

1. **Provide a brief abstract or summary of your Honors in Action project including the following components: academic research into and analysis of sources related to the Honors Study Topic, action that addresses a need in your community that was discovered through your research and analysis into the Society's current Honors Study Topic, and the impact of your project.**

Our exploration of the Honors Study Topic Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change, began with Honors in Action (HiA) lightning rounds during officer training. We brainstormed topics to investigate further, such as artificial intelligence, ocean pollution, and food deserts. Additional research into food deserts led us to Broad's (2016) *More Than Just Food: Food Justice and Community Change* and Wright's (2016) *Food Deserts: What is the Problem? What is the Solution?* These works evaluated causes of food deserts and directly linked food insecurity in America to socioeconomic disadvantage. Because food security has become a commodity available only to economically privileged individuals, Alpha Nu Sigma chose to research the "Economies of Everything" theme. These sources led us to our research question: how does socioeconomic disadvantage contribute to the availability, access, and use of nutritional food? Research led us to Lowcountry Food Bank (LCFB), a non-profit organization dedicated to relieving food insecurity in local communities, with whom we partnered to bring Broad and Wright's theories to life. We concluded from our research food insecurity and poverty are interlocked in a vicious and ever-growing cycle. Fixing only one part of that cycle does not solve food insecurity, but multiple efforts to assist a food insecure individual can break that cycle if they lead to lifelong and sustainable lifestyle changes. Our chapter used our student survey findings to reveal the extent of food insecurity at our college and to confirm the need for a campus food pantry. Our action components included sorting and packing 230 pounds of food, wrapping four vinyl bins, and collecting twenty-two pounds of food donations for LCFB, as well as presenting research findings on campus to classes. Chapter members learned more about food insecurity and the importance of the relationship between an individual and their community through volunteering and service.

2. Economies of Everything
3. **Summarize your research objectives. In other words, what did your chapter set out to accomplish in terms of its research? (See Research Objectives Rubric in the HiA Rubrics for more detail.)**

Our research objectives were to 1) learn how to identify reliable academic sources through a library workshop, 2) identify eight academic sources that showcased multiple viewpoints of our topic, 3) review local research to identify a need in our community, and 4) establish a college-wide need via a student survey.

4. **Describe your academic research into the Honors Study Topic, your research question(s), your analysis of your research findings, and your research conclusions**

Chapter members attended a workshop with a research librarian, where we searched for academic sources through a virtual library guide tailored specifically to our theme. We developed strong search terms and created APA citations. To identify a need for change in the community, we reviewed food desert maps constructed by the Department of Health and Environmental Control. We were shocked to see large, wide-spread food deserts surrounding

areas close to Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC). Broad's (2016) book and Wright's (2016) article led us to shift our focus to food insecurity, a multifaceted issue caused by poor availability, access, and use of nutritious food. With our newfound focus, we re-examined our research and used tactics learned at international and regional events to develop our research question: how does socioeconomic disadvantage contribute to the availability, access, and use of nutritional food?

Historically, nutrition was a sign of social standing, with upper-class individuals having ample access to a variety of nutritious foods, while lower-class individuals struggled to feed their families. Although transformations over the past few decades have worked to balance these dynamics, they are still seen today. Many families in America find it difficult to get the nutrition they need because of lacking availability, limited access, and inadequate use of nutritious foods. All three of these factors determine the food security status of a family in a cycle called deprivation amplification. Research indicated low-income areas have a higher exposure to fast-food outlets and those unhealthy foods are heavily promoted and much cheaper than their healthy counterparts (Wright et al., 2016). While combating the overexposure to unhealthy foods is one way to overcome food insecurity, research in California, Pennsylvania, and the United Kingdom indicated that without proper resources or nutrition education, unhealthy options will continue to fill the pantry of the food insecure (Broad, 2016; Dubowitz et al., 2015; Loopstra et al., 2019). These options lead people to exceed daily recommended sugar, sodium, and saturated fat intake, which can cause subsequent health issues (Persoskie, 2017). To create real social change to alleviate food insecurity, people need to learn how to choose healthy options over unhealthy ones while still getting their money's worth (Mozaffarian & Ludwig, 2015). From the research, we concluded: 1) food insecurity is a multifaceted issue that is closely linked to socioeconomic status and is driven by deprivation amplification, 2) making nutritious foods more available does not make someone more likely to purchase them, and 3) deprivation amplification may be alleviated by practicing smarter food habits and helping food insecure families find and access available foods.

- 5. List the 8 academic/expert sources that were most enlightening regarding multiple perspectives of the Honors Study Topic theme you selected. Briefly explain why these were the most important sources and what you learned from each of them as you researched your theme. (NOTE: Please use full, formal APA citations for your entry.)**

Broad, G. M. (2016). *More Than Just Food: Food Justice and Community Change*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.

