



SAN DIEGO COLLEGE OF  
CONTINUING EDUCATION



# BASIC NEEDS REPORT

A COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH REPORT ON THE  
BASIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS AT  
SAN DIEGO COLLEGE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

JULY 2023



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This research study was conducted by  
Henderson Professional Mentorship Group and Inclusive Data.







# Background

## Assessing the Basic Needs of San Diego College of Continuing Education (SDCCE) students

- 60% of students enrolled in San Diego Community College District struggle to meet their own basic human needs in 4 critical areas (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019).
- Critical Areas intensified by pandemic and inflation: Mental Health, Housing, Childcare, and Food Insecurities.
- According to 2023 data from the SDCCD Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research, two-thirds (66%) of SDCCE students with known income report that their annual income is under \$33,000.
- Over half (57%) of SDCCE students from the 2023 SDCCD Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research student profiles report that they are students of color. Immigration status is also a significant consideration, given that nearly half (48%) are not U.S Citizens.



# Literature Review

## PRIORITY AREAS



### Mental Health

- Students report high levels of exhaustion, anxiety, discomfort, and generally poor mental health (Geary, 2022).
- Basic needs insecurity is linked to mental health challenges (Hege, 2021).
- The need for on-site mental health services along with other basic needs support services is recommended.



### Housing

- Students experiencing housing instability were found to value their campuses as spaces of stability.
- However, 20 percent of SDCCD students reported being homeless (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019), which was exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19.
- Basic needs insecurity is often experienced in combination with other factors, such as food insecurity and mental health destabilization (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019; Hallett, 2018).





# Literature Review

## PRIORITY AREAS



## Child Care

- 60% of working parents adjust their work life or lose work opportunities to accommodate the needs of their children (SD Foundation, 2022).
- SDCCD's 2022 Accreditation Plan component of workforce development can be supported through on-site child care, which would support parents in taking advantage of their educational experience (Gonchar, 1995).

## Elder Care

- Students who care for elderly or disabled family members face similar challenges but are rarely included in the discussions around support with care needs (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2021).
- Caregiving often detracts from studying and the opportunity to engage in supportive academic services, often leaving student caregivers with lower educational attainment, high absenteeism, and increased levels of stress or sleep deprivation (Armstrong-Carter, et. al, 2022).

*Literature Review cont. →*



# Literature Review

PRIORITY AREAS



## Food Insecurities

- 42% of SDCCD survey respondents experience low levels of food security; 44% cannot afford to eat balanced meals; 44% worry about running out of food before they have money to buy more (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019).
- Students are forced to choose between necessities like food, education, housing, utilities, and/or medical care leading to poor classroom performance, higher attrition rates, and delayed graduation.



# Environmental Scan

## SWOT Analysis



### Strengths

- Resources for students and dedicated departments
- Students reflect local community
- Preferred Language materials
- Broad-ranging programming



### Weaknesses

- Limitations in funding and resources to meet identified student needs, such as on-campus housing, health care
- Limited staff for student organizing
- Students are workers and parents, impacting availability



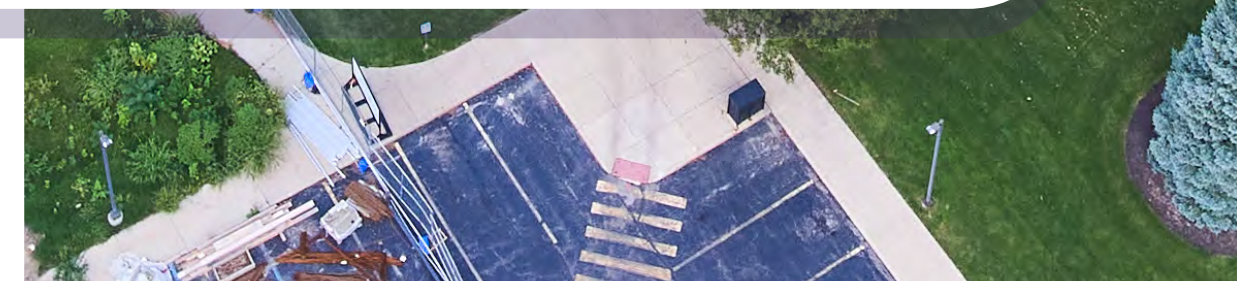
### Opportunities

- Mutual aid groups among students
- Sponsorship
- Programming that is fundable
- Students can develop skills working in student resource programming



