

Warhawk Emergency Fund

“In my career as a university teacher, I've worked with students who had to couch surf, or live in shelters, because they had no place else to stay. I've seen students coming in sick, week after week, because they couldn't pay for healthcare. I had a student who couldn't get his work done because he had a horrible toothache and couldn't go to a dentist and another who came to class with a broken wheelchair as she waited to find money for repairs. I routinely have students whose broken-down cars interrupt their commute and their success at school, and many others who couldn't afford healthy food or appropriate winter clothing. Many of these students end up dropping out, when a relatively small infusion of resources could keep them in school.”

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— Dr. Lauren Smith, project director for the Warhawk Emergency Fund grant program —



The campus food pantry allows students to supplement their food supply and focus on their classes and obligations, rather than worry about how to pay for tomorrow's dinner.

UW-Whitewater recognizes students have an increasing need to cover basic necessities as the gap between student aid packages, what their families can contribute or they can earn to pay for their studies, and the total cost of completing their education grows. For instance, in 2017, 246 students who had expected family contributions of less than \$7,000 failed to return to UW-Whitewater. These are vulnerable students who may find themselves temporarily homeless or unable to afford regular meals. Too often, financial emergencies spell the end of college for low-income students. An unexpected car repair or medical bill can put these students in a serious bind: stay in college or pay the bill.

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The Campus Food Pantry, which opened in March 2018, is staffed by student and staff volunteers. Next door to the food pantry, a Success Closet will be added to give students access to gently used business attire for interviews, internships and work.

No student who is part of the Warhawk Family should go without food, housing, or medical care. The Warhawk Emergency Fund provides small grants to low-income students when financial emergencies arise. One-time aid of as little as \$200 can help a student through a difficult time and keep them on the path to finishing their degree. A centralized rapid response team offers a judgment-free process to quickly evaluate student emergency grant requests. UW-Whitewater makes disbursements directly to whomever the funds are due (landlord, repair shop, hospital, etc.) to ensure the expense is quickly and appropriately addressed.

Students may have other hurdles to remaining in school. Therefore, all students who apply for emergency grants also receive financial counseling. Future plans include a campus food pantry, a campus support services referral program and a clothes closet to offer interview-appropriate clothes for students applying for internships and employment. Together, these wrap-around services will ensure that students understand UW-Whitewater intends to partner with them to meet their graduation and employment goals.

Our vision is to create a \$1 million endowment that will provide \$40,000 annually to the Warhawk Emergency Fund, allowing it to award approximately 70 grants of \$500 on average to students. When students' basic needs are met, they will be better equipped to be successful in the classroom, to graduate and thrive in their careers, and to carry on the Warhawk traditions of access and excellence.