

# Addressing College Students' Basic Needs

Food and Housing Insecurity on Campus



**Hailey Badger**  
*Analyst*

[hbadger@eab.com](mailto:hbadger@eab.com)

Student Affairs Forum

# Addressing Students' Basic Needs

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As the costs of higher education rise and institutions expand access to more diverse students, the number of students on campus financially unable to meet their basic needs is growing. This research initiative will:

- Help institutions serve these students with existing resources today, and
- Plan for a growing population in the future

## Four-Part Webconference Series

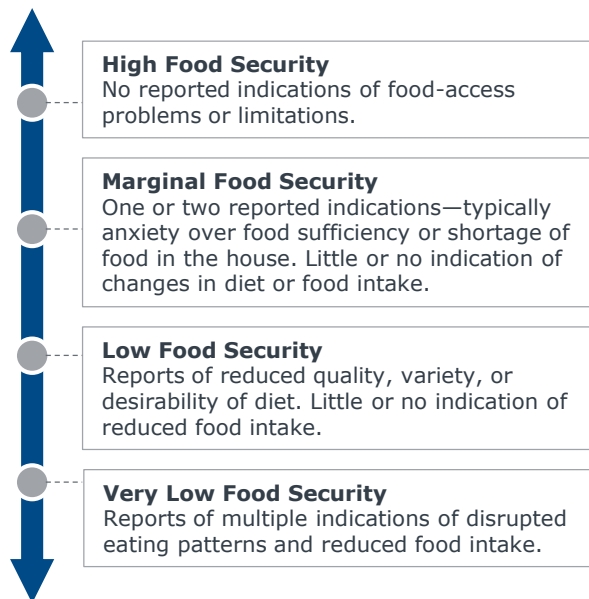
- 1 [What You Should Know About Food and Housing Insecurity on Campus](#)  
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# Speaking the Same Language

## Key Terms and Definitions

### Range of Food Security

USDA Economic Research Service



### Indicators of Housing Insecurity

*Experienced any of the following in the last 12 months...*

- Had difficulty paying rent
- Didn't pay full cost of utility bills
- Didn't pay full cost of rent
- Borrowed money to help pay bills
- Moved in with others, even briefly, because of financial problems
- Moved two or more times

### Indicators of Homelessness

*Experienced any of the following in the last 12 months...*

- Didn't know where you were going to sleep, even for one night
- Thrown out of home by someone else in the household because of financial problems
- Stayed in any place not meant for regular housing, even for one night
- Didn't have a home
- Stayed in a shelter
- Evicted from home

# The “Starving College Student”

## Outdated Stereotypes Shape Public Perception of Struggling Students

### Widespread Misperceptions Abound



#### Skimps on Meals to Buy Beer

*"I remember many nights where I traded dinner for beer money!"*



#### Eats Ramen Because They Like It

*"They could always go to the dining hall if they're really hungry."*



#### Works to Supplement Spending Money

*"I worked through college too...kids these days are just spoiled."*



#### Access to Additional Resources

*"They're paying tuition, they can't really be hungry."*

“

### A No-Win Situation

“For many people, it’s a **contradiction in terms – homeless college student**. If you’re a college student, you had to be with it enough to get yourself into college, so obviously you can’t be homeless.”

*Paul Toro  
Professor of Psychology  
Wayne State University*

”

# Contrasting Stereotypes with Reality

## Hunger and Housing Insecurity a Real Problem for Today's Students

### College-Going at an All-Time High...

17%

Growth in **undergraduate enrollment** in the U.S.,  
2004 - 2014

2X

Number of **FT university students** in Canada has  
doubled since 1980

### ...But No Longer the Ticket Out of Poverty

“Students and families all over the country are saving, working, taking out loans... Yet they still find themselves facing an unreasonably high price for college, **and fall short of the resources they need to successfully complete degrees.** Unexpected costs, even those that might appear modest in size, can derail students from families lacking financial cushions.”

