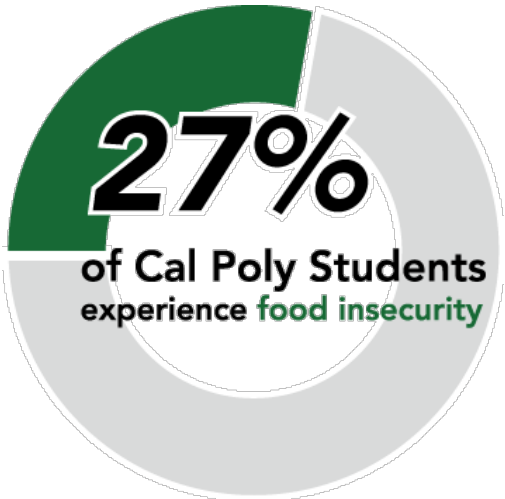# CAL POLY

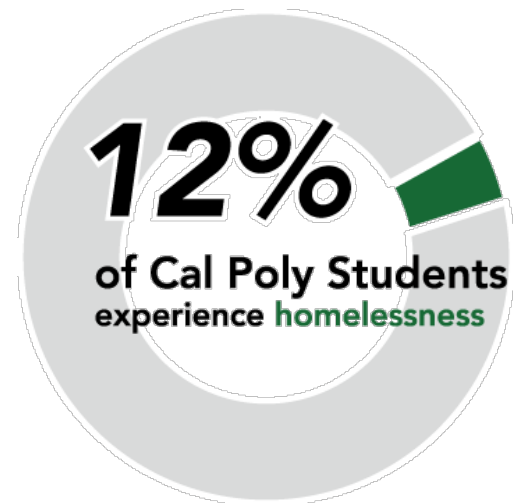# CAL POLY BASIC NEEDS TASK FORCE REPORT

Fall 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

College students must be properly fed and housed if they are to succeed academically. According to The California State University (CSU) Basic Needs Initiative Report (2018), 27 percent of Cal Poly students experience food insecurity, and 12 percent experience homelessness. Cal Poly students who experience food and housing insecurity report worse physical health, mental health, and lower GPAs than students who do not. Established research has also confirmed that hunger and homelessness among young people impairs cognition, memory, academic performance, mental health and social well-being.

These problems impact thousands of Cal Poly students, disproportionately affecting first-generation college students, students of color, and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Stigma, shame and fear exacerbate already precarious positions with respect to

27% of Cal Poly Students experience food insecurity

their academic performance and path to graduation, not to mention their physical and mental well-being.

As college tuition and living expenses continue to increase, together with socio-demographic diversity at Cal Poly, food and housing insecurity issues are likely to become more pronounced. In the interest of achieving CSU Graduation Initiative targets and fostering a positive, inclusive campus climate, Cal Poly must take concerted action to ensure that all students have regular and sufficient access to proper food and housing.

12%
of Cal Poly Students experience **homelessness**

The chronic and devastating nature of hunger and homelessness on our campus underscores the need for an integrated basic needs infrastructure at Cal Poly. The Cal Poly Basic Needs Task Force recommends the following actions:

1) **Acknowledge the problem** and scale of basic needs insecurity on our campus.

2) Create a student-centered, dedicated, **physical space** for basic needs-related issues.

3) **Normalize and destigmatize** issues associated with food and housing insecurity and poverty.

4) **Focus on equity**, providing students with the help that is right for them.

5) **Capitalize on partnerships** across sectors.

6) Build a stronger **evidence base** by encouraging and supporting research.

7) **Advocate** for basic needs efforts at the campus, CSU, state and national levels.

8) Undertake philanthropic **fundraising** for basic needs efforts.

KEY TERMS

BASIC NEEDS
Necessary resources for survival. The fundamental, minimum requirements necessary for a decent standard of life and physical, mental and social well-being. In the context of this report, we refer primarily to food and housing, but basic needs may also include issues such as safety and security, sanitation, access to clean water, and clothing.

CALFRESH
The name of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in California. CalFresh offers eligible individuals and families money in the form of an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, similar to a debit card, which can be used to purchase fresh food. The CalFresh college student recepient receives $150/month to spend on groceries.

FOOD INSECURITY
The state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. "Low" and "very low" food security levels are defined as "food insecure" by the Department of Agriculture, and "marginal" and "high" food security levels are considered "food secure." The word "hunger" is sometimes used colloquially, albeit imprecisely, to describe food insecurity.

FOOD PANTRY
Charitable effort that distributes food to those who have difficulty accessing enough food to avoid hunger or food insecurity. At Cal Poly, the food pantry is located at the Student Health and Wellness Center and may be utilized by any registered student.

HOUSING INSTABILITY OR INSECURITY, HOMELESSNESS

Variably defined as having difficulty paying rent, moving frequently, living in overcrowded conditions, or doubling up with friends and relatives. In the college context, instability may take the form of frequently moving or changing residences due to lack of resources or eviction, or temporary or chronic couch surfing. Homelessness refers to lack of a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, characterized by living in motels, hotels or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations, or living in a car or other location not designated as a residence.

