



Meet the Basic Needs of All Students & Employees

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT(S) THIS INITIATIVE SUPPORTS

- 4 - Transportation Mode Shift
- **7 - Sustainability Literacy**
- 10 – Sustainability Research Funding

INITIATIVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE CHARGE

- **Build Community:** Ensuring that basic needs are met for our university community will represent the care that the University of Arizona has for its community. When basic needs are met, students and employees will be able to connect with each other without worrying about meeting these needs.
- **Be Actionable:** The infrastructure for meeting basic needs on campus already exists, this initiative merely builds on existing infrastructure.
- **Be Data Informed:** Existing research shows the importance of meeting basic needs in student success.
- **Demonstrate Leadership:** By prioritizing the basic needs of students and employees, the University of Arizona can position itself as a leader in the struggle against basic needs insecurity nationwide.

INITIATIVE DETAILS

Initiative Summary

This initiative proposes to meet the basic needs of all campus community members and eliminate barriers to accessing food, clothing, housing, transportation, childcare, and other basic needs. Research indicates that unmet basic needs significantly impact success, with students and staff facing difficulties in concentration, academic achievement, and mental health. To improve student and staff well-being, the university should enhance support services such as establishing affordable grocery access, improving transportation options, expanding basic needs services, and increasing access to affordable childcare. Actionable items include:

- Collaborate with the City of Tucson to ensure continued fare-free public transit for all and explore additional alternative transportation options.
- Centralize resources such as the Basic Needs Center and a potential on-campus thrift store, and improve access to these services
- Establish an on-campus childcare center to support students and employees with children, improving their ability to work and study effectively.
- Implement these services campus-wide by distributing information about basic needs services and offering support for public assistance program applications.

- Include language in contracts with private developers to increase access to basic needs, such as grocery stores, within a truly walkable distance from campus.

Proposed Initiative & Background

Research shows that meeting basic needs is a critical part of student success. When basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, transportation, and childcare are left unmet, students struggle with concentration, academic focus and achievement, social connectivity, and mental health, and may even struggle to remain enrolled in courses each semester. This is a problem for the University of Arizona, which aims to foster an environment of education where all students can thrive.

Universities across the nation have historically experienced high rates of basic needs insecurity, including 30% food insecurity across students pre-COVID-19 pandemic. At the University of Arizona specifically, 1 out of 5 students are food insecure and only 34% of students reported low or very low rates of food insecurity. At our university, these trends are distributed unevenly across demographics. Students who are from systemically marginalized populations are more likely to experience basic needs insecurity. Existing research shows that across the United States, Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native students experience basic needs insecurity 16% more than their White peers, with this trend extending to other students of color as well as low-income students and students who are parents.

To address the issue of food insecurity on campus, the university should consider plausible actions to secure an affordable grocery store within walking distance of campus. This could happen by adding additional language to contracts in land or asset sales with private developers that would require any university-owned land being sold to be developed for the purpose of becoming a grocery store or other resource that would meet student and employee basic needs. It is important to note that the current on-campus offerings (Highland Market and Arizona Market) are not sufficient to bridge the needs of food insecurity that currently exist.

Transportation is another basic need that can be difficult to meet and fulfill without institutional support. Owning a personal vehicle can be expensive and our campus community should have access to more reliable forms of transportation so that it is not necessary to own a personal vehicle for convenient transportation to/from and within campus. Currently, fares for public transit are free across Tucson, but this may not always be the case. If local legislation leans away from upholding fare-free transit, the University of Arizona should work with the City of Tucson to ensure fare-free access to transit for all students, not just subsidized. Additionally, the university should support efforts to expand alternative modes of transportation to lessen the financial burden of owning a car that many students and employees face.