### Threats

- Employment market has below living wages
- Digital divide widening
- Increased cost of living
- Fund development requires staff time





# Environmental Scan

## Market Forces

- Over the past 10 years, college student enrollment has dropped by 10% or 1.9 million (Causey, 2023)
- Between Fall of 2019 and 2022, there has been an 8% loss in students given financial struggles
- Increase for online classes with stagnant wages and rising inflation shaping workforce changes



## Technology

- Digital Equity issues such as internet cost, access, reliability, and devices
- Can impact rural, tribal, and low-income communities disproportionately



## Internal Capability Analysis (ICA)

In performing an ICA, SDCCE must consider the following:

- Human Resources
- Facilities
- Operations

## Stakeholder Analysis

- Students
- Instructors
- Administrators
- Alumni
- Employers
- Community
- Regulators



## Legal and Regulatory Factors

- Laws and regulations for continuing education and providing mental and physical health care
- Regulations from the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges
- FERPA, HIPAA, data-sharing agreements



# Methodology

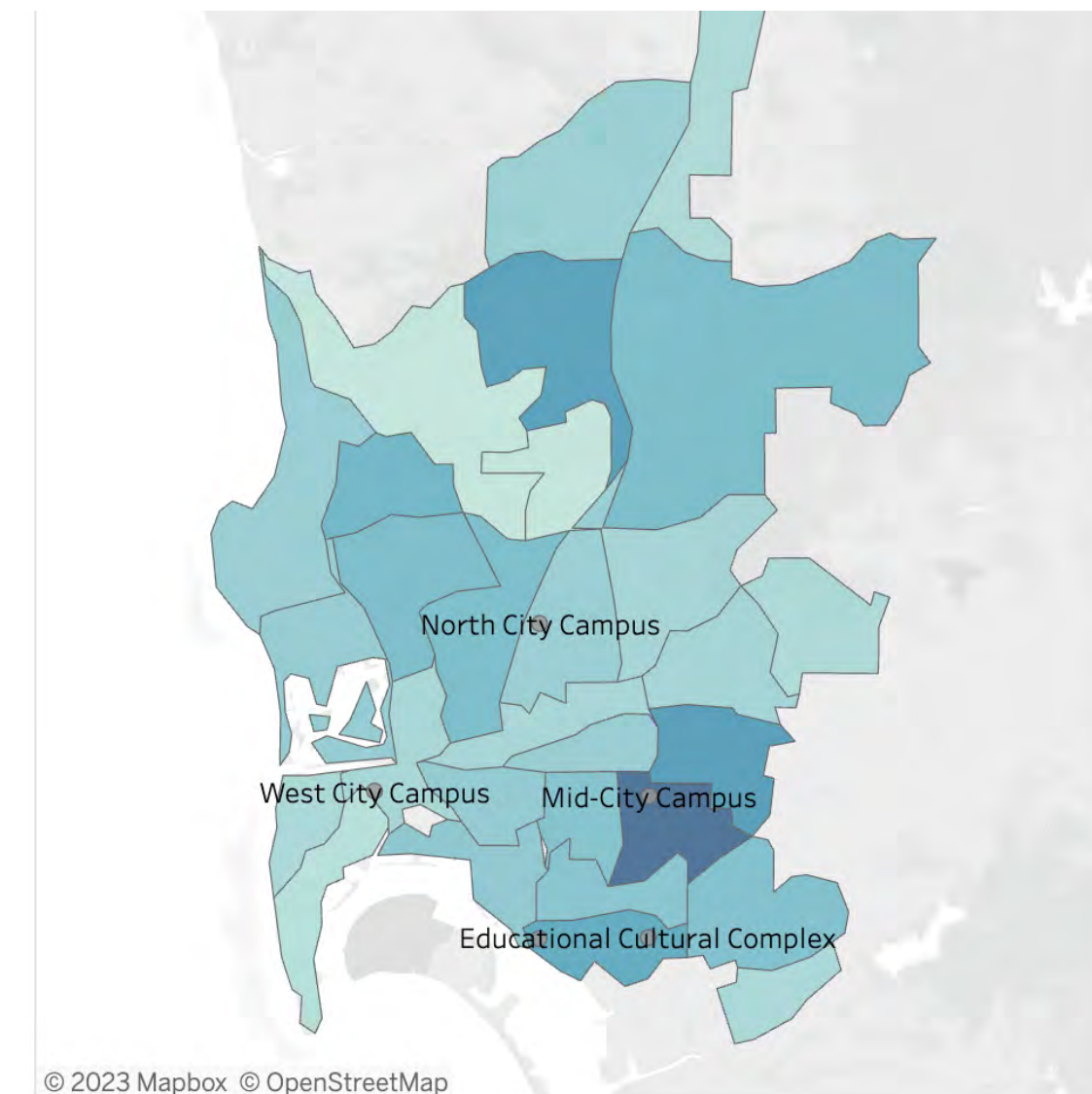
Mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) study conducted virtually at all six SDCCE campuses: Continuing Education Mesa, Continuing Education Miramar, César E. Chávez, Educational Cultural Complex, as well Mid City, North City, and West City campuses.

