





Ventura College Basic Needs Center 2024 Bellwether Award Nominee Instructional Programs and Services



The Ventura College
Basic Needs Center
Fosters Increased Student Success:



# EVERY STUDENT! EVERY NEED!

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# Introducing Ventura College

Ventura College sits on the beautiful coastline of Southern California in a city that ranks in the top 2 percent of the most expensive cities in the world. Our affluent coastal community intersects with a strong agricultural landscape where extremes of wealth and poverty coexist. Farmworkers and migrant workers struggle to make ends meet, learn English, and survive.

Ventura College was established almost 100 years ago as the first institution of higher education in Ventura County. We believe that students come first and all else follows. This commitment is especially crucial in our role as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), catering to 16,000 students annually. More than 60 percent of our students are Hispanic.

Our Basic Needs Center prides itself on being a lifeline for students. We aren't simply passing out grocery bags, but providing holistic services that aim to help every student succeed in their educational journey, because we know students can't succeed when their basic needs aren't met. Our center offers a case management approach by providing a safe, accepting place where we meet every student and their every need.

# Overview: Basic Needs at California Community Colleges

The vast California Community College system, with its 2.1 million students, faces many basic needs challenges. Based on the 2023 report "Real College California: Basic Needs Among California Community Colleges," the data reveals a sobering truth: approximately two-thirds of students in California Community Colleges face basic needs insecurities. Specifically, half of these students struggle with food insecurity, while three out of every five experience housing instability. Furthermore, 20 percent cope with homelessness. The impact of these insecurities on students' mental well-being is indisputable with over 60 percent of students considering dropping out of college when faced with the mental stress of basic need insecurities (EAB 2018).

# Understanding Basic Needs Insecurity

Not all students facing food or housing insecurities come from low-income families. Financial status can change quickly with fluctuation in employment or health. Financial aid status does not shift as quickly as life does.

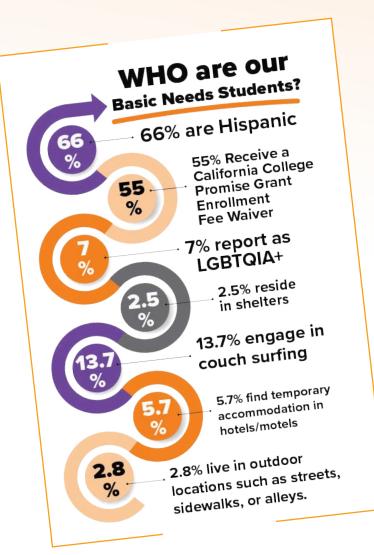


# Defining the Crisis of Basic Needs Insecurity

Basic needs insecurity is not just a matter of sustenance; it is a fundamental issue affecting students' well-being and academic success. The Real College survey sheds light

on the connection between food insecurity and academic success. It underscores how insufficient access to nutritious meals can prevent students from fully engaging in their studies.

According to researchers O'Neill and Maguire, students experiencing food insecurity disclosed suffering from health issues such as headaches and low energy. Furthermore, students reported having trouble concentrating on academics when they did not have enough access to food.





The retention rate for students who utilized the BNC were 25 percent higher than those who did not. (Fall 2022 to Spring 2023)

# Basic Needs Disparities by Academic Performance

Students who experience food insecurity, homelessness, or both, are more likely to have lower GPA's compared to those who report being food secure and housed. Students earning grades below a B reported facing basic needs insecurities at a rate of 20-25 percent higher than those earning A's and B's.

# **Empowering Change:**Ventura College Basic Needs Center Unveils a Solution

At the heart of Ventura College's commitment to supporting students is our Basic Needs Center (BNC), driven by the motto "Every Student. Every Need." By embracing a holistic approach, Ventura College sets an example for educational institutions committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment. The Basic Needs Center staff take a case management approach to working with students who make their way to the BNC. Because of the safe, welcoming culture of the Center, students share their questions and struggles beyond those related to the BNC, and the staff can assist them with navigating the college overall. Students may be worried about how to approach a professor about a class matter, or they may be struggling in a subject area, and the BNC staff are there as a trusted support team to help them strategize how to connect with a teacher, access tutoring, etc. The BNC truly is a hub for a wide array of resources and assistance for students facing basic needs challenges.

