Connecting Community College Students to SNAP Benefits:
Lessons learned from a pilot outreach intervention in California

March 2022
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Before the pandemic, millions of college students eligible for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) did not access the benefit.[1] This gap between eligibility for SNAP benefits and the use of those benefits is often a result of confusion around federal eligibility requirements.[2] Even when eligibility guidelines were temporarily changed to include new exemptions during the pandemic to make it easier for more students to access SNAP, many had no idea they were now eligible to receive benefits.[3] This has serious implications for students' lives as food insecurity can influence their well-being and academic success.

College staff around the country are working diligently to inform students of these changes and connect them to SNAP benefits. California in particular has made significant strides in expanding eligibility and access to public support programs to reduce basic needs insecurity among college students. For instance, colleges in California have used additional state funding to conduct outreach to students about SNAP benefits, known locally as CalFresh.[4] Yet, there remains a gap between students experiencing food insecurity and those using food supports like CalFresh. The pandemic has shown that traditional approaches to college outreach, such as the use of flyers, posters, and word-of-mouth, are no longer effective strategies when fewer students are on campus.

With support from the Michelson 20MM Foundation, The Hope Center partnered with Compton College to pilot a low-cost intervention that used text-based nudging to provide timely and relevant information about CalFresh.[5] During the fall of 2021, we identified 1,539 Compton College students who may be eligible for CalFresh. Approximately one-third of these students received empowering and stigma-reducing, or "attuned," text messages about CalFresh benefits. Another one-third received texts with basic information on how to sign-up for these benefits. A sub-sample of students was surveyed to assess their experiences with food insecurity, use of public and campus benefits, and impressions of the text messages.[6]

In this brief, we share lessons from the pilot intervention at Compton College. In addition, we review findings from focus groups with other community college students throughout California and meetings with community organizations that help connect students to SNAP benefits.[7] Practitioners should consider these lessons when conducting outreach to students about SNAP and similar benefits.

Lessons Learned

> **Lesson #1:** Although all students used at least one campus-based resource, some had trouble finding information about certain campus supports and felt hesitant to visit on-campus food pantries and other offices to ask for help.

In the pilot intervention at Compton College, we surveyed a subset of 49 study participants. All students surveyed used at least one campus-based resource such as emergency aid, wi-fi hotspots, counseling services, or meal vouchers.[8] About three in four students who used only one or two resources were unaware of the other supports (Figure 1). Two-thirds of the students did not know how to apply for these resources and half felt that others needed the supports more than they did.[9] Students from the focus groups expressed hesitance to reach out to college staff because of feelings of embarrassment and uncertainty about where to go for information they could trust. Students spoke about miscommunication or no communication about possible benefits available to them, confusing eligibility requirements, and missteps during the application process that caused delays in receipt of benefits.