MEAL VOUCHERS

Cal Poly program designed to alleviate food insecurity by providing electronic dining credits redeemable for meals at participating food outlets on campus.

MUSTANG MEAL SHARE

Cal Poly program that allows freshmen with a dining plan to donate up to 10 meals per academic year to fellow students.

OBJECTIVE

The Cal Poly Basic Needs Task Force was inaugurated in 2016 as a working group and currently meets monthly during the academic year. It is co-chaired by Joy Pedersen, associate dean of students, and Aydin Nazmi, associate professor in the Food Science and Nutrition Department. Members of the task force represent Alumni Relations, ASI, Athletics, Cal Poly Corporation, Campus Dining, Campus Health and Wellbeing, Career Counseling and Education, Counseling Services, Dean of Students and Student Affairs, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Facilities, Financial Aid, Green Campus Program, Office of the President, University Housing and Residential Life, and community members and organizations.

> **The goal of the task force, and that of this report, is to examine and contextualize the problem of basic needs insecurity at Cal Poly and to offer solutions to address this ongoing problem.**

BACKGROUND

College students must be properly fed and housed if they are to succeed academically. Sadly, thousands of Cal Poly students lack the basic needs of food and housing, according to the CSU Basic Needs Initiative Report (2018)[1].

The notion that college students are protected from basic needs insecurity, that is, difficulty accessing proper and consistent food and housing, is incorrect. In fact, **college students are at substantially increased risk** for experiencing these problems compared to non-student populations. The cost of tuition, housing and books, and gaps in financial aid, contribute to college students' vulnerability to these issues[2]. This is a national problem that not only compromises academic success, but also compromises longer-term professional and economic mobility. Worse, these problems are often hidden due to stigma and shame.

The prevalence of food insecurity in U.S. colleges and universities is at least 40 percent[3], in line with CSU[1] and University of California (UC)[4] data showing **42 percent food insecurity** among students. To put this into perspective, national data shows U.S. households average 12-16 percent food insecurity, suggesting **college students are affected three times as much** as non-student households (USDA Economic Research Service). As with community-based populations, there are **significant disparities** between college student groups. At the CSU level, for example, **substantially increased risk of food insecurity** exists among first-generation college students (49 percent), Pell Grant recipients (51 percent), former foster youth (63 percent), EOP students (58 percent), students who speak English as a second language (49 percent), Dreamers (47 percent), and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students (45 percent). Latino/Hispanic, black/African-American, native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, and other race/ethnicity students experienced food insecurity at higher rates compared to non-Hispanic white and Asian students.

Homelessness among students averages about 13 percent[5] but has been reported as high as 20 percent in the Los Angeles Community College District[6]. The **CSU average for homelessness was 11 percent** in 2017, but **higher rates were evident** for transfer students, Pell Grant recipients, EOP students, and students who speak English as a second language (all 13 percent), international students (16 percent), and former foster youth (25 percent), black/African-American students also experienced homelessness at far higher rates (18 percent).

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[1] Crutchfield and Maguire. California State University Basic Needs Initiative Report. CSU Chancellor's Office. 2018. https://www2.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/student-success/basic-needs-initiative. Report data and narratives (red boxes) cited throughout.
[2] Goldrick-Rab. Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream. University of Chicago Press. 2016.
[3] Nazmi, Martinez, Byrd et al. Food insecurity among US higher education students: A systematic review. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 2018. DOI: 10.1080/19320248.2018.1484316.
[4] Martinez, Web, Frongillo et al. Food insecurity in California's public university system: What are the risk factors? *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 2017. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19320248.2017.1374901
[5] Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Hernandez. Hungry and homeless in college. 2017. http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf
[6] Los Angeles County Community College District. 2017. http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Wisconsin-HOPE-Lab-LA-CC-District-Report-Survey-Student-Needs.pdf

Unsurprisingly, lack of proper food and housing makes everything worse. **The evidence is unambiguous that food and housing insecurity lead to poor physical, mental, cognitive, academic and social outcomes**[7]. Moreover, these problems **disproportionately impact students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students**, suggesting the need for equity-based approaches targeting those experiencing highest risk.

CAL POLY DATA

According to the CSU data from 2018, **27 percent of Cal Poly students experience food insecurity** (Figure 1). Of these, there was an approximately equal distribution of food insecurity (defined as "low" and "very low" food security, shown in red in graph below). An additional 26 percent experienced "marginal" food security, which refers to problems of food access and consistent anxiety over food acquisition. This translates to approximately **6,000 students without regular access to proper food and another 6,000 on the brink**.