*The Real Price of College*  
The Century Foundation



### Alarming Prevalence of Basic Needs Insecurity

36%

Of students at four-year institutions in the U.S. qualify as having low food security

64%

Of food insecure students also experience housing insecurity

39%

Of Canadian university students experience food insecurity

# Who Is the Basic Needs Insecure Student?

## Three Groups of Students Struggling on Campus



1

### Chronically Poor

Increased access brings more low-income students to college



51%

Of K-12 students in U.S. public schools who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch



2

### Newly Struggling

High costs overextend middle-class families, so basic needs insecurity is often just one unforeseen expense away



57%

Percentage of food insecure students in the University of California system for whom hunger was a new phenomenon



3

### In Crisis

Some students unexpectedly lose necessary support (e.g., LGBTQ students, victims of domestic violence)



39%

Of LGBT individuals say they were rejected by a family member or close friend

# A Snapshot of Campus-Level Data

## Consistent Findings Across Institutional Sizes and Types

### U.S. Public Institutions



42%

Of students report low food security at a **large system**



21%

Of students report low food security at a **mid-sized research university**

### U.S. Private Institutions



23%

Of students report some level of food insecurity at a **small private institution**



22%

Of students experienced very low food security at a **mid-sized, very selective university**

### Canadian Institutions



15%

Of students report severe food insecurity at a **small research university** in Canada



30%

Of students experience some level of food insecurity at a **large research university**

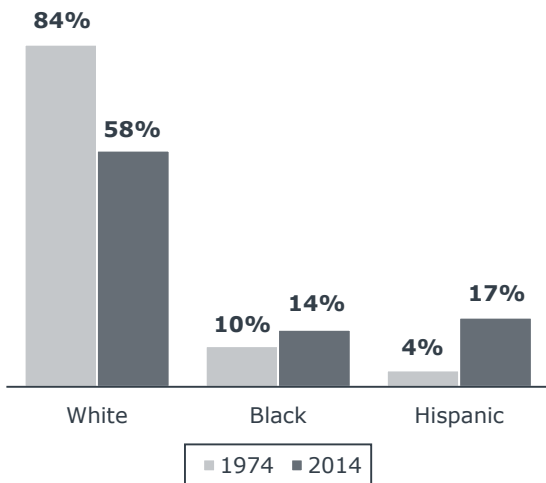
Source: Anderson, Nick. "For the Poor in the Ivy League, a Full Ride Isn't Always What They Imagined." Washington Post. May 16, 2016. Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses. Toronto: Meal Exchange. Martinez, Susanna, Maynard, Katie, and Lorrene Ritchie. *Student Food Access and Security Study*. University of California. 2016. "Starving College Student" Is Not a Joke: Changing the Culture Around Food Insecurity on Campus. University of Nevada, Reno. EAB interviews and analysis.

# Looking Down the Pipeline

## Urgency of Addressing Basic Needs Will Continue to Escalate

### Increasingly Diverse Make-Up of Post-Secondary Enrollment

National Center for Education Statistics



### Need Will Grow in the Years Ahead



9%

Of white students in four-year colleges come from food insecure households



16%

Of Hispanic students in four-year colleges come from food insecure households



18%

Of black students in four-year colleges come from food insecure households



56%

Of Aboriginal post-secondary students in Canada experience food insecurity

Source: NCES Digest of Education Statistics: 2015, retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/ch\\_3.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/ch_3.asp); *Assessing Food Insecurity on Campus*, The Urban Institute, 2017; Silverthorn, D. (2016). *Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses*. Toronto: Meal Exchange. Retrieved from: <http://mealexchange.com>; EAB interviews and analysis.

