The State of Food Security at CUNY in 2020

AN ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MAY 2020

CUNY URBAN FOOD POLICY INSTITUTE

Healthy CUNY

THE hope CENTER

CUNY SPH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH & HEALTH POLICY

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On the cover: (LEFT) Karla Ignacio served as a food security advocate at Hostos Community College. "You get out of the train station and all you see for miles is... junk food," she explained. As a food security advocate, she helped her peers find food resources on her campus and in the community. (RIGHT) Transition Academy Food Program, Medgar Evers College.

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About Healthy CUNY

Healthy CUNY is a university-wide initiative that since 2007 has promoted health for academic success at CUNY. It is sponsored by the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy and the CUNY Office of Student Affairs.

About the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute

The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute is an academic research and action center at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health located in Harlem, NYC. The Institute provides evidence to inform municipal policies that promote equitable access to healthy, affordable food.

About the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice is redefining what it means to be a student-ready college with a national movement centering #RealCollege students' basic needs. We believe that students are humans first. Their basic needs for food, affordable housing, transportation, childcare, and their mental health are central conditions for learning.

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An ***Executive Summary*** of this report is available here.

Introduction

No achievement better supports lifetime health, satisfaction, and the potential to support oneself than earning a college degree. No United States institution has helped more low income, immigrant, and students of color to enter and graduate from college than the City University of New York, the nation's largest urban public university.

But like other institutions of higher education that serve students who have experienced poverty, racism, growing up in under-resourced communities, and inadequate high school education, CUNY could do much better. Today only about half of those who enter CUNY's community college and baccalaureate degree programs graduate within six years, depriving many of these individuals of the lifetime benefits of a college degree, and New York State of the health, economic and social benefits of having more residents graduate from college.

Students fail to achieve academic success for many reasons, but food insecurity is a significant contributing factor. It is also a problem that with will, commitment, and modest resources our society can fix. Food insecurity is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the "lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life."[1] Growing evidence shows that food insecure students tend to have lower GPAs than their food secure peers,[2,3,4] and face additional challenges such as difficulty studying[5,6] and an increased likelihood of withdrawing from courses[7] or suspending studies.[8]

Moreover, food insecurity exacerbates physical, mental and other health problems, imposing costs on the food insecure and on society.[9,10,11] Not having enough to eat, waking up not knowing whether one can afford to eat that day, having to decide whether to buy a textbook or eat dinner—these are perhaps among the most debilitating experiences of poverty. In this way, food insecurity also poses a moral challenge—can the wealthiest nation in the world tolerate a situation where many people's life chances are diminished by lack of access to food?

In this report, we examine the prevalence and distribution of food insecurity at CUNY at the start of 2020. We also describe and assess the variety of programs, policies and services CUNY and its partners have developed to reduce food insecurity and suggest options for further reducing food insecurity in the coming years. Our goal is to provide the key constituencies at CUNY—its leaders, faculty and staff, students, and the City and State elected officials who fund CUNY—with the evidence they need to make informed decisions about promoting food security and academic success at CUNY. At the end of the report, we provide a brief overview of preliminary evidence on how the COVID-19 epidemic has affected food security at CUNY and the university's options for reducing it.

Previous studies by the organizations preparing this report, Healthy CUNY, a university-wide initiative to promote health to support academic success at CUNY, and the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University, an organization that conducts research, policy analyses, and advocacy to better meet the basic needs of college students throughout the United States, show that high levels of CUNY students—between a third and a half, depending on the survey methods and the definitions of food insecurity—faced some level of food insecurity in 2018-2019.[12,13] These rates are similar to those found in other studies of public, private and for-profit colleges.[14,15,16]

Why are so many college students food insecure?

Recent social, political, and economic changes in the United States have dramatically changed who goes to college, how students pay for college, and the price of a college education. Together, these changes constitute what has been called a new economics of college.[17] Six developments define the new economics of college: (1) a growing population of low-income college students, (2) higher college costs and insufficient financial aid, (3) more financial hardship among many low and moderate-income families, (4) a weak labor market for part-time workers, (5) declining per capita college resources, and (6) Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) policies that specifically exclude many college students from participation.[18] A deeper understanding of each of these trends can inform the development of policies and programs to overcome these obstacles to food security.

Programs that promote food security address one or more of these obstacles. To provide an overview of CUNY's response to food insecurity, we created six categories of programs:

- Programs that reduce students' out of pocket expenses for college (food related)
- Programs that reduce students' out of pocket expenses for college (non-food related)
- Programs that increase family stability/supports
- Programs that improve work-related income
- Programs that increase access to the safety net
- Programs that increase colleges' capacity to provide resources

In this report, we describe each of these categories of programs as they were being implemented on CUNY campuses in the Fall 2019 semester. We also include a preliminary assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on food insecurity among CUNY students in the Spring 2020 semester. We then review this portfolio of interventions to identify strengths, weaknesses, duplications, and gaps in services as well as emerging opportunities to weave these programs together into a more integrated and systematic response to the food security needs of CUNY students.

Appendix 1 describes the methods used to gather the evidence summarized in this report.

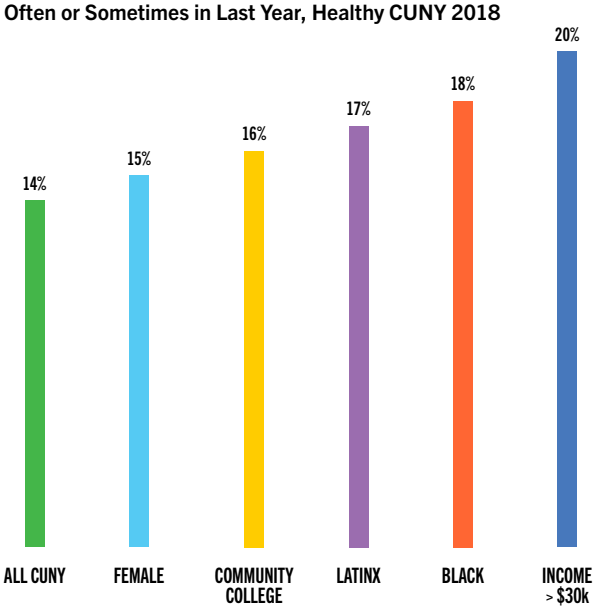
Food Insecurity Prevalence and Impact at CUNY

In 2018-19, both Healthy CUNY and the Hope Center conducted surveys of the prevalence and distribution of food insecurity among CUNY undergraduate students, the results of which are described below.

Each of these studies used different survey instruments, somewhat different definitions of food insecurity, and recruited samples in different ways, as described in the Appendix. Each study had distinct strengths and weaknesses. Both, however, found disturbingly high levels of food insecurity among CUNY students and both found that some groups of students bore a disproportionate burden of unmet need.

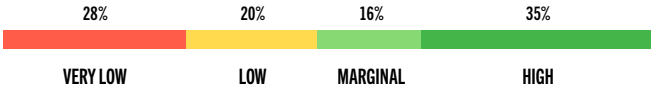
Two figures illustrate key findings from these studies. Figure 1, from the Healthy CUNY 2018 survey of a representative sample of students, shows that overall 15% reported that they were often or sometimes hungry in the last year—representing an estimated 34,000 students. As Figure 1 shows, students from families with household incomes of less than $30,000 per year, Black, Latinx, and community college students were more likely to report hunger than their respective peers.[19]

FIGURE 1 **Percentage of CUNY Students Reporting Hunger Often or Sometimes in Last Year, Healthy CUNY 2018**



A separate survey of CUNY undergraduate students conducted in 2018 by the Hope Center (referred to hereafter as the #RealCollege 2018 CUNY survey) used the validated 18-item USDA Food Security Module and was completed by nearly 22,000 students who responded to an invitation to all CUNY students to participate. That module uses students' responses to questions to classify their food security as high, marginal, low, or very low. Students classified as "Low" or "Very Low" are considered "food insecure" by the USDA and 48% of #RealCollege respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days.[20] Figure 2 shows the distribution of CUNY respondents by food security status.

FIGURE 2 **CUNY Undergraduates by Food Security Status, #RealCollege 2018 CUNY Survey, Cumulative Percentage** (%)



The #RealCollege 2018 CUNY survey also found modest differences in the proportion of students experiencing low and very low levels of food security by type of campus, with 51% of community college students reporting low food security compared to 45% of senior college students.

The #RealCollege 2018 CUNY survey also found that the burden of food insecurity was inequitably distributed among different groups, with LGBTQ, Black, Latinx, students over age 26, and students reporting grades of D and F reporting higher levels of food insecurity than their respective peers.

What influences which students use food security assistance programs?

Healthy CUNY 2018 survey data provide evidence that helps to understand some of the influences of use of campus food security programs, particularly food pantries.

FIGURE 3 **Percentage of CUNY Undergraduates Who Know About and Use Campus Services, Healthy CUNY Survey 2018**

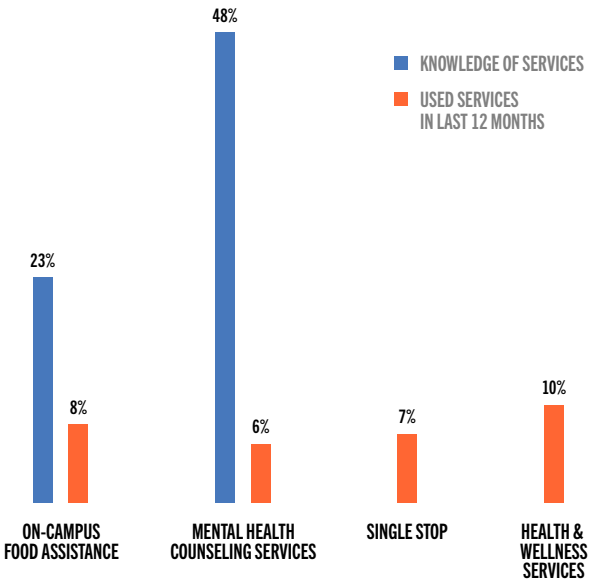
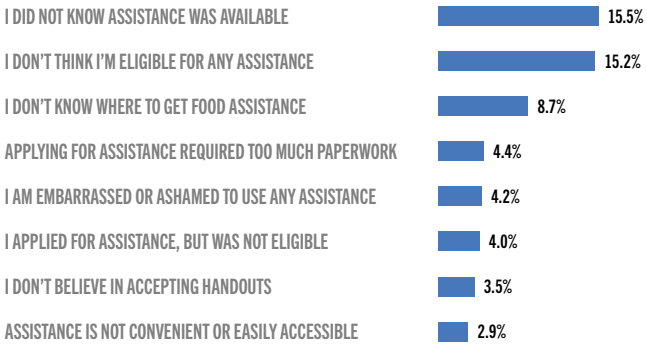


Figure 3 shows that slightly less than one in four CUNY students knows about the availability of food assistance on their campus and only one in twelve uses this service. In comparison, almost half of CUNY students know about the availability of mental health services on their campus while only 6% use this service.