FIGURE 1 | REASONS WHY STUDENTS DID NOT USE CAMPUS-BASED RESOURCES
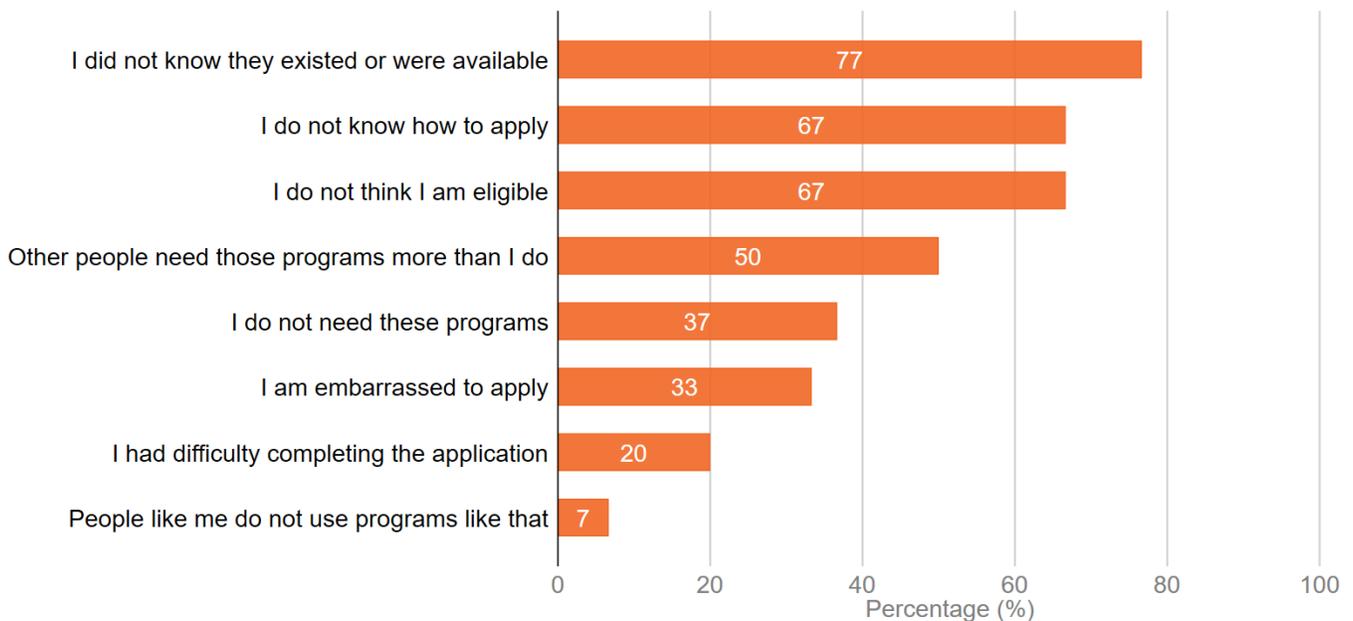
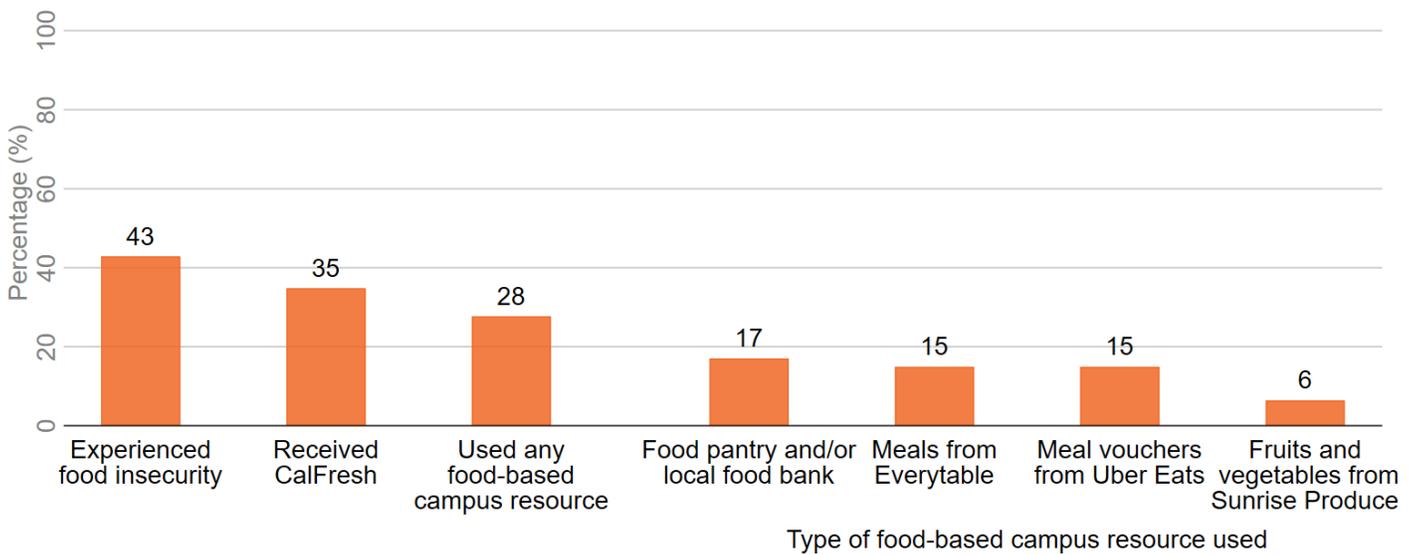Source | 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey
Notes | Students who used no more than two campus supports shared reasons why they did not use those supports (N = 30). Some students may have listed more than one reason why they did not use supports. For more details on the campus-based resources used, refer to the web appendices.

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These findings highlight the importance of using informative, attuned outreach strategies to connect students to knowledgeable and empathetic staff who can provide clarity and guidance throughout the application and recertification processes. Faculty and student affairs employees may benefit from additional training about how SNAP works, how to help students apply, and how this benefit impacts students' outcomes.[10]

> **Lesson #2:** Colleges have minimal information to target their outreach.

For the pilot intervention, we used a few student background characteristics to determine who to target for outreach, such as whether students received federal and/or state grants. This information can only be used as a proxy for SNAP eligibility as it does not indicate whether the student experienced food insecurity or was eligible for CalFresh benefits. In fact, 43% of students who participated in the study experienced food insecurity (Figure 2). About one in three of these students were already receiving CalFresh benefits and 28% were using food-based campus resources.

