

THE FUTURE OF FOOD AT GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

October 2019

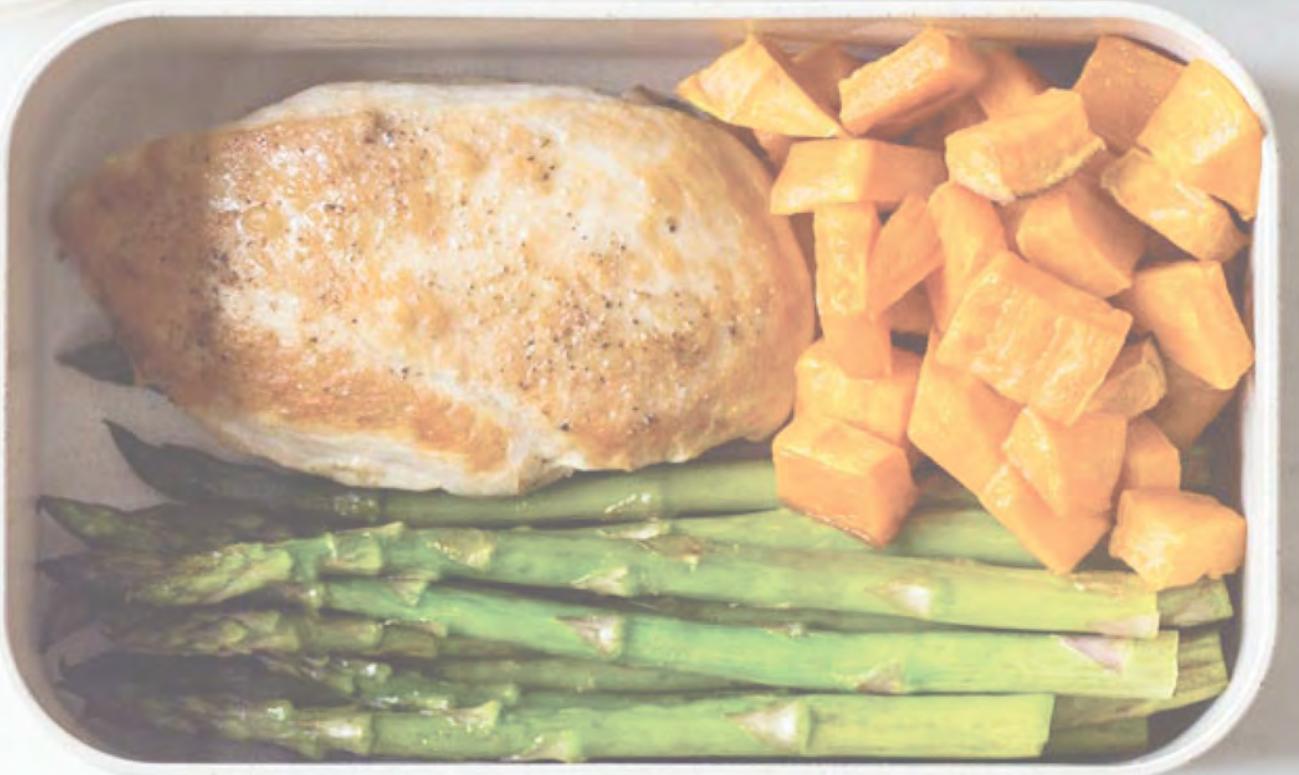
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George Brown College is located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the land of other Indigenous Peoples that lived here over time.

We are grateful to share this land as treaty people who learn, work and live in community with one another.



INTRODUCTION

As one of the largest urban post-secondary institutions in the country, George Brown College (GBC) has a unique opportunity to explore how food and food services can help shape the College's commitment to student and employee success. By leveraging the diverse communities that are part of the College, GBC seeks to partner with providers who believe that there is a new future to be imagined for post-secondary food services, and in so doing collaborate with GBC to Imagine Possibilities in enlivening the commitments of the college's strategic plan for 2022 and 2030 (<https://www.georgebrown.ca/strategy/>).