> *I think a lot of people are ashamed because they get public assistance, HRA that is basically what CUNY EDGE is—basically HRA is CUNY EDGE. They help you out with whatever you need help with, but a lot of people are ashamed, and they will say, no I'm not HRA and in reality, they really are but they don't like to tell people for some reason.*
>
> — **Bronx Community College Student, 2017**

Figure 4 shows some of the reasons that CUNY students cited for why they do not use food security programs on their campus. The three most frequently cited reasons were not knowing assistance was available, not thinking the student was eligible for this service, and not knowing where to get food assistance, all factors that could be reduced with robust information campaigns.

FIGURE 4 **Why Students Did Not Use Food Security Assistance Programs, Healthy CUNY Survey 2018**



How does food insecurity influence academic success at CUNY?

Since a fundamental goal of CUNY is to support the academic success of its students, a key question facing CUNY is to assess the impact of varying levels of food insecurity on the academic progress of populations of CUNY students. Both Healthy CUNY and the #RealCollege surveys provide useful information.

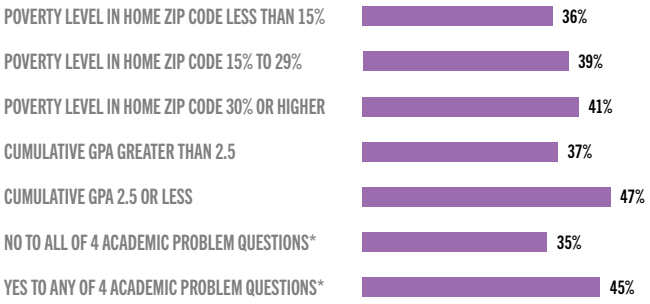
The 2018 Healthy CUNY survey found that, compared to their food-secure peers, students experiencing any food insecurity were 1.4 times more likely to experience any of four academic problems during the last 12 months (i.e., GPA less than or equal to 2.5, failed out, dropped out, or took a leave of absence from a degree program). This survey also showed that students who reported having gone hungry often or sometimes in the last 12 months were twice as likely to have failed out of a degree program as students who had not experienced hunger (6.8% versus 3.4%) and 21% of these students reported a GPA of less than or equal to 2.5. Moreover, 8.6% of respondents—an estimated 21,000 CUNY undergraduates—reported that hunger or food insecurity had sometimes or often interfered with their schoolwork in the last 12 months.[21]

The 2018 #RealCollege survey also showed that students who experienced basic needs insecurity and homelessness had lower grades than peers without these needs.[22] Food insecure students were almost 1.3 times more likely to report average grades of C, D or F than food secure students.

The surveys completed to date are cross-sectional, not longitudinal, and thus do not allow researchers to determine

whether food insecurity or some other factors contributed to low grades. Moreover, both surveys depend on students self-reported data which may be inaccurate. Further studies of the impact of food insecurity on academic progress among various population groups and at varying levels of food security are urgently needed to develop effective programs and policies to reduce food insecurity and its adverse academic consequences.

FIGURE 5 **Poverty and Academic Problems Among Students Reporting Food Insecurity, Healthy CUNY Fall 2018**



*GPA < 2.5, FAIL OUT, DROP OUT, OR TAKE LEAVE OF ABSENCE (Q3 - Q4)
Data Source: 2018 Healthy CUNY Survey, Fall 2018, N=1869

How many CUNY students are enrolled in SNAP?

Enrolling in SNAP can play an important role in helping college students to prevent or escape from food insecurity. Yet several studies, including some at CUNY, show that many students who would seem to meet the eligibility requirements for SNAP are not in fact enrolled. A 2018 report by the GAO found that among the 3.3 million undergraduate students that were at-risk for food insecurity and potentially eligible to receive SNAP benefits, 57% were not enrolled in the program in 2016.[23]

According the 2018 Healthy CUNY survey, only 5.7% of undergraduate respondents reported receiving SNAP benefits in the past 12 months. Further analysis showed that 13% of students with household incomes less than $30,000 per year were enrolled in SNAP and only 1.4% of students with household income of $30,000 or more. These findings suggest that many CUNY students who appear to be eligible for SNAP based on income are not enrolled.

The 2018 #RealCollege CUNY survey found that among food insecure students, 23% of community college and 17% of senior college students received SNAP benefits in the past 12 months. Among those students who experience high food insecurity, 13% of community college students and 10% of senior college students were receiving SNAP benefits. Overall, 16% of surveyed students reported receiving SNAP, a proportion almost three times as high as in the 2018 Healthy CUNY survey. Both the #RealCollege and Healthy CUNY surveys suggest that many CUNY students whose household incomes appear to make them eligible for SNAP are not in fact enrolled, a missed opportunity for improving food security.

To explore that question further, Healthy CUNY researchers teamed with Maggie Dickinson, an assistant professor at Guttman Community College, to explore CUNY students' experiences with SNAP. A March and April 2020 survey of a representative sample of 500 students at five CUNY campuses with high enrollments of students who live in low-income households found that 20% of CUNY students on these campuses are enrolled in SNAP. Of those, 56% are enrolled as part of a household. Almost three in five (58%) students who are enrolled in SNAP reported that receiving SNAP benefits had a positive impact on them as a student. Two in five (41%) reported no impact. One student reported that SNAP "allows me to focus on school and not worry so much about how I will eat." Another reported that they "can use part of the money I'm saving to get books and pay for school." Another put it succinctly, "Less stress = better grades". Nineteen Percent (19%) of students in this survey had applied for SNAP but were not receiving benefits.

Follow up interviews with CUNY students who completed the survey found that there are three primary reasons that students who have applied for SNAP do not receive benefits. First, the student or their household does not meet the income requirements. Students had various levels of independence from their families, with some sharing meals and income and others simply sharing a living space. There was considerable confusion from students about whether they should apply as individuals when they lived with other family members and how to make sense of complex financial arrangements.

Second, their applications for SNAP were denied because they do not meet the requirement for college students to work 20 hours a week to be eligible for SNAP. These students expressed the feeling of being punished for being full time students and experienced high levels of food insecurity. About one in ten (11%) students who do not believe they are eligible for SNAP or were turned down when they applied believe that they do not qualify because they do not work enough hours. One in three (32%) believe they are not eligible or were turned down because they are a student. Single Stop employees who help students enroll in benefits on CUNY campuses confirmed that the SNAP work requirements for full time college students are one of the primary reasons students are denied much needed food assistance from SNAP.

Third, students who have applied for SNAP do not receive benefits because they experience poor treatment at the

welfare offices, become discouraged and give up on trying to apply. In interviews, students reported long wait times at welfare offices, having to miss class to attend required appointments, and generally poor treatment that added to the sense of stigma often associated with applying for benefits like SNAP and public assistance.

Although the New York City Human Resources Administration has made substantial progress in expediting online access to SNAP enrollment and certification, some CUNY students reported not benefiting from these improvements.

Overview of CUNY Food System

This section describes the multiple components of the CUNY food system, the complex array of programs and food outlets that provide CUNY students with food or food assistance while they are on campus. By deepening our understanding of this system, we hope to:

- Discover new opportunities for reducing food insecurity and improving CUNY students' access to healthy and affordable food,
- Improve coordination of the multiple programs
- Identify gaps or duplication in services
- Find new ways to use existing resources more effectively
- Highlight policy changes at CUNY or in New York City and State that could assist CUNY to better meet students' food needs

Students can obtain food and food assistance through a number of offices and programs at CUNY. The types of food available for purchase in cafeterias, kiosks and vending machines are determined through an administrative contracting process. In addition, a variety of food trucks, food carts, fast food chains and other restaurants, supermarkets, bodegas and other food outlets surround most CUNY campuses, offering other food and price choices.

Campus food pantries provide immediate food assistance and can connect students with public benefits such as SNAP, while vouchers help subsidize food either purchased on campus or at off-campus vendors. These resources work in tandem with other student support initiatives that free up economic resources and facilitate access to the social safety net. Single Stop offices offer comprehensive social, legal and financial support, and several emergency grant programs help address temporary financial need. Together these outlets constitute the food system of CUNY, a mélange of providers that now report to different CUNY administrative units and have varying social and economic commitments. Collectively, these entities are one major influence on students' ability to find food on campus and outside of it.

Currently, the operation of CUNY's food service (i.e., cafeterias and vending machines) relies on a decentralized contracting process. CUNY solicits bids for contractors through requests for proposals (RFP) to provide food services to a select campus. Each campus has an auxiliary services corporation (ASC), a non-profit entity, composed of CUNY faculty, students and administration that coordinates with and contracts food vendors for its cafeterias, vending machines and kiosks.[24] Decision-making by administrators, faculty and students is based on several factors, such as revenue generation, financial viability, options for student employment, nutrition and affordability. As of 2018, 17 campuses procure services for cafeteria operations and management which includes on-site campus catering services.[25] CUNY is currently exploring options for more unified contracting system across campuses, an approach that could help to reduce the wide variability in pricing, quality and access among CUNY campuses but could also reduce campus flexibility to find innovative ways to meet their students' needs.

A student workshop on food insecurity at Hostos Community College

A Typology of CUNY's Food Security Assistance Programs

As noted in the Introduction, to complete our scan of existing food security programs at CUNY, we developed a typology of approaches, based on the particular way that the services addressed the causal factors contributing to food insecurity. Table 1 describes 5 categories of food security resources and programs that go beyond emergency food assistance to address the underlying contributors to food insecurity.

