

Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of May 18, 2022

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BASIC NEEDS PROGRESS UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2020, the Regents' Special Committee on Student Basic Needs issued its report, *The University of California's Next Phase of Improving Student Basic Needs*.

In advance of and as a preview of the annual report on student basic needs, this progress update summarizes outcomes in this first full year of implementing the report recommendations with a focus on CalFresh advocacy, outreach, and enrollment.

BACKGROUND

In November 2020, the UC Regents set forth aspirational goals that would enable the University to reduce food and housing insecurity by half by 2025.¹ The University has made progress toward reducing the rate of food and housing insecurity for undergraduate and graduate students through a series of critical steps.

Expanding the definition of basic needs within the state represents progress in and of itself. It was made possible by the Governor's Postsecondary Council in Higher Education and by the Intersegmental Workgroup on Basic Needs. Efforts to address financial aid and increase the use of public benefit programs also have been made a priority. A summary of progress made toward these goals is among the attachments to this report.

Update: 2025 Basic Needs Goals

Since 2016, the University has included items related to basic needs on student surveys, including the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), the Graduate Student Well-Being Survey (GSWBS), and the UC Graduate Student Experience Survey (UCGSES).^{2,3} The

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

² UCUES is administered every other year and has included items related to basic needs on the 2016, 2018, and 2020 surveys. The GSWBS was administered in 2016 only.

³ UCGSES was administered for the first time in 2021, combining efforts of the GSWBS and other graduate student surveys, and will be administered every other year moving forward.

2025 food and housing insecurity goals have been adjusted to align with results from updated modules within those surveys.

Figure 1 demonstrates progress made toward reducing food and housing insecurity among undergraduate students, taking into account the historical data used to inform the 2025 goals. As reported by the 2020 UCUES, the current rate of food insecurity for undergraduate students is 39 percent and the rate of housing insecurity for undergraduate students is seven percent.

Figure 1. 2018–20 UC undergraduate student food and housing insecurity with 2025 goals

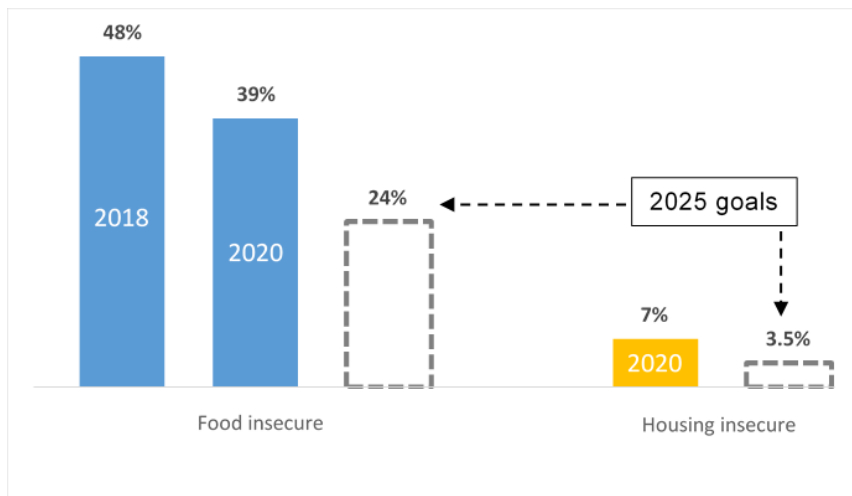
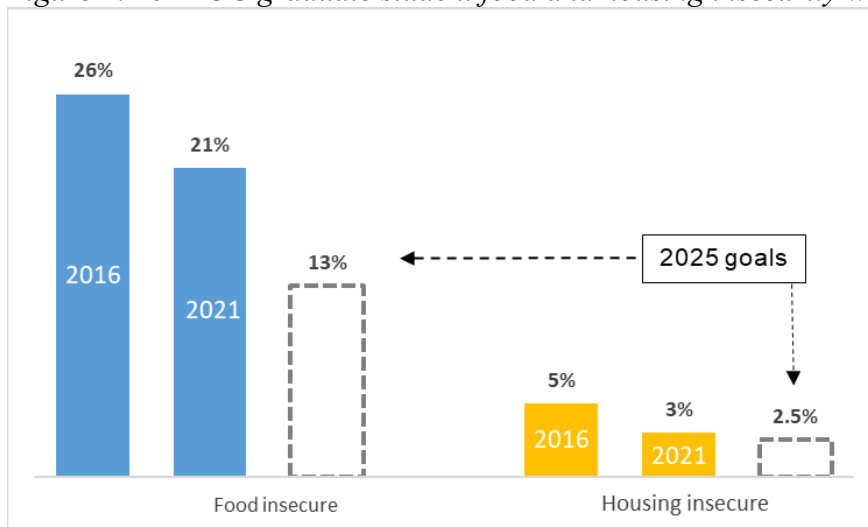