### **Basic Needs Center Services**

HOT SPOTS

Transportation

Health Services

Academic Success

BOOKS

LAPTOPS

**Free Food:** Free snacks, campus food and essentials pantry, and on-campus hot meal program.

**Free Classes:** English as a Second Language classes and Agricultural Supervisor classes in

English and Spanish.

### Free Legal Services:

Free support and services for Dreamers (AB540), undocumented students, and their families.

### **Free Essentials:**

Toothbrushes, hygiene products, and cleaning products.

**Housing:** Referrals for housing and emergency shelters.

### **Food Assistance:**

Supplemental Nutrition
Assistance Program
(SNAP) application assistance and referrals to local food pantries.

**Academic Counseling/Advising:** This ensures a holistic approach to student support, addressing both immediate needs and academic goals.

**Referrals:** Community referrals to services such as free vision care, laundry service, PO Boxes, utility assistance, etc.

School Supplies: Backpacks, planners, pens, scan-trons, etc.

### Shower Services for Unhoused Students:

Dedicated shower facility and access to essential toiletries, towels and lockers.

### **Transportation Support:**

Student ID waivers for free county bus transportation and free access to Metrolink services.

### **Physical Health:**

Student Health Center referrals, Medi-Cal enrollment, sexual health

education and services.

**Mental Health Services:** Students receive up to six mental health visits per semester.

**Finances:** VC Student Emergency Grants and student financial aid application assistance.

**Waivers:** Student ID card and graduation cap and gown fee waivers.



The BNC helped relieve a lot of external challenges. I used the food pantry daily, allowing me to make academics my priority. It was a space to get a quick snack or heat a meal. The BNC helped me apply for the CalFresh program. I know I would have struggled to focus on school without this resource. Thanks to all the resources and support I received at Ventura College, I was able to transfer to my dream school, UCLA, and will graduate next year with a B.S. in Neuroscience. I am extremely grateful to Ventura College.

Natalia Bucio, Ventura College Student | Transfered to UCLA

# VENTURA COLLEGE BASIC NEEDS CENTER HISTORY TIMELINE

2014

Ventura College Associated Students launch the FEED A PIRATE program 2017

Basic Needs Center is established and supported by California's STOP HUNGER initiative 2021

Basic Needs Center relocates to be near Financial Aid - a crucial, supporting partner 2022

Part-time staff member dedicated to SNAP enrollment and fostering community partnerships is hired







### **History of Ventura College's Basic Need Center**

The Associated Students of Ventura College (ASVC) took a pivotal step in 2014 by launching the Feed a Pirate Program, a precursor to the Ventura College Basic Needs Center (BNC) that formally launched in 2017. Supported financially from California's Stop Hunger Initiative, the BNC services expanded with the hiring of a full-time Basic Needs Specialist, and the introduction of innovative drive-thru events during the pandemic.

In 2021, recognizing the importance of being close to financial services, the BNC relocated next door to the Financial Aid office to offer students a convenient one-stop location. In 2022, the center's expansion involved hiring a part-time staff member

dedicated to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) enrollment and fostering

community partnerships. As of 2024, the BNC consists of a full-time specialist, a part-time student services assistant, and six student ambassadors.

The college, through the establishment of the Basic Needs Center and collaborative efforts with community partners, is actively committed to ensuring that every student receives the necessary support to overcome challenges and succeed in their academic journey.

# Understanding Student Utilization of Ventura College's Basic Needs Center: Collaboration With Ventura College Partners

### **VC Financial Aid:**

The Basic Needs Center and Ventura College's Financial Aid Department have joined forces to create a powerful partnership, fostering a united and effective campus community. This collaboration has transformed the BNC into a central hub, providing students with essential assistance, guidance, and resources to streamline their academic journey.

### **VC Foundation:**

We have a strong collaboration with our Ventura College Foundation, a non-profit philanthropic organization that annually grants thousands of dollars to the BNC to assist with student emergency grants, food, personal essentials, and much more.

