UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Basic Needs Annual Report

To The Regents of the University of California **March 2026**

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KEY TO ACRONYMS

CCAMPIS	Child Care Access Means Parents In School
CDSS	California Department of Social Services
IRAP	Institutional Research and Planning
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SPARK	Student Parent Action through Research Knowledge
UC	University of California
UCGSES	University of California Graduate Student Experience Survey
UCOP	University of California Office of the President
UCUES	University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of California has expanded its basic needs infrastructure over the past decade, becoming a national leader in advocating for student basic needs and well-being, including food and housing security. Supported by $19.5 million in annual California State funding, campuses operate basic needs centers with services ranging from CalFresh outreach and application assistance to emergency housing, innovative food access programs, and crisis response. While these investments have strengthened UC's ability to support students, including during emergencies such as the 2025 federal shutdown, rising costs—particularly for food, housing, and transportation in California[1]—and high demand have prevented the University from meeting the Regents' goal of reducing food and housing insecurity by 50 percent between 2020 and 2025.[2]

Systemwide survey data show that food and housing insecurity for both undergraduate and graduate students have remained within fourteen percentage points for food insecurity and two percentage points for housing insecurity over nine years. Undergraduate food insecurity ranged from 39 to 48 percent between 2018 and 2024, and graduate student food insecurity ranged from 21 to 35 percent between 2021 and 2025.[3] Undergraduate housing insecurity ranged from 7 to 8 percent between 2020 and 2024, and graduate housing insecurity ranged from 3 to 5 percent between 2021 and 2025.

Recent years have shown less change. Between 2022 and 2024, undergraduate food insecurity increased five percentage points (from 43 to 48 percent), while graduate student food insecurity decreased four percentage points (from 35 to 31 percent) between 2023 and 2025. Housing insecurity remained relatively stable for both groups, at 7 to 8 percent for undergraduates (from 2020 to 2024) and 3 to 5 percent for graduate students (from 2021 to 2025).[4] Several student groups are more likely to be affected, including foster youth, international graduate students, LGBTQIA+ identified students, Pell recipients, parenting students, and several racial/ethnic groups. Basic needs insecurity is also strongly associated with higher rates of anxiety and depression.

In its continuing effort to improve data processes to better understand basic need insecurities at UC, the University of California Office of the President (UCOP)

[1] California Legislative Analyst's Office Inflation Tracker

[2] The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs

[3] Housing insecurity is measured by respondents' "yes" answer to the question "In the last 12 months, have you ever lacked a safe, regular and adequate nighttime place to stay and sleep for any of the following lengths of time? (Academic terms, breaks, summer)." Food security was measured using the six-item USDA food module.

[4] Macro-level factors were at play, including the COVID-19 pandemic and rising costs of living. This is discussed further in the following sections.

launched the Basic Needs Service Utilization Pilot Project in 2024 in collaboration with the Berkeley, Davis, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz campuses. This pilot securely links campus basic needs service utilization data with students' demographic and academic information. The purpose is to provide information to campuses on who uses their basic needs programs and how service utilization correlates with basic needs insecurity levels and academic performance indicators like grade point averages.[5] This information can be used to target programs and services to underserved populations with the overarching goal of improving their basic needs security levels, overall well-being, retention, and academic performance. Additionally, the process provides insights on how UCOP can better support campuses in analyzing their data. The pilot has already provided actionable insights that will assist campuses in targeting their outreach and supports to vulnerable groups.

Recent federal policy changes and actions—including new work and other eligibility requirements and cost sharing for certain public programs like Medi-Cal and CalFresh[6]—pose risks to student health coverage and food access beginning in 2026. Federal actions affecting the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program have had a negative impact on two campuses' childcare resources, threatening affordable childcare options for student parents. Additionally, amid immigration enforcement efforts, a federal judge approved the Department of Homeland Security's use of Medicaid data to locate people living unlawfully in the United States starting January 2026. Public health advocates are expressing concern that this ruling will deter those individuals from seeking basic health care, including immunizations.[7] These actions heighten the vulnerabilities of populations already experiencing basic needs insecurities. The University of California is committed to supporting all students in accessing all campus basic needs services for which they are eligible.

UC has continued to work on a systemwide level and, in collaboration with community and segmental partners, to expand basic needs infrastructure, to educate the public about student basic needs insecurities, to advocate for legislation, and to develop new dataintegration efforts. Over the past decade, it has also been made clear that current resources—while essential for emergency needs, stabilizing the prevalence of basic needs insecurities, and supporting student safety and well-being—are insufficient to significantly reduce student food and housing insecurity rates systemwide. Continued investment and coordinated policy efforts remain essential to supporting student stability, academic success, and overall well-being.

[5] Future analysis will include service utilization's relationship with retention and graduation.

[6] Navigating Federal Cuts to Health and Human Services in California: A Presentation with CalHHS

[7] ICE can use Medicaid data to find people without legal status for deportation cases: NPR

BACKGROUND

The University of California has made significant efforts over the last decade to identify and address students' basic needs struggles, including food and housing insecurity. The University's work in developing effective programs, innovative strategies, accessible data analyses, and in-depth research has established UC as a national leader. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the combined contributions from students, staff, faculty, and administration. This has enabled the University community to be a part of important discussions shaping state and national policies.

In 2020, the UC Board of Regents set an aspirational goal to reduce UC student food and housing insecurity by 50 percent by 2025. Since then, the University has bolstered its efforts while navigating broader economic pressures and a pandemic. Supported by ongoing State investment beginning in 2019—currently $19.5 million annually—all ten campuses have established extensive basic needs centers and programs, including:

- Food pantries
- Innovative food security programs like pop-up produce distributions and non-transactional cafes
- CalFresh application assistance
- Emergency housing
- Pilot programs like need-based rent subsidies.[8]

This ongoing funding has also strengthened the University's ability to collaborate with community partners, coordinate systemwide efforts, expand analyses, and deepen understanding of State and national economic conditions.

This work has provided UC with the perspective that basic, or essential, needs are interconnected with one another. The money and time that students spend to meet one basic need (such as housing) influence their ability to meet their other basic needs (such as food), particularly with limited resources. Basic needs insecurities also affect students' mental health, physical health, and academic performance.[9] This understanding resulted in UC creating the following definition of basic needs, aided by the input from students, researchers, and the 2021 Intersegmental Working Group on Basic Needs:[10] *An ecosystem that supports financial stability through equitable access to nutritious and sufficient food; safe, secure, and adequate housing; healthcare that promotes sustained well-being; affordable transportation; personal hygiene resources; and emergency supports for students with dependents.*

STUDENTS SERVED

Starting at just under 53,000 in 2020–21, the number of students served systemwide by the University of California basic needs programs has increased substantially. Between 2021 and 2023, 72,000 to 78,100 students were served annually.[11] In 2024–25, UC served approximately 77,785 students. This demonstrates that (a) the influx of ongoing State funding starting in 2019 had a significant effect on campus's capacity to serve students, and (b) the number of students accessing services has increased considerably over time but has stabilized in recent years. Feedback from campuses also indicates that, with greater funding, even more students may access services, as program offerings are limited by resources. Figure 1 shows the number of students served and the number of student contacts in 2024–25 across all ten campuses.