Figure 2 demonstrates progress made toward reducing food and housing insecurity among graduate students. As reported by the 2021 UCGSES, the current rate of food insecurity for graduate students is 21 percent and the rate of housing insecurity among graduate students is three percent.

Figure 2. 2021 UC graduate student food and housing insecurity with 2025 goals



While the data from the UCUES and UCGSES provides a snapshot in time of what students may be experiencing, further data analyses will be conducted to look holistically at food and housing insecurity. Various contextual factors might influence the student experience. For example, students who responded to the 2020 UCUES and 2021 UCGSES were taking online classes, so they may have been staying with parents or family members, which could have affected their responses. Furthermore, both graduate and undergraduate students received over \$270 million in federal emergency grants from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF), which was available beyond traditional financial aid.⁴

The University continues to track and analyze food and housing trends among students, particularly as additional funding, programs, and services are developed to meet their needs. To begin benchmarking the efforts associated with the next phase of student basic needs, the University has developed a logic model to track and trend systemwide objectives.

Update: Basic Needs Logic Model

There have been changes in the ecosystem of student basic needs over the last seven years. As a result of tremendous State investments through the Budget Act of 2019, campuses have established permanent basic needs services and supports with \$18.5 million in ongoing funding to address student basic needs. For the purposes of tracking efforts across the system, the University will benchmark activities to academic year 2020-2021, based on the year the Regents Special Committee report was released. A logic model to track shared efforts across the system has been developed. (see Attachment 1).

While the 2020 Regents report serves as a guide, the Basic Needs Logic Model serves as the implementation roadmap. The logic model takes into consideration all the various inputs that influence the basic needs outputs and outcomes across the system. For example, each goal and strategy from the 2020 Regents report is considered an input, influencing the activities, outputs, and outcomes within the logic model.

A summary of progress to date on Regental goals and strategies is among the attachments to this report.⁵ Figures 3 through 5 provide a snapshot of key efforts to date associated with the basic needs logic model.

Figure 3: Basic Needs Logic Model – systemwide inputs

Policy	(1) AB 396 (Gabriel) CalFresh Educational Programs (passed June 2022) (2) AB 543 (Davies) CalFresh Student Orientation (passed June 2022) (3) AB 1326 (Arambula) Public Social Services (passed June 2022) Priority 1.4, 2.6
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⁴ Annual Report on Student Financial Support: https://www.ucop.edu/enrollment-services/data-and-reporting/reports-to-the-regents-on-student-financial-support/regents_uc_50th_annual_report_student_financial_support_2020-21_letter_aa-714-ac-002.pdf

⁵ Progress toward Regents basic needs priorities can be found on the Basic Needs website: <https://basicneeds.ucop.edu>

Funding	<p>(1) AB 1809, the Budget Act of 2017, one-time appropriation of \$2.5 million for hunger-free campus efforts (2) AB 74, the Budget Act of 2019, ongoing appropriation of \$18.5 million to address food and housing, rapid rehousing needs (3) AB 85, the Budget Act of 2020, one-time appropriation of \$650,000 for CalFresh Outreach (4) AB 128, the Budget Act of 2021, ongoing appropriation of \$15 million to address student mental health</p> <p>Priority 1.4, 2.2, 2.6</p>
Partners	<p>(1) California Higher Education Basic Needs Alliance (2) Governor’s Intersegmental Workgroup on Basic Needs (3) CSU Chico Center for Healthy Communities (4) John Burton Advocates for Youth (5) California Student Aid Commission (6) Food Research & Action Center (7) California Association of Food Banks (8) California Department of Social Services (9) California Welfare Directors Association of California (10) Swipe Out Hunger (11) California Policy Lab</p> <p>Priority 3.4, 4.2</p>

