

WASHINGTON STATE

Council of Presidents



Report to the Legislature

HB 1559 **Compliance Report**

2025

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The Council of Presidents is the association of Washington’s six public baccalaureate degree-granting college and universities. Located in Olympia, Washington, COP strives to be a common voice for the public baccalaureate sector and the most respected and trusted resource for decision-makers on issues affecting public higher education. COP serves in a coordinating role for a number of initiatives and activities common to the public baccalaureate institutions, fostering coordination and collaboration among the public baccalaureates as well as with other educational partners, both in Washington and nationally.

This report is available on COP's website: [Legislative Engagement page](#)

Introduction

In 2023, Washington state passed a law ([2SHB 1559](#)) to help college students with their basic needs. It created a benefits navigator position at each public institution of higher education to connect students with food, housing, and financial aid resources. Institutions also had to create a plan to fight hunger, meet students' needs, and report on how well it's working.

This report summarizes the work of the benefits navigators, using information from each public baccalaureate institution. It covers the institutions' outreach efforts, changes they made to help students, partnerships they formed, and problems they faced. The report also shares common themes found across different institutions.

The following institutions and campuses have benefits navigators:

- Central Washington University
- Eastern Washington University
- The Evergreen State College
- University of Washington Seattle
- University of Washington Bothell
- University of Washington Tacoma
- Washington State University Pullman
- Washington State University Tri-Cities
- Washington State University Vancouver
- Western Washington University

Sources of data

Each institution and campus used a common data collection sheet to report the number of students served, student demographics, types of outreach used to let students know about the benefits navigators, and the types of referrals made to campus and community supports. They also answered the following questions:

1. What progress did your institution make toward the goals of your strategic plan?
2. What system changes did your college or university engage in to strengthen the institution's ability to support student basic needs?
3. What campus and community partners is your college or university working with?
4. How is your institution doing outreach and engaging community partners?
5. What are some of the challenges and barriers to implementation of your strategic plan, including navigation?

Services across the sector

During the 2024-25 school year, benefits navigators across Washington’s public four-year institutions were busy serving over 900 students through over 1,000 navigation meetings.

The following tables provide the demographics of the students served.

Table 1: Gender of Students Served	
Female	62%
Male	33%
Other Gender	5%

Table 2: First Generation and Low-Income Status of Students Served	
First Generation	48%
Low-Income Status ¹	59%

Table 3: Race/Ethnicity of Students Served	
African American/Black	11%
Asian/Asian American	7%
Hispanic/LatinX	25%
Native American	1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%
White/Caucasian	40%
2 or more races	9%
Other Race/Ethnicity	6%

Institutions used several ways to reach out to and inform students of the services available. Electronic communication and outreach included emails, phone calls, text messages, social media, and messages sent using the student portal, e.g., Canvas. They also presented information about their services via classroom visits, campus events, off-campus living events, and posting flyers.

In the over 1,000 navigation meetings, the benefits navigators completed intakes and assessments of student needs. They also assisted with filling out benefits applications, completing the FAFSA/WASFA, setting goals, life coaching, and financial planning and assistance.

¹ A student is considered low-income if they are Pell-eligible, Washington College Grant-eligible or other program eligibility using the 200% federal poverty level.

Benefits navigators provided referrals and connections to several campus supports. Most referrals were made to food pantries, followed by the Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH) program, the financial aid office, and emergency assistance. Additional referrals were made to academic advising, the career center, child care, clubs, confidential advocates, counseling and mental health services, transportation, health services, housing, the international student office, laundry, technology, TRIO programs, and tutoring.

Students were also connected to community supports by benefits navigators. Most referrals were made to the community food bank, followed by food benefits and housing assistance. Additional referrals were made to 211 (Washington's statewide information and referral system), cash assistance, child care, community centers, coordinated entry, disaster relief, domestic violence and relationship navigation, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, employment office, eviction prevention/diversion fund, health insurance, immigration resources, the internet, legal services, LGBTQ+ resources, mental health services, ROTC, social security, transportation, unemployment, utility assistance, unemployment insurance, veterans' services, WorkSource, and YWCA.

Common themes from institution and campus narratives

The subsequent pages contain narrative summaries from each benefits navigator, with key themes extracted below:

Outreach and engagement efforts

1. Community and campus partnerships: Universities are actively building and maintaining partnerships with both on-campus departments and external community organizations to enhance support for students' basic needs.
2. Awareness and accessibility: There is a strong focus on increasing awareness of available resources through various channels such as social media, events, and direct communication with students and faculty.
3. Diverse support services: Efforts are being made to provide a wide range of support services, including food pantries, housing assistance, mental health services, and financial aid to address the diverse needs of students.

System changes for supporting student needs

1. Centralization and streamlining: Many institutions are working to centralize resources and streamline processes to make it easier for students to access support. This includes creating single points of contact or committees to handle emergency funds and referrals.
2. Integration of technology: The use of technology, such as online platforms and databases, is being integrated to improve the efficiency of service delivery and data management.
3. Proactive and preventive approaches: Universities are adopting proactive measures, such as workshops and educational programs, to equip students with skills and knowledge to manage their needs independently.

Challenges and benefits

1. Resource limitations: Common challenges include limited funding, space, and staffing, which can hinder the ability to meet all student needs effectively.
2. Stigma and awareness: There is a persistent challenge of overcoming the stigma associated with seeking help for basic needs, as well as ensuring that students are aware of the resources available to them.
3. Adaptability and resilience: Despite challenges, universities are showing resilience by adapting their strategies and continuously improving their systems to better support students.

Central Washington University

Outreach and engagement efforts

Central Washington University made significant progress in the first 1.5 years of its strategic plan. Although the basic needs resource coordinator was not hired until January 2024 due to hiring processes, the strategic plan called for collaboration with numerous campus and community partners and substantial progress was achieved. For 2025-2027, with a new coordinator in place, CWU will reevaluate and update the strategic plan based on current partnerships, student needs, and revised ideas. The period from 2023-2025 laid a strong foundation for future initiatives. The CWU Library established private spaces for basic needs next to the Wildcat Pantry, creating an initial Basic Needs Center on campus. Marketing efforts and partnerships with Marketing and Publicity Centers have enhanced resource branding for easy identification. Partnerships with orientation programs have informed incoming and potential students about available resources to support their path to graduation. The CWU Marketing and Communications division partnered with the CWU Foundation for a year-long marketing campaign to engage alumni, donors, and the community, aiming to further recognize and normalize student needs. The basic needs resource coordinator and the Wildcat Pantry coordinator collaborated to develop a Basic Needs Resource Center, co-writing the strategic plan and working together to serve students. Various educational programs, marketing initiatives, cooking classes, housing arrangements, and technology services were integrated to support CWU students.