TABLE 1 **A Typology of Approaches and Programs to Promoting Food Security**

	CATEGORY	EXISTING CAMPUS PROGRAMS AND OTHER RESOURCES
1	Programs that directly give students $ or other tangible resources for food and other necessities	**FOOD RELATED** (e.g., food pantries, food scholarships, fresh food on campus, meal vouchers and/or swipes, emergency cash assistance for food) **NOT FOOD RELATED** (e.g., transportation subsidies; childcare subsidies and/or CCAMPIS;[1] utility assistance programs; SAP support/academic recovery program; Credit for life experience, which reduces student's overall cost for a degree; book subsidy or free online book access program)
2	Programs that help students and families use resources better	Financial and financial aid counseling and education for students and their families; benefits access for students and families; pro bono legal support; psychological counseling; nutrition education or counseling; wellness programs related to food/nutrition; student-run clubs related to food security; healthcare access programs including health insurance enrollment assistance
3	Programs that help students earn more, so they have more to spend on food and other necessities	Total work study budget; non-work-study campus-based work program; partnerships with employers to hire students
4	Programs that help students obtain and use public benefits	Single Stop, increasing access to SNAP (enrollment assistance); WIC center on campus; eviction prevention program (e.g., One Shot Deal); free tax prep services; programs that create awareness of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
5	Programs that strengthen CUNY's capacity to provide resources	Single Stop on campus; academic advising; case management programs/services (ASAP or other comprehensive student support programs); faculty professional development to build their capacity to recognize and assist students with food insecurity; partnerships with CBOs with on-campus presence; on-campus homeless liaison and/or single point of contact

1 The Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program is a federal grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education to support student-parents. This program supports the participation of low-income student-parents in postsecondary education through the provision of campus-based child care services.

CUNY Food Security Resources

To describe CUNY's overall efforts to address food insecurity among its students, we provide brief profiles of the main CUNY programs that seek to contribute directly or indirectly to promoting food security. Our methods for completing our profiles of these programs are described in Appendix 1.

Campus Food Pantries

Coupling immediate food assistance with the promotion of food-related resources, food pantries serve as an important support for food insecure students on 18 campuses. According to data collected by Hope Center and Healthy CUNY researchers, most CUNY pantries were established within the last four years with the involvement of staff, campus and central administration, students, community partners and faculty. Pantry hours change often from semester to semester and vary across CUNY campuses, based on staffing, space and level of internal CUNY and external philanthropic support. Five campuses offer open hours after 5PM. Food pantries often work with community-based organizations, internal college offices, student clubs and faculty. Fifteen CUNY campuses are actively affiliated with Food Bank for New York City, which supports pantries by training pantry coordinators, sharing food safety and nutrition guidelines and providing food to be distributed and access to donated and federally subsidized food.

To present a more complete description of the CUNY food pantries, Hope Center and CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute staff developed and sent a survey to 18 CUNY food pantries in early 2020. As part of this survey, pantry directors were asked a variety of questions on the planning stages of the pantry, the management of the pantry and general information on daily operations.

Results from this survey indicate that most of these pantries were created with the input of students, faculty and staff and went on to be managed by campus staff or student groups. For example, of the 13 surveyed pantries, nearly three out of four were created with students being involved in the planning process and almost one in four had faculty involved. Six pantries were managed by student affairs, five by the campus Single Stop, and one by the campus Health and Wellness program.

CUNY pantries also vary in terms of their size and how long they have been open. About half of CUNY pantries are fairly new, having opened within the last two years. The pantries at Hostos Community College, Kingsborough Community College and CUNY School of Law have been open more than five years. Twelve CUNY pantries have dedicated space on-campus and seven have at least two staff members on site. Among the directors who could speak to the size of their pantry space—one director could not—the size of pantry space ranged from less than 100 square feet to as much as 500 square feet.

Access to the food pantries also varies considerably. For example, almost half of the pantries are open every day or every weekday, while five are only open two to four times a week. One pantry is open only once a week. Five pantries are open 31 to 40 hours per week and nearly one-quarter are open less than 10 hours a week. Despite limitations on hours open, many of the pantries permit broad access to pantry use. For instance, about two-thirds of pantries allow families of students to use the pantry. About half also allow faculty or staff to use the pantry. However, only one allows community members to use the pantry.

Only about half of surveyed pantry directors reported counts of annual users. Among those who provided estimates, four reported fewer than 500 total users in the fall of 2018. However, in the spring 2019 semester three pantry directors

reported serving more than 500 total users. According to the Food Bank for New York City, a separate source of data on pantry users, during the 2018-2019 academic year, the CUNY pantries they support served more than 5,000 individuals, including children, adults, and seniors.

Despite the level of demand at a campus pantry, pantries often operate with limited resources. Nine pantry directors provided us with budget information. Of those responses, three have a budget less than $10,000, five have a budget between $10,001 and $20,000, and only one campus pantry had a budget exceeding $20,000.

Single Stop

Offered at all seven CUNY community colleges and at John Jay College, Single Stop provides free social, legal, and financial services to help students complete their degrees. The program takes a holistic approach to connect students with existing resources that promote individual well-being, academic success and degree completion. One key program that Single Stop screens and enrolls eligible students for is SNAP. Single Stop is a national model and thus provides relatively uniform services across participating campuses. In addition, through its assistance on tax preparation, screening and enrollment in Medicaid and other public benefit programs, Single Stop helps students find additional sources of support that can increase the resources available for food. In June 2020, CUNY ended its contract with Single Stop USA.

Food Vouchers

Some colleges provide meal vouchers to subsidize food purchased on campus or at off-campus vendors. As of 2019, fifteen campuses offer vouchers for on-campus food, while eleven campuses offer vouchers for off-campus vendors. In 2015, ten percent of students who reported using food assistance at CUNY had used on-campus meal vouchers.[26] On-campus vouchers are primarily used at the cafeteria. John Jay College, for example, provides qualifying students vouchers based on need to cover the costs of breakfast, lunch or dinner purchased from its cafeteria.[27] Participation is limited to one academic semester, and students can reapply for the program each year. Use of on-campus vouchers can extend to food access programs such as the Fresh Food Box Program at Hunter College. At John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the food service provider, MBJ, pledged to provide students with $60K in on-campus food vouchers. Off-campus vouchers can provide more choice; their uses range from nearby restaurants, cafes, supermarkets, grocery stores and even a mobile farmers' market depending on the college.

In 2019 New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson released his Growing Food Equity report that includes several initiatives to tackle food insecurity at CUNY. In partnership with CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Speaker Johnson unveiled a $1 million pilot at CUNY's community colleges that provides $400 in meal vouchers/ swipe credits or off-campus food vouchers in the Fall and Spring semesters to qualifying students.[28] In Spring 2020 CUNY reported providing $400 food stipends to 1,595 students. As described in the section on CUNY's response to COVID-19 later in this report, additional food security programs were established in response to the pandemic.

SNAP Enrollment

Some CUNY schools that do not operate Single Stop programs also provide SNAP and other benefits enrollment assistance to their students. Medgar Evers College, for example, operates the Transition Academy, a one-stop-shop for accessing resources for students at the college, and offers screenings for benefits programs and other assistance. Four senior colleges offer benefits enrollment assistance, including SNAP. The operations of these programs are tailored to each school and thus can differ widely. There are currently no WIC centers located on CUNY campuses.

Cafeterias

Most CUNY campuses have cafeterias including all community colleges. These facilities provide on-campus access to food. Less than half of CUNY cafeterias offer a meal plan and the vendors and types of foods vary widely across CUNY. Two

CUNY campuses recently closed their cafeterias, leaving few food options for their students while on campus. SWIPE Hunger, an organization that seeks to address food insecurity through cafeteria meal swipe donations, has recently been active at a few CUNY campuses. While SWIPE donations may be an effective solution at residential colleges, long commutes and a lack of meal plans make meal swipe donations an imperfect solution for addressing food insecurity at CUNY. Accordingly, SWIPE has increased its programming to include student organizing and advocacy. As noted above, some cafeterias have offered vouchers to students on their campus and the new City Council program also offers cafeteria vouchers to eligible students on participating campuses.

Emergency Aid

CUNY offers a total of at least 10 separate sources of emergency assistance. Twenty-two CUNY campuses offer the Carroll and Milton Petrie Student Emergency Grant Fund, which provides financial assistance for qualifying students experiencing a short-term financial crisis that may impede their ability to remain in school. Although emergency grants provide necessary immediate assistance to students in need, the amount awarded, spending restrictions, application process and eligibility requirements vary significantly by college. Some schools have review committees or required interviews which, in addition to application redundancies, may impose unnecessary burdens on students already in crisis. Moreover, emergency aid, in some cases (not always), is taxable income which, if not coordinated with other income, can affect students' eligibility for financial aid. CUNY recently created a centralized emergency assistance fund, described in a later section.

> ***It's like I just spent my last $20 on a MetroCard. How am I going to eat today?***
>
> *Lehman student*

Training Faculty & Staff

There is not a universal way of educating faculty and staff about student basic needs and assistance. Most information is distributed through the associate deans of students and offices of student affairs. The allocation of additional resources for faculty and staff training is an area which merits consideration. Concerned faculty and staff advisors across CUNY already offer formal and informal academic assistance and referrals to social services to their students. In Summer 2019, Healthy CUNY and the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute convened faculty and staff from five CUNY campuses to prepare a guide for faculty on addressing food insecurity in their classrooms and on their campuses. It includes a variety of suggestions for teaching, research and service related to food security.[29]

Two components of CUNY's response to food insecurity constitute the foundation of these efforts and warrant further investigation: the campus food pantries and CUNY partnerships with community anti-hunger and food security organizations.

Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations (CBOs) provide and implement solutions to improve the lives of the underserved. At least 7 community-based organizations have joined CUNY in the fight to reduce food insecurity among CUNY students, providing valuable resources, connections, training and expertise to better equip CUNY schools to tackle the cause. Some CBOs have supported the creation of new campus infrastructure to address hunger. To date, Food Bank for New York City has helped 17 CUNY schools launch their food pantries and streamline their food distribution. Green Bronx Machine provided Hostos Community College the training and partnerships to create a 12-tower commercial farm, which donates some produce to its pantry. Donate NYC, a virtual platform that nonprofits and businesses can use to give or find donations, has connected several CUNY schools with surplus food donations.