FIGURE 2 | PERCENT OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY, RECEIVING CALFRESH, OR USING A FOOD-BASED CAMPUS RESOURCE

Source | 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey
Notes | Students shared whether they had ever heard of or used a variety of campus-based resources, not only food-based campus resources (N = 49). For more details on the other campus-based resources, refer to the web appendices. Some students may have used multiple campus resources.

Better information systems could help colleges improve how they target their outreach efforts. States should take advantage of recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. It suggests using financial aid data to identify students who are likely income-eligible for federal benefits.[11] This data could serve as a valuable tool for reaching students most likely to qualify for and benefit from SNAP eligibility, among other basic needs supports.

> **Lesson #3:** Students remember the text messages sent by their college.

Nearly 8 in 10 Compton College students who received text messaging remembered the texts (not shown, see web appendices). In addition, 62% of students who received a text felt supported by their college in comparison to 43% of students who did not receive a text (not shown, see web appendices). This finding suggests that text messages are an effective tool in increasing awareness about SNAP and other supports while also demonstrating care for students.

For many colleges, institutional capacity and limited staffing may be a barrier to effectively communicating with students. Colleges should identify and provide training to equip multiple core support staff across offices to administer text messaging outreach to students. Centralizing the outreach operations while sharing information across offices can ensure consistency of messaging to students and reduce text message fatigue.

The texts I received from Compton made me feel…

" **Good**, knowing that there is a place I can go if I needed help with food."

" **Good** to see that Compton College is concerned about their students."

" **Relieved** to know there is somewhere to go in case I need to apply [for CalFresh]."

" **Assured** that there are resources available."

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Lesson #4: The content and tone of text messages matter to students.

In the pilot intervention, we sent text messages to Compton College students four times over four weeks. One set of texts provided basic information on how to sign up for CalFresh benefits (i.e., info-only messages), while the other set of texts provided the same information but with framing that normalized the experience of needing additional resources (i.e., attuned messages; Figure 3). Students perceived the attuned messages as more empowering than the messages with basic information (not shown, see web appendices).

FIGURE 3 | EXAMPLE OF TEXT MESSAGES

INFO ONLY vs ATTUNED

Hey, this is Lauren with Compton College. If you need help paying for food, check out CalFresh. It is a state program that awards up to $234 a month for groceries.

Hey, this is Lauren with Compton College. **We know money is tight for most students.** That's why we are connecting students to CalFresh, a state program that awards up to $234 a month for groceries. Whatever your situation, **we want to help you focus on studying and make progress toward your goals.**

This finding suggests that the content and tone of messages sent to students are important. Practitioners should use caring messaging and target communication during times of elevated need such as the end of the month or before financial aid is disbursed.[12] Moreover, they should normalize talking about basic needs insecurity and the use of SNAP benefits as well as affirm the college's commitment to helping students obtain support without shame or judgment. Given that text messages are not effective after a certain length, balancing the right amount of content may require creativity.[13]

> **Lesson #5:** Clear communication about SNAP policies is challenging.

Based on insight provided by state, community, and advocacy groups conducting outreach efforts in California, we learned that communication and implementation challenges within the complex CalFresh ecosystem create most, if not all, of the obstacles for the partners helping college students get access to the benefit. For instance, while policy guidance regarding changes to SNAP eligibility guidelines is regularly distributed at the federal and state level, ensuring that the information is disseminated through training at the county level promptly across regions can be difficult. This results in inconsistent and unclear communication to students regarding changes in SNAP eligibility. The support of advocates and well-informed staff at colleges is critical to helping students navigate how to access and maintain their benefits.

Summary and Additional Recommendations

Reducing food insecurity among college students is a retention strategy.[14] Results from similar low-touch interventions have shown that nudging increases students' use of campus resources and their academic outcomes.[15] Supplemental Nutritional Assistannce Program presents no additional costs for colleges, and it allows college students to shop for food on an ongoing basis with dignity. By using outreach tools like text-based nudging, colleges can equip students with the proper information and resources to access SNAP and support their food security and success in college.

Student affairs staff, especially those in direct contact with students and responsible for managing non-academic support programs, can be game-changers by helping shift the perception of SNAP and advancing equity practices to close the SNAP gap. These practitioners are the catalysts of institutional transformation toward increasing student success and require support from their leaders to establish successful partnerships on and off campus that properly support and serve students.

Education leaders should consider implementing the following practices:

Increase Awareness & Enhance Outreach

- Improve outreach messaging to students by:
  - Identifying key offices/staff to run targeted and personalized outreach about SNAP and other benefits at different points of the semester, especially before tuition payment due dates and toward the end of the month when bills become harder to pay.

- o Considering which students should be targeted for outreach, how often they should be contacted, and offer an option for students to opt-out from receiving notifications.

