Food Security at UCR

What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner.

Low food security indicates reduced quality, variety and desirability of diet. Quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns are not disrupted. Very low food security indicates that food intake is reduced and normal eating patterns are disrupted at times. Generally, food insecurity references a summation of the low and very low food secure categories.[1] Food security is one element of basic needs, which also include housing, transportation, education, child care, safety, and health/wellness services.

Food insecurity on college campuses is a national issue. A national survey of community colleges found that 67% of students experienced food insecurity, including 33% very low food security.[2]

How many students at UCR are food insecure?

A large proportion of UC students are food insecure and this proportion is even higher for students at UCR.

Overall, there are three main sources of survey data that address food insecurity: the 2015 Student Food Access and Security Study conducted by the University of California Global Food Initiative and the Nutrition Policy Institute (NPI), the 2016 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), and the 2016 Graduate Well-Being Survey conducted by UCOP. Whereas the NPI Survey calculated an overall food insecurity rate, the UCUES and Graduate Well-Being Survey collected data on behavioral indicators of food insecurity.

2015 Student Food Access and Security Study
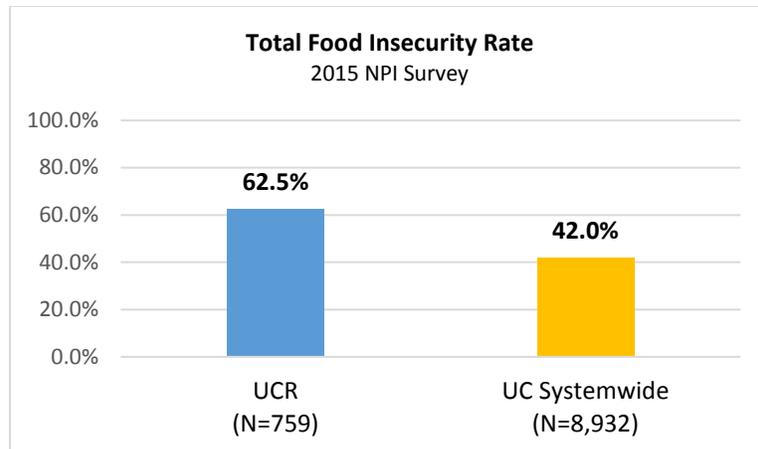
The 2015 survey by the Nutrition Policy Institute (NPI) found that 28.8% of UCR undergraduates (vs. 23.1% UC systemwide) experience *low* food security, and 33.7% (vs. 19% systemwide) experience *very low* food security. Combined, UCR's *total* food insecurity rate was measured at 62.5%. (n=759), compared to 42.0% (n=8,932) UC systemwide. Additionally, 66.9% of undergraduate students and 38.7% of graduate students at UCR experience food insecurity.[3]

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[1] https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security/; https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2016/december/what-is-very-low-food-security-and-who-experiences-it/.

[2] Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Hernandez, A. (2017). Hungry and homeless in college: Results from a national study of basic needs insecurity in higher education. Wisconsin HOPE Lab. Retrieved from http://wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf

[3] Martinez, S., Maynard, K., & Ritchie, L. (2016). Student food access and security study. University of California Global Food Initiative. Retrieved from http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/regmeet/july16/e1attach.pdf

