

# anagha & winston **2020** POLICY WHAT IT TAKES. **2020** PAPER

*Written by: Anagha & Winston 2020 Policy Team*

## Healthy: Menstrual Equity

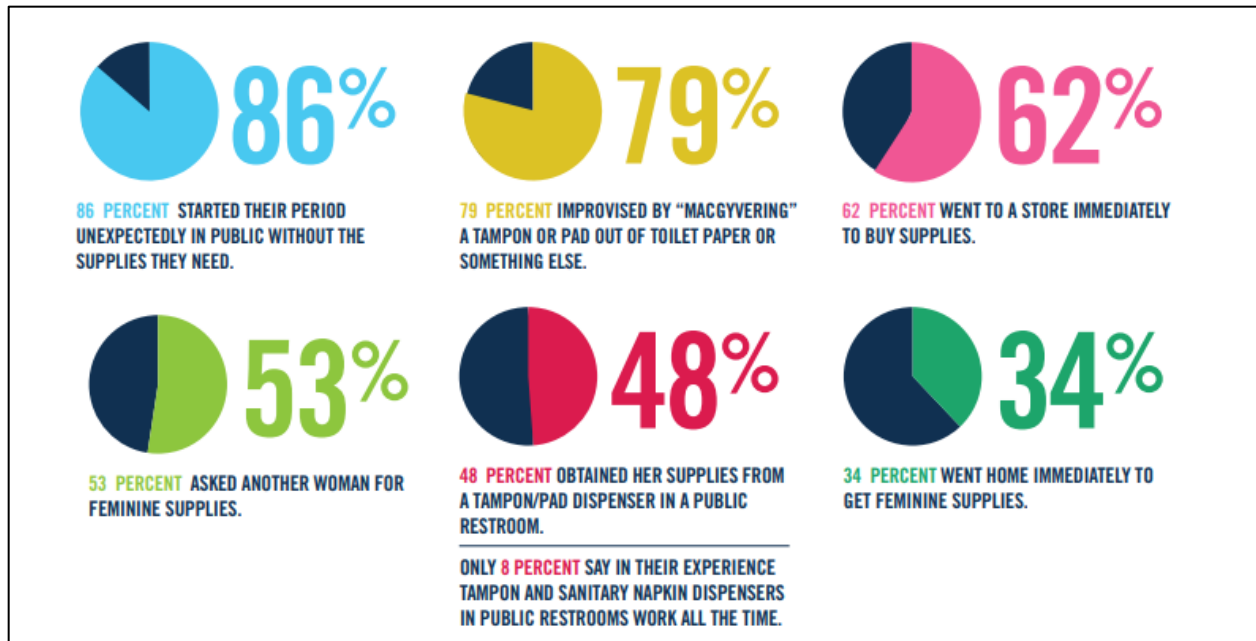
### Summary

Menstrual equity is a human rights issue - all menstruating individuals deserve equitable access to menstrual health products. Not having access to these products can have a detrimental impact on their health, safety, and academic success. Our campaign will work to ensure **tampons and pads can be delivered, at no cost, to all** those who request them in dorms.

### Background

It's fairly common for menstruating individuals to unexpectedly start their period in public, or to be in a situation where menstrual products are needed immediately.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, cost and accessibility can be a prohibitive factor in accessing menstrual products. While tampons and pads are currently available in women's restrooms in the Student Activity Center and the Union Building, they are not available in restrooms in any of the residence halls, forcing students who live there to have to buy them.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.freethetampons.org/uploads/4/6/0/3/46036337/ftt\\_infographic.pdf](https://www.freethetampons.org/uploads/4/6/0/3/46036337/ftt_infographic.pdf)



Source: *Free the Tampons*

The cost of purchasing menstrual products can create an undue financial burden to menstruating individuals, considering that more than half of the campus population menstruates. This financial burden can be especially acute for college students, who already face issues of high tuition and rent. Additionally, the lack of menstrual products in residence hall restrooms makes accessibility a significant issue. Periods can occur at any given time, so it's important that menstruating individuals have easy access to this resource.