Other CBOs have set up programs to increase access to fresh produce, promote nutrition and provide resources to alleviate food and financial insecurity. GrowNYC has partnered with Hunter College to provide a Fresh Food Box program, while the Corbin Hill Food Project has partnered with 3 CUNY schools to provide Farm Shares. These programs allow students to purchase a select amount of healthy food at reduced or no cost. The Campaign Against Hunger has brought the Fresh Vibes Market to Medgar Evers College, a mobile farmers' market that provides nutrition workshops, low-cost fresh produce, public benefits counseling, and tax preparation services. City Harvest has partnered with Borough of Manhattan Community College to offer students a six to seven-week credit bearing course that provides nutrition education, cooking classes and a grocery store shopping trip with vouchers provided.

Interviews with staff of community-based organizations suggest that these partnerships provide expanded opportunities to address hunger among CUNY students. For these organizations, partnerships with CUNY campuses help them meet a common goal of increasing access to affordable, healthy food for low-income New Yorkers. In turn, the organizations provide resources and increase CUNY's capacity to meet students' basic needs. On the CUNY side, much of the work is led by staff and faculty who do not necessarily have a background or training in food service or nutrition, and whose time is stretched as a result of budget and staffing limitations, but are nevertheless dedicated to helping students in need.

Partnerships help supplement existing resources directly—for example, by providing fresh produce, a mobile pantry or food vouchers. Some partnerships provide a source of technical expertise and assistance, such as with GrowNYC whose staff have provided training and technical assistance to CUNY schools on how to start a Fresh Food Box program at their respective campuses, and Food Bank for New York City, which provides training and technical assistance in food pantry operations and food safety. These community partnerships also increase access to the food safety net through donated and government subsidized food, and assistance with public benefits enrollment. Partnerships with organizations like Hillel and Swipe Hunger provide a way for campuses to reach sub populations and targeted groups of students through their peer outreach and advocacy efforts.

While it is clear from our interviews that CBO partnerships are a valuable resource for campus food security work, there are also some limitations overall. CBO partnerships with CUNY would benefit from a more coordinated approach to collaboration with the university. In addition, better promotion and communication of services is needed within the university to make students aware of services and resources made available through partnerships and to reduce stigma. In recent years organizations have made connections to CUNY campuses as a result of increased interest in student food security on the part of the central office. Others have made connections and inroads through CUNY's Urban Food Policy Institute and Healthy CUNY as well as through student advocacy groups. Now, with campus closures and economic strain due to COVID-19, campuses will be even more reliant on external partnerships to meet student need.

The CBOs interviewed for this report face common challenges while working with CUNY campuses. For example, lack of funding or limited funding presents a challenge for both the campuses and CBOs who rely on external public and private funding to provide food and services. While most programs receive generous funding from Petrie Foundation and other charitable organizations, there remains an overall gap in each campus' ability to meet student need. In addition, establishing relationships and achieving continuity of food security programs within a large institution such as CUNY is a challenge for most of the CBOs we interviewed. To be successful, programs require buy-in and support from campus administration, as well as reliable communication with designated staff. Shifting priorities among campus administrators, unreliable funding streams, staff turnover and a lack of adequate space to provide food and services make it difficult in some cases for CBOs to work within the CUNY system.

Partnership Profile: Green Bronx Machine

Green Bronx Machine (GBM) is a non-profit organization based in the Bronx, NY whose mission is to build healthy, equitable, and resilient communities by fully integrating indoor vegetable gardening and green curriculum into a K-12+ model. GBM partnered with Hostos Community College to train select staff, faculty, and students on how to grow vegetables indoors, and connected them to their technology partners so that they could receive guidance on how to replicate GBM's National Health & Wellness Learning Center, a cutting-edge indoor vertical farm and training kitchen with solar and alternative energy generators. As a result of the partnership, Hostos created a 12-tower hydroponic commercial farm that produces approximately 160 pounds of produce per semester. Some of the harvest is donated to the school's food pantry, and their Food Studies Club sometimes gives away leafy greens while tabling.

An Assessment of CUNY Responses to Food Insecurity

Overview

The previous brief descriptions of the various programs that address food insecurity at CUNY set the stage for a more comprehensive assessment of how these pieces fit together and their successes and limitations coordinating and integrating these diverse program elements. The scan of campus food environments showed that most campuses have a variety of programs designed to address food insecurity. Table 2 below provides an overview of the findings. Programs highlighted in green were present on more than two-thirds of the campuses, those highlighted in yellow were present on one third to two thirds of campuses and those highlighted in blue were present on less than a third of campuses.

TABLE 2 **Food Security and other Support Programs at CUNY**

PROGRAM	TOTAL #(%) OF CAMPUSES WITH PROGRAM N= 26	% OF SENIOR COLLEGES WITH PROGRAM N=11	% OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES WITH PROGRAM N= 7	% OF GRADUATE, HONORS, AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS WITH PROGRAM N=8
Emergency financial assistance	22 (85%)	100%	100%	63%
Cafeteria	21 (81%)	100%	100%	25%
Eviction prevention programs	21 (81%)	91%	100%	50%
Case management programs	19 (73%)	100%	100%	13%
Child care center	18 (69%)	100%	71%	25%
Food pantry on campus	18 (69%)	82%	100%	25%
Work study	18 (69%)	73%	86%	50%
Meal vouchers for on-campus foods	17 (65%)	82%	100%	13%
Information about food assistance on website	16 (62%)	82%	100%	0
Tax prep counseling	14 (54%)	55%	100%	13%
Book subsidies or free books	13 (50%)	64%	71%	13%
SNAP enrollment assistance	12 (46%)	45%	100%	0
Meal vouchers for off-campus vendors	10 (38%)	73%	14%	13%
Cafeteria meal plans	10 (38%)	45%	71%	0
Credit for life experience	9 (35%)	55%	29%	13%
Single Stop	8 (31%)	9%	100%	0
Earned income tax credit promotion	7 (27%)	18%	71%	0
Food pantry appointments available	7 (27%)	36%	29%	13%
Health Bucks distributed	5 (19%)	18%	43%	0
Homeless liaison or office with single contact	5 (19%)	36%	14%	0
Median number of programs per campus	10.3	12.5	15	3.2
% of campuses with less than 10 programs	35%	9%	0	100%

ON FEWER THAN 2/3 OF CAMPUSES ON 1/3 TO 1/2 OF CAMPUSES ON LESS THAN 1/3 OF CAMPUSES

What types of programs were most common? Table 3 shows that more programs were available on more campuses in categories 1 and 4, i.e., programs to give students direct assistance related to food or other necessities of life and programs that help students to obtain and use public benefits. In comparison, programs to help students and their families better use resources or to help students earn more were less available and/or located on fewer campuses.

TABLE 3 **Food Security and Other Support Programs on CUNY Campus by Approach**

	CATEGORY	TYPES OF PROGRAMS			# OF PROGRAMS
1	Programs that directly give students $ or other tangible resources for food and other necessities	• Emergency financial assistance • Child care centers • Food pantry on campus	• Meal vouchers for on-campus foods • Meal vouchers for off-campus vendors • Book subsidies or free books • Credit for life experience	• Health Bucks distributed	8
2	Programs that help students and families use resources better	• Case management programs	• Information about food assistance on website	• Food pantry appointments available	3
3	Programs that help students earn more, so they have more to spend on food and other necessities	• Work study			1
4	Programs that help students obtain and use public benefits	• Eviction prevention programs • Case management programs	• Information about food assistance on website • Tax prep counseling • SNAP enrollment assistance	• Single Stop • Earned income tax credit promotion • Homeless liaison or office with single contact	8

ON FEWER THAN 2/3 OF CAMPUSES ON 1/3 TO 1/2 OF CAMPUSES ON LESS THAN 1/3 OF CAMPUSES

An important question we sought to answer in this report was the extent to which food security programs were equitably distributed among CUNY's 25 campuses and distributed based on student need. While no single metric captures this outcome completely, one (albeit imperfect) measure is the number of the 20 food-security related programs identified in Table 2 that were present on campuses of varying characteristics. As shown in the table, community colleges had the highest mean number of programs (15), senior colleges on average 12.5 programs and the professional and graduate schools by far the lowest number of mean programs, 3.2. While evidence suggests that food insecurity rates are lower among graduate and professional students at CUNY and elsewhere, in the coming years, CUNY may want to characterize the level of need more fully in these professional and graduate schools and to ensure that student needs are being met.

Among the senior colleges, the seven larger campuses (enrollment 15,000 to 23,000) had a slightly lower mean number of food security programs—12.3—than the four

smaller campuses (enrollment less than 15,000), which had a mean of 13 programs per campus. Among the community colleges, the four largest campuses had a slightly higher mean number of programs—15.3—than the three smaller campuses, which had a mean of 14.7 programs per campus.

Do the number of food security programs available on a campus vary by the proportion of low-income students on that campus? Our comparison of all campuses with undergraduate students found no such difference at community colleges. The three campuses with the highest proportion of enrollment of low-income students had on average 17.7 programs, while the four with lower enrollment of low-income students averaged 15.3 programs per campus, suggesting some increase in the number of programs on high needs campuses, an appropriate strategy.

Emerging Strategies that Address Food Insecurity at CUNY

The response to food insecurity differs among CUNY campuses. Below we highlight some campus-based programs that are tailored to meet the particular food insecurity needs of their students.

Basic Needs Hubs. The Transition Academy is a comprehensive program that was established to address student housing needs among Medgar Evers students. They use a systems approach to assist students with a variety of basic needs including food security (food pantry, food vouchers, SNAP enrollment), transportation assistance, advocacy and referrals to community partners. Some campus food pantries have become de facto basic needs hubs in order to meet increasing student need; however, the burden falls on pantry administrators to do more without additional staff or resources.

Ready-to-Eat Food. Ready-to-eat food supplements food pantry efforts for commuting students who find it difficult to transport groceries. Baruch College implements a "grab & go" bag model whereby students can visit either the Health & Wellness Center or the Office of Student Life to request a "grab & go" bag of food from the front desk.[30] The bag contains three nutritious meals to address immediate hunger needs. John Jay College also provides ready-to-eat food and a place to eat, recognizing that students are hungry while on campus and may not be able to afford a meal.

Campus Farms and Gardens. The Urban Farm at Kingsborough Community College is an organic, year-round food production site. Founded in 2011, the KCC Urban farm site includes approximately 7,000 square feet for cultivation and learning. During the 2014 growing season, nearly 4,000 lbs. of produce were harvested and used throughout KCC classes. The KCC Urban Farm provides a channel for students to connect with issues relating to the food system including food research, plant nutrition, food systems, gardening skills, culinary arts, public health, early childhood development, food preparation and workforce readiness. In addition, some campuses are establishing Community Supported Agriculture programs, where farms sell bags of locally or regionally grown food on campuses. Developing subsidized versions of this approach could help students gain access to healthier food.