### Associated Students of Ventura College (ASVC):

We maintain a robust collaboration with ASVC, actively working together on campus events. ASVC frequently sponsors our events and contributes to our promotion through their marketing initiatives.

### **VC Marketing:**

We regularly coordinate with our campus marketing department to keep our students informed about our services. We coordinate to produce catchy videos for social media, graphics, posters, web pages, newsletters, and more.

### **VC Student Health Services (SHC):**

All students have access to medical services and receive six free mental health sessions per semester. The SHC also provides COVID tests, hygiene products, contraceptives, and tuberculosis tests for those seeking access to a shelter.



### Ventura College In-Reach:

We organize comprehensive resource fairs that highlight campus resources and community partners. These events serve as a valuable platform for students to familiarize themselves with our diverse array of resources.

- **Drive-Thru and Pop-Up Events:** During the pandemic, we offered bi-monthly distribution of groceries and essentials.
- Gratitude Lunch: Distribution of a turkey meal and fixings.
- **Holiday Giving Tree:** Students write wishes which are fulfilled by VC employees and retirees.
- **Workshops:** Cal Fresh, Cash4College, and other various workshops.
- Resource Fairs: Welcome Back Days, De-Stress for Finals, Community Resources, Undocumented Student Action Week, Earth Day and more.

### **Meeting the Needs of our Food Insecure**

The ongoing efforts of the Ventura College Basic Needs Center revolve around strategic expansions to improve our facilities and services. Every new program starts as a pilot program with deliberate investment directed at cultivating a more inclusive, supportive, and resource-rich environment. These initiatives are linked to fostering students' academic success, ensuring they have the necessary support and resources for a thriving educational journey.

**Meal Voucher Program:** We are piloting a meal voucher program with 100 students offering them up to four hot meals each week.

**Microwaves/Food Preparation:** Microwaves, toaster ovens and hot water are available to students.

**Industrial Refrigerator/Freezer:** Introduction of industrial-grade appliances expanded our capacity for food storage, increasing availability of fresh and nutritious foods.

**Produce Stand:** We provide fresh fruits and vegetables to students to encourage healthy eating habits and address nutritional gaps.

**Additional Support:** Our investment in storage containers, tables, and a canopy helped enhance our outdoor meal services. These improvements have transformed outdoor facilities into a welcoming space where students can gather, share meals, and engage with their community.

# FUN FACTS



plus a hot meal and all of the goodies to prepare a full Thanksgiving meal were given at our Gratitude Lunch

36
DRIVE-THRU PANTRIES

Serving up to 300 students per event

100+ FREE SHOWERS



provided weekly to students including towel, locker and free toiletries



# **1,000**+

weekly where students receive snacks, groceries, toiletries, and more

**70**+ GIFTS

for students donated by VC staff at our 1st Holiday Giving Tree



100 HOT MEALS

given four times a week through our meal voucher program



15.000+ POUNDS

of dry goods, canned goods, fresh produce and frozen meals were given in 2023



# Who is Eligible to use the Basic Needs Pantry?

The Basic Needs Center aims to make it easy for all students to access the pantry and its services. With a self-check-in kiosk, currently enrolled students enter their valid student ID number to access the pantry. This streamlines and contributes to the destigmatization of a food pantry. If students are unable to afford a student ID card, waivers are available.

# **Eco-friendly Options to Save Money and the Environment**

Our center promotes eco-friendly practices by giving out and encouraging students to use reusable bags, utensils, and water bottles. During our Welcome Back Days in summer of 2023, we introduced a filtered water dispenser and gave out free, reusable, branded water bottles to foster an environmentally conscious atmosphere. We also collaborated with student government to hold a drawing to incentivize reusable bag usage. Our efforts increased awareness of our services and produced an average of \$325 savings for students per year utilizing reusable water bottles and grocery bags. Not only did the students save money, but the BNC costs were also reduced by \$2,600 annually.



