It all started with an FSU student, Nathaniel Tackett, who had no idea what his next meal would be one day during the 2021 spring semester.

He decided to do something about it. A year later, FSU established EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card terminals in qualifying locations on campus to help students facing food insecurity.

Since February, the terminals have been available to students who are eligible for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits.

“It was finals week, and I was really hungry,” fall 2021 graduate Tackett told the Democrat. “I was really hoping that the POD (Provisions on Demand) Market would accept my EBT card so I can get some food to eat, but they didn't. At that time, I didn't have any money in my bank account.”

On March 24, 2021, Tackett sent a message to university administrators, addressing his concern. He also met with the officials to ask if there was any way of putting EBT machines on campus.

Spring 2022 graduate Ashley Gonzalez, who was a student at the time, joined Tackett in supporting the cause. During their time as senators in FSU’s 73rd Student Senate, Tackett and Gonzalez wrote a resolution, which was passed in November.

"As a CARE (Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement) student, I know a large number of the students within our department rely heavily on EBT/SNAP benefits," Gonzalez
said. "In numerous conversations with my peers, I realized how limited our options were on campus and the inequity that stemmed from it."

The CARE program supports first-generation college students who may face challenges while at FSU because of their socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Both students proposed that the university conduct an assessment of possible EBT terminal locations on campus and put forth an effort to make any necessary accommodations to provide the terminals in qualifying locations, according to the resolution.

**Where to find EBT terminals at FSU**

"We are pleased to expand access to healthy food options for our students who are most in need," Vice President for Finance and Administration Kyle Clark said. “We’re also grateful to Aramark for its work to enable Florida State University to become the company’s first university partner to accept EBT/SNAP on campus.”

**Other news from Florida State University:**

Sodexo out, Aramark in as new dining services vendor at Florida State

Picture this: FSU’s New Student Union Project renderings

EBT terminals have not been established at Florida A&M University or Tallahassee Community College.

Currently, the only qualifying location on FSU’s campus holding machines is the POD Market, a convenience store located in the Honors, Scholars and Fellows House with items including fresh produce, frozen food, snacks and drinks.

It is anticipated that the new Student Union convenience store will also accept SNAP shortly after the location opens, according to FSU spokesperson Amy Farnum-Patronis.

“I'm glad that they started doing it,” POD Market Supervisor Scott Provenzano said. “I’ve been on campus for about 15 years, and at my other store (The Trading Post) before they tore down the Student Union, the students used to always ask if we accepted EBT, but we didn’t back then.”

**Effort to get EBT terminals on campus**
To qualify for having an EBT terminal, a location cannot operate as a restaurant, and it must carry a minimum number of staple foods within four major categories:

- Vegetables or fruits
- Dairy products
- Meat, poultry or fish
- Breads or cereals

There must also be three stocked units of three varieties for each category, with a minimum of 36 stocked units.

The university determined the eligibility of the POD Market based on the minimum number of stocking units in the staple food categories that are currently and consistently stocked. An application was then filed with the USDA Food and Nutrition Service to gain approval for the convenience store to accept SNAP funds.

The store was approved to accept the benefits after a period of review by the USDA. After the approval, terminals were ordered and the Seminole Dining team received training on how to use the machines and accept funds, according to Farnum-Patronis.

“It’s amazing to see the fruit of me and Nate’s efforts,” Gonzalez said.

According to USDA, the expansion of SNAP during the COVID-19 national emergency allows post-secondary students to be temporarily eligible for benefits if they are enrolled at least half-time in a higher education institution and are eligible to participate in a state or federally financed work study program during the regular school year, as determined by the institution of higher education.

Students must also meet other eligibility requirements, including resource and income limits.

**Info Box:**

The Department of Student Support and Transitions provides information for students about SNAP benefits. To discuss eligibility, contact the DSST Case Management by calling 850-644-9555 or by emailing casemanagement@fsu.edu.

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