Food Security Status Among Cal Poly Students
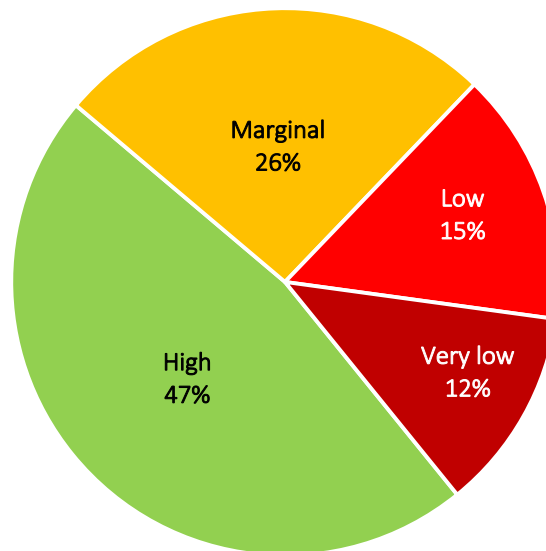
Figure 1. Food security status among Cal Poly students showing 27 percent food insecurity (15 percent low and 12 percent very low food security) and 73 percent food security (47 percent high and 26 percent marginal food security). Data from the 2018 CSU study.

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[7] Jyoti DF, Frongillo EA, Jones SJ. Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance, Weight Gain, and Social Skills. *The Journal of Nutrition.* 2005. Alaimo K, Olson CM, Frongillo EA. Food Insufficiency and American School-Aged Children's Cognitive, Academic, and Psychosocial Development. *Pediatrics.* 2001. Howard LL. Does food insecurity at home affect non-cognitive performance at school? A longitudinal analysis of elementary student classroom behavior. *Economics of Education Review.* 2011.

Students struggling with food insecurity have worse physical and mental health indicators (Figure 2), and **lower GPAs** (Figure 3).
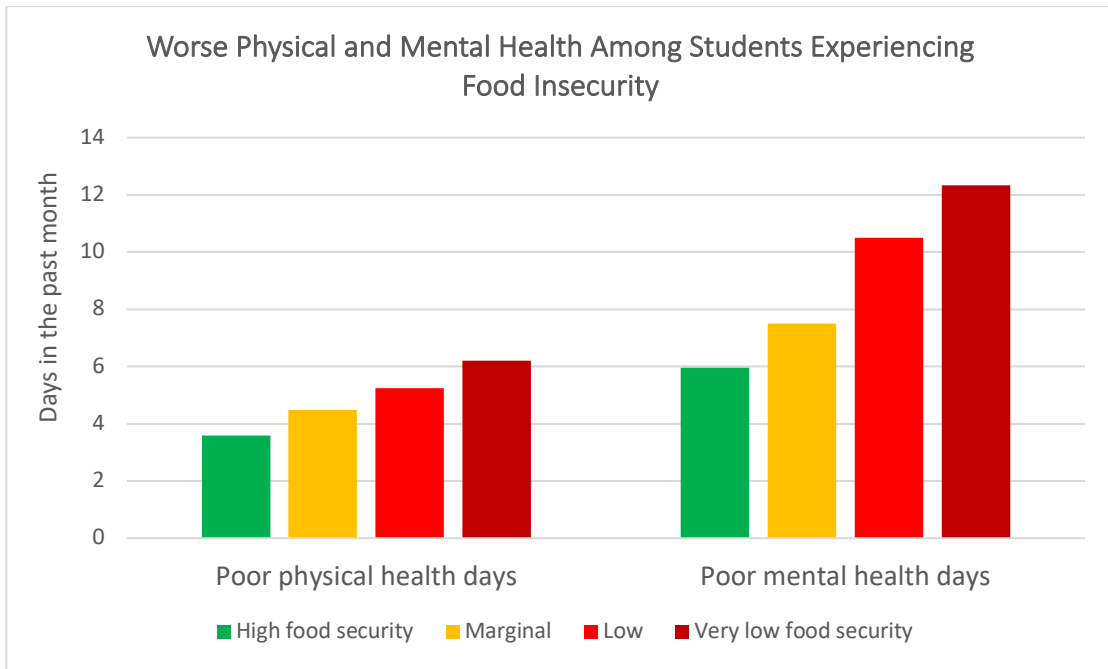