In considering the Future of Food at GBC, it is particularly important that vendors and partners embody the following key priorities of an urban college's food service program:

- **A partner in student success**
- **A bridge to the City and the community**
- **A collaborator in food creativity and innovation**
- **A leader in sustainability**
- **A vital financial contributor**

A PARTNER IN STUDENT SUCCESS



GBC has arguably one of the most demographically diverse student communities in the country. Situated in the heart of downtown Toronto, GBC is a mirror of the City's diversity. According to 2016 census data:

- The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) has a total population of 5,928,040 people
- The GTA represents 20% of Canada's entire population
- 13-15% of Torontonians live in households with 'low-income' status
- 2,705,550 of Torontonians were born outside of Canada:
- Torontonians come from over 50 different countries, speaking over 200 different languages, representing over 250 distinct ethnic origins

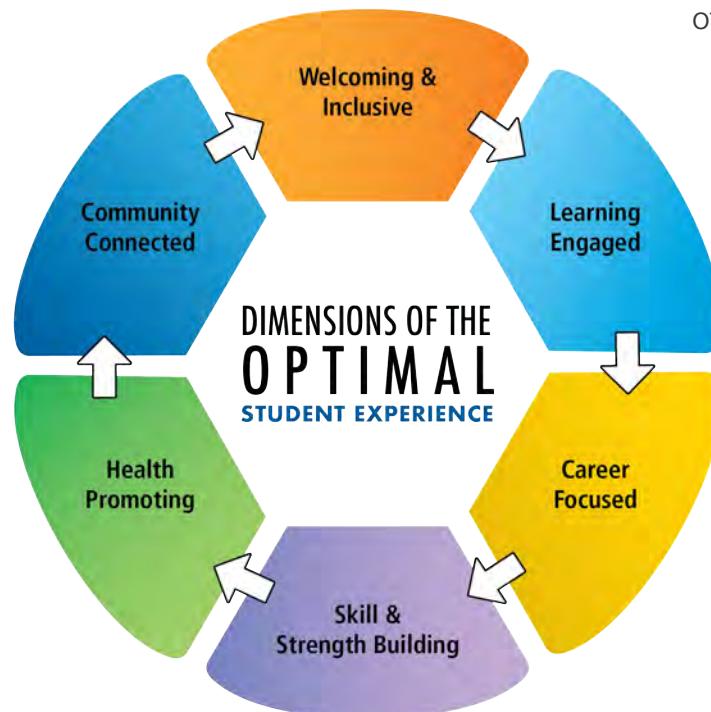
Similarly, the GBC student population is incredibly diverse. According to data collected through the bi-annual Student Characteristics survey:

- We have over 33,000 individual students at GBC
- More than 60% of students are not coming directly out of high school, and 50% of students already have some experience with PSE
- 27% of students come to Canada on a study permit, but 80% of GBC students were either born outside of Canada or have a parent who was
- 29% of GBC students live in one of the City's neighbourhood improvement areas and close to 70% come from families where the household income is less than \$50K per year
- Roughly 13% of students report having a disability
- 70% of our student population identifies as non-white.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE MODEL

In advancing its capacity to meet the needs of this diverse student population, GBC has adopted a student experience model that will help all areas of the College community to become student-ready. Research clearly signals the vital relationship between student-centred program and service design, and student success. The six dimensions of the optimal GBC student experience are foundational to this work.

All GBC services and programs should strive to optimize these conditions in as many ways as possible – ensuring that the whole College community is part of a student-ready ecosystem that facilitates the conditions for student and graduate success.