UCUES

The 2016 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) found that out of the 63,129 undergraduates UC systemwide who completed the survey (UCR n=5,210) 26.7% of UCR undergraduates (vs. 22.6% UC systemwide) reported often (very often/often/somewhat often) skipping or cutting the size of meals because there wasn't enough money for food. 41.7% of UCR undergraduates (vs. 32.9% UC systemwide) reported it was often true or sometimes true that the food they bought didn't last and they didn't have money to get more. Additionally, 49.7% of UCR undergraduates often or sometimes worried whether their food would run out before they got money to buy more (vs. 42.2% systemwide).[4]
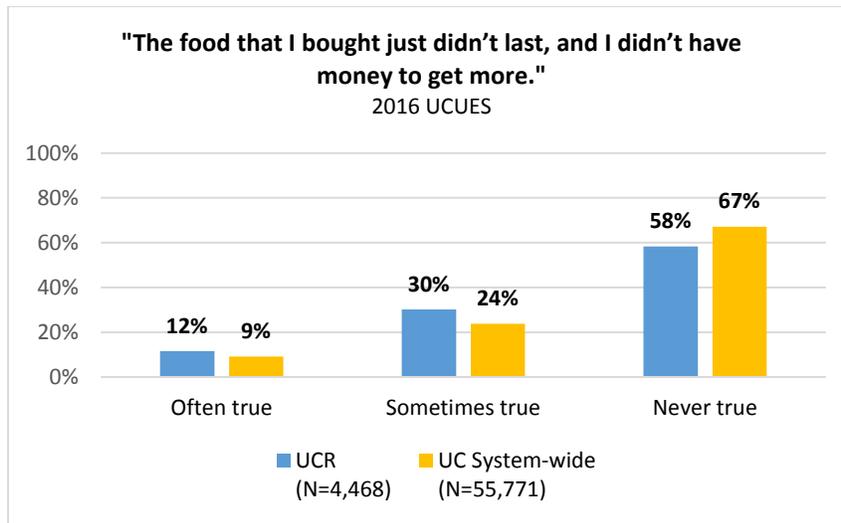
Graduate Well-Being Survey

Of the 549 UCR graduate students who completed the 2016 Graduate Well-Being Survey, 23.3% of UCR graduate students reported often (very often/often/somewhat often) skipping or cutting the size of meals because there wasn't enough money for food. 22.4% of UCR graduate students reported it was often true or sometimes true that the food they bought didn't last and they didn't have money to get more. Additionally, 36.1% of UCR graduate students worried whether their food would run out before they got money to buy more.[5]

Limitations

Together, these three surveys show a consistent trend that food insecurity is an issue at UCR. However, each survey has its limitations.

- First, the NPI Survey has been the standard in addressing food security rates UC systemwide, but this survey has a very low response rate, with only 759 students participating from UCR. The version of the survey that was conducted at UCR was a stand-alone survey, which could indicate a sampling bias (i.e., only students experiencing food insecurity would be interested in completing the survey), whereas many other campuses had the survey questions added on to the National College Health Assessment (NCHA).
- Second, the UCUES has a much larger sample size, with a total of 5,210 UCR students participating. This suggests that the UCUES results are more generalizable to our student population. However, the food security questions asked on UCUES vary slightly from those on the NPI study, making it difficult to compare the results of both surveys or to calculate overall food insecurity rates.
- Lastly, the Graduate Well-Being Survey also has a small sample size, making it difficult to generalize the results to the broader UCR graduate student body. Further, UCR does not have access to the UC systemwide data, making it difficult to draw comparisons with food insecurity rates for graduate students at UCR vs. systemwide.

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[4] Harris, S. (2017). Internal report by Student Affairs Information Systems, Research & Evaluation. University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) Results for UCR. Retrieved from http://ucues.ucr.edu/results/index.html
[5] Harris, S. (2017). Internal Analysis by UCR Student Affairs Information Systems, Research & Evaluation: UCR Graduate Well-Being Survey.

Are some students more vulnerable to food insecurity than others?

