

Fostering Equity and Inclusion: Food security efforts at UCSC and beyond

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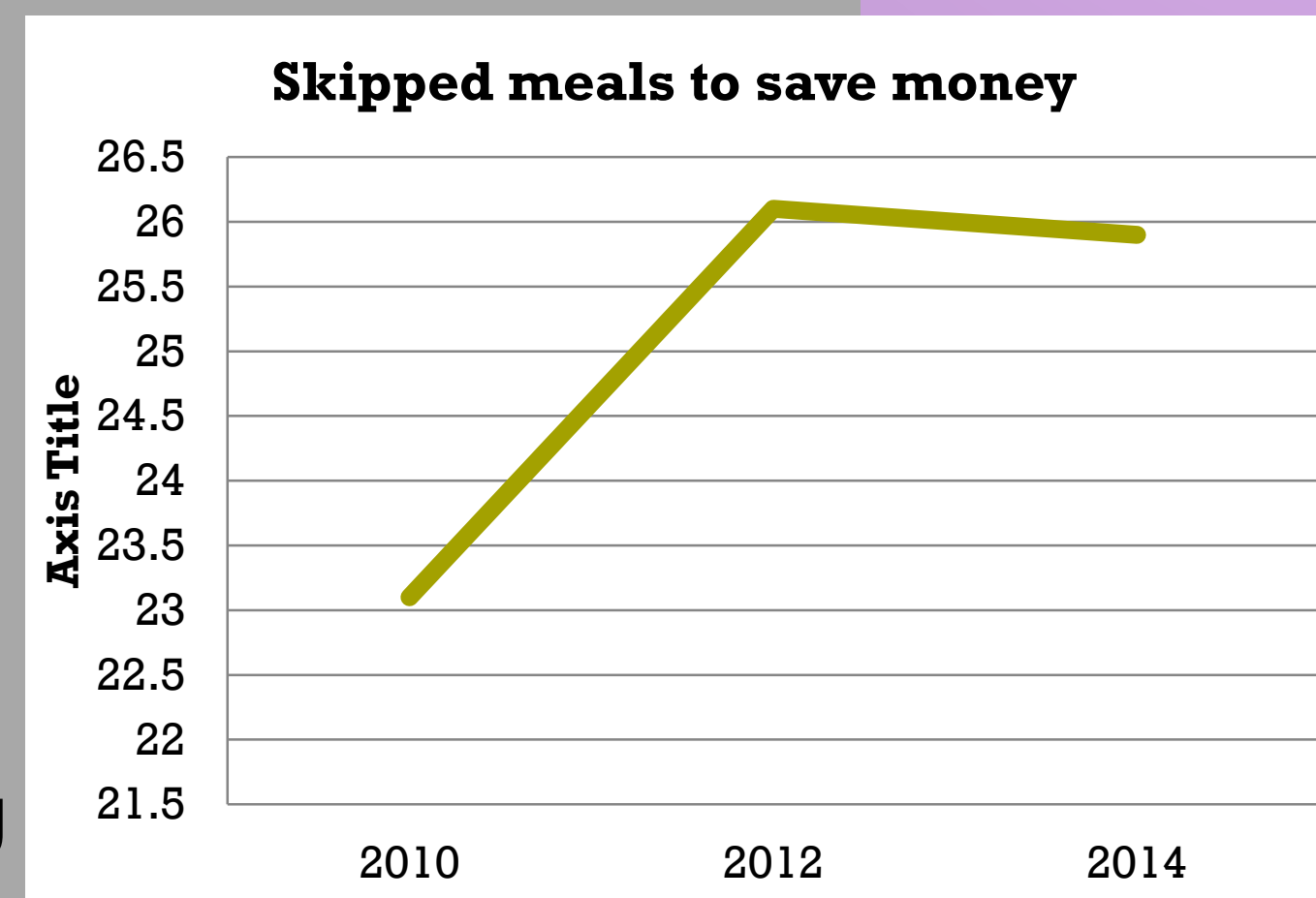
ABSTRACT

While the UC Global Food Initiative (GFI) mission aims to relieve world hunger by 2025, many students at our own UC campuses experience food insecurity and malnourishment on a daily basis. While there are varying resources per campus to support student food security, many of these resources are limited or based around emergency relief. With GFI foci led by UCSC staff on food justice and food access and security, my fellowship efforts overlapped these two dimensions of this system wide initiative. Specifically I focused my project development through supporting the student planning for the CA Higher Education Food Summit (CAHEFS): Food Security, Access, and Equity, leadership in the GFI Food Security & Access subcommittee, and supporting efforts to establish our campus wide food security task force to harness current resources and partnerships.

BACKGROUND

Food security can be defined as having limited or uncertain access to nutritious food (Feeding America). To help relieve food insecurity many go to food pantries for emergencies or on a regular basis, apply for Cal Fresh. This program provides additional support for individuals and families to access funding however many shame or stigma by using such resources and this is true for UC students. The UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) reports an increase of students stating that they have skipped meals to save money. This is also true for UC students. The UC gathers such data through the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) which states that in 2010, 23.1% (14,321 students), 2012 26.1% (13,722 students), and in 2014 25.9% (14,157 students) across the UC System have faced food insecurity.

UCSC has experienced an increase in students experiencing food insecurity “often” or “very often” according to the UCUES data. While UCSC does have a food pantry, two active snack pantries, and student interns working to assist students with Cal Fresh applications through the Dean of Students CARE program such resources are at capacity. Lastly, campus staff and students who are working on food access, security, and justice issues have yet to come together to share current undertakings and contribute to a larger collective vision.



STRATEGIES

As a campus, GFI efforts were focused on leading student food security efforts through planning CAHEFS 2015 while building partnerships with departments and strategically working towards relieving food insecurity on campus by harnessing current resources.

UCSC Engagement:

- Leadership in CAHEFS planning to increase strategic conversations and relationships
- Support the GFI Food Access and Security subcommittee co-chairs and provide an undergraduate student perspective in the process
- Collaborate with Dean of Student Services CARE program and other relevant food security programs.
- Capture current student food insecurity on campus and harness current resources for relief.
- Initiate food security task force

As a GFI Student Fellow, I served as a content co-coordinator for the 2015 CAHEFS who's strategy included:

- Strengthening partnerships between UC's, CSU's, CCC's and community partners
- Sharing best practices and experiences to inform action steps toward fostering food access, equity, and justice for all.
- Offer workshops, speakers, and activities of all levels for individuals to engage with critical issues while building skills and relationships to implement change on their college campuses and their surrounding communities.

OUTCOMES

My fellowship year resulted in several successful undertakings and has truly deepened my understanding and ability to participate in collaborative projects across the UC and my own campus. Current results include:

- Supporting stakeholder engagement for our UCSC Food Security Working Group
- Provide input into the system-wide proposal to secure funding from UC GFI for holistic food security centers per UC on each campus
- Successfully serve as a student lead on the planning team for the 2015 CAHEFS and support recruitment for the second CAHEFS in 2016.
- Contribute to increase student awareness of GFI across my campus through presentations and food systems based programming across the year.
- Assess the interest and commitment for launching a Swipes program in 2015-2016.

CONCLUSION & FUTURE GOALS

- While it is helpful to provide emergency relief in the short term it is critical to address and develop better solutions to systemic issues such as financial aid packaging that lead to student food insecurity.
- There needs to be comprehensive research per campus in order to serve direct resources to student populations with greater food insecurity.

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