[8] Need-Based Rent Subsidy | UC Davis Student Housing and Dining Services

[9] Food Insecurity in Higher Education: A Contemporary Review of Impacts and Explorations of Solutions; Pathways from Food Insecurity to Health Outcomes Among California University Students; No Food For Thought: Food Insecurity Is Related to Poor Mental Health and Lower Academic Performance Among Students in California's Public University System. See also Basic needs service | University of California and Student basic needs | University of California

[10] The Opportunity to Strengthen Basic needs Supports for California's Post-Secondary Students Through Partnership and Shared Accountability

[11] In 2022–23, 78,070 students were served; in 2021–22, 72,213 students were served; and in 2020–21, 52,883 were served.

Figure 1: Students Served and Student Contacts, 2024–25[12]

Campus	Unique Students Served 2024–25	Student Contacts 2024–25
Berkeley	7,651	33,673
Davis	13,249	96,570
Irvine	7,550	30,468
Los Angeles	9,310	16,641
Merced	3,633	15,147
Riverside	5,954	45,391
San Diego	9,406	48,829
San Francisco	2,450	43,896
Santa Barbara	11,304	81,572
Santa Cruz	7,278	51,644
Total	**77,785**	**463,831**

Student Food and Housing Insecurity, 2018–2025

The University of California Office of the President (UCOP) has been measuring student food insecurity since 2018 with the United States Department of Agriculture Six-Item Food Security Module on the UC Undergraduate Student Experience Survey (UCUES) and the UC Graduate Student Experience Survey (UCGSES).[13] Housing insecurity has been measured consistently using the Housing Security Module since 2020 and is based on the federal McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act definition of homelessness, which focuses on fixed, adequate, and regular nighttime sleeping arrangements.[14] In 2020, the UC Regents set the aspirational goal of reducing food and housing insecurity by 50 percent by 2025 based on these measures.

At the time, the use of food security and housing security modules was the most adequate way to measure the student experience; however, over the past eight years, UCOP—alongside researchers from the California Policy Lab, the Center for Economic Justice and Action, the Center for Healthy Communities, the Center for Equitable Higher Education, and other State and national partners—is developing new approaches to understanding more about food and housing security and assessing the short- and long-term impact of basic needs interventions on student food and housing insecurity. As such, UCOP is funding a long-term longitudinal research study to establish new measures, inform investments in student basic needs, and advise on systemwide strategy. The study will be advised by the UC Student Mental Health and Well-being Oversight Committee and led by the Center for Economic Justice and Action at UC Santa Cruz, under the direction of Heather Bullock, Ph.D. This study will be the first of its kind in the UC system, bridging the gap between the Regents' aspirational goals and the ongoing investment of resources in services and support aimed towards reducing food and housing insecurity.

Basic needs programs have significantly contributed to addressing individual students' urgent and emergency needs, as well as responding to widespread emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters,[15] and interruptions in CalFresh benefits. They have also contributed to stabilizing housing insecurity, helped prevent higher spikes in food insecurity, and supported students in addressing the mental health toll of these stressors. The following provides updated assessments of food and housing insecurity rates for both undergraduate and graduate student populations, which depicts trends in student experiences for food and housing insecurity, but not necessarily the overall impact for students who have received or need basic needs assistance.

Undergraduate food insecurity has fluctuated between 39 percent and 48 percent, with 2018 and 2024 exhibiting the highest rates at 47 and 48 percent, respectively. The former predates ongoing State funding for basic needs, which began in 2019 and provided the resources necessary for campuses to establish permanent campus basic needs supports. In 2020, many students participated in remote instruction and returned to their family homes and/or received emergency aid in response to COVID-19, which likely contributed to lower food and housing insecurity rates. Since then, cost of living and overhead costs for running programs which fulfill those

[12] Unique students are calculated using data collection techniques such as the number of times individual student identification cards are used at basic needs centers. Minor duplication may occur. There is some variation in data collection methodologies due to differences in infrastructure and capacity across the campuses. The total student contacts reflect the number of times students interacted with basic needs programs, often also accounted for via student identification card swipes. Unique students can have multiple student contacts.

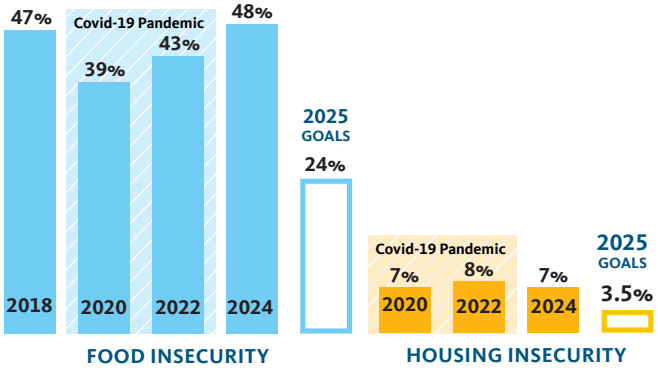
[13] Six-Item Short Form Food Security Survey Module (usda.gov) and UC Measuring Food and Housing Insecurity

[14] 42 USC Chapter 119, Subchapter VII, Part B: Education for Homeless Children and Youths

[15] California experienced historic floods and wildfires in 2024 and 2025. See California Governor's Office: Request for Major Disaster Declaration, March 22, 2024.

basic needs have continued to rise.[16] Although UC received a systemwide state increase of $800,000 for basic needs and $200,000 for rapid rehousing in 2023, costs and demand for services have exceeded this amount. Figure 2 shows overall undergraduate student food and housing insecurity rates between 2018 and 2024 compared with the Regents' aspirational goals.