## Quantitative Component

- Online survey administered to a larger sample of SDCCE students

## Qualitative Component

- 2 one-hour interviews
- 3 one-hour focus groups
- 2 one-hour focus groups in Spanish







## Mental and Physical Health

Mental health challenges are interconnected with housing and food insecurity.



## Housing Insecurity

Lack of affordable housing options and shared housing can come with not-so-ideal living conditions.



## Child/Elder Care

Caregivers and parents need on-campus resources and course offerings created with them in mind. Connect to resources with operating hours.



## Food Insecurity

SNAP/EBT is a resource for students which they would like on-campus support with as well as support connecting to other food resources.

# Qualitative Findings

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

- **16 student participants:** African American/Black (2), Asian American (1), Latino/Latinx/Hispanic (7), Native American (1), White/Caucasian (1), and Unknown (1)
- **Gender representation:** Male (6), female (9), and unknown (1)
- **Age range:** 19-60; majority in 50s
- **Citizenship status:** (9) Participants holding U.S. citizenship while (3) identified as Refugees/Asylee, and (3) identified as 'Other' or declined to state
- **Relationships status:** (8) were single, (6) were married, and the status of the remaining participants is unknown
- **Campus Participation:** Cesar Chavez (5), Continuing Education Mesa (1), Continuing Education Miramar (0), Educational Cultural Complex (3), Mid-City (1), West City (5), Unknown (1)
- **Program of Study:** Fashion Design = Clothing and Textiles (3), ESL = English as a Second Language (5), DSPS (3), Hospitality/Culinary Arts (1), Emeritus (1), Business Information Technology (2) Administrative (1), Admin of Justice (1), Computer & Info Science (1), ESL (5), Fashion Design (2), Law Pathway (1), Undeclared/DSPS (2), Unknown (3)

*Additional Findings Cont.* →





## Mental and Physical Health

The survey responses suggest over a third of student respondents struggle with physical health (38%) or mental health (33%).



## Housing Insecurity

About a third (31%) of students in the survey reported experiencing housing insecurity on a daily basis.



## Child/Elder Care

Nearly one in ten students reported caregiving duties for the sick or elderly (9%) or children (15%) are barriers to their educational goals.



## Food Insecurity

Nearly a quarter of student respondents (21%) reported that they had unmet food needs on a daily basis.