System changes for supporting student needs

CWU consolidated several small resource funds within divisions and the Foundation office into a single source called the Emergency Funds Committee in collaboration with University Advancement and the division of Student Engagement and Success. A single document was created for students to fill out, which helps determine their eligibility for specific resources, allowing the committee to make swift decisions and notify students. An optional syllabus statement was created through Faculty Senate for faculty to include, informing students about available resources. The basic needs resource coordinator and the Wildcat Pantry coordinator meet with Faculty Senate leaders annually to remind them of available resources and referral processes. CWU worked with Case Management to add a Basic Needs Referral option to the campus-wide Concern and Support Form, which automatically directs referrals to the basic needs resource coordinator for immediate outreach. The Emergency Meals Fund was reinstated in partnership with the Wildcat Pantry and Dining Services, allowing students to donate unused dining dollars for meals for other students, involving many campus partners and technology systems to streamline the process.

Campus and community partnerships

CWU's primary campus partners include Libraries, the President's Office, Dining, the Wildcat Pantry, Student Government, the Multicultural Center, the Wildcat Farm, Auxiliary Enterprises, Career Services, Case Management, Financial Aid, Sustainability, Wellness Center, the Office of International Studies and Programs, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, and Residence Life. Representatives from these offices form the Wildcat Essentials Coalition, ensuring campus-wide involvement in student basic

needs and food security programs. Off-campus, CWU's major partner is HopeSource. CWU maintains ongoing relationships with community partners through quarterly meetings, meet-and-greets, and monthly email communication. CWU has an excellent partnership with the Washington Student Achievement Council and has received the Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness grant since 2023. The basic needs resource coordinator manages this grant and participates in support groups for regular communication and resource sharing.

Challenges and barriers

CWU faces challenges, such as limited space for emergency housing and restructuring within community partner organizations, which occasionally delay resources for students. Capacity issues with campus partners have hindered the implementation of projects like EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) in dining locations. Leadership changes in campus partners, such as Faculty Senate or the Wildcat Pantry, have caused delays in project continuation. Implementing technology or monetary-related ideas has been difficult due to additional job duties for campus partners. For example, offering campus parking passes for students with transportation and monetary limits has been challenging due to financial aid package constraints.

Eastern Washington University

Outreach and engagement efforts

In the first year of Eastern Washington University's three-year strategic plan, the program achieved significant milestones. Meaningful progress was made in outreach efforts, student engagement with services, response rates to the Washington Student Experience Survey, and the development of new partnerships. With a full year of implementation completed, the program is now making targeted adjustments to improve its ability to serve students more effectively.

Goal 1.1: "Increase diversity of basic needs offerings and services on campus and in the Cheney community." This year, the basic needs navigator expanded its support network through several key initiatives. A new partnership with SEED Ministry was established, allowing for the regular purchase of dairy products for distribution through the campus food pantry. The annual Basic Needs Resource Fair, held in May, saw a marked increase in participation from 20 community vendors to 50 community vendors, broadening the range of support services available to students. Additionally, EWU contracted with an online counseling platform to provide mental health services during evenings and weekends, improving access to care for students outside of traditional hours.

Goal 1.2: "Work toward the creation of a Basic Needs Support Center in Tawanka 129 by fall 2026." The basic needs navigator participated in a Washington Student Achievement Council-sponsored training focused on one-stop centers for basic needs services. Building on this experience, the feasibility of co-locating services near the campus food pantry will be explored. Additionally, this year we launched a new initiative in which the Basic Needs Graduate Service Appointment (GSA) began assisting students with food stamp applications during pantry open hours, further expanding direct support for students.

Goal 1.3: "All campus departments, academic and operational, will be educated on EWU's Basic Needs Program by July 2025." The basic needs navigator delivered 15 presentations this year, reaching over 150 faculty and staff members to raise awareness of available services and resources.

Goal 1.4: "Collect quantitative data that provides a full and inclusive picture of basic needs insecurity on campus." In fall 2024, EWU completed its second administration of the Washington Student Experience Survey, achieving a 5% response rate—a slight improvement over the previous year. The data provided an updated snapshot of basic needs insecurity on campus and will be further enriched by qualitative insights gathered through interviews and focus groups. However, due to the small sample size, full demographic analysis was not possible, highlighting the need for continued efforts to boost participation. A faculty member from the Basic Needs Advisory Group (BNAG) expressed interest in collaborating with colleagues in the Department of Social Work to conduct a comprehensive wrap-around study on students' experiences with basic needs insecurity.

Goal 2.1: "By September 2026, student utilization of services on campus will increase by at least 50% from September 2025. By September 2028, utilization will increase by 100% from September 2025." Campus food pantry usage increased by 53% from fall 2024 to fall 2025. During the same period, the basic needs navigator's case management services experienced a 103% increase, growing from 32

students in 2023–2024 to 67 students in 2024–2025. Additionally, the basic needs navigator had contact with another 67 students who did not complete a full intake but still received some level of support.

Goal 2.2: "The pantry and other services will gather qualitative experience data from students in order to tailor programming to student needs." To further inform programming, the basic needs navigator has implemented multiple strategies to gather qualitative data on student needs. One ongoing effort involves a "Question of the Week" initiative in the campus pantry, where students respond to prompts selected by the GSA. These informal responses will be compiled into a report to help tailor future services. The basic needs navigator also facilitated interviews and a focus group focused on child care and food insecurity. The data collected from these sessions is currently under analysis and will provide insights to guide future programming and support strategies.

Goal 2.3: "The basic needs navigator will direct programming towards underrepresented populations." In winter 2025, EWU piloted series of "Know Your Rights" workshops in partnership with a local immigration nonprofit. Developed in collaboration with the Dean of Students Office, Women and Gender Studies, and the Multicultural Center, these workshops aimed to support students experiencing anxiety related to immigration enforcement by providing an overview of constitutional rights for U.S. citizens and residents. The sessions also served as an educational opportunity for faculty and staff, offering a clearer understanding of the immigration process and equipping them to better support students navigating related challenges.

System changes for supporting student needs

This year, EWU revised the process for routing emergency fund requests to improve efficiency and better serve students. This affected how funds were distributed under Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH), Passport, and the Emergency Fund. Under the previous system, the basic needs navigator was responsible for both documenting need and collecting supporting materials, which created delays and made it difficult to respond quickly to student needs.

