

Board and Commission Council Committee Agenda Item Request

Name of Board or Commission: College Student Commission

Request Number: 20210416-003a

Description of Item: City of Austin College Student Food Insecurity Grant Program intended to fund initiatives and programs aimed at assisting food-insecure students across college campuses in Austin.

Board or Commission Vote to refer item to Council: Unanimously approved (8-0-0)

Date of Approval of Request: 04/16/2021

Attachments: ☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please list the attachments: 20210122-3b: College Food Insecurity Grant Program

Attest: David Alcorta (Staff Liaison), Jared D. Breckenridge (Chair), Jessica Riley (Co-Chair)

MAYOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY

Council Committee Assigned:

- ☐ Audit and Finance Committee
- ☐ Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee
- ☐ Mobility Committee
- ☐ Health and Human Services Committee
- ☐ Housing and Planning Committee

Recommend a Fiscal Analysis be completed?

Recommend a Legal Analysis be completed?

Notes:

Mayor Signature & Date:



COLLEGE STUDENT COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation Number #20210122-3b College Food Insecurity Grant Program

WHEREAS, the City of Austin College Student Commission has been established and authorized to advise members of the Austin City Council on topics that affect college students here in the City of Austin; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin both historically and in present time continues to have a young college student population that is greater than or equal to approximately 100,000+ students; and

WHEREAS, the Food Insecurity Working Group was created by the College Student Commission to form productive solutions to combating food insecurity across college campuses in the City of Austin; and

WHEREAS, the Food Insecurity Working Group has been informed and guided by partnerships with experts on this pressing matter, such as representatives from the Central Texas Food Bank, wherein we have explored a variety of potential local solutions; and

WHEREAS, the food security needs of each Austin college are unique, and the available services at each campus are at varying levels of development and financial support; and

WHEREAS, the development of a city grant program would allow for targeted investment in tailored community-based solutions that build on preexisting university programming and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, a study conducted in March 2020 by The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice, which surveyed “38,602 students attending 54 colleges and universities in 26 states,” found that as a result of the devastating economic impacts of COVID-19, “rates of food insecurity among students ranged from 42% to 56% at two-year institutions and from 33% to 42% at four-year institutions;¹” and

¹ Goldrick-Rab, S., Coca, V., Welton, C. R., Dahl, S., & Magnelia, S. (n.d.). *#REALCOLLEGE DURING THE PANDEMIC : NEW EVIDENCE ON BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY AND STUDENT WELL-BEING* (Study conducted by the Hope Center and Believe in Students). https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Hopecenter_RealCollegeDuringthePandemic_Reupload.pdf



WHEREAS, the University of Texas’s food pantry, UT Outpost,² has found that 1 in 4 students do not know where their next meal is coming from; and

WHEREAS, another 2020 study conducted by Swipe Out Hunger and Chegg identified connections between food insecurity and decline in academic performance, as 35% of surveyed students said that “hunger has impacted their ability to study at some point,” and 34% of surveyed students said that “they know someone who has dropped out of college due to difficulties affording food;”³ and

WHEREAS, this same study found that “more than half of all students (52%) sometimes use off-campus food banks, and 30% use them once a month or more,” and The Hope Center study found that 21% of students “dealing with basic needs insecurity applied for unemployment insurance, 15% applied for SNAP, and 15% applied for emergency aid,” though many students did not apply for supports because they did not know they were eligible to do so;” and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin and Travis County as a whole has been especially impacted by COVID-19, as a study concluded August 2020 by Dell Med Department of Pediatrics research team found that in Travis County, “food insecurity affected families surveyed 33% to 70% during this time,” with fluctuations corresponding directly to “Travis County COVID-19 rates and hospitalizations, and with changes in the labor market;”⁴ and

WHEREAS, to the best of our knowledge, as of January 22nd 2021, the City of Austin has the ability to support the development of city grant programming, such as The Cultural Arts Funding Program and The Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs), overseen by the Department of Economic Development; and

WHEREAS, we, the members of the College Student Commission, believe that the lack of sustainable and fully effective food security resources at Austin Colleges, is an urgent and pervasive issue that the Austin City Council needs to address.

² UT Outpost. (n.d.). *Help UT Outpost Fight Food Insecurity*. <https://hornraiser.utexas.edu/project/16939>

³ 2020 State of the Student: COVID-19 & Food Insecurity. (2020). Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.chegg.org/covid-19-food-insecurity-2020>

⁴ *COVID-19 Surges Linked to Hungry Children, Families in Travis County*. (2020, November 30). Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin. <https://dellmed.utexas.edu/news/covid-19-surges-linked-to-hungry-children-families-in-travis-county>



NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the College Student Commission recommends that the members of the Austin City Council take the following actions:

1. Create a College Student Food Insecurity city grant program that serves to award funding to applicants with the appropriate financial resources to support campus-wide programs, projects, and initiatives that work to eliminate food insecurity at a college or university in the City of Austin.
 - a. Projects or initiatives that ought to be considered for funding from this grant program include *but are not limited to*: SNAP application assistance which may involve outreach programs, enrollment initiatives, and personnel trainings; meal voucher or swipe assistance programs; emergency aid funds; and support for on-campus food pantries which may involve initial set-up, restocking of items, and general pantry maintenance.
 - b. Eligible applicants include: students representing registered student groups and organizations at one of the five major colleges and universities in Austin, and faculty, staff, or administrators representing one of these institutions directly.
 - c. Development of the College Food Insecurity grant program, the creation of the request for proposal (RFP) application, the creation of the formal grant proposal criteria, and the guidelines for approving grant requests and awarding funds, ought to be overseen by the College Student Commission, in collaboration with the Youth Initiatives Office in the Department of Austin Public Health.
 - d. Components of the RFP application include *but are not limited to*: contact information (name, title, organization, email), project title, brief project description, cost, and estimated amount of students to be impacted.
 - e. Components of the formal grant proposal criteria, which shall be distributed to applicants whose RFP has been approved, include *but are not limited to*: project title, project description, budgetary information, sustainability planning, and descriptions of relevant partnerships and personnel.
 - f. The College Student Commission should be identified as the responsible party for reviewing and approving College Food Insecurity RFP applications and grant proposal submissions at each commission meeting.



2. Allocate a minimum annual budget of \$25,000 to the College Student Food Insecurity grant program.

The College Student Commission believes that creating this grant program will aid in the establishment and support of various programs that provide sustainable and effective resources for food-insecure college students at Huston-Tillotson University, St. Edward's University, University of Texas at Austin, Austin Community College, and Concordia University. This Commission also believes that the City of Austin's recovery from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is dependent, in part, on the recovery of higher education and the protection of college students' basic needs.

Date of Approval: January 22, 2021

Record of the vote: 8-0-0; Co-Chair Jessica Riley motioned. Commissioner Cristobal Garcia-Quiroz seconded. Voting in favor were: Chair Jared D. Breckenridge, Vice-Chair Jessica Riley, Secretary Kristen Marx, Commissioner Brandon Barrows, Commissioner Jeffrey Clemmons, Commissioner Cristobal Garcia-Quiroz, Commissioner Kindle Kreis, and Commissioner Lira Ramirez.

Attest: Jared D. Breckenridge
Jared D. Breckenridge
Chair, College Student Commission