## Policy Recommendations

Free tampons and pads are already accessible in the Student Activity Center and the Union Building, but this is not enough to ensure equitable access to menstrual products. Though these buildings have frequent foot traffic, menstruating individuals who live in residence halls may find it difficult to reach these buildings. Therefore, we propose creating a **delivery service for tampons and pads**, similar to the delivery system operated by HealthyHorns for condoms. Students who request tampons and pads will have them delivered to the mailbox that

corresponds to their dorm. Creating a delivery service also ensures the privacy of those who request them, allowing non-binary and transgender individuals to request them without shame. Additionally, we also propose keeping some **tampons and pads at the front desk** of residence halls, where students could simply ask the resident assistant (RA) working at the desk for a tampon or pad in case of an emergency.

## **Feasibility**

Currently, Healthy Horns provides a free condom delivery service, and pads and tampons are located in the SAC and Union. With successful programs already initiated across campus, we strongly believe that a free pad and tampon delivery service is achievable and sensible. Furthermore, universities such as Ohio State<sup>2</sup>, University of Pittsburgh<sup>3</sup>, and Harvard<sup>4</sup> provide free menstrual products in dorm restrooms.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thelantern.com/2019/08/free-menstrual-product-pilot-beginning-in-dorms/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://pittnews.com/article/151322/news/pitt-institutes-menstrual-products/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2018/9/12/college-installs-menstrual-hygiene-dispensers-houses/>

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## **Healthy: West Campus Farmer's Market**

### **Summary**

We will create a “West Campus Farmers’ Market” to help combat the pervasive epidemic of food insecurity and lack of healthy food options in West Campus.

### **Background**

Food insecurity is a pervasive problem among college students, but it is especially a problem at UT Austin, where it is estimated that 1 in 4 students currently struggle with food insecurity.<sup>1</sup> Food insecurity has two forms according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Low food security, or food insecurity without hunger, is defined as “reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet” but “little or no indication of reduced food intake,” whereas very low food security, or food insecurity with hunger, is defined as “reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.”<sup>2</sup>

A key component of food security is access to nutritious food, such as fresh produce and non-processed goods. However, college students, especially UT students, face heightened barriers not just in accessing food, but accessing nutritious food. UT is located in a “food desert,” for starters, which is defined by the USDA as an area that has “limited access to

<sup>1</sup> <https://hornraiser.utexas.edu/project/16380>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>

supermarkets, supercenters, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food.”<sup>3,4</sup>

For students that are already food insecure, living in an area with limited access to healthy food adds additional barriers that have a negative impact on a student’s health, and makes price a heightened barrier, as available healthy food options will likely be more expensive due to their limited availability.

## Policy Recommendations

UT already has worked to combat food insecurity by opening a farmers’ market near Jester. Operated by UT’s Housing and Dining department, the UT Farm Stand is a student-run farmers’ market that sells produce to students at an affordable price, some of which is sourced from UT’s own gardens.<sup>5</sup> However, the location of this farm stand, in East Mall, is far away from students who would most benefit from the service - students who live in West Campus. Indeed, many West Campus are likely unaware of this resource because of its distance from West Campus. We propose working with UHD to **move the UT Farm Stand to the co-op food court**, or to a more convenient location such as West Mall.

Additionally, we hope to partner with local non-profits in the Austin area that work to provide fresh produce at an affordable price for low-income residents. These non-profits include the [Sustainable Food Center](#), which operates various farmers’ markets targeted towards low-income people across Austin, and [GAVA \(Go Austin, Vamos Austin\)](#), which operates a series of corner stores that provide healthy produce to low-income zip codes across Austin.

<sup>3</sup> <https://thedailytexan.com/2016/03/07/ut-food-desert-feeds-unhealthy-eating-habits>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/about-the-atlas.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sustainability.utexas.edu/events/240>

## **Feasibility**

A number of universities provide accessible farmers' markets for their students, in order to facilitate access to healthy produce. These universities include Rice University<sup>6</sup>, University of Minnesota<sup>7</sup>, and UC Berkeley<sup>8</sup>. Because UT already operates a program like this, it will be of little to no cost to the university to move it to a more convenient location. Partnering with nonprofit organizations will likely be of little to no cost to the university, and discretionary funds can be used from Student Government to fund a lasting partnership if needed.