- o Centering equity by ensuring that text message language is free from bias and that the messages resonate with all students. Avoid jargon and normalize the conversation about basic needs. For example, "Do you need help affording groceries this month?" is a more effective question than "Are you experiencing food insecurity?"

- o Reducing the requirements and administrative burden limiting staff's ability to send personalized communication to students via text.

- Engage and train student leaders to promote SNAP awareness and support enrollment on-campus and virtually. Ask students to pay attention in case their peers need help. An example text-based nudge could include messaging such as, "Many students struggle to afford food. Got a friend short on grocery money? CalFresh can help."

- Collect and share data about the impact of outreach efforts on student SNAP enrollment and academic success.

- Promote a culture of care, support faculty and staff to do this work, and engage your board to advance basic needs efforts as part of your institution's strategic plan.

Build Institutional Capacity Through Collaboration

- Take advantage of Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) dollars and state funding to conduct SNAP outreach and centralize basic needs supports.[16]

- Form an on-campus basic needs task force to increase the reach and impact of SNAP and align other basic needs supports efforts.[17]

- Partner with the county to break down communication barriers, share data to target outreach to students, and streamline/troubleshoot issues with students' SNAP applications.

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About The Hope Center

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice is an action research center transforming higher education into a more effective, equitable, and impactful sector using a powerful combination of applied scientific research, technical assistance to colleges and universities, policy advising with state and federal governments, and strategic communications. We believe that students are humans first and that their basic needs are central conditions for learning. We are redefining what it means to be a student-ready college with a national movement centering #RealCollege students' basic needs.

To learn more about the report's authors, visit hope4college.com/team/. For media inquiries, contact Editorial Director, Nicole Hacker, at nicole.hacker@temple.edu.

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Notes and References

[1] SNAP is referred to as CalFresh in California. For use of SNAP among college students, see: U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2019, January). *Food insecurity: Better information could help eligible college students access federal food assistance benefits, GAO-19-95*.

[2] U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2018, September). *Public service loan forgiveness: Education needs to provide better information for the loan servicer and borrowers, GAO-18-547*.

[3] Goldrick-Rab, S., Coca, V., Kienzl, G., Welton, C. R., Dahl, S., & Magnelia, S. (2020). *#RealCollege during the pandemic: New evidence on basic needs insecurity and student well-being.* The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice; The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2021). *#RealCollege 2021: Basic needs insecurity during the ongoing pandemic.*

[4] *Cal. Educ. Code § 66027.8(d). (2017).*

[5] Nudges are messages that encourage students to engage in a certain behavior, such as using supports.

[6] "Attuned" outreach is a term coined by Shannon Brady and Greg Walton. For more on this approach, see: Goldrick-Rab, S., Baker-Smith, C., Bettinger, E., Walton, G., Brady, S., Gill, J., & Looker, E. (2022). *Connecting community college students to non-tuition supports during the COVID-19 pandemic*. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

[7] Both focus groups and meetings occurred in June 2021.

[8] For more details on all the campus-based resources used, refer to the web appendices.

[9] This finding is consistent with information collected nationally. See: The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021.

[10] Balzer Carr, B. & London, R. A. (2020). *Healthy, housed, and well-fed: Exploring basic needs support programming in the context of university student success*. *AERA Open*.

[11] Federal Student Aid. (2022, January). *Use of FAFSA data to administer federal programs*, GEN-22-02. U.S. Department of Education.

[12] Raphael, S. & Goldrick-Rab, S. (2020, March). *Beyond the food pantry: Social work case management*. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

[13] For more examples of attuned text messages, see The Hope Center's recent paper on a nudging intervention at Dallas College entitled, *Connecting community college students to non-tuition supports during the COVID-19 pandemic*.

[14] King, J., Umaña, P., Conroy, E., & Welton, C. (2021, February). *Beyond the food pantry: Recommendations for higher education institutions to implement federal guidance on SNAP expansion for college students during COVID-19*. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

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[15] Goldrick-Rab, S., Clark, K., Baker-Smith, C., & Witherspoon, C. (2021). *Supporting the whole community college student: The impact of nudging for basic needs security*. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

[16] Price, D., & Umaña, P. (2021, May). *Beyond the food pantry: One-stop center models: A guide to centralizing students' basic needs supports*. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

[17] Umaña, P., & Hacker, N. L. (n.d.). *Beyond the food pantry: How to form a campus basic needs task force*. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

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Connecting Community College Students to SNAP Benefits: Lessons Learned from a Pilot Outreach Intervention in California

WEB APPENDICES

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Appendix A. Intervention & Survey Design

STUDY ELIGIBILITY

In the fall of 2021, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice partnered with Compton College to evaluate the impact of sending students text messages (or "nudges") about CalFresh, California's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Students were eligible for the study if they met the following criteria:

- Enrolled in the fall of 2021;
- 18 years or older;
- Not enrolled in a dual-enrollment program;
- Enrolled in a certificate or degree-program for at least two semesters (as early as fall 2019); and
- Either received a Pell Grant or Cal Grant, were eligible for work study, had an Expected Family Contribution of $0, received emergency aid (e.g., CARES funding), OR did not submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).[1]

RANDOMIZATION

In early September 2021, 1,539 students who met the eligibility criteria were randomly assigned to one of three approximately equal-sized groups:

- **No outreach (n=539):** Students in this group did not receive any text messages. They served as the comparison group. While students in the no outreach group did not receive the nudge text messaging, they were still able to apply for CalFresh and use this benefit.
- **Information-only (n=500):** Students in this group received informational text messages about signing up for CalFresh benefits.
- **Attuned, or stigma-reducing (n=500):** Students in this group received texts that contained the same information about CalFresh sign-up, but they included additional language to help students recognize that non-tuition supports like CalFresh are positive, useful, and geared toward helping students focus on degree completion.

During randomization, the groups were checked for equivalency across the following student characteristics: gender, age, full-time status, filed a FAFSA, and race/ethnicity (Table A-1). Outreach and no outreach groups were determined to be equivalent according to the What Works Clearinghouse standards.[2] We shared the results of the randomized study assignment with our Compton partners.

Students in the study, on average, were in their mid-twenties and disproportionately female (Table A-1). Fifty-seven percent of study participants were Latinx, 29% were Black, and 14% identified with another race or ethnicity. In addition, about half of all students in the study filed

a FAFSA or received a Cal Grant. About one in four students received a Pell Grant and about three in ten students were enrolled full-time. Overall, differences between study groups (outreach vs. no outreach) were small.

TABLE A-1 | BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FULL STUDY SAMPLE, BY STUDY ASSIGNMENT

| | Total Sample (N=1,539) | Outreach Groups | | Both Outreach Groups (N=1,000) | No Outreach Group (N=539) |
		Info Only (N=500)	Attuned (N=500)		
Age (mean)	27	27	27	27	27
Gender Identity					
Female (%)	64	64	63	63	65
Male (%)	35	35	37	37	33
Race and Ethnicity					
Latinx (%)	57	57	58	57	57
Black (%)	29	29	27	28	31
Another race (%)	14	14	15	15	12
Financial Aid Status					
Filed FAFSA (%)	46	46	46	46	46
Has Cal Grant (%)	48	48	48	48	47
Has Pell Grant (%)	26	26	24	24	29
Enrollment Status					
Full-time (%)	31	31	30	31	31

Source | Compton College administrative records

Notes | For race, the category labeled as "another race" was used to aggregate racial and ethnic groups with small sample sizes. Pell Grant recipients may have also applied for and received a Cal Grant. Full-time students were enrolled in 12 or more units in the fall.

SCHEDULE OF INTERVENTION

The intervention, text messaging to encourage CalFresh signup, took place between September 14th and October 4th, 2021. Four text messages were sent to study participants in the outreach groups via Compton's one-way text messaging platform. The first and third texts were sent at 10am local (Pacific) time, and the second and fourth texts were sent at 12pm local (Pacific) time.

- Text 1: Tuesday, September 14, 2021
- Text 2: Monday, September 27, 2021
- Text 3: Thursday, September 30, 2021

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- Text 4: Monday, October 4, 2021

SAMPLE NUDGES

Information-Only	Attuned
Hey [student name], this is Lauren with Compton College. If you are struggling to pay for groceries, CalFresh assistance can help. Click here to learn more: https://students.getcalfresh.org/	Hey [student name], this is Lauren with Compton College. We know many students are having trouble paying for groceries. If you are, CalFresh assistance can help. We want to support you, so you can focus on studying and work toward your goals. Click here to learn more: https://students.getcalfresh.org/

SURVEY ELIGIBILITY

From the total study sample of 1,539 students, 500 students (166 in the no outreach group, 167 in the info-only group, and 167 in the attuned group) were randomly selected to receive invitations to participate in a follow-up survey. Students from the no outreach, information-only, and attuned groups had an equal chance of receiving invitations to the survey.

SCHEDULE OF SURVEY REMINDERS

Students in the survey sub-sample were sent invitations to take the survey via text message and email from October 7th to October 29th, 2021. In total, students received four text message invitations to the survey and two email invitations to the survey. The Hope Center provided the email and text message invitation language as shown in Appendix B. To increase survey participation, students were offered a chance to receive a $100 gift card.

Upon sending the first text message, Compton identified 32 students (16 in the information-only group, along with 16 in the attuned group) who did not receive texts. The Hope Center randomly identified 32 students who met the eligibility criteria to replace these students in the study. Background characteristics for the final study sample are available in Table A-1.