To streamline the process, requests are now routed through Maxient. Submissions are first reviewed by Student Accommodations and Support Services (SASS), then forwarded to Financial Aid to determine the most appropriate funding source, and finally to the basic needs navigator for follow-up and case management. This new workflow has significantly improved the speed and coordination of support, allowing eligible students to receive emergency funds more quickly and connecting others to additional resources as needed.

While some initial challenges arose, such as students not always being referred to the basic needs navigator for case management, these issues have been addressed, and the system is now functioning more smoothly to meet student needs.

Campus and community partnerships

Campus partners: EWU Garden Club; the Office of Sustainability; Athletics; Sorority and Fraternity Life; Dining Services; College of Professional Programs; CAMP; Multicultural Center; American Indian

Education Center; the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Student Accommodations and Support Services; Financial Aid; Housing and Residence Life; SEED Campus Ministry; Urban and Regional Planning; the Office of Grants and Research Development; Campus Recreation.

Community partners: 2nd Harvest Spokane; NW Harvest; Spokane Homeless Coalition; Spokane Edible Tree Project; Manzanita House; Main Market Co-Op; West Plains Angels; Se Habla Media; Washington Student Achievement Council; Idaho Central Credit Union; Swipe Out Hunger; Better Health Together; WA Connection.

Outreach and community engagement remain central to the work of the basic needs navigator and Basic Needs GSA. Together, they lead most outreach efforts to both students and community partners. The basic needs navigator maintains active connections with local organizations through email newsletters, monthly Homeless Coalition meetings, and volunteer work with food rescue suppliers and nonprofits. These relationships help sustain and open new partnerships that directly benefit EWU students.

Student outreach is conducted through multiple channels, including social media, campus events, tabling, and word of mouth. To ensure visibility among faculty and staff, the basic needs navigator shares program information through presentations, distributes a syllabus statement, and collaborates with various campus offices. These efforts help ensure that those who work closely with students are informed and able to make timely referrals to basic needs services.

Program challenges were significantly reduced this year due to a more unified approach for distributing emergency funds, increased job knowledge of the basic needs navigator, and growing campus-wide familiarity with basic needs programming. These improvements contributed to smoother operations and more effective student support.

Challenges and barriers

However, one challenge that persisted was the inconsistent referral of students who applied for SSEH funding to the basic needs navigator. As a result, some students did not receive timely financial assistance or case management during periods of financial stress. To address this, beginning in fiscal year 2025–26, all emergency fund requests will be automatically forwarded to the basic needs navigator or another case manager within Student Accommodations and Support Services. This change is expected to ensure that all students receive appropriate follow-up and support.

The Evergreen State College

Outreach and engagement efforts

In the last year, The Evergreen State College has increased drop-in hours for Basic Needs Center access. Since the basic needs strategic plan was drafted, Evergreen has hired a case manager for student success to connect students with Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH) grant support; implemented regular meetings of staff working on basic needs support; and the Basic Needs Roundtable continues to meet quarterly to engage the on-campus community and provide quarterly updates. Evergreen continues to foster relationships with on-campus departments to engage the campus community in basic needs work and support for students. This includes working with Evergreen's Advancement Office to secure and allocate donations to basic needs programming efforts, increasing resources and availability of tangible items such as grocery/gas gift cards, dedicated basic needs housing in campus housing, and increasing the FTE for the basic needs navigator and SSEH case manager.

To expand visibility and strengthen engagement across the student body, the Basic Needs Center conducts ongoing outreach through flyers, social media, and information tabling at institutional events. In addition, staff participate in classroom visits and maintain active partnerships with student organizations and student governance. These efforts enhance communication pathways between students and support services, build trust, and increase awareness of available resources. One of the Center's ongoing goals is to increase presence through targeted social media and on-campus campaigns that share specific data and information related to food insecurity, housing, and other basic needs challenges. The campaigns aim to raise awareness, educate the campus community, and foster a culture of collective responsibility and advocacy around student well-being.

The basic needs navigator has also served as a field supervisor for internships and individual learning contracts (independent study for credit), supporting students who wish to integrate their academic studies with hands-on experience in basic needs programming, outreach, and community support initiatives.

System changes for supporting student needs

Evergreen's strategic goal to "create a sound and stable infrastructure for basic needs initiatives on campus" supports consistent and sustained collaboration among campus partners. Evergreen created cross-divisional communication and coordination between academic programs and student support services. Both the SSEH case manager and navigator work across divisions; the campus team includes students, frontline staff, area directors, and deans. Evergreen's Basic Needs Team hosts quarterly campus-wide Basic Needs Roundtables. Students participate in basic needs efforts through work study, fellowships, student groups, and volunteer roles at the Evergreen Olympia and Tacoma campuses. Evergreen has made gains toward the goal that "basic needs work should be known and a part of all employees' work at Evergreen" through presentations to the Board of Trustees and at a faculty meeting.

Campus and community partnerships

The Evergreen State College collaborates with on-campus partners, including The Center for Community Based Learning and Action, The Organic Farm, The Children's Center, TRiO, Student Wellness Services, Student Activities, the Geoduck Student Union (GSU), WASHPIRG, and faculty.

The Evergreen State College's Basic Needs Center is part of a local network of community partners developed through its participation in Thurston Thrives and the Unite Us! platform, as well as through the longstanding efforts of the Center for Community Based Learning and Action, which has cultivated and sustained community partnerships for many years. Community partners include the Thurston County Food Bank (the Basic Needs Center serves as a food bank satellite), TCFB Client Services and Nutrition Program, Peer Olympia, NAMI, Unite Us!, Intercity Transit, and Safeplace. Evergreen's basic needs navigator and student workers participate in community events and educational opportunities hosted by our partners. Community partners are invited to table at food bank distributions.

Challenges and barriers

Unfortunately, Evergreen lost an AmeriCorps service member due to federal program cuts. This position had provided significant support to the Basic Needs Center and Food Bank Satellite operations, including volunteer coordination and food distribution efforts. Financial literacy among students remains an area of need, and the Basic Needs Center is exploring future collaboration with local credit unions to address this gap.