This article asserts poverty is a critical cause of hunger and describes the term deprivation amplification, in which food deserts perpetuate other food access problems. Turning a food desert into a food oasis does not lead to positive health outcomes for disadvantaged communities. This taught us food deserts are a surface-level result of food insecurity and cannot be resolved independently. This led us to further investigate food insecurity locally.

Dieterle, J. M. (2015). *Just Food: Philosophy, Justice, and Food*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

This collection of essays, along with Broad's book, directed us to the social aspect of food insecurity. *Just Food* asserts correcting the supply in food deserts will not solve food insecurity. This book introduced various factors of food insecurity and led us to collaborate with LCFB.

Dubowitz, T., Ghosh-Dastidar, M., Cohen, D. A., Beckman, R., Steiner, E. D., Hunter, G. P., ... Collins, R. L. (2015). Diet And Perceptions Change With Supermarket Introduction In A Food Desert, But Not Because Of Supermarket Use. *Health Affairs (Project Hope)*, 34(11), 1858–1868. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0667

This study evaluated how introducing a full-service supermarket in a food insecure area affected diet and perception of nutrition of individuals. It was a main influence for our initial research on the three facets of food insecurity.

Hamrick, K. S., & Andrews, M. (2016). SNAP Participants' Eating Patterns over the Benefit Month: A Time Use Perspective. *Plus One*, 11(7). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0158422

This article describes how Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients are more likely to report increased food insecurity further into the benefit month and refuted claims that SNAP participation contributes to obesity. Rather, participants are more likely to go without eating and experience energy and nutrient decline. These observations were vital to our project because they countered common stereotypes about benefit recipients.

Loopstra, R., Reeves, A., & Tarasuk, V. (2019). The rise of hunger among low-income households: an analysis of the risks of food insecurity between 2004 and 2016 in a population-based study of UK adults. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 73(7), 668–673. doi: 10.1136/jech-2018-211194

This study indicated those who are income or employment insecure in the UK are most likely to be food insecure. In other high-income nations with a matching definition of food insecurity, similar factors also contribute to hunger. This provided a global perspective.

Persoskie, A., Hennessy, E., & Nelson, W. L. (2017). US Consumers' Understanding of Nutrition Labels in 2013: The Importance of Health Literacy. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 14. doi: 10.5888/pcd14.170066

This article details a scientific investigation of U.S. citizens' understanding of nutrition labels. Many adults did not correctly interpret nutrition labels, resulting in poor health outcomes. Nutrition label understanding depends on academic skills such as reading and mathematics. Without health literacy, consumers lack label understanding to guide proper dietary choices. These findings affirmed the importance of LCFB's nutrition education class.

Wright, J. D., Donley, A. M., Gualtieri, M. C., & Strickhouser, S. M. (2016). Food Deserts: What is the Problem? What is the Solution? *Society*, 53(2), 171–181. doi: 10.1007/s12115-016-9993-8

“Food Deserts” describes the three hypotheses surrounding food deserts, including lack of education, poverty, and culture, and it notes the connection between poor nutrition and health. Food deserts are a phenomenon of food insecurity prevalent in higher income nations, where food is available but nutritious food is not easily obtainable. This helped us create our survey questions.

Yahia, N., Wang, D., Rapley, M., & Dey, R. (2015). Assessment of weight status, dietary habits and beliefs, physical activity, and nutritional knowledge among university students. *Perspectives in Public Health*, 136(4), 231–244. doi: 10.1177/1757913915609945

This study assessed health and nutrition habits among Central Michigan University students. While most were in a healthy weight range with positive dietary habits, students’ nutritional knowledge was lacking. We used this to develop our student survey.

6. Summarize your project action and collaboration objectives. In other words, what did your chapter set out to accomplish in terms of its collaborations and action?

Our collaboration objectives were to 1) work with a local non-profit organization to gain insight into food insecurity and develop an action plan, and 2) collaborate with HGTC’s food pantry coordinators. Our action objectives were to 1) host a food drive on campus, 2) create a presentation for students, and 3) support our campus food pantry.

7. Describe the service or "action" components of this Honors in Action project that were inspired by and directly connected to your Honors Study Topic research. (Action can also include promoting awareness and advocacy.) Be sure to include information about the people and/or groups with whom you collaborated, why you chose these collaborators, and the impact they had on the outcomes of the project.

