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**Subject:** Written Testimony for the Select Committee on the CA Higher Education Master Plan

Dear Select Committee Members and Attendees,

It is an honor to participate in this timely panel and hearing on ensuring the CA Higher Education Master Plan can meet the needs of students across the state; both 2 and 4 year, public and private. I hope my brief remarks will contribute to your understanding of the basic needs challenges facing students today as well as what we are doing across the University of California and our partners to advance solutions. The University of California has over 230,000 enrolled students, 150 academic disciplines, and 600 graduate degree programs with 10 campuses serving undergraduate, graduate, and professional student populations.

A clear challenge to higher education that impacts Basic Needs is the Costs of Attendance (COA) that students face. Today expenses other than tuition can account for more than 60 percent of the total cost of attending a college or university. Further, over the past four decades, the cost of living for college students has increased by over 80 percent.<sup>1</sup> Peter Hinrichs, senior research economist at the Federal Reserve, best summed up the struggle for students in relation to the number of hours they would need to work to cover the costs of attendance. Older generations were able to pay for much more than millennials now as past wages only cover 1/3 of today's university costs. Further, The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS) 2017 report, "What College Costs for Low Income Californians," indicated California students in UC, CSU, or CCC would need to work up to 37 hours per week to cover their Costs of Attendance if they received no financial aid and had to cover all of their expenses by working.

Increased costs of attendance affect student food and housing security. According to the USDA food security is measured by identifying food secure (FS), low (LFS--being a factor of quality) and very-low (VLFS--being a factor of quantity) food secure populations. Food Insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner. The question sets designed by the USDA provide a 18, 10, and 6 item set that maintains food security response validity. Nationally, 14% of American households are food insecure, combining both low and very-low. When we look at studies in higher education the results are noticeably higher in food insecurity. Between 2009 through 2016, there were a total of nine studies on the prevalence of food insecurity on college campuses with an average of food insecurity (low and very low) totaling 48%. All in all, food insecurity was assessed in less than 10,000 students which is very low compared to expected 20 million students projected by the National Center for Education Statistics as of fall 2015. My colleagues will speak to broader national community college studies undertaken by the Hopelab at Temple University

<sup>1</sup> The Real Price of College. *Wisconsin Hope Lab*. Retrieved from <https://tcf.org/content/report/the-real-price-of-college/>.

however this background should provide you with a sense of the alarming scale of food insecure student populations.

With these challenges and data points in mind the University of California has committed to drawing upon campus and systemwide leadership to advance an upstream approach to addressing student basic needs. Through President Napolitano's Global Food Initiative, launched in 2014, we have worked to align existing student support services and programs within a food access and basic needs framework. Our initial efforts sought to research the scale of need and develop, implement, and assess interventions to address student food insecurity as well as begin to better understand the housing and homelessness dimensions of basic needs for our students. From 2015-2018 we have centered efforts across *Research, Prevention and Support, Advocacy and Collaboration*, and overall *Sustainability*.

#### Data and Research:

The University of California began examining the issue of food insecurity in 2015 starting with the Student Food Access and Security Survey (SFASS) funded by President Napolitano as part of the UC Global Food Initiative (GFI) effort. To increase our response rate, we used the National College Health Assessment survey that was already set to be administered on four UC campuses. On the remaining six campuses the UC Institutional Research and Academic Planning (IRAP) division administered what we call the "got food?" survey. These two surveys were administered online in spring 2015 to a random sample of more than 66,000 students across all 10 campuses. Of those asked to participate, 8,932 undergraduate and graduate students responded. As you can see, our initial findings found that 42% of students were low and very-low food insecure amidst other key findings that can be reviewed in the survey results.

The University of California System Student Food Insecurity Study -informed the decision to revise institutional assessment measures that include the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), Graduate Wellbeing Survey, Undergraduate Cost of Attendance, as well as a graduate Cost of Attendance survey. With that said, 2016-2017 was an impressive year of research advancement for our basic needs efforts by improving and expanding the Cost of Attendance Survey for Undergraduates and launching for the first time a Cost of Attendance Survey for Graduate Students. In addition, four qualitative studies about student basic needs experiences and needs were completed (UCB/UCSF, UCD, UCI, UCLA). The UC Undergraduate Experience Survey Team, and the Graduate Wellbeing Survey Team also incorporated both food insecurity and homelessness questions into their surveys. Forty-four percent of undergraduate students and 26 percent of graduate students reported having experienced food insecurity, which is in line with the 2015 SFASS findings of 48 percent and 25 percent, respectively.