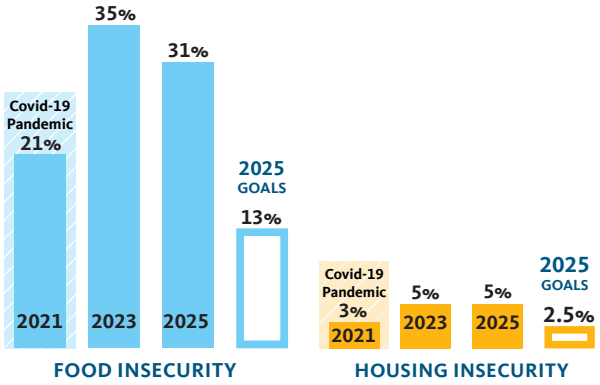
Figure 2: Undergraduate Food and Housing Insecurity, 2018–2024



Graduate student food insecurity has shown more fluctuation over the years than undergraduate food insecurity, with an overall food insecurity ranging from 21 percent in 2021 to 35 percent in 2023. In 2025, graduate student food insecurity was at 31 percent, showing a slight reduction from the high of 35 percent two years prior. Housing insecurity has been more stable for graduate students than food insecurity, ranging from 3 percent to 5 percent, with no change between 2023 and 2025. The lower food and housing insecurity rates for graduate students in 2021 was, similar to that of undergraduates in 2020, likely due to COVID-19 emergency aid and family resources, such as housing and food.[17]

Additionally, in December 2022, graduate student researchers received a new three-year contract with higher pay and adjustments to health care benefits.[18] Figure 3 shows graduate student food and housing insecurity rates between 2021 and 2025.

Figure 3: Graduate Student Food and Housing Insecurity, 2021–2025



[16] California Legislative Analyst's Office Inflation Tracker
[17] See 2024 Basic Needs Annual Report to the Regents of the University of California
[18] Graduate Student Researchers Contract

BASIC NEEDS INSECURITIES BY POPULATION

The University of California now has several years of student food and housing insecurity data from the UCUES and UCGSES, which enables an analysis of patterns over time, including which populations are more and less likely to experience food and housing insecurity. This information allows basic needs centers to adjust programs and outreach to improve services for the students most vulnerable to food and housing insecurity, while evaluating successful initiatives in populations that have shown improvements.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY

For undergraduate students overall, food insecurity rose nine percentage points between 2020 and 2024—from 39 percent in 2020 to 43 percent in 2022 and to 48 percent in 2024. The highest increases in undergraduate food insecurity between 2020 and 2024 were in the foster youth and parenting student populations.[19] Food insecurity for foster youth increased sixteen percentage points, from 55 to 71 percent. Housing insecurity for parenting students increased thirteen percentage points, from 13 percent to 26 percent.[20,21] White and Asian students were less likely to be food insecure than these and the overall student populations, increasing from 30 to 41 percent, and 34 and 42 percent, respectively, between 2020 and 2024. Overall undergraduate housing insecurity rose one percentage point between 2020 and 2024, fluctuating between 7 and 8 percent. All undergraduate subpopulations identified below, with the exception of nonbinary and American Indian students, experienced food insecurity rate increases of four percentage points or more between 2022 and 2024. Five populations—certain LGBTQIA+, Pell, Hispanic/Latino(a), and foster youth students—experienced increases in food insecurity greater than the overall UC undergraduate increase of nine percentage points between 2020 and 2024. Four LGBTQIA+ groups showed less than the overall increase in food insecurity, while parenting and American Indian students showed the average overall increase between 2020 and 2024.[22] Increases in housing insecurity for these underserved populations were all higher than the overall UC undergraduate increase of one percentage point, except for certain LGBTQIA+ and American Indian students, who showed slight decreases. White and Asian students were less likely to experience housing insecurity than these or the overall student populations, both going from 5 percent in 2020 to 6 percent in 2024.

Undergraduate parenting students and foster youth showed the highest increases in housing and food insecurity, respectively, from 2020 to 2024. By 2024, foster youth food insecurity had climbed to 71 percent and housing insecurity to 19 percent. Student parents experienced a 2024 food insecurity rate of 67 percent and a housing insecurity rate of 26 percent.[23] Both populations have unique needs. While parenting students provide for dependents, foster youth often have fewer family resources. Additionally, both populations are more likely to have intersectional identities that are also more likely to be food and/or housing insecure. For instance, foster youth are more likely to be parenting students than non-foster youth students, and foster youth and parenting students are both more likely to be students of color.[24] Figures 4 and 5 show undergraduate food and housing insecurity by underserved population between 2020 and 2024.

[19] Foster youth are less than 1 percent, and parenting students are approximately 2 percent of the total undergraduate student population. See UC undergraduate current and former foster youth | University of California and Parenting Students' Experiences and Challenges at UC.

[20] Note that student parent undergraduate housing insecurity was measured at 20 percent in 2022 for the 2024 Basic Needs Annual Report to the Regents of the University of California. Due to research and subject matter expert recommendations, the definition of parenting student for this analysis was more inclusive.

[21] It should be noted that these populations are smaller sample sizes and are more likely to display greater highs and lows. However, this significant increase matches feedback from student service programs and from student parents themselves, and it is mirrored in national data that shows high rates of food and housing insecurity for student parents and foster youth students. See Hope Student Basic Needs Survey Report 2023–24.

[22] American Indian students show an average increase. However, due to small sample sizes, this difference is less reliable than in other populations.

[23] These populations have smaller sample sizes than other populations; therefore they are more likely to display greater highs and lows from year to year. Also see footnote 21.

[24] Parenting Students' Experiences and Challenges at UC; Retaining students with foster care experience in college; Hope Student Basic Needs Survey Report 2023–24.pdf; and SPARK Infographics on Student Parents

Figure 4: Undergraduate Student Food Insecurity by Underserved Population, 2020–2024