Peer Outreach. Food Security Advocates is a peer outreach program piloted by the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute and Healthy CUNY at Hostos Community and John Jay Colleges during the 2017-18 academic year. With the Food Security Advocates project, students collaborated with the campus Wellness Centers to create media campaigns to raise awareness about campus food insecurity and to help connect peers to services and resources. In fall 2018 the CUNY Food Security Advocates Project became an official club at John Jay College with the same goal of ending food insecurity on campus.

Current Policy Issues

Despite the success and efforts of enrollment staff in connecting eligible students to SNAP, the federal administration continues to chip away at the social safety net. The Trump administration has introduced tightened work requirements, reduced the power of states to request requirement waivers that would exempt many high need persons from stringent requirements, and implemented rule changes that would deem immigrants who utilize certain safety net services a public charge and thus may impact their immigration statutes. Tightened work requirements may exacerbate food insecurity among college students. Eligibility is determined based on their income and assets, household qualification and immigration status. Students who study at

least half-time are subject to additional requirements. They have to meet one of several criteria, such as working for at least twenty hours per week or having a dependent under six years old. Those enrolled for less than half of the time, however, are not subject to the student exclusion. Recent changes regarding SNAP requirements threaten the latter group. It is already difficult to connect college students to SNAP for reasons such as stigma and confusion about eligibility requirements, so these changes impose yet another barrier of access.

Against a backdrop of federal hostility toward people receiving public assistance, local and state leaders have also demonstrated a commitment to addressing food insecurity among college students. Governor Andrew Cuomo, through the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, has proposed a policy to expand SNAP access to qualifying community college students and those enrolled in technical education programs in New York State. The policy would exempt students enrolled at least half-time from SNAP work requirements. The Governor's office has also led a food pantry initiative, the No Student Goes Hungry Program, to mandate that CUNY and SUNY students have access to food pantries.

Recent laws that expand federal assistance programs in response to the COVID-19 epidemic will provide another opportunity to expand student access to SNAP. In addition, currently SNAP cannot be used in campus cafeterias—only in stores that sell food to take out—but some campuses in other parts of the country are exploring waivers that would enable students with SNAP to use campus food facilities

Next Steps for Promoting Food Security at CUNY

In this first report from the Healthy CUNY/Hope Center CUNY Food Security Project, our goal is to encourage all those engaged in seeking to ensure food security for all CUNY students—from the senior leadership of CUNY and its campuses to faculty, staff and students, as well as city and state policy makers and the many New York City residents, advocates and voters concerned about access to college education, access to healthy affordable food, and other social justice and equity issues—to take a step back. Take a step back from the urgent efforts to address the new needs created by the COVID-19 epidemic in New York City, and a step back from recent efforts to address food insecurity among college students at CUNY, in New York City and State and around the nation. The purpose of this step back is to ask what all these constituencies can do together to make sure that a few years from now CUNY will have made significant progress in reducing food insecurity among its students.

For more than a decade CUNY administrators, staff, faculty, and students have made determined efforts to address food insecurity on campus. Today, as documented in this report, an impressive panoply of programs addresses food insecurity on every CUNY campus. Many CUNY leaders have expressed their commitment to taking action to address this problem. Still, however, too often these efforts are uncoordinated, still no one at CUNY has overall responsibility for ensuring that the university is making measurable progress in promoting food security, and still too many CUNY students have to decide whether to continue their schooling or feed themselves and their families.

Our aspiration is that in the next year this report and the subsequent activities will spark a robust, high level discussion engaging all CUNY constituencies to plan the specific steps each group can take to achieve the goal of significantly reducing food insecurity.

To inform this discussion, we present three sets of recommendations. First, we present a comprehensive menu of options for strengthening food security programs at CUNY and making progress towards the achievable goal of significantly reducing food security at CUNY in the next three years—by January 2023. The options presented in Table 9 include suggestions made in previous reports on food security at CUNY and additional suggestions made by the participants in a meeting held at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy in March 2020. Over 20 CUNY administrators, staff and students, including several food pantry and Single Stop directors and staff, several representatives of Food Bank for New York City and other groups that partner with CUNY food pantries, reviewed the list prepared by researchers, then added or refined suggestions.[2]

2 We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the participants in this meeting:Chris Aviles, Student Affairs Manager | Hunter College; Waleek Boone, Director of Transition Academy | Medgar Evers College; Arlys Tineo, Transition Academy Intern | Medgar Evers College; Yahaira Castro, Assistant Dean | School of Journalism; Malaine Clarke, Health Service Director | John Jay; Sunday Coward, Dean of Special Programs | Central Office; Madeline Cruz, Single Stop Coordinator | Hostos Community College; Maggie Dickinson, Researcher | Guttman Community College; Nicholas Freudenberg, Faculty Director, Healthy CUNY; Robb Friedlander, Advocacy and Organizing Manager | Swipe Out Hunger; Irene Garcia-Mathes, Coordinator | School of Labor and Urban Studies; Samantha Gioia, Single Stop Coordinator | BMCC; Deborah Harte, Director | BMCC; Dwayne Jones, Director | Queens College; Vanson Lee, Manager Operations Support | United Way of NYC + Plentiful; Rhonda Mouton, Director | LaGuardia Community College; Jonathan Quash, Director | York College; Marling Sone, Director | NYC City Tech; Amanda Williams | Food Bank for NYC; Karyn Kennedy, Coordinator | Food Bank for NYC; Zach Hall, VP Programs | Food Bank NYC; Patti Lamberson, Director Healthy CUNY | Healthy CUNY.

Participants at this meeting were then asked to identify priority actions for each type of food security assistance and at each level of organization. In the table, recommendations in bold were suggested as priorities by five or more participants and are listed in order of the votes they attracted. This process yielded 75 specific recommendations, with multiple recommendations in each category of food security program and at each level of action, i.e., city and state governments, CUNY, campuses, and CUNY students. Of these 75 recommendations, 34 (45%) were identified as priorities by 5 or more participants in a poll after the January meeting. This exercise suggests that those with expertise in the practice of providing food security assistance to CUNY students have identified multiple opportunities to strengthen CUNY's approach and achieved some consensus on which strategies are more important than others. At the same time, this process suggests there is urgent need for further priority setting, so that the multiple constituencies involved in acting to reduce food insecurity at CUNY can identify and begin to implement a shared priority list of actions, a process we address in the last section of this report.

TABLE 4 **Promoting Food Security at CUNY: Menu of Actions by Program Type and Level of Organization**

1 Programs that put more $ for food in students' pockets (16)

New York City (11)	• Subsidize or incentivize farmers markets, Green Carts, and fresh food box programs at or near CUNY campuses • Provide Summer Youth Employment students with free meals on campus
New York State (12)	• Expand SNAP eligibility criteria to be more inclusive of students • State support for subsidized meal plans
University/Central (23)	• Offer subsidized meal plans and funding for student discount cards • Provide support for food pantries • Negotiate significant food discounts from local food distributors supported by CUNY central • Rebrand CUNY pantries as an academic success program to reduce stigma
Campus (20)	• Staff and supply pantries that can support student need • Negotiate discounts with local food outlets • Arrange for mobile food pantries at campuses with no pantry • Create partnerships with local farmer's markets • Subsidize and connect meal vouchers to student ID card • Negotiate student discounts with food stores near campuses, especially in high income neighborhoods
Students (6)	• Advocate for cafeteria and local vendor discounts • Organize fund raising or food raising events for campus food security programs

2 Programs that help students and families use resources better (12)

New York City (11)	• Increase school counselors preparing students for college and support them with awareness of living costs as critical college expenses
New York State (12)	• Support families to support students; reframe college as a family activity
University/Central (23)	• Work with State and federal governments to arrange SNAP eligibility for cafeterias and on-campus food stores • Allow CUNY students to use any CUNY food pantry • Create university wide food buying club for students
Campus (20)	• Create campus food buying club with help from academic departments (business, communications, culinary, etc.) • Provide financial education and planning workshops for students in coordination with other NYC programs • Provide faculty and staff with knowledge and tools to help students with food insecurity
Students (6)	• Host financial planning workshops with a club or organization • Host resource fairs throughout semester

(TABLE CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

(TABLE CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

3 Programs that help students earn more, so they have more to spend on food (5)

New York City (11)	—
New York State (12)	• Allocate more federal work study programs for students • Provide Work/study • students with free or discounted meals on campus
University/Central (23)	• Increase funding for CUNY CAP Program, offering graduate students' meals as well.
Campus (20)	• Broader distribution of FWS funds to help more students earn money and meet SNAP requirement • Support job skills training programs and integrate with food security efforts • Create work-study jobs in CUNY food pantries
Students (6)	—

4 Programs that enroll students in public benefits

New York City (11)	• Launch communications campaign to reduce stigma about food insecurity and accessing public assistance • Create public campaign aimed at college students facing food insecurity to direct students to NYC and federal food assistance programs • Rebrand SNAP as a health and nutrition program rather than a benefit
New York State (12)	• Change work hour minimum so students can receive SNAP benefits • Allow NYS to request waivers (from the feds) to determine eligibility for college students to receive SNAP benefits • Create public campaign aimed at college students facing food insecurity to direct students to NYC and federal food assistance programs
University/Central (23)	• Expand Single Stop partnerships across CUNY by establishing new office or connecting campuses with community programs • Achieve SNAP eligibility for campus food stores and cafeterias • Achieve SNAP eligibility for community college students enrolled in programs that qualify as work training if they meet SNAP income requirements, as done in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania who so designated all their community college programs • Oversee distribution of FWS funds to help more students earn money and meet SNAP requirement • Create work study jobs in pantries • Address food security needs of adult learners as well as younger students • Include graduate students in food security programs
Campus (20)	• Increase outreach and communication about existing resources • Connect students to community food pantries • Screen all students who use pantries for enrollment in SNAP and other benefits.
Students (6)	• Advocate for policies and programs that support food security for students • Form a food security advocate club to conduct outreach and education to peers about resources • Volunteer or work in the pantry

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5 Programs to strengthen capacity of CUNY to reduce food insecurity (19)