Figure 4: Basic Needs Logic Model – systemwide outputs: activities

Food Resources	All UC campuses have food resources in the form of (1) food pantries, (2) food distribution, (3) food recovery, (4) grocery cards/vouchers, and (5) CalFresh outreach
Housing Resources	All UC campuses offer short and long-term housing support in the form of (1) housing grants and vouchers and (2) on-campus placements.
Emergency Support	All UC campuses offer emergency grant programs and are often supported by wraparound support through case management and Emergency Crisis Response Teams (ECRT).
Education/ Training	All UC campuses offer education, outreach and training efforts to increase awareness of campus resources, reduce stigma, and increase utilization.
Other	Most UC campuses partner with local community-based organizations and non-profits to offer additional services and supports beyond just food and housing. All campuses offer health and mental health services.

Figure 5: Basic Needs Logic Model – systemwide outputs: direct products from July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021

Campus	Basic Needs Services	Housing Services
Berkeley	3,799	817
Davis	4,962	494
Irvine	2,789	147
Los Angeles	7,126	746
Merced	690	136
Riverside	9,798	219
San Diego	5,997	484
San Francisco	1,598	78
Santa Barbara	14,307	287
Santa Cruz	1,817	592
TOTAL	52,883	4,000

Note: The summary data in this table reflects the number of unique (unduplicated) students served. Data is reported annually.

The intent of the Basic Needs Logic Model is for campuses to adopt the template as their own, empowering campuses to meet minimum shared goals while providing autonomy to grow and expand services and supports to meet students’ basic needs. Each campus differs in region, resources, and organizational structures. Therefore, campuses must be given flexibility as they evolve.

The proposed list of metrics and outcomes included within the logic model is meant to be a starting point. As additional basic needs services and supports are added, the list of outputs associated with the direct products will grow. The list of initial benchmarking data the University is expecting to collect annually is as follows:

- The amount of emergency aid awarded
- The number of students served through all food services
- The number of students served by a campus food pantry
- The number of students served by food distribution sites
- The number of students who received meal vouchers
- The number of students who received food/grocery gift cards
- The number of students served by CalFresh
- The number of students served through all housing efforts
- The number of students who received emergency aid
- The number of students served by case management
- The number of staff members hired
- The number of undergraduate student staff members hired
- The number of graduate student staff members hired

As the University prepares to evaluate short-, mid- and long-term efforts associated with the basic needs initiative, additional attention is needed to evaluate and collect outcomes data, beyond traditional student success data. Examples of traditional student success data include retention, graduation, time-to-completion, and academic performance. Other areas to explore are holistic student success measures including food security, housing security, physical and mental health, student engagement, and belonging. In addition, as the definition of basic needs continues to grow, assessing transportation needs and access to child care, technology, and internet services is critical to student success.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing student basic needs, more research is needed to inform best practices within the field of higher education.

2021–22 Key Priority: CalFresh Outreach

CalFresh, known at the federal level as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), provides individuals with monthly food benefits. It is the largest federal food benefit program and has provided support to nearly four million California residents.⁶ CalFresh enrollment by college students has become a critical component of meeting their basic needs.

The University of California has made focused efforts to increase CalFresh outreach, education, and enrollment, in close collaboration with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), and the California State University (CSU) and California Community College (CCC) systems. This priority was set by the 2020 Regents Basic Needs Report, as a key strategy to support student basic needs through public safety-net benefits.

In February 2022, the California Policy Lab (CPL) conducted a CalFresh study to measure students' use of public safety-net benefits.⁷ To demonstrate the University's effect on CalFresh outreach and enrollment, case studies from UC Santa Barbara and UC San Francisco will be featured in this written report.