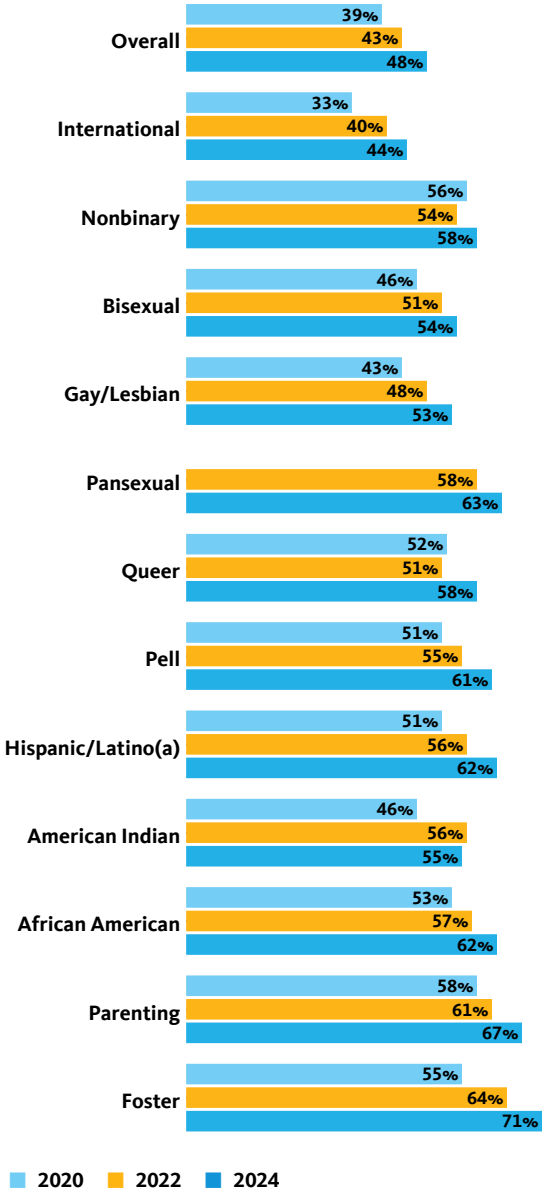
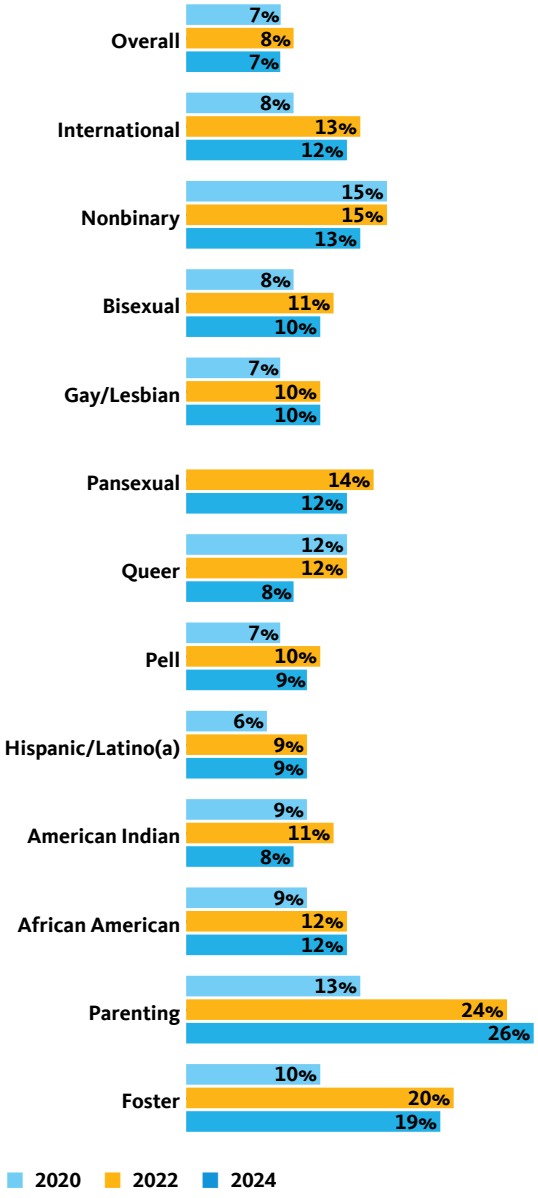


Figure 5: Undergraduate Student Housing Insecurity by Underserved Population, 2020–2024



GRADUATE STUDENT FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY

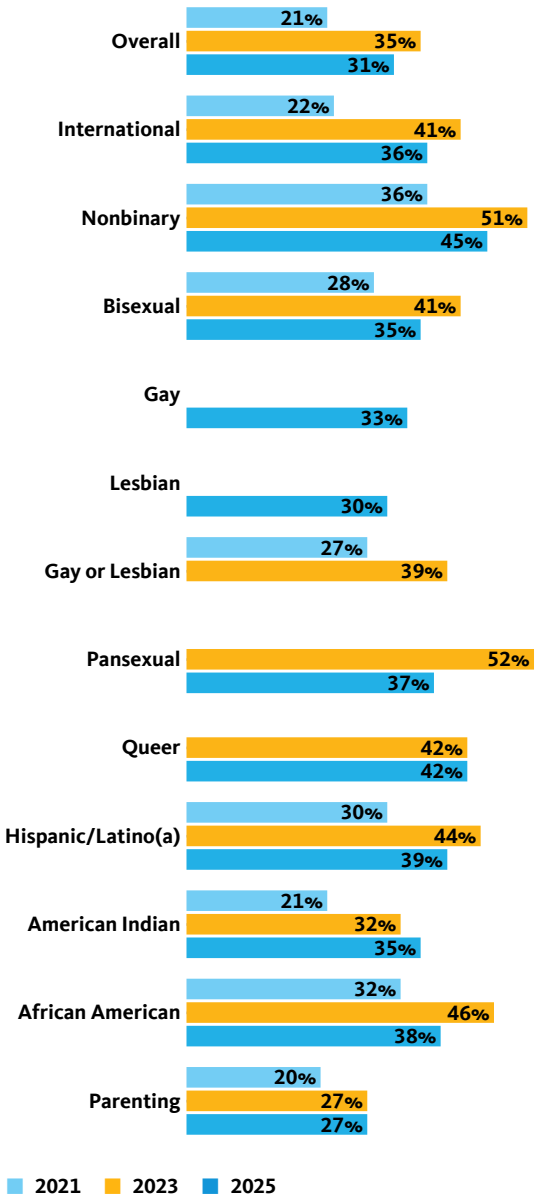
Graduate food insecurity increased fourteen percentage points between 2021 and 2023 and then decreased by four percentage points between 2023 and 2025. The greatest increases in food insecurity for graduate students between 2021 and 2025 were in the international and American Indian student populations, both increasing by fourteen percentage points, from 22 to 36 percent, and from 21 to 35 percent, respectively.[25] International students comprise approximately 23 percent, and American Indians comprise less than 1 percent of the total graduate student population.[26] The greatest increase in housing insecurity was in the international student population with three percentage points, from four to seven percent between 2021 and 2025.

Between 2023 and 2025, international, some LGBTQIA+, Hispanic/Latino(a), and African American graduate student populations experienced decreases in food insecurity greater than the overall decrease of four percentage points. Gay or lesbian student food insecurity increased from 27 to 39 percent, parenting and queer student food insecurity remained steady at 27 and 42 percent, respectively, and American Indian student food insecurity increased from 32 to 35 percent. Housing insecurity remained steady for graduate students overall between 2023 and 2025. However, certain populations experienced increases and decreases.

A little more than half of the graduate student populations identified here experienced increases in housing insecurity between 2021 and 2025—international, certain LGBTQIA+, Hispanic/Latino(a), Hispanc/Latino(a), and parenting students. Four populations experienced decreases within those years: three LGBTQIA+ groups and American Indian students. It should be noted, however, that American Indian students experienced a significant increase in housing insecurity between 2021 and 2023, going from 4 percent to 15 percent. White and Asian students were less likely to experience housing insecurity, with the exception of 2021, when white students were as likely to be housing insecure as the overall population at 3 percent. In other years, both populations experienced less housing insecurity by one to two percentage points.