Another challenge is students accessing SNAP benefits and navigating the eligibility requirements. This includes work study eligibility, and participation in campus meal plans. According to the National Student Basic Needs Coalition, "the mere existence of a required meal plan can result in automatic SNAP ineligibility." Additionally, inconsistencies in DSHS determination of student eligibility continue to present challenges for many students seeking assistance. Evergreen seeks to continue developing materials and strategies to help students prepare for DSHS interviews with the appropriate supporting documentation to strengthen their cases for eligibility. Furthermore, limited affordable housing in Olympia poses a significant challenge. The Basic Needs Center regularly works with campus and community partners to identify housing resources; yet, there remains an acute and growing need for affordable student-accessible housing.

Another challenge is effectively serving students on the Tacoma campus and those enrolled in evening, weekend, and virtual classes. This raises important questions about how Evergreen can equitably distribute staff, capacity, and resources. Although the basic needs navigator currently provides virtual appointments, Evergreen aims to expand access by strengthening outreach to Tacoma and virtual students who experience high levels of need. The Tacoma campus, located in the Hilltop neighborhood, is situated within a food desert and lacks the same infrastructure and on-site resources available in Olympia. Addressing these disparities remains a key priority as we continue to assess and develop strategies to ensure equitable service delivery.

University of Washington Seattle

Systems changes for supporting student needs

The basic needs navigator position is housed in the LiveWell: Health Promotion and Prevention office, a dedicated unit of professional staff members and Peer Health Educators who provide evidence-informed programs and services focused on health promotion, prevention, education, and advocacy for students at the University of Washington.

The LiveWell office worked with First Year Programs to establish a basic needs assessment tool that newly admitted students were required to complete as part of their Advising & Orientation session. This assessment tool contained the following two questions: “are you currently receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Basic Food (Washington) benefits?” and “would you like to be connected to other benefits assistance programs related to affordable housing, food security, healthcare, and/or child care?” Students were able to select “yes” or “no” for each question. The student needs navigator can pull a report that generates a list of student names, their contact information, and their responses to the assessment tool. This helps the student needs navigator conduct outreach to students that have responded affirmatively to being connected to benefits assistance programs.

Work began on developing staff infrastructure on campus to identify and address students’ current basic needs insecurities. The beginnings of a Basic Needs Committee comprised of the student needs navigator and staff members from other University of Washington offices are in an initial planning phase. Staff on this committee would include, but not be limited to, the Office of Student Financial Aid, the UW Food Pantry, Housing & Food Services, Hall Health Center, the Counseling Center, the Academic Counseling Services within the Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity, and CIRCLE. The Basic Needs Committee will meet regularly to review the trends of basic needs insecurities that members observe in their work with students, assess the current avenues of support that address these insecurities, and improve the support methods, if necessary. These meetings will serve as an opportunity for members to learn more about the resources and services provided by other offices on campus, in addition to serving as a collaborative space for members to determine how to best support students experiencing basic needs insecurities.

Outreach and engagement efforts

The University of Washington Seattle campus has made great strides toward completing the goals of the strategic plan. Although the student needs navigator position was vacant for six months, efforts to enhance partnerships and support services continued. With the position now filled, UW is resuming coordinating student needs navigation. By addressing issues such as food insecurity, housing instability, and other basic needs, the University of Washington has supported students across various departments and programs, enabling them to focus on their education and reach their full potential.

The UW’s strategic priorities for addressing basic needs insecurities are outlined as follows:

Strategic priority #1: “Create a sound and stable infrastructure for basic needs initiatives on campus.”

UW was looking to develop a method to identify newly admitted students that are likely experiencing basic needs insecurities and provide them with an opportunity to get connected to benefits assistance programs. This was achieved through the first-year programs questionnaire outlined in the systems changes section above.

Strategic priority #2: “Address and combat food insecurity of University of Washington students.” This was achieved through establishing the student needs navigator role as a service that connects students who are experiencing food insecurity to Basic Food/SNAP benefits and resources in the community. The student needs navigator partnered with the UW Food Pantry and local food banks to allow for more streamlined referrals to campus and community partners to address food insecurity.

Strategic priority #3: “Address and combat housing insecurity of University of Washington students.”

This was achieved by establishing the student needs navigator role as a service that connects students who are experiencing housing insecurity to resources on campus and in the community. Further development will continue on this priority as follows:

- **Tactic #1:** The student needs navigator will serve as a point of connection between students who are experiencing housing insecurity while living in on-campus housing through Housing & Food Services and the Systems & Accounts Specialist from Housing & Food Services. In facilitating this connection, the student needs navigator will effectively advocate for students that are experiencing on-campus housing insecurity to receive the Ferris Family Scholarship or WASH Multifamily Laundry Systems Scholarship. This connection will remove the additional step of a student submitting the Emergency Aid Request Form through the Office of Student Financial Aid, streamlining the process for students to receive support.
- **Tactic #2:** Explore the potential for a partnership between the University of Washington and YouthCare, a community organization dedicated to ending youth homelessness. YouthCare plans to launch a community-based housing program specifically designed for UW students aged 18-24 experiencing Category 1 and Category 4 definitions of homelessness, as outlined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The student needs navigator will facilitate connections between Housing & Food Services, the Academic Counseling Services within the Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity, and YouthCare to determine the capacity of each office to contribute to the partnership and launch of the new program. If there is capacity for a partnership between the University of Washington and YouthCare, the student needs navigator will serve as a point of contact for students who express interest in renting a property through YouthCare’s housing program. The student needs navigator will also increase the visibility of YouthCare on campus by serving as a distributor of promotional materials for YouthCare’s services.

UW is also looking to establish a connection between the University of Washington and the City of Seattle to increase knowledge of public basic needs and support resources available through the city.

- **Tactic:** The student needs navigator will participate in the community advisory panels, as facilitated by the City of Seattle’s Affordable Seattle team. The purpose of the community advisory panels is for the Affordable Seattle team to obtain feedback from community-based organizations, like the University of Washington, on certain topics concerning Affordable Seattle, “a coordinated program designed as a one-stop-shop for residents and community workers to find and apply to City of Seattle [public benefit and discount] programs” (Harrell, 2023).

Campus and community partners

Campus partners: UW Food Pantry; the Office of Student Financial Aid, Housing & Food Services; the Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity; Academic Counseling Services; Husky Health Center; UW Counseling Center; Disability Resources for Students; UW Children’s Centers; UW Transportation Services; First Year Programs; and Student Technology Loan Program.

Community partners: University District Food Bank; the FamilyWorks Wallingford Food Bank; the FamilyWorks Greenwood Food Bank; the Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church Food Bank; the Giving Room Food Bank at Epic Life Church; Ballard Food Bank; YouthCare; REACH; Seattle Housing Authority; and King County Public Health.

