

California State University, Chico
Division of Student Affairs



Basic Needs Project
Annual Report 2017-18

*The Chico State Basic Needs Project is a collaborative effort of **campus** and **community-based programs** with the **goal to improve student success** and **positively engage the community** through the provision of supplemental food, meals, emergency grants, housing, referral services, research-based education and appropriate policy for students experiencing food insecurity, hunger, displacement, homelessness and poverty.*

Basic Needs Programs, Initiatives and Goals

Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry

The Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry's goal is to continue to support student success through the provision of supplemental food, supplemental meal access, on-the-spot CalFresh USDA SNAP application assistance, hygiene products, basic needs services and referrals for students in need.

The California State University 2018 *Study of Student Basic Needs* reported that 50% of Chico State students, an estimated 8,000 students, experience low (24%) to very low (26%) food security. The system-wide research also indicated that 48% of the students are eligible for CalFresh USDA SNAP food assistance benefits.

This high level of food insecurity *is a symptom* of increasing student financial stress, a fundamental barrier to learning, academic persistence, student retention and graduation, especially for traditionally underrepresented students. These combined University and community efforts continue to support the graduation and student wellness goals of the system-wide CSU Graduation and Basic Needs Initiatives.



Photo: Yee Yang, Jenny Merlo and Joanna Rodriguez
welcome new students to the new Pantry in the Student Services Center (January 2018)

Farm to Student

California State University, Chico continues to be a national leader in the development of sustainable agriculture and the production and distribution of organic produce and high quality agricultural products. To support the University's strategic goals of sustainability and student wellness and to extend the positive local economic impact of food security services, the Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry's goal is to continue to source local, organic produce from the University Farm's Organic Vegetable Project and other local and California-based farmers. Since 2015, more than 20,000 pounds of sustainable and organic produce has been distributed.



Photo: Pop Up Pantry and CalFresh USDA SNAP application assistance at CalFesh Day (March 2018)

CalFresh Outreach Collaboration

The goal of the Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry is to continue to provide both short-term food access and longer-term food assistance through CalFresh Outreach, a University grant sponsored program through the Center for Healthy Communities.

CalFresh Outreach provides USDA SNAP enrollment assistance to eligible students. Participants are actively engaged in the eligibility requirements and benefits of CalFresh and can take advantage of on-the-spot sign ups at the Pantry.

Homeless and Displaced Student Services – Emergency Grants

In cooperation with University Housing, Off Campus Student Services and the School of Social Work, Financial Aid and Financial Services, the Basic Needs Project's goal is to continue to provide access to short-term emergency housing and emergency grants for students experiencing homelessness, displacement or unexpected financial crisis.

The California State University 2018 *Study of Student Basic Needs (Crutchfield, Maguire)* reported that 3.3% of Chico State students, an estimated 500 students, experience homelessness or displacement during the academic year. Limited housing supply (1% vacancy) and access to affordable housing continues to be a leading cause of Chico State student financial stress - *the primary barrier to student retention and graduation.*

Quality Meal Access

The Basic Needs Project's goal is to provide nutritious meals to food insecure students who lack access to a kitchen for meal preparation or have unstable living situations. With Associated Students Dining and Associated Students Sustainability support, the Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry distributes redeemable campus dining meal cards for students in immediate need of a nutritious meal. In addition to the distribution of meal cards, the Associated Students administers a text notification system that alerts students when there is food available after a catered event on campus. This and additional food rescue efforts continue to support

student success while actively demonstrating the wellness and sustainability values and goals of the University.

Research, Nutrition Education, Curricula Integration and Service Learning

In addition to providing direct food and housing services, the Basic Needs Project also helps support graduate student and faculty research, nutrition education, the integration of basic needs into the curriculum and service learning opportunities for students.

Internal & External Outreach, Fundraising and Grant Coordination

The Basic Needs Project continues to manage basic needs outreach to the campus, community, state and national stakeholders.

Endowment, fundraising and grant development efforts support the initiatives of the Project with the goal of becoming a sustainable organization and a national success model.



Photo: Will Padula, Kathleen Moroney and Kathleen Hassig celebrate the Chico Breakfast Lions donation of a refrigerator and freezer unit (April 2018)

Accomplishments

Through the generous support of thousands of donors, the Basic Needs Project has been able to expand and improve services making a positive difference on campus and in the community.