2021-22
STUDENTS SERVED
992
TOTAL CENTER VISITS
2,474

2022-23
STUDENTS SERVED
2,838
TOTAL CENTER VISITS
29,505







### **Expansion of Services at Ventura College East Campus in Santa Paula**

Ventura College East Campus offers access to higher education for the underrepresented areas of the Santa Clara River Community, which includes the cities of Santa Paula, Filmore, and Piru.

The East Campus, initially known as the Santa Paula Vocational Center, was established in Santa Paula in 1980 to serve a predominantly Hispanic population. It is now serving more than 800 students.

In Spring 2018, we launched a grocery bag distribution twice monthly at VCEC. Our small pantry has now been converted to a room that includes a full size commercial fridge. The BNC at the East Campus now provides essential services, such as Cal Fresh application assistance, a food pantry, housing referrals, transportation assistance, VC Student ID card vouchers, and emergency grants for students.









The Basic
Needs Center
became my
lifeline during
a challenging
period,
addressing my
food and housing
insecurities with
unwavering
support. Their
compassionate

and charismatic student staff not only provided essential resources but created a warm community where I felt a profound sense of belonging, reminding me that I truly mattered on campus. This invaluable second chance has been a beacon of hope and resilience in my journey.

Mark Huff, Ventura College Student and Associated Student President



The Ventura College
Basic Needs program
took me in like family.
They understood my
needs as a student
athlete. The BNC
helped me with
countless resources.
I especially love the
pantry. It's stocked
with everyday needs
like fruits, vegetables,
frozen foods, even

laundry detergent. I knew that I could stop in and get a snack and a drink everyday. They also help with housing and showers and are always available to talk to students who have a lot on their shoulders. I am forever grateful for my family at the BNC.

Michael-Anthony Noulowe, Ventura College Student and Athlete Transferred to Fort Valley State University

### **Looking to the Future**

As we envision the future, we recognize that success is built through incremental program launches and data collection, including tracking student behavior and event participation. Our plans include after-hours services for night classes, free parking vouchers, a mobile food pantry, and ultimately establishing on-campus housing options for students.

# On-Campus Housing Project in Ventura College

Ventura College plans to create student housing on campus that will include over 300 beds in 95 units. The \$62 million in funding comes from Assembly Bill 183, which approved more than \$542 million for the construction of affordable student housing in California. The housing project is expected to break ground next year. Rental costs are estimated at \$400 to \$900 a month — significantly lower than the median gross rent of \$1,854 in Ventura County.

Access to affordable housing continues to be an issue that California must address. Students are particularly impacted, and in this year's state budget, we



were able to direct funding to colleges and universities across the state to help address the impact. I know Ventura College's new housing will enable hardworking students access to a safe and affordable place to live.

Steve Bennett, Assembly-member (CA)







## **Hear what they** have to say!

The Basic Needs Center has a profound impact on students academic success and it plays a pivotal role in ensuring their basic needs security. Read more on their personal account with the BNC and hear from our community partners.



*If it weren't for the* Basic Needs Center, I wouldn't have been as successful academically and might have faced significant financial hardship. As a DACA student, I am faced with limited access to financial aid, scholarships, and in-

state tuition, making it challenging to afford college. This barrier restricts my academic advancement and narrows my personal and professional growth opportunities. However, with the help of the BNC staff, I was able to find loopholes. This included the food pantry, free health center, emergency grants to cover my book expenses, and most importantly, being referred to the Ventura College Dreamers Center.

Paulo Montalvo, Ventura College Student

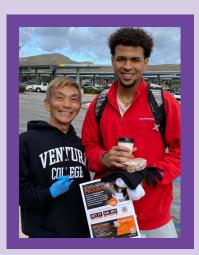
It is hard to ask for help especially if you have kids. As a single dad, it's rough especially during this challenging time, but the Ventura College Basic Needs team has reduced the burden, not only for me, but for my family.

The need to remove financial barriers for students and expand educational access is more pressing than ever. With a striking 55 percent of Ventura College students facing food insecurity, especially during the pandemic, the Ventura

College Foundation's Board of Directors escalated our financial commitment to Ventura College's Basic Needs Food Pantry and Emergency Grant Program. The VC Foundation's Board recently pledged to invest further in the Basic Needs Center by raising philanthropic funds that will provide long-term sustainability to this vital campus program.

