**WESTERN IOWA TECH INCREASES EFFORTS TO
ELLEVIATE STUDENT FOOD INSECURITY AND SUPPORTS COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS**

For Immediate Release
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Western Iowa Tech Community College (WITCC) is intensifying its efforts to alleviate COVID-19 food insecurity for low-income students. With support from a Verizon grant, WITCC will provide Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares, emergency food funding, and access to food panties in rural service areas.

The *Cultivating Student Success* initiative will begin during the Fall 2020 semester. Verizon grant funds will be used to purchase 50 fall Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares from local small-scale farmers. These shares will be distributed to WITCC students in Sioux City, Denison, and Cherokee. These share purchases will increase accessibility to participate in the local food movement and guarantee recipients have access to high quality, locally sourced, fresh produce through biweekly deliveries. Funds will also be used to implement an emergency grocery fund. Grocery store gift cards in varying amounts will be purchased and made available to students in need based on referrals from faculty and student support staff on each of the campuses. A portion of the grant funds will be used to implement food pantries on the Cherokee and Denison campuses- located in rural communities with limited resources. These pantries will serve over 500 WITCC students and faculty by providing non-perishable foods and commonly needed items including personal hygiene products. The funding will specifically help with furnishing and stocking the pantries.

WITCC serves a high number of first-generation college students, dislocated workers, and low- income adults. The College also partners with Verizon to offer Verizon Innovative Learning STEAM program for middle school girls. The *Cultivating Student Success* initiative aims to increase access to fresh produce while simultaneously supporting local farmers, create a safety net for high need students through emergency grocery funds, and respond to the immediate needs of the rural WITCC community by implementing on-campus food pantries in Denison and Cherokee. During this time of uncertainty and change, WITCC is proud to partner with Verizon to address, alleviate, and prevent food insecurity for students. For more information about the grant, contact Dr. Erin Volk at erin.volk@witcc.edu or (712) 274-8733 ext 3208.

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