The survey was developed by The Hope Center and hosted on Compton College's Qualtrics platform. Upon opening the survey, students were presented with a consent form in compliance with Institutional Review Board standards. To take the survey, the student had to click continue as a record of consent and complete a minimum of the first page of the survey.

Two weeks into the survey fielding, Compton College received feedback from students that the link to the survey was not working in the text message invitations. Due to this feedback, the deadline for taking the survey was extended from October 21st to October 29th, and Compton

sent two email messages invitations to the survey. Originally, the survey was only to be advertised via text message.

SAMPLE SURVEY RECRUITMENT MESSAGING

SAMPLE SURVEY RECRUITMENT TEXT MESSAGING

Hey, this is [STAFF FIRST NAME] with Compton College. Life is a lot right now and Compton College needs help figuring out how best to support you. This survey is the place to share your thoughts. Please take it now! Click here: [SURVEY LINK]

Everything you say is confidential, and the survey will take no more than 20 minutes. In appreciation, you can win a $100 gift card.

SAMPLE SURVEY RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear [STUDENT FIRST NAME],

Let's get real. Life is a lot right now. You're the expert when it comes to what's happening with you. Compton College wants to know how best to support you.

Tell us your thoughts in this survey, which will take no more than 20 minutes. In appreciation, you can win a $100 gift card.

Click here to take the survey:
[SURVEY LINK]

If the link is not working, copy and paste it into your web browser.

Please be honest—everything you say is confidential.

We have partnered with The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University to administer this survey. If you have questions, send a note to The Hope Center at hopesrvy@temple.edu.

Thanks in advance,

[STAFF FIRST NAME AND EMAIL SIGNATURE]

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

About 10% of the 500 students invited to the survey responded (i.e., 49 out of 500 students). Mirroring patterns seen in other college surveys, female students were disproportionately more likely than their male counterparts to respond to our survey (while female students accounted for 64% of the study sample, they were 83% of the survey sample; Table A-2).[3] In addition, students who filed a FAFSA, received a Cal Grant or Pell Grant, and who were enrolled at a full-time status are overrepresented in our survey sample in comparison to our full study sample.

TABLE A-2 | BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE, BY STUDY ASSIGNMENT

	Total Survey Sample (N=49)	Outreach Groups		Both Outreach Groups (N=35)	No Outreach Group (N=14)
		Info Only (N=20)	Attuned (N=15)		
Age (mean)	27	30	29	29	27
Gender Identity					
Female (%)	83	83	84	82	85
Male (%)	17	17	16	18	15
Race and Ethnicity					
Latinx (%)	53	53	48	50	62
Black (%)	34	34	40	38	23
Another race (%)	13	13	12	12	15
Financial Aid Status					
Filed FAFSA (%)	66	66	74	68	62
Has Cal Grant (%)	66	66	74	68	62
Has Pell Grant (%)	36	36	28	26	62
Enrollment Status					
Full-time (%)	43	43	37	38	54

Source | Compton College administrative records

Notes | For race, the category labeled as "another race" was used to aggregate racial and ethnic groups with small sample sizes. Pell Grant recipients may have also applied for and received a Cal Grant. Full-time students enrolled in 12 or more units in the fall.

Appendix B. Focus Group & Meeting Design

FOCUS GROUP WITH STUDENTS

On June 16, 2021, The Hope Center conducted an hour-long focus group with nine students enrolled at three community colleges in California: Irvine Valley College, Long Beach City College, and Mount San Antonio College. The purpose of the focus group was to determine (1) how students learned about CalFresh, and (2) what challenges they experienced when applying for CalFresh. The focus group was facilitated by two Hope Center staff via Zoom.

To recruit focus group participants, The Hope Center asked colleges in the #RealCollege California Coalition to advertise the focus group to their students. Students who were interested in the opportunity were directed to email The Hope Center. The first 19 students who emailed Hope received additional details and a calendar invitation with the Zoom link. Students who participated received a $15 gift card in gratitude for their participation. Of the 19 students who received the focus group details, 9 students attended and participated in the focus group.

MEETING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

On June 16, 2021, The Hope Center facilitated an hour-long meeting with California-based organizations that are working to increase college students' awareness of CalFresh. The purpose of the gathering was to convene influencers to (1) learn about current CalFresh outreach initiatives, along with challenges and barriers to that outreach, and (2) identify potential opportunities and actions to increase students' access to and utilization of CalFresh.

