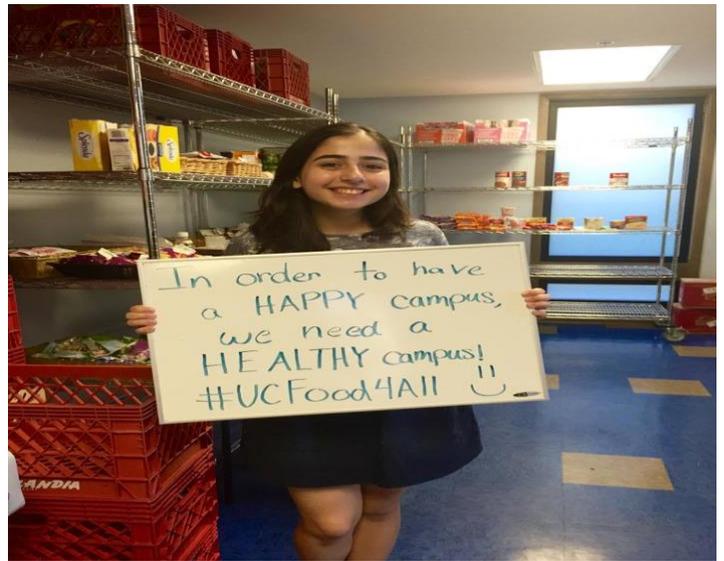


UC San Diego Basic Needs Insecurity Committee



Report on Food and Housing Insecurity at UC San Diego

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SUMMARY

On April 27th the Basic Needs Committee was charged by the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs to specifically assist the campus in the following areas:

- A definition of food and housing insecurity that suits our campus' unique needs;
- Identification of prevailing challenges associated with accessing affordable and sustainable food and housing;
- Creation of an inventory of all existing campus programs and services in support of housing and food security;
- Provide recommendations for further coordination and collaboration and possible new initiatives aimed at addressing food and housing insecurity.

Further, the committee was asked to advance strategies for the campus that are immediate (this academic year), short-term (1-3 years) and long-term (3-5 years).

The Committee included Vonda Garcia, Director of Financial Aid & Scholarships Office, William Armstrong, Director, Student Research and Information, Krista Mays, HDH Sustainability and Green Living, Heather Belk, Associated Students Administration, Roz Allina, Student Health Services Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Jon Carlos Senour, Director, Student Legal Services, Amanda Marples, Assistant Director for Student Life Marketing, Ryan Perez, Interim Director of Commuter Student Services, Lesly Figueroa, Manager, Triton Food Pantry and Mary Anan, Attorney, Student Legal Services.

The committee addressed its work by dividing the issue of food and housing insecurity into questions and sub topics which members then individually researched, and analyzed. We used data from a variety of surveys and reports such as the most recent California State University's internal review of food insecurity, NASPA's Emergency Aid Report, UCUES findings, data from the Triton Food Pantry and several scholarly articles on both student homelessness and food insecurity.

OVERVIEW

Across the country as college costs have increased, students and their families have struggled to identify the financial resources needed to meet their basic needs during the duration of their academic tenure. Identified among the top public research institutions in the United States, UC San Diego attracts students from a wide variety of life experiences and backgrounds. The campus awards Pell Grants to 40% of the student population (more than UC Berkeley and UCLA) and over 60% of the student population receive some type of financial assistance. However, for too many students attending UC San Diego their time in college is often marred with complex personal, social and unexpected financial challenges. Students' experiences with these challenges are multidimensional as food insecurity or housing instability are not mutually exclusive experiences. In fact, most students who experience food insecurity are likely to also be experiencing some level of housing instability. Students experiencing food insecurity and/or housing instability are also more likely to encounter academic challenges as well as experience some level of mental health distress and/or report a poor health status (UC Student Food Access and Security Study, 2016 & US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015).

Several recent surveys and reports have focused on food insecurity throughout the UC system. We hope in the weeks ahead to analyze the data received in both the recent Student Food Access and Security study completed by UC Office of the President and the 2016 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES).

However, In the 2014 UCUES survey one in four UC San Diego students reported they "somewhat to very often" skip meals to save money. The campus has partially risen to meet the needs of struggling students through several efforts including emergency loans, the development of a food pantry, food vouchers and new for the 2016-17 year an unrestricted grant program targeting students in need. However, more is required to fully meet the basic needs of an increasing student population, including: A common language, the identification of at risk populations, greater campus integration among various food and housing security efforts, targeted data collection, increased campus awareness and marketing.

A COMMON LANGUAGE

It is necessary that as the campus continues to direct resources towards supporting students who identify as housing and/or food insecure, we provide our community with a common definition of basic needs insecurity.

