Notice of Funding Availability: Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program

According to data released in February 2020 from a survey of New Jersey community college students conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice, about 40 percent of respondents were food insecure and 44 percent were housing insecure in the prior 30 days, and 14 percent of respondents were homeless in the previous year.[1] The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), in partnership with the Hope Center and the New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS), released these survey results just weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic began devastating New Jersey. Food insecurities among college students nationwide have been exacerbated by COVID-19[2], which has highlighted the racial health inequities that already existed and has resulted in unprecedented unemployment figures.

On February 24, 2021 Governor Murphy announced that nearly $30 million of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER II) Fund will be committed to higher education, which has experienced significant financial burdens during the unprecedented public health emergency. Given the above food insecurity data, the Murphy Administration is committing $1 million of this second round of GEER II Funding from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) to offer Hunger-Free Campus grants as part of the Hunger-Free Campus Act (Act) (P.L. 2019, C.89). The Act provides grants to public institutions of higher education that have one or more hunger-free-designated campuses to help support students on their paths to success.

GEER II funding is provided through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA). The funds are provided to institutions of higher education that have been "most significantly impacted by the coronavirus" in order to "support their ability to continue providing education services to their students and to support the "on-going functionality" of these entities." For more information about the GEER, visit the USED's website at: https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/governors-emergency-education-relief-fund/.

Purpose:
The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the barriers that many students face in the pursuit of higher education, including high unemployment and reduced access to food. The purpose of this grant program is to foster innovative ways to combat food insecurity on public college and university campuses and assist in planning for long-term solutions. The grant funding shall be used to address student hunger, leverage more sustainable solutions to address basic food needs on campuses, raise awareness of currently-offered campus services that address basic food needs,

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[1] https://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/documents/pdf/index/materialhardships.pdf
[2] https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Hopecenter_RealCollegeDuringthePandemic.pdf

and continue to build strategic partnerships at the local, state, and national levels to address food insecurity among students. Each of these strategies is critical as we navigate the ongoing pandemic.

Eligibility Criteria:
The Secretary of Higher Education shall allocate grant funding to each **New Jersey public institution of higher education** that has one or more campuses designated by the Secretary as a "hunger-free campus" in accordance with the following criteria:

- Established a hunger task force that meets a minimum of three times per academic year to set at least two goals with action plans;
- Designated a staff member responsible for assisting students with enrollment in the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NJSNAP);
- Provided options for students to utilize SNAP benefits at campus stores or in the process of providing options/seeking ways to utilize SNAP benefits on-campus;
- Participated in an awareness day campaign activity and planned a campus awareness event during National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week;
- Provided at least one physical food pantry on campus or enable students to receive food through a separate, stigma-free arrangement;
- Developed a "Swipe Out Hunger" student meal credit sharing program, or designated a certain amount of funds for free meal vouchers that might otherwise be raised through a "Swipe Out Hunger" program; and
- Annually conducts a student survey on hunger, developed by the Secretary, and submits the survey results and a best practices campus profile to the Secretary at a time prescribed by the Secretary for inclusion in a comparative profile of each campus designated as "hunger-free."

Application Criteria for Hunger-Free Campus Designation & Grant Funds:
Eligible public institutions of higher education must prove that they meet the qualifications for the Hunger-Free Campus Designation and may do so while also applying for the grant funds in their complete application to OSHE. Institutions of higher education must demonstrate that they meet the aforementioned eligibility criteria. Institutions will be asked to submit a 1) grant narrative; and 2) budget.

Grant Narrative

The narrative portion of the application must be submitted as a single PDF by each institution. Use the headings listed below within the application. Institutions must abide by the word limit indicated per section. Any information beyond the word limit will not be reviewed. The grant narrative must include:

- **Contact Information:** The name of the institution, contact information for person(s) implementing the grant at the institution.
- **Letter of Support from the Institution's President/Chancellor:** The institution's President/Chancellor must submit a letter of support indicating the institution's need, as well as its commitment and capacity to carry out the grant proposal.