Figure 2. Health and academic outcomes by level of food security in the previous 30 days. Data from the 2018 CSU study.
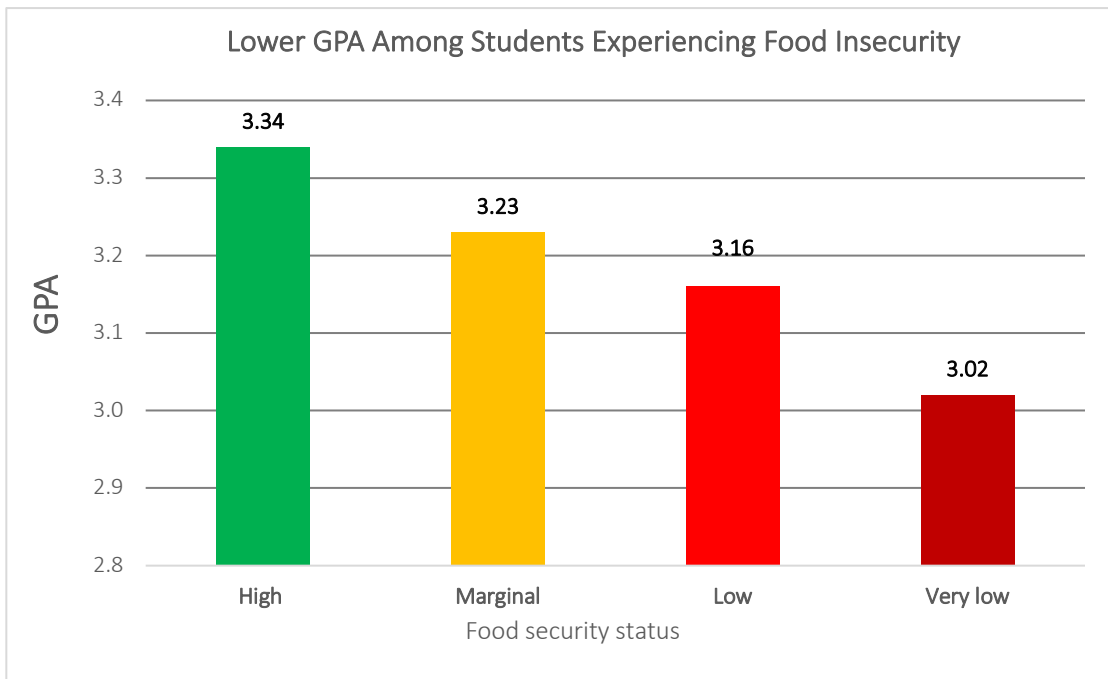
Figure 3. GPA by level of food security among Cal Poly students. Data from the 2018 CSU study.
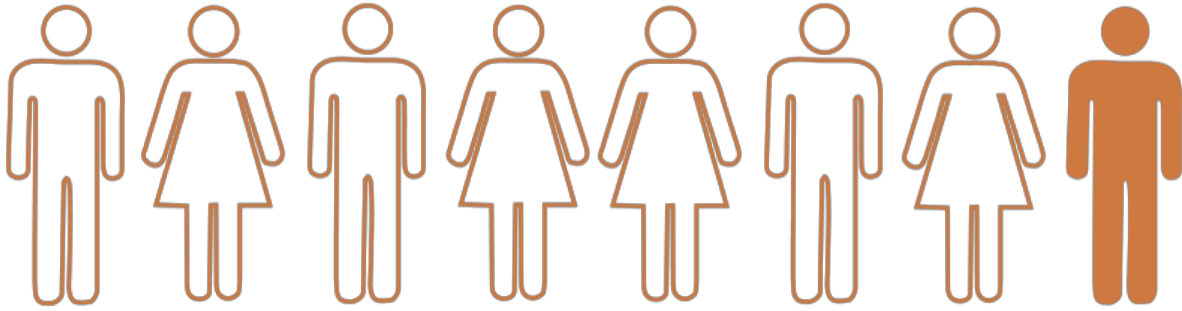
Figure 4. Nearly one in eight Cal Poly students experienced homelessness in 2017. Data from the 2018 CSU study.

The proportion of students that reported being **homeless in the previous year (2017) was 12 percent, nearly one in eight Cal Poly students** (Figure 4).

These students have worse physical health, mental health and academic concerns compared to those who were properly and consistently housed (Figure 5). Students who had not experienced homelessness had comparable GPAs to those who had been homeless, 3.24 and 3.23, respectively. It has been hypothesized that the academic performance of homeless students is boosted by spending so much time on campus, as they seek to capitalize on the shelter and resources offered by libraries and other common areas[8].
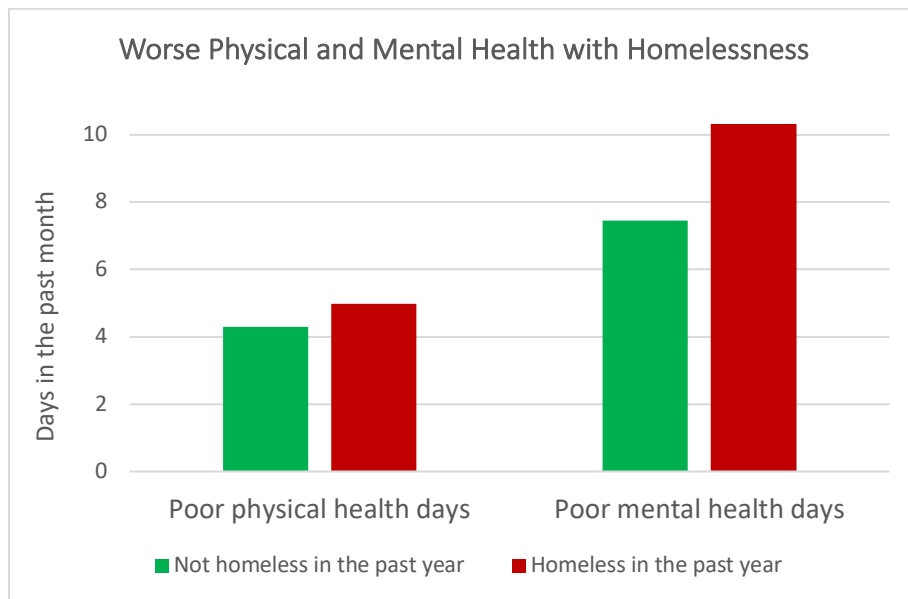
Figure 5. Health and academic outcomes by homelessness status. Data from the 2018 CSU study.