#### Prevention and Support:

In 2014-2015, the GFI Food Access and Security Basic Needs (FAS-BN) subcommittee initiated campus level working groups to better assess student needs on the campus level as well as to inform systemwide efforts. Recognizing there was a growing concern around student food security, President Napolitano allocated \$75,000 per campus to address the immediate challenges of ensuring student access to nutritious food, while GFI co-chairs developed a multiyear strategic plan. The NPI Study informed efforts to improve our data collection as discussed earlier in my presentation across institutional student surveys further activating central leadership and providing the capacity to better assess high-risk student populations based on campus level data. Further, the president committed an additional \$3.3 million over a two-year period, 2016-2018, to provide emergency assistance, financial and food literacy, and life skills

training and to strengthen the impact of food access and basic needs working groups on each campus. The Food Access and Security Basic Needs subcommittee, sponsored by GFI and overseen by UC's Office of Student Affairs, has established a working group on each campus that includes equitable representation from campus stakeholders. Led by GFI co- chairs, the FAS-BN workgroups have been working closely together to address basic needs challenges and develop implementation plans that address the unique needs of each respective campus.

Over the last two years we have made significant headway on our food access and basic needs efforts in the UC. This includes:

- Hosting semi-annual systemwide Basic Needs leadership meetings
- Facilitating monthly systemwide campus leadership Basic Needs calls and quarterly professional development webinars
- Releasing a Student Food Access and Security Toolkit on campus level food insecurity interventions
- Establishing shared Basic Needs outcome and impact evaluation and reporting timelines for campus efforts
- Providing over 22,000 students with direct Basic Needs services and support on campuses
- Launching central online websites and communication resources for Basic Needs on all campuses
- Four Basic Needs Resource Centers have opened with other campuses going online by Fall 2018
- Engaged with the Department of Social Services to increase Cal Fresh awareness and stronger training tools
- Enrolling over 8,000 students in CalFresh with proactive county to campus support teams
- Releasing the UC Food and Housing Security Report (Dec 2017)

As recently shared with the UC Regents by the Total Cost of Attendance Working Group, the University is a leader in providing institutional financial aid support. Coupled with our Cal Grant and federal aid, UC strives to ensure access and affordability. Our Food Access and Security Basic Needs efforts include leadership systemwide and on the campus level with our Financial Aid Directors in order to better serve our students.

#### Advocacy and Collaboration:

The state legislature has adopted a number of proposals over the past several sessions focused on food assistance for students enrolled in higher education institutions. As a result, California has become the most inclusive and accessible state for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for college and university students. Known as CalFresh in California, the program provides eligible students with up to \$192 per month and does not negatively affect their financial aid packages.

Further demonstrating their commitment to food access, leaders in the California Legislature included in the 2017-18 state budget \$2.5 million for each of the three segments of public higher education in one time funding. The University is incorporating these funds to accelerating our fresh and healthy food access efforts as well as CalFresh enrollment and outreach services. Overall, UC will utilize these important resources to continue investing in infrastructure and programs that help support student food security.

Our FAS-BN Co-Chairs and systemwide leads have also engaged professional associations, conferences, and key leadership meetings to ensure UC is communicating our efforts, sharing best practices, and identifying partnerships to build a more basic needs secure student experience in higher education.

Building on the foundation of CA legislative CalFresh eligibility support, UC with sister sectors have partnered with the California Department of Social Services to increase student access to CalFresh benefits by better aligning local county implementation of the program with statewide eligibility requirements. This will help ensure students eligible for CalFresh throughout the state are able to receive benefits in a timely manner regardless of county residence.

Our relationship with the CSU and CCC system could not be stronger. Over the last two years, we have worked to convene and prioritize basic needs student support partnerships. We are working to develop a shared vision of basic needs support as well as working together on publications, communicating on pending basic needs proposed policies and bills, and ensuring we are sharing insights and best practices with respect to our prevention and support models. Lastly, we are developing access to share our multi-sector research and analysis on basic needs to learn from one another.

Sustainability:

Tackling the challenges of food and basic needs security is a long-term, resource-driven endeavor. The “Global Food Initiative: Food and Housing Security at the University of California” report is a major milestone in communicating UC’s expansive approach toward student and systems solutions — incorporating extensive research, outreach and collaboration among campuses and partners — to help students meet basic needs. In just three years, the UC system has built campus and system infrastructure that will facilitate the improvement of ongoing learning, services and systems transformation. The UC is currently developing a *Master Plan for Basic Needs* that will utilize a prevention and education approach to ensure at-risk student populations are equipped to succeed academically while accessing the resources to maintain a basic needs secure lived experience.

Closing:

In closing, the UC will continue close collaboration with the State of California, California State University and California Community Colleges to more comprehensively combat the basic-needs challenges that affect students and families statewide. We look forward to providing any additional materials and resources to inform the important work of this committee.

Thank you again for inviting us to participate today (end testimony)