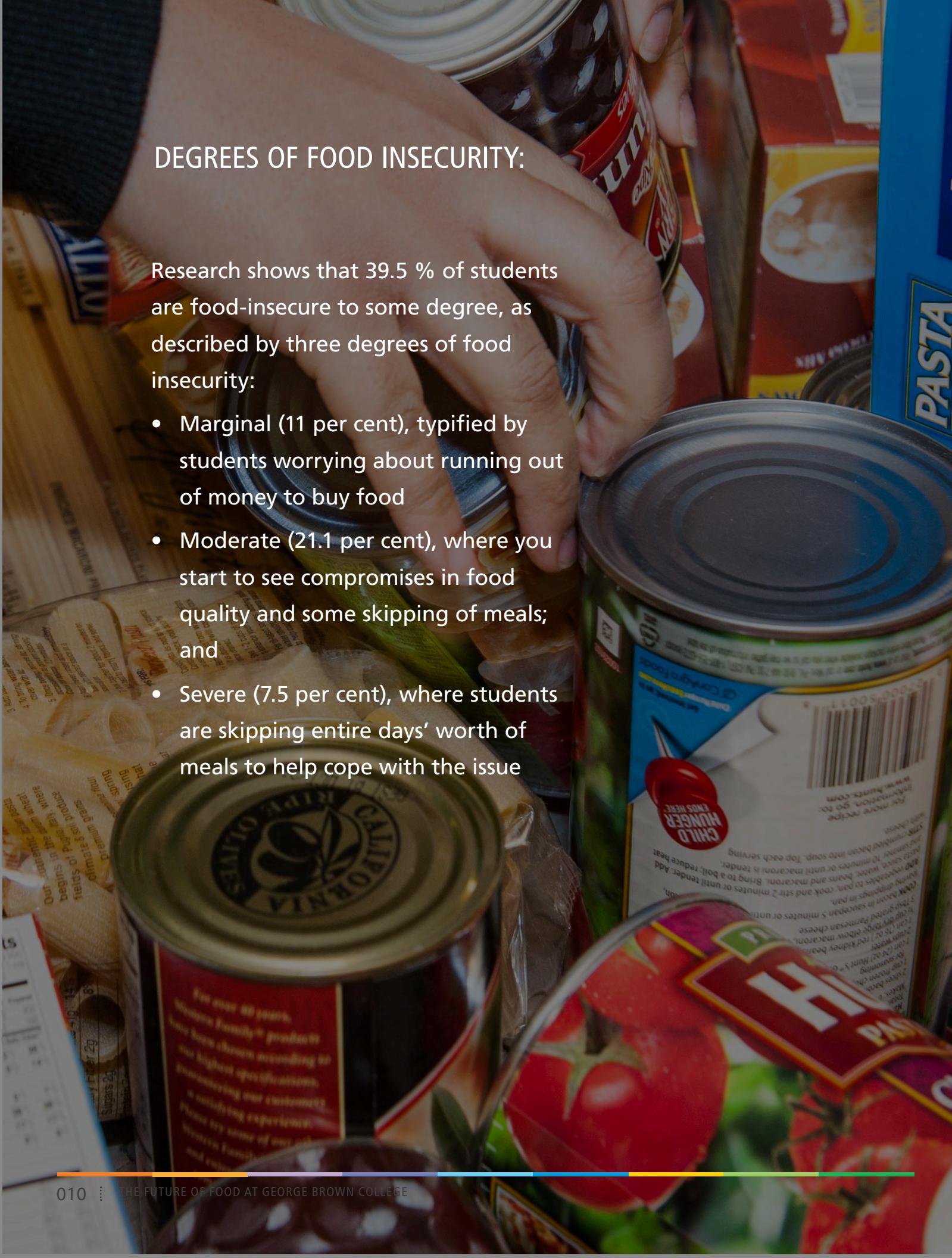
INCLUSIVE BY DESIGN

The keystone to this model of the student experience is ensuring that students feel welcomed and included. An inclusion-focused GBC food services program will help students' cultures and experiences be seen, encourage exploration across experiences, by incorporating opportunities to explore, highlight and champion the various cuisines represented in our population. Through exposing the entire College population to a panoply of flavours and food-related traditions, food services can help to build cultural curiosity and mutual respect among all members of our community. Further, the program ought to be **inclusive by design** rather than 'accommodating on demand' – to ensure dignified and inclusive access to people from across the widest range of social identity and diversity.