At UCR, analyses of the 2016 UCUES results reveal that Black, Hispanic, and LGBTQ undergraduates are more vulnerable to food insecurity than other student populations.[6]
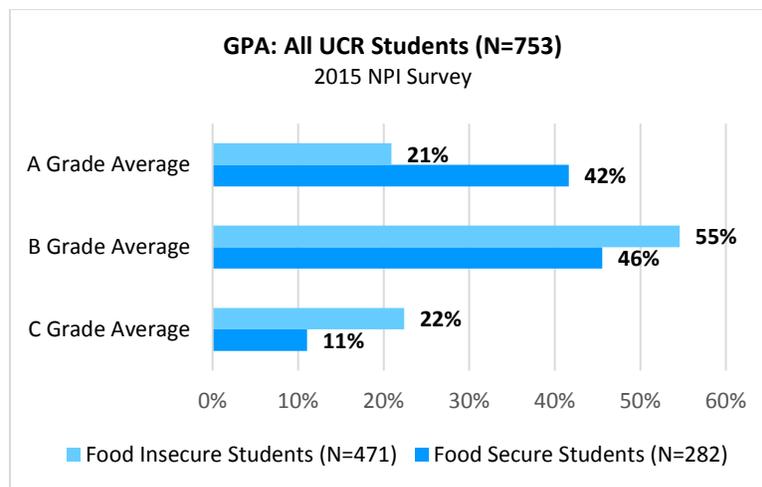
The UC Students at Risk for Food Insecurity report found that across the UC system, undergraduate students, students with a low socioeconomic status, under-represented minority students (URMs: African American, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino(a)), LGBTQ students, and former foster care youth were at significantly higher risk of food insecurity. Graduate students in the humanities reported higher rates of food insecurity, as well as academic master's students and academic doctoral students who had not advanced to candidacy.[7]

Students who have experienced food insecurity before coming to UC are more likely than other students to be food insecure now. However, 57% of food insecure students in the NPI study were experiencing food insecurity for the first time.

National surveys find that rates of food and housing insecurity are higher among former foster care youth, Pell-eligible students, independent students, and undergraduates with children.[8]

How does food insecurity impact student success?

The 2015 Nutrition Policy Institute survey found that food insecure students self-reported a lower GPA (M=3.1) than food secure students (M=3.4) UC systemwide.[2] At UCR, 21% of food insecure students reported having an A grade average, compared to 42% of food secure students (undergraduate and graduate students n=753).[8]

GPA: All UCR Students (N=753)
2015 NPI Survey

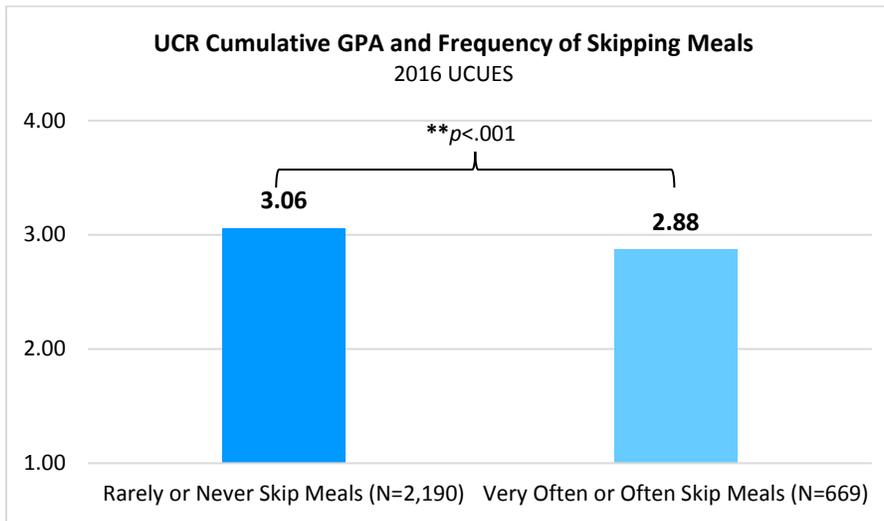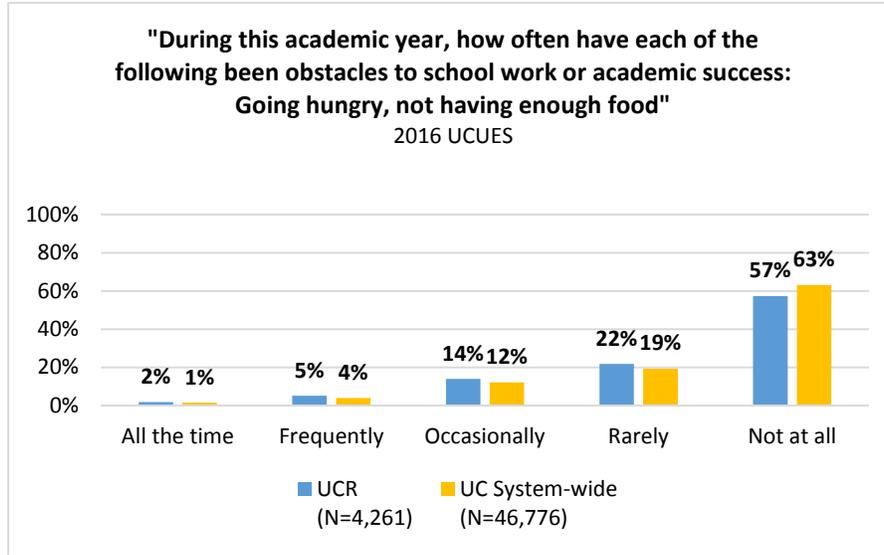| Grade Average	Food Insecure Students (N=471)	Food Secure Students (N=282)
A Grade Average	21%	42%
B Grade Average	55%	46%
C Grade Average	22%	11%