International graduate students showed the greatest increase in both food and housing insecurity between 2021 and 2025. A fourteen percentage point increase in food insecurity represents a 63 percent overall increase, while a three percentage point increase in housing insecurity represents a 75 percent overall increase in housing insecurity. International students have less access to State and federal basic needs resources—including CalFresh, certain housing assistance, and certain childcare assistance—and have more limited health insurance options. Additionally, visa regulations may mean spouses and domestic partners have limited or no employment options. Figures 6 and 7 show graduate student food and housing insecurity by underserved population.

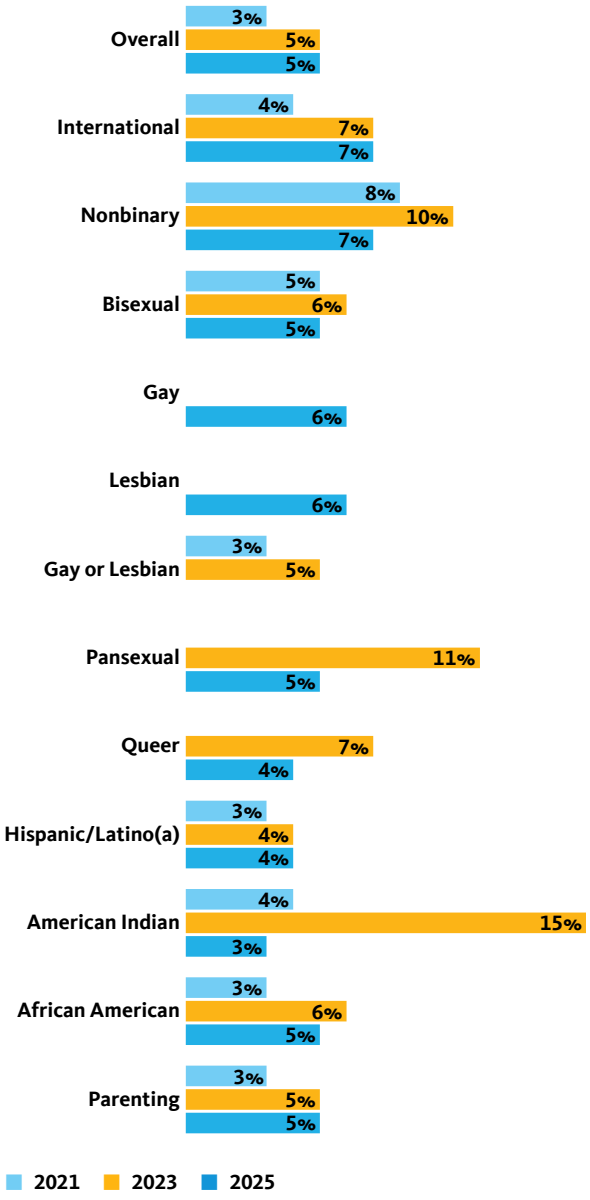
Figure 6: Graduate Student Food Insecurity by Underserved Population, 2021–2025



[25] It should be noted that the American Indian sample population is small and therefore the increases and decrease aren't as reliable as they are in larger populations. However, national data shows high rates of food and housing insecurity for American Indian and Indigenous students. See Hope Student Basic Needs Survey Report 2023-24.

[26] Fall enrollment at a glance | University of California

Figure 7: Graduate Student Housing Insecurity by Underserved Population, 2021–2025

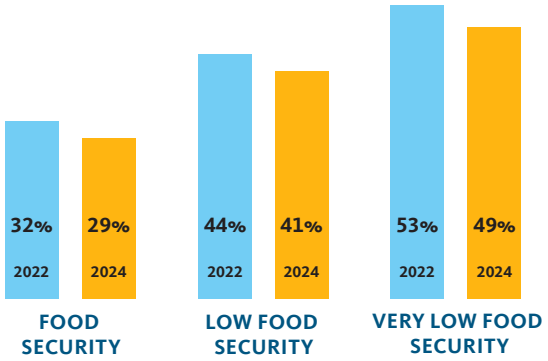


MENTAL HEALTH AND BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY

Students struggling to meet their basic needs experience more stress, higher depression and anxiety rates, and lower first-year retention and graduation rates.[27] The University of California has been investigating the link between mental health and basic needs insecurities. Analysis revealed that both food and housing insecurity had a negative impact on students' mental health. Both undergraduate and graduate students who experienced either food or housing insecurity showed significantly higher rates of anxiety and depression than those who were food and housing secure.[28] Depression and anxiety increased as the level of food insecurity increased. While overall incidences of anxiety and depression decreased slightly among undergraduate students from 2022 to 2024, it is clear that in both years, students who struggle with food insecurity are more likely to feel anxious and depressed.

These lower incident levels may be, in part, due to the ending of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated stressors. This data provides an excellent base for further investigations. Figures 8 and 9 show undergraduate student food security relationships with depression and anxiety.

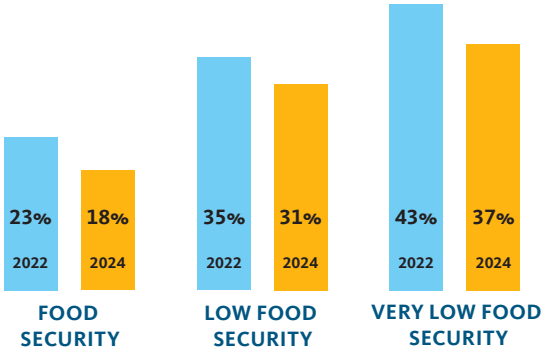
Figure 8: Undergraduate student food security and anxiety, 2022 and 2024



[27] Food Insecurity in Higher Education: A Contemporary Review of Impacts and Explorations of Solutions; Pathways from Food Insecurity to Health Outcomes Among California University Students; and No Food For Thought: Food Insecurity Is Related to Poor Mental Health and Lower Academic Performance Among Students in California's Public University System. Also see Student basic needs | University of California.

[28] Over the last two administrations of UCUES (2022 and 2024) and UCGSES (2021 and 2023). See Student basic needs | University of California

Figure 9: Undergraduate student food security and depression, 2022 and 2024



Graduate students showed a similar pattern, where increasing severity of food insecurity was associated with increasing challenges to their mental health. Anxiety and depression both increased slightly for students experiencing low food security and maintained, or near maintained, the same levels for those experiencing very low food security between 2023 and 2025. Figures 10 and 11 show graduate student food security relationships with anxiety and depression.