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[8] Hungry and homeless in college. Wisconsin Hope Lab. 2017. www.wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf

BASIC NEEDS AND THE GRADUATION INITIATIVE

The **CSU Graduation Initiative 2025** aims to "increase graduation rates for all CSU students while eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps[9]." Key metrics for the initiative suggest a focus on students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students. As such, academic preparation, academic support, and reducing achievement gaps are highlighted as major targets. **Three campuses** of 23 (Channel Islands, East Bay and Fresno) **have recognized housing and food security issues as part of their short- or long-term Graduation Initiative plans**. The CSU Graduation Initiative 2025 is an opportunity for all CSUs to include addressing basic needs as part of their goals.

Cal Poly's Graduation Initiative Student Success Plan[10] features 14 focus areas, including academic strategies such as advising, block scheduling and tutoring. In addition, the Cal Poly Graduation Initiative has allocated $60,000 to assist graduating seniors with emergency expenses that could negatively impact their graduation. In many cases, the graduation initiative funds have been used to support students experiencing homelessness and food insecurity.

Any efforts at promoting academic success must recognize the most fundamental human needs that, without which, students simply cannot function. To be sure, academic support mechanisms are important, but if they are hungry or homeless, students cannot learn, achievement gaps will not be decreased, and graduation targets will not be met.

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[9] California State University Graduation Initiative 2025. https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/why-the-csu-matters/graduation-initiative-2025
[10] California State University Graduation Initiative 2025 CSU System and Campus Completion Goals and Plans, Draft Report. 2016. https://www.calstate.edu/bot/agendas/sep16/ED-POL-2-ADDENDUM-GI-2025.pdf

RESOURCES AT CAL POLY

Cal Poly is fortunate to have a number of resources to directly address student hunger and homelessness (Table 1), along with an emerging social awareness of the issues surrounding basic needs insecurity. Most of these basic needs programs began as grassroots responses by Cal Poly students, faculty and staff to a palpable need on campus. The fact **that these services today are in higher demand than ever** speaks to the **ongoing and widespread nature of the basic needs problem** on our campus.

In addition to the resources listed, Cal Poly was recently awarded a one-time grant from the CSU Chancellor's Office (from Senate Bill 85, $130,000) designating Cal Poly a "**Hunger Free Campus.**" Funds from this grant will be dedicated to improving food distribution programs, meal-sharing programs and CalFresh outreach efforts. It will also be used to develop partnerships, create a strong online presence, and create a "Cal Poly Food Hub" that includes a community garden and kitchen, education, research and evaluation, and an accompanying mobile app. In addition, in fall 2018, Cal Poly began **hosting two full-time AmeriCorps CSU STEM VISTA basic needs coordinators** for at least a year to help plan and coordinate a Hunger Free Campus and other basic needs initiatives across campus. These key resources will help build momentum for Cal Poly as our needs grow and evolve.

Resource	Coordination	Description	Funding
CalFresh Outreach	Food Science and Nutrition Dept.	Multi-CSU effort to enroll eligible students in CalFresh program	Calif. Dept. Social Services
Cal Poly Cares	Dean of Students	Emergency grants of up to $2,000 for basic and other acute needs	Private donors, Graduation Initiative
Emergency Housing	University Housing	Temporary emergency housing in residence halls, partner to Cal Poly Cares	Private donors, Univ. Housing
Food Pantry	Campus Health and Wellbeing	Venue with free food and basic needs items, "free supermarket"	Private donors
Meal Vouchers	Dean of Students, Campus Dining	Electronically added to students' PolyCard: Peer-to-peer mechanism to donate meals to other students	Student donors via Mustang Meal Share
Professional Clothing Closet	Career Services	Free high-quality donated professional attire	Private, community donors

__Table 1.__ Cal Poly basic needs security resources. Detailed program information is listed below the table, with usage data corresponding to June 2018.