Highlights of the 2017-2018 academic year include (*partial list*):

- Opened a dedicated location for the Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry in the Student Services Center on campus.
- Served more than 4,000 students, supporting an average of 100 students served per day.
- Distributed more than 35 tons of healthy food, an equivalent of 58,000 meals.
- Expanded our food supplies through the North State Food Band and the Food Banks of Contra Costa and Solano Counties and improved our wholesale purchasing channels through the Associated Students and local grocers.

- Increased our provision of high quality, sustainably grown organic produce through the University Farm's Organic Vegetable Project and several other local farmers and growers.
- Facilitated the expansion of benefit referral and outreach services including the support of 2,000 students in their quest to receive CalFresh USDA SNAP food assistance through education and direct application assistance. This effort added more than \$3 million dollars to our local economy, positively improving the food security of our students while benefiting local farmers and grocers.
- Assisted dozens of students with off campus housing support and placed 13 displaced or homeless students in short-term emergency and transitional housing through University Housing and community partnerships.
- Provided more than \$10,000 in emergency grants and employment opportunities for students in unexpected financial crisis.
- Improved basic needs services and referrals through partnership with the School of Social Work and the Social Work BSW internship program.
- Through the generous support of more than 650 donors, the Chico Cares Campaign, the annual fundraising effort of the Basic Needs Project, raised more than \$60,800.
- Applied and awarded 2017-2018 University Foundation Special Endowment Award (\$5,000)
- Applied and awarded \$80,000 CSU Basic Needs Grant (SB 85 State funding).
- Developed new Chico State Basic Needs website <http://www.csuchico.edu/basic-needs> for better access Basic Needs Project services.



Photo: Student Success Center leadership class celebrates a successful outreach and donation drive (April 2018)

Diversity and Graduation Efforts

Research demonstrates that underrepresented students experience food and housing insecurity at higher rates than average and experience lower rates of academic persistence, retention and degree obtainment.

To support diversity and graduation goals of the University, the Basic Needs Project provides essential food, housing security and referral services essential for the academic success of students who have experienced poverty over their lifetimes and those experiencing it for the first time.

For more than twenty-five years, California State University, Chico has actively invested in the recruitment of traditionally underrepresented students. Today, more than 50 percent of Chico State's first-time freshmen identify as students of color--compared to just over 20 percent a decade ago.

The current generation of students is coming from more challenging economic backgrounds, marked by an era of a compromised middle class and are experiencing stagnate wages and an increasing cost of living, especially in context of the State's current housing crisis. Close to 50 percent of Chico State students (8,000) receive federal Pell Grant assistance and 48% are estimated to be eligible for CalFresh USDA SNAP benefits.

To increase impact amongst underrepresented students, the Basic Needs Project and the Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry has provided direct outreach and collaborated with many offices and academic departments (e.g., EOP, TRiO, PATH Scholars, Off Campus Services, School of Social Work, DREAM Center, Student Success Center, Student Life and Leadership, Diversity, the WREC, Athletics, Associated Students, Rec Sports, Summer Orientation, Cross Cultural Leadership Center, AS Sustainability, University Housing, CARE Team, Student Health Services, Academic Advising, Financial Aid & Scholarship, and Financial Services).

Policies and Procedures

The Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry developed a student intake system that provides individual confidentiality and collects valuable participant data.

In addition to participant intake, safety training and documentation has been established for Pantry volunteers, student staff and interns as an essential part of operations. The Basic Needs Project has an ongoing working relationship with Environmental Health and Safety, Risk Management, Butte County Public Health and the Food Banks of Contra Costa and Solano Counties to support the safe operation of the Pantry.

To support short-term emergency housing and emergency grants the Basic Needs Project in collaboration with other CSU campuses and internal departments (e.g., Financial Aid, Financial Services, University Housing, School of Social Work and Off Campus Student Services) has established eligibility and intake procedures to help staff better serve this emerging student population.



Photo: Chico State Parent Advisory Council celebrating student success through their support of the Basic Needs Project

Resource Summary

In 2016, a small group of University staff developed a long-term strategy to expand services beyond food security and established the Basic Needs Project. Not deterred by the lack of resources, the Project expanded scope significantly in 2016 and began to formally address the current housing crisis with short-term housing security services. These leadership efforts and dedicated work to extend, expand and mature basic needs services qualified the University to apply for State funding for the first time through a system-wide competitive process.

March 2018 marked *the first State funding allocation* for the Basic Needs Program and the Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry. Through a CSU system-wide grant award, the Chico State Basic Needs Project received \$80,000 in one-time State-supported funds allocated through Senate Bill 85 (SB 85).