Challenges and barriers

The biggest challenge UW faced while implementing the strategic plan was the six-month gap in the position that made it difficult to continue partnerships and address the goals of the strategic plan. The vacancy also came at a time when UW (and other Washington state colleges and universities) were required to make budget cuts stemming from state funding reductions. UW did not want to hire a position that did not have guaranteed funding. While meeting with students continued during this time across campus, coordinating and collaborating with campus partners and community agencies was paused.

University of Washington Bothell

Outreach and engagement efforts

Over the past year, the University of Washington Bothell has made measurable progress toward the goals outlined in its strategic plan to address and support student basic needs. Significant developments include the expansion of staffing in certain areas, enhancement of infrastructure, strengthened campus and community partnerships, and expanded outreach efforts, all designed to improve student access to campus and other community resources.

Data from UW Bothell's Navigational Services tracking for the year reflects these efforts, though it is important to note that the following numbers only include students who made appointments with the resource navigator or received CARE Team outreach. It is also noted that this data does not include students who were assisted through walk-ins, phone, or other informal channels. However, this data shows that UW Bothell served 65 unique students through these formal channels. Of these students:

- 29 (45%) identified as first-generation college students.
- 36 (55%) were identified as low-income (through Pell Grant eligibility).

This data offers a critical snapshot of UW Bothell's direct service impact on a subset of its student population. Many students visited for a variety of supports, with each student receiving information on all campus supports, regardless of whether they needed it at that moment, such as information on the Husky Pantry, Counseling Center, Career Center, Advising, and Financial Aid, in addition to information on their most pressing needs. While data shows meaningful connections were made, such as 33 referrals to Emergency Assistance grants and Financial Aid, and 25 to community Housing Assistance, previous tracking methods have historically captured only a fraction of total referral activity. The challenge of manually logging every informal interaction has led to underreporting. This is most evident in areas like Tutoring and Academic Advising, where numerous referrals were made based on student need, yet they were not systematically recorded.

System changes for supporting student needs

To address gaps and improve service delivery, UW Bothell has begun the process of implementing various measures to collect data to better address student needs and enhance service delivery. A centralized case management system to enhance data collection for basic needs appointments, to track student interactions, track referrals, and ensure continuity of care is on track to roll out fall quarter 2025. UW Bothell has additionally integrated PantrySoft software to assist with tracking visits to the food pantry and additional data collection. Data from PantrySoft shows the essential role the pantry plays in addressing food insecurity on the UW Bothell campus. Over half of respondents (55%) reported eating less than they wanted to due to lack of money, and 40% experienced hunger without the means to buy food. Despite this need, 82% do not receive Basic Food/SNAP benefits. Many households served are small, with 33% consisting of just one person and 28% having four or more members. These findings, though based on optional questions, demonstrate the pantry's vital support for students and families who may otherwise fall through the cracks of traditional assistance programs.

UW Bothell has not always been able to keep accurate records of all walk-ins or contacts outside of scheduled navigator appointments. This is caused by the lack of dedicated staff that can greet all Husky Pantry patrons and ensure they check in while the resource navigator or other Health & Wellness Resource staff are in meetings or engaging in other work activities. Current reported data also does not fully capture the extent of outreach activities conducted throughout the campus community, such as tabling events and other engagement efforts, which are significant in scope and impact.

However, basic needs initiatives have been integrated into UW Bothell's peer health education program, increasing visibility across campus and ensuring students receive information about available resources through multiple trusted channels. An estimated number of 388 students attended basic needs programming hosted by our peer health educators throughout this past year. Progress has also been made toward securing a larger, centralized space for the Husky Pantry, a key strategic priority. This expansion will allow for refrigeration, increased storage, and a broader variety of nutritious food options, addressing both food access and nutritional needs. In a Qualtrics survey designed by the resource navigator, 62.5% of student respondents identified "access to healthy food choices" as one of their primary concerns related to meeting basic needs. Despite UW Bothell's continued struggles with space and visibility for the Husky Pantry, the food pantry still saw 1,197 total visits, accounting for 196 unduplicated households this past year.

Campus and community partnerships

UW Bothell's partnership network continues to grow. On-campus key collaborations include faculty, staff, the CARE Team, Counseling Center, the Office of Financial Aid, Orientation & Transition Programs, ASUWB (student government), and the HERO (peer health educator) program. In the community, UW Bothell maintains strong relationships with United Way of King County (Benefits Hub, funding), Hopelink Mobile Market (direct food distribution), local food banks, and rental assistance programs, such as Neighborhood House. The resource navigator also actively attends community events, such as health and resource fairs, to build "warm connections" with community organizations and expand the network of available resources for students.

Outreach strategies have been broadened to include classroom presentations, professional development for faculty and staff (i.e., "Lunch & Learns"), targeted communication to Pell Grant-eligible and parenting students, integration into orientation and campus tours, collaboration with student organizations on events and campaigns, and in-person representation at campus engagement events.

Challenges and barriers

Despite these advances, challenges remain. UW Bothell is undergoing a restructuring of its basic needs support. The addition of MSW interns expected for fall quarter 2025 will provide valuable professional expertise to case management and student support. However, this shift coincides with the loss of a full-time basic needs program manager position, whose duties have been redistributed among existing staff as UW Bothell undergoes a hiring freeze due to state budget decisions. This change has strained overall program capacity, highlighting how essential dedicated staff are to sustain and grow basic needs

initiatives. Currently, this work is reliant on other staff members finding time for it amidst their existing duties in an unsustainable model.

UW Bothell's pressing barriers include space limitations, which currently hinder the expansion of food resources and prevent dedicated navigation meeting spaces; visibility issues, with some students still unaware of available services; loss of dedicated staffing capacity with the elimination of the full-time basic needs program manager role; and long-term funding sustainability for critical programs, such as emergency housing and food pantry operations. Additional obstacles include gaps in comprehensive data tracking for all student contacts and outreach efforts, the need for more consistent needs assessments to adapt to evolving student demographics, and the continued work required to remove policy barriers that can limit access to basic needs programs. All of this is dependent on having the dedicated staff for these roles, as continues to be evident.

Overall, UW Bothell has taken significant steps toward realizing the priorities of its strategic plan, as it strives to create a sound and stable infrastructure for basic needs services, combat food and housing insecurity, strengthen partnerships, and elevate student voice in decision-making. These have been, in large part, due to the dedicated staff, who have helped to sustain these important priorities and conversations. Continued investment, both in resources and in strategic leadership, will ensure that UW Bothell can meet the needs of its most vulnerable students and uphold its commitment to equity, inclusion, and student success.