Figure 10: Graduate student food insecurity and anxiety, 2023 and 2025

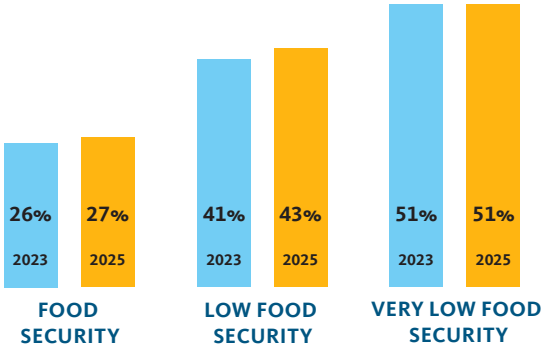
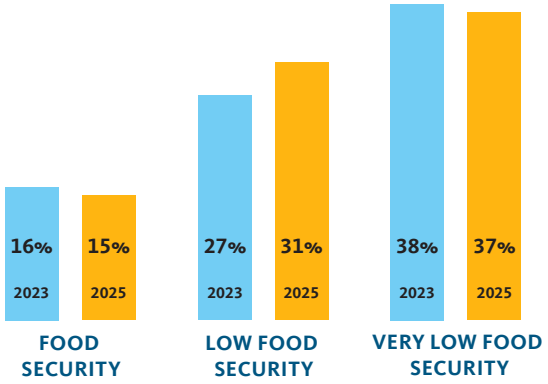


Figure 11: Graduate student food insecurity and depression, 2023 and 2025



Over half of undergraduate and graduate students with housing insecurity experienced anxiety in the last two administrations of the UCUES and UCGSES, compared with about one-third of housing secure students.[29] Approximately one-quarter of housing-secure undergraduate and one-fifth of housing-secure graduate students reported depression, while just under half of housing-insecure undergraduate and approximately 40 percent of housing-insecure graduate students reported depression. Similarly, both undergraduate and graduate student housing insecurity increased incidences of depression by about twenty percentage points compared with their housing secure counterparts. The relationship between mental health and basic needs insecurities is clearly demonstrated in these results. Figures 12 through 15 show housing security's relationship with anxiety and depression for undergraduate and graduate students.

[29] Housing security measures in the UCUES and UCGSES are based on the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness and are not separated into 'low housing security' and 'very low housing security' in the same way as food insecurity measurements do. As such, students are classified as either housing secure or housing insecure.

Figure 12: Undergraduate student housing security and anxiety

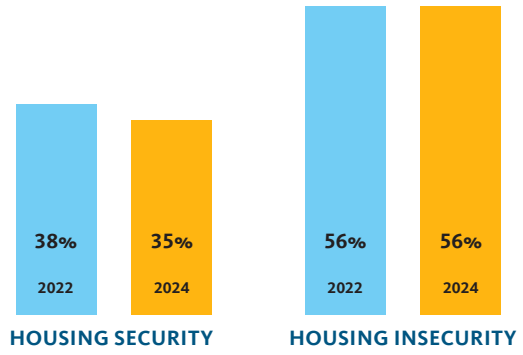


Figure 13: Undergraduate student housing security and depression

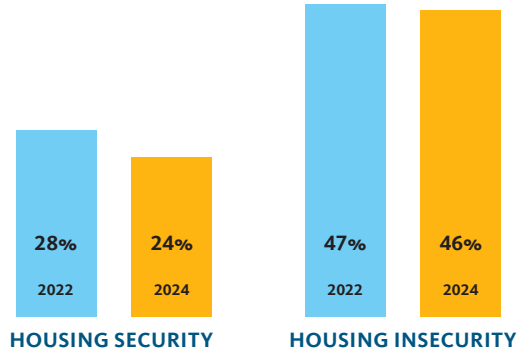


Figure 14: Graduate student housing security and anxiety

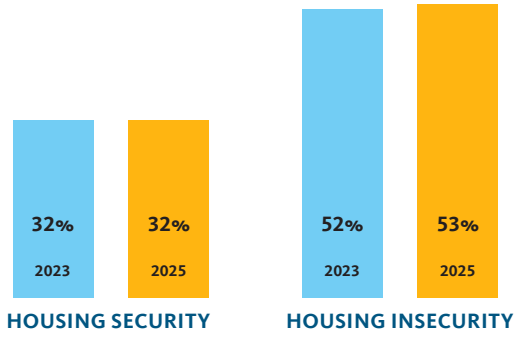
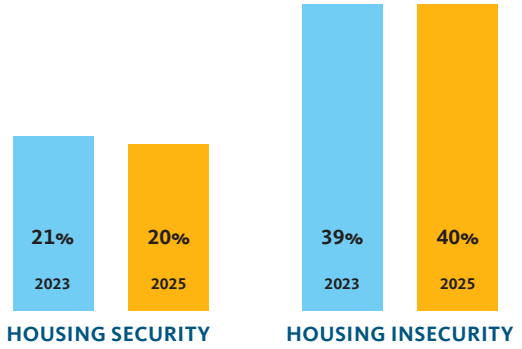


Figure 15: Graduate student housing security and depression



FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS AND STUDENT BASIC NEEDS

2025 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

During the federal government shutdown in October and early November 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) did not fund the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or CalFresh in California. Approximately 58,000 students attending UC, who must meet or be under CalFresh's income thresholds based on the Federal Poverty Line, are enrolled in the program.[30] Judges ultimately required the federal government to release funds to provide SNAP benefits, but by the time they were distributed, there was already a one-to-two week delay in issuing CalFresh benefits.

Campuses responded rapidly to mitigate the impact, with services such as expanded food pantry hours (including mobile pantries), increased pantry food stocks, increased meal assistance, grocery cards, expanded food recovery efforts, and streamlined applications for emergency assistance that allowed staff to triage high-need students and efficiently tailor resources. They worked with their financial aid departments to issue emergency grants and to notify students of resources available to them. However, these responses strained already limited campus basic needs resources, many of which were not designed to absorb such a large, sudden increase in need. At least $275,000 in resources were deployed systemwide to address the sudden lack of food for thousands of students.

H.R. 1 AND STUDENT BASIC NEEDS

Changes to Medi-Cal

Last year's One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1) introduces several major changes to Medicaid—known as Medi-Cal in California—that will affect student eligibility and enrollment. In 2023–24, at least 17,000 UC students relied on Medi-Cal.[31]

Beginning October 1, 2026, certain noncitizens—including refugees, asylees, and trafficking survivors—will no longer qualify for federally funded Medi-Cal coverage. Instead, these individuals will only be eligible for emergency and pregnancy services (known as "restricted-scope" Medi-Cal). By January 1, 2027, states will also be required to implement new "community engagement" (work) requirements; students can satisfy these requirements by maintaining at least half-time enrollment. Students enrolled less than half-time can satisfy these requirements through a combination of enrollment, employment, and community service. H.R. 1 also requires Medi-Cal enrollees to more frequently recertify their eligibility. Starting January 1, 2027, Medi-Cal enrollees will have to recertify every six months rather than every 12 months.