<sup>6</sup> <https://farmersmarket.rice.edu/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://humanresources.umn.edu/wellbeing-program/farmers-market>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ecologycenter.org/fm/about/>

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## Healthy: Expand CMHC Virtual Access

### Summary

The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) currently runs the Thrive app, which helps students navigate mental health challenges through various interactive activities.<sup>1</sup> Online mental health resources such as the Thrive app make mental healthcare more accessible to students who can't afford to make the walk to the Students Services Building, or to wait for an appointment. Expanding CMHC virtual access, via online counseling and peer support resources, can help ensure that all students can get the mental healthcare they need.

### Background

The CMHC is a vital institution on campus, helping students manage mental health and academic challenges simultaneously. However, the location of the SSB, where the CMHC is located, can be inaccessible for students with physical disabilities, or students who live far off-campus and cannot visit during normal business hours.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, wait times for a CMHC counselor continue to be long, which can prevent students from seeking necessary and immediate help for their mental illness.<sup>3</sup>

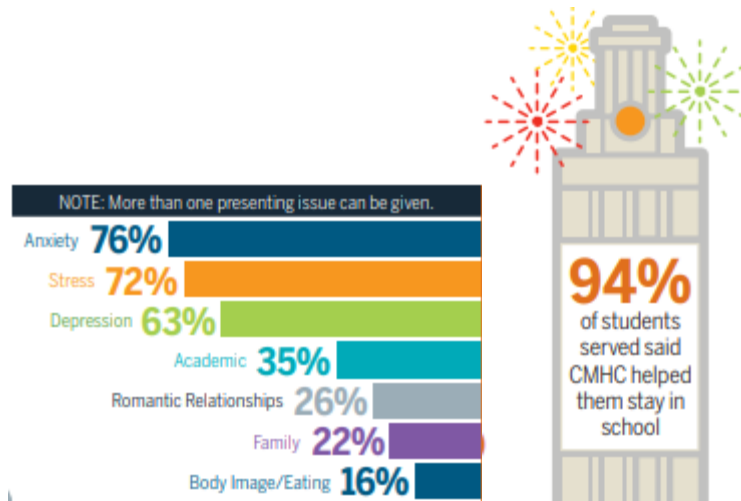
**Figure 1. Reasons Student Seek Help**

**Figure 2. CMHC Academic Success**

<sup>1</sup> <https://thedailytexan.com/2019/08/27/these-campus-resources-can-help-students-relax-mentally-and-physically>

<sup>2</sup> <https://thedailytexan.com/2017/10/04/cmhc-must-expand-treatment-options-for-students>

<sup>3</sup> <https://thedailytexan.com/2018/11/20/ut-needs-to-increase-funding-for-more-cmhc-counseling-staff>



Source: *Impact Statement 2018-2019*<sup>4</sup>

## Policy Recommendations

Expanding CMHC's virtual access resources can help break down the barriers in accessing mental healthcare. Creating a resource where students can meet with counselors online, via video chat, would be one remedy to this issue. Partnering with organizations that provide online counseling services, such as [BetterHelp](#) or [Lean On Me](#), can also ensure that students have immediate access to care when they want it.

## Feasibility

The CMHC is currently working on making online counseling an available resource for students, and Student Government has been in conversations with the CMHC in the past to ensure that the new service is high-quality.<sup>5</sup> The CMHC has generally expressed a strong interest in promoting online resources for students.<sup>6</sup> Once elected, Anagha and Winston will

<sup>4</sup> [https://cmhc.utexas.edu/pdf/UHS\\_ImpactStatement\\_2019.pdf](https://cmhc.utexas.edu/pdf/UHS_ImpactStatement_2019.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://thedailytexan.com/2019/08/28/ut-senate-hopes-for-accessibility-wio-payments>

<sup>6</sup> <https://thedailytexan.com/2018/01/18/cmhcs-new-initiative-seeks-to-promote-mental-health-in-ut>



work with the CMHC to promote and expand these online resources while they are in development.