University of Washington Tacoma

Outreach and engagement efforts

The University of Washington Tacoma has advanced outreach and support efforts to address student basic needs in food, housing, health, and emergency aid. Food security initiatives include The Cupboard for quick snacks, The Pantry for staple items, fresh produce from the Giving Garden, and weekly visits from the Nourish Mobile Food Bank. Students also receive one-on-one SNAP application assistance and access to informational materials. Housing supports include limited on-campus emergency housing, stronger relationships with local apartment complexes, and the planned launch of UW Tacoma's off-campus housing marketplace in September 2025 to provide students with off-campus listings and roommate matching. Health and wellness efforts feature vaccine clinics, educational workshops, the e-Checkup To Go program, the Wellness Vending Machine, and free access to virtual care through TimelyCare. For financial emergencies, UW Tacoma's Office of Student Advocacy & Support (OSAS) and Financial Aid office have established an efficient referral process to direct students to the most appropriate support.

System changes for supporting student needs

Key system changes include shifting Pantry management to UW Tacoma's Student Life department, relocating it to a central campus location, and hiring a dedicated Pantry manager. Housing assistance processes have been streamlined to reduce barriers, while health services have expanded through the addition of new programs and resources. Emergency aid protocols were refined to allow UW Tacoma's OSAS and Financial Aid department to independently review requests while maintaining collaborative support.

Campus and community partnerships

Partnerships remain central to UW Tacoma's work. On campus, collaborations span OSAS, Psychological & Wellness Services (PAWS), the Giving Garden, Court 17 dorm housing, Equity & Inclusion (EI), and academic units such as the Schools of Social Work and Healthcare Leadership. Community partners include the Nourish Mobile Food Bank, Tacoma Farmers Market, KOZ Apartments, CJK Community Homes, Associated Ministries, TimelyCare, and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). Broader engagement occurs through the WSAC basic needs navigator cohort and the Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness, as well as direct outreach to local housing providers.

Challenges and barriers

Challenges persist, including delays in filling key staff positions, restrictive SNAP eligibility rules, limited affordable housing in the area, and disruptions in housing partnerships. Staffing shortages also constrained progress in wellness programming, and demand for emergency aid continues to exceed available resources.

Washington State University Pullman

Outreach and engagement efforts

The benefit navigator on the Washington State University Pullman campus has made significant strides toward unifying basic needs efforts through community partnership and active response. Through collaboration and coordination with essential campus partners described below, the campus has implemented in-person hoteling hours in many campus affinity spaces to streamline resources for students. This initiative has built trust, removed stigma, and provided consistent support to our students who utilize these spaces every day, intentionally aligned with WSU Pullman's strategic plan focus to support equitable student success and institutional effectiveness and accessibility. Additionally, the navigator presented information on benefits navigation, resources available through the Office of the Dean of Students, and assistance programs (EBT/SNAP eligibility and Washington Connection) to students utilizing programs such as the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program, Passport to College, and College Success Programs through the WSU Office of Academic Engagement. The navigator also provided direct assistance to students who wanted to apply for EBT/SNAP, helping them navigate complex systems and educating them on self-advocacy. This achievement directly supports the WSU Pullman strategic plan focus on supporting student and institutional success.

System changes for supporting student needs

WSU remains constant in its effort to understand students' lived experience on our campuses. To facilitate this, the benefit navigator has sought to establish comfortable, confidential, and welcoming environments where students can discuss their needs. Retention counselors based in the Compton Union Building and other student affairs staff have helped support students in these spaces. This connection and opportunities have been promoted thanks to the creation of targeted marketing materials regarding benefits navigation services. WSU Student Affairs' marketing team has designed and distributed materials across campuses. This effort helps to support WSU Pullman's strategic plan focus area of equitable student success by improving strategic outreach methods so that students can find support and leverage resources available to them.

Campus and community partnerships

The benefit navigator on the Pullman campus has worked to support students by collaborating with several institutional partners to increase access to a great number of already existing resources. These partners include the Cougar Food Pantry, the WSU Center of Civic Engagement, the Pullman campus student government, the WSU Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, WSU Dining Services, and a variety of academic college support success programs. The benefit navigator in Pullman also regularly communicates with its counterparts on the Tri-Cities and Vancouver campuses to share and maintain best practices and partnership opportunities to support the entire system.

Additionally, the benefit navigator has helped increase awareness of resources available to students in the local Pullman community, which include the Community Action Center and the Whitman County Landlord Association.

WSU Pullman has a strong foundation across campus and community partners regarding student basic needs support. Throughout the community, people understand the challenges students may face while completing their degree.

Challenges and barriers

Among the major challenges are building a new program and making students aware of services offered on campus and in the community. In addition, the benefits navigator also reported that social stigma surrounding the use of these services prevented some students from seeking assistance. The program will include prevention education workshops, which will allow the benefits navigator to help shift perspectives and help students think of these services as things they should use or apply for. A key responsibility and priority for the benefits navigator is to destigmatize these conversations through outreach with all navigators, fostering mutual support to better assist students.

Washington State University Tri-Cities

Outreach and engagement efforts

The benefit navigator on the WSU Tri-Cities campus has sought to increase equitable access to resources and guidance to address student fundamental needs through a variety of measures. This includes one-on-one support for students, where guidance and counseling were provided to 104 students experiencing a variety of needs around housing, financial challenges, food accessibility, transportation, family needs such as child care, and other resource access.

The navigator has also worked to develop tools to support students' needs. For example, the campus has established a roommate-finding tool and a ride-sharing tool for students to connect with other students. It has also helped promote a laptop loaner program, which has a 100% utilization rate. The navigator is actively refining a referral process to programs that include TRiO, academic advising, faculty advising, financial aid, student care network, emergency funding, and other student services. Finally, the benefit navigator is working to reduce barriers to accessing food by improving the number of students accessing campus food pantries. In fiscal year 2025, the Tri-Cities campus had 339 students accessing the food pantry.

The benefit navigator has also been involved in strengthening student self-efficacy through creating opportunities for students to gain practical skills and tools to address their needs. This has included financial wellness and management workshops around topics such as credit scores, budgeting, homebuying 101, and affordable ways to purchase cars in collaboration with community partners. The navigator has also developed and branded a food accessibility program series, which includes fresh produce events in collaboration with Second Harvest and school break boxes.