CALFRESH OUTREACH (2016-current)

This program is part of a CSU effort involving 11 campuses to identify and help eligible students apply to CalFresh. CalFresh Outreach staff conduct extensive campuswide outreach and hold drop-in hours, coordinate private appointments, increase awareness at events, and promote visibility through conventional and social media platforms. Since its inception in 2016, this program has helped more than **300 students apply for CalFresh**, and about half of those were approved for benefits. At Cal Poly, CalFresh utilization among eligible students is estimated to be much lower than the estimated 17 percent eligibility, representing a **major opportunity**. This program is funded by the California Department of Social Services via CSU Chico, and Cal Poly's 2016-18 budget totaled $361,599. A proposal has recently been approved to **continue funding in 2019-21** in conjunction with dozens of other CSU, UC and California Community College campuses.

CAL POLY CARES (2015-current)

Cal Poly Cares awards emergency grants of up to $2,000 to students with acute financial need. From July 2015 to April 2016, this program awarded **grants to 163 students** for a total of $288,753, about half of which was for basic needs such as housing and meals. From July 2016 to June 2017, **183 students were served** with a total of $232,767.

EMERGENCY HOUSING (2016-current)

The emergency housing program is available for students experiencing housing instability or those at risk of becoming homeless. Inaugurated in 2016, the program **hosted 22 students** for an approximate average of two weeks to one quarter in its first academic year of operation. Funding for the progam comes from Cal Poly Cares and University Housing and totaled $83,000 in its first year. In academic year 2017-18, 15 students were hosted.

CAL POLY FOOD PANTRY (2014-current)

Students visiting the Cal Poly Food Pantry typically get a grocery bag full of food, including fresh produce. A student ID is required to check in, and no questions are asked. In academic year 2015-16, the Pantry **served 313 students a total of 559 times**. In its second year, almost twice as many students utilized the pantry and the **total number of encounters tripled**. In academic year 2017-18, it **showed further growth**, even though data suggest that less than 9 percent of students have utilized it, and only 15 percent of students have heard about it. The pantry has been supported by philanthropic funding and has recently partnered with the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo, granting access to wholesale pricing. The annual cost to maintain the pantry is approximately $35,000-$45,000.

PROFESSIONAL CLOTHING CLOSET (2015-current)

Career Services accepts donations of high-quality professional attire and makes them available to students at no charge. Demand for this service has grown significantly. In 2015, 2016 and 2017, Professional Clothing Closet events served **228, 343 and 679 students**, respectively. This represents a **tripling of participation**. In 2018, a permanent space was dedicated to this effort.

MEAL VOUCHERS (2014-current)

Available through the Dean of Students, meal vouchers are redeemable for meals at campus eateries electronically via PolyCard. The transition to an electronic mechanism (**Mustang Meal Share**, introduced in 2017) has contributed significantly to streamlining the program, as well as decreasing the stigma associated with using a different means to purchase food compared to other students. Mustang Meal Share allows freshmen on a meal plan to **donate up to 10 meals per quarter** to their peers. Donors submit a form with the number of meals they want to donate, and Campus Dining creates an electronic voucher for each meal donated. Since Spring 2018, **100 students have donated 786 meals** through Mustang Meal Share. Since its inaugural academic year, **about 10,000 vouchers have been distributed to roughly 1,200 students per academic year**. The majority of recipients receive 26-50 vouchers per year, and nearly half of all recipients receive at least 51 vouchers. Demand has recently increased; in **spring quarter 2018 alone, more than 2,000 vouchers were distributed**. This program has been supported by philanthropic funding and annual cost is about $65,000.

SUSTAINING GROWING NEEDS

Food and housing insecurity among Cal Poly students should be considered chronic problems. Indeed, they are likely to become more prevalent in coming years for two main reasons. First, as student socio-demographic diversity increases, **Cal Poly's student body will have more students of color, first-generation students, and other historically underrepresented groups who are at increased risk** for basic needs insecurity[11]. Second, as **housing and tuition costs continue to increase**, more and more college students, even those from middle class backgrounds, will struggle for basic needs such as food and housing[12]. As these problems become more pronounced on campus and impact more students, it will be important to **identify and employ the most effective interventions**, apply financially **sustainable models**, and **prioritize prevention**.

The most **effective interventions** will be identified through rigorous longitudinal research into the causes of basic needs insecurity and how best to meet students' needs. Utilizing **financially sustainable models** is also key. The Meal Voucher program, for example, was funded by a single donor but that support was recently discontinued. The Basic Needs Task Force at Cal Poly creatively responded to this need by helping create the **Mustang Meal Share** program, which allows students on meal plans to donate their surplus meals to their peers. Current activities in outreach, promotion and assisting students with enrollment in CalFresh are externally funded,

[11] RTI International. "Vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by food insecurity, despite public programs." 2014.
[12] College Board. Trends in College Pricing. 2017. https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing

but represent a **high return on investment,** because once students are enrolled, they receive an average of $150/month for groceries with little further input from Cal Poly. This directly addresses food insecurity and generates $1.80 in the local community for every $1 spent.