Anne Paul King, Ventura College Foundation Executive Director

I began collaborating with the BNC during their drive-thru pantry events that started during COVID. We became the vendor that the BNC would use to provide fresh meals. We are now working with the BNC on a Meal



Voucher program. These students deserve to be well fed so that they can concentrate on their academics!

Peter Tsing, L & T Catering

George Cesar, Ventura College Student

### **APPENDIX**

### References

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### **Community Partnerships**

We proudly coordinate with a variety of partners in our community who help us provide essential services to our students.



**Interface Children & Family Services** is a non-profit organization in Ventura County that focuses on providing support and services for children, families, and individuals facing challenges such as abuse, domestic violence, and homelessness.



**The Salvation Army** is a global charitable organization that offers various community services, including food help, disaster relief, and support for those in need.



**Food Share** is a regional food bank in Ventura County that works to alleviate hunger by collecting and distributing food to those in need.



**Community Action** programs aim to address poverty-related issues by providing services and advocacy. These programs often focus on education, employment, housing, and other essential needs for low-income individuals and families. They also provide utility assistance (LIHEAP, FERA).



**Easter Seals** is a non-profit organization that provides services, education, outreach, and advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families. They aim to enhance quality of life and promote inclusivity.



**Mexican American Opportunity Foundation (MAOF)** is a non-profit organization that offers a range of social services, including early childhood education, workforce development, and senior programs, with a focus on the Latino community.



The Human Services Agency in Ventura County is a local government agency that provides social services, welfare programs, and support for residents in need.



**Ventura County Lions Rotary Club** is a service organization that engages in community projects and humanitarian efforts.



**Food Forward** is a non-profit organization that addresses food waste and hunger by rescuing surplus produce and distributing it to those in need. They often collaborate with farmers, volunteers, and local organizations.



**Ventura County Community Foundation** is a philanthropic organization that supports local non-profits and community initiatives through grants, scholarships, and partnerships.



Crumble Cookie provides end-of-day cookie donations.



Gallardo's Produce provides fresh produce to our community every Monday.



The College Area Community Council collects extra produce from trees and gardens from local homeowners.

### **Basic Needs Center Data**

The numbers in the tables below show the service usage and demographic data for students who are using the Basic Needs Center during Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.

Term				
Fall 2022 Spring 2023			2023	
Student	Student Total Student Student To			
Headcount	Contacts	Headcount	Contacts	
2,234	22,042	1,281	7,386	

	Term				
	Fall 2022		Spring 2023		
Age Category	Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%	
Under 20	631	28.2%	325	25.4%	
20-24	1,003	44.9%	573	44.7%	
25-29	227	10.2%	115	9.0%	
30-39	193	8.6%	151	11.8%	
40-49	90	4.0%	68	5.3%	
50+	90	4.0%	49	3.8%	
Total	2,234	100.0%	1,281	100.0%	

	Term				
	Fall 2022		Spring 2023		
First Gen	Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%	
Υ	330	14.8%	76	5.9%	
N	421	18.8%	89	6.9%	
N/A	1,484	66.4%	1,116	87.1%	
Total	2,234	100.0%	1,281	100.0%	

### **Basic Needs Center Data**

	Term				
	Fall	2022	Spring 2023		
Ethnicity	Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%	
American Indian/Alaskan Native					
Asian	100	4.5%	57	4.4%	
Black or African-American	82	3.7%	64	5.0%	
Hispanic	1,475	66.0%	826	64.5%	
Pacific Islander					
Two or More Ethnicities	72	3.2%	48	3.7%	
White	444	19.9%	251	19.6%	
Unreported	49	2.2%	25	2.0%	
Total	2,234	100.0%	1,281	100.0%	

	Term					
	Fall 2022	Fall 2022		Spring 2023		
Gender	Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
Female	1,130	50.6%	639	49.9%		
Male	1,050	47.0%	612	47.8%		
Unreported	54	2.4%	30	2.3%		
Total	2,234	100.0%	1,281	100.0%		

