

Consolidating The Clothing Pantry on Campus

SUNY Potsdam

Emma Norris, Jessica Schmidt, Riot Preston

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



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CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



Background

We need a clothing pantry because of the volume of textile waste accumulated on campus, and the needs of students who cannot afford new clothes.

- A study done by the Urban Institute from 2015-2016 found that full-time students with jobs had a median annual income of \$3,900. And globally, 92 million tons of textile waste is generated per year. With 134 million tons per year expected by the end of 2030
- Other SUNY and CUNY schools have established clothing pantries proving the feasibility and impact of such initiatives.
- According to SUNY Potsdam's AASHE report from 2020, our Waste Minimization and Diversion score was a 4.45/8.00, by improving our clothing pantry we can boost that number up. In the past we've recycled 233.80 Tons and donated or ere-sold 0.43 Tons

At SUNY Potsdam

Many students buy clothes cheaply online or waste money on textiles, many clothes are disposed of and wasted. Clothes closets on campus minimize this waste issue but could be improved upon.

The Professional clothes closet, run by Lisa Stewart that takes donations from students, alumni and community members. The closet operates by loaning out professional clothes to students in need and having them returned to be used again.

The Regular clothes closet, run by Shawn Ramos that also accepts donations from students and acts more as a campus thrift store. Students are free to take unwanted clothes as they please at no cost.

Models for success

Nine SUNY and CUNY schools are addressing the need for clothing pantries by opening dedicated spaces that provide students with access to free or low-cost clothing. The range of clothing varies, and some have professional attire for job interviews, winter clothing for cold weather, and everyday casual wear.

Some common strategies include:

- **Dedicated Spaces:** Schools have set up physical locations on campus where students can access clothing
- **Item Limits and Exchange Policies:** Some institutions, like Queens College, impose limits on how many clothing items students can take per semester but allow them to exchange items if needed.
- **Pre-Ordering Systems:** SUNY Morrisville's Mo's Marketplace uses a credit-based system where students can place orders through an online platform.
- **No-Cost or Low-Cost Models:** While most schools offer clothing for free, Alfred State's Community Needs Hub initially operated as a low-cost thrift store. (Fig 1.)
- **Expanded Offerings:** Many pantries provide not only clothing but also hygiene products, school supplies, and food. For instance, Brooklyn College's NYPIRG Free Store includes canned goods and toiletries in addition to clothing.



Fig 1.

Our solution

Consolidate the existing clothing pantry in Sisson 231 as it is a central location for students to access.

The stakeholders of this project are;

- Students, faculty, and staff in need of low-cost or free clothing.
- Student organizations who can provide volunteer support.
- Administration and facilities management for space and operational support.
- Local businesses and community members can donate clothing, reducing textile waste in the local community.

What needs to be done?;

- Establish operating procedures such as setting rules for item limits, student eligibility, and distribution processes.
- Promote awareness of the pantry through social media, campus emails, and events to ensure its success. (Fig 2)
- Workers/volunteers or a way to run the pantry when no one is there needs to be found.

Who will do it?;

- Student volunteers or interns. They can be responsible for collecting, sorting, and distributing clothing.
- Faculty and staff can provide guidance, support, and promotion of the pantry.
- Student organizations such as the Environmental Club, service organizations, and other clubs who may want to participate can help organize donation drives, outreach, as well as volunteers.
- Community Partners and Donors: Local businesses or alumni may contribute clothing or financial support to sustain the pantry.

Budget

Relatively cheap since most of the project is operated by internships, volunteer work and donated hardware

Cost of minimum wage: 16.50\$/hr

Additional racks or shelving: 0\$-30\$/unit

Functioning Space: 0\$



Fig 2.

References

Shawn Ramos
 Lisa Stewart
 Alfred State College Thrift Store
 ACE (American Council on Education). "Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Look at Low-Income Undergraduates"
 Education Data Initiative. "Financial Aid Statistics"
 Urban Institute, Understanding College Affordability.
 National Library of Medicine, Circular Economy and Sustainability of the Clothing and Textile Industry.