



**CAL POLY**

Food Pantry & Basic Needs

CAMPUS HEALTH  
& WELLBEING

## BASIC NEEDS REPORT 2022

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### INTRODUCTION

In 2018, Cal Poly's first [Basic Needs Report](#) was published by the Basic Needs Taskforce with the goal of examining and contextualizing the problem of basic needs insecurity at Cal Poly and to offer solutions to address the ongoing problem.<sup>1</sup> This current report examines Cal Poly's response and effectiveness towards to the 2018 recommendations, and provides additional recommendations with the continued goal of advancing equity while prioritizing the experiences of the individuals most impacted by basic needs insecurities at Cal Poly.

### BASIC NEEDS TASKFORCE

The Cal Poly Basic Needs Task Force is comprised a group of dedicated staff and faculty across campus who seek to ensure equity and expand access to students' basic needs through programs, policy, research, and advocacy.

The Task Force was inaugurated in 2016 as a working group and currently meets monthly during the academic year. It is co-chaired by the Cal Poly basic needs coordinator and the CalFresh Program Director. 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, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Facilities, Financial Aid, Green Campus Program, Office of the President, University Housing and Residential Life, and student Organization representatives.

## CURRENT PROGRAMS

Cal Poly has a number of resources to directly address student hunger and homelessness, along with an emerging social awareness of the issues surrounding basic needs insecurity.

**It is important to note that need for all basic needs services has increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## HOUSING ASSISTANCE

### EMERGENCY HOUSING

The emergency housing program is available for students experiencing housing instability or those at risk of becoming homeless. Funding for the program 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. **In 2021-22, 25 students were hosted on campus in the emergency housing program.**

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<sup>1</sup> 2018 Basic Needs Report



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## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

### CAL POLY CARES

Cal Poly Cares awards emergency grants of up to \$2,000 to students with acute financial need. From July 2016 to June 2017, 183 students were served with a total of \$232,767.

**During the 2021-22 Academic Year, the Cal Poly Cares Committee reviewed a total of 996 applications and approved a total of 618 applications.** The average Cal Poly Cares Grant is \$1,600. The total amount awarded for the duration of the academic year was over \$110,000.

### TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE<sup>2</sup>

In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan (HEERF III) was signed into law designating funds to be used for direct grant aid to students. In October 2021, Cal Poly disbursed \$9,017,150 in block grants to 5,700 students who completed a FAFSA or CA Dream Act, had an Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) of 0-15,000 and were enrolled at least half-time. Grants ranged from \$150 to \$2000 depending on enrollment and EFC. The remaining direct grant aid funds were designated to support students in receiving adequate technology for their education. As of 1/9/2022 Cal Poly disbursed funds or provided university bookstore credit totaling \$4,650,012 to 2,572 students for the purchase of a laptop computer that met the minimum standards of most majors (16G RAM and 512G SSD storage). Following the direct disbursement to Pell-eligible students, all students at Cal Poly regardless of financial aid status were offered the opportunity to receive funding for the purchase of a laptop. **As of 3/31/2022, Cal Poly disbursed funds or provided bookstore credit for laptops totaling \$17,061,453 to 6,859 students.**

### FINANCIAL WELLNESS & EDUCATION

Financial Wellness programming within Basic Needs provided a support system and outlet for personal finance support at Cal Poly. Financial stress leads to academic and personal duress and by providing financial wellness resources and education, Cal Poly normalizes and prioritizes the journey to financial independence. **Financial Wellness programming included eight (8) events and workshops and there were 315 individuals who attended the workshops over the academic year.**

### PROFESSIONAL CLOTHING CLOSET

Career Services accepts donations of high-quality professional attire and makes them available to students at no charge. Demand for this service had grown significantly prior to implementing reduced student capacity on campus as early as the 2019 academic year. In 2018, a permanent space was dedicated to the Clothing Closet, as there were up to 679 students who utilized this service in 2017-18. In 2021, Career Services predominantly operated in a hybrid virtual/on-campus capacity and as such, outreach and donations were

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<sup>2</sup> <https://coronavirus.calpoly.edu/financial-aid>



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limited. **In the 2021-22 academic year, 173 students utilized the professional clothing closet.**

## FOOD RESOURCES

### CALFRESH OUTREACH

This program is part of a statewide effort involving 50 campuses to identify and help eligible students apply to CalFresh, California's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Cal Poly students participating in CalFresh receive about \$250/month to spend on groceries with funds from the federal government. According to Cal Poly research, participants experience a 90% decreased odds of food insecurity at six months (Nazmi et al, 2022). Each federal dollar of CalFresh also generates \$1.75 in the local economy. CalFresh Outreach staff conduct extensive campus wide outreach, host drop-in hours, coordinate private and online appointments, increase awareness at events, and promote visibility through conventional and social media platforms. Since its inception at Cal Poly in 2016, this program has helped thousands of students apply for benefits. This program is funded by the California Department of Social Services via CSU Chico through a "matching" model, with direct funds from the sponsor of approximately \$140,000 annually to Cal Poly and about \$300,000 in matching direct costs in the form of matching effort from more than two dozen Cal Poly employees across several units.

