

UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

Basic Needs Annual Report

To The Regents of the University of California March 2025



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KEY TO ACRONYMS

AB	Assembly Bill
CCAMPIS	Child Care Access Means Parents In School
CCC	California Community Colleges
CDSS	California Department of Social Services
CEJA	Center for Economic Justice in Action
CHC	Center for Healthy Communities
CHEBNA	California Higher Education Basic Needs Alliance
COA	Cost of Attendance
CPL	California Policy Lab
CSU	California State University
EBT	Electronic Benefits Transfer
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
HCV	Housing Choice Voucher
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
IRAP	Institutional Research and Planning
NCCSEN	National Coalition for College Student Essential Needs
SB	Senate Bill
SFS	Student Financial Support
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SPARK	Student Parent Action through Research Knowledge
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
UC	University of California
UCGSES	University of California Graduate Student Experience Survey
UCUES	University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of California (UC) has been at the forefront of student basic needs initiatives for the last fifteen years, providing State and national leadership, elevating student voices, producing groundbreaking research, and developing promising practices. In 2020, the Regents' Special Committee on Student Basic Needs produced systemwide recommendations for improving these basic needs efforts, including an annual report to the Regents. These recommendations are outlined in the report, *The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs*.¹ The following report provides systemwide updates on progress toward these goals, with highlights from Academic Year 2023–24.

UC campuses have made progress toward achieving these goals. 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 striven 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 on research and training.

¹[The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs](#)

BACKGROUND

The University of California has established itself as a national leader in student basic needs, producing some of the most promising practices, innovative programs, and informative research. Input from UC students, staff, and leaders has also been instrumental in crafting progressive legislation that supports efforts to reduce student food and housing insecurity. In 2020, the UC Board of Regents set the aspirational goal of reducing student food and housing insecurity by 50 percent by 2025. The University has made significant progress in implementing measures to support students' basic needs while learning more about the challenges of achieving such a goal within the context of broader economic challenges. Annual funding from the State to support student food and housing efforts has been instrumental to this process. The University receives \$19.5 million in ongoing state funding to support student basic needs and rapid rehousing efforts. All ten UC campuses have well-developed basic needs centers with various services, including robust CalFresh outreach and application assistance.

UC supports a holistic view of basic, or essential, needs, recognizing that students' fundamental needs are often dependent on one another. Students' housing costs, for instance, affect what resources they have left for food, transportation, childcare, or other essentials needs. Students also need safe places to study, sleep, care for their hygiene, and attend to their mental health.² The ability of students to fulfill their basic needs affects their mental health, physical health, and academic performance.^{3,4,5} The Intersegmental Working Group on Basic Needs, comprising representatives from UC, the California Community Colleges (CCC), and the California State University (CSU) system, met in 2021 to provide recommendations to the Governor's Council for Post-Secondary Education.⁶ From these discussions and after input from UC student leaders, researchers, and staff,⁷ UC established the following systemwide definition of basic needs:

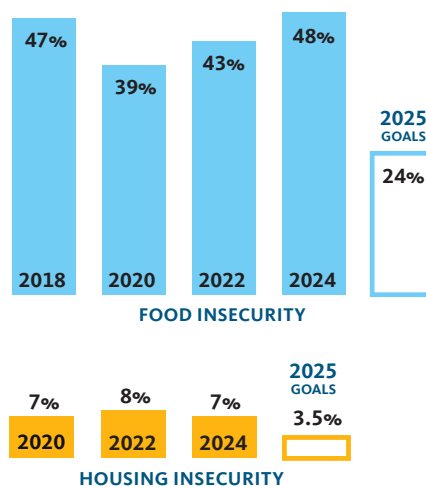
An ecosystem that supports financial stability by ensuring equitable access to nutritious and sufficient food; safe, secure,

and adequate housing (to sleep, study, cook, and shower); healthcare to promote sustained mental and physical well-being; affordable transportation; resources for personal hygiene care; and emergency needs for students with dependents.

2025 BASIC NEEDS GOALS

The benchmark for the UC Regents' aspirational goal of cutting student food and housing insecurity in half by 2025 was the 2018 student experience survey results. Ongoing food and housing insecurity rates are estimated with results from the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES)⁸ and the UC Graduate Student Experience Survey (UCGSES),⁹ which are administered in alternating years systemwide. The last UCUES was administered in 2024, and the last UCGSES was administered in 2023. The food security questions are based on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Six-Item Food Security Survey Module.¹⁰ UC developed housing security questions based on the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness.¹¹ Figures 1 and 2 show the progress made toward food and housing insecurity goals for undergraduate and graduate students.

Figure 1: Undergraduate food and housing insecurity, 2018–2024 *Source: UCUES*



²Redefining Basic Needs for Higher Education: It's More Than Minimal Food and Housing According to California University Students

³Food Insecurity in Higher Education: A Contemporary Review of Impacts and Explorations of Solutions

⁴Pathways from Food Insecurity to Health Outcomes among California University Students

⁵No food for thought: Food insecurity is related to poor mental health and lower academic performance among students in California's public university system

⁶The Opportunity to Strengthen Basic Needs Supports for California's Post-Secondary Students through Partnership and Shared Accountability

⁷Redefining Student Basic Needs for Higher Education: A Study to Understand and Map University of California Basic Needs

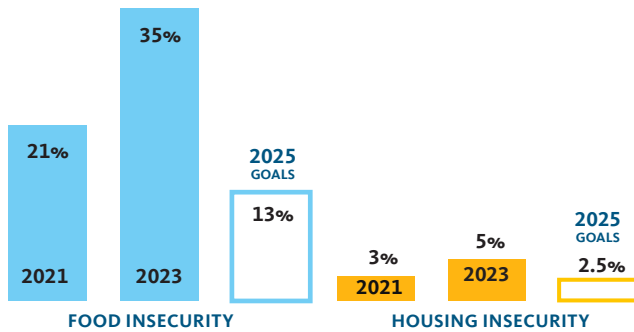
⁸UCUES Survey Instrument

⁹UCGSES Survey Instrument

¹⁰Six-item Short Form Food Security Survey Module (usda.gov): UC measuring-food-insecurity.pdf

¹¹42 USC CHAPTER 119, SUBCHAPTER VI, Part B: Education for Homeless Children and Youths

Figure 2: Graduate student food and housing insecurity, 2021–2023 *Source: UCGSES*