Research Update from the California Policy Lab

Efforts to reduce food and housing insecurity are hampered by limited information about students' situations, and especially about participation in existing programs designed to support students at risk of either. The California Policy Lab (CPL), a research effort with activities at eight UC campuses, is working with the UC Office of the President and several state agencies to develop better measures of students' use of public safety-net benefits. CPL developed a methodology to link UC enrollment records with CalFresh participation records from CDSS and student financial information from FAFSAs contributed by CSAC, all under strict protections

⁶ California Budget and Policy Priorities Factsheet: California CalFresh (January 2021)
https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_california.pdf

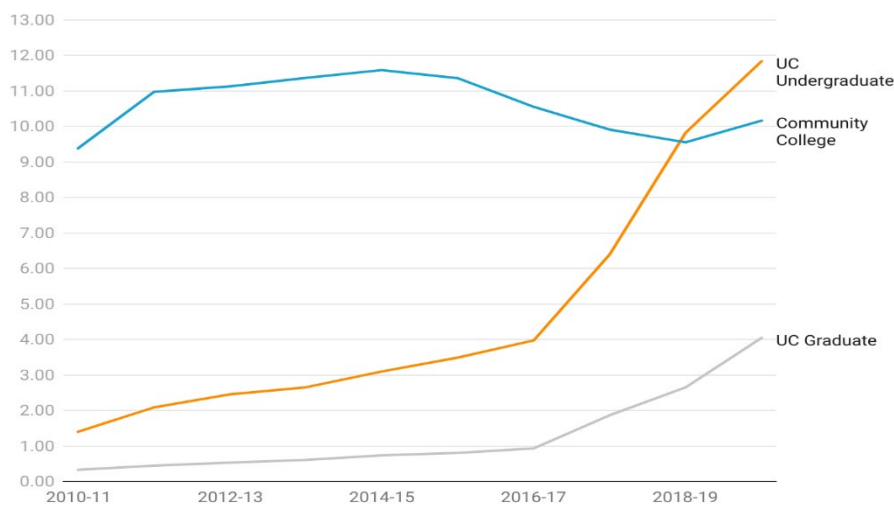
⁷ California Community College and University of California student participation in CalFresh food benefits, California Policy Lab <https://www.capolicylab.org/california-community-college-and-university-of-california-student-participation-in-calfresh-food-benefits/>

that ensure complete student privacy. CPL used this linked data system to produce the first-ever direct estimates of the number of UC students receiving CalFresh nutrition benefits between 2010 and 2020, providing a baseline for evaluating efforts under the November 2020 Regents report recommendation to increase the number of UC students enrolled in CalFresh by 50 percent, by 2022.

In the academic year 2019–20, CPL estimates that 12 percent of UC undergraduates and four percent of UC graduate students were enrolled in CalFresh at some point during the academic year (not including summer). These rates declined somewhat in fall 2020 for undergraduates (9.8 percent) but remained similar for graduates (4.5 percent), perhaps a reflection of undergraduate students changing households due to the pandemic. The full report includes estimates of CalFresh enrollment rates at the campus level and for a range of student subgroups of interest. At the campus level, UCSF had the highest rate of student CalFresh enrollment of all campuses, at 33.8 percent in the academic year 2019–20 and 29.5 percent in fall 2020. This may be due to UCSF Student Academic Affairs’ outreach and assistance efforts to encourage enrollment.

Overall rates of UC student enrollment in CalFresh have increased markedly from 2016 onwards, likely reflecting, in part, food-related initiatives and additional funding introduced around this time, as well as changes in CalFresh eligibility rules. In the academic year 2019–2020, CPL estimates that 12 percent of UC undergraduates and 4.2 percent of UC graduate students were enrolled in CalFresh at some point during the academic year (not including summer). These rates declined somewhat in fall of the 2020–21 academic year for undergraduates (9.8 percent) but remained similar for graduates (4.5 percent), perhaps a reflection of pandemic-related disruptions. Figure 6, reflects the increases in CalFresh enrollment over time from 2010–11 to 2019–20.