Additionally, the 2016 UCUES found that 20.9% of UCR undergraduates (vs. 17.5% UC systemwide) reported that going hungry or not having enough food was an obstacle to their school work or academic success. Further analyses revealed that students who reported very often or often skipping meals had significantly lower cumulative GPAs (M=2.88, SD=0.517) than students who rarely or never skipped meals (M=3.06, SD=0.518), t(2,857)=8.11, p<.001. All food security items also showed significant negative correlations with GPA (p<.001), such that higher ratings on food security items (i.e., higher food insecurity) related to a lower cumulative GPA. Together, these results suggest food insecurity impacts students' GPA and

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[6] Harris, S. (2017). Internal Analysis by UCR Student Affairs Information Systems, Research & Evaluation: UCR Food Access & Basic Needs.

[7] Internal Report by Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning at UCOP (2017). UC Students at Risk for Food Insecurity.

[8] Ibid., 16.

academic success.[8]

"During this academic year, how often have each of the following been obstacles to school work or academic success: Going hungry, not having enough food"
2016 UCUES

	All the time	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at all
UCR	2%	5%	14%	22%	57%
UC System-wide	1%	4%	12%	19%	63%

■ UCR (N=4,261)   ■ UC System-wide (N=46,776)

UCR Cumulative GPA and Frequency of Skipping Meals
2016 UCUES

**p<.001

Rarely or Never Skip Meals (N=2,190): 3.06
Very Often or Often Skip Meals (N=669): 2.88

2016 UCUES UCR Correlations		Cumulative GPA
How frequently -Skipped or cut the size of meals	Pearson Correlation	-.148**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p<.001
	N	4,448
I was worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more.	Pearson Correlation	-.169**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p<.001
	N	4,446
The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more.	Pearson Correlation	-.159**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p<.001
	N	4,440
How often as an obstacle-Going hungry, not having enough food	Pearson Correlation	-.131**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p<.001
	N	4,235

What is UCR doing about food insecurity right now?

In 2015, as part of the Global Food Initiative, UC Office of the President provided all UC campuses with an initial $75,000 to begin shaping efforts to address food insecurity (Phase I.) In response to the UC NPI food security report, UCOP has agreed to fund an additional $151,000 each year for the next 2 years (Phase II.)

With those funds, UCR
- Convened a cross-disciplinary Basic Needs (formerly Food Access & Security) Working Group of staff, faculty and students to steer food security and basic needs programming.
- Established the R'Pantry in the Bear's Den, currently serving up to 400 students per week, and a graduate student-only satellite pantry. Renovations are underway for a new pantry space to be located in Costo Hall. Plans include refrigeration, small appliance rentals, semi-private Case Management and Cal Fresh enrollment assistance, and expanded hours.
- Hired a full-time staff member and a team of undergraduate and graduate students to coordinate the pantry and increase basic needs skills and education.
- Outfitted Dining Services convenience stores to be EBT-compatible.
- Established the UCR Farmers Market.
- Delivered fresh produce from the R'Garden to the R'Pantry and collaborative programming.
- Hired a full-time Financial Literacy Coordinator housed in Financial Aid.