Undergraduate food insecurity increased by five percentage points between 2022 and 2024 as pandemic era emergency aid programs and expanded CalFresh eligibility ended, from 43 to 48 percent of respondents. Between 2021 and 2023, graduate food insecurity increased by 14 percentage points, from 21 to 35 percent. Food insecurity is reflected in other populations in the post-pandemic era as well. According to the California Student Aid Commission, 66 percent of students in California are food insecure.¹² Nationally, nearly four million students are food insecure.¹³ Overall food insecurity rates for U.S. households also rose over a two-year period, from 10.2 percent in 2021 to 13.5 percent in 2023. Undergraduate food insecurity rates rebounded to prepandemic levels in 2024, and graduate student food insecurity rates increased significantly between 2021 and 2023. Housing insecurity, however, has remained relatively stable for both undergraduate and graduate students.¹⁴

Historically underserved populations are disproportionately affected by housing and food insecurities, experiencing them at higher rates than other populations. These include parenting and international students, students of color, Pell recipients, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

ANNUAL DATA COLLECTION

Campus basic needs programs collect annual data on the number of unique students served across their food and housing efforts, as well as on the programs their centers provide. This information is then reported to the UC Office of the President. Figure 3 illustrates the number of unique students served at each campus between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. These food and housing programs included, but were not limited to:

- CalFresh application and outreach assistance
- Food assistance for CalFresh-ineligible populations
- Food pantries and food distributions
- Meal vouchers or grocery cards
- Emergency housing
- Crisis grants

Figure 3: Unique Students Served by Campus

Campus Total	Unique Students Served*	Total Student Contacts**
Berkeley	7,896	26,711
Davis	12,569	94,673
Irvine	7,016	31,962
Los Angeles	8,322	66,830
Merced	3,822	13,906
Riverside	5,456	37,874
San Diego	7,248	41,684
San Francisco	2,270	29,632
Santa Barbara	10,971	79,053
Santa Cruz	8,053	35,420
Total	73,623	457,745

Source: Campus 2023–24 annual basic needs and rapid rehousing reports

*The number of unique students served is calculated through a variety of data collection methods, most commonly the number of individual student identification cards that have been “swiped” at basic-needs centers. These represent the total number of individual students served. Due to differing data collection methods and data infrastructure available across campuses, minor duplication may occur.

**Student contacts represent the total number of student identification card “swipes,” or the total number of times students were served by basic needs

¹²Food and Housing Basic Needs Survey 2023

¹³Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Estimated Eligibility and Receipt among Food Insecure College Students | U.S. GAO

¹⁴The UCUES began including housing insecurity questions in 2020.

The following includes additional basic needs program data for 2023–24, also collected annually:

- Number of students who received emergency basic needs grants: 2,760
- Total amount of emergency basic needs grants: \$3,489,317
- Number of students served by a UC campus food pantry: 40,593
- Number of students served by UC food distribution sites: 26,811
- Number of students who received UC meal vouchers: 9,376
- Number of students who received food/grocery cards: 4,902
- Number of CalFresh prescreens: 52,928
- Number of submitted CalFresh applications: 17,281
- FTE of professional staff at campus basic needs centers: 56
- Number of student staff at campus basic needs centers: 422

RE-EVALUATING GOALS AND BENCHMARKS

Over the last fifteen years, efforts to address food and housing insecurity have made progress toward supporting students' immediate basic needs challenges. In 2023–24, campuses served over 70,000 unique students through basic needs services and campus supports. UC is also dedicated to reducing the stigma associated with accessing services and ensuring that students are met with care and dignity. Although campuses are serving a high number of students across the system, what we are learning from practitioners and researchers is that these variations in, particularly, food insecurity are likely due to a combination of economic factors, the ending of pandemic-era relief programs, and the inability of federal financial aid to keep pace with rapidly rising costs. Also, as living costs rose in recent years, emergency relief programs associated with the pandemic sunsetted.¹⁵ Housing insecurity rates have remained relatively stable, likely due to successful campus basic needs programs, housing protections over the pandemic and students' prioritization of housing over food. This prioritization, then, leads to higher food insecurity levels.¹⁶

Additionally, overall food and housing security rates do not convey all the significant food or housing insecurity improvements for individual students. For instance, a student may progress from having very low food security to low security (indicating greater access to nutritious food) due to campus services and supports, but they would still be categorized as food insecure. It is important to continue assessing progress toward reducing food and housing insecurity.

Considering all that the UC system and the broader higher education community have learned, a more refined approach is necessary to capture students' lived experiences and practitioners' inputs more accurately. For instance, basic needs programs' effects on student well-being—such as stress levels, safety, and feelings of belongingness—are important indicators of program success. Students becoming more aware of available resources and/or gaining greater financial stability also indicate positive impacts. As the system continues to improve its data collection methods and accumulates more longitudinal data, it will also be important to consider retention, academic performance, and graduation rates for those who access services over time.

LESSONS LEARNED: REDUCING STUDENT FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITIES

Years of basic needs work have allowed the UC community to learn important lessons about the successes, challenges, and limitations of available resources. Among the most important of these was differentiating between emergency and preventative services.

Emergency resources address immediate health and safety concerns. For example, a student sleeping outside in a nearby park or their car is experiencing immediate threats to their health and safety. A student struggling but so far able to pay their rent in an otherwise safe, adequate, and fixed space does not have an emergency need. Such a student would be unable to access most emergency housing programs until they became homeless or until loss of housing was imminent.

A preventative approach to the latter student's situation is ideal so that the student would not need to experience the displacement or stress of losing their housing. Additionally, staff would not need to engage the significant time and resources required to attend to emergencies. One of the most effective preventative approaches is a housing subsidy. These subsidies help close the gap between the cost of housing and what a person can actually afford. They are also usually less expensive and employ a longer-term strategy than emergency services. However, campuses lack adequate funding to cover both emergency resources that address immediate health and safety concerns as well as homeless prevention programs such as these. Additionally, state basic needs funding restrictions have historically emphasized emergency over preventative efforts.

Students also experience significant barriers to accessing community resources and public benefits that could stabilize their situations before emergency interventions become necessary. Community-based organizations often do not have the capacity to serve students who need to access their basic needs programs, and many deem students a lower priority than other populations. To complicate matters, college students are categorically ineligible or must meet additional criteria to qualify for public benefits that could help, including CalFresh (the California State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP) and Housing and

¹⁵See [Basic Needs Annual Regents Report, January 2024](#)

¹⁶[Redefining Basic Needs for Higher Education: It's More Than Minimal Food and Housing According to California University Students](#)

Urban Development (HUD) programs. CalFresh provides monthly benefits to purchase food, and HUD programs, such as the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV), provide affordable housing. Due to this combination of factors, campus basic needs programs must devote most of their funding to solving emergency situations rather than investing in preventative and sustainable approaches that would be more efficient and more effective in the long run.