The majority of these funds are slated to support operations, student employment and intern opportunities. This early CSU, Chico expansion of the Basic Needs Project in direct support the CSU Basic Needs Initiative also provided the CSU, Chico Center for Healthy Communities an opportunity to apply and receive \$75,000 in funding for system-wide training for a total of \$155,000 in one-time State funding (the highest level of funding available).

Research demonstrates the positive short and long-term economic impacts of student basic need services. To increase student success, classroom learning, retention, graduation rates, and long-term economic growth, basic needs services are an excellent target for proactive State and University investment.

Every dollar invested by the State or individual donor has a positive multiplying factor in its return to the individual, the State and local economies. Failure to strategically invest, allocate and develop adequate operational funding, appropriate facilities and additional human resources for such efforts will limit essential services, delay needed development, and significantly diminish the overall economic impact, fundraising and grant potential of the Basic Needs Project.

Human Resources

At the request of the Basic Needs Project and in sync with emerging nation-wide best practices, the University established a new position, the Basic Needs Administrator, to lead the campus and community collaboration of food and housing security efforts. The establishment of the Basic Needs Administrator culminated a three year effort to appoint a dedicated professional staff person to develop basic needs programming and services.

February 2018 marked the first University allocation for a position specifically focusing on improving student success through food and housing security programs and services. Today, the Basic Needs Project is staffed by one administrator supported by part-time interns, volunteers and student staff.

To meet increasing demand, appropriately scale needed services, provide essential case management, support donor relations and develop future funding opportunities, additional professional staff support is paramount to meet student need and achieve the University's graduation goals.

Facilities/Equipment

One of the early goals (2014) of the Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry was to move out of the staff office which had housed the Pantry since 2013 into a more appropriate space for safe food distribution, transport, storage, water access and confidential benefit enrollment.

Through the hard work of dedicated staff from Facilities Management, Space and Facilities Utilization and Student Affairs, the Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry established its first dedicated Pantry location in Siskiyou Hall on June 15, 2017.



Photo: Organic Vegetable Project Farmer Tyler Doman with summer harvest (August 2017)

The Pantry operated out of Siskiyou Hall through 2017. During the three-week winter break, the Student Services Center 196 conference room and adjoining suite space was remodeled into the new and current Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry.

Through the thoughtful cooperation and coordination from Student Affairs, Student Conduct, Rights and Responsibility, Facilities Management, Space and Facilities Utilization, and the contractor, Modern Building, the newly remodeled Pantry opened two days before the start of the spring semester (January 19, 2018).

The primary advantage of the new location is that the Pantry is now strategically located in a high traffic building (Student Services Center) and has improved proximity to truck access and the BMU loading dock.

The primary challenge with the new location is that it lacks the appropriate space to support the demand and inventory requirements of the Pantry. Under 500 square feet, the Pantry is often crowded beyond the capacity of the room.

The current SSC Pantry configuration lacks appropriate space for participant and inventory intake, pallet loading and unloading, inventory storage, refrigerated display area, confidential space for case management and appropriate office space for interns and staff.

Importantly, the Pantry lacks access to running water. For safety, the Pantry requires access to clean water and would benefit significantly with an on-location commercial grade sink and drain for produce and inventory sorting and preparation areas.