In AY 2019-20, the team helped 404 students apply for CalFresh, expanding their services to 536 in 2020-21. **In AY 2021-22, the CalFresh Outreach team assisted 912 students apply for benefits.**

### MEAL VOUCHERS

Managed by the Dean of Students, meal vouchers are redeemable for meals at campus eateries electronically via PolyCard and provide students with an opportunity for a ready, hot meal on campus. The transition to an electronic mechanism (Mustang Meal Share, introduced in 2017) has contributed significantly to both streamlining and destigmatizing meal assistance programs. Mustang Meal Share allows students with a meal plan to donate up to 10 meals per quarter to their peers.

**During the 2021-22 academic year, there was an 83% approval rate for this service with 1,150 Meal Voucher applications approved and 1,378 meal voucher applications submitted.** Students who are approved for meal vouchers receive \$20 per week for Campus Dining. Demand has increased substantially and the Cal Poly community is challenged with how to continue to offer this service alongside donation caps and increased costs of food on campus.



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### *Meal Vouchers Fall 2021*

<i>Dining dollars distributed</i>	\$71,240.00
<i>Dining dollars redeemed</i>	\$59,569.66
<i>Dining dollars donated</i>	\$10,524.44
<i>Meal Share balance Fall 2021</i>	\$68,445.17
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<i>Students who donated</i>	179
<i>Students received vouchers</i>	340

### *Meal Vouchers Winter 2022*

<i>Dining dollars distributed</i>	\$71,480.00
<i>Dining dollars redeemed</i>	\$64,428.49
<i>Dining dollars donated</i>	\$10,063.00
<i>Meal Share balance Winter 2022</i>	\$33,737.42
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<i>Students who donated</i>	198
<i>Students received vouchers</i>	408

### **CAL POLY FOOD PANTRY**

The Food Pantry was created in 2014 out of a need identified by staff and faculty seeing an increased number of students going hungry and without the means to purchase basic food and supplies. Today, members of the Cal Poly community can choose from a robust inventory of packaged and canned foods, fresh produce, frozen meals, and personal hygiene products.

**During the 2021-22 academic year, there were 9,367 visits to the Food Pantry and 1,790 unique users.** The Food Pantry averaged 60 visits each day.

The Food Pantry is an agency partner of the SLO Food Bank allowing the pantry to source food at cost-effective rates and within a reliable recurring schedule. **The Food Pantry received more than 285+ individual ad hoc donations of food or goods to the Food Pantry.** The Food Pantry received two large donations from local grocery stores, California Fresh Market and Grocery Outlet, with a total of \$10,000 in donations allowing the pantry to source local additional food in the pantry in biweekly grocery trips. Additionally, local Cal Poly organic produce from Cal Poly CROPS unit was delivered weekly and harvest from the Cal Poly Experimental Farm was delivered three times in the academic year to increase local, fresh produce available in the pantry for the Cal Poly Community. The Food Pantry was managed by the basic needs' coordinator, four student assistants, administrative assistance in Campus Health and Wellbeing, one garden manager, and a rotating team of 88 volunteers.



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## Total Pantry Visits:

### Academic Year Total Food Pantry Visits

2014-2015	131
2015-2016	598
2016-2017	1,502
2017-2018	1,863
2018-2019	1,051
2019-2020*	2,521
2020-2021**	881
<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>9,367</b>

\*until March 2020

\*\*at reduced on-campus capacity

## FOOD PANTRY GARDEN

In partnership with Cal Poly Sustainability and the University Honors Program, the Food Pantry Garden started in 2016 and grows fresh produce direct to the pantry. **At the 2021-22 academic year, the Food Pantry Garden exclusively harvested more than 400 lbs. of organic produce for the Food Pantry.**

## FOOD CABINETS

Prompted by ASI’s Secretary of Basic Needs and per the 2018 Basic Needs Report recommendation to increase partnerships and awareness about food security measures across campus, the Food Pantry established five (5) Food Cabinets on campus in intentional locations to further serve marginalized student populations.