Recent research has verified the effectiveness of these preventative approaches. Unaffordable housing and limited housing assistance programs are the primary causes of homelessness.¹⁷ Housing subsidies, particularly in combination with supportive services like case management—including rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing—are significantly cheaper and more effective than emergency shelters or transitional housing. Savings come in immediate programming costs and reduced use of other emergency and public services, such as hospital emergency rooms, in-patient hospital stays, detoxification centers, and jails. Indeed, an Urban Institute comparative analysis of housing programs found that preventative programs were over five times less expensive than emergency shelters for families. Participants in subsidized housing programs also experience better health outcomes and higher incomes and are more likely to find permanent housing than those who received traditional, emergency-based homeless services.¹⁸ Eliminating eligibility barriers to HUD programs based on student status would be an important step to making their critical resources available. Increasing funding to both HUD and campus basic needs centers would provide these programs with the resources they need to offer emergency and longer-term, more effective solutions to housing insecurity and homelessness.

STATE, FEDERAL, AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL

UC cannot independently eliminate food and housing insecurity for its students, nor are UC students the only ones who experience them. While a college degree is the most consistently effective path to improving socioeconomic mobility,¹⁹ achieving this task has been made more difficult for millions nationwide by the struggle to provide the most essential needs for their households. The scale and scope of the problem go beyond what UC can solve on its own.

Campus basic needs programs have responded to this

challenge by expertly leveraging state resources, collaborating with community organizations to provide students with more services, and creating innovative programs to address regional needs. This has been effective at connecting students with resources. The California Policy Lab (CPL) found that 14.8 percent of undergraduate UC students and 8.6 percent of UC graduate students participated in CalFresh in Academic Year 2021–22. This was more than triple the participation rate of undergraduates and more than eight times the participation rate of graduate students in 2016–17.^{20,21} This was largely due to the rise in campus outreach and application assistance made possible by State funding and broader research and media coverage on student eligibility. Basic needs centers also collaborated with dozens of community organizations systemwide to provide students with more food, housing, and other critical services. Doing so enabled them to target limited State funding and amplify the effects of both campus and community programs.

At the federal level, UC advocated for federal financial aid and other assistance programs, including the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant to support parenting students and for expanding student eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These combined efforts have been pivotal in addressing food and housing insecurity and educating the public on these issues. However, advocacy efforts have not gained enough support to eliminate basic needs struggles.

DATA IS KEY FOR TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

Robust data have provided important information to better inform basic needs initiatives. Campus basic needs centers collect data on outreach, services, and supports, as well as the total number of students served in their food and housing programs. This information has been essential to understanding the scope of basic needs insecurities, improving programs, and developing innovative responses. At least 50,000 students have accessed basic needs resources systemwide every year since 2020, with last year's counts reaching over 70,000. This indicates not only the high need for those programs, but also successful outreach. Data and feedback from basic needs staff also determined that while food programs are more commonly accessed than housing programs, housing is just as critical—and sometimes more so—to the health and safety of our students.²²

¹⁷Homelessness in the US - National Coalition for the Homeless; Income - National Alliance to End Homelessness

¹⁸Ending Chronic Homelessness Saves Taxpayers Money; Rapid Re-housing's Role in Responding to Homelessness

¹⁹Education pays : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

²⁰CalFresh Participation Among California's College Students: A 2021-22 School Year Update

²¹California Community College and University of California student participation in CalFresh food benefits

²²Redefining Basic Needs for Higher Education: It's More Than Minimal Food and Housing According

In 2024, CPL released an expansion to their study estimating the percentage of students participating in CalFresh. Their latest analysis estimates the number of likely eligible students who actually received CalFresh benefits. Twenty-two percent of likely eligible UC undergraduates and 27 percent of likely eligible UC graduate students participated in CalFresh in fall 2019.²³ Twenty-four percent of eligible undergraduates participated in spring 2022. The CDSS CalFresh Student Data Dashboard also indicates that CDSS denies more than half of all student applications statewide.²⁴ At the same time, campus basic needs staff have emphasized that students often have difficulty obtaining all of the necessary documents, getting in touch with the right CDSS staff, and receiving clear and timely information on their cases.^{25,26}

Together, this indicates that more robust technical and application assistance supported by CDSS and different forms of outreach may be necessary to increase participation rates. As a result of these lessons learned, University leaders are working closely with CPL and CDSS to develop data-sharing agreements that would inform efforts to improve CalFresh outreach and participation.

²³[Filling the Gap: CalFresh Eligibility Among University of California and California Community College Students - California Policy Lab](#)

²⁴[CF dashboard - PUBLIC | Tableau Public](#)

²⁵Feedback from basic needs staff and AB 1326 legislative report see [Templates & Resources - CalFresh Outreach](#).

²⁶[SNAP Student Rules Are Not So Snappy: Lessons Learned From a Qualitative Study of California County Agency Workers](#)

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

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 sections provide highlights from 2024, while Appendix A provides a more detailed summary of progress toward these goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND ADVOCATES

Student basic needs challenges can be ameliorated with funding, including student financial aid and access to supportive programs. Recommendations for policymakers and advocates focus on increasing student financial aid and removing unnecessary barriers to financial aid (Priority 1.1 and 1.2); updating the State definition of basic needs to align with the holistic approach reflected in UC's definition (Priority 1.3); and continuing existing efforts, and improving partnerships with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to support CalFresh outreach and application assistance (Priority 1.4). This section highlights efforts toward these goals in 2023–24. See Appendix A for detailed descriptions of each goal.

Financial Aid

Priorities 1.1 and 1.2: Financial stability underpins basic needs security—if students can afford their living costs, their risks of food and housing insecurity diminish. Direct aid is one of the most effective ways to support low-resourced students.

UC's Student Financial Support (SFS) regularly reassesses its students' estimated total cost of attendance (COA) by administering cost of attendance surveys for undergraduate and graduate students. The COA is the context for UC's financial aid programs and how it assesses affordability, making accuracy important. SFS has increased the COA between 5 and 9 percent each year for the past three years, as survey results show that UC students experienced inflation like the rest of the country.

Both the State and UC have increased the amount of financial aid provided to students in recent years, as well as improved access to funds. The University has also been a long-standing advocate of student-centered initiatives, such as Double the Pell, reforming the Middle-Class Scholarship, and improving

the CalGrant program. The following section provides highlights of these efforts in 2023–24.

- UC returns a proportion of revenue generated from tuition increases to University financial aid programs. With the Regents' approval of the Tuition Stability Plan, this proportion increased by 12 percent, from 33 to 45 percent. In 2023–24, the total UC need-based grants awarded to California students exceeded \$1 billion for the first time.
- The Middle Class Scholarship provided \$219 million to 81,000 UC undergraduates in 2023–24, an increase of \$68 million from the previous year.