- o   Word limit: 500 words.
- **Campus Hunger Task Force:** Describe your Campus Hunger Task Force. Provide a list of task force members (names and titles) and actual meeting dates, times, and locations for the current academic year. Briefly describe the goals of the task force (minimum of two) and corresponding action plans.
    - o   Word limit: 500 words.
- **Staff Member for SNAP Assistance:** Provide the name, title, and contact information for the staff member(s) responsible for assisting students in SNAP screening and application processes. Briefly describe how this service is advertised on campus or how students are referred to this staff member, who may have other responsibilities on campus, but must be knowledgeable and aware of SNAP eligibility and application procedures as they pertain to college students. (Note: Training is available through DHS).
    - o   Word limit: 250 words.
- **Options for Students to Utilize SNAP at Campus Stores**: List the options available to students to utilize SNAP at campus stores. If campus stores do not accept SNAP, please describe any steps taken to determine if these vendors are able to accept SNAP benefits or how you plan to have students utilize SNAP at campus stores in the future. Alternatively, please describe how students are informed about which local off-campus establishments accept SNAP if this is not currently an option at campus stores. To learn more about becoming a retailer, visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s webpage here: https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer
    - o   Word limit: 500 words.
- **Information on SNAP and other public benefits available to students:** Describe opportunities for the school to promote information on SNAP and other public benefit programs available for students through the school's website, online student portals, training residential/student life representatives or student-led organizations.
    - o   Word limit: 500 words.
- **Information regarding participation in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (anytime during month of November 2020):** Describe your institution's plans to participate in or implement an awareness event surrounding student hunger. Describe the event, the intended goals and outcomes of the event, and any student organizations, departments, or institutional partners that will be involved. Please detail the outcomes of the event (number of participants, etc.).
    - o   Word limit: 250 words.
- **Evidence of a Campus Food Pantry:** Provide the address of the campus food pantry and a web link advertising the pantry to students. Flyers/advertisements, media reports, and pictures of the campus pantry are accepted forms of verification. If you do not have a campus pantry but have other mechanisms in place to help students receive food free of cost, please describe these arrangements.
    - o   Word limit: 250 words.
- **Evidence of a "Swipe Out Hunger" or Meal Plan Donation Program:** Provide your institution's written policy, dining services promotion or advertisement, web link

describing the program, or Swipe Out Hunger certification as verification. Other forms of verification can be submitted on an as-needed basis.
- o Word limit: 500 words.
- **Student Hunger Survey:** Campuses must measure food insecurity among their students using the USDA's 18-item food security measure. Additional guidance regarding survey requirements is provided below as an appendix. If your institution measured food insecurity among students in the past 12 months using an alternate USDA measures (6-item or 10-item scales), or used a different student hunger survey, please contact Stefani Thachik, OSHE's Director of Policy and Outreach, (Stefani.Thachik@oshe.nj.gov) to confirm if this would be an accepted alternative. If you plan to conduct a survey as outlined in this Notice of Funding before the end of Academic Year 2020-2021 (including summer 2021), please detail the plans for the survey. If you have already conducted the survey at time of submission, attach the results of your hunger survey, including the number and percentage of students that are food insecure to the application. If your institution receives grant funding, you will be required to submit raw data to OSHE.
  - o Word limit: 500 words (not including survey appendices, if applicable).
- **Best Practices Campus Profile:** Include a best practices campus profile. This profile should include a brief description of campus efforts to address food insecurity among students, highlights from the student hunger survey, and any other items you think best highlight the work on your campus to combat food insecurity.
  - o Word limit: one page.
- **Other:** Identify any other topics or data you would like to share with OSHE that relate to addressing food insecurity.
  - o Word limit: 250 words.

Budget

The budget portion of the application must be submitted as an Excel spreadsheet utilizing the template provided. Grant awards may range from $40,000-$100,000 per public institution of higher education. A key component of the budget template is the column for the "Narrative Description." For each category of budgeted expenses, institutions must provide a "Narrative Description" which consists of a detailed list of, and justification for, each expense, including how each directly relates to the purpose of the grant and addresses COVID-19 impacts. For specific guidance for what should be provided for the content of the "Narrative Description" are outlined in the "Directions to Complete" tab within the budget template provided. If the "Narrative Description" cannot be provided within the space allowed within the template, institutions may submit a secondary spreadsheet with this detail, but all submissions must be in an Excel spreadsheet format.

