



February 1, 2026

Hunger-Free Campus Activities

Report to the Legislature
Minnesota State

In the 2025 legislative session, the Hunger-Free campus appropriation was transferred from the Office of Higher Education to Minnesota State as a direct appropriation. Minnesota State is to report to the Legislature on information regarding hunger-free campus activities, including how appropriation dollars were distributed among institutions, how hunger-free campus requirements were met at those institutions, and how many students were served.

How money was distributed among colleges and universities

Minnesota State used a competitive grant application process to allocate the Hunger-free Campus Grant funds to build and sustain programs that meet the stated requirements to receive the Hunger-Free Campus designation. The competitive grant process opened in early Fall 2025 semester with a goal of having award decisions made by mid-October and funds distributed shortly after.

The Minnesota State Hunger-Free Campus program has three paths for the colleges and universities to follow:

- **Pathway to Designation Grant:** Support for colleges or universities who have not received a Hunger Free Campus Designation and are seeking the designation within the next year.
- **Sustaining Designation Grant:** Support for colleges or universities who have successfully earned the Hunger Free Campus designation by achieving all listed requirements and are requesting funds to sustain their designation and continue their work.
- **Designation Only:** Colleges and universities who successfully meet all requirements, but do not require funding support may also apply annually for the Hunger Free Campus Designation.

The competitive grant application process yielded applications from colleges and universities that included narrative answers detailing how the institution would meet the requirements to obtain the Hunger-Free Campus designation and a detailed budget outlining how grant funds would be used to support that work. Minnesota State allocated 100% of the \$600,000 Hunger-Free Campus Grant appropriation in November of 2025. The total requests for funding in the competitive grant process exceeded \$1 million.

How hunger-free campus requirements were met at those institutions

The 2025-2026 Hunger-Free Campus work at Minnesota State colleges and universities is still in its early stages, with many institutions focused on launching or formalizing their task forces, opening new pantry spaces, and building foundational processes. Across institutions, early efforts have centered on establishing student membership, improving signage and visibility, and strengthening the basic operations of food pantries. Several campuses are just beginning to host introductory meetings, plan outreach strategies, gather student feedback, and explore partnerships that will support longterm sustainability. Despite being in the launch phase, these

early steps have already generated strong momentum, including the opening of new pantry locations, enhanced shelving and freezers, increased retail food rescue, and expanded distribution of essentials such as toiletries and winter clothing.

At the same time, campuses that are slightly further along have begun implementing awareness events, food drives, academic partnerships, and SNAP outreach to better connect students to available resources. Many are exploring or piloting programming such as cooking demonstrations, nutrition education, budgeting workshops, cultural food spotlights, and stigma reduction strategies. Collaboration with community partners, student groups, and academic departments is growing, helping to build a more coordinated response to food insecurity. While the work is still developing, campuses collectively report increased engagement, improved access to basic needs resources, and a strong foundation for deeper, more integrated hunger relief efforts in the year ahead.

How many students were served

In the approximately six weeks between the arrival of Hunger Free Campus funding and the end of the Fall 2025 semester, campuses across Minnesota State mobilized quickly and at scale. During this short window, just under 25,000 students were served through a wide range of events, programs, and support activities designed to meet basic needs and reduce food insecurity. These efforts included food pantry enhancements, largescale food drives, community partnerships, SNAP outreach, awareness campaigns, cooking demonstrations, and expanded access to fresh and shelf stable food. Although many institutions were still in the launch or early implementation phase of their Hunger Free Campus plans, the rapid engagement and meaningful reach of these early initiatives demonstrate strong momentum. Collectively, these actions reflect a systemwide commitment to ensuring that every campus meets the requirements for Hunger-Free Campus designation by the end of the 2025–2026 academic year.

The early outcomes of the Hunger-Free Campus initiative reflect the impact that focused investment and coordinated action can have across Minnesota State colleges and universities. Through a competitive funding process that fully distributed the \$600,000 appropriation, and in response to more than \$1 million in requests, institutions have mobilized to strengthen basic needs infrastructure, expand food access, and build sustainable systems of support. Even within the first six weeks of implementation, nearly 25,000 students were reached, demonstrating both the urgency of student need and the systemwide dedication to meeting it. As campuses continue to develop programming, deepen partnerships, and work toward meeting all Hunger-Free Campus designation requirements, Minnesota State is well positioned to advance a more stable, supportive, and student-centered environment throughout the 2025–2026 academic year and beyond.



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