GBC STUDENT ACCESS TO FOOD

In addition to their cuisine backgrounds, the GBC student population can be loosely considered in five groups, relative to their access to food-related amenities at GBC and in the City of Toronto:

- **Local students**, those who live within the City proper, and are able to take advantage of the whole of Toronto's diverse food culture and programming
- **Commuting students**, those who travel in from outside the City limits, with limited time within the City and hence primarily using GBC campus facilities and programming
- **International students**, who likely are living within the City but are far from home, family and friends, often with limited social networks and impetus to explore and add to the City's culinary offerings



DEGREES OF FOOD INSECURITY:

Research shows that 39.5 % of students are food-insecure to some degree, as described by three degrees of food insecurity:

- Marginal (11 per cent), typified by students worrying about running out of money to buy food
- Moderate (21.1 per cent), where you start to see compromises in food quality and some skipping of meals; and
- Severe (7.5 per cent), where students are skipping entire days' worth of meals to help cope with the issue

FOOD & STUDENT WELL-BEING

Students are faced with many barriers to academic success including not having enough money to buy books, pay tuition, and put food on the table. Students coming from lower-income families (approximately 50% of GBC students) along with first-generation students face food insecurity. Their access to safe and nutritious foods is limited. With increasing costs of a college education and the recent changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP) - affecting up to 70% of GBC students - education-related debt is placing added stress on students and their families.

As a result, food can become a low priority when tuition and rent are due.

Food is a critical contributor to health and well-being. Allied Academics indicates that "College students are at risk of making poor dietary choices that can cause significant health problems and weight gain." As part of health and wellness promotion, we could be better educating our students on the trade-offs between convenience and cost, comfort and nutrition. We could be leveraging our Chef School, Food and Nutrition program, our health expertise and fitness and recreation to create a holistic wellness program that is a cornerstone of our student experience.

FOOD ACCESS & SECURITY

Not getting enough to eat can have a dramatic effect on students' success. Their grades can suffer, their test scores may be lower, and overall, their chances of graduating are less. A report from the Community College Equity Assessment Lab at San Diego State University found that in California, food insecurity was more prevalent among students of colour, and students with food insecurity are more likely to indicate their intention to drop out of college.

At the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Rachael Engler-Stringer and her team sampled a group of 4,500 students in 2015. The survey included questions on demographics, housing circumstances, employment and other incomes, in addition to questions on coping strategies and perceived health impacts. The survey results found that 39.5 % of students were food-insecure to some degree. She broke down the results into three degrees of food insecurity:

- Marginal (11 per cent), which she typified by students worrying about running out of money to buy food
- Moderate (21.1 per cent), where you start to see compromises in food quality and some skipping of meals; and
- Severe (7.5 per cent), where students are skipping entire days' worth of meals to help cope with the issue

Like colleges throughout Canada and the U.S., the GBC Student Association has provided a Student Nutrition Access Program (SNAP) for students and recently introduced a community garden at the Casa Loma campus. In 2017-2018 the Student Association provided food to over 1,512 households and had 12,628 individual visits to its SNAP locations. Getting to a point where a student has sought food support or registered at a food bank carries a certain stigma in our society and asking for charity is difficult.

According to a January 2019 U.S. Government Accountability Office report, more than a third of college students across the U.S. struggle to afford food. Further, a 2018 national study from the Urban Institute estimates that 11% of households with a student in a four-year college experience food insecurity.

Further, a 2016 article in Maclean's magazine signals that "nearly half of students surveyed had forgone healthy food to pay for books, tuition fees and rent," according to an exclusive report from Meal Exchange. High prices not only result in students being unable to afford food, but also leaves them resorting to unhealthy options because they are cheaper. Unhealthy food options typically cost less, leaving students with no choice but to indulge in poor eating habits.

