



# Basic Needs Road Trip

JULY 2019

**RISE**

# Summary

College students across the nation are struggling to meet their basic needs. National research from the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University identified that nearly half of college students faced food insecurity in the past 30 days, and 1 in 6 students experienced homelessness in the past year.

Similar research conducted with the Los Angeles Community College District, the nation's largest community college system, identified even higher percentages of students struggling to meet their basic needs. This crisis is why Rise launched our LA2050 Challenge to end college student hunger and homelessness in Los Angeles County through student advocacy. We are committed to the idea that the cost of higher education should never prevent students from pursuing their dreams in college and beyond.

We know that a challenge of this magnitude cannot be solved by one organization alone. To begin building our coalition, and surfacing the best ideas and programs in California, Rise organized a 5 day Basic Needs Road Trip and met with students and staff at 9 colleges and universities across California. This document summarizes what we learned. For more information about Rise, visit [RiseFree.org](https://RiseFree.org) or follow us on social media @RiseFreeOrg.

# Strong Program Design

Campus basic needs programs vary significantly in size and scope. While some colleges have a permanent, well-resourced food pantry, others use a "pop up" model, and others have no food security resources at all. Despite the variability, Rise identified 3 core components of successful basic needs programs:

- 1) **Student Leadership:** A number of basic needs programs were launched by students. The ongoing systems change required to build successful programs requires sustained advocacy from students, faculty, and administration to build and expand programs over time.
- 2) **Comprehensive Approach:** Addressing basic needs challenges cannot be solved through a single program or strategy. Real change requires a comprehensive approach to addressing stigmas, offering resources, and building a community committed to serving students.
- 3) **Permanent Resources:** Campuses cannot meaningfully address basic needs without permanent, ongoing resource commitments from administrators. This means ongoing funding for permanent staff, student staff, and the physical spaces required to build basic needs programs.

# Cal State Los Angeles


## Cal State Los Angeles Food Pantry

In 2015, California State University Chancellor Timothy White initiated a statewide survey that identified tens of thousands of CSU students struggling to meet their basic needs. The response from the system led to the creation of a food pantry at Cal State LA that launched nearly two years ago.

The Cal State LA pantry is open one day during the week, and students can schedule visits if they are not able to attend during business hours because of class or other conflicts. In addition to the food resources, the basic needs coordinator organizes nutrition courses, cooking classes, and emergency housing resources for students experiencing housing insecurity.



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The second stop of our day was to [@CalStateLA](#) to meet Sesley Lewis, the campus coordinator for food and housing security. Check out what Sesley has to say in her own words   
[#BasicNeedsRoadTrip](#)



We shared our [#BasicNeedsTrip](#) on social media so people could learn alongside us.

While Cal State LA does not offer safe parking for students living in their cars, students can access emergency housing on campus for two weeks by working with the basic needs coordinator. Cal State LA has also built partnerships with the Los Angeles, Homeless Service Authority and community-based organizations to transition students into permanent housing.



# Rio Hondo College

## Rio Hondo Food Pantry

### Addressing Food Insecurity

When entering the space, students sign in and provide their full name and address. If a student feels uncomfortable with providing their home address, they can use the campus address. Each student is given a bag to fill with items they need the most. Most of the food in the pantry is sourced from the Los Angeles Food Bank. When they are available, students can also take condoms, feminine care products, toothbrushes, and diapers. Although students do not have quotas of items they can select, they are also not allowed to excessively stock up on items. The Rio Pantry is open to students Monday through Thursday, from 9:00am – 6:30pm during the academic year. Summer hours vary depending on staff. Students are allowed to fill their bag once a day per person. Students may also enroll in CalFresh year round with the help of the college staff.

### Addressing Housing Insecurity

Students with housing needs can do walk-ins or schedule an appointment with a representative from Jovenes, Inc. Jovenes, Inc. helps students find temporary and/or long-term housing. The college staff does not coordinate these services for students directly, but refers students to community-based organizations that can help address their housing needs. There is also a local effort underway to convert a public library into a shelter for students and community members experiencing homelessness.

# City College of San Francisco

## H.A.R.T.S., Homeless, At-Risk, Transitional Students Program



H.A.R.T.S. is the longest-standing program Rise visited during the Basic Needs Road Trip, and has served students for over 30 years. H.A.R.T.S. is run by an alumnus of the program, and offers a combination of resources (e.g., meal vouchers for eligible students) and referrals to community-based organizations for housing assistance and other social services.