While most UC students can fulfill the work requirement with full-time enrollment, the significant administrative burden resulting from more frequent eligibility checks and demonstrating compliance with work requirements will put many students at risk of losing Medi-Cal coverage.[32]

Changes to CalFresh

H.R. 1 also included changes to SNAP, or CalFresh in California, that may reduce students' access to food benefits, particularly for part-time students, including students with dependents, who will be newly subject to work requirements. The bill expands work requirements and narrows the set of work exemptions for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs). Students caring for dependents will qualify for a work exemption if the dependent is under age 14, rather than under 18, creating new barriers for low-income, part-time student parents and their families seeking or maintaining CalFresh.

The bill further increases the state share of administrative SNAP costs from 50 percent to 75 percent beginning October 1, 2026, and requires states to pay an additional cost share based on their SNAP error rate starting in fiscal year 2028. Due to California's high error rate, these provisions could impose substantial financial burdens; the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality estimates that the changes could increase California's

[30] Estimates are based on the California Policy Lab's research on UC student participation rates calculated by linking CDSS participation data with UCOP's enrollment data. These estimates are from the 2022–23 school year, which are the most recent calculations available on UC student participation.

[31] Internal UCOP analysis is based on student health insurance and health insurance waiver information.

[32] H.R. 1 exempts certain individuals—including pregnant individuals, former foster youth under age 26, disabled individuals, and American Indian/Alaska Natives—from community engagement requirements and six month eligibility redeterminations. In addition, H.R. 1 includes other exemptions from community engagement requirements, including for certain parents, guardians, or caregivers and individuals experiencing behavioral health challenges.

CalFresh cost share by roughly $2.5 billion.[33] This may reduce the California Department of Social Services' capacity to support student access through outreach and other campus supports. The bill also eliminated funding for SNAP-Ed, which provides nutrition outreach programs. The loss of SNAP-Ed funding will affect higher education partners, including nine UC campuses participating in the CalFresh Outreach Higher Education Contract, which provides campuses federal share dollars based on specific state share activities.[34] Guidance on how California will implement these changes is still pending.

Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)

In September 2025, the U.S. Department of Education canceled or halted several grant competitions, including those funded through the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program. This action followed the release of President Trump's fiscal year 2026 budget request, which called for eliminating CCAMPIS funding. However, in February 2026, Congress approved funding for CCAMPIS for federal fiscal year 2026.

CCAMPIS is the only federal grant program specifically supporting affordable childcare for college student parents, addressing one of the most common reasons student parents stop or drop out.[35] The high cost of childcare often affects parenting students' abilities to meet their other basic needs and succeed academically.[36] In California, average annual infant care costs exceed $21,000.[37]

UC received approximately $3.5 million in CCAMPIS grants among eight campuses in 2024–25.[38] Two of those campuses lost access to funding at the start of the 2025–26 academic year after it was determined their programs no longer aligned with federal priorities. New Department of Education guidance has also led many institutions nationwide to restrict CCAMPIS support for noncitizen students, including international students.

IMMIGRATION POLICIES

The current federal administration has prioritized immigration enforcement and narrowing eligibility for federal and other public benefits for noncitizens. This action includes issuing notices in July 2025 that five federal agencies would revise how they interpret the term "federal public benefit" and include a broader range of federally funded programs subject to eligibility restrictions for non-U.S. citizens. While there are some preliminary injunctions blocking portions of this reinterpretation, eligibility changes are presumably in effect in areas not covered by the court preliminary injunctions.

On November 19, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to rescind prior regulations that offered a clear definition of who could be deemed a "public charge" and therefore inadmissible for entry to the U.S. or denied an adjustment of status to lawful permanent residence. Under the current rule, officers are limited to seven factors to assess whether an individual is likely to become a "public charge." If the new rule is finalized, immigration officers would receive broad discretion to use any other factors or information to conclude an individual is likely to become a "public charge."

The administration also issued an executive order prioritizing deportation and enforcement against unauthorized entry or presence, which has led to heightened immigration enforcement activities.[39] Additionally, a federal judge ruled in January 2026 that Immigration and Customs Enforcement can continue to use Medicaid data to locate people for the purpose of deportation.[40] The administration's immigration policies have deterred those who fear being detained or harmed from seeking critical basic needs services, including medical care. This may eventually put strain on campus basic needs resources as programs work to fill the gap. UC continues to monitor the situation.

[33] SNAP Changes Will Upend State Budgets — Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality. Based on 2024 state error rates.

[34] Administered by the Center for Healthy Communities at California State University, Chico

[35] Institute for Women's Policy Research: Busy With Purpose

[36] Ibid

[37] The average cost of infant care in California per year is $21,945. California is the fourth most expensive state (and the District of Columbia) for infant care: Child care costs in the United States | Economic Policy Institute

[38] UCOP internal analysis

[39] Executive Order 14159 ("Protecting the American People Against Invasion").

[40] ICE can use Medicaid data to find people without legal status for deportation cases: NPR

IMPROVING DATA ANALYSIS

Valuable lessons have been learned over the past five years on how best to support student basic needs. Among those is better utilizing existing data to gain new insights. While many data elements exist in different departments or topical areas, these datasets are not merged until a specific purpose has been defined. This year, UCOP dedicated resources to taking new approaches to utilizing existing data to not only better understand student subgroups who are more likely to experience basic needs insecurities, but to provide valuable information that campuses can use to target programs and services.

BASIC NEEDS SERVICE UTILIZATION PILOT PROJECT

In 2024, UCOP Graduate, Undergraduate and Equity Affairs (GUEA) collaborated with Institutional Research and Academic Planning (IRAP) and four campus basic needs programs (at the Berkeley, Davis, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz campuses) to launch a pilot project whose purpose was to develop a systemwide process for securely correlating campus basic needs service utilization data with certain student demographic information and academic performance indicators, such as grade point average.[41] Pilot campuses submitted data from 2023 and 2024 to UCOP IRAP, which then conducted the analyses in consultation with GUEA, campus basic needs, and other relevant units. Strict protocols were followed to ensure student privacy and data safety. Published results are de-identified, and small cell sizes are redacted. This project aimed not only to better understand the effects of basic needs service utilization, but also to improve data systems and data collaborations between campuses and UCOP.