Figure 6: Cal Fresh enrollment rates among college students, 2010–11 to 2019–20



Source: California Policy Lab • Created with Datawrapper

Estimated participation rates are only the first step in a more ambitious planned project. CPL is using the linked data to identify students who are likely eligible for CalFresh but not currently receiving benefits. This will allow CPL to construct participation rates among eligible students, to update them annually, and to measure outcomes of ongoing and future initiatives to increase student enrollment in CalFresh. This will be crucial to testing and refining new strategies to meet students' basic needs at the campus and system levels. As an example, in 2021, CPL worked with CSAC and CDSS to evaluate email and postcard outreach to college students (across all three public education segments) who were likely eligible for CalFresh. CPL found that students who received a postcard and an email were 68 percent more likely to apply for CalFresh than those who only received an email, an impact that would have been impossible to measure without the linked data system developed by CPL. CPL will continue to work with basic needs centers throughout UC to develop and test the impacts of additional outreach and other aspects of their programming.

Campus Case Study: UC Santa Barbara

UC Santa Barbara (UCSB) has a robust CalFresh program. The campus recently succeeded in breaking a state record for the most applications submitted to CalFresh by a single California college or university in a month—1,233 applications in September 2021. A major component of this success relates to the integration of CalFresh with financial aid programs and processes. The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships recognizes CalFresh as a core financial aid program that offers critical support to students facing food insecurity, one that has become more visible and accessible to undergraduate and graduate students alike. This has been accomplished with integrated messaging, engagement of financial aid staff at all levels, strategic use of work-study, and improved documentation to support student CalFresh applications.

The UCSB CalFresh team also facilitates a countywide CalFresh and food security planning committee called the Higher Education Food Impact Group, with stakeholders from Santa Barbara City College, Allan Hancock College, Westmont College, Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services, Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, Cottage Hospital, and Santa Barbara Food Action Network. This creative approach has yielded a further increase in CalFresh enrollment. It has also highlighted the positive effect of CalFresh on the local economy, as it strengthens the purchasing power of students in the Santa Barbara community.

Campus Case Study: UCSF

UCSF supports student basic needs through a robust model of prevention, intervention, and emergency relief. UCSF Basic Needs for Students connects students to critical on- and off-campus resources and provides opportunities for students to learn to take personal responsibility for their wellness.⁸ In addition, UCSF supports students with the essential resources to thrive there, which include financial assistance, health/wellness, food, housing, transportation, and dependent care.

⁸ The UC San Francisco Basic Needs for Students website: <https://basicneeds.ucsf.edu/>

In 2020–21, UCSF served 11,051 total students (1,598 unique students). The most-used program continues to be the CalFresh Application Assistance program, which served 968 students (30 percent of the UCSF student body) with an 85 percent approval rate for CalFresh benefits applications. Since 2018, UCSF Basic Needs has successfully partnered with Student Financial Services to focus efforts on increasing awareness and enhancing support for students applying for CalFresh benefits. Efforts included informing all new students about basic needs resources, including CalFresh, during orientation; inviting all new students to CalFresh Application Assistance workshops; training and deploying CalFresh Ambassadors to supplement outreach efforts; prioritizing CalFresh emergency applications through Student Financial Services; and establishing an ongoing, open relationship with the San Francisco-Marín Food Bank, the Alameda County Community Food Bank, the City and County of San Francisco Human Services Agency, and Alameda County Social Services workers to address applications that are in process or not approved.

As a result of UCSF CalFresh efforts, 98 percent of students surveyed agreed that participating in the program has made them more food-secure and reduced their food security stress.

State and Federal CalFresh Policy Efforts

The work of CalFresh at the campus level would not be possible without the help and support of State funding and policies that have continued to champion students' needs. Assembly Bill (AB) 85 amended the 2020–21 State Budget Act to include a one-time appropriation of \$650,000 to support campus efforts to increase student applications to the CalFresh program. As a result of these funds, the University supported 58,188 students from January 1, 2021, to September 30, 2021.⁹

In addition, the following bills were signed by Governor Newsom in October 2021, which has helped advance the Regents' goals and recommendations:

- AB 396 (Gabriel) CalFresh Educational Programs: Requires a program that meets the eligibility standards established by the State Department of Social Services for CalFresh local educational programs to increase employability at a campus at CCC, CSU, vocational school, or graduate school; and requests that each UC campus submit an application for certification to the department on or before June 1, 2022.
- AB 543 (Davies) CalFresh Student Orientation: Requires CSU and requests UC to provide, as part of campus orientation, educational information about CalFresh and the eligibility requirements for CalFresh to all incoming students for all campuses of their respective segments.
- AB 1326 (Arambula) Liaison for Higher Education: Requires a county human services agency to designate at least one employee as a staff liaison for academic counselors and professional staff at public higher education institutions, and encourages the agency to consult with specified stakeholders, including UC, to develop protocols and to

⁹ University of California CalFresh Legislative Report 2020-21: https://www.ucop.edu/operating-budget/files/legreports/2021-22/calfresh_legrpt_2021.pdf

collaborate with CSU, CCC, and UC by request to conduct a related survey and report to be submitted to specified legislative committees and the Department of Social Services.

Challenges

Students across the University have received substantial support from campuses during a critical time of need. Unfortunately, barriers to access to county services remain a challenge. Students and campuses report challenges with the complexity of student eligibility rules and exemptions, which are barriers to the uptake of student enrollment, causing students to be unnecessarily disqualified from CalFresh benefits. Previous legislation included Senate Bill (SB) 77, which established a cross-segment, CDSS-led CalFresh Eligibility Work Group; this in turn contributed to the recent passing of AB 396 and AB 1326, which aim to address local challenges. However, more efforts are needed at the federal level to ensure that the US Department of Agriculture makes strategic changes to SNAP to support college students, namely to make permanent the emergency expansion of SNAP eligibility for college students, to urge Congress to pass the EATS Act, and to permanently expand SNAP eligibility to include students “attending an institution of higher education.”^{10,11}

Another major challenge is data limitations, with limited data on student eligibility, enrollment, and uptake. This has made it increasingly difficult to arrive at an accurate understanding of the impact CalFresh efforts have made on student success. Currently, the California Policy Lab is the only entity that has been able to create a linked data system between CDSS, CSAC, CCC, and UC. While CPL’s efforts have been helpful in the short term, the State of California’s Cradle-to-Career system ought to examine outcomes from CPL’s CalFresh study to inform the 2025–26 Goals to add social service, health, and workforce data to better assess student success outcomes.

CONCLUSION

CalFresh outreach efforts continue to be a priority and together comprise a key strategy used across all ten campuses to increase public safety net benefits for students in need. While campuses have made great strides in educating students about these benefits, external state and federal barriers continue to affect students’ ability to navigate public safety-net programs and services. This has caused barriers to the uptake of student enrollment, time-to-degree, and overall student well-being.

Despite these challenges, the university remains committed to continuing this important work. As such the following priorities, from the 2020 Regents report have been identified as strategic next steps to continue to advance basic needs efforts across the system.

¹⁰ The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, temporarily expanded student eligibility to new groups from January 16, 2021, through the end of the public health emergency: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/students>.

¹¹ The EATS Act would permanently expand SNAP eligibility: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1919?r=1&s=3>.

- Continue advancing efforts to increase students’ utilization of public benefits by working closely with the CDSS, California higher education segments, and local counties to support the implementation of policy changes to increase CalFresh enrollment efforts. (Priority 1.4, 2.3, 2.6, 2.8, 3.1, 5.1, 5.2)
- Continue to advocate for greater investment in financial aid at the federal, state and university levels by doubling the Pell Grant, engaging in CalGrant and Middle Class Scholarship reform, and creating debt-free UC pathways. (Priority 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 5.1, 5.2)
- Continue to evaluate and report progress towards short-, mid- and long-term student success outcomes. (Priority 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

KEY TO ACRONYMS

CCC	California Community Colleges
CDSS	California Department of Social Services
CHC	Center for Healthy Communities
CPL	California Policy Lab
CSAC	California Student Aid Commission
CSU	California State University
GSWBS	Graduate Student Well-Being Survey
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
UCUES	UC Undergraduate Experience Survey
UCGSES	UC Graduate Student Experience Survey

ATTACHMENTS

- [Attachment 1. Basic Needs Logic Model](#)
- [Attachment 2. Basic Needs 2025 Goal Tracker](#)