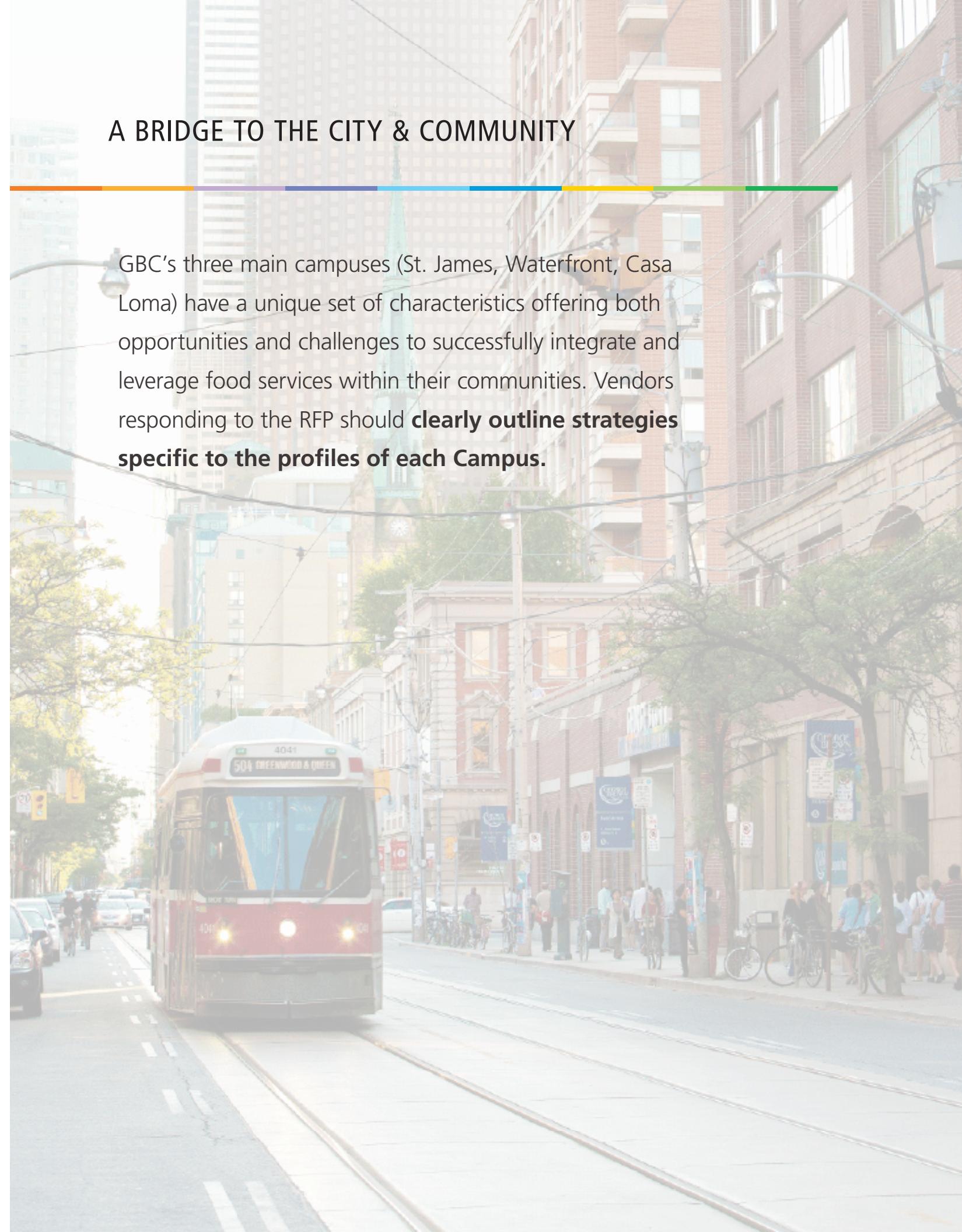
The Meal Exchange survey also identified that the students particularly at risk are financially independent from parents, namely those funded by band councils, student loans and bank loans. The most vulnerable—international students, Indigenous students and students with dependent children—were some of the most food-insecure.



GBC's Good Food Market supports students by providing affordable access to nutritious food.