# Quantitative Findings

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

- **1692 student survey respondents:** African American/Black (22%), Asian American (14%), Latino/Latinx/Hispanic (31%), Native American (1), White/Caucasian (18%), Pacific Islander (1%), Middle Eastern (4%), Mixed but not otherwise specified (3%), and Races not listed here (1%). Students were allowed to select more than one race and/or ethnicity.
- **Gender representation:** Man (29%), Woman (62%), Other options or declined to state (8%) [Note: gender was a multi-select option]
- **Education:** Elementary School (5%), Junior High or Middle School (10%), GED (3%), High School (32%), Certificate (11%), Associates (8%), Bachelors (20%), Masters or Professional Doctorate or Higher (13%)
- **Age range:** Under 18 (2%), 18 - 24 (8%), 25 - 29 (12%), 30 - 34 (17%), 35 - 39 (18%), 40 - 44 (11%), 45 - 49 (9%), 50 - 54 (5%), 55 - 64 (9%), 65 or older (9%)
- **Household representation:** Household size: 1 (21%), 2 (23%), 3 (18%), 4 (16%), 5 (10%), 6 (5%), 7 (2%), 8 (2.0%), 9 (1%), 10 or more (2%)
- **Household Income:** Under 5,000 (33%), 5,000-9,999 (8%), 10,000-14,999 (12%), 15,000-24,999 (11%), 25,000-34,999 (9%), 35,000-44,999 (5%), 45,000-54,999 (5%), 55,000-64,999 (4%), 65,000-74,999 (3%), 75,000 or more (10%)
- **Current Military Status:** Not a veteran (94%), Veteran (3%), Active Duty (2%), Reserve (1%)

*Additional Findings Cont.* →

Please note due to rounding, the totals may not add up to 100%.



# Additional Findings

## CONTEXT MATTERS

- Transportation needs negatively impact students' basic needs and attendance. Students need more campus support.
- Students need more access to resources, including monetary resources and visibility of available resources on campus. Students were often unaware of resources on campus but expressed interest in learning more about the resources that can help them.
- Students need more immigration support to help them navigate specific challenges. Every situation is different, so students need support for the unique challenges that recent arrivals and undocumented students face, including legal and financial support.
- Students still need more support for technology, employment, and resources to foster their business ownership. Students need coordinated technology resources that are relevant to courses.





# Recommendations

## Fostering a Holistic Approach

A holistic approach to meeting the basic needs of SDCCE students is critical to promoting academic and personal growth.

- Mental Health
- Physical Health
- Housing
- Food
- Child Care
- Elder Care
- Transportation
- Immigration
- Technology





# Recommendations

## General Basic Needs Program

SDCCE students need a comprehensive basic needs program with case management at its core to ensure the successful delivery of basic needs services and key interventions.

- Comprehensive Services
- Leadership Support
- Streamlined Intake Process
- Cross-Campus Collaboration
- Community Partners
- Campus Culture
- Faculty and Staff Training
- Marketing Services
- Accessible Services
- Student Partnerships
- Case Management System
- Ongoing Follow-Up
- Case Management Training
- Data System
- Data Collection Tools
- Data-Informed Decisions





# Mental Health Matters



## Key recommendations

- Increase access to on-campus mental health counselors and develop a hotline for immediate crisis support.
- Conduct workshops and campaigns to destigmatize mental health issues and promote help-seeking behavior.
- Establish a pipeline of ongoing support for students transitioning from crisis situations to regular mental health care.
- Create support groups led by trained psychologists specifically tailored to the needs of recent arrivals and undocumented students.
- Provide resources or programs for service animals to support students' mental well-being.

## Student Voice

"It would be nice to have a hotline to call when we (students) get to this emotional panic attack about anything.. just like the suicide hotline I see in hospitals before."

*West City, Clothing and Textiles, American Filipino, age 57*

## Statistical Highlight

The survey responses suggest at least 1 in 5 students has an unmet mental health need or concern. Wellness concerns were reported by 53% of student respondents, followed by physical health (38%), mental health (33%).



# Physical Health Matters



## Key recommendations

- Implement mobile clinics to provide healthcare services on campus or in areas with limited access to medical care.
- Advocate for reduced or subsidized medications and medical care for low-income students.
- Assist with transportation for medical visits, including Personal Care Attendants, to overcome transportation barriers.
- Collaborate with local healthcare providers to ensure availability and accessibility of medical services for students.

## Student Voice

"What I have seen is that many people do not have health insurance, and they've even missed school because they can't get medical attention. I have seen three people who have health issues with their feet and there is one who needs something to help his leg, but because he is from Haiti, he does not have Medi Cal. So, I would like them to tell them where they can go or where they can get help with a physical exam so they have can have good health."

*Confidential Student*

## Statistical Highlight

The survey showed that low-income students were less likely to be aware of the services that could benefit them, in general, but were more likely to have heard of the food insecurity and housing program compared to academic and career services. When surveyed about specific health services that students would use if they were available, the most popular services were: blood pressure screening (56%), vaccines (43%), mental health (36%), and vision screening (35%). The other services student respondents reported they would attend would be physicals (26%), first aid (25%), crisis counseling (20%), birth control (15%), and pregnancy testing (12%).



