

Office of the President

TO THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA:

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of March 20, 2025

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BASIC NEEDS ANNUAL REPORT, 2023–24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, the Special Committee on Basic Needs developed systemwide recommendations for policymakers and advocates, leaders, student service practitioners, researchers, and students, as outlined in the report, *The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs*¹. Among those recommendations is an annual report to the Regents discussing progress toward specific goals. This report provides systemwide updates related to these goals from academic year 2023–24.

In 2023–24, over 70,000 students received critical supportive services at basic needs centers, and over 17,000 CalFresh applications were submitted systemwide. Nearly \$3.5 million dollars were provided in emergency grants. Peer-to-peer support has also been critical, with over 400 students employed in campus basic needs centers. Important lessons have been learned in the last several years as UC has worked to reach the Regents' aspirational goals of cutting student food and housing insecurity by half. Among the most important of these lessons are the limited capacity of basic needs centers to provide both emergency and preventative programs; that the scope of student food and housing insecurity surpasses UC's ability to eliminate it independently; the essential nature of collaborations with State, community, and segment partners; and the critical insights that data provides. UC has responded to these challenges by improving services and supports, advocating at State and national levels, and leading the way in research and training.

BACKGROUND

Since 2020, the UC Basic Needs Annual Report to the Regents has included updates on recommendations for policymakers and advocates, University leaders, student service practitioners, researchers, and students. UC continues to make progress in each of these areas. The following summarizes key findings and select highlights from 2023–24, while the attached full annual report provides more information and details of progress toward goals.

¹ *The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs*, November 2020, <https://basicneeds.ucop.edu/files/uc-next-phase-of-improving-student-basic-needs.pdf>

Key Findings

- Student Support: In the 2023–24 academic year, UC basic needs centers served over 70,000 students, submitted 17,000 CalFresh applications, and provided nearly \$3.5 million in emergency grants. Peer-to-peer support remains critical, with more than 400 students employed in basic needs programs.
- Food and Housing Insecurity: Undergraduate food insecurity rose from 43 percent in 2022 to 48 percent in 2024, while graduate student food insecurity increased from 21 percent in 2021 to 35 percent in 2023. However, housing insecurity has remained relatively stable. Undergraduate housing insecurity has remained between seven and eight percent for the last four years, while graduate student housing insecurity stayed between three and five percent from 2021 to 2023. Effective campus interventions and COVID-19 pandemic-era housing protections likely played important roles.
- Disproportionate Impact: Historically underserved populations, including parenting students, international students, students of color, Pell Grant recipients, and LGBTQ+ students experience food and housing insecurity at higher rates.

Progress on Recommendations

- Expanded Financial Aid and Advocacy: UC successfully advocated for increased State funding and raising Middle Class Scholarship support to \$219 million. The total UC need-based grants awarded to California students exceeded \$1 billion for the first time. As lower-resourced students are more likely to experience basic needs challenges, need-based aid is important for providing students with the means to pay bills like food and housing.
- CalFresh and Public Benefits: Systemwide partnerships increased student access to CalFresh, yet eligibility restrictions continue to exclude many students from essential food and housing assistance.
- Holistic Basic Needs Approach: UC continues to push for a broader definition of basic needs in State Budget Act language that goes beyond food and housing to better align with student realities. In 2024, Assembly Bill 2033 passed, which codified that “‘basic needs services and resources’ includes, but is not limited to, housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, childcare, and mental health services” for all three segments of California public higher education. It also expanded access to Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) on campuses.
- Data-Driven Interventions: Enhanced data collection efforts since 2019 have led to better targeted basic needs services. Ongoing collaborations with State agencies and community partners have also improved resource options, outreach strategies, and student CalFresh participation rates.

- Regional Partnerships: UC has strengthened alliances with the California State University, California Community Colleges, and community partners to advocate for policy changes supporting student well-being at state and national levels.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Funding Limitations: Despite the State allocation of \$19.5 million for basic needs and housing programs, funding remains insufficient to fully address student food and housing insecurity. Additional investments in preventative measures, such as housing subsidies, are recommended.
- Barriers to Public Benefits: Students face categorical ineligibility or additional criteria for key assistance programs like CalFresh and Housing Choice Vouchers. Policy reforms are needed to expand access to these vital resources.
- Rising Cost of Living: The increasing cost of housing, food, and other essential needs continues to strain students financially, necessitating stronger financial aid policies, institutional support, and public programs to meet the true cost of living.
- Mental Health Integration: Addressing food and housing insecurity is deeply linked to student mental health. Expanding mental health resources alongside basic needs programs is critical for student success.

ATTACHMENTS

[Basic Needs Annual Report, March 2025](#)