A BRIDGE TO THE CITY & COMMUNITY

GBC's three main campuses (St. James, Waterfront, Casa Loma) have a unique set of characteristics offering both opportunities and challenges to successfully integrate and leverage food services within their communities. Vendors responding to the RFP should **clearly outline strategies specific to the profiles of each Campus.**



ST. JAMES CAMPUS: EVOLVING FOOD

The largest of GBC's three campuses, St James consists of nine buildings totaling over 800,000 square feet. Located within the Moss Park neighbourhood, this campus is the most connected in terms of food options with a myriad of well-established restaurants, bars, markets and social services. The area immediately surrounding the GBC Campus is overseen by the highly influential St.

Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA, which is undergoing a significant transformation that will cement this area of the City as a hub for food and food culture.

As a popular landing point for new immigrants, Moss Park is a dynamic neighbourhood with diverse ethnocultural representation and a wide spectrum of income levels.



WATERFRONT CAMPUS: BLANK SLATE

GBC's newest and fastest-growing campus, the Waterfront currently has just over 400,000 sf with another 175,000 sf on the way. The Daphne Cockwell Centre for Health Sciences was one of the first buildings to open in the East Bayfront area and acted as a catalyst for the development of what is now Toronto's newest and most innovative neighbourhood. The Daniels Waterfront City for the Arts houses GBC's arts and design programs and is a hub of creative and innovative academic programming, industry partnership and applied research. The

College's latest capital project, The Arbour, will be a highly innovative and sustainable Tall Wood building and the first of its kind when it opens in 2024. In a macro-context the East Bayfront Neighbourhood consists primarily of reclaimed former industrial land but is in a transformational development process. Over the next 20 years, it will see the addition of 3 million square feet of commercial space, 8,000 new jobs, 6,000 residential units and 5.5 hectares of public space. However, at present there is a lack of public amenities in the area.



CASA LOMA CAMPUS: FOOD DESERT

One of GBC's original locations, the Casa Loma Campus is made up of a series of 5 interconnected buildings totaling 674,000 sf. Located in the Annex/Forest Hill neighbourhood, this area is largely made up of high earning households which have formed an influential and highly vocal neighborhood association. The Campus itself is surrounded by a residential neighborhood and a CN rail corridor to its South limiting immediate

access to stores and restaurants. Of the three campuses, Casa Loma is the least connected to public amenities including transit. With the lack of transit connection and a majority of educational programs related to skilled trades, this Campus has the highest population of commuter students.



A COLLABORATOR IN FOOD CREATIVITY & INNOVATION

GBC is an internationally-recognized leader in culinary and hospitality education. Accompanying that reputation are benchmark expectations of excellence in quality, innovation and service that may not otherwise be evident in other post-secondary settings. Food service programs ought to align with this benchmark reputation while still maintaining a razor-sharp focus on student success.

The ways in which students understand and conceptualize food services are also a vital consideration. In the past 5 years, the idea of the urban food court has been transformed to provide a sleek and integrated customer experience. The European notion of a food hall has emerged as a way to connect higher-end products to a broader population. Food trucks and outdoor food marketplaces have created entry points for diverse and affordable suppliers to connect to focused customer bases. And self-serve hot tables and food bars have facilitated choice and consumer customization. **Where are opportunities to transform the traditional post-secondary food service interface? How can digital tools and automation be considered as means to enhance the ways in which people access food?**

GBC's Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts offers unique learning enterprises through which students enrolled in the Centre's programs gain invaluable experience and skill development for their careers. The Chefs' House, Chef on the Run, and the GBC Café feature a range of options for customers, prepared by students in an active learning environment. However, how might students in other academic programs engage in opportunities to learn about food and food preparation through a food service program offering? How are opportunities leveraged for students and consumers to interact with choice and preparation, so that there are opportunities to learn as well as transact? What does the food service's food education program look like?

With the emerging and recognized food cultures within the College and adjacent to GBC's campuses, there is an opportunity for the food service program to become an integrated part of that scene. Ambitious and leading-edge thinking to innovate food offerings, delivery modes, and college partnerships and collaborations will help to accomplish this goal.

A LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY

Climate change is undeniably going to transform the ways we live in the very near future. As such, variables relating to sustainability are of critical importance in the College's future plans. One of the strategic commitments in George Brown College's Vision 2030 is that we demonstrate "behaviours, actions and policies that lead to environmental, financial and social sustainability". We have already identified necessary steps for the College to reduce its carbon footprint and lead by example. Beyond recycling and composting, **the food service should clearly demonstrate a commitment to sustainability across all of its domains – environmental, social and financial.**

Local and sustainable procurement of food is an important strategy to reduce an institution's carbon footprint while having positive effects on the local economy, the environment, and the community.

Food service providers should be prepared to suggest creative ways to emphasize local, sustainable and Fair-Trade food procurement while managing costs and addressing barriers related to tracking, measuring and reporting food purchases.

Food waste and use of single use plastics are huge environmental concerns with the need to shift to a circular economy being addressed

in Toronto's Long Term Waste Management Strategy, the provincial Strategy for a Waste Free Ontario and the Government of Canada's plans to ban single use plastics as early as 2020. Locally, the City of Toronto is undertaking consultations to help develop a strategy to reduce the use of single-use and takeaway items in Toronto. Food service providers should be prepared to innovate and suggest strategies to help George Brown College address these difficult sustainability challenges. It is expected that the College's food services will measure its sustainable practices through procurement policies and decisions, by preventing food waste and diverting food materials from the waste stream, by making low impact dining options available, by demonstrating a commitment to social justice and equity, and by educating students and employees about more sustainable options and practices.



A VITAL FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTOR

As part of the College's Division of Student Success, food service is considered as a key student success partner, whose educational and financial contributions help to advance the Division's collective work to optimize the student experience. Commissions from the College's food service contract support vital services that support student success. While commissions have provided equivalent funds to secure support services for students, the College's continued capacity to deliver a partnership-based food service program will depend on innovative approaches to finances and commissions. At the same time, cost and price are still primary drivers of the program's success.

To that end, myriad considerations arise when considering the optimal financial model for the college's food service program. Are there unrealized business streams or channels within or outside of the College that ought to be leveraged? Are there service and site optimization opportunities in the current business model that will bolster revenue generation? What are the costs and benefits relating to early investment in infrastructure and capital? Are there advantages to maximizing commissions instead? How is engagement

in fundraising and philanthropy a part of the overall financial profile? An **innovative and nimble financial model and profile** will help boost the financial impact that the food service program can have on the College's overall goals and objectives.



WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

Vendors should demonstrate creativity, innovation and collaboration in their responses by specifically addressing:

- Plans to provide a diverse range of menus and service options that reflect the diverse community at GBC
- Strategies that address food security issues in support of at-risk students and community members
- Strategies to support the success and inclusion of Indigenous students and community members
- Strategies to offer affordable food options, and/or partnerships with at-risk populations or not-for-profit organizations
- Strategy to meet expectant benchmarks of quality, excellence and innovation as part of the GBC food community
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- Ability to evolve service composition and capacity as campus population evolves

- Strategies to promote sustainability, and help reduce the campus carbon footprint
- Examples of or a demonstrated willingness to support entrepreneurial culinary initiatives involving GBC students, faculty, graduates, and industry partners
- Demonstrated commitment to collaborative approaches to food and nutrition education, and experiential learning for students across the broadest range of GBC's academic programs
- Willingness to participate in innovative research and pilot projects related to food
- Opportunities to use food to create a greater sense of connection to other campuses and the rest of Toronto
- Innovative models of revenue diversification and generation
- A clearly articulated understanding of the role of food service in student success



FUTURE OF FOOD WORKING GROUP



Chris McGrath

Vice President
Student Success

Gerard Hayes

Director
Student Experience & Business Services

John Higgins

Director
Culinary & Hospitality Enterprises

Heather Dyer

Manager
CHCA Academic Operations + Student Services

Shannon Hynes

Director
Strategy

Graeme Kondruss

Manager
Academic Space & Design Planning

Stephanie Foster

Consultant
Green Team Sustainability

Wayne Dolson

Sr. Manager
Business Services

Vidyia Rego

Director
Financial Services

Carrie Gaetz

Executive Assistant
Student Success