# Housing



## Key recommendations

- Develop and offer reduced or subsidized utilities and housing.
- Establish mortgage assistance programs to support students in securing stable housing.
- Address safety concerns in shared housing arrangements by implementing measures to ensure the well-being of all students, especially women.
- Provide support and guidance for undocumented students to navigate the legal complexities of securing housing.

## Student Voice

"I'm a handicapped individual. I use a wheelchair for about 70% of my mobility and I live off a very small disability stipend every month... if I were actually able to work part-time at a job to supplement that... then my disability either gets reduced by the amount I'm earning or it goes away entirely... student scholarships and grants and things do not impact that amount... Trying to exist on that small amount of income every month is an impossibility... I basically live on the good graces of a friend who is allowing me to be in his apartment and to share his space and pay a minimal amount of rent ... But that's an unstable housing situation... it can change at any time, at any day with only a day or two or three worth of notice. It colors the decisions that I make in my life, the things I do, the way I act, the plans that I'm able to make in terms of school..."

*Continuing Education Mesa, Emeritus, White, age 54*

## Statistical Highlight

About a third (31%) of students in the survey reported experiencing housing insecurity on a daily basis.



# Food



## Key recommendations

- Provide referrals to local food pantries for students who may not be eligible for SNAP/EBT or when SNAP/EBT funds become depleted.
- Organize food distributions that consider students' dietary needs and restrictions.
- Implement budgeting workshops to help students manage their finances effectively.

## Student Voice

"...I came here as a refugee four years and I still, under the program with my family and under the CalWORKS program, where I receive my EBT every month and we have food. But sometimes you can find that it's not enough, but it's there every month. When you reaching the end of month, you find that you have already finished everything... Food distribution center, we have to visit them and maybe to get something, and that can take us up to the end of the month, and as we are waiting the next month... And for me, I have no problem because I find every food, even from my home in Africa where I come from, I find everything here, which is amazing....I can eat. My children, they can eat... When the food stamp is over, we can visit the food distribution center. That's good program too that help me."

*Mid City, Business and Information Technology, Black, age 53*

## Statistical Highlight

In the survey, researchers found that nearly a quarter of student respondents (21%) reported that they had unmet food needs on a daily basis. These students were more likely to be lower income and to have larger families or to have disabilities.



# Child Care



## Key recommendations

- Increase on-campus childcare options, including tutoring or academic support for children.
- Create class schedules with parents in mind to accommodate their dual roles as caregivers and students.
- Provide resources for accessing affordable caregivers and comprehensive lists of local daycare facilities.
- Establish partnerships with local daycare facilities to ensure availability and operating hours align with student needs.

## Student Voice

"A children's room or daycare would be good at school. While the parents are in class, the child can be there. One day a classmate brought her son and she had to keep him outside the classroom. I wasn't there, they just told me, and I said, "Oh, poor thing sitting out there." Well it would be good for people who want to study and dont have anywhere to leave their kids. That would be cool in the future."