The campus, with support from the benefit navigator, has piloted benefit promotion through targeted outreach to eligible students in collaboration with the Washington Student Achievement Council and the Department of Social and Health Services to increase access to public benefits for eligible students. The Tri-Cities campus has completed three rounds of targeted outreach. A DSHS truck was invited to campus during two rounds to help students access the benefits quickly and efficiently. In total, 120 unique students participated in different workshops and events that supported proactive skills and resources.

To facilitate student support, the benefit navigator has worked to establish collaborations to increase student access to non-academic supports. This has included a campus community resource fair hosting 20 community organizations that provide basic needs-related services to share resources with students. As mentioned, it has also included bringing to campus the DSHS mobile truck, Apple Health care providers, the Department of Licensing, veteran services, a low-cost health center located in the community, representatives from WA 211, and the Head Start program. The navigator has collaborated with institutional partners to increase awareness at new student orientations, faculty and other offices such as Counseling and Wellness, TRiO, and student government on various occasions to promote resources and create awareness about basic needs security.

Additionally, the navigator has also served in positions throughout campus that include the campus child care committee, which resulted in creating a family-friendly study space for students. The navigator took part in community forums to bring community resources to campus. For example, it has worked to facilitate a family-friendly workplace cohort, food access, and security coalition in Benton and Franklin counties.

System changes for supporting student needs

The advent of the basic needs navigator position has resulted in a dedicated space for students to meet with the navigator, who has been able to serve as a landing place and resource for students facing foundational challenges hindering their ability to learn. This work has been enhanced through establishing a dedicated website where resources are listed with the ability to schedule time with the navigator to meet privately.

The navigator has also promoted their new position at many campus and community events, as previously described, including new student orientation presentations to provide early exposure to the new services offered.

Campus and community partnerships

As previously described, the Tri-Cities benefit navigator has forged several partnerships with both campus and community partners. The benefit navigator continues to look for opportunities to build collaborative partnerships to equip students with the necessary resources to support their academic success.

On campus, key partners include the campus Career Center, TRiO support services, campus student government, the WSU Office of Advancement, the WSU Office of Financial Aid Services, Counseling and Wellness, student care network, organizers of new student orientation, as well as some faculty collaboration for classroom presentations, academic advisors, and the campus veteran center.

In the community, the navigator has helped bridge several partnerships between campus and the community. These include DSHS, Second Harvest, the Benton and Franklin Food Security Coalition, the Washington State Department of Commerce's Family-Friendly Workplaces, Women of Wisdom, and the Self Help Credit Union. A variety of partners participated in the aforementioned resource fair on campus, including Benton Franklin Head Start, Lourdes Behavioral Health, HAPO Community Credit Union, Support Advocacy Resource Center, the Department of Licensing, Benton Franklin Health District, Mid-Columbia Libraries, Ben Franklin Transit, Catholic Charities, Columbia Basin Veterans Center, Tri-Cities Community Health, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Richland Public Library, Northwest Public Broadcasting, People For People, My Friends Place, Community Minded Enterprise, Kadlec Community Health, Columbia Ability Alliance, and Molina HealthCare.

This work will continue as the navigator works with these partners to facilitate workshops around housing and financial management, inviting community partners to attend the community resources fair hosted on campus, participating in community resource forums, presenting and participating in the

Benton Franklin food accessibility coalition, and facilitating the food pantry partnership with Second Harvest and Lamb Weston.

Challenges and barriers

Among the challenges facing the benefit navigator are the capacity to facilitate many of the great resources available to students while also having time to meet with students directly. Other challenges to the navigator's position include data management and advertising the position as a resource.

In facilitating partnerships, there are also procedures to be mindful of and to be followed that were not foreseen initially. This includes being informed on DSHS policies and being attentive to which students should be referred.

Additionally, the navigator seeks to equip themselves with additional skills and tools to provide students in distress with adequate support in complex and emotional experiences. The navigator also seeks to develop a better understanding of what the basic navigator does and means to students, which will primarily be done through relationship and trust development with campus community partners as more are made aware of the service.

Washington State University Vancouver

Outreach and engagement efforts

The benefit navigator on the Washington State University Vancouver campus has been working to strengthen partnerships with local community organizations (e.g., food banks, housing programs) to expand available services. These efforts contribute to improved student retention and academic persistence by addressing non-academic challenges.

The navigator has worked to provide personalized support, referrals, and access through these cultivated and maintained partnerships. Students have received individualized support from the benefit navigator to address issues including food insecurity, housing instability, and financial hardship. To do this, the navigator has facilitated referrals to on- and off-campus resources such as food pantries, emergency aid, mental health services, and transportation support.

To conduct this work, the benefit navigator has utilized case management and follow-up to ensure ongoing support and track impact. The benefit navigator has collected and tracked data on student needs and service usage to inform future programming. This work has contributed to a campus understanding of the impact of basic needs on student outcomes, which has increased student access to community-based resources through strategic collaboration.

Finally, the navigator has represented WSU Vancouver at conferences and local community activities focused on basic needs and student wellbeing.

System changes for supporting student needs

The introduction of the basic needs navigator to campus has been joined with other changes to support students' basic needs. This has included moving the campus Cougar Food Pantry to a "shop for yourself" model. The campus has also established a dedicated basic needs navigator space with the Cougar Food Pantry. This collaboration has allowed for increased programming such as "Resource of the Week" and facilitated donor-supported emergency funding that covers housing, transportation, and healthcare costs, without having to take out loans. Other system changes have included the creation of Apple Health and SNAP Workshops and establishing the use of the Maxient database system used across campus. The navigator has also facilitated programming, including eviction prevention funding. To promote services, the navigator has been present through presentations and tabling events. They have made system changes by building partnerships with campus and community partners.

Campus and community partnerships

Among these campus and community partners, the benefit navigator has been working with a variety of campus resources: the WSU Office of Financial Aid, Disability Services, Student Wellness Center Health and Counseling, Veteran and Military Affiliated Students, the Office of Student Involvement, the Child Care Center operated by Innovative Services NW, Veteran Student Support Services, the library Laptop Loaner Program, and the Cougar Center to distribute the Education Opportunity Pass, which lets students ride local transit at no cost. Community resources include SeaMar, Clark County Food Bank, Council of

the Homeless, Clark College, SNAPeD, the United States Department of Veteran Affairs, Vancouver Housing Authority, and TriMet.

Outreach is being completed through a variety of mediums. This includes emails, donor connections, video calls, phone calls, foundation outreach, and invitations to visit the Cougar Food Pantry and Resource Center.