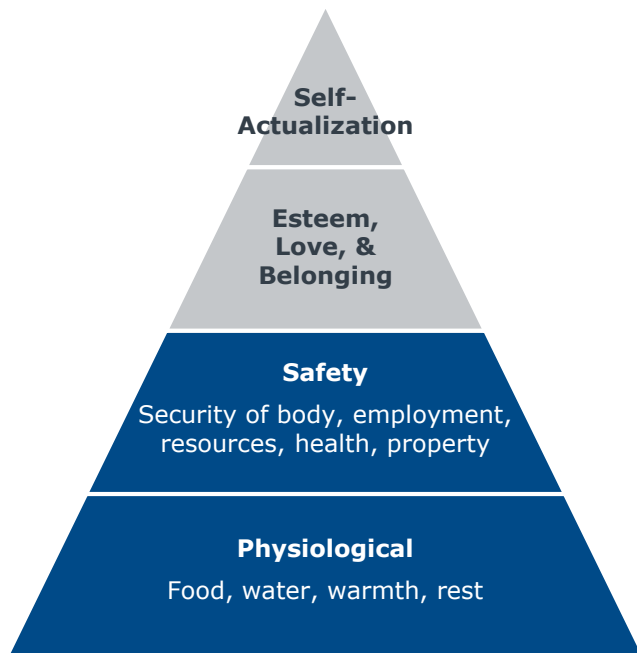


# Whatever the Cause, the Consequences Are Real



## Severe Personal and Physical Impacts for Basic Needs Insecure Students

### Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



### Under-Resourced Students Face Constraints on Their Time and Focus



*"When I leave the dining hall I take an apple or a banana with me. I always think ahead about food – **it never leaves my mind.**"*



*"I'll take photos of a textbook with more than 500 pages **so I can avoid buying it.** It takes hours but you get into a rhythm."*



*"Trying to do homework when you **haven't eaten in 70 hours** is not going to happen."*



*"**I never know if I'll have quiet,** or an internet connection at night, so I try to get as much done as I can during the day."*

Source: Anderson, Nick. "For the Poor in the Ivy League, a Full Ride Isn't Always What They Imagined." Washington Post. May 16, 2016. SJ, Taylor. *This is What It's Like to Be Homeless in College.* Vice. July 23, 2015. EAB interviews and analysis.

# The New Frontier in Student Success



## Institutional Priorities Around Student Outcomes



### Mental Health and Well-Being

**55%**

Of students with very low food security also report symptoms of depression



### Early Academic Indicators

**25%**

Of basic needs insecure students consequently drop a class



### Academic Performance

**15X**

Higher chance food insecure students will fail a class



### Retention and Graduation

**<20%**

Of basic needs insecure students will graduate in five years

Source: Goldrick-Rab, S., Broton, K., and Eisenberg, D., *Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates*, Wisconsin Hope Lab, 2015; Dubick, James, Brandon Mathews, and Clare Cady. *Hunger on Campus*. 2016. Retrieved from [http://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger\\_On\\_Campus.pdf](http://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf); Goldrick-Rab, S., *Paying the Price*, 2016; EAB interviews and analysis.

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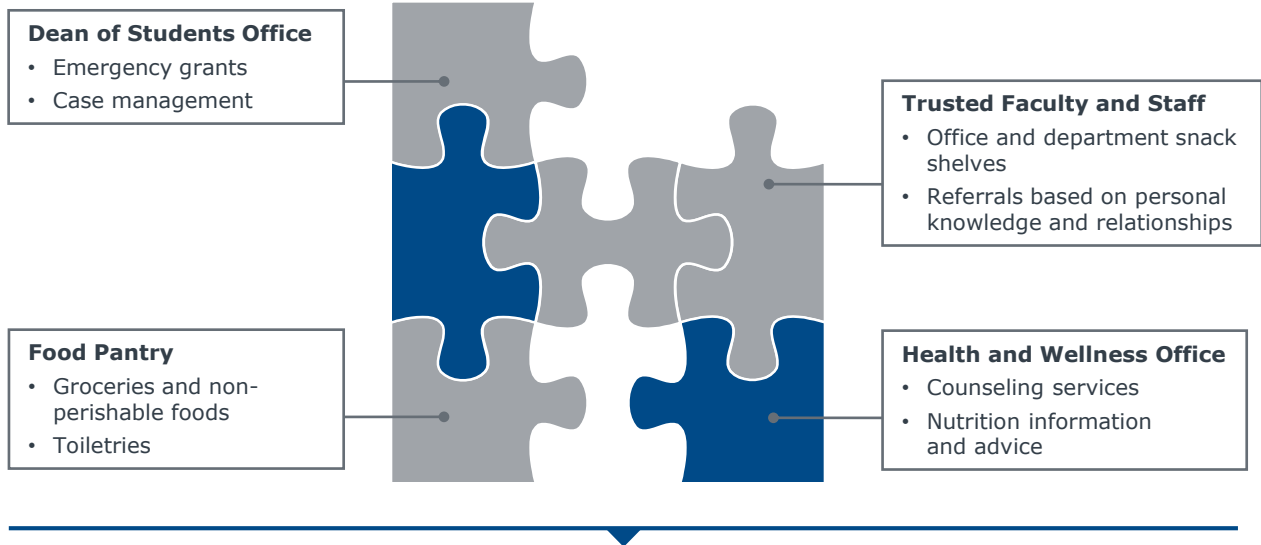
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# A Reactive and Ad Hoc Status Quo