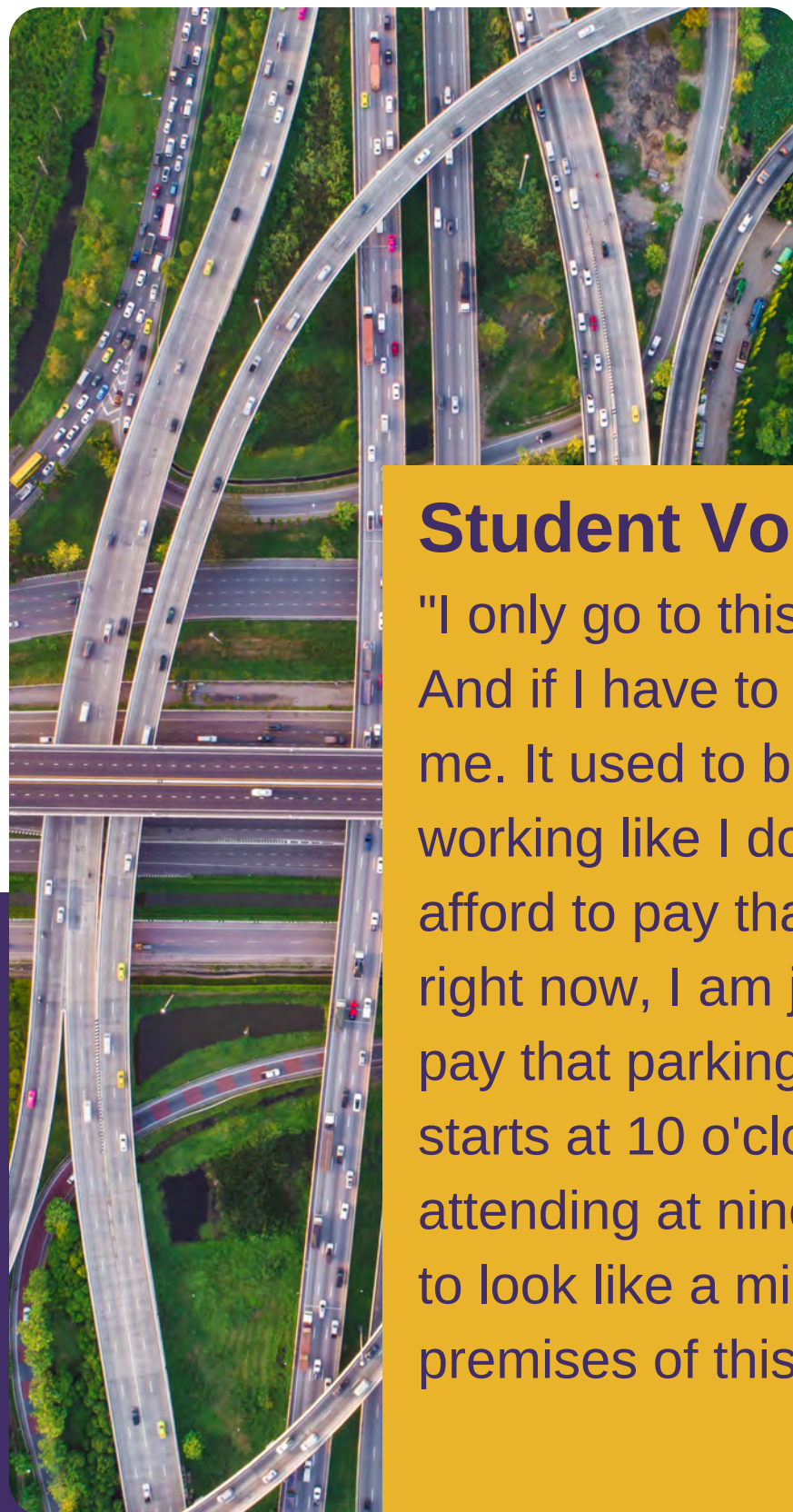
*César E. Chávez, ESL, Hispanic, age 40*

## Statistical Highlight

In the survey, about one in ten students (9%) reported their caregiving duties for sick or elderly sometimes gets in the way of them achieving their educational goals.



# Transportation



## Key recommendations

- Lower or waive parking fees to reduce the financial burden on students.
- Distribute gas cards or provide assistance with fuel costs.
- Establish a Dial-A-Ride bus program with nominal fees for transportation.
- Provide MTS passes or trolley tickets to students.

## Student Voice

"I only go to this school one time a week, and it's two hours a week. And if I have to pay \$35 for parking, it's kind of a waste of money for me. It used to be free, but now I have to pay. And people who are not working like I do, I don't have income like other people. I really cannot afford to pay that. Well, if I really have to, I guess I have no choice. But right now, I am just parking outside because I don't have income to pay that parking. Sometimes I cannot find parking because my classes starts at 10 o'clock and other students already park. People who are attending at nine o'clock already started parking in this street so I had to look like a mile away. Yet the parking inside in the building in the premises of this school is empty because no one wants to pay."

*West City, Clothing and Textiles, American Filipino, age 60*

## Statistical Highlight

In the survey, researchers found that 43% of parent respondents with dependent children needed more transportation to help with childcare-related issues.