Efforts of Cal Poly's CalFresh Outreach program in 2016-18 resulted in **more than $40,000 per month being generated in the local region**. For other services and programs, finding ways to decrease costs is critical — and may be simple. For example, the Food Pantry recently partnered with the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo, which **resulted in a savings of 75 percent on food**. Finally, **prevention must be prioritized** through a number of means, including early identification of at-risk students, rapid deployment of resources to alleviate acute food or housing insecurity, and advocacy at all levels, from grassroots movements to institutional and systemwide lobbying and policy making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The chronic and potentially devastating nature of basic needs insecurity underscores the **need for an integrated basic needs infrastructure at Cal Poly**. To that end, the Cal Poly Basic Needs Task Force recommends the following actions that are suitable to an array of inter-sectoral partnerships.

1. <u>Acknowledge the problem and scale of basic needs insecurity</u> among Cal Poly students. **Unambiguously commit** to efforts designed to alleviate, prevent and study food and housing insecurity. Define food and housing security as a fundamental right for all Cal Poly students.

2. <u>Create a dedicated student-centered physical space explicitly for basic needs infrastructure and support</u>.
   a. **Accessing help must be quick and painless**. Creating an integrated Basic Needs Hub for basic needs services and resources would streamline access to resources, refer students more quickly and effectively to the proper channels, and decrease misconceptions about which services are available and to whom. This model would also contribute to sustainability, as programs may evolve over time, but a central nucleus would remain a one-stop shop. To improve access and contribute to normalization of the issues, a highly visible physical space (e.g. in the University Union) would house the Hub and be coupled with intensive marketing. A dedicated, specially trained full-time staff member plus part-time student staff and interns would serve to run the facility, offering Learn by Doing opportunities for student staff/interns. For the 2018-19 academic year, the Cal Poly Basic Needs Task Force, in conjunction with Campus Health and Wellbeing, have secured two full-time AmeriCorps volunteers in an effort to begin coordination of basic needs-related efforts, but a longer-term plan is needed.

b. **Develop a strong Cal Poly Basic Needs online presence**, including a centralized website with information about resources, plus links to various programs, resources and key contacts. Create an opt-in mailing list whereby students can receive basic needs information on an ongoing basis. Coordinating with existing resources such as diverse Cal Poly social networks and the Cal Poly mobile app is also recommended to make this information easier to access. For the 2018-19 academic year, the Cal Poly Basic Needs Task Force has secured funds, albeit limited and short-term, from the CSU Chancellor's Office (Hunger-Free Campus grant) that will serve to initiate some of these efforts.

3. <u>Normalize and destigmatize</u>, create a positive and inclusive climate for all students.
   a. **Increasing visibility of the issues** and decreasing the associated shame, fear and stigma is a matter of campus culture. As such, core programs such as WOW, SLO Days, and other student orientation and transition programs offer valuable opportunities for introducing and normalizing the food and housing issues to promote dialogue and visibility in the student population. These issues are relevant to all students and will become major hurdles to many over the course of their time at Cal Poly. Staff members of large-scale programs such as academic support centers should also be trained on how to identify students with potential basic needs problems. Venues such as campus residence halls, recreation centers, and libraries are also high-density areas useful for promotion and marketing efforts.
   b. **Breaking taboos**. Financial aid is typically not a taboo subject, but food insecurity and homelessness remain extremely sensitive topics, even among friends. Several thousand Cal Poly students experience basic needs insecurity, and studies show that their social and mental health suffers. They feel disenfranchised, shame, stigma and fear. Many do not know where to turn. Raising awareness and normalizing the issues can help ensure that students know where to go for help or where to refer their friends who may be experiencing problems. Research and action in this area is urgently needed and must be prioritized.

4. <u>Focus on equity</u>. Some groups experience significantly higher rates of basic needs insecurity. Creating an inclusive campus means **ensuring that all people get the type of help that is right for them**. Groups at higher risk need more support. While campus-level marketing approaches may be useful for visibility and awareness-building, targeted approaches are warranted for known at-risk groups such as first-generation students, students of color, Pell Grant recipients, former foster youth, EOP students, DACA students, and Dreamers. By tapping into existing on-campus networks and mechanisms to offer support, high-risk students may more effectively and quickly access needed resources.