What else can UCR do?

UCR is nationally known for its campus diversity, graduation rates and social mobility. UCR is thus well positioned to become a national leader in the field of campus food security.

The UCR Basic Needs Working Group is currently working on the following:
- Improving visibility of resources, including awareness of Cal Fresh and new state policies. (For example, all work-study eligible students are now exempt from benefits restrictions.)
- Building relationships with off-campus partners, such as local churches
- Identifying food preparation, cooking and storage areas around campus
- Developing a resource map of existing departments, spaces, resources, transportation, etc. on campus and in our community to support students' basic needs and well-being
- Increasing life skills and basic needs awareness and education via workshops and campaigns
- Exploring long-term sustainability, including funding, policy change, and further research
- Training faculty and staff on ways to support their students' basic needs and provide linkage to resources

In addition to these efforts, basic needs researchers make the following policy recommendations for universities:
1. Create a comprehensive campus center that offers training and education about poverty, income inequality, and socioeconomic class, and also provides direct services to students in need. For example, the Human Services Resource Center at Oregon State University offers a food pantry, a shower, laundry, assistance completing SNAP applications, and emergency short-term housing.
2. Expand staff (such as Student Affairs Case Managers) who can serve as a single point of contact for basic needs insecure students, and in particular homeless students.
3. Develop a robust and accessible emergency aid program that delivers support to students quickly. These are often popular fundraising efforts undertaken by colleges.
4. Improve the accuracy of Cost of Attendance estimates, on which financial aid packages are based (particularly the cost of living off campus.)
5. Encourage state and federal investment in targeted aid programs that reach students with the most financial need, and/or Promise programs that help students who otherwise would not access financial aid for fear of the price being out of reach.
6. Campaign for a national or state subsidized School Lunch program for students in all public colleges and universities.
7. Encourage the federal government to simplify the FAFSA application process for establishing independence, particularly for homeless students, and to re-institute year-round Pell so students have access to summer support

to make progress in their studies and to contribute to living expenses.

__What you can do to help:__

- Join the UCR Basic Needs Working Group. Subcommittees currently include marketing, data and evaluation, education and outreach, R'Pantry operations, EBT capability, and emergency support and infrastructure.
- Donate to the R'Pantry. Collecting food via food drives and delivering to the pantry is appreciated, but donating money goes a lot farther than donating canned goods since we purchase foods by weight from a food bank. The fundraising page is available via the link on www.go.ucr.edu/rpantry.
- Refer students to Cal Fresh benefit enrollment each Thursday at the UCR Farmer's Market.
- Identify existing or potential food storage and prep spaces—access to a microwave or refrigerator in your space may help to alleviate student stress related to food insecurity. If you have a departmental kitchenette or resources, consider making them available for students to use.
- Create a "food shelf" in your office —think of it as a mini food pantry. (A toolkit for departments will be online soon.)
- Rethink expiration and sell-by dates—most of these dates are arbitrary and lead to a lot of unnecessary food waste.
- Ask students how they are doing and refer students to Student Affairs Case Management (827-5000) for additional support.
- Check the cost of books when creating a syllabus and consider cost-free fair use, e-book or open access alternatives. Textbooks are a significant financial burden for students. See more information from the UCR Affordable Course Materials Initiative at http://cnc.ucr.edu/acmi/
- Include a blurb about campus resources in your syllabus, encouraging students to seek aid.
- *Solutions will need to mobilize the whole campus community and the surrounding region.*

For more information about the Basic Needs Working Group or how to help support these efforts, please email basicneeds@ucr.edu.