

BASIC NEEDS APP RECOMMENDATIONS: INSIGHTS FROM THE BASIC NEEDS OUTREACH AND STIGMA ASSESMENT STUDY

Winter Quarter 2020 a research team from the Blum Center administered a questionnaire assessing basic needs outreach on campus. The final sample was 613 undergraduate students who reflect the diversity of campus. In questionnaire responses there was great student interest in the development of a Basic Needs Mobile App for UCSC. Participants described having difficulty navigating UCSC's website and keeping up with emails about campus resources. Students describe the app as an effective medium for increasing accessibility, awareness, and available services across campus:

"I love the Basic Needs App idea- that would greatly improve student accessibility in my opinion."

"An App is the best way, keeps the outreach to your phone without [having] students just check their emails for the sake of checking."

"I believe a system of announcements would increase the amount of eligible UCSC students who use the resources. This could either be through an app with notifications or a social media account."

"Having an app might work or something they can look up because sometimes students feel intimidated or embarrassed and wouldn't want to go in face to face to find information."

These are just some of the many responses we received advocating for an app. Nearly all agreed that an app should be a simple, easy-to-navigate, center for UCSC Basic Needs information. The recommendations for additional features below were generated from student responses.

FEATURES TO STRENGTHEN ACCESSIBILITY

- CRISIS HOTLINE BUTTONS

Crisis hotlines could be accessed at a single press of a button by sending the hotline phone number directly to the student's default phone dialer. Students should not be expected to memorize these numbers or dig through websites to find the correct one.

- RESOURCE MAP WITH ACCESSIBLE DIRECTIONS AND PHOTOS

Many students, especially underclassmen or transfers, struggle to navigate the campus. Having walking and accessibility maps that navigate through the colleges to each resource would be hugely beneficial to the students. Additionally photos of basic needs staff and the resource centers in the app could make them seem more approachable to students.

- PROVIDE EASY LINKS FOR ANY NECESSARY SIGN-UP FORMS, REGISTRATIONS, OR APPLICATIONS (I.E. EMERGENCY HOUSING APPLICATIONS, BUDGET ADD-ON APPEALS, ETC.)
 - Include tutorials or FAQs about the process of completing these forms and what accessing the resource is like.
 - Dedicate a section to the UCSC CalFresh Representative. Many are not aware they exist and how helpful they can be when one is wondering about if they are eligible or the process of applying.

FEATURES TO STRENGTHEN OUTREACH

- LIVE PANTRY STATUS REPORTS WITH FOOD UPDATES
 - Food Updates: Visiting the food pantries can be a time expense for busy or working students. Having live status reports can help them maximize the value in their trips by letting them know when their local pantry has been restocked or is low on items.
 - Volunteer Notifications: Notifications for volunteers could also increase student awareness about the need for effective pantry staff and outreach to time-privileged students for help.

Maybe having an app that notifies you when pantries get more food, also notifies how you can volunteer. There could also be information on how to reach out to staff that can help you more."

- SPACE FOR STUDENT REVIEWS AND FEEDBACK
 - Hearing about positive student experiences could help resources seem more accessible and beneficial
 - Space for reviews also allows resources to receive instant student recommendations for ways they can be improved and strengthened.
- FOOD RECOVERY NOTIFICATIONS
 - Push notifications when there is extra food after catered campus events can save students time and money by allowing them to continue studying instead of going home to cook. This becomes especially important as schedules become busier during midterms and finals week.
 - Food recovery also helps reduce food waste, important for reaching the campus "zero waste" goal.
 - Successful examples include;
 - UCSD: Extra Food Notification - part of UCSD APP
<https://basicneeds.ucsd.edu/food-security/app/index.html>
 - UCI: Extra Food from Catered Events - text message based
<https://zotbites.basicneeds.uci.edu/>

- UCR: Food Recovery - text/email
<https://highlanderlink.ucr.edu/organization/foodrecovery>

FEATURES TO STRENGTHEN AWARENESS

- REPORTING STATISTICS AND BASIC NEEDS RESEARCH

- Include overviews of food and housing insecurity as well as statistics about prevalence, this helps create awareness and lets students that they are not alone in their experiences. For example, UCR has a helpful [infographic](#) on their website.
- Include education about the causes of food and housing insecurity, as described by the student below.

"I think an app would be very helpful, and maybe transparency when advertising for resources. For example rather than saying, "for students in need", it can also be coming from a place like is from something bigger than the individual, like "there are many reasons why basic needs are not being met i.e. expensive housing, excessive working, etc. "

- INCENTIVIZE REFERRALS

- Allow coupons/rewards via the app to people who refer a friend to complete a tour of the app, visit a pantry, apply for CalFresh, participate in research surveys, etc.
- Preliminary results from the Basic Needs Outreach and Stigma Assessment Survey indicate that friends play a major role in motivating students to access these resources. Incentivizing this behavior would increase overall campus awareness about basic needs.

We hope that these suggestions will help guide the developers of this app to create a technology that is thorough and powerful in growing the efficacy of UCSC basic needs resources!