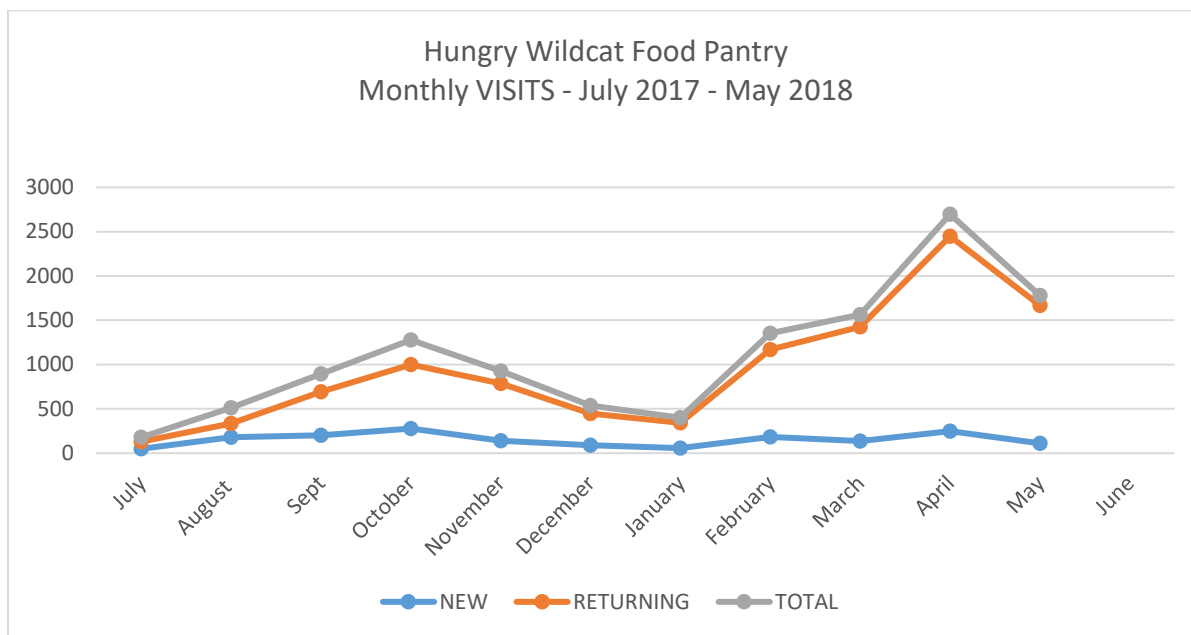
To maintain participant and stakeholder expectations, the Basic Needs Project recommends continued University action to review the space and logistical needs of the Pantry and to move forward with an expansion of Pantry to accommodate the demands on the Project.

Program Assessment – Program Objectives

The Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry currently provides supplemental food, quality meal access, on-the-spot, CalFresh USDA SNAP application assistance, hygiene products, basic needs services and referrals to more than 4,000 students annually.

This represents a doubling of service in one academic year and 400% growth from 2016.

New Participants, Returning Participants and Total Participant Visitations



Graphic: Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry monthly visits July 2017 to May 2018

2017-18	NEW	RETURNING PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL VISITS
July	49	130	179
August	179	334	513
Sept	203	692	895
October	278	1000	1278
November	142	787	929
December	90	446	536
January	57	344	401
February	184	1168	1352
March	135	1427	1562
April	248	2448	2696
May	113	1669	1781
TOTAL	1678	10,445	12122

Chart: Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry monthly visits July 2017 to May 2018

Analysis

The recently released California State University *Study of Student Basic Needs* (Crutchfield, Maguire 2018) noted that many students experiencing food and/or housing insecurity had lower GPAs and higher academic concerns than food secure students.

New research, institutional support for data systems development and systems integration will be necessary to appropriately capture, study and understand the impact of the Pantry on student learning, outcomes and graduation rates.

Unsolicited feedback from Pantry participants support the fact that students struggling with food and basic needs insecurity have a more difficult time in school and face more challenges in their quest to graduate.

Student testimonials: direct student testimonials of Andres Martinez, Alejandra Balle and Brandi Simonaro are highlighted in the fall issue of Inside Chico State, *One in Four – University Tackles Students’ Most Basic Needs: Housing and Hunger*, by Ashley Gebb.

<http://www.csuchico.edu/chicostatements/2017-fall/feature-basic-needs.shtml>

While serving 4,000 students is a significant Project accomplishment considering the high rate of growth, about half of the 8,000 estimated students with low to very low food security remain underserved.

Appropriately addressing this need will require an ongoing University commitment to expand the Pantry. An expansion of the Pantry will also allow room to hire the appropriate human resources required to serve this large student population successfully (e.g., case managers, operations manager). This is especially true when considering the support needed to provide appropriate case management to address housing insecurity.

Program Objectives for Next Academic Year

- 1) Through the Basic Needs Project, the Pantry distributed more than 35 tons of food last academic year. During a busy week, the Pantry distributes more than 2,000 pounds of food to 600+ students. Maintaining and expanding product inventory to meet this growing challenge is a primary objective/goal of the Project.
- 2) To ensure appropriate growth and stewardship, continue to develop a long-term plan for the Basic Needs Project, including facilities, human resources and financial support.
- 3) Though the generous support of donors and the dedicated efforts of the Basic Needs Project more than 50 tons of food has been acquired and distributed since 2013 *without any direct State support*. Efforts to expand State and stakeholder support is a primary objective/goal of the Project. To assist in this effort the Project will coordinate the second annual Chico Cares fundraising campaign with University Advancement and stakeholders.
- 4) In order to expand food acquisition, financial and institutional support, the Basic Needs Project looks to expand communication, vendor relations, education and outreach efforts to students, campus departments, businesses, community agencies and other stakeholders.

###