All funding must be expended by September 30, 2023 in accordance with federal guidelines.[3]

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[3] https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/governors-emergency-education-relief-fund/

Link to Budget Template: https://nj.gov/highereducation/documents/excel/hunger-free-campus-budget.xlsx

Institutions may utilize funding for items like salaries. Salaries and Benefits may include costs associated with expenditures for employees whose services are directly related to the Hunger Free Campus grant/intervention selected. The justification for the inclusion of these employee salaries should be tied directly to the grant plan. In utilizing the funding for capacity, institutions should be aware this is one-time funding and notify anyone being hired with these funds that they will not be available past the grant expenditure date.

Funding must abide by state and federal guidelines. The USED's website provides additional information on how GEER funds can be used under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Process for Submission and Notification:
The above requested information should be submitted as two files (one PDF of the narrative and one Excel spreadsheet of the proposed budget that adheres to the template provided) to OSHE by no later than **5 p.m. on Monday, April 12, 2021**. All applications shall be submitted via email in PDF format to OSHE@oshe.nj.gov with the subject line "Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program" followed by your institution's name. OSHE will confirm receipt of application. Late applications will not be accepted.

Applications will be reviewed by the OSHE according to the criteria outlined above. Questions about this notice may be directed to Stefani Thachik, OSHE's Director of Policy and Outreach, (Stefani.Thachik@oshe.nj.gov).

Additional Resources (NEW):

On March 16, 2021, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education held an informational webinar on this grant opportunity. To view the webinar, visit:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4BPmaibxkQ

A list of question and answers resulting from the webinar is also available at:
https://nj.gov/highereducation/documents/pdf/GEERII-FAQ.pdf

Appendix A

Student Survey on Hunger: Items and Scoring

To receive both the 'Hunger-Free Campus' designation and grant funds, institutions must, in accordance with the Hunger-Free Campus Act, *"Annually conduct a student survey on hunger, developed by the Secretary of Higher Education, and submit the results of the survey and a best practices campus profile to the Secretary at a time prescribed by the Secretary for inclusion in a comparative profile of each campus designated as a hunger-free campus. In the development of the survey, the Secretary may utilize any existing surveys designed to collect information on food insecurity among students enrolled in public institutions of higher education."*

All institutions must determine the number of food insecure students on their respective campuses using the USDA's 18-item food security measure. Institutions are also required to ask the demographic questions listed below. The USDA measure is validated (Bickel, Nord, Price, Hamilton, & Cook, 2000) and is commonly used to study food insecurity in the general population and among college students. OSHE recommends asking all food security questions with a 30-day timeframe.

Before using the 18-item measure, you must ask the following question to determine if there are children present in the household.

Children Screener: Do you have any biological, adopted, step or foster children who live in your household?
-Yes
-No

18-Item USDA Food Security Measure (https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8271/hh2012.pdf*)*

ADULT STAGE 1

1. "I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more." Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for you in the last 30 days?

-Often true
-Sometimes true
-Never True
-Don't know

2. "The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 30 days?

-Often true
-Sometimes true
-Never True
-Don't know

3. "I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 30 days?

     -Often true
     -Sometimes true
     -Never True
     -Don't know

If the respondent answers "Often True" or "Sometimes True" to any of the three questions in ADULT STAGE 1, then proceed to ADULT STAGE 2.

ADULT STAGE 2

4. In the last 30 days, did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

     -Yes
     -No
     -Don't know

5. *[IF YES TO QUESTION 4, ASK]* In the last 30 days, how many days did this happen? _____

6. In the last 30 days, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?

     -Yes
     -No
     -Don't know

7. In the last 30 days, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?

     -Yes
     -No
     -Don't know

8. In the last 30 days, did you lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food?

     -Yes
     -No
     -Don't know

If the respondent answers "Yes" to any of the questions in ADULT STAGE 2, proceed to ADULT STAGE 3.

