

Campus food bank use increasing

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Students at the University of Alberta are turning to the Campus Food Bank in greater numbers this year, reflecting a larger national trend.

The HungerCount, Canada's only annual survey on food bank use nationwide, recently published new statistics showing that 71 per cent of Canadian food banks saw an increase of nine per cent between March 2009 and March 2010, with almost 870,000 people turning to food banks in March 2010.

This rise is reflected on campus, where the recession is putting pressure on students already burdened by tuition fees and the cost of living.

Ashley Seibert, executive director of the U of A's Campus Food Bank, explained that food bank use is increasing faster on campus than the national average. Between 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, there was a 20 per cent increase in campus food bank usage.

Last year, more than 2,000 students used the food bank, which provides hampers designed to provide four days' worth of food.

While in previous years students were able to make enough money during the summer months to support themselves in the school year, Seibert points to the recent slump in the job market as a major reason for the increase in food bank use over



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FOOD FOR THOUGHT Seibert said there has been a rising demand on campus.

the past few years.

Seibert explained that there is usually a jump in usage in September and October while people are waiting for student loans to come in. In addition, she said the end of winter semester can be a busy time.

"People access our services as they start to deplete their resources at the end of the semester," Seibert said. "We have traditionally seen a spike in both

users and in donations, which is great because it balances each other out."

At the U of A, 29 per cent of students using the food bank in the 2009-2010 year relied on student loans as their primary income, while The HungerCount reports that 1.6 per cent of Canadian households nationwide are relying on student loans as a primary income.

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