

2021 College Project Entry (116 words in questions) – 1600 maximum

1. Briefly describe your College Project and what your chapter set out to accomplish with your college administration.

Alpha Nu Sigma members met with our college president to discuss College Project ideas. Many Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) students were experiencing hardships such as food insecurity. At the president's suggestion, our chapter decided to revitalize the pantries on all three campuses by restocking, creating an awareness campaign, and planning food distribution events. We agreed our project would address the portion of the HGTC mission statement "to provide a student-centered environment." To develop our project, we collaborated with college administration, staff, and the HGTC Foundation.

2. Describe the planning process in detail including who was involved in determining the project and who your chapter collaborated with to carry out the project. (It's perfectly acceptable to list individual job titles or departments/organizations rather than listing everyone by name.)

Chapter officers researched HGTC's mission statement during training in preparation for meeting with our college president and anticipated brainstorming ideas with her. Our committee considered members' project suggestions, understanding we would adjust our plan to needs she identified. During our meeting, she expressed concern about student food insecurity and was supportive of revitalizing HGTC's pantries. Following her suggestion, we met with the Pantry Coordinator to determine pantry needs and how to assist students. HGTC's Pantry Coordinator explained the pandemic changed pantry usage and operations due to cancellation of the work-study program. We shared ideas about students being able to use grocery store gift cards and doing drive-by distributions because students were not permitted on campus. A committee member contacted ten locations of four grocery store chains about gift card availability and grant information and compiled an Excel spreadsheet with her results. We shared this spreadsheet with the HGTC Foundation Philanthropic Coordinator to apply for grants per college policy. Committee members realized the pantries were not stocked, nor were funds available to restock them, preventing us from organizing a drive-by distribution. To address these shortfalls, we wrote a \$5,000 budget request through HGTC's Student Engagement office. The request was approved and some of the funds were used to stock one pantry. We were unable to stock the remaining two pantries because they were being relocated to larger spaces. We realized HGTC students still needed assistance and decided to create our own food distribution event, called "Gobble Bags," prior to Thanksgiving. We requested \$2,500 of our travel funds be reallocated and were approved. During a committee meeting, we selected items to include and priced the cost of a single bag to determine how many we could distribute. We needed additional approval to be permitted on campus while observing social distancing protocols. Once approved, we scheduled shopping and packing days. Throughout our project, we collaborated with:

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- HGTC Pantry Coordinator
- Director of Student Engagement
- Vice-President of Student Affairs
- Director of Student Services
- Philanthropic Coordinator-HGTC Foundation
- Associate Vice-President of Academic Support

3. How did chapter members develop their leadership and/or knowledge, skills and abilities needed for project implementation?

Our committee learned how to be a team, forced to operate virtually in a pandemic, by participating in training activities, including the Four Tendencies quiz, communications exercises, and a hallmark awards writing workshop. We utilized fellowship activities to develop a rapport with each other, and committee members determined Google Classroom would help us stay organized. Our team learned how to navigate this program and upload files, downloaded Facebook Messenger for informal communication, and increased our technology skills by using Zoom video conferencing software.

To properly identify administrators, we familiarized ourselves with HGTC's organizational chart. We requested our advisors review emails before sending to administrators, since we understood the importance of professional communication. Team members kept detailed notes of meetings throughout our project.

We met with the Pantry Coordinator to learn how pantries receive funding, the current reserves balance, and brainstormed ways to obtain funds. Committee members investigated grocery store giving practices and gift cards. We shared this information with the HGTC Foundation because we learned college policy dictates only they can write grants. They prepared a grant request, which is still awaiting approval. We investigated how student activities funds are allocated to student groups. A team member drafted a \$5,000 request from the Student Activities Funding Committee to support the pantries, and it was approved. Our chapter received travel funds from the same committee. We contacted the Director of Student Engagement to determine if unused portions could be reallocated for this project and were excited to receive permission to use them for our "Gobble Bags."