The broad term of **food insecurity** can encompass a number of experiences from a poor quality diet that lacks variety, to inconsistent access to affordable and nutritious food options.

Housing insecurity includes a number of circumstances, such as unaffordable housing costs, poor housing quality, overcrowding, couch surfing and homelessness.

Basic Needs Insecurity is inclusive of either food insecurity and/or housing insecurity experiences. *In essence, when a student identifies as not having access to consistent nutritious food or secure housing, they are basic needs insecure.*

CHALLENGES WITH ACCESSING AFFORDABLE FOOD AND HOUSING:

Several barriers have been identified that impede a student's ability to access consistent, nutritious food and/or consistent housing. In the 2016 UC Global Food Initiative's Student Food Access and Security Study the following data was gathered, "System wide, UC students reported often (often or very often) experiencing the following barriers to accessing food they wanted: cost (39%), lack of time to prepare food (48%), and lack of time to shop for food (46%). Food insecure students, including those experiencing reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet, reported more often experiencing the following barriers to food access than food secure students: cost (46% vs. 38%), lack of time to prepare foods (52% vs. 46%), and lack of time to shop for food (49% vs. 44%),"

Some specific UC San Diego campus examples of impediments to financial resources and nutritious food include the following:

- Financial aid challenges
 - Students who do not meet satisfactory academic progress have to appeal their financial aid, the delay often means students must pay in advance their fees and hope that their financial aid is restored.
 - Timing of financial aid disbursements can create gaps in student finances. For example, aid is not dispersed until the first day of classes, but students may need money to fund housing before the start of the first day of class.
- Affordability challenges
 - Estimated cost of attending UCSD falls short of actual cost of living in La Jolla
 - When Payday occurs, (i.e. if someone gets paid AFTER rent is due, or only gets paid once a month, so there is little money near the end of the month)
 - Experiencing health problems, either mental or physical, and are unable to work, or spend most of the money on trying to get well, leaving very little for food and rent
- Location challenges
 - Unfriendly tenant laws that prevent students from sharing rooms to reduce costs
 - Transportation and parking challenges for commuters
- Knowledge challenges
 - Students come to college with lack of financial experience
 - Students lack proper resources to find housing and roommates
 - Students may lack credit/rental history and are not able to find guarantors

We look forward to more specific housing insecurity data once UCUES, 2016 is finalized and analyzed by our Office of Student Research and Information.

Anecdotally however, we note that students often report the following experiences to campus administrators and student leaders that when dealing with basic needs insecurity they will sleep in lounge spaces and with friends, shower in recreation facilities, skip meals in order to buy books, and intentionally seek out student activities and programs where free food is provided citing that they have not eaten all day.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY:

Although anyone can experience basic needs insecurity, there are certain populations who are at higher risk to experience it. There is also very little actual data around the demographics of people who experience basic needs security, most of these were inferred based on general trends nation-wide (not just university students) and after conversations with many UC San Diego students who experience basic needs insecurity. We hope to get more concrete data about the populations at-risk through the UC surveys and results that are yet to be released.

Populations that may be at higher risk for food and or housing insecurity:

- Foster youth
- Homeless children/ teenagers
- LGBTQ community
 - students who don't receive support from their parents due to their identities
- Lower income bracket
 - Students will sometimes send money home to help their family, then are at a loss when trying to pay for food and housing
 - Due to the incorrect cost of attendance, there isn't enough money given through financial aid to pay for rent and food
- Undocumented students
 - DREAM act doesn't grant enough to nearly cover the cost
- Students who cannot fill out a FAFSA due to not having the ability to obtain parental financial information and continually getting denied individual appeals

Populations at higher risk for food and housing insecurity cont.

- Middle class students
 - too much money to get financial aid, too little money to pay for college
 - also students from middle class families, who receive no support from their families
- Transfer students
 - Source: Wisconsin Community Colleges survey
- First generation college students
 - little knowledge of the cost of college outside of “cost of attendance”
- First generation immigrants
- Graduate students
- Students with single parents, or a large family, with a lot of siblings especially if they are a middle or younger child, parent(s) already had to front the cost for their older siblings

UC SAN DIEGO EFFORTS TO DATE:

UC San Diego has formed several campus partnerships in Support of food security. Housing, Dining & Hospitality, The Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Associated Students, the Undergraduate Colleges, Financial Aid and Scholarships Office, Student Health, Counseling and Psychological Services, and Student Life have created the following initiatives in support of basic needs security on campus:

Triton Food Pantry (launched Winter 2015, open M-F)