Other basic needs to be addressed include clothing, specifically professional clothing. Within the already established Basic Needs Center exists the Campus Closet. This service provides professional clothing to students, faculty, and staff free of charge. This service runs on donations and may overlap with another proposed initiative to establish an on-campus thrift store. It will be crucial for the university to centralize basic needs information and services on campus. If an on-campus thrift store is established, the existing Basic Needs Center and Campus Closet location must be considered for expansion to house additional basic needs services, in addition to consideration given for collaboration opportunities. Not only should

locations of services be centralized on campus, but so should campus events and service or distribution hours. A central calendar should be established and publicized with upcoming events, locations, distribution hours, and donation opportunities.

Another basic need to consider is childcare. There is already funding set aside through Life & Work Connections to provide funding to students and employees with children, although there is not currently an established childcare center on campus that provides quality and affordable childcare to students and employees with children. A center like this could be beneficial for all members of our campus community who are parents because it could improve commuting times for many individuals and prove to be a time and money saving option for many members of our campus community. For individuals who may struggle with affording childcare, a center like this will have large impacts on their ability to work or study successfully and without interruption.

Finally, it is also important to better understand and address housing insecurity, ensuring the university's plans reflect the need for affordable housing on and near campus, providing emergency housing grants, creating partnerships with off-campus housing to offer discounts, etc.

In efforts to increase access to basic needs services, it is important to challenge the idea that failure to meet basic needs is a personal issue and remind our campus community that it is systemic. To ensure that we meet students and employees where they are, the university must extend the reach of these programs into every building, classroom, and office. A campus-wide network must be established to educate all faculty and staff members on basic needs services provided by the university so that information can be spread to employees and students in all departments and programs by coworkers, peers, and instructors. Additionally, basic needs "business cards" should be distributed to all dormitories and office spaces across campus so that this information is available to all individuals who enter a residential or working space.

This distribution of resources into every campus space could also include the establishment of "sharing shelves" or lending libraries across campus. These shared spaces would serve as a location for resource and material sharing between individuals. By creating a space where students and employees can leave or take functioning items, the university can promote the use and sharing of resources and information between peers.

This initiative aims to address these current issues by meeting the basic needs of students and employees at the University of Arizona. To achieve this, the university must ensure that low-income students and students belonging to systemically marginalized communities have equitable access to the Basic Needs Center and other related resources on campus through continued investment in basic needs programming and the establishment of new services to ultimately reduce inequity on campus.

Data Analyses to Support Initiative

At the University of Arizona specifically, 1 out of 5 students are food insecure and only 34% of students reported low or very low rates of food insecurity. 34% of students reported low or very low rates of food insecurity in 2021. The Campus Pantry sees roughly 2,200 students, faculty, and staff each week during

the Fall and Spring semesters. Over the extent of a year, Campus Pantry serves 51,000 unique individuals.

Nationwide basic needs insecurity: <https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/helping-students-meet-basic-needs-support-their-success>

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Resource Requirements & Return on Investment

Resource Requirements

- Space and funding for a childcare center on campus
- Space near the existing Basic Needs Center for a future thrift store
- Funding and time to create and distribute employee education on existing basic needs services

Return on Investment

- The financial return of this initiative is unclear at this time. A childcare center could be cost-neutral or even net positive depending on affordability and charges.

Potential Funding Sources

- Student Services Fee
- Campus Sustainability Fund
- Individual donations: Donor interests are shifting toward meeting basic needs
- Grants

Accountable Division(s) & Department(s)

- Basic Needs Center
- Surplus Property Services
- Human Resources
- Office of the President
- Life & Work Connections

Partners & Collaborators

- Office of Sustainability
- Local basic needs providers

Implementation

Length of Time to Implement

- Less than one year
- One to five years
- More than five years

Difficulty of Implementation

- Low
- Medium
- High
- Extremely High

Relative Timing

- Begin within two years
- Begin in three to five years
- Begin in six years or later

Metrics for Success

- How many people visit and use services such as the Campus Pantry and Campus Closet
- Sustainability Survey results pertaining to knowledge of basic needs services on campus
- Participation in basic needs programming
- Number of people that use a future thrift store
- Cost or revenue from future thrift store and/or childcare services