UC students and financial aid administrators faced formidable challenges in 2023–24 when the federal administration did not smoothly execute the rollout of the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application. Students and parents experienced significant challenges in applying for financial aid, and campuses, in turn, had difficulty providing information about available financial aid in a timely way. The UC system adapted by delaying deadlines for financial aid, admissions, and fee payments, while also working directly with affected students. Most financial aid was disbursed on time, except for students who had been unable to resolve their FAFSA application problems. For these students, campus financial aid offices fronted anticipated funding and eliminated payment deadlines.

Expanding the Statewide Definition of Basic Needs

Priority 1.3: The California State Legislature has historically restricted the definition of basic needs for the UC system to food, housing and most recently, hygiene. However, this is not reflective of the lived experiences of students. UC has consistently educated lawmakers and other policy decision-makers that students' basic needs are interdependent and that recognizing only food and housing security fails to represent students' lived experiences accurately. If a student is cost-burdened due to housing, for instance—or uses 30 percent or more of their income to pay for housing expenses²⁷—this will likely create budgetary shortfalls with other needs, such as food, transportation, and technology.

In 2024, historic Assembly Bill (AB) 2033 was passed, which specifies that “[b]asic needs services and resources’ includes, but is not limited to, housing, food, clothing, feminine hygiene,

²⁷Nearly Half of Renter Households Are Cost-Burdened

diapers, technology, childcare, and mental health services and resources” for all three State public higher education segments. Previously, this did not apply to UC. This is an important step to ensuring that students’ needs are reflected in legislative language. However, Assembly Bill (AB) 2033 does not provide for additional State basic needs funding, nor does it change funding restrictions. UC continues to educate legislators, policy and research organizations, and advocacy leaders about the importance of creating funding guidelines that support students’ holistic basic needs.

Expanding Student Eligibility For Public Benefits

Public benefit programs such as CalFresh, HUD housing subsidies, and the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) have enormous potential to address the gap between students’ needs and available resources. However, students face significant and targeted restrictions when qualifying for benefits. Particularly considering historic rises in the cost of living, these resources are more necessary than ever. UC has made several steps to encourage lawmakers and CDSS to expand student eligibility for public benefits. UC’s new systemwide basic needs consortium, the UC Essential Needs Consortium (UCENC), housed at the Center for Economic Justice in Action (CEJA) at UC Santa Cruz, has already made important contributions to furthering these efforts. Community and higher education partners have also provided important collaborations.

Priority 1.4: The UC community has continued to invest in deepening collaborations with the California Department of Social Services, both on campus and systemwide levels, in order to improve student access to public programs, including CalFresh. In 2024, UC also partnered with the USDA to increase access to nutritious food on UC campuses. This section highlights campus and systemwide efforts in 2023–24.

- In 2024, UC, CSU, and CCC collaborated with the Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) at CSU Chico State to complete a systemwide survey to assess the effectiveness of CDSS county liaisons with campuses. Passed in 2021, [AB 1326](#) requires all California county human services agencies to assign a staff person as a liaison to county higher education institutions. The survey revealed that campus staff’s knowledge of CalFresh and MediCal increased after a liaison was assigned, but the same was not true for CalWORKs, the State Temporary Assistance to Need Families (TANF) program. Additionally, the level and quality of interactions with liaisons, as well as the liaisons’ knowledge of public programs and capacity to serve the campuses, varied.²⁸

- Led by UCENC at CEJA, UC partnered with the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) in 2024 to establish a Multi-Store Owner (MSO) contract. This simplifies the authorization and renewal of UC self-operated retail campus sites to accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Retail or benefits provided by CalFresh or CalWORKs. (The previous process had been a barrier for store owners.) UC is the first higher education institution in the country to develop an MSO contract with USDA FNS. As of December 2024, UC has 19 active onsite EBT retail locations and three more planned for spring 2025. CEJA and UCOP Procurement are providing ongoing technical assistance to campuses.
- UCENC staff at CEJA took leadership roles in redesigning the California Department of Social Services Student Eligibility Decision Tree, now operational across all California counties. This model has been shared with national partners to support the development of comparable tools.
- The UC Social Services Community of Practice, led by campus basic needs staff, submitted over 60 feedback points to CDSS for the final version of the newly published CDSS Student Handbook 2.0. This handbook provides guidelines on student CalFresh eligibility. Counties have historically been inconsistent in their procedures around student rules.²⁹ The handbook is operational across all California counties and has been shared with national partners to inform and develop comparable tools.
- Nine campuses participate in the CalFresh Outreach Subaward, a contract administered by CHC that allows institutions to receive additional federal funds to support CalFresh outreach. UCOP will begin participating in 2025.
- UC representatives continue providing critical insights during the quarterly statewide CalFresh Student Eligibility Workgroup facilitated by CDSS. These convenings among higher education, community organizations, advocates, and CDSS promote efficient statewide communication and problem-solving that address unintended consequences of CalFresh student rules, eligibility screenings, and application interfaces like BenefitsCal.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY LEADERS

The guiding recommendations for university leaders include adjusting COA to reflect the actual cost of living (Priority 2.1); advocating for increased mental health funding to provide mental health supports for students impacted by the stressors of struggling with basic needs (Priority 2.2); strengthening alliances with community partners and higher education segments to strengthen regional approaches (Priority 2.3); and prioritizing basic needs for historically underserved

²⁸For a detailed report on UC survey results, see [Legislative reports | UCOP](#). For CHC’s intersegmental report, see the [CalFresh Outreach Resource Hub](#).

²⁹According to [Helping College Students Get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Facilitators and Barriers to Students Accessing the Federal Nutrition Assistance Program](#) as well as feedback from basic needs staff and students over several years.

populations (Priority 2.4). This section highlights key updates made towards Priorities 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 in 2023–24. See Appendix A for detailed descriptions of each goal.

Advocating for Mental Health Funding

Priority 2.2: When students struggle to meet their basic needs, it can lead to negative mental health markers and decreased academic performance, including depression, anxiety, and lower grade point averages.³⁰ In 2022–23, The University successfully advocated for an increase of \$1 million in State mental health funds to support UC’s systemwide efforts to meet the demand, as well as an increase of \$200,000 in rapid rehousing funds as part of mental health efforts. UC has continued to progress in supporting its students’ intersectional mental health and basic needs.

- [Senate Bill \(SB\) 326, the Behavioral Health Services Act](#), passed the primary election with UC’s support. SB 326 expands the distribution of mental health funding, services, and resources.
- UC is partnering with the Department of Healthcare Services to implement the multipayer fee schedule, which enables campuses to receive State reimbursements from behavioral health services provided to students regardless of health insurance payer. Insurance complications have been a concern for students and practitioners. This initiative allows for greater student access to mental health services.
- UCOP hosted its second annual systemwide Student Well-Being Leadership Summit in October 2024. This summit convenes basic needs, mental health, and well-being leaders—including students—from across the system for the purposes of developing collaborative strategies and deepening partnerships.