ADULT STAGE 3

9. In the last 30 days, did you ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

      -Yes
      -No
      -Don't know

10. *[IF YES TO QUESTION 9, ASK]* In the last 30 days, how many days did this happen? ____

If the respondent indicated that children under age 18 are present in their household (a response of "Yes" to the Children Screener question), proceed to CHILD STAGE 1. If children are not present, this is the end of the food security module.

CHILD STAGE 1

11. "I relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed my children because I was running out of money to buy food." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 30 days?

      -Often true
      -Sometimes true
      -Never True
      -Don't know

12. "I couldn't feed my children a balanced meal, because I couldn't afford that." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 30 days?

      -Often true
      -Sometimes true
      -Never True
      -Don't know

13. "My child was not eating enough because I just couldn't afford enough food." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 30 days?

      -Often true
      -Sometimes true
      -Never True
      -Don't know

If the respondent answers "Often True" or "Sometimes True" to any of the three questions in CHILD STAGE 1, then proceed to CHILD STAGE 2.

CHILD STAGE 2

14. In the last 30 days, did you ever cut the size of your children's meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

-Yes
-No
-Don't know

15. In the last 30 days, did your children ever skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

-Yes
-No
-Don't know

16. *[IF YES TO QUESTION 15, ASK]* In the last 30 days, how many days did this happen?
_____

17. In the last 30 days, were your children ever hungry but you just couldn't afford more food?

-Yes
-No
-Don't know

18. In the last 30 days, did any of your children ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

-Yes
-No
-Don't know

Scoring for USDA 18-Item: Use the chart below to score responses. Each affirmative response (answers of "sometimes true" or "often true," "yes," or "3 days or more") equals one point. Calculate the total number of affirmative responses per respondent and categorize them according to the chart below. Respondents with high or marginal food security are food secure and those with low or very low food security are food insecure.

Food Security Level	18-Item Raw Score **with** Children Present	18-Item Raw Score **without** Children Present
High	0	0
Marginal	1-2	1-2
Low	3-7	3-5
Very Low	8-18	6-10

Mandatory Demographic Information

If the Institutional Research office on your campus already collects some of this information, consider working with them to link student data to institutional data in an effort to reduce survey fatigue.

What is your year in school?
     1st year undergraduate
     2nd year undergraduate
     3rd year undergraduate
     4th year undergraduate
     5th year or more undergraduate
     Graduate or professional
     Not seeking a degree
     Other

What is your major? (Either open-ended or with the institution's majors listed)

What is your enrollment status?
     Full-time (12 credits or more)
     Part-time (less than 12 credits)
     Other

What is/are your gender identity/identities? *Select all that apply.*
     Man (1)
     Woman (2)
     Gender queer/gender variant (3)
     Transgender (4)
     Non Binary   (5)
     Other (6)

What year were you born?

Are you Hispanic or Latino?

     Yes
     No

How do you describe your race?
     White
     Black or African American
     Latino/a/x
     Asian or pacific islander
     American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian
     Biracial or Multiracial
     Other

Have you ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard?
     Yes
     No

Are you a first-generation college student (i.e. neither of your parents have a college degree from a 4-year institution)?

> Yes
>
> No

Which of the following means help you cover for the expenses associated with attending college? (check all that apply)

> Federal Grant/Scholarships
> Federal Student Loan(s)
> State Grant/Scholarship
> Outside Grant/Scholarship
> Institutional Grant/Scholarship/Tuition Remission
> HESAA Loan(s) (NJCLASS)
> Outside private loans
> Self Paying- Cash
> Self Paying- Credit Cards
> Parents Paying- Cash
> Parents Paying- Credit Cards
> Employer Tuition Remission
> Other _____

How would you describe your current relationship status?

> Single
> In a relationship
> Married or domestic partnership
> Divorced
> Widowed

Where do you currently live?

> Campus residence hall
> Fraternity or sorority house
> Other college/university housing
> Parent/guardian's home
> Other off-campus housing
> With a friend until I find other housing
> Houseless
> Other

Did you receive free or reduced-price meals in high school?

