

Implementing Swipes for Slugs to Alleviate Food Insecurity within UC Santa Cruz

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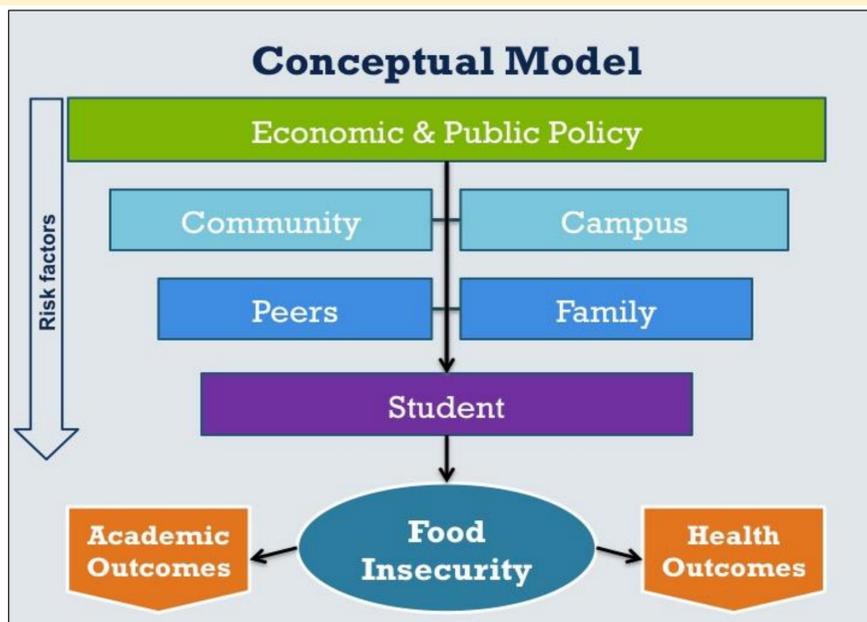
Context

Food security is when an individual has safe and reliable access to healthy, affordable, and fresh food, but that's not always the case for students. With increasing student enrollment, tuition costs, and housing costs within UC Santa Cruz, more and more students are facing food insecurity in order to compensate for these costs by skipping meals.

Whether it's skipping a meal or lacking access to healthy, wholesome foods, people can experience food insecurity through a spectrum of factors. To address this issue, the goal was to implement the Swipes for Slugs program where UCSC students that are meal plan holders can donate their excess meal swipes to a fellow student in need to gain access to the campus dining halls for a nutritious meal.

Goals

- To create a comprehensive system where students may elect to donate meal swipes to increase food access for their peers who may be experiencing food insecurity
- To have the program acts as a supplementary program in regards to the "Enjoy" cards distributed by Slug Support.
- Raise awareness about food insecurity is among UCSC students and staff
- To provide short term assistance for students experiencing hunger or food insecurity



Lorrene Ritchie, "Student Food Insecurity: What Do We Know?" UC Agricultural and Natural Resources

Background

Swipes for Slugs is derived from the nonprofit hunger relief organization, Swipe Out Hunger, that focuses on addressing local hunger by utilizing student donated meal swipes and meal dollars to give to the local community. This began in UCLA in 2010 and their swipe out hunger model has evolved to include donating to fellow students that may also be facing hunger.

Currently, UCSC has a program, Slug Support, where qualified students in need are able to meet with a Slug Support Coordinator to develop an action plan to address the issue(s) the students face. This includes providing resources and support such as distributing "Enjoy" cards. These give students a limited number of access to the campus dining halls for a warm, nutritious meal as they work on developing long term solutions to address food insecurity.

Methods

To create this program, the director of Swipe Out Hunger and other universities that already have an existing program on their campus were contacted to advise in developing the official proposal and best approaches and next steps to ensure program approval by our campus Colleges, Housing, and Educational Services (CHES). We also worked with the UCSC Food Equity and Access Specialist and Slug Support Coordinator to develop a proposal and outreach plan to present to CHES administrators for their feedback and approval.

Outcomes

- ✓ Official Proposal plan
- ✓ Outreach plan
- ✓ Approval from CHES to start the program in the next academic year (2016-2017)
- ✓ Raising awareness among UCSC staff

Conclusion/Observations

Within this school year, 1,250 Enjoy cards have been distributed to students, By May 2016, 550 cards were used and accounted for by Dining staff. Potential reasons behind the low usage rate include that students may be saving up these cards and are only utilizing them when they are unaware of when and where their next meal will come from or the cards may not have been properly recorded at UCSC dining cashiers. This shows that a program like Swipes for Slugs is necessary in supporting students that lack food access and security by increasing the number of available meals for students to utilize.

Next Steps:

- Determining donation periods for each quarter
- Develop outreach material
- Data tracking

"Don't know how to spend your meals? Or have some extra flexi's to spend? Remember meals DO NOT roll over!"

- UCSC Student