Creating Regional Approaches

Priority 2.3: UC prioritizes regional approaches to basic needs and develops or maintains mutually beneficial collaborations with partners in CSU and CCC, community organizations, philanthropic organizations, and researchers to improve basic needs efforts and inform the broader public about student basic needs.

- In 2024, UCOP basic needs leads collaborated with CHC at CSU Chico State to implement and analyze results from the survey required by AB 1326. This survey evaluates the effectiveness of county human services agency liaisons to campuses.³¹ As CSU and CCC also worked with CHC on this survey, insights were gathered from and shared among all three segments.

- UCOP and UCENC leads meet regularly with the California Higher Education Basic Needs Alliance (CHEBNA), a trisegmental alliance with basic needs leaders across UC, CSU, and CCC. In 2024, UC hosted CHEBNA’s first in-person conference since the COVID-19 pandemic, working closely with campus and central office representatives from CSU and CCC. CHEBNA has begun planning the 2026 trisegmental summit, which will be hosted by CCC.
- Representatives from UCOP and UC campuses participate in the Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative, a national group of leaders and subject matter experts on student parents that share knowledge, best practices, and policy experiences.
- The UC Parenting and Pregnant Students Community of Practice, facilitated by UCOP, is a monthly systemwide convening to support student parenting initiatives. This community has engaged with national and state leaders to provide insights and mutual learning opportunities.
- In 2024, UCOP and CEJA began hosting regular systemwide calls to encourage communication and information sharing among campus Basic Needs directors and Financial Aid Directors. CEJA also launched new systemwide basic needs education and training workshops and a pilot grant program.
- UC Merced and UC Riverside are collaborating with local community colleges while leveraging State funds to create joint housing and increase community college transfer rates to UC. UC Merced’s project is expected to provide 488 beds once it is completed in 2027.³² UC Riverside’s project is expected to provide 1,500 beds and be completed by 2026.
- UC leaders regularly meet with federal and State basic needs groups, including the new National Coalition for College Student Essential Needs (NCCSEN) facilitated by the Hope Center. NCCSEN includes over 150 community leaders from across the United States. UC leaders also participate in the quarterly Student Eligibility Working Group hosted by CDSS, monthly statewide meetings on CalFresh efforts hosted by CHC, monthly national meetings supporting parenting students, and ongoing conversations with organizations dedicated to improving student basic needs.

Prioritizing Basic Needs for Historically Underserved Populations

Priority 2.4: Basic needs insecurities are not experienced at the same rate and in the same ways by all populations. Historically underserved populations face additional barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Pell recipients and student parents, along with first-generation,

³⁰No food for thought: Food insecurity is related to poor mental health and lower academic performance among students in California’s public university system

³¹For a detailed report on UC survey results, see [Legislative reports | UCOP, 2024-25](#). For CHC’s intersegmental report, see the [CalFresh Outreach Resource Hub](#).

³²UC Merced, Merced College to Provide New Housing for Transfer Students | [Newsroom](#)

people of color, international, undocumented, and nonbinary students, are more likely to be food and housing insecure.

Providing resources for historically underserved populations requires systems to evaluate common access or eligibility barriers and mitigate them. UCOP distributes Innovation Awards to all campuses, the amounts of which are determined by an equity index. Campuses are required to use these funds in efforts that primarily support historically underserved or marginalized populations.

However, basic needs centers have shown their dedication to supporting these students through various methods. For instance, all campuses have basic needs programs with low entry barriers—or limited requirements to participate—in order to encourage those who may be affected by stigma, prejudice, or practical challenges in obtaining paperwork to participate. Examples of low-barrier programs that reduce stigma and encourage participation include food pantries, UC Santa Cruz’s nontransactional café, a free text messaging service at UC Merced that notifies students of leftover food from campus catering events, and UC Berkeley’s partnership with Berkeley Dining to recover dining hall food and package ready-to-eat meals for students with food-access and time-poverty challenges.

Basic needs staff evaluate the holistic needs of each individual whenever possible to match them with culturally appropriate and functional resources. They also collaborate with other student services and campus case management to provide better coordinated care while reducing redundant appointments and paperwork. Basic needs centers also have a long history of working with community organizations and financial aid to provide students with flexible emergency resources and a plan to mitigate food and housing insecurity. In 2023–24, approximately 2,760 students received emergency basic needs grants, and 62 percent of those recipients were members of historically underserved populations.

The University has also advocated for initiatives that would better meet the needs of underserved populations at State and federal levels. Among the most important is the UC’s longstanding advocacy to expand student eligibility for CalFresh and SNAP. Since students are categorically ineligible, they only qualify under certain exemptions. They are also often required to produce documentation in excess of federal requirements. At the federal level, UC advocated CCAMPIS, the only federal grant program dedicated to providing college parenting students—the most housing-insecure, and second most food-insecure, students at UC—with childcare so they can go to class, work, and study. In 2024, new CCAMPIS grants were halted, and the program was considered for elimination. Through united advocacy from community, State, federal and higher education institutions, however, CCAMPIS remained intact.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT SERVICE PRACTITIONERS

The three recommendations for student service practitioners focus on maximizing CalFresh enrollment for all eligible students (Priority 3.1); ensuring that food-insecure students ineligible for CalFresh still have access to nutritious food (Priority 3.2); and sharing promising practices in basic needs while coordinating strategies for improving basic needs among campus and intersegmental partners (Priority 3.3). This section provides key updates on Priorities 3.1 and 3.2 in 2023-2024. See Appendix A for detailed descriptions of each goal.

Maximizing CalFresh Enrollment

Priority 3.1: UC Basic Needs Centers submitted approximately 17,281 CalFresh applications, either directly through their programs or via a referral link in 2023–24. This is an increase of over 1,000 applications from last year. Approximately 52,928 CalFresh pre-screens were performed systemwide.

CalFresh application assistance has moved beyond focusing on the initial screening and application processes and progressed to include ongoing support. Basic needs staff have consistently communicated that while helping students through the initial CalFresh application is paramount, students often need continued support to maintain their benefits. For instance, CalFresh recipients must submit regular updates, including proof of income and financial aid. This becomes a challenge for those with unstable housing, who frequently change contact numbers or have limited access to the necessary documents. Students may also misunderstand the complicated requirements, leading to an interruption in benefits.

In an effort to support targeted CalFresh outreach, application assistance, and benefits maintenance, UCOP is negotiating a systemwide data-sharing agreement with CDSS that would enable UC to gain more nuanced insights about student CalFresh application processes and participation. UC is working with its public segment partners—CCC and CSU—to share insights as they develop similar agreements.