# Immigration

## Key recommendations

- Vet and establish partnerships with reputable legal aid organizations to provide free or low-cost legal services for immigrant students, reducing fraud and exploitation of students.
- Develop a comprehensive job placement program, including partnerships with local businesses, career readiness programs, access to job fairs and internships, a dedicated support network, and legal information and referrals to support undocumented students in obtaining employment opportunities.
- Hire specially trained staff to provide essential services such as healthcare, food assistance, and social security benefits for immigrant and undocumented students.
- Develop affordable housing initiatives specifically tailored to the needs of immigrant students, including partnerships with housing organizations, financial literacy programs, and culturally sensitive support services to ensure their housing stability and well-being.



### Student Voice

"Well, as my colleagues say, the truth is we need legal help, because many of us work, but many of us are not paid well, because we do not have legal documentation, so we are undocumented in this country, and it is not legal for us to work without that. And well, they give us work like under the table like we say, things that aren't through companies or things like that and they don't pay us well, so we have to deal with our legal status."

*César E. Chávez, ESL, South American, age 19*

### Statistical Highlight

Immigration status was not solicited in the survey, but it was inquired in the qualitative research. During the focus groups and interviews, it was evident that students who are recent arrivals and/or undocumented immigrants face unique challenges and barriers.



# Technology

## Key recommendations

- Develop programs for reduced or subsidized allowances for class materials or a loaner program for updated tools.
- Improve internet connectivity on campus and provide user training for effective utilization of online resources.
- Create study and work spaces with flexible operating hours to accommodate diverse student schedules.

## Student Voice

"For those who are online and they don't have mean, internet, computer. They're asking computer. We don't have computer. We are online, so we don't know how to do Zoom. We have a phones. Phone, also they're sometimes... Phones are complicating them, and maybe the institution could think about that, how to find resources to give to those who need them. They're online, and everybody's not in person, and so it become a bit difficult. So you can think about that. Yeah, yeah. Library and all those things related to facilitate, to make easier-"

*Mid City, Business and Information Technology, Black, age 53*

## Statistical Highlight

In the survey, researchers asked about employment-related needs and found that about a third (30%) had unmet needs related to having stable employment - and about a quarter (26%) need help with job searching. They also reported higher needs in terms of needing technology or computers (36%).



# Elder Care Recommendations



## Key recommendations

- Train SDCCE staff and faculty to increase awareness and promote the availability of resources for student caregivers, with a particular focus on those caring for older adults.
- Encourage faculty to offer flexibility to student caregivers, such as extensions for assignments and understanding around irregular class attendance.
- Develop special tuition reimbursement policies for student caregivers who may be required to withdraw from classes due to caregiving responsibilities.
- Establish holistic support services for student caregivers, including counseling centers, financial aid offices, student health centers, and academic advisors.

## Student Voice

"Right now we have caregiver [that] comes only Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday...only [in the] afternoons. ...I stay here in the mornings in [virtual] school. So, [if] she needs help. I give her some coffee or something. I just give her some coffee and something like that. This is difficult for me to handle by myself and for her. She's only 95."

*-ECC, Undeclared/ DSPS, White, age 38*

## Statistical Context

A 2020 AARP study found that five million college and vocational school students are caregivers for adult family members, including elderly parents or grandparents (Horovitz, 2022)



# General Basic Needs 1/2



## Key recommendations

- Develop a comprehensive service framework that ensures students have access to a well-coordinated range of support services, including food assistance, emergency aid, physical and mental health care, technology resources, housing assistance, transportation options, financial planning guidance, employment support, and child care support.
- Establish strong campus-wide leadership support by creating a dedicated basic needs task force or team responsible for integrating basic needs into the college's strategic plan. Secure funding from the college foundation and other funders to ensure sustainable implementation of basic needs initiatives.
- Implement a streamlined intake process that includes a centralized one-stop-shop approach, such as a basic needs center, where students can easily access various services. Utilize a centralized screening process through an orientation survey to identify students' needs and establish a documented referral system for effective service coordination.

## Student Voice

"...it's not enough to just say, "We have a program for that." You have to make sure that that's a pipeline that's tested and is going to work for those students...you can't put it on their shoulders to be responsible to be resilient enough to knock down those barriers and get that care. They need the care right away. So I think that that burden needs to shift onto the side of the district and the continuing education group of colleges to make sure that they can not only just make a program, but make sure it's accessible and available to the students."