H.A.R.T.S. receives funding from the state of California and resources from community-based and partner organizations (e.g., Guardian Scholars is a comprehensive support program for former foster youth working with H.A.R.T.S. to house students). However, Rise observed a significant resource disparity between community colleges and university campuses when it comes to resources for basic needs. Although community college students often experience higher levels of need than students at universities, they typically receive fewer resources to meet their basic needs. While H.A.R.T.S. has only one full-time staff and one part-time staff, other basic needs programs at university campuses have multiple full-time staff and permanent space for basic needs programs. Fortunately, the success of programs built at H.A.R.T.S. has grown the program's capacity over time, and continues to attract more resources year-after-year.



# UC Berkeley

## Basic Needs Center

The Basic Needs Center at UC Berkeley is among the most comprehensive basic needs programs in the nation. Launched six years ago, the basic needs programs at UC Berkeley emerged from undocumented student advocacy to address the cost of college for students who have fewer financial aid resources available. The Center itself is comprised of a food pantry, multipurpose room, community kitchen and space for students and community members to convene.

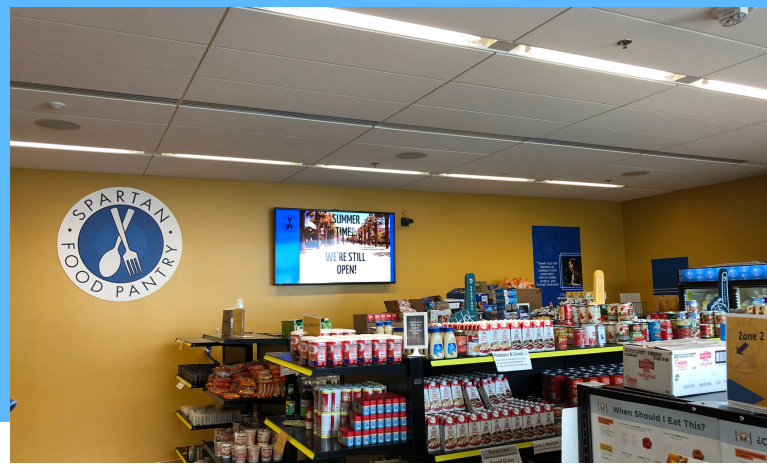
Students swipe their student IDs when they enter the food pantry. During the 2018–2019 school year, the pantry adopted a new system of no longer limiting the amount of food students can take. While the frequency of visits changed, the overall amount of food consumed remained consistent with previous years. The data collected by the food pantry is securely transmitted to researchers who can help identify trends in the data.

In addition to the food pantry, the Basic Needs Center helps students enroll in CalFresh and connect with housing resources. This is part of a holistic strategy focused on prevention, advocacy, research, and sustainability. Through these strategies, the Basic Needs team seeks to end student poverty on the UC Berkeley campus.

# San Jose State Univ.

## Spartan Food Pantry

The majority of food in the Spartan Food Pantry is sourced through a partnership with the Second Harvest Food Bank. Students are allowed to come in when needed, and the process resembles a grocery shopping experience. As students walk in, they pick up a food basket and swipe their student ID. The goal of this process is to give students autonomy over what they eat. These efforts are supported by two full-time staff and several student staff members. Additionally San Jose State Student Government gives funding and additional support to the pantry. The food pantry emerged from previous efforts to address food insecurity. Previously, staff members and one hundred student volunteers organized “food giveaways” in the gym. Within an hour, they would distribute food to more than three hundred students. This approach helped prove to administration that there was a need for more comprehensive programs.



### Addressing Student Homelessness

Students experiencing unforeseen economic crises can apply for emergency loan aid through the Economic Crisis Response Team. Students apply for support through a website and will receive a response from staff within 24 hours of applying, if not sooner. Staff can also provide students with support in the form of rental assistance and referrals to external housing programs to assist with permanent housing efforts. While there are fewer available resources for housing than food security overall, these programs are principally designed for students in crisis – not struggling more generally from the overall surge in housing prices in California.



# UC Merced

## Bobcat Food Pantry

The Basic Needs Center at UC Merced is run by one full-time staff member and a student-run basic needs committee. The committee consists of a CalFresh Marketing Director, Manager, Marketing Intern, and a Basic Needs Web Development Intern. More than one third of UC Merced students utilized the food pantry in its first year of operation, the 2018–2019 school year.

With funding from California's Hunger Free Campus Bill, students and staff were able to establish a permanent pantry location on campus. Students and the Basic Needs Coordinator partnered up with the campus housing division to open a space near student housing that is open on Mondays and Thursdays. Staff and students believe the location and appearance of the food pantry is important in fighting the stigma .

When students walk into the pantry, they swipe their student ID card, which is helpful for collecting data. Once they do that, they are able to grab a food basket and pick the food they want.