The meeting was facilitated by two Hope Center staff, and eight staff from the following organizations attended:

- California Community College Chancellor's Office
- Swipe Out Hunger
- GetCalFresh
- Rise
- John Burton Advocates for Youth
- California Community College Ambassador Program
- Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
- Foundation for California Community Colleges

Appendix C. Survey Measure of Food Insecurity

FOOD SECURITY
To assess food *security* in the fall of 2020, we used questions from the 18-item Household Food Security Survey Module (shown below) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It is important to note that while we mainly discuss *insecurity*, the standard is to measure the level of *security,* referring to those with low or very low security as "food insecure."

Food Security Module

Adult Stage 1
1. "In the last 30 days, I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more." (Often true, Sometimes true, Never true)
2. "In the last 30 days, the food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more." (Often true, Sometimes true, Never true)
3. "In the last 30 days, I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." (Often true, Sometimes true, Never true)

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)
5. [*If yes to question 4, ask*] "In the last 30 days, how many days did this happen?" (Once, Twice, Three times, Four times, Five times, More than five times)
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)
7. "In the last 30 days, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?" (Yes/No)
8. "In the last 30 days, did you lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food?" (Yes/No)

If the respondent answers "yes" to any of the questions in Adult Stage 2, then 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)
10. [*If yes to question 9, ask*] "In the last 30 days, how many days did this happen?" (Once, Twice, Three times, Four times, Five times, More than five times)

If the respondent has indicated that children under 18 are present in the household, then proceed to Child Stage 1.

Child Stage 1
11. "In the last 30 days, 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." (Often true, Sometimes true, Never true)
12. "In the last 30 days, I couldn't feed my children a balanced meal, because I couldn't afford that." (Often true, Sometimes true, Never true)
13. "In the last 30 days, my child was not eating enough because I just couldn't afford enough food." (Often true, Sometimes true, Never true)

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)
15. "In the last 30 days, did your children ever skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?" (Yes/No)
16. [*If yes to question 15, ask*] "In the last 30 days, how often did this happen?" (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or more times)
17. "In the last 30 days, were your children ever hungry but you just couldn't afford more food?" (Yes/No)
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)

To calculate a raw score for food security, we counted the number of questions to which a student answered affirmatively.

a. "Often true" and "sometimes true" were counted as affirmative answers.
b. Answers of "Three times" or more were counted as a "yes." We translated the raw score into food security levels as follows:

Food security level	Raw Score	
	18-item (children present)	18-item (no children present)
High	0	0
Marginal	1–2	1–2
Low	3–7	3–5
Very Low	8–18	6–10

Appendix D. Detailed Tables from Analyses Referenced in the Practitioner Brief

TABLE D-1 | REASONS WHY STUDENTS DID NOT USE CAMPUS-BASED RESOURCES (FIGURE 1)

	%	N
I did not know they existed or were available	77	23
I do not think I am eligible	67	20
I do not know how to apply	67	20
Other people need those programs more than I do	50	15
I do not need these programs	37	11

I am embarrassed to apply	33	10
I had difficulty completing the application	20	6
People like me do not use programs like that	7	2
Other	5	1

Source | 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey

Notes | N = 30. Students were asked to respond 'yes' or 'no' to the above list of reasons if they used only one or two campus-based resources. All students who participated in the survey reported using at least one campus resource. See Table D-3 for full list of campus-based resources.

TABLE D-2 | PERCENT OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY AND PERCENT RECEIVING CALFRESH (FIGURE 2, PART 1)

	Experienced Food Insecurity		Received CalFresh Benefits	
	%	**N**	**%**	**N**
Overall	43	21	35	16
Gender Identity				
Female	46	18	35	13
Male	38	3	29	2
Race and Ethnicity				
Latinx	36	9	29	7
Black	44	7	50	7
Another race	83	5	17	1
Financial Aid Status				
Filed FAFSA	45	14	45	13
Has Cal Grant	45	14	45	13
Has Pell Grant	65	11	44	7
Enrollment Status				
Full-time student	45	9	35	6

Source | Compton College administrative records and 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey

Notes | This table displays students' experiences of food insecurity (N = 49) and rates of CalFresh use among students in the survey (N = 46). For race, the category labeled as "another race" was used to aggregate racial and ethnic groups with small sample sizes. Pell Grant recipients may have also applied for and received a Cal Grant. Full-time students enrolled in 12 or more units in the fall. For more details on how the measure of food insecurity was created, refer to the web appendices.

TABLE D-3 | PERCENT OF STUDENTS USING OF FOOD-BASED RESOURCES ON CAMPUS (FIGURE 2, PART 2)

	%	**N**
Counseling services	61	28
Laptops from Compton College	26	12

Wi-Fi Hotspots from Compton College	22	10
Used any food-based resource	28	13
Food pantry and/or local food bank	17	8
Emergency aid delivered on the Edquity app	17	8
Meals from Everytable	15	7
Meal vouchers from Ubereats	15	7
Produce (fruits and vegetables) from Sunrise Produce	6	3
Compton College scholarships	4	2
Rent assistance from Compton College and the Coalition of Responsible Development	4	2

Source | 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey

Notes | N = 47. Students were asked if they had ever used any of the above campus-based resources. All students who participated in the survey reported using at least one campus resource.

