

# POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Point Park University develops food pantry for students in need**

**PITTSBURGH, PA** – Thanks in large part to the efforts of two current students, Point Park University has established a food pantry, recognizing that food insecurity is an issue students face in the region and around the country.

Pioneer Pantry began serving students in need at the beginning of the semester, and dozens of orders already have been filled.

“We have done a lot outreach to determine what services our students need so that they can focus on their studies without distraction,” said Heather Starr Fiedler, chair of the University’s Department of Community Engagement. “Food insecurity is a much more common problem for college students than people realize.”

Students who would like to take advantage of the pantry can simply go to [www.pioneerpantry.org](http://www.pioneerpantry.org) and fill out an online order. The website also tracks inventory, so students can select different categories and weigh their decisions based on what’s currently in stock. Once it’s submitted, volunteers put together the package and alert the student via text when it is ready to pick up on the second floor of Lawrence Hall. Those who take advantage of the pantry can receive up to 10 items twice a month. Students who need to use it more often will not be turned away, but must meet with a counselor so the University can determine if they need further assistance.

Starr Fiedler worked with Keith Paylo, vice president of Student Affairs and dean of students, and students Veronika Panagiotu and Kimberly Prokurat to develop the pantry and get it online as soon as possible.

Panagiotu, who earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Point Park, is currently working on her Ph.D. in Community Engagement at the school. She acts as director of the Pioneer Pantry, and was the primary driver for its creation.

“Research for one of my Community Engagement courses had us go to a food bank, and I was shocked by how many young people were in line waiting for food,” Panagiotu said. “I began to wonder how many students at Point Park could benefit from a pantry.”

As it turned out, Starr Fiedler, Paylo and Prokurat also were determined to establish a food pantry on campus. Panagiotu worked with all three and took the lead to make it a reality.

Three Point Park students developed the Pioneer Pantry's website as part of their senior project course under Professor Mark Voortman, director of the Information Technology Program in the Rowland School of Business.

The Pioneer Pantry is affiliated with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Different groups and schools on campus will host food drives throughout the year, and it is staffed with help from student, faculty and staff volunteers.

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