Current Approach Focuses on Troubleshooting Issues as They Arise



## Existing Interventions Focus on Immediate Solutions

### 1 Decentralized

Resources are available through various offices and staff across campus

### 2 Siloed

There is often little knowledge sharing between offices providing support

### 3 Ad Hoc

Interventions are often tailored to a specific student situation rather than holistic support

# How Will We Scale Campus Efforts?

## Future Needs Will Challenge Our Current Approach

“

### **Incoming Students More Diverse Than Ever...**

“We have incredible diversity on campus and it’s something we’re very proud of. But there are challenges that come along with this as well. The percentage of our student population that is now Pell eligible is higher than we’ve ever seen, and so is the number of students we’re seeing who have unmet need. We have done a lot with financial aid to try and make it easier on students, but there is only so much we can do when more and more students every year who need it.”

*Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management  
Public Research University*

”

“

### **...Ad Hoc Solutions Will No Longer Be Sufficient**

“We have definitely seen an uptick in the number of students on campus taking advantage of our food pantry, and I know that the ones we see are only the tip of the iceberg. There are a lot of students out there who we’re losing because they aren’t coming forward to ask for help. I think it’s on us to do more to help them realize we are here to support them, and that they have access to all of these benefits because they are a student here. But it really needs to be a campus-wide effort; my office can’t do it alone.”

*Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs  
Private Research University*

”