The dining team and other staff members on campus are also supportive of these efforts and contribute donations of their own to the food pantry. They also benefit from the Campus Garden, the Second Harvest Food Bank, and community-based programs like CropMobster.

CropMobster is an online platform for local farmers and community members to share free or discounted food products. When local farmers have extra food they let the campus know, community members are able to pick it up. The Basic Needs Center has built a number of local partnerships. Two student volunteers drive to local farms to pick up food twice a week. These efforts to engage students broadly are also part of the pantry's work to de-stigmatize food insecurity on campus.



## Bobcat Pantry (Continued)



### Cal Fresh

The UC Merced Basic Needs team also operates a CalFresh enrollment program. Their acceptance rate into CalFresh is a relatively high 40% (at other campuses, the acceptance rate is often closer to 10%). UC Merced also has a high percentage of undocumented students who are not eligible to receive CalFresh benefits and need to leverage other creative approaches for food security.

### Administration Buy-In

One of the most significant hurdles at UC Merced was the goal of opening the permanent pantry within a very short timeframe. Thanks to significant administrative support, the Basic Needs team was able to meet deadlines to make sure the pantry could be opened on time.

# San Diego State Univ.

## Wellbeing & Health Promotion

While San Diego State University does not have a permanent location for their food pantry (instead using a mobile model), or a Basic Needs Center, they do have programs coordinated by the Emergency Crisis Response Team. The ECRT Coordinator role is a new position, and students are still learning that they have opportunities to meet their basic needs through ECRT. Similar to SJSU, basic needs at SDSU is principally focused on crisis situations--not broader prevention efforts.

### Addressing Food Insecurity

Students can receive short term assistance in the form of gift cards to Trader Joe's. The long term goal is to enroll students in CalFresh. The center has CalFresh representatives on campus and enrollment parties to streamline the enrollment process for as many students as possible. Students also utilize mobile food pantries in two locations on campus to meet students where they are.



## Fresh Basic Needs HUB

The UC Irvine Fresh Basic Needs HUB is in its second academic year of operation.

Previously, they were located in a small campus space and only provided food to students. For UC Irvine, finding space for a basic needs center was a big challenge. The Director of Wellness offered a small space to run a pilot program. Through this effort, they were able to collect data to prove basic needs had to be a priority. Concurrently, UC Irvine's Student Government ran a campaign to increase funding to support ongoing basic needs efforts.

The Fresh Basic Needs HUB has had over 4,000 unique student visits. The total number of visits adds up to more than 25,000 visits, reflecting the frequency of visits during the semester.

### Addressing Food Insecurity

Students are able to come to the HUB when needed. When they enter, they swipe their student ID and pick up a food basket. They can wash and heat up their food in the center as well, and eat it in a dining area inside the pantry. There are also CalFresh representatives on site who support students working to enroll in the program.



Similar to other campuses, UCI is focused on making the HUB an inviting place. There is always music playing in the background to create a joyous atmosphere, and there is a play area for the children of student parents.

### Addressing Housing Insecurity

For the past two years, UCI has offered an emergency grant of up to \$1,000. This grant is only offered to students who have maxed out their financial aid and loans. This year, there was another grant given to undergraduate students which can be used for bridge housing and hotel vouchers. The UCI student government has allocated \$100,000 for staff working on basic needs.

### Student Leadership

The current Basic Needs Coordinator is a former UC Irvine student leader. The Coordinator emphasized the importance of wanting to make students' vision for the Center come to life. They emphasized the importance of trust and transparency in building these efforts over the long haul.

# Students 4 Students Shelter

Formerly known as "Bruin Shelter"



The Students 4 Students Shelter, formerly known as Bruin Shelter, was founded by a UCLA alumnus. Initially, the goal for the shelter was to serve students on campus, but the student was unable to get campus approval. Instead of giving up, he reached out to the faith community and eventually found a church to offer space a few miles away from campus. The shelter's founder was so committed to the cause that he personally saved funds to launch the shelter effort. While the shelter is principally operated by UCLA students, it is open to all students and is primarily used by community college students.

## Operations

The shelter opens at 7:00 PM. Two student volunteers cook dinner and two students stay overnight. Each year it takes eighty student volunteers to successfully run the shelter which is open every single day throughout the academic year.

The shelter has a student-run board which manages grocery shopping, keeping student volunteers engaged, and reviewing shelter applications. The shelter has ten beds and the board tries to give space to the students that they will be able to help the most. There is usually a waitlist with around thirty students. Most students that stay in the shelter are undocumented, former foster youth, and women that have experienced domestic violence. In the shelter's first year open, 85% of its students transitioned to permanent housing. This year, that number was 92%.



**For more information  
on Rise and our LA2050  
work, visit us at  
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