

## FY 2025 One-Time Request – Cougar Cupboard Operational Funds

Cougar Cupboard opened in January 2020 serving close to 70 students a week prior to COVID-19. The Cupboard has grown exponentially since then, and in Spring 2023, the program distributed over 5,000 pounds of free food to over 800 students visits per week.

It is our goal to be a nationally recognized pantry for our ability to adequately meet our diverse student needs and alleviate food insecurity as a barrier for student success. It is a practice of the cupboard to provide service to our students with dignity which includes offering practical, healthy, culturally responsive, food options. We aim to accommodate a variety of preferences and dietary needs of our students. As a result of visiting the cupboard each week, we hope that they feel supported and empowered to persist in their degree attainment.

The Cougar Cupboard currently has enrolled 6,700 students. National research suggests that a campus our size should anticipate serving over double that many students. Because of the kindness of the Student Fee Advisory Committee, the Cougar Cupboard will be relocating to a larger space in the University Lofts spring 2024. However, given the record-breaking utilization of both cougar cupboard locations this fall, we require additional support to help meet the need of our students.

Although the Cougar Cupboard is supported by the Houston Bank, which provides free food deliveries of primarily fresh produce, and the cupboard is a recipient of a large grant from TDECU, providing \$20,000 annually, the student need outweighs what these partners are able to provide.

Additionally, the Houston Food Bank is not able to regularly provide certain staples of a healthy diet, including milk and bread. Limited nonperishable items that can be provided by the Food Bank also limits options for a consistent healthy diet. Furthermore, about ¼ of students who use the Cupboard are international students. These students have frequently requested that the Cupboard provide food that they eat in their own cultures, and the Houston Food Bank is very rarely able to provide these foods for the Cupboard. Since food insecurity is defined as not only a lack of access to food, but rather a lack of consistent access to foods that support a healthy diet, it is imperative for the Cougar Cupboard to provide student with options for a well-rounded diet.

Currently, we are projecting an average of over 800 to 1,000 visits per week to the Cougar Cupboard once it is settled in its new location in Spring 2024. Considering this level of utilization, a review of **anticipated costs for needed food items is as follows:**

<b>Milk</b>	
Cost per gallon (discounted, and including delivery)	\$2.15
Cost per month	\$1355
Students served per month	630
<b>Total Cost for Peak Months (Sept-Nov, Feb-April)</b>	<b>\$8130</b>
<b>Bread</b>	
Estimated Cost per loaf (including delivery)	\$1
Cost per month	\$800
Students served per month	800
<b>Total Cost for Peak Months (Sept-Nov, Feb-April)</b>	<b>\$4800</b>

<b>Culturally Relevant Foods</b>	
Cost per month	\$1,000
Total Cost for Peak Months (Sept-Nov, Feb-April)	\$6,000
<b>Nonperishables</b>	
Cost per month	\$2,000
Total Cost for Peak Months (Sept-Nov, Feb-April)	\$12,000

Meeting students' essential needs is directly tied to student success. Students experiencing basic needs insecurities are more likely to miss, fail and/or drop classes, are less likely to purchase needed textbooks, and more likely to leave their university altogether. In fact, over 35% of students who enrolled in the Cougar Cupboard reported had considered dropping out of the university due to financial concerns. Support to this program will make an huge impact to hundreds of Cougars by helping them have what they need so that they can focus on their education.

DSA Strategic Initiative:

***Student Success: Champion exceptional opportunities and services to support all UH students.***

- SS2: Expand **diverse experiences** on exploration and education while identifying and meeting the needs of our student population through supportive, inclusive environments.
- SS3: Foster the **holistic well-being** of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.

***Division Cohesion: Create and foster a cohesive division identity, culture, and community.***

- DC4: Foster **collaborative divisional processes and support** focused on common goals for enhancing the student experience.
- DC5: Promote and create initiatives that support a **healthy work environment while contributing to divisional shared goals** for student retention and success.

***Resources: Evaluate, actively pursue, and leverage resources to enhance the UH experience.***

- R1: Evaluate resources to **identify opportunities** for efficiency, improvement, and transformation for all students.
- R2: Pursue and **develop resources** to address identified gaps and needs of students.
- R3: Leverage and adapt resources in innovative ways to increase **effective utilization**.

***Partnerships: Forge and strengthen partnerships to expand our reach into the university and greater community.***

- P1: Educate and empower **campus partners** to be our advocates and connect with local resources.
- P2: Enhance students' educational experience by expanding partnerships with **academic affairs**.

- P5: Promote **alumni** engagement and support for division initiatives in cooperation with Advancement.
- P6: Raise the profile of the division through **regional, national, and international** involvement.

**Funding Request- FY2025**

Milk	\$8,130
Bread	\$4,800
Culturally Relevant Food Options	\$6,000
Nonperishable Supplements	\$12,000
<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>\$30,930</u>
Admin Fee	\$1,855.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$32,785.80</b>