*Continuing Education Mesa, Emeritus, While, age 54*



# General Basic Needs 2/2



## Key recommendations

- Implement a streamlined intake process that includes a centralized one-stop-shop approach, such as a basic needs center, where students can easily access various services. Utilize a centralized screening process through an orientation survey to identify students' needs and establish a documented referral system for effective service coordination.
- Foster cross-campus collaboration by encouraging close collaboration between basic needs staff, the financial aid office, advisors, and DEIA leaders. This collaboration will facilitate seamless support for students' access to basic needs services, ensuring a holistic approach to student well-being.
- Develop strong community partnerships, particularly with local food suppliers/farms and external partners, to increase access to public benefits and other essential services. Allocate space on campus for these partners to provide additional resources, creating a supportive environment that meets students' basic needs effectively.

## Student Voice

"Maybe even partnering with childcare in the community and offering classes, not just on campus, but partnering with independent childcare areas, centers, people's homes that they open up for childcare. Things like that might be a resource for people to both keep in the education loop and have a place for their child to go safely if there's not one on campus. I'm just thinking outside the box."

*West City, Clothing and Textiles, American Indian, White, age 55*



# Significant Highlights

## Basic Needs and Educational Goals

- We explored how each question in the survey was statistically related to whether or not students reported they were on track to meet their educational goals.
- People who reported housing, money, sleep, and food needs were less likely to say they were on track to meet their educational goals.
- Surprisingly, when it comes to stating they were on track to meet their educational goal, childcare, healthcare, job search, and job stability were not significantly significant for this group of student respondents.





# Significant Highlights

## Demographics Matter

- We explored race, ethnicity, language, disabilities, and income to see if students' experiences varied by these experiences. Generally, they did.
- Students of color were more likely to report multiple barriers compared to white students.
- BIPOC awareness of assistance programs was typically lower than white students, with differences within groups.
- Black and Indigenous students were more likely to know about CalWorks and CalFresh, compared to other students of color.
- Students spoke many languages.
- Looking at language, we found that there were different childcare preferences and desired times for care. We found the most variation for English and Haitian Creole, which were also the largest language groups from our survey.
- Students with disabilities were more likely to have lower household incomes and to have unmet needs.
- Students with lower household incomes were more likely to have unmet basic needs and face barriers, as expected.
- In most cases, students with multiple barriers tended to be less aware of SDCCE services and programs that could help them, but there are a few exceptions.
- Students with disabilities were more likely to be aware of academic counseling, career services, transfer, CalFresh, and disability services, compared to their peers.





# Culture, race, and ethnicity, makes a difference.

- Indigenous students' experiences often differ from other students of color. They were typically more aware of housing and food insecurity-related supports compared to Black and other students of color.
- When considering ethnicity, African American and Black immigrant students also varied from each other in important ways. African American students were more likely to report they were not getting the help they needed in classes compared to their Black immigrant peers. African American students were also 2x to 3x more likely to report they had unmet mental health or physical health needs compared to their Black immigrant peers.

## MORE IN REPORT



"We come from Africa. They know plantain. They know yuca or cassava. [We] eat. So we are trying to eat completely like that. When the food stamp is over, we can visit the food distribution center. That's [a] good program too that helps me."

Mid City, Business and Information  
Technology, Black, age 53



# Funders are ready to invest in thriving students

## California is leading the way

- When looking at funders who have a focus on meeting basic needs, including housing, medical care, food, and economic empowerment, we found that California has consistently been a state with high investment when looking at federal, state, and corporate sources.
- We also found funders who have invested in community colleges to meet community needs.
- We've added all of these funders as possible targets for future fund development strategies and activities.





# Funders are ready to invest in thriving students



Nationally, there are funders ready to support

- There are funders who may be newer to investing in California but who have been seeking awardees in these project areas.
- We identified several who are adopting a multi-state strategy to focus on community members impacted by economic and social inequities.
- We also found some funders who are reassessing their investments in order to address people who are impacted by cuts in state and federal safety nets.
- In many cases, these larger philanthropic organizations are seeking community colleges as partners to ensure they are reaching the communities where they are located.
- SDCCE could consider this approach for supporting larger priorities in economic development, housing, and healthcare.





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