### **Basic Needs Center Data**

### Comparison between students who are using and who are not using the Basic Needs Center

	Term			
	Fall 2022		Spring 2023	
Basic Needs Visitors	No	Yes	No	Yes
Student Head Counts	8,935	2,234	8,935	1,282
Avg. Units Term Overall Earned	6.6	9.0	7.1	8.9
Avg. Units Cum Overall Earned	41.2	42.9	44.7	51.5
Persistence Rate	56.4%	81.8%	50.1%	65.9%

### Note:

- Student Head Count = unduplicated number of students
- The number of students of less than 10 are suppressed.
- Average Units Term Overall Earned = Average number of units students completed with a
  passing grade during the term
- Average Units Cumulative Overall Earned = Average cumulative number of units students completed with a passing grade
- Persistence Rate = % of students who persist to the next term (i.e., Fall to Spring and Spring to next Fall)
- Some students may have used the Center, but later dropped the class or did not earn any units for the term.
- Data Source:
  - Starfish using VC Basic Needs appointment reason
  - Banner for demographic and enrollment data

### **Marketing Material**







Sept. 27 · 10am-12pm

Oct. 11 · 10am-12pm

Oct 25 · 10am-12pm

Nov. 8 • 10am-12pm

Nov. 22 · 10am-12pm

Dec. 6 · 10am-12pm

• VC students only • While supplies last • Must bring Student ID# Sept. 27 · 2pm-5:30pm

Oct. 11 · 2pm-5:30pm

Oct 25 · 2pm-5:30pm Nov. 8 · 2pm-5:30pm

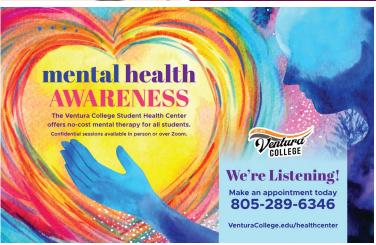
Nov. 22 · 2pm-5:30pm

Dec. 6 · 2pm-5:30pm

Sponsored by Ventural









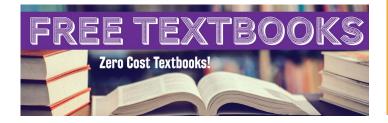


















### **VENTURA CAMPUS**

February 10 - 9am-12pm March 9 - 9am-12pm Library (LRC Bldg)

### **SANTA PAULA CAMPUS**

February 24 - 9am-12pm March 23 - 9am-12pm

Bilingual Financial Aid staff from Ventura College are ready to help you complete and access information on...

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- California Dream Act Application (CADAA) for the 2024-25 school year.
- Basic needs support (food and housing assistance), tutoring, academic counseling, mental health services, & other student services.

### **CAMPUS DE VENTURA**

10 de Febrero - 9am-12pm 9 de Marzo - 9am-12pm Biblioteca (Edificio LRC)

### **CAMPUS DE SANTA PAULA**

24 de Febrero - 9am-12pm 23 de Marzo - 9am-12pm

El personal bilingüe de ayuda financiera del Colegio de Ventura está listo para ayudarlo a completar y acceder a la información sobre:

- Solicitud Gratuita de Ayuda Federal para Estudiantes (FAFSA)
- Solicitud de el Acta del Sueno de California (CADAA) para el año escolar 2024-25
- Apoyo a las necesidades básicas (asistencia alimentaria y de vivienda), tutoría, asesoramiento académico, servicios de salud mental y otros servicios estudiantiles



### For more info, visit VCCCD.EDU/CASH4COLLEGE

Para obtener más información visite VCCCD.EDU/CASH4COLLEGE

entura County Community College District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or sexual orientation.









### GET YOUR VENTURA COLLEGE

# STUDENT ID CARD!



### \$10 for the academic year \$6 per semester

• FREE admission to Athletic Events - includes all home games

• Discounts to VC Theatre Arts performances

• FREE rides on any Ventura County Bus
• AND SO MUCH MORE!

### Can't afford a student ID card?

Swing by the Basic Needs Center - you may qualfiy for a FEE WAIVER and receive your student ID card FREE OF CHARGE!!!







# VENTURA COLLEGE BASIC NEEDS CENTER

EVERY MFD