New York City (11)	• Advocate for a federal expansion of free school meals to public colleges • Allocate CUNY budgets and staffing support that includes funds to support CUNY central food security program • Provide DOHMH support for food insecurity programs, including planning, research and evaluation • Subsidize hydroponic garden systems for campuses without green space • Leverage needs of CUNY students to increase CUNY City and State budgets
New York State (12)	• Allocate CUNY budget that includes funds to support CUNY central food security program • Create CUNY/SUNY partnerships to address student food insecurity • Leverage needs of CUNY students to increase CUNY city and state budgets • Advocate for a federal expansion of free school meals to public colleges
University/Central (23)	• Develop a comprehensive plan for CUNY to reduce food insecurity • Financial support for each campus-based food pantry • University support for food security planning, research, and programs • Central financial support for partnership with Food Bank for NYC • Expand Single Stop to all campuses • Central communications assistance to bring together campus efforts to address food insecurity • Strengthen partnerships with campus vendors on and near CUNY campuses where students can use SNAP • Involve CUNY culinary and food studies programs in food insecurity • Advocate for federal expansion of free school meals
Campus (20)	• Dedicated staff for food security work • Train and pay stipends to student food security advocates • Dedicated campus financial support for food pantries • Train and support faculty food security advocates • Allow for food security advocacy and outreach to meet community service and fieldwork requirements
Students (6)	—

Second, we present an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of CUNY's current portfolio of food security programs. Table 5 summarizes assessments from previous reports on food insecurity at CUNY,[31,32,33,34,35] the judgements of the research team, and the feedback of the individuals who participated in the March 2020 meeting.

This assessment is not intended to point a finger at any of those involved in the effort to promote food security at CUNY. Rather, this summary is based on the research team's belief that only a sober assessment of the accomplishments and limitations of efforts to date can identify what is working and needs to be strengthened, what's not working and needs to be changed and what unmet needs remain unaddressed. CUNY's historic strength as an enduring institution of New York City has come from its willingness to forthrightly identify and confront its challenges, then take action to overcome them.

TABLE 5 **Overview of Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Efforts to Promote Food Security Among CUNY Students**

ON THE ONE HAND ...	ON THE OTHER HAND ...
18 of 25 campuses now have food pantries ...	... but most food pantries lack sufficient space, food, and staffing to meet demand, the university does not have quality standards that pantries are expected to meet, nor does it provide resources needed to consistently improve quality
Meal vouchers are being piloted at 3 community colleges with City Council funding and a total of 17 campuses have some meal voucher programs and a Swipe Out Hunger program is being discussed at two other schools, showing innovation ...	... yet campus food service continues to be priced beyond students' ability to pay and the voucher program is reaching only a small proportion of food insecure students
8 campuses have Single Stop programs offering access to SNAP and other public benefits, as well as financial coaching, tax preparation, and legal assistance ...	... however, on-campus benefits programs are not offered at 17 campuses and there is no coordinated SNAP campaign to enroll eligible CUNY students in SNAP; many students still do not know about or use the Single Stop on their campus
23 campuses have emergency aid programs ...	... but emergency aid falls short of demand, face spending restrictions that limit impact, and impose administrative burdens for colleges and students is high; multiple emergency aid programs are often not coordinated
Several community-based anti-hunger organizations (e.g. Food Bank for NYC, City Harvest, GrowNYC, and Green Bronx Machine) are contributing to CUNY food security initiatives ...	... yet the private sector is playing only a limited role in addressing campus food insecurity and their contributions are not coordinated.
More than half of CUNY campuses have more than 10 programs to address food insecurity directly or indirectly ...	... however, food security initiatives are often siloed and not coordinated, increasing administrative burden, and reducing efficacy and impact.
CUNY is utilizing several other innovative approaches to reduce time to degree and assist students with expenses including transportation ...	... but outreach is limited, and many students are unaware of programs on their campus.
There have been two rigorous independent studies of food insecurity at CUNY and there is a strong culture of rigorous evaluation to assess program impact ...	... yet CUNY lacks a systematic plan for reducing food insecurity and measuring progress towards goals.
New university leadership has made strong commitments to address food insecurity and recognizes that investments in food security can bring educational and economic benefits to CUNY and its students ...	... however, CUNY does not have a point person for leading and coordinating food security initiatives, nor a designated university-wide task force to set and monitor goals; New York City and State have so far made only modest investments in reducing food insecurity at CUNY; and CUNY does not know how many students drop out or slow progress towards degree as a result of food insecurity.
CUNY is joining other leading urban higher education systems in calling on federal policymakers to provide more support to reduce food insecurity...	... but these efforts have not engaged the powerful organizations of CUNY faculty, staff and students to maximize impact.

Waleek Boone, Transition Academy Director and volunteers distribute food at Medgar Evers College during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The third and final body of evidence for guiding next steps comes from a review of previous efforts to address food insecurity in other settings. This review was prepared by Professor Jan Poppendieck, senior faculty fellow at the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, Professor Emerita of Sociology at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, a recognized scholar of the history of food insecurity, anti-hunger activism and poverty in the United States and a participant in food security advocacy in the United States, New York City and at CUNY. This historical perspective provides a context for the current efforts to promote food security at CUNY.

Lessons from five decades of anti-hunger activism

Hunger has been a recurring public issue in the United States, at least since the late 1960s. In the intervening half century, anti-hunger activists have waged many successful campaigns to change public policy, especially to achieve the expansion and improvement of federal food assistance programs such as SNAP and school meals. Beginning in the early 1980s, a network of charitable food programs, soup kitchens, food pantries and the food banks that supply them has developed, and become institutionalized, supplementing the public provisions, and addressing hunger at the community level. This long history contains many lessons that might usefully guide our efforts to confront hunger on college campuses. Here are some of the most salient.

1. Don't be afraid to think big. When activists first began to confront the serious flaws that prevented the Food Stamp Program from reaching the poor, one of the biggest barriers was a "purchase requirement," designed to ensure that food stamp spending would produce a net increase in farm income. Participants had to buy their food stamps—they allocated 30% of their income to the stamps and were then given enough bonus stamps to allow them to purchase the equivalent of the Thrifty Food Plan for their family size. For poor families, it was a good deal –if they could muster the cash to purchase the stamps, which many could not. In the early days of anti-hunger activism, elimination of the purchase requirement seemed completely unattainable, but advocates kept up a steady campaign, and in 1977, Congress enacted it into law. We should begin working now for the end of the exclusion of full time students from SNAP, and for recognition of class attendance and preparation as work for the purpose of participation in federal assistance programs.

2. Beware the seductions of food pantries. Pantries are highly visible. They are relatively inexpensive to establish. They permit the engagement of faculty, students, administrators, alumni, and other staff. But they should not be permitted to be the primary response to food insecurity on campus. They do nothing to address the underlying problems of limited financial aid, inadequate wages, excessive housing and transportation costs and other harsh realities. They make the well-fed among us feel more comfortable, but if this reduces our motivation to act on the underlying problems, they may do more harm than good. Where established, pantries should always function as a portal to more fundamental help.

3. Look carefully at the realities of your particular campus before choosing a package of actions. For urban commuter students, a food pantry that provides food to be hauled home via subway and bus may not be an optimal solution. Vouchers for meals on campus plus a referral to a pantry near a student's home may be more useful. For campuses without a meal plan, Swipe-Out-Hunger is not a real option. Resist the fads and think about what will work for your students.

4. Beware of investment in infrastructure. Food banks and food pantries across the United States, stung by the critique of their offerings as "junk food," have invested in walk-in coolers and fleets of refrigerated trucks in order to be able to handle fresh fruit and vegetables. This turn toward healthier food has necessitated ever-increasing fundraising to pay for state-of-the-art warehouses. This may be an optimal choice for a community that intends to rely on a food bank for the foreseeable future, but it is not a smart choice for a program that is truly intended to be a short-term response to an emergency. There is no shortage in New York City of places to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables. What hungry students need is the wherewithal to do so. Avoid the trap of trying to duplicate the mainstream food system.

5. Leverage public benefits programs. Get to know their details. Every successful SNAP application is the equivalent of many visits to a food pantry. While working to eliminate the rules that make SNAP inaccessible to many students, there is much that campuses can do to help students achieve and document eligibility. Strategic deployment of Work Study could enable many students to qualify for SNAP, since a single hour weekly of Federal Work Study counts as meeting the requirement. Designation of Community College and various occupation-related courses of study at senior colleges as job training could also help to qualify students. As food pantries and food banks across the nation have discovered, it pays to invest in detailed knowledge of public benefits.

6. Listen to students. Ask questions. Find out what gets in the way of food security and design responses that fit. The charitable food system has been just as prone to fads as any other segment of American life. Many appealing projects have failed because they did not pay enough attention to the realities of their current or intended beneficiaries.

7. Harness clients' and students' civic engagement. Students who need assistance should be thoroughly engaged in efforts to improve relevant public policy. Colleges can make this possible for time-strapped students by offering relevant course work in which research and action can contribute to the completion of a degree. It took considerable time for community-based pantries to realize that clients were often their most effective spokespeople. Campuses can build on this insight.

8. Look for allies. In the fight to defend and improve SNAP, grocers and food manufacturers have been important allies. Figure out who loses when students are forced to drop out of college or fail to perform well; these should also be important allies in efforts to meet students' basic needs.

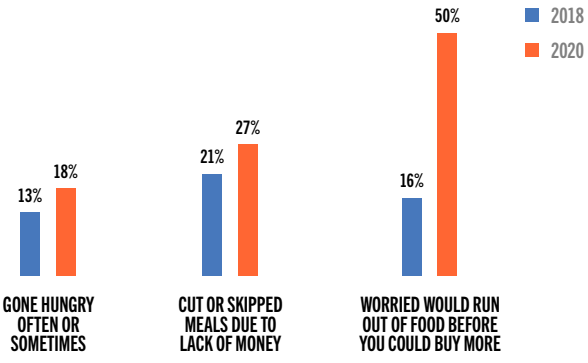
Update: Impact of COVID-19 Epidemic on Food Security at CUNY: Early Lessons For The Future

As the CUNY/Hope team was finishing this report, the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world—and CUNY. With the support of the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs and in partnership with the CUNY Office of Institutional Research, Healthy CUNY investigators conducted a survey of a representative samples of CUNY students in mid-April, at the height of the epidemic in New York City. Details of that survey are in the Appendix. The findings were disturbing:

- 18% of students had gone hungry due to lack of access often (5%) or sometimes (13%) in the last 2 weeks. Thus, an estimated 35,620 CUNY students experienced this level of hunger.
- 50% of students reported that they had worried often or sometimes about running out of food for lack of money in the last two weeks, more than three times the rate of students who reported this perception over the past 12 months in 2018
- 8% of the students who are financially responsible for children or others in their household report that these individuals have sometimes or often gone hungry due to lack of access to food in last 2 weeks.
- 7% of students (an estimated 19,180 learners) say that lack of food has interfered with their school moderately or a lot in the last two weeks.
- 50% of students report that the epidemic has reduced the ability of their household to get the food they need a lot or somewhat.
- 71% of students reported that they are paying more for food since the epidemic.