- Open for free to any registered UCSD student (including graduates)
- An average of 230 students visit the pantry each week
- Since opening in Spring of last year, the pantry has provided food to over 2,000 unique students

Produce Boxes (weekly, mid Spring 2016)

- Partnership with local CSA Farm Garden of Eden to offer fresh local produce boxes to students

Cooking Demonstrations (biweekly beginning Spring 2016)

- Collaboration with HDH and the Food Pantry to teach students how to prepare healthy meals using ingredients offered in the pantry
- Sessions are free for any student who registers through the Food Pantry

Meal Preparation Sessions (new, Spring 2016)

- Space for students to prepare meals for the week
- Some materials provided for students (such as Mason jars or reusable dishware)

CalFresh Eligibility Sessions (1-2 times per month, began Winter 2016)

- Local CalFresh Coordinator comes to campus to help students fill out applications for CalFresh
- Coordinator submits any completed applications for students following the session

Crowdsurf Campaign (Fall 2015)

- Collaboration between the Associated Students and Annual Giving to fundraise \$9,000 for food insecurity

Programs available through Financial Aid and Scholarships

- Emergency Loan Program – Financial aid students are able to borrow up to \$1500 (exceptions on case-by-case) to assist with urgent needs, including food and housing needs. A common use is for housing deposits prior to the start of the Fall term. Loans are repaid with expected financial aid disbursements.

- Basic Needs Emergency Grant – Up to \$1000 (exceptions on case-by-case) is gifted to students for urgent food and housing needs. Awarded on a referral basis from College Deans, Students of Concern Case Managers, Financial Aid Counselors, and other campus staff. Funded by VC Student Affairs and available effective Summer 2016.
- Dream Emergency Grant Supplement – Up to \$500 per quarter is gifted to Dream students for urgent issues, including food and housing needs. Funded by UCOP.
- Budgeting workshops and one-on-one counseling to develop personal budgets.

Meal Vouchers

- \$10 Triton Cards (good for food only) given to students in need

Basic Needs Committee (Spring 2016)

- Decision to transition existing Food Insecurity Workgroup to campus-wide Basic Needs Committee addressing both housing and food insecurity among students.
- Charged by VC Student Affairs in collaboration with AS President, chaired by Muir Dean of Student Affairs

Services offered by The Zone

- In conjunction with the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office, offers a 10-week “Financially Savvy” workshop series which includes budgeting, smart spending, and credit card debt management, all of which can lead to improved and maximized availability of personal funds for food and housing.
- Napping accommodations are provided daily during open hours.

Services provided by Student Affairs Case Managers

- Referrals to CalFresh and San Diego Food Bank
- Referrals to 211 for local services and resources by United Way for housing, food and utilities assistance.

Resources provided by Housing Dining and Hospitality

- EcoGrounds coffee proceeds includes \$.15/lb of the total Triton Blend sold at UCSD facilities- HDH Dining/Markets & UCSD Med Center and donated to the Food Pantry.
- Colleges Rock Hunger Fall food Drive & the Walk the Block program to help raise food & awareness of Triton Food Pantry.
- End of year donations from students that helps to stock the Pantry for the summer.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Basic Needs Committee offers the following IMMEDIATE CAMPUS STRATEGIES

Dedicated staff member for basic needs

A dedicated FTE for basic needs security work would serve multiple purposes. Primarily, a dedicated staff member is needed to coordinate existing basic needs initiatives, as well as develop new programs to best address food and housing insecurity (such as additional student positions, financial aid initiatives, and emergency housing). A dedicated staff member would also serve as a point-of-contact for students struggling with food and housing insecurity. Currently, basic needs resources at UCSD are diffused across campus, making them difficult to access. Finally, this staff member would serve as UCSD’s representative for system-wide work related to basic needs. *Potential shared funding sources for this position could include student affairs, associated students and graduate student association.*

Continued access to emergency food relief and development of temporary housing for students

The Triton Food Pantry continues to serve over 200 students each week, and usage will likely grow in 2016-2017. Continuing to provide healthy food to students experiencing food insecurity will remain a priority, as well as

expanding CalFresh eligibility workshops, and efforts to increase the number of on-campus markets accepting EBT. To complement these food insecurity efforts, In addition, we propose developing a plan to provide students with emergency housing relief. We recommend that on-campus housing vacancies be used for students in need of emergency housing, and would also like to explore the possibility of staff/community members hosting students in need.

Develop website/central resource for basic needs initiatives on campus

A centralized website of basic needs resources available to UCSD students would help streamline the process of serving students experiencing food and housing insecurity. Currently, there is a system-wide webpage of food insecurity work happening on the UC level, which could serve as a model for a UCSD-specific basic needs website. A dedicated basic needs staff member on-campus would be very helpful in developing and managing this resource.