Challenges and barriers

Among the challenges and barriers facing the benefit navigator are resources available for immediate assistance for urgent needs. Some community partners are unable to provide immediate assistance, causing delays in support for urgent needs.

A unique challenge to serving WSU students is that students enrolled at WSU Global, the online campus, may be assigned to a benefit navigator based on a campus that isn't physically located closest to them. For instance, a student enrolled online who lives in Yakima but may be connected with a benefit navigator located in Vancouver rather than in the Tri-Cities. As a result, the student may end up working with both—coordinating with their assigned navigator while also involving the navigator from the campus nearest to them for more accessible, in-person support.

There is inconsistency in how services are offered across campuses, leading to inequities in access. Some students may be hesitant to explore available resources due to perceived complexity.

Finally, the coordinated meetings for benefit navigators organized by the Washington Student Achievement Council often felt repetitive and lacked new insights, making them feel less beneficial and, at times, time-consuming without clear added value.

Western Washington University

Outreach and engagement efforts

Following Western Washington University's hiring of a 1.0 FTE resource navigator in fall 2023, all basic needs efforts became more effective with a single point of contact. Intentional outreach and engagement focused on academic departments, student-facing staff and services, and direct-to-student initiatives. These efforts increased with the hiring of work-study student staff to enable consistent tabling directed toward students to share resources and with the creation of a basic needs website, now found in the footer of all institutional web pages. Student staff also assisted with an Instagram account highlighting resources and events. Both the website and social media utilized logos and practices aligned with institutional branding guidelines and consistent marketing practices. Because all students spend online time in Canvas (a web-based learning management system), a resource button was created to direct students to the basic needs website.

Student-focused programs and events each quarter not only raised awareness of basic needs resources but also brought students together for social and community-building activities. Students learned cooking skills, found ways to de-stress, and accessed free items like home and kitchen essentials. Staff programmed robustly during Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week and Whatcom Housing Week, including bringing author Stephanie Land to share her experience as a single mother living in poverty in Skagit County, as detailed in her book "Maid and Class." Other programming efforts included incorporating education into Western's ongoing "Lunch & Learn" series for staff/faculty, financial literacy cooking classes, and inviting the DSHS mobile unit to campus quarterly, with dozens of students having completed the SNAP application process.

System changes for supporting student needs

Western Washington University centralized the basic needs and short-term emergency housing efforts supported by recent state legislation, and students voted for a new food security fee implemented in fall 2025. There continue to be changes responsive to student demand and interest. One key early change was the Basic Needs Hub, located in Viking Union 420, directly down the hall from the Western Hub of Living Essentials (WHOLE) Pantry. The suite contains basic needs staff and includes WWU's resource navigator, Passport to Success staff (who support former homeless and foster youth), and the off-campus living office.

To best address the complicated situations of some students struggling with basic needs insecurity, a care/concern team was assembled to coordinate efforts between several offices: Financial Aid, Western Success Scholars, the Office of Student Life, Counseling and Wellness Center, and the Office of Off-Campus Living. This team is typically facilitated by the resource navigator and seeks to ensure that struggling students receive good care and assistance, do not have to re-tell their sometimes-complicated stories repeatedly, and can access the most appropriate and efficient support possible. The team meets weekly during the academic year and as needed during break periods.

The Western Hub of Living Essentials (WHOLE) Pantry was established by the Associated Students, changed to a meal pop-up during the pandemic, and is now a staffed food pantry located in the Viking Union. Because of limitations on the use of state funds, the pantry is donation driven, and The Foundation for WWU & Alumni has provided most of the food in the pantry until this year's new student food security fee. Staff have established relationships and partnerships with local agencies and businesses to help stock the WHOLE, including the Bellingham Food Bank, Trader Joe's, Avenue Bread, Erin's Breakfast Cookies, several local farms, and support from the Whatcom Food Co-op for food purchasing. The WHOLE food pantry is currently "no barrier," meaning anyone can access it. Plans are underway for a new food pantry to be included in the new student success building on south campus, near the Rec Center, the other most heavily trafficked building by students on campus. Efforts are underway to address the legal, space, and health issues surrounding the safe transfer of food from WWU's dining services provider to the WHOLE food pantry (catering and dining commons). There have been ad hoc food recovery efforts from markets on campus already, and more work is necessary to make this ongoing.

Western has improved its tracking and input on developing and commenting on new legislation by connecting with student government leadership and Western's legislative liaison.

In reviewing this work, periodic assessment is useful. Below are select quotes from students about the work of the Basic Needs Hub and resource navigator:

- *"The BNH helped me get emergency funding for my housing during one of the worst and scariest points of my life."*
- *"The Basic Needs Hub literally saved me this summer. I've been in a battle for the past month now trying to secure housing, financial aid and a stable source of food after some unexpected circumstances. The Basic Needs Hub stopped me from being homeless and starving and has given me the opportunity to continue my education even with all the instability I've been facing."*
- *"I was losing my housing due to a financial aid mix-up and was in the midst of a mental health crisis. The people at the basic needs hub helped me drag myself out of the hole and supported me all the way up."*

Campus and community partnerships

Since the resource navigator was hired two years ago, and due to the efforts noted above, campus awareness of basic needs resources is moderate to high. Additionally, in 2022, a Basic Needs Strategic Workgroup was convened to gather key staff and interested faculty to review current efforts, develop a strategy to advance basic needs efforts as a central vision for the institution, identify internal challenges and gaps, and develop a plan to reduce barriers for students in need.

Key community partners include Community Food Coop for a free/reduced food pilot (2023-26), DSHS mobile unit, Opportunity Council (for SNAP trainings for student staff), Bellingham Food Bank, and the Foundation for WWU & Alumni.

Challenges and barriers

Several challenges continue to exist and are named here to acknowledge the significant work that is yet to be done. These challenges include:

- Ongoing gaps in unmet need that exist between institutional financial aid and after state/federal aid is applied.
- Increasing gaps between financial aid and on-campus housing affordability.
- Lack of awareness in the WWU community about student basic needs.
- Continual shifts in community resources, making assistance and case management vital.
- Shifting state and federal funding for programs like the Western Success Scholars budget, making long-term budget planning difficult.
- Limited options for supporting undocumented students.
- Gaps in support for students with families, particularly with the high cost of child care.
- Rising rental costs, limited housing supply, and very limited affordable housing.
- A looming demographic cliff coupled with high building costs that discourage new housing.
- Stretched services and staff as awareness of services grows.