Food Programs for CalFresh Ineligible Students

Priority 3.2: All ten campuses provide food assistance for CalFresh-ineligible populations, including food awards or regular allotments to spend on food. This allows food-insecure students who do not qualify for CalFresh to receive sustained food assistance. Other programs particularly beneficial for CalFresh-ineligible populations include food awards, meal vouchers, grocery cards, food recovery networks, food pantries, free healthy food vending machines, mobile produce distributions, and pop-up produce distributions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

The three guiding recommendations for researchers include examining the interrelationships among basic needs (Priority 4.1); researching barriers and facilitators of CalFresh (Priority 4.2); and creating student basic needs assessments and identifying best practices, especially for those from historically underserved groups (Priority 4.3). See Appendix A for detailed descriptions of each goal.

Examining the Interrelationships Among Basic Needs and Researching Barriers and Facilitators of CalFresh

Priorities 4.1 and 4.2: UC has a long history of leading research and innovation. Last year, UCOP began five years of pilot funding for UC's Essential Needs Consortium, housed at CEJA.³³ A focus of this consortium is to advance research and evaluation. This was the second year of that funding, and CEJA has continued to make contributions. CEJA supported six separate UC campus basic needs research projects with over \$529,000 in 2023–24. These projects explored the effects of CalFresh on student food insecurity and stress, the impact of increased CalFresh access, SNAP application processes for students, access to basic needs services for historically underserved groups, student-driven solutions to food security, and community learning in basic needs. These are scheduled to be completed by June 2025. A second call was made in the fall of 2024 for another round of funded projects.

California Policy Lab analysis has continued to confirm that student CalFresh exemptions present formidable barriers for food-insecure students to access the program and that nuances to these exemptions have significant impacts. After the 2022 and 2024 CalFresh participation and eligibility studies, CPL concluded that a lower proportion of CCC students qualified than UC students. The most influential contributors to this disparity were household composition and type of CalGrant received. While UC students generally receive CalGrants with TANF funding, CCC students do not. Additionally, community college students are more likely to live with family, making their household compositions significantly different from single students living on their own. This data confirmed the lived experiences of students that staff and practitioners have articulated, validating and communicating those realities.

Creating Student Basic Needs Assessments and Identifying Best Practices

Priority 4.3: UC is continually advancing the study of best practices and improving basic needs assessments, especially for those from historically underserved groups.

- This year, UCOP launched a Basic Needs Data Working Group, a pilot project with volunteer UC campuses to correlate basic needs service utilization with student demographics.
- UCOP Institutional Research and Planning (IRAP) is updating the Basic Needs Dashboard, which publishes the results of UCUES and UCGSES in an interactive platform. Updates will improve the dashboard's interactive components and provide customizable analysis tools.
- UCENC at CEJA offered a series of systemwide basic needs education and training workshops throughout the year to share knowledge, improve and identify best practices, and consider future priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS

The two guiding recommendations for students focus on normalizing basic needs services and encouraging their peers to access these resources when needed (Priority 5.1); and continuing to prioritize basic needs services in student government leadership and advocacy, including participating in campus committees (Priority 5.2). See Appendix A for detailed descriptions of each goal.

Priorities 5.1 and 5.2: Students have been pivotal in normalizing basic needs services and prioritizing basic needs in leadership conversations. With students' lived experiences and peer advocacy, basic needs programs, policies, and legislation better address access barriers and root causes of basic needs struggles. Campus basic needs centers use peer-to-peer outreach programs to encourage students to engage in services, and they employed over 400 students systemwide in 2023–24.³⁴ These efforts have contributed to tens of thousands of students receiving basic needs services every year.

Students remained active in leadership discussions at campus and systemwide levels in 2023–24. Members of the UC Student Association and the UC Graduate and Professional Council have consistently raised basic needs concerns in conversations with systemwide leaders and President Drake, including disproportionate impacts on underserved populations. Student leaders attended the 2024 Student Leadership Summit at the UCOP Oakland headquarters, which included basic needs presentations and discussions. Students also attended the second annual systemwide UC Well-Being Summit in October 2024 at UCLA to strategize responses to intersectional basic needs, mental health, and well-being challenges.

³³[About the UC Essential Needs Consortium—Center for Economic Justice and Action](#)

³⁴UC basic needs centers employed 346 undergraduate students and 76 graduate students in campus basic needs centers.

KEY CHALLENGES

Funding

UC has invested millions of dollars into supporting its students' basic needs, and the State provides \$19.5 million yearly for basic needs and rapid rehousing. Of the 2,760 students who received emergency basic needs grants last year, approximately half were funded by University aid and half by the State. Yet this funding is inadequate to eliminate either food or housing insecurity systemwide.

California has long been a high-cost state, with living costs increasing since the pandemic. Rent increased by over 35 percent statewide since 2020, while wages increased by 22 percent. It would take twice the State's median income to purchase a mid-tier home and 1.5 times the median income to purchase a bottom-tier home.³⁵ Utilities have increased by approximately 45 percent since 2020, gasoline by 28 percent, and household food by 27 percent.³⁶ A 2023 California Community Poll found that 40 percent of respondents considered moving out of the State due primarily to the high costs associated with housing, healthcare, and everyday expenses.³⁷ (The average monthly mortgage for a two-bedroom home is over \$4,600, and the average rent is over \$2,700.) For low-resourced students, those costs are challenging, particularly when considering that the majority of students who used campus basic needs supports could not cover an unexpected emergency expense over \$100. Nearly one-quarter could not cover an emergency expense of any amount.³⁸

The University does not have the resources to absorb the full financial consequences of these widespread economic challenges. State basic needs allocations remain low compared with the need, as a result of flat funding formulas that do not account for rises in the cost of living or other inflationary factors. Budgetary language for UC basic needs is also significantly more restrictive than for CCC, specifying how UC campuses are to spend funds on food and housing supports. The restrictive nature of these requirements does not align with the modern lived experiences of college students.³⁹ This

leaves campus basic needs programs to triage emergency needs first for as many students as possible, making difficult spending trade-offs among its programs without the necessary resources to significantly lower food or housing insecurities. Their dedication to students, efficient use of resources, and innovative programming have played pivotal roles in ensuring the health and safety of thousands of students, stabilizing housing insecurity, and preventing more dramatic rises in food insecurity.

Eligibility Barriers to Public Programs

Students continue to be categorically ineligible for CalFresh, the California SNAP program, and must meet additional criteria to participate in many HUD programs, including the HCV.⁴⁰ CalFresh is the largest and most effective food security program in the nation, while HCV is the largest rental assistance program.⁴¹ Expanding students' eligibility for these programs would significantly improve their ability to attain food and housing security.