> Yes, I received free meals (1)
> Yes, I received reduced-price meals (2)
> No (3)

Are you currently employed?

> Yes (1)

No (2)

If yes, about how many hours do you work each week? *Include all of your jobs.*
  1-4 (1)
  5-9 (2)
  10-14 (3)
  15-19 (4)
  20-24 (5)
  25-29 (6)
  30-34 (7)
  35-39 (8)
  40 or more (9)

In the past 12 months, from which of the following programs did you receive assistance? (Select all that apply)
  1. SNAP (food stamps)
  2. WIC (nutritional assistance for pregnant women and children)
  3. TANF (public cash assistance)
  4. SSI (supplemental security income)
  5. SSDI (social security disability income)
  6. Medicaid (NJFamilyCare or Public health insurance)
  7. Child care assistance
  8. Unemployment compensation/insurance
  9. Utility assistance (e.g. help paying for heat or water)
  10. Housing assistance
  11. Transportation assistance
  12. Tax refunds (including EITC)
  13. Veterans benefits (Veteran's Administration benefits for a servicemen's, widow's, or survivor's pension, service disability or the GI bill)

If Yes, do you receive household benefits on your own or are they shared with other household members?

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Appendix B

Best Practices for Survey Implementation

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Please use the guidance below as you begin to disseminate your survey.

- **Acquire IRB Approval from your institution if needed.**

- **Collaborate with Institutional Research (IR):** IR or professional researchers are the professionals best equipped to conduct this research. Importantly, you will need to work with an office within your institution that can provide an email list of all active students. It is also important that the survey is anonymous and confidential.

- **Send Survey Invitations & Recruitment:** When inviting students to take your survey, it should NOT be advertised as a survey about food insecurity, basic needs insecurity, or material hardship. Highlighting the content of the survey may cause a disproportional response from students that experience these hardships. Possible title suggestions could include "Student Experience Survey" or "Student Success Survey." You can advertise the survey as an effort to understand how to help students succeed during their time in college. If the survey is being administered electronically via Survey Monkey, Qualtrics, etc., think about who (president, vice president, dean of students, student affairs administrator, etc.) should invite students to take the survey via email. You can refer to this guide from The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice for more information about disseminating your survey https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Basic-Needs-Insecurity-College-Students.pdf.

- **Survey All Enrolled Students:** All students should be invited to take the survey. Sampling students is much more complicated and a census survey is appropriate for this circumstance. Once you have surveyed students, you should work with IR to determine if your sample is representative of the larger student population. Ideally, the best time to implement a survey on food insecurity is early in the fall semester.

- **Incorporate the 18-Item Scale into Campus Climate Surveys:** College students are frequently surveyed, which can lead to survey fatigue and low response rates. If your institution is conducting other surveys regarding campus climate, consider adding the 18-item food security scale to these surveys.

- **Analyze Data:** When analyzing data, work closely with a researcher or professionals from your institution's IR office. The 18-item scale does include skip patterns, meaning it may be difficult to interpret. You should report the number and percentage of students that are food insecure, but you should also conduct additional analyses. For instance, if your institution is interested in delivering resources to students, it is helpful to identify any patterns regarding the populations that are most likely to be food insecure. You may also want to determine how food insecurity is influencing other aspects of students' lives (i.e. working patterns, GPA, etc.)

- **Report Results to OSHE:** If selected for the grant, campuses must report the raw data to OSHE. Details about how to securely transmit this data and the deadline for submitting the data will be provided upon selection. If you include data in your Hunger-Free Campus Grant Application, it should only include general results and be non-identifiable.

- **Share Results with Your Campus Community:** Results of your survey should be made available to students, faculty, and staff. We recommend including links to SNAP and information about local food pantries. If you learn that many students are food insecure and in need of resources, be prepared to address this problem. Work with campus leaders

or administration regarding how food insecurity can be addressed on your campus. When reporting results, it is beneficial to have a plan of action in place regarding institutional plans to help alleviate food insecurity among students.

For more information about NJSNAP, visit:
https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/programs/njsnap/students/