Our food drive committee met LCFB’s regional food center manager and relations coordinator and toured their facility, discussed volunteer opportunities, and received food drive information. LCFB’s nutrition program coordinator attended our October chapter meeting and explained nutrition education programs offered and laws which protect their contents. LCFB is a SNAP Education Implementing Agency, which means anyone participating in their programs must be SNAP eligible. Because neither HGTC’s Financial Aid office nor our Institutional Research Office could provide data on student SNAP eligibility, we could not video-record, reproduce, or take students through these programs. Our original plan was to share these programs with our student body. Since this was not possible, we modified our initial action objectives. Our collaboration with LCFB was a vital piece of our HiA project. We incorporated service and advocacy through volunteering at LCFB and presented their data and available resources to students.

Our survey committee drafted a ten-question survey with information from our research findings and local statistics from LCFB to conduct during Student Welcome Back Week (SWBW). We worked closely with LCFB’s relations coordinator to develop our questions. She added

three questions specifically about LCFB designed to assess HGTC students' knowledge of local services. We shared a table with LCFB at the SWBW event and collected survey responses.

Our food pantry committee investigated the status of our campus food pantry. We were frustrated to discover the food pantry coordinators no longer worked at the college. Subsequently, we reached out to the Student Affairs Vice President who informed us college administration was in the process of assigning someone to the position, and we would be notified when a decision was made. It severely curtailed our plans to assist food insecure students. We were disheartened because nearly half of our survey respondents reported needing to choose between buying food and paying bills.

Chapter members participated in two different volunteer opportunities with LCFB: food sorting and packaging, and Cooking Matters: At the Store Tour (CMST). Led by a community volunteer, seven members sorted donated food items and re-packaged them for delivery to area food pantries. This allowed us to see firsthand what types of food are donated and procedures used to handle and package them. While at LCFB, a member noticed the collection bins were in disrepair and suggested we decorate a few for our food drive. We partnered with a class from HGTC's Digital Arts program to design vinyl wraps with the LCFB logo on them. The CMST was an interactive nutrition education program run by LCFB's nutrition program coordinator. SNAP eligible families were led through a grocery store and taught healthy portions, reading nutrition labels, and identifying whole-grain products. Attendees could complete training to be a tour guide themselves.

While hunger and food insecurity are global issues, high-income nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States experience hunger without starvation, in which healthy foods are being overshadowed by unhealthy, cheaper, and more accessible alternatives. Because our survey results indicated an overwhelming number of students were interested in learning more about food insecurity, our survey committee created a PowerPoint presentation containing visual graphs of our findings. We provided links to local food pantries and other community resources and the status of our campus food pantry. We collaborated with our Information Systems Department to broadcast five facts about food insecurity in a fact-a-day format on the HGTC website.

8. What are the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project? What impact did your project have on the problem addressed and on opportunities for chapter members and others to grow as scholars and leaders?

To get a diverse sample of survey respondents, we conducted our survey at SWBW, in an online format, and in classes on campus. We received 131 responses, of which 60 were from SWBW, 22 were online submissions, and 49 were in-class. Survey questions assessed nutrition education, community resources, and local food bank statistics. Committee members met with a statistics professor to learn how to analyze our survey data. We were surprised to find 69% of respondents were completely unaware of LCFB and 70% of respondents viewed food security as a privilege in the United States. These results led our survey committee to create a follow-up PowerPoint presentation containing survey results, community contact information, and an update regarding the status of the campus food pantry, which we presented to 30 survey

respondents. We shared our presentation and survey responses with LCFB's nutrition program coordinator. She commented our results were eye-opening, and they were surprised that so many of our students were unaware of LCFB services. While the campus food pantry was not operational by the end of this project, an HGTC Human Services professor was appointed to oversee it. A committee member drafted a pantry flyer for her and college administration to review in anticipation of it re-opening next semester.

Our food drive committee worked with LCFB to get students involved with food security efforts through volunteering, nutrition classes, and a chapter food drive. In a two-hour shift, seven chapter members sorted and packaged 230 pounds of food to be delivered locally. Three members attended a CMST course to observe healthy and cost-effective grocery shopping habits, and one continued to train as a tour guide. She assisted LCFB's nutrition coordinator with two more classes. Those who attended said they learned the relationship between diet and personal health, as well as the importance of reading labels to maximize their food budget. HGTC Digital Arts students designed vinyl wraps for four LCFB collection bins, being careful to follow LCFB branding standards. Though our bins were not ready in time to conduct a campus-wide food drive, chapter members collected 33 pounds of food and delivered it and the bins to LCFB. By lending a helping hand and learning about food insecurity, students became more aware of the positive impacts service and deliberate action can have locally, nationally, and globally.

Chapter officers and members grew as scholars and leaders by conducting academic research, collaborating with non-profit personnel, and keeping a record of the entire HiA process. The depth and complexity of food insecurity and its impact on HGTC students surprised us the most. Many different factors weave together to create the problem, making it more difficult to solve. Our HiA committee acknowledged the need to assess local issues and implement change. Members were transformed through researching, sharing information, and volunteering.