Findings revealed that, among the four pilot campuses, food-insecure students were significantly more likely to use campus food assistance programs than food-secure students, though students who experienced food security still accessed services. It is possible that at least a portion of these students' food security was a result of accessing those services, but there is insufficient data to draw that conclusion. The UCUES and UCGSES are point-in-time surveys and do not track food security over time for individual students. Also notable, only about one-third of students experiencing food insecurity who responded to UCUES in spring 2024 and attended one of the project's pilot campuses accessed campus basic needs food assistance.

Results also indicated that undergraduates were more likely to access services than graduate students and that the food pantry was the most used basic needs service for both student categories. Food pantries made up about half of all services used by undergraduates and 60 percent of all services used by graduate students. CalFresh assistance and prepared food were the next most utilized services.[42]

Undergraduate Hispanic/Latino(a), African American, Pell recipient, women, and certain members of the LGBTQIA+ community were among those overrepresented among basic needs service users—a term used here to describe when a greater percentage of that population seeks services than their percentage in the overall population.[43] They are also more likely to be food insecure than the overall population (see Figure 5), which illustrates that campuses are reaching some of the most vulnerable students. For graduate students, Hispanic/Latino(a), African American, international, women, and certain members of the LGBTQIA+ community were overrepresented while also experiencing higher food insecurity rates. Undergraduate and graduate parenting students, and undergraduate foster youth, were underrepresented while experiencing higher than average food insecurity rates, indicating areas of growth. Men and professional degree students were also underrepresented.

This project also investigated which students were more likely to use certain services. For example, undergraduate students who used a food award—a program providing resources specifically for food, particularly for students unable to access other resources like CalFresh—were more likely to be domestic nonresident (versus CA resident), transfer students (versus freshmen), age 22 and above (versus younger), not Pell recipients,[44] and parenting students. Graduate students were more likely to be domestic nonresident (versus CA resident), age 30 and above (versus younger) and have a higher grade

[41] Future analysis will include service utilization's relationship with retention and graduation.

[42] California resident undergraduate students were overrepresented (86 percent of service users versus 80 percent of the overall campus populations), while California resident graduate students were underrepresented (41 percent versus 52 percent).

[43] For instance, Hispanic/Latino(a) undergraduate students represented 33 percent of those who utilized basic needs services and are only 23 percent of the overall undergraduate student population

[44] Pell recipients are not ineligible for food awards. However, many food awards recipients do not qualify for federal financial aid.

point average. These analyses provide campuses critical information to best target their supports and, ultimately, to help vulnerable students achieve improved basic needs security, better academic performance, retention, and overall well-being. UCOP IRAP has produced a public, comprehensive, and interactive dashboard that presents the project's results. This allows dashboard users to select campuses and student levels to see how basic needs service utilization correlates with characteristics and grade point averages.[45]

UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS AND DATA: STUDENT PARENTS

This year, UCOP IRAP partnered with GUEA to produce a new analysis on student parent experiences. Student parents comprise approximately 2 percent of the undergraduate population and 11 percent of the graduate population. They experience some of the highest food and housing insecurity rates, but are underrepresented in basic needs service utilization: undergraduate parenting students comprise only 1 percent of undergraduates who used campus basic needs services, and graduate parenting students comprise only 2 percent of graduate students who used campus basic needs services.[46] Analysis revealed that on average, between 2022 and 2024, undergraduate parenting students not only experienced higher levels of food insecurity (64 percent versus 46 percent for nonparenting students), but they were significantly more likely to experience very low food security, or "hunger," than nonparenting students (37 percent versus 27 percent). They were also more than three times as likely to experience housing insecurity than nonparenting students (25 percent versus 7 percent).[47]

Food insecurity also had a greater effect on undergraduate parenting students' graduation prospects than their counterparts. Approximately three-quarters of parenting students are transfer students, so the analysis looked at two-year graduation rates for transfer students. Food-insecure parenting students had a lower graduation rate (44 percent) than food-secure parenting students (59 percent). Nonparenting food-insecure transfer students also had a lower graduation rate (59 percent) than their food-secure counterparts (68 percent), but the difference was less. However, housing insecurity had a greater correlation with nonparenting transfer students' graduation rates than parenting student counterparts, with nonparenting housing-insecure transfer students graduating 55 percent of the time, versus 65 percent for housing-secure nonparenting transfer students. The difference in graduation rates for housing-insecure versus housing-secure parenting students was, by contrast, minimal at one percentage point (49 percent versus 50 percent). Figure 16 breaks down two-year graduation rates and grade point averages for parenting and nonparenting students by food and housing security status.

Figure 16: Graduation rate and UC GPA of transfer undergraduate parenting students

Parenting Status		1st Year UC GPA (all transfer entrants who responded to 2022 survey)		2-Year Graduation Rate (2021 transfer entrants)	
		N	Mean GPA	N	Graduation Rate
Parenting students		540	3.26	200	51%
Nonparenting students		8,321	3.30	4,223	64%
Parenting students	Housing secure	411	3.29	150	50%
Nonparenting students	Housing secure	6,673	3.32	3,432	65%
Parenting students	Housing insecure	71	3.19	29	49%
Nonparenting students	Housing insecure	803	3.16	353	55%
Parenting students	Food secure	231	3.33	93	59%
Nonparenting students	Food secure	3,949	3.38	2,140	68%
Parenting students	Food insecure	298	3.22	101	44%
Nonparenting students	Food insecure	4,269	3.23	2,028	59%

Source: Parenting Students' Experiences and Challenges at UC

[45] The UC Basic Needs Dashboard also provides undergraduate completion rates by food and housing insecurity status: Student basic needs | University of California

[46] See Basic needs service | University of California

[47] Data calculated by averaging 2022 and 2024 responses to UCUES; See Parenting Students' Experiences and Challenges at UC.

CONCLUSION

Over the past decade, the University of California has built a strong and widely recognized basic needs infrastructure that has proved to be an important part of supporting student health and well-being. State investment, campus leadership, student advocacy, and community partnerships have expanded access to food, housing, public benefits, and coordinated support services, enabling campuses to respond effectively to both ongoing need and acute crises.

Despite this progress, basic needs insecurity is persistent, with some students more likely to experience it than others. Rising costs, growing demand, and impending federal actions have limited progress toward meeting the Regents' aspirational goal of cutting food and housing insecurity in half.

At the same time, new data-integration efforts such as the Basic Needs Service Utilization Pilot Project demonstrate opportunities to improve access, outreach, and effectiveness of services. Moving forward, sustained investment, coordinated advocacy, and continued use of data-driven strategies will be essential to ensuring that all UC students have access to the basic resources necessary for academic success and overall well-being.

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