4. Describe in detail how the chapter collaborated and communicated with others before, during and after the project?

Our college president directed us to meet with the Pantry Coordinator to start the project. This coordinator attended our weekly committee meetings to share the needs of HGTC's pantries and develop a plan to reopen them. College administrators and faculty were invited to participate in our project meetings and were kept informed about progress via emails. Notices of our weekly meetings were posted in Google Classroom,

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and we sent email reminders to chapter members. College Project progress was shared in both chapter and officer meetings. To promote awareness of the pantries, we shared the pantry website link and a brief description with an administrator and asked her to oversee distribution to faculty. This authorized faculty to add the information to their course syllabi. Our initial request to the HGTC Foundation for gift cards was denied because they could not be restricted to food. Committee members clarified the requirements, determined Food Lion could provide restricted cards, and our subsequent request was approved. Much of the progress on this project necessitated administrators' approval to move forward, requiring us to regularly communicate with them. After deciding to distribute "Gobble Bags," we contacted the Director of Student Engagement to inquire about reallocating travel money. She instructed us to complete an additional request to hold distributions on multiple days and campuses. Once that request was approved, we contacted the Vice-President of Student Affairs to obtain permission for our "Gobble Bags" flyer to be sent to all faculty and staff, and it was approved. We submitted a final report to our administrative collaborators, informing them of the outcome of our project. Several administrators praised us and one commented, "From the Homeless Period Project to the Gobble Bag distribution, each of you have made a positive impact in the community."

5. What were the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project, including the lessons learned by your chapter members and others?

Throughout this project, chapter members learned about the many elements required to operate within a bureaucracy, successfully organize an event, and function as a team.

Initially, our plan was to host drive-by distributions on each campus; however, we found the pantries were not properly stocked and the Fall work-study program was canceled. HGTC's Pantry Coordinator unexpectedly decided to create a leadership team of faculty and staff volunteers during our project, causing administrative delays. Our team realized we needed to create a new course of action that still addressed food insecurity.

We developed a multi-pronged approach to overcome these challenges. Chapter members posted 100 pantry flyers on all three campuses to advertise and inform students hygiene products were also available. One committee member requested and received 100 baggies containing feminine hygiene products from the Homeless Period Project. Team members wrote a \$5,000 funding request from the Student Affairs Office, which was approved. Additionally, six volunteers used \$950 of those funds to shop for grocery and hygiene products to restock the Georgetown Campus pantry (picture attached). Ultimately, we participated in the December grand re-opening event

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on all campuses. We were proud to be part of a project supporting the college's goal to reopen the pantries.

Despite administrative challenges prohibiting college-wide distribution from the pantries, team members developed a Thanksgiving-themed food distribution event. To successfully organize this distribution, we realized we needed to request approval, create a menu, comparison price shop, advertise, and address the logistics of shopping, storing, packing, and transporting the goods in 45 days. Committee members requested reallocation of \$2,500 of chapter travel monies to fund this project. Four volunteers purchased 1,958 items including stuffing mix, instant mashed potatoes, canned vegetables, spices, and other Thanksgiving-related foods. Team members brainstormed and decided to call our initiative "Gobble Bags." To advertise, one member created the attached professional flyer which we shared on social media, with faculty and staff, and through college announcements. We were excited to see the college promote our project on its official social media outlets. The chapter purchased 91 reusable grocery bags, and ten volunteers packed them. Each bag weighed 31 pounds. We recruited 13 volunteers to distribute bags on our three campuses, practicing proper social distancing protocols (picture attached). Upon arrival at our distribution locations, we were shocked to find students waiting for us. On one campus, 12 bags were distributed in five minutes! On another campus, a student shared she set a reminder on her phone to get a bag. We were thrilled to see our advertising efforts led to handing out all 91 bags. Chapter members felt joyful in helping our fellow students and their families yet expressed sadness because the need is so great. We received emails expressing gratitude for our project from students, administrators, and the Pantry Coordinator, who thanked us for "eagerly stepping forward to assist in the effort to reopen the pantry at all three campuses." A student emailed, "I wanted to say thank you for the gobble bag we picked up today at the Conway Campus! We greatly appreciate it." She included a picture of her toddler surrounded by the contents of the bag.

Throughout this project, we learned the importance of working with college administrators and each other. Committee members discovered the funding allocation process was complex, and the process of working with administration was a learning experience. We better understood how policies govern the college's overall operation. We grew as scholar-servant-leaders as we learned the value of adaptability. To overcome challenges, team members capitalized on each other's strengths to complete specific tasks. For example, our advertising flyer was designed by a committee member skilled in Adobe Photoshop. Through teamwork, our committee organized and planned a complicated, multi-step project in extraordinary circumstances.