A comparison of the findings from this survey with the Healthy CUNY 2018 Student Survey showed greater proportions of reported food insecurity in 2020:

FIGURE 6 Comparison of Rates of Food Insecurity in 2018 and 2020 (After COVID-19)



Fewer than one in ten CUNY students reported getting food assistance on their campus prior to the epidemic. Among the 10% of students that visited the campus food pantries before the epidemic, the majority visited once a week or less. Fewer than 40% visited twice a week.

Since the epidemic, 6% of students reported using *any* food pantry. Of these, 63% visited once or twice in the last 2 weeks and 37% reported visiting more than twice. Of the 140 students who reported visiting any food pantry in the last two weeks, 69% visited an off-campus pantry and 16% on a campus. Of those visiting off-campus pantries, 72% reported that the facility was within walking distance of their house.

Only one percent of the entire sample reported visiting a campus food pantry in the last 2 weeks, i.e., after the epidemic. During this period, less than one percent of the sample reported receiving a food voucher or an emergency grant from their campus. Thus, as levels of food insecurity increased, CUNY programs were meeting the food-related needs of very few students.

In the survey, students expressed how challenging it had been for them to find food as quarantine kept them in their homes and unemployment devastated their incomes:

I worry about keeping food in my kids' bellies.

Living is hard. And I feel sad because I am afraid to go out to buy food.

It's hard to get food. I can't pay my bills. My industry was shut down.

I have no family in the United States and no one to run in times of emergency, I lost my job more than a month ago and I haven't had income ever since. I still have to pay living expenses and I'm worried I won't be able to provide food for myself.

I had to go out and buy, supermarkets are full, so we went hungry for about two days before I found out about the NYC Get Food program.

No one is working so we are trying to see what we can do to make rent, buy food and pay bills.

We are running out of food supplies, money, and utilities.

The cost of food has increased dramatically.

Based on these findings, CUNY and other college campuses are exploring how best to provide additional emergency relief during the health and economic crises precipitated by COVID-19; link students to community-based food security and other services, rather than relying on services at campuses that are now mostly closed; provide additional support for students experiencing high levels of anxiety, depression or other psychological problems, problems that can contribute to food insecurity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Today many CUNY leaders, faculty, staff, and students have a new commitment to address food security and want to take action to reduce it. How can the University make the transition from this situation to one where these constituencies act together to win meaningful new investments for food security from city, state, and private contributions? A situation where multiple, now often siloed programs work in coordination to build on their accomplishments and to identify and fill gaps in services? One where paid and volunteer faculty, staff and students work together to implement systematic and sustainable programs across the university? Where the university and its campuses monitor, document and celebrate concrete reductions in food insecurity? In short, how can we begin the steady march to making college food insecurity history, to become a university that has eliminated food insecurity, setting a model for the city and the nation?

We end this report with several practical recommendations for the next 12 months that we think can become the first steps on this journey:

1. Designate one person in the CUNY Central Office to serve as Director of Food Security and provide that person with the resources and authority to make steady and measurable progress in coordinating, integrating, establishing and monitoring standards for CUNY's food security work. To more fully coordinate the services and policies designed to meet students' basic needs, this position could be expanded to provide oversight and vision for those programs.
2. Create a university-wide *Task Force on Promoting Food Security* charged with developing, implementing, and monitoring a plan to significantly reduce food insecurity at CUNY within three years. The CUNY Director of Food Security would chair this Task Force, which could also propose other specific steps CUNY can take to meet other basic student needs such as housing stability, access to health and mental health care and financial security. Among other tasks, this Task Force could set priorities among the many program enhancements suggested in this report. At least one-quarter of its members should be individuals from outside the university with relevant expertise. Membership should also be granted to several current CUNY students.
3. Encourage each campus to establish a Task Force on Promoting Food Security to develop, in coordination with the university-wide task force, a coordinated plan to make significant reductions in food security on their campus. As CUNY reviews and strengthens other programs designed to meet other student basic needs, these campus groups can expand their role by helping to integrate these services with food security programs.
4. Establish CUNY-wide Student and Faculty Food Security Advocates Training Programs to create a cadre of students and faculty with the knowledge, skills, and credibility to mobilize their campuses and peers to take action to reduce food insecurity.
5. Seek new investments to promote food security at CUNY from the city, state, and federal governments and from philanthropy, and encourage faculty, staff, and students to support new public policies that contribute to ending college food insecurity. While seeking new funding in the current economic and political climate will be challenging, several new public and philanthropic initiatives approved to address the COVID-19 epidemic provide a potential stream of funding.
6. Consult with campus and CUNY-wide Food Security Task Forces to develop an equitable plan for dividing new and existing food security resources with clear and achievable accountability measures.
7. Create a clear system with measures and procedures for documenting and assessing all of CUNY's food security programs to report on progress, gaps, and innovative practices.

As well as developing, implementing and monitoring a coordinated, integrated and systematic approach to making significant reductions in food insecurity among its students, CUNY also has the opportunity to mobilize its students, faculty, staff, leadership and many external supporting constituencies to make reducing campus food insecurity a higher public priority. As the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic disruption that it is causing continue, many elected officials are calling for reduced commitments to public programs. Such an approach would impose additional burdens on CUNY students and their families—and in the longer run on the taxpayers and citizens of New York. Cutting back programs that address college food insecurity will diminish one of New York City's strongest assets—healthy graduates with college degrees who contribute their skills, productivity and service to the city and the region.

CUNY students, researchers and leaders can also provide support for specific programmatic and policy changes that will help to reduce food insecurity. These efforts should:

- Ensure that every CUNY student who is eligible for SNAP is actually enrolled
- Eliminate the federal provision that excludes full-time students from SNAP enrollment, even if they meet other eligibility requirements
- Advocate for continued city, state, and federal rule changes to make it easier for college students to enroll in SNAP
- Use the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide additional support for college students facing food insecurity, whether or not these students have a Social Security Card
- Assist in transforming every CUNY food pantry and emergency food program into a hub that connects students to other needed services including SNAP enrollment, financial aid, and emergency loans

Throughout its almost 175-year history, CUNY students, faculty, staff and leaders have played an important role in making our city a fairer, more decent place to study, live and work. By using the new public attention on campus food insecurity, the new resources available to respond to COVID-19, and the exigency that the unfolding economic crisis is imposing on the city and the nation, the leaders of CUNY, supported by students, faculty, staff and elected officials, can forge a path towards ending food insecurity and hunger among its students. As New York City and State seek to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis it has triggered, ensuring that CUNY students can achieve their full academic and health potential must be prioritized as a crucial part of that recovery. By taking action to realize these goals, we can write the next chapter in CUNY's lasting contributions to the people of New York City and State.

Appendix — Description of Methodologies

Research Design and Methodology for this Report

This report is based on a variety of sources of information, some collected in 2018 prior to the start of this project and most in the last six months. By using a variety of sources of evidence on the state of food insecurity at CUNY and eliciting the perspectives of several different constituencies, we seek to present a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional view of the problem.

The main bodies of evidence, described in more detail in this Appendix, are:

1. The 2018 Healthy CUNY Student Health Survey
2. The 2018 #RealCollege Survey at City University Of New York (CUNY) 2018
3. The 2019 CUNY Environmental Scan of Food Security Resources on CUNY Campuses
4. Healthy CUNY Campus visits: Fall 2019
5. The 2019 CUNY Interviews with Community Based Organizations Providing Food Security Programs at CUNY
6. The 2020 Hope Center Survey of CUNY Food Pantries
7. The 2020 CUNY Understanding Barriers to SNAP Utilization at CUNY – Survey and Qualitative Interviews
8. The 2020 CUNY Coronavirus Epidemic Impact Survey

By using a variety of sources of information, each methodology with its own strengths and weaknesses, we provide the most comprehensive picture of the state of food insecurity at CUNY published to date.

1. 2018 Healthy CUNY Student Health Survey

The study entailed a mixed-mode online and telephone survey of CUNY undergraduate and graduate students, developed through a collaboration between the CUNY School of Public Health, the NYU School of Medicine and the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA). The survey questions assessed 22 domains, including the health behaviors and attitudes of respondents related to hookah use and alternative tobacco products, student socioeconomic characteristics, academic achievement, service utilization, health status and behaviors. This study was approved by the City University of New York Institutional Review Board (Protocol # 695980) and used a cross-sectional quantitative research design; the individual was the unit of sampling, assignment and analysis.

The survey was programmed through Voxco to be completed online, and through computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). Survey recruitment and administration was conducted by the Baruch Center for Survey Research (BCSR).

For the 2018 survey, invitations were sent to 7,500 students in a random sample across all CUNY colleges. To obtain the sample, CUNY's Office of Institutional Research (OIR) provided contact information for all undergraduate and graduate students enrolled for Fall 2017 who were at least 18 years old and had not turned on their privacy flags (about 180,000). BCSR then selected a stratified random sample of 44,000. Stratified by six parameters: college type (senior or community college); year in school; gender; race/ethnicity (Hispanic, non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, or Asian/American Indian/Alaskan Native); age (under 21 or 21 and older); and grade point average quartile (quartiles 1-4 or a 'missing' quintile). BCSR then divided the random sample into replicates of 500 students and sent emails to replicates as needed to replenish the full sample of up to 5,000 students.