5. <u>Capitalize on partnerships</u> **to unify existing efforts and create new ones.**
   a. **Tap into the power and efforts of student groups**. Learning about what students need, how they utilize resources, and how they prefer to utilize them will ensure that new efforts are well suited to needs. Partnerships with ASI, student clubs, Greek life, and internal and external student advocacy groups would benefit planning, strategy and marketing efforts.
   b. **The Cal Poly Food Pantry was founded by students** and is one of the most successful basic needs programs on campus. It, and other fruitful student-led efforts, must be highlighted and nurtured into new phases of growth. Students and student government should feel empowered and supported to initiate change and pilot new programs.
   c. **Faculty and staff** are excellent resources and advocates for students. Mechanisms for engaging them represent a great opportunity for basic needs efforts. For example, faculty members across the country have incorporated basic needs language and resources into course syllabi. Basic needs trainings for faculty/staff should be offered and promoted on campus.
   d. **Expand existing successful programs, develop new ones**.
      i. Mustang Meal Share allows students with meal plans to donate up to 10 meals for food insecurity programming. This program should be aggressively marketed to students, as initial trials have shown promise. It may be expanded to include other mechanisms such as online giving. Faculty/staff may be receptive to donating meals for students. Moreover, the current limit of donating 10 meals should be eliminated in favor of an unlimited number of meals.
      ii. CalFresh Outreach helps thousands of students and enrolls hundreds for benefits. However, there is no location on campus where these dollars can be used. Relatively simple efforts, such as accepting CalFresh EBT cards at the two campus market locations, would be an important step toward improving food accessibility for many students.
      iii. Students utilizing Emergency Housing should be provided basic home needs such as towels, sheets, utensils, and basic cooking tools to facilitate transition.
      iv. Other CSU campuses have initiated food recovery programs through which extra food from campus dining and events are made available to students, providing a useful resource and simultaneously reducing food waste.
   e. **Leverage local connections**. The Cal Poly partnership with the Food Bank Coalition of SLO County has saved the Food Pantry 50 percent on food. Monthly public food bank food distributions began in April 2018 (23 distributions at first event), with the Cal Poly Food Pantry staff assisting and the CalFresh Outreach team present to answer questions about enrollment. Another collaboration under development is a concept for public events that would include free food coupled with high-impact marketing to increase awareness of food and housing insecurity issues and resources. The richness of Cal Poly's food and agricultural resources

and programs (e.g. Cal Poly farms, food and the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences) could be leveraged for material support and to increase visibility of partnerships.

    f. **Support CSU, California, and national-level collaborations** to learn from the experiences of other institutions/systems and leverage larger-scale programmatic and research efforts. The California Higher Education Basic Needs Alliance, for example, unites the California Community College, CSU and UC systems to build bridges to addressing basic needs insecurity among their three million students. Similarly, faculty across several university systems nationwide are engaged in research collaborations that have extraordinary reach and influence. A CSU-level basic needs research initiative was developed in 2018. Travel to meetings, pilot research studies, and networking opportunities should be supported by the university and the CSU Chancellor's Office. Cal Poly faculty and staff hold key leadership roles in these efforts, which should be recognized as critical to building effective initiatives at Cal Poly.

6. <u>Build a stronger evidence base</u> **by evaluating programs and undertaking new research**. College basic needs insecurity is not well researched, and existing programs at Cal Poly are not thoroughly evaluated. Without data, we are in the dark about which programs are most effective, among whom, and how to improve our efforts. Current efforts **must be evaluated**. **Research is urgently needed** in the following areas: basic needs security and resource utilization; academic success and degree completion associated with basic needs; how to normalize and destigmatize the issues among students; and how state and national policies impact basic needs. Data is needed to move forward in an evidence-based manner. Nascent but promising research collaborations should be supported by the university and the CSU Chancellor's Office in the form of funding and facilitating collaborations.

7. <u>Advocate</u> **for our students.**

    a. The power of Cal Poly and the CSU is significant in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., and must be harnessed to **lobby on behalf of students' basic needs**. From grassroots student groups to campus and CSU leadership, we **should be consistently pushing for improvements** in policy related to basic needs.

    b. **Effective policies** to help students succeed ensure a healthy workforce and vibrant economy. Decades ago, this thinking led to the National School Lunch Program for elementary and secondary education. Higher education students and their basic needs, however, are not effectively supported. There is an **urgent need for better policies** to this end.

        i. Example: As a full-time college student, it is exceedingly difficult to qualify for SNAP/CalFresh, and one of the more common "student exemptions" is working 20 hours per week, which is not feasible for most students. Changing policy to count "credit or unit-hours" as "work hours" would effectively qualify most students in need, making an immediate and significant positive impact on food insecurity among college students.

    c. University and CSU political liaisons should be familiar with ongoing policy-level activities associated with basic needs in higher education and communicate developments and discuss opportunities with the Basic Needs Task Force.

8. <u>Fundraise</u>. Giving to basic needs efforts should be highlighted as an opportunity for donors who may wish to support Cal Poly students toward academic success. Fundraising efforts for student basic needs is an **exceptional opportunity for fundraising**.

The **Cal Poly Basic Needs Task Force** pledges to take concerted action toward eliminating basic needs insecurity on campus by focusing on the above issues, as well as communicating our efforts, sharing resources, and engaging partners.

In spite of considerable challenges, the **CSU system and Cal Poly are among the national leaders** when it comes to examining and addressing basic needs initiatives[13]. However, there is still much to be learned about the causes and consequences of food and housing insecurity, and how to appropriately, equitably and sustainably address these problems on our campus and throughout the nation.

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[13] Synopsis of #RealCollege: A National Convening on College Food and Housing Insecurity 2017. http://wihopelab.com/events/realcollege.html