CalFresh

Students enrolled at least half-time between the ages of 18 and 49 must meet the following specific exemptions, in addition to income and citizenship requirements, to be eligible for CalFresh:⁴²

- Working a paid job at least 20 hours per week on average
- Receiving TANF-funded Cal Grant A or Cal Grant B
- Receiving disability-based income
- Physically or mentally unfit to work 20 hours per week
- Parenting a child under age 6 or parenting a child under age 12 without adequate childcare
- A single parent attending full-time with a child under age 12
- Participating in a Local Program that Increases Employability
- Approved for State or federal work study and anticipating a work assignment that term

³⁵California Housing Affordability Tracker (4th Quarter 2024) [EconTax Blog]

³⁶Inflation Tracker [EconTax Blog]

³⁷Many California residents are considering leaving the state - Los Angeles Times

³⁸Results from the UC Basic Needs Research and Evaluation team online survey administered to all students who accessed basic needs services during fall 2022, at nine participating University of California campuses. Fifty-nine percent could not handle an unexpected emergency costing over \$100, and 23 percent could not handle an emergency of any amount.

³⁹Bill Text - AB-102 Budget Act of 2023

⁴⁰HCV Guidebook Eligibility Determination and Denial of Assistance.pdf

⁴¹<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12546>

⁴²Student Eligibility Decision Tree—1 Pager

- Receiving CalWORKs benefits
- Attending school as part of an employment and training program approved by CalFresh
- Not planning to register for the next school term

Only a minority of UC students are potentially eligible, as reported by CPL. Graduate students face additional challenges to receiving benefits, as CDSS income formulas do not readily translate to students whose earnings are through fellowships, grants, or assistantships. When students do qualify, they may experience difficulty obtaining all of the necessary paperwork, completing the application or recertification processes, or receiving timely communication from CDSS.⁴³ CDSS has also had difficulties maintaining consistent procedures on student eligibility determinations both within and between counties.⁴⁴

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)

To qualify for HCV, students must meet the following criteria in addition to income and citizenship requirements:⁴⁵

- 24 years of age or older; or an independent student who will be 24 by December 31 of the award year
- A veteran
- Married
- Has a dependent child
- Is a person with disabilities, as defined by HCV, who was receiving HCV as of November 30, 2005
- Is a graduate or professional student
- Is individually income eligible, and the student's parents are individually or jointly income eligible

Graduate students may be more likely to qualify for HCV. However, HCV is notoriously underfunded, with waitlists as long as 15 years in California.⁴⁶ Additionally, landlords are not required to accept HCV.

CalWORKS

Four-year universities in California lack funding for on-campus support programs for students who participate in CalWORKs. They also lack outreach, application, and technical assistance from CDSS to help reach potentially eligible students.⁴⁷ CalWORKs provides families with financial,

childcare, housing, educational, job, and food assistance. CCCs receive funding for on-campus CalWORKs programs through Proposition 98, which guarantees minimum funding amounts for all public California K–12 and community colleges. Proposition 98 excludes four-year universities.⁴⁸ Over 8 percent of respondents to the 2022 Graduate Cost of Attendance Survey (GCOAS) reported having dependent children. Approximately 7.5 percent of undergraduate COAS respondents⁴⁹ in 2019 indicated potential parenting status.⁵⁰

Data

Robust data provides critical insights into students' basic needs insecurities, disproportionate impacts, effective programming, and outreach efforts. As demonstrated by CPL, correlating data across multiple systems is a powerful method to better understand who participates in public programs like CalFresh and who may be eligible. However, access to data has been limited, and confusion remains at State levels about who owns what data regarding students and which organizations can use it for analysis. UC does not have access to CDSS data that records which students are on CalFresh, where they attend college, how much they receive in benefits per month, or their household compositions. UC basic needs centers only know which students are on CalFresh if they volunteer that information. Yet the Budget Act of 2023 requires UC to report:

*The number of students who first started receiving CalFresh benefits in the preceding year as well as the total number of students in the preceding year receiving CalFresh.*⁵¹

The CalFresh Student Data Dashboard, mandated by Senate Bill (SB) 187, provides helpful information on student CalFresh participation, demographics of participants, common reasons for denial, and approval rates. However, this information is only supplied in the statewide aggregate, with no data disaggregated by segment or campus.⁵²

In an effort to improve CalFresh student outreach and enrollment, the University is actively discussing new data sharing agreements with CDSS and promising practices with CSU and CCC. UC representatives have also requested that CDSS improve their BenefitsCal website—the State's application website for public benefits—so that students can

⁴³Templates & Resources—CalFresh Outreach See AB 1326 Legislative Report under AB 1326 heading.

⁴⁴Helping College Students Get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Facilitators of and Barriers to Students Accessing the Federal Nutrition Assistance Program

⁴⁵HCV Guidebook Eligibility Determination and Denial of Assistance.pdf

⁴⁶Federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Rental Assistance

⁴⁷Templates & Resources—CalFresh Outreach See AB 1326 Legislative Report under AB 1326 heading.

⁴⁸The 2024–25 California Spending Plan: Proposition 98 and K–12 Education

⁴⁹2022 GCOAS Report 09-12-22

⁵⁰The question on the 2019 UCUES concerning parenting status is comparable to the 2022 GCOAS question concerning parenting status. Results from internal UCOP analysis.

⁵¹Bill Text - AB-102 Budget Act of 2023. (ca.gov)

⁵²CF dashboard—PUBLIC | Tableau Public

identify their campus. This will improve data collection and allow for segment and campus-level data on student CalFresh participation.

The University is continuing to assess data infrastructure for basic needs at campus and segment levels. Basic needs State funding does not provide adequate resources to both supply campuses with program funds and purchase new data management programs that would improve collection and reporting processes. UCOP is currently collaborating with Institutional Research and Planning (IRAP) to develop new data reporting processes that would ease the burden on campuses and improve efficiency.