Students received one email invitation with a link to participate followed by up to six email reminders over the course of the data collection period, and a final (7th) reminder was sent during the last few days of data collection, alerting recipients when survey link would be disabled, for a total of eight emails. Those who did not respond after the fourth email reminder were contacted by telephone by the Baruch Center for Survey Research (BCSR). Recipients were given the option to opt-out from participating and being contacted at all times in the invite and reminder emails. BCSR made up to five attempts to contact students by telephone if they did not respond previously. On average, respondents completed the online survey within 20 minutes; however, via CATI, the survey took up to 30 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, respondents received an incentive ($20 Amazon gift card) and were entered into a raffle to receive an iPad. All respondents were asked if they were willing to be contacted for additional studies over the next 18 months.

Response rates and demographic distribution: 2018 representative sample: Of the 7,500 students in the 2018 sample (excluding re-contacts), a total of (N=2,112) undergraduate and graduate students responded for a response rate of 28%. The data from the 2018 sample (N=2,112), was then weighted to resemble all CUNY students using: level (grad/undergrad), ethnicity, gender, full/part time, age, and college type (community/senior). In this report, we present data only on undergraduate students.

2. The 2018 #RealCollege SURVEY at CUNY

The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice designed the #RealCollege survey and in fall 2018 with the CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), fielded the survey to all undergraduate students in the CUNY system. Nineteen CUNY institutions fielded the survey early in fall term, as students enduring basic needs insecurity are at greater risk for dropping out of school later in the year.[36] OIRA sent a series of invitations and follow-up reminders to all enrolled undergraduate students encouraging them to participate, and students were offered the opportunity to enter a raffle to win a weekly unlimited MetroCard in order to boost response rates. Survey invitations were emailed to an estimated 244,420 undergraduate students and 21,665 students participated, yielding a response rate of 9%.[37] The survey was sent to all students rather than drawing a subsample due to legal and financial restrictions. The results may be biased—overstating or understating the problem—depending on who answered and who did not.

Upon opening the survey, students were presented with a consent form in compliance with Institutional Review Board standards. To actually take the survey, the student must have clicked continue as a record of his/her consent and completed a minimum of the first page of the survey to be included in the analysis.

To assess food security in 2018, #RealCollege 2018 CUNY used questions from the 18-item Household Food Security Survey Module from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The standard is to measure the level of security, referring to those with low or very low security as "food insecure."

3. Environmental Scan of Food Security Resources on CUNY Campuses

During the fall 2019 semester, Healthy CUNY researchers conducted an environmental scan of CUNY programs that address food insecurity which began with a review of the websites of each of CUNY's 26 campuses. To obtain program details, three trained research assistants scanned the websites of all 25 CUNY campuses and entered data into a shared Excel spreadsheet sorted by categories used in the framework described in this report that directly or indirectly address student food insecurity:

1. A) Programs that reduce students' out-of-pocket expenses for college (food-related).
   B) Programs that reduce students' out-of-pocket expenses for college (not food-related).
2. Programs that increase family stability/supports.
3. Programs that improve work related income.
4. Programs that increase access to the safety net; and
5. Programs that increase the college's capacity to provide resources.

Within each of these categories, program details such as eligibility requirements, location, hours, key personnel, and contact information were recorded, as well as visibility/ease of finding the resources on the campus websites. Campus website review was followed up by phone calls by Healthy CUNY researchers to campus program staff, primarily Single Stop and Food Pantry directors, to collect program information not found in the initial website review. Healthy CUNY staff then emailed Student Affairs or Student Life administrators at each campus requesting that they verify the information we had collected and enter any missing or additional pertinent details about food security and related programs at their respective campuses. Three reminder emails were sent to increase responses and reliability of environmental scan data.

Descriptive responses were coded where possible to yes/no quantitative responses and included in a table of resources which presents an overview of CUNY campus food security and related programs. A limitation of this study is that programs not listed on websites or not familiar to the individuals interviewed by telephone may have been missed. In addition, researchers did not independently verify the information listed on the website or provided by informants. The next activity addressed some of these limitations.

4. Healthy CUNY campus visits: Fall 2019

Healthy CUNY student researchers conducted field visits to the 18 undergraduate and community college campuses to verify and supplement information collected from the CUNY colleges website review, and observe promotion and visibility of food pantries and other food security resources such as vouchers, fresh food programs and grab and go meals available to students enrolled in the respective colleges. Researchers visited campus food pantries, Single Stop offices, Student Affairs offices, and common areas such as cafeterias and lounges to look for promotion of food security resources, and in some cases had informal conversations with campus staff and volunteers to learn more about their food security work. An observation guide was used to guide campus visits, and students took field notes which helped to inform this report. It is important to note that the environmental scan findings represent a snapshot of CUNY campus food security programs and are subject to change over time and in response to campus operations, particularly changes that happened after the arrival of the COVID-19 epidemic in New York City in March 2020.

5. Healthy CUNY Interviews with Community-Based Organizations

Semi-structured qualitative phone interviews were conducted with representatives from fourteen community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide food security programming at CUNY colleges. CBO key informants were recruited by researchers and staff of Healthy CUNY and the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute from across the university. Interviews examined program delivery as well as facilitators and barriers to implementation. The interview guide included questions on partnership activities, interactions between partners and CUNY staff, programs, facilitators and barriers encountered and recommendations for future activities.

A total of 17 interviews were conducted during November 2019 and January 2020. In addition, three interviews were conducted with CUNY campus representatives regarding their working relationships with CBOs. Interview responses were cataloged using the following identifiers: key stakeholders/ contact person, email/ contact information, CUNY school where food programming is provided, and the type of programming they provide. Notes and transcripts from completed interviews were then compiled and analyzed for major themes.

6. Hope Center Survey of CUNY Food Pantries

An online Qualtrics survey was distributed to staff at 16 CUNY campus food pantries in between December 12th, 2019 and January 8th, 2020. Researchers sent an email invitation to 18 pantry directors with a link to the online survey. Up to 3 reminder emails were sent and (n= 13) surveys were completed. Twelve institutions participated. Six of the 13 institutions were community colleges, another five were senior colleges, and two were professional institutions. The average completion rate among respondents was 87% with nine institutions having a 100% competition rate. Survey questions covered program details such as space, hours, set-up, operating budget, staffing, procurement, distribution and promotion.

7. Understanding Barriers to SNAP Utilization at CUNY – Survey and Qualitative Interviews

To better understand barriers to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) utilization among CUNY students, researchers surveyed a representative sample of CUNY's 244,400 undergraduate students on five campuses with high proportions of low-income students. The goals were to establish what percentage of CUNY students are eligible for SNAP, and of those, how many students are enrolled in the program. Further, the survey queries barriers to enrollment experienced by students and assesses the impact of SNAP on educational outcomes, including GPA and retention. It also seeks to determine what percentage of food insecure students are ineligible for SNAP due to program requirements and restrictions. Results of this study will help to inform the most effective strategies for increasing SNAP enrollment for students at the campus, city, state and federal levels.

To recruit students for the Barriers to SNAP Utilization Survey, CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Advancement (OIRA) selected a random sample of CUNY students at least 18 years old and enrolled in one of five CUNY colleges (Hostos, New York City Tech, LaGuardia, Bronx Community College and Medgar Evers). Email invitations were sent inviting students to participate in an online Qualtrics survey and offering them a $20 Amazon gift code for their time. Invitations were sent to 5,000 students and 529 responded for a response rate of 10.5%.

To identify predictors of SNAP enrollment, using multivariate analyses, we will compare differences between all SNAP-enrolled and non-SNAP-enrolled students and then between students eligible for SNAP (based on survey responses) who are and are not enrolled.

In April 2020 researchers will draw a sample from survey respondents to conduct interviews at both four-year and community college campuses to further assess the barriers to SNAP enrollment among college students. Follow up interviews will also be conducted with survey respondents who indicated they had enrolled in SNAP to determine the impact of the program on food insecurity and educational outcomes. Additionally, researchers will interview staff on campuses who are directly engaged with benefits enrollment, including Single Stop and CUNY Edge. Staff interviews will help identify and document common barriers to enrollment, including both student perceptions and the bureaucratic barriers encountered in dealings with city welfare offices and administrators. Interview transcripts will be transcribed and analyzed for major themes.

8. Healthy CUNY Coronavirus Epidemic Impact Survey 2020

The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) randomly selected 10,000 students to invite to participate across CUNY campuses using simple random selection (with verification that the distribution of the sample matched that of CUNY as a whole in terms of level: 30% from community colleges, 57% from undergraduate campuses and 12% from graduate campuses). The survey was reviewed and approved by the CUNY SPH IRB on April 9, 2020 (amendment to IRB #695980). Four undergraduate student interns with Healthy CUNY piloted the survey and provided feedback on questions that were hard to understand, and/or the general flow of the survey which was programmed in Qualtrics software.

The survey was sent on 4/14/2020, with text and email reminders to non-responders, and closed on 4/22/2020; 2,689 started the survey and 2,282 completed 70% or more of the survey. The analytic sample consists of the 2,282 who completed 70% or more of the survey for a response rate of 22.8%. Some sociodemographic characteristics were associated with the likelihood of responding to the survey: being female (vs. male), being an undergraduate (vs. graduate) student, and being a part-time (vs. full-time) student. Preliminary weights were created to adjust for the differences in distributions between the respondents and the full sample for these three characteristics. Final weights will be calculated once race/ethnicity data is available from OIR; these data are imputed at the close of each semester.

This report is based on the analyses of these eight sources of information, in addition to our reviews of the literature from other campuses and the extensive programmatic experience of the two research teams. The report was prepared by researchers from both institutions and reflects our syntheses of the evidence gathered.

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36 Although assessments of basic needs insecurity made early in the fall semester are likely to capture more students, these assessments may also understate students' basic needs. In fact, Bruening et al. (2018) surveyed the same population at the beginning and at the end of a semester and found that rates of food insecurity were higher at the end of the semester (35%) than at the beginning (28%); Bruening, M., van Woerden, I., Todd, M., & Laska, M. (2018). Hungry to learn: The prevalence and effects of food insecurity on health behaviors and outcomes over time among a diverse sample of university freshmen.

37 The estimated number of survey invitations is based on the total number of undergraduates at participating institutions in the fall of 2017, as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Fall 2017 enrollment numbers for the Professional Studies program were gathered from the CUNY Office of Institutional Research's website. According to the OIRA's preliminary reporting, 244,118 undergraduates were enrolled at participating institutions in fall 2018. They also note that only 215,440 students were surveyed due to missing or invalid email addresses and other issues.