

Addressing Food and Housing Security among NC State Students:

A Call to Action

October, 2019

Over the past two years, dedicated and compassionate students, staff, and faculty have been productive in seeking to understand and tackle food and housing insecurity among NC State students. Members of the Steering Committee have volunteered their time to collect rich data on student food and housing security, complete an asset mapping process, review the research literature, communicate with national experts on basic needs among students in higher education, and obtain reports from other campuses about strategies to increase food and housing security. With DASA's leadership and generous donors, we launched an online portal of resources. With Student Government and University Dining, we arranged meal swipe donations. Student leaders launched an award-winning Student Coalition on Basic Needs. The collective knowledge and experience gained in the past two years led the Steering Committee to prepare and submit this urgent call to action.

Goals to Achieve the Stated Vision

All NC State students will have access to sufficient, nutritious, culturally appropriate, and affordable food and safe, stable, affordable housing accessible to the university.

- 1** **There will be no barriers and no "wrong doors"** for students who seek resources for food and housing. Students will be confident and at ease in seeking and receiving resources. Every person in the NC State community will be aware of the potential for unmet basic needs among our students and prepared to (a) have a meaningful, open conversation with students about food and housing and (b) make appropriate and timely referrals for needed resources.
- 2** **There will be no gaps in resources and services** available for students to become and remain secure in food and housing. A comprehensive and integrated system of care will be in place that maximizes campus and community resources. There will be a streamlined, transparent, rapid process for dissemination of resources to students. Prevention will be prioritized.
- 3** University **policies and procedures will support students'** ability to secure sufficient food and stable housing. Each university unit will continuously evaluate the impact of their operations on the financial status and food and housing security of students. Then, without delay, changes will be made to better support students' basic needs.
- 4** A long-range fundraising and **capacity building plan will be in place** to ensure resources and a sufficient staff of basic needs navigators will be available as the number of NC State students at risk for food and housing insecurity increases in coming years.
- 5** **NC State will be a national leader** in resolution of student food and housing security.

Recommended Actions

Food and housing insecurity is a multidimensional challenge that will require a comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous response. Following are systems-level recommendations to meet the desired outcomes. Certainly, individual programs that provide direct services for students will be an essential component of a comprehensive strategy, but structural changes are needed to reach desired goals.



The Pack Essentials Steering Committee should be officially charged by the chancellor and resourced to create a bold plan for rapid progress toward desired outcomes listed above, and to ensure the plan is implemented and evaluated. The following strategies should be components of the comprehensive plan:

- Access to resources and information should be available in a single physical location on campus that is high visible, non-stigmatizing, and easily accessible to students. “Satellite” locations also could be established for some resources such as the food pantry. To streamline and hasten the process of securing sufficient food and safe housing, knowledgeable designated staff (basic needs navigators) must be available at that site to link students to a network of diverse services.
- Continuous identification and outreach strategies, as described in the Call to Action, should be developed and implemented to increase and sustain awareness of student hunger and housing instability and homelessness and awareness of campus and community resources. The current campuswide campaign to destigmatize help-seeking and economic stress should be expanded and sustained.
- The comprehensive Student Homelessness Prevention Plan, funded by the NC State Foundation, should be executed without delay.



University leadership should include food and housing security among 100% of our students as a goal in the new strategic plan. Once included in the strategic plan, university leadership should encourage every unit across campus to consider innovative practices and policies to promote student food and housing security.



The NC State Office of Research and Innovation should bring faculty together in a collaborative research group across disciplines to generate solutions for the pressing educational equity and public health problem of student food insecurity and homelessness. This research agenda is highly consistent with the “Designing Healthy and Resilient Societies” strategic research area. Steering Committee members have begun collaboration in this emerging field, so there is momentum to build on—and NC State can be in the forefront.