# Components of a Formal Campus Infrastructure



## Step One

**Cultivate a Campus-Wide Referral Network**



## Step Two

**Establish a Forward Action Plan**



# Campus-Wide Efforts to Build Student Awareness



## Current Efforts Only Scratching the Surface

### A Wide Range of Student-Facing Efforts...



Orientation Presentations



Tabling on Campus



Class or Club Presentations



Office Tours

### ...But Most Students Still Not Connecting with Needed Resources

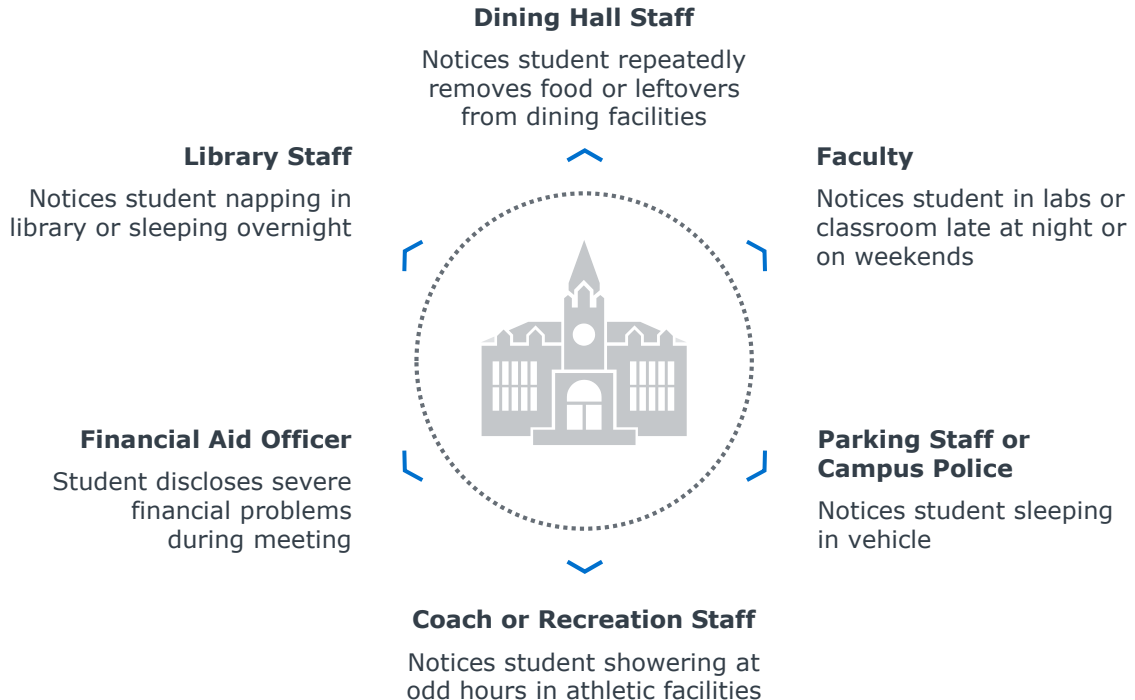


17%

Percent of food-insecure students who reported using a campus food pantry

# Identify and Support Key Frontline Partners

## Tap Into Network of Information Across the Campus Community





# Redefining Our Culture of Care

## Provide Basic Education to Key Frontline Partners

### Faculty and Staff “411 Folder”

#### REFER A STUDENT IF...

*When working with the student, try to identify signs or stressors, including:*

Relationship issues  
Self-harm concerns  
Disruptive behavior

Health concerns

Financial concerns, including  
trouble affording food or  
housing

#### RESOURCES

Campus Safety  
CARE Team  
Health and Counseling  
Center

Title IX Coordinator  
Dean of Students

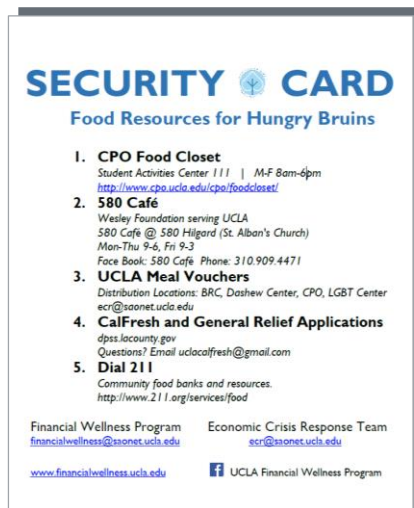
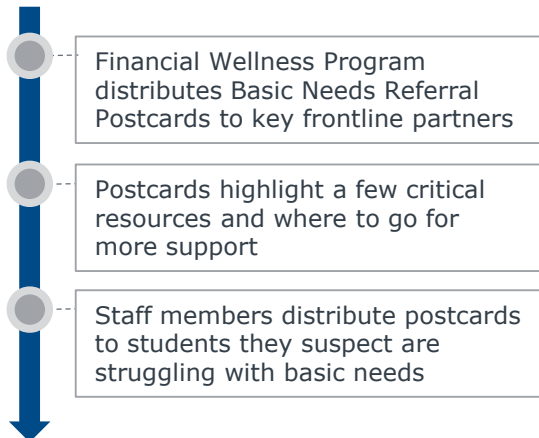
Food Pantry

- 1 Add basic needs to campus community's awareness of student challenges
- 2 Provide faculty and staff with easy-to-access information about resources available to support these students

# Make It Easy to Make Referrals

## Equip Frontline Partners with Plug-and-Play Tools to Facilitate Referrals

### UCLA's Basic Needs Referral Postcard



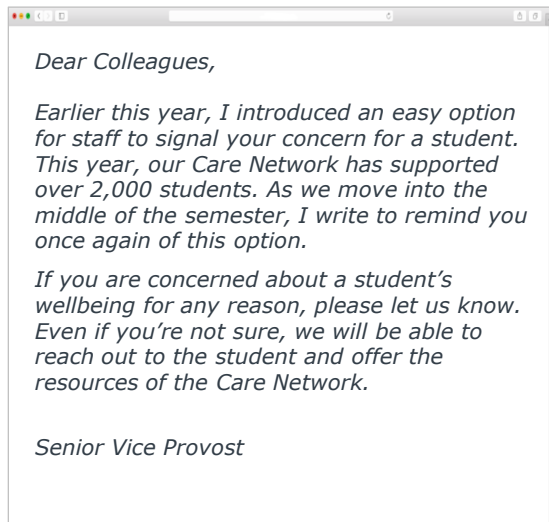
### Postcards Distributed Widely to Staff