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEXT STEPS

- Advocate that financial aid programs meet the true costs of living, including improving federal financial aid and refining the University's total cost-of-attendance calculation methodology. Support financial aid efforts to implement AB 2458, which requests that UC develop a cost-of-attendance adjustment policy for student parents and update the campus net price calculator to include a baseline student-parent cost estimate. (Priorities 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 4.1)
- Address insufficient funding for UC basic needs and related mental health programs. Address the lack of funds for both emergency and preventative programs. Consider holistic approaches that include advocating for improved student access to public benefits. Encourage the legislature to align Budget Act language for UC basic needs funds with the more inclusive definition of basic needs outlined for all three segments in AB 2033 (Priorities 1.3, 2.2, 2.5)
- Continue investigating how basic needs insecurities disproportionately affect historically underserved groups. Use Basic Needs Service Data Working Group insights to better understand campus service use and to improve data collection methods. Share knowledge with segment and state partners to continue developing best practices. (Priorities 1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.2)
- Continue investigating how basic needs and mental health challenges intersect, particularly for historically underserved populations. (Priorities 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.8, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3, 5.2)
- Encourage data-sharing agreements with CDSS that would enable public higher education segments to better understand their students' CalFresh participation rates, demographics, reasons for denial, and other pertinent information for the purposes of improving CalFresh outreach and enrollment. Use data to inform policies, programming, and legislation. (Priorities 2.3, 2.8, 3.1, 4.2)
- Continue to deeply examine the interrelations among the various components of basic needs, including food, housing, financial/economic needs, health care, hygiene, mental health, well-being, safety, sleep, and transportation. (Priority 4.1)
- Support policy changes to eliminate college student eligibility barriers to public programs, including CalFresh and HUD. Encourage CDSS liaisons to provide technical and application support beyond CalFresh to include CalWORKs, HUD, MediCal, and other public benefits. (Priorities 1.4, 2.3, 2.6, 2.8, 3.1, 5.1, 5.2)
- Collaborate with CDSS, California higher education segments, and campus partners to reduce barriers experienced by four-year university students enrolling in CalWORKs and HUD programs. Encourage the legislature to provide funding for on-campus CalWORKs programs, similar to what CCC receives through Proposition 98. Encourage the legislature to increase funding for HUD and other low-income housing programs, being sure to include students as an eligible population. (Priorities 1.4, 2.3, 2.6, 2.8, 3.1, 5.1, 5.2)
- Continue to innovate CalFresh and basic needs outreach approaches with the purposes of reaching more students, increasing CalFresh enrollment, and encouraging basic needs service use by historically underserved populations. (Priorities 3.2, 5.1, 5.2)
- Continue investigating the needs of and elevating services and supports for parenting students. Parenting students are disproportionately affected by basic needs insecurities, and their positive educational outcomes have multigenerational effects, including helping the University and the State reach educational attainment goals. (Priorities 2.4, 5.1, 5.2)
- Convene, attend, and facilitate basic needs professional development and learning opportunities, particularly those that encourage knowledge sharing across all three segments and across campus units. Collaborate with mental health, case management, and well-being programs. (Priorities 2.3, 2.8, 3.3)

CONCLUSION

The University of California's staff, students, and leaders have shown diligence in and dedication to supporting students' basic needs. Through advocacy efforts, research, and the development of some of the most promising practices in the nation, students at UC receive critical food and housing support. These efforts have minimized increases in food insecurity over time and have stabilized housing insecurity. However, UC is but one institution in a broader context of economic concerns. California remains a high-cost state, with housing prices out of reach for even those who earn median incomes. This is not limited to California, as millions of students nationwide experience food insecurity. Students still remain ineligible for the largest national food and housing support programs, and federal financial aid has failed to keep pace with cost of living. To address this collective crisis, higher education, philanthropic and research organizations, and state and national leaders continue to work towards a common vision to support these efforts. The University will continue to track progress on basic needs initiatives and use the Regent's recommendations as inspiration for stewarding these efforts.

Appendix A: Progress Towards Regents Recommendations, 2023–24

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND ADVOCATES		PROGRESS
1.1	Advocate for greater investment in financial aid at the federal, State, and University levels: stronger financial aid helps prevent basic needs insecurity. With an additional \$500 million in need-based grants, the University could: (1) decrease, by half, the number of undergraduate students who would need to borrow or work and (2) increase by 60 percent the amount of aid available to support students living expenses.	In Progress
1.2	When the State’s budget allows, advocate for legislation that would eliminate unnecessary barriers for UC students in the State’s Cal Grant program and provide additional summer financial aid for students enrolled in summer session.	In Progress
1.3	Advocate for the State adoption of the UC definition of student basic needs.	Complete
1.4	Continue the work of county Human Services' collaboration with campuses to provide staffing for regular on-campus county (and food bank) office hours and for technical and application assistance for student CalFresh applicants.	Ongoing
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY LEADERS		PROGRESS
2.1	Refine the total cost-of-attendance calculation methodology, especially the algorithm used to account for off-campus rent costs, to ensure that the calculated cost of attendance accurately represents the true local cost of living.	In Progress
2.2	Advocate for an increase in mental health funding to ensure that the University has the capacity to meet demand for mental health services, including for students whose need for mental health services is related to basic needs insecurity.	Complete
2.3	Create regional approaches to basic needs by strengthening alliances with UC partners (e.g., Agriculture and Natural Resources), intersegmental partners (e.g., the California Higher Education Basic Needs Alliance, California Community Colleges, the California State University), private/independent colleges and universities, and external partners (e.g., the Hope Center and other national entities).	Ongoing
2.4.	Prioritize basic needs resources for historically underserved student populations including, but not limited to, low-income, LGBTQ, community college transfer, parenting, undocumented, current/former foster, and carceral system-impacted students, as well as student veterans.	Ongoing
2.5	Prioritize basic needs as a goal of campus development or advancement fundraising campaigns.	In Progress
2.6	Continue to invest in direct partnerships between county offices of Health and Social Services and campus Governmental Relations to ensure regular office hours for on-campus county staff to assist students with the CalFresh application.	Complete
2.7	Coordinate financial aid packages with the notification of CalFresh eligibility.	Complete
2.8	Advocate for collaboration with county and community services to improve basic needs services for students.	Ongoing

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT SERVICE PRACTITIONERS		PROGRESS
3.1	Maximize enrollment of eligible graduate and undergraduate students in CalFresh by continuing to work with county agencies to increase application assistance.	Ongoing
3.2	Ensure that students who are experiencing food insecurity but do not qualify for CalFresh (e.g., undocumented and international students) have access to nutritious food.	Ongoing
3.3	Continue to share promising practices related to basic needs and to coordinate strategies across campuses and intersegmental partners.	Ongoing
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS		PROGRESS
4.1	Further examine the interrelations between the various components of basic needs, including food; housing; financial and economic needs; health care; hygiene; mental health, well-being, and safety; sleep; and transportation.	Ongoing
4.2	Continue researching barriers and facilitators of CalFresh enrollment systemwide, particularly the factors that influence student eligibility, and monitor CalFresh enrollment and application rates among UC students.	Ongoing
4.3	Establish assessments of basic needs interventions and identify practices that best support the experiences of students, especially those from historically underserved groups.	In Progress
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS		PROGRESS
5.1	Encourage more students—on individual campuses and across the system—to access basic needs resources by raising awareness about basic needs insecurity in order to normalize students' availing themselves of assistance.	Ongoing
5.2	Ensure that all campus basic needs committees include undergraduate and/or graduate student representatives.	Ongoing

More details on progress towards regents recommendations can be found at <https://basicneeds.ucop.edu>



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