Assessment strategies

The results from the UCOP Food Access and Security Survey will provide broad, system-wide data and for campus specific data the results from the 2016 UCUES survey and Grad Wellbeing surveys will further inform our campus specific discussions and efforts.

As we continue to explore the scope and impact of food and housing insecurity at UCSD, it is imperative that we gather data in order to inform decision-making. In addition to tracking usage at the Triton Food Pantry, we hope to analyze the PIDs gathered in order to better understand what populations of UCSD students are most vulnerable to food insecurity. As UCUES 2016 data becomes available, we will gain valuable insight into the level of housing insecurity at UCSD. Additionally, as programs are developed to address food and housing insecurity, these initiatives will need to be assessed (via surveys, focus groups, etc.) in order to determine their effectiveness.

The Basic Needs Committee offers the following recommended SHORT TERM CAMPUS STRATEGIES

Increased access to temporary housing for students

As discussed in the section above, emergency housing would offer students a safe place to stay during times of housing insecurity (e.g. between leases, or during a financial crisis). Over the next 1-3 years, emergency housing options will need to be developed and refined. Current suggestions include utilizing vacancies in on-campus housing, and creating a database of staff/faculty/community members who are willing to host students in need. A dedicated staff member for basic needs security could serve as the project lead for this initiative, in collaboration with HDH and that Basic Needs Workgroup.

Further develop financial and food literacy programs on campus

In addition to struggling with inconsistent access to quality and affordable food, many students do not have a comprehensive understanding of how to budget, or knowledge regarding nutrition, food production, and food preparation. There are several small programs on campus that address these issues (e.g. financial literacy workshops, and cooking demonstrations) that serve as a solid starting point for increasing students' financial and food literacy. With additional resources and marketing, these initiatives could be streamlined and expanded to reach a larger percentage of the student body.

Financial Aid initiatives

The Financial Aid and Scholarships Office plays a key role in ensuring that students' basic needs are met. The presence of Financial Aid staff on the Basic Needs committee has allowed us to develop several short term recommendations. First, we recommend establishing completion scholarships on campus, which would be available for students who have encountered unexpected financial obstacles that could prevent them from completing their degree. We also recommend expanding the existing emergency grant program, given that funding has only been allocated for one year. Finally, we suggest that financial aid disbursement times be analyzed and potentially amended, given that students frequently share difficulty accessing funds in time to meet financial obligations.

Partnership with campus development officers about fundraising for basic needs initiatives

While UCOP has been very helpful in regards to recent funding allocations for food insecurity, additional resources are needed in order to effectively address basic needs security at UCSD. Developing partnerships with campus development officers would likely open up new fundraising avenues, which could help solidify the initiatives outlined in this report. A long-term goal is to have basic needs included as one of UCSD's capital fundraising projects.

Increasing basic needs literacy of staff

Given that food and housing insecurity are large issues at UCSD, it is necessary that key administrators (e.g. case managers, deans, CAPs, student health, academic advisors) maintain a strong network of support for students. In order to achieve this, we need to ensure that staff at all levels are educated about basic needs, and the impact that food and housing insecurity have on students' experiences. Furthermore, staff need to be knowledgeable about the existing resources on campus for students experiencing food and housing insecurity, such as the food pantry and emergency grants. Incorporating education into existing trainings would be a strong strategy for increasing staff/faculty knowledge about basic needs issues and initiatives.

The Basic Needs Committee offers the following recommended LONG TERM CAMPUS STRATEGIES

Coordination with on campus vendors to increase healthy habits and affordability

Working with the third-party vendors to explore the ability to provide healthy and affordable food. Collaborate with HDH to explore on-campus housing affordability and room capacity, as well exploring the on-campus HDH food prices. This would be allow students to get the "on-campus experience" without "breaking the bank".

Increased campus farming and food forests

Providing fresh food grown by students, for students to increase food knowledge and continue providing fresh produce to the Triton Food Pantry, and other entities on campus (?)

Definition of acceptable standard of living on campus

Maintaining and updating a standard of living including food and housing and creating strategies in which to maintain this standard for both on- and off-campus living

CONCLUSION

As detailed in the above report, the issues of food and housing insecurity at UCSD are complex and pervasive. While the list of strategies outlined is not exhaustive, it represents a strong starting point for addressing these issues at UC San Diego. We appreciate the opportunity to engage in this work through the Basic Needs Committee, and look forward to developing additional interventions geared towards promoting students' health and well-being.