- Residential life
- Financial aid/bursar staff
- Center for international students
- Student legal services
- Academic counseling
- Special populations center

# Keep Referrals Top of Mind

## Send Just-in-Time Emails to Key Campus Partners

### Targeted Information in Your Inbox



### Make It Work on Your Campus

#### An Effective Email Reminder Campaign



Include information about **key warning signs** and **resources available** for food and housing insecurity



Distribute widely to faculty and staff in **student-facing** roles (e.g., international student office, financial aid, advising)



Send from **senior campus leader** to emphasize issue's importance



**Circulate at key times** to keep referring top of mind when students may be most at risk

# Components of a Formal Campus Infrastructure

## Step One

**Cultivate a Campus-Wide Referral Network**



## Step Two

**Establish a Forward Action Plan**



# Key Elements of an Effective Forward Action Plan



## University Action Plan

1

### **Inventory Existing Efforts**

Centralize knowledge of existing campus efforts to identify gaps and service barriers

2

### **Assess the Current State**

Gather relevant data and information to understand the size and scope of need on campus

3

### **Formalize Recommendations and Next Steps**

Develop a set of institution-specific recommendations and an execution timeline

# Inventory Existing Campus Efforts and Resources

## A Snapshot of UC San Diego's Efforts to Date

### Cross-Campus Initiatives Addressing Basic Needs

#### 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 and others have created the following initiatives of basic needs on campus:*

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

- Open for free to any registered UCSD student (including graduate students)
- 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 produce

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

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

#### **Crowdsurf Campaign** (Fall 2015)

Highlights units offering basic needs services

Includes utilization data when available

Provides key details on services provided

# Assess the Current State and Forecast Future Need

## Understand the Scope of the Problem on Your Campus

### ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE



#### Crowdsourced Intelligence

- Cases referred to the BIT/CARE Team
- Students confiding in trusted advisors
- Students taking extra food from dining halls
- Students sleeping in their cars or in campus buildings
- Students repeatedly applying for emergency loans/grants

### PROXIES



#### Available Data

- Pell eligibility
- FAFSA data
- Unmet need
- Former foster youth
- First-generation college students
- Transfer students
- LGBTQ community

### INSTITUTIONAL SURVEYS



#### Survey Add-On

Add questions to gauge basic needs security onto pre-existing surveys

- **University of Minnesota's** Student Health Survey
- **University of Nevada, Reno's** ACHA Survey
- **Cornell University's** PULSE Survey



#### Standalone Surveys

Develop and administer standalone surveys to assess basic needs security on campus

- **Xavier University**
- **University of California & CSU Systems**

# Assess the Current State

## Leverage Existing Resources to Kickstart Survey Administration

### USDA Food Insecurity Survey Modules

#### Sample Question

In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

#### Measuring Food Insecurity

##### *Scale*

- 0.0 – 2.32
- 2.33 – 4.56
- 4.57 – 6.53
- ...

##### *Respondent Status*

- Marginal food insecurity
- Low food security
- Very low food security



**Widely-accepted survey questions**



**Options for six question, 10 question, and 18 question survey modules**



**Interpretation guidance**



# Formalize Recommendations and Next Steps

## Building a Forward Looking Plan

### UCSD's Basic Needs Strategic Plan



- 1 Immediate Recommendations**  
For Current Academic Year  
*"Develop a centralized web portal for basic needs initiatives"*
- 2 Short-Term Campus Strategies**  
1-3 Year Time Horizon  
*"Increase access to emergency housing"*
- 3 Long-Term Campus Strategies**  
3-5 Year Time Horizon  
*"Coordinate with vendors to increase affordability"*

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# Using This Research on Campus

## Forthcoming Resources from the Student Affairs Forum

### **Webinar Series**

Each section spotlighted in 30- to 45-minute webinar sessions; perfect for team meetings and brown-bag workshops



### **Book-Length Publication**

Every best practice from the study compiled in a bound publication, featuring guidance and worksheets for your team



### **Implementation Toolkit**

Templates and examples from profiled institutions help student affairs leaders avoid “reinventing the wheel” and streamline new initiatives



### **Executive Briefing**

Ready-to-go resource for senior leaders that explains the current state of affairs on campus and what institutions are doing to meet students' demand





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