TABLE D-4 | STUDENTS WHO REMEMBER RECEIVING TEXT ABOUT CALFRESH, BY STUDY ASSIGNMENT (PAGE 4)

	Overall		Outreach Groups		No Outreach Group	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Remembered receiving text about CalFresh	62	28	78	25	23	3
Compton College is supportive of students like me	56	27	62	21	43	6

Source | 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey

Notes | Students were asked if they remembered receiving a text about CalFresh (N = 45). For the item on Compton College's support (N = 48), students were asked to rate their feelings on a five-point Likert scale (Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, and Extremely). This item is defined by students who felt 'Very' or 'Extremely' supported by Compton College.

TABLE D-5 | HOW STUDENTS NOT RECEIVING CALFRESH LEARNED ABOUT IT

	%	N
Student has heard of CalFresh	83	25
If yes, how did you learn about it?		
From another person	52	13
From a text from Compton College	48	12
From a postcard or another source	8	2

Source | 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey

Notes | For students who were not receiving CalFresh benefits (N = 30), we asked them to share whether they had heard of the benefit. Among those who had heard of CalFresh (N = 25), we asked them to share how they learned about it. Some students may have reported multiple sources for how they heard about CalFresh. Students were listed as having heard about CalFresh from a person if the source of information came from a

friend or family member, a classmate, or Compton College faculty or staff. We did not disaggregate the results by study group due to small sample sizes.

TABLE D-6 | STUDENT SENSE OF BELONGING, BY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

	Overall		Black		Latinx		Parenting Student	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
I feel like I belong	66	31	79	11	60	15	80	16
I fit in well	70	33	64	9	76	19	70	14
I feel like an outsider	11	5	7	1	12	3	0	0
I feel comfortable	74	35	79	11	72	18	85	17
Compton College is supportive of students like me	56	27	67	10	48	12	65	13

Source | 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey

Notes | Data are from a survey of study participants who were asked various questions on how they felt about their experience at Compton College (Overall, N = 47; Black, n = 14; Latinx, n = 25; Parenting Students, n = 20).[4] For questions about students' feelings towards Compton College, students were asked to rate their feelings on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). Reported percentages represent students who 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' with each item. For the question on whether students felt Compton College had a supportive environment, students were asked to rate their feelings on a five-point Likert scale (Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, and Extremely). Reported percentages for this item reflect students who felt 'Very' or 'Extremely' supported by Compton College.

TABLE D-7 | STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEXT MESSAGING (PAGE 5)

Feeling about messages (Attuned in comparison to Information Only)	Overall	Students who Experienced Food Insecurity	Black Students	Latinx Students	Parenting Students
Respected	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Empowered	+	+	n/a	+	+
Motivated	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Understood	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cared for	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Supported	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Connected to Compton College	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Disconnected to Compton College	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source | 2021 Compton College CalFresh Pilot Outreach Study - Survey

Notes | Overall N = 44; Experienced food insecurity, n = 44; Black, n = 13; Latinx, n = 23; Parenting Students, n = 20. Data come from survey of student perceptions of different text nudges styles. All students were shown samples of the information-only and attuned text messages about CalFresh. After each text, students were asked about how the messaging made them feel in relation to Compton College. Students were asked to rate

their feelings on a five-point Likert scale (Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Very, and Extremely). Answers above with n/a indicate that perceptions of the two messaging styles did not differ at a p<0.10 significance level. A plus symbol indicates that students rated the attuned messaging higher than the information-only messaging at p<0.10.

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[1] Originally, we intended to include only students who submitted a FAFSA in the study. However, we expanded the study to include students who did not submit a FAFSA to obtain a sample large enough for this study as many of these students are likely eligible for federal financial aid and possibly SNAP benefits (TICAS, 2010). Moreover, according to California Community Colleges Chancellor's Data Mart, less than 5% of students in the Compton Community College district were non-U.S. citizens in the fall of 2021.

[2] We adhered to the What Works Clearinghouse Standards Handbook (version 4.1).

[3] Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., Goldrick-Rab, S., Looker, E., Richardson, B. & Williams, T. (2020, February). *#RealCollege 2020: Five years of evidence on campus basic needs insecurity*. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2020, January). *Current term enrollment estimates - Fall 2020*.

[4] The racial category "another race" was excluded from the analyses due to small sample sizes.

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