In January 2022, Food Cabinets were established:

- Dream Center\*
- Black Academic Excellence Center\*  
Center for Military Connected Students\*
- Education Outreach Program (EOP)
- TRIO Achievers Program\*

## Food Cabinet usage as of January 2022:

Food Cabinet	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	TOTAL
TRIO*	23	26	50	38	68	205
EOP	12	5	6	2	8	33
Dream*	54	42	35	60	26	217
BAEC*	22	32	18	36	13	121
CMCS *	30	52	63	58	72	275

\*denotes after-hours and weekend access for students



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## SLO FOOD BANK COMMUNITY DISTRIBUTION

Cal Poly serves as a site host for the SLO Food Bank’s county-wide grocery distribution on the fourth Tuesday of each month. In partnership with the SLO Food Bank, all community members have access to free groceries. As with all food resources at Cal Poly, the SLO Food Bank monthly grocery distribution experienced exponential growth in the 2021-22 academic year. Other than staff oversight, this food assistance opportunity is available at no additional cost to Cal Poly.

### Unique Users:

	2020-21 AY	2021-22 AY
<i>Cal Poly Food Pantry</i>	881	1790
<i>SLO Food Bank Monthly Distribution</i>	196	968
<b>Total</b>	1077	2758

## SUCCESSES AND ONGOING CHALLENGES

The 2018 Basic Needs Report determined eight (8) specific recommendations for ensuring concerted action to support students in need of basic needs assistance. While there has been impressive progress in response to some of the recommendations, there continues to be demonstrated need for ongoing research and institutional support to advance basic needs services at Cal Poly.

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

Cal Poly continues to recognize and research basic needs insecurity on campus. In 2021, a full-time basic needs coordinator was hired in Campus Health & Wellbeing and this position is dedicated to the strategy and growth of basic needs support at Cal Poly. The Dean of Students Office has continued to expand services and positions to better serve students accessing their basic needs including hiring additional care coordinators as well as coordinators designated to support students with dependents and former or current foster youth.

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

While there is a food services hub located in Wellbeing Services with CalFresh Outreach, the Cal Poly Food Pantry, and the basic needs coordinator, students continue to request a dedicated hub for all basic needs’ services. **The 2022 Basic Needs Report further supports a serious examination of this request including institutional support reflected in ongoing infrastructure strategic planning.**



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

The continued growth of Food Pantry usage, CalFresh applications, and Cal Poly Cares applications is indicative of changing cultures and decreased stigma. We acknowledge that there is ongoing work to ensure destigmatization.

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

Established Food Cabinets across campus with specific centers and programs have increased food equity on campus by promoting basic needs resources in environments where students feel most comfortable. Between Food Cabinets and increased staffing to serve marginalized students within the Office of Student Success, Support, and Retention, programs designed to specifically serve students with highest need continue to experience growth.

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

The Basic Needs Taskforce has expanded to include staff and faculty with specific research or backgrounds to ensure all student groups are accurately represented. There continues to be need to increase representation and the basic needs taskforce serves as a hub for information sharing, resource introductions, and campus-wide strategy.

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

Research on basic needs continues to grow at Cal Poly, including a series of focus groups in Winter 2022 that explored barriers in students' access to basic needs resources particularly for Pell-eligible students, students with dependents, former foster youth, and undocumented students. The 2022 Focus Groups highlighted and reinforced the need for a basic needs hub or center and provided explicit recommendations for both departmental and institutional advocacy.

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

Working alongside the Chancellors Office, there has been ongoing support and relationship building within Cal Poly basic needs support across all 23 CSUs. Through relationship development and outreach, Cal Poly can offer comparative services for similar student body groups and learn from the successes of our peers.

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

Donor support has skyrocketed this past year for the food pantry and continues to be an opportunity to grow basic needs support at Cal Poly.

**ACHA-NCHA SPRING SURVEY**

In Spring 2022, Cal Poly conducted the American College Health Association (ACHA) / National College Health Assessment (NCHA) national research survey to assist college health service providers, health educators, counselors, and administrators in gaining a current profile of



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health trends within their campus community.<sup>3</sup> There were 1,037 respondents, 14.81% of the Cal Poly campus community.

The ACHA-NCHA III survey used the USDA six-item short form survey module to measure the food security levels of Cal Poly respondents in categories of high or marginal food security, low food security and very low food security. **Per ACHA data in 2022, it was reported that 39% of the Cal Poly Community experiences low or very low food security.**

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<sup>3</sup> 2022 ACHA-NCHA III, California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo