EVALUATION OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION: SWIPE OUT HUNGER

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INTRODUCTION

An estimated 1 in 2 college students experiences food insecurity while pursuing postsecondary credentials. Food insecurity is associated with compromised academic performance and lower rates of degree attainment. Many organizations around the country are seeking ways to address this problem. For ten years, a nonprofit organization called Swipe Out Hunger has been on a mission "to end college student hunger."

To advance that goal, Swipe Out Hunger (SOH) partners with college campuses to implement its flagship program, known as "The Swipe Drive" (SD). The SOH website lists three components of the SD, which together comprise its main program elements.

a) Students donate extra meal swipes;
b) Donated dollars are placed into a swipe fund; and
c) Swipe funds are used by hungry students via meal swipes or a campus food pantry.

Thus, the organization's guiding theory of change is that providing students with greater access to dine on campus or via a food pantry will reduce hunger. In August 2020, SOH's website reported that its movement "spans more than 120 colleges and has served 2 million nutritious meals to date." Is the Swipe Drive an effective approach to advancing the organization's stated mission? This two-part evaluation examines that important question.

We begin with a detailed assessment of how the program is implemented across SOH's sites. Fidelity of implementation is critical for ensuring program efficacy and contributes to the efficient use of resources. The national SOH office supports site-level implementation by providing technical assistance, data, training, and advocacy tools. This report examines SD implementation fidelity during the 2019–2020 academic year. The second part of the evaluation will rigorously assess the impact of the SD via a randomized controlled trial during the 2021-2022 academic year.

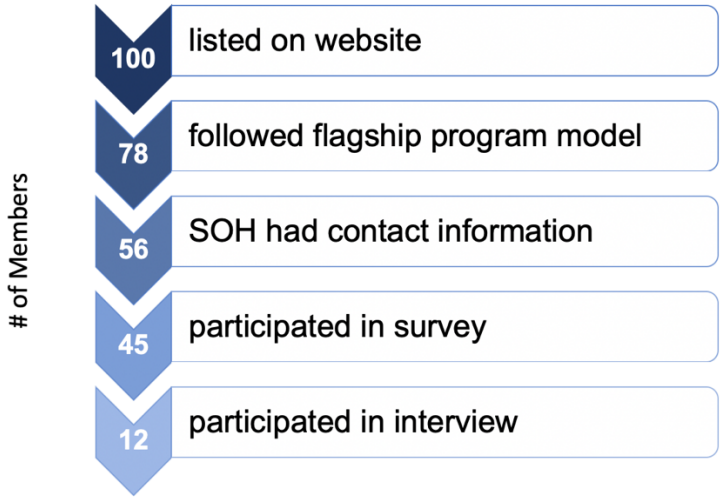
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

When this evaluation began in fall 2019, SOH's website listed 100 member colleges and universities. For this evaluation, SOH chose to focus on 56 sites, excluding those institutions that: (a) used SD to fund campus pantries, rather than dining hall swipes; (b) may not have been active program participants; and (c) had not provided SOH with current contact information.

The Hope Center invited these 56 sites to participate in both a 39-question electronic survey and a 45-minute interview. Eighty percent (45) of the 56 members

participated in the survey, with 21% then participating in the interview.[1] Figure 1 depicts the resulting funnel for the evaluation sample. All information presented in this report is based on the 45 members that completed the survey. We are therefore unable to report on nationwide SOH efforts outside of these 45 participating members, nor can we characterize program implementation by the other 55 members listed on the SOH website.

Figure 1. Swipe Out Hunger Evaluation Participant Funnel



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SWIPE DRIVE

The surveys and interviews revealed that the implementation fidelity of the Swipe Drive (SD) varies widely, depending on the level of student interest, member commitment, and institution capacity. We summarize these with 10 key observations. The data driving these observations are presented in Appendix A, including 14 tables summarizing the survey results. Please note that even among the 45 members completing

[1] In August 2019, SOH introduced The Hope Center to the 56 sites via email. Those sites were invited to participate in an online survey. The fielding period was from September through November 2019, and included three reminders. Thirty-three institutions (59%) responded to the survey. To increase participation, the survey was fielded again in April and May 2020. Twelve additional institutions responded in the second fielding, resulting in 45 total institutions (80% participation). At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they were willing to participate in an interview in exchange for a $50 gift card. Sixteen members indicated they were willing to be interviewed, the evaluation team followed up with them, and 12 institutions ultimately participated in an in-depth 30–60 minute interview (21% participation).

the survey, many institutions were unable to answer important questions about program implementation; these omissions are reflected in the lower response rates to key questions as well as the "unsure" response to several questions.

1. Nearly all of the sites that participated in the survey (93%) reported using the SD model. Combined with the knowledge that non-SD programs were excluded from this evaluation, we can therefore confirm that about 75% of the 100 SOH members listed on the program website (which includes those excluded from this evaluation) deploy the flagship program in some form. All offer the program to undergraduates, and most offer it to graduate students as well (Table A-1).

2. While SOH was founded in 2010, sites are overwhelmingly young, with 22% started in the last year and 47% just one to two years old. Only one-third of sites have existed for at least three years: 24% are three to five years old and 7% have been around for at least six years (Table A-1).

3. Senior-level staff at the college or university lead about half of the programs, while 56% have dedicated staff support (Tables A-2 and A-3).

4. Food service providers are generally cooperative with the SOH site. Eighty-two percent of members rate their food service provider's (FSP) cooperation with the SOH program as 75 or higher on a 100-point scale, with 100 being the most cooperative. About three in five sites work with Aramark, Bon Appetit, Chartwells, or Sodexo, while the rest work with an in-house dining service (Table A-4).

5. Sites generally have limited funding and related support. Sixty-one percent of programs have annual budgets of less than $20,000. Just 27% of programs are supported by a dining partner, 18% by the Dean of Students, and 12% by Student Life. Programs with additional support tend to report a greater sense of sustainability (Table A-5).

6. Only 63% of sites advertise their efforts to receive swipe donations, despite funding struggles. The most common approaches to advertising are word-of-mouth (28%), websites (19%), and social media (14%). Correspondingly, just 27% of institutions report that their students are at least moderately aware of the SD. Interviews indicate that a lack of capacity constrains the ability to advertise more widely and that further exploration of advertising constraints would be helpful (Tables A-3, A-6, and A-7).

7. Almost two-thirds of sites require students to apply for access to food (Table A-8).

8. Student resources vary greatly across sites, with one-third of sites indicating that they do not have enough swipes and one-third reporting they have more than enough. (This spread may reflect other factors, including demand and advertising.) Two-thirds of sites limit the number of swipes students can receive. About half of the sites said they had more than 700 swipes available for students in the last academic year (Tables A-9–11).

9. Three-quarters of sites load swipes directly on to student ID cards, which is the method preferred by both administrators and students. Sites explained that while this approach is more demanding to set up, and likely involves coordination between multiple offices, the long-term benefits outweigh the initial labor. Four programs (10%) reported using physical vouchers. Interview participants shared that physical vouchers are not ideal because they are more difficult to distribute, they can be lost, and they may perpetuate stigmas related to food insecurity. Four sites (10%) use cards preloaded with a certain number of swipes, an alternative to physical vouchers when it is not possible to coordinate with student IDs (Tables A-9–11).

10. Most sites are not collecting and recording sufficient data to measure program utilization. This contributes to uncertainty about how many students received swipes and how supply relates to demand (Tables A-9–11).

CROSS-SITE PROGRAM FIDELITY

Using data from the surveys and the interviews, we developed a rubric of Swipe Out Hunger program fidelity that makes it possible to assess the current strength of overall program implementation. Figure 2 describes the specific characteristics associated with low, medium, and high implementation fidelity, defined as follows:

- Low fidelity programs have few resources and can only support a small number of students. It is difficult for these programs to meet students' needs, often due to limited buy-in across the institutions.
- Medium fidelity programs support a moderate number of students but with limited resources. These programs would benefit from additional partnerships and technical assistance.
- High implementation programs support a large number of students through high-quality partnerships utilizing best practices.

Figure 2. Fidelity of Swipe Out Hunger Program Site Implementation

Area of Focus	Fidelity of Program Implementation		
	Low	Medium	High
Relationship to SOH National	No relationship, operates independently	Some relationship, utilizes some resources (e.g., coaching calls, student training, program evaluation)	Strong relationship, utilizes resources to manage and/or expand the program (e.g., coaching calls, student training, program evaluation)
	Staff do not utilize SOH program model or name/logo	Staff utilize either SOH program model or name/logo	Staff utilize SOH program model and name/logo
Institutional Support	No staff support, managed by volunteers	Some staff support (small part of job description)	Dedicated staff, or staff coordinates and paid student workers manage
	No dedicated funding from institution	Dedicated short-term funding from institution	Dedicated long-term funding from institution
	No dedicated space on campus	Dedicated space on campus	Dedicated space on campus used to provide support to students
Partner Relationships	Weak partnerships across campus	Moderate partnerships across campus	Strong partnerships across campus
	No attempt to create new partnerships across campus	Occasional check-ins and coordination with partners	Regular check-ins and coordination with partners to improve processes
	No shared goals or coordinated work processes	Partnerships support the program, but coordination efforts or their frequency could be improved	Work across campus is highly coordinated with smooth, well-practiced hand off processes between different offices

Area of Focus	Fidelity of Program Implementation		
	Low	Medium	High
Support from Food Service Provider (FSP)	No or low cooperation	Medium to high cooperation	High cooperation
	No logistical or staffing support provided	Minimal logistical or staffing support provided	Logistical or staffing support provided
	FSP has a strict limit on number of swipes students can donate	FSP has a moderate limit on number of swipes students can donate	FSP has no limit on number of swipes students can donate
Advertising	No or minimal advertising	Advertised to particular groups of students	Program widely advertised to all students
	At most one advertising method	More than one advertising method (e.g., social media, email, flyers)	Multiple advertising methods (e.g., social media, email, flyers)
	Few students aware of the program	Substantial number of students aware of the program	Most students are aware of the program
Application	Long and difficult to complete	Straightforward and easy to complete	Straightforward, short, and easy to complete
	Not available online	Available online but not easy to find	Available online and easy to find
	Process not widely shared with students	Process widely shared, but not actively advertised	Process actively advertised widely
Student Eligibility	Limited with large number of eligibility criteria	Moderate number of eligibility criteria required (e.g., Pell Grant recipient or undocumented student)	Few to no eligibility criteria
	Students must meet specific criteria, which exclude many students	Eligibility criteria are focused on supporting the majority of students, with some limitations	Most students at both graduate and undergraduate levels are eligible if they request support

Area of Focus	Fidelity of Program Implementation		
	Low	Medium	High
Scale	Program supports a small number of students each semester	Program supports a moderate number of students per semester	Program supports many students per semester
	Students can receive few swipes per semester (less than five)	Students can receive a moderate number of swipes per semester	Students can receive swipes up to the equivalent of a full meal plan per semester
	Swipes distributed through physical vouchers	Swipes distributed through preloaded cards	Swipes loaded onto student ID cards
Data/Evaluation	Program collects no data for evaluation purposes	Program collects some data and provides some data to national for evaluation purposes	Program regularly collects data and provides data to national for evaluation purposes
	Data not shared between campus partners	Data shared with campus partners, although not frequently used to make decisions	Data shared with campus partners and frequently used to make decisions
Sustainability	Inconsistent leadership (e.g., staff turnover)	Consistent leadership	Consistent leadership involving senior leaders
	No outreach to students	Some outreach to students (e.g., word of mouth, website)	Extensive outreach to students (e.g., word of mouth, website, social media, tabling, staff meetings with students)
	Do not have enough meal vouchers to meet demand	Usually have enough meal vouchers to meet demand	Have enough meal vouchers to meet demand
	Program has few swipes available for use (less than ~300/academic year)	Program has a moderate number of swipes available for use (~300–700/ academic year)	Program has a high number of swipes available for use (more than ~700/ academic year)
	Difficult to collect swipes or Swipe Drive raises few swipes	Swipe Drive generally successful, but would like to collect more swipes	Swipe Drive successful and collects sufficient swipes

We assigned each site an overall level of program fidelity, based on survey responses.[2] Table 1 summarizes the results by the age of the program and the level of leadership. In addition, the Appendix lists the program fidelity level for each site (Table A-14).

Sixteen percent of sites exhibit high fidelity to the program model, 62% exhibit medium fidelity, and 22% exhibit low fidelity. Institutions exhibiting higher program fidelity tend to be led by senior leaders (i.e., associate or assistant deans of students); however, age of the program does not correlate directly higher fidelity of implementation.

Table 1. Fidelity of Implementation Across Sites

	Fidelity of Program Implementation		
	Low	Medium	High
# of Sites	10	28	7
Program Age			
Less than 1 year	0	9	1
1 to 2 years	5	13	3
3 to 5 years	3	5	3
6 or more years	1	2	0
Leadership Level			
Junior	8	15	0
Senior	1	11	7

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the national Swipe Out Hunger program now includes more than 100 members, there is widespread variation in the extent to which its core program—The Swipe Drive—is implemented with fidelity to ensure effectiveness. Some sites adhere to the program model and use the national program name, while a substantial number (as many as one in four) do not. This program flexibility may be intentional, as it creates a low barrier to entry and helps SOH increase the size of its membership. However, variation in

[2] If institutions did not provide complete survey data, they received a lower score, as compliance in providing data for program evaluation is a key part of strong program implementation.

program fidelity may limit the program's capacity to succeed at its mission of sufficiently supporting students to reduce hunger.

Examining the practices used by high fidelity sites and providing lower fidelity sites with greater technical assistance may improve program efficacy. Sites clearly need more institutional support when it comes to engaging senior leadership, building partnerships across campus, advertising to students, and developing a positive relationship with food service providers, which includes financial support and the placement of swipes on student ID cards. While implementation will always vary across sites, reflecting specific community needs, in order to be effective SOH's theory of change must be matched by adequate funding, staff time, and at least some institutional commitment to addressing food insecurity.

When preparing for the second stage of evaluation, it may be useful for SOH to consider whether its current theory of change and organizational scale is the best way to advance its mission to "end student hunger." Hunger is associated with the very lowest level of food security. Many students who do not experience hunger but do experience food insecurity have limited or uncertain access to food, insufficiently nutritious food, or difficulty acquiring food in a socially acceptable manner. To effectively end student hunger, SOH would need to substantially improve the ability of students to eat on a daily basis, which may be challenging given current program implementation. It is possible that investing more in a smaller number of sites to achieve high fidelity program implementation before scaling the program would lead to greater efficacy.

APPENDIX A

TABLE A-1. Characteristics of Participating SOH Programs

	N	%
Program Age (Years)		
Less than 1	10	22
1–2	21	47
3–5	11	24
6 or more	3	7
Allow Swipe Donations From Students?		
Yes	42	93
No	3	7
Students Served		
Undergraduates	45	100
Graduates	41	91

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. "Students Served" refers to whether institutions' SOH programs serve undergraduates, graduates, or both.

TABLE A-2. Seniority of College and University Staff Running SOH Programs

	N	%
Senior leadership	19	43
Not senior leadership	23	52
Unsure	2	5

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Level of seniority was coded from respondents' reported job titles; when level of seniority was unclear from respondent's title, respondent was coded as "unsure."

TABLE A-3. Institutional Support of SOH Programs

	N	%
Dedicated staff member	23	56
Staff member with SOH program in job description	23	56
Advertising support	26	63
Funds to buy swipes	15	37
Space on campus	20	49
Other supports	9	22
No institutional supports	4	10

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Types of institutional support are not mutually exclusive.

TABLE A-4. Food Service Provider Cooperation with SOH Programs

	N	%
Somewhat uncooperative	4	14
Neither cooperative nor uncooperative	1	4
Cooperative	11	39
Completely cooperative	12	43

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Respondents who reported that they had worked with their institution's food service provider to establish their SOH program were asked to rate food service provider cooperation on a scale from 0 to 100, with 0 as "not at all cooperative" and 100 as "completely cooperative." Responses were assigned categories based on the overall distribution of responses: "somewhat uncooperative" corresponds to responses between 30 and 40, "neither cooperative nor uncooperative" corresponds to a response of 60, "cooperative" corresponds to responses between 75 and 99, and "completely cooperative" corresponds to responses of 100. Note the high proportion of respondents who indicated that their food service provider was completely cooperative. Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE A-5. Estimated Amount of Institutional Financial Support for SOH Programs

Financial Support (thousands of dollars)	N	%
0–5	11	33
5–10	4	12
10–20	5	15
20–30	2	6
30–40	1	3
40–50	1	3
50–60	4	12
60–70	2	6
70–80	1	3
80–90	0	0
90–100	0	0
More than 100	2	6

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Respondents were asked to estimate the dollar amount of the support their institution provides to their SOH program, including staff salary for institutions with dedicated staff. The question was only asked of respondents who indicated they received at least one of several kinds of institutional support for their program. The N column indicates the number of institutions who estimated receiving support at each funding level. Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE A-6. Most Used Advertising Method by SOH Program

	N	%
Word of mouth	12	28
Website	8	19
Social media	6	14
Student-led tabling	5	12
Staff who meet with students	4	9
Meal swipe donation drives	4	9
Campus posters	2	5
Other	2	5
Distributing flyers	0	0
Faculty syllabi	0	0

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Respondents were asked to rank the above advertising methods by most- to least-used method at their institution. This table (and the corresponding figure in the text) display the number of respondents who marked each choice as their most frequently used method of advertising. For example, zero respondents chose faculty syllabi as their top advertising method. However, this does not mean that no institution surveyed used faculty syllabi to advertise; it simply was not the most frequently used method of any institution.

TABLE A-7. Perceived Student Awareness of SOH Programs

Level of Awareness	N	%
Among General Student Population		
Extremely	1	2
Moderately	10	24
Somewhat	19	46
Slightly	10	24
Not at all	1	2
Among Students Perceived to Need Support from SOH Program		
Extremely	4	10
Moderately	16	40
Somewhat	15	38
Slightly	5	13
Not at all	0	0

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE A-8. Application Requirements Among SOH Programs

	N	%
Requires formal application	29	64
Does not require formal application	8	18
Requires application only for more than a small number of swipes	4	9
Other	4	9

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE A-9. Swipe Utilization in the Past Academic Year

	N	%
Total Swipes Available For Use		
0–50	3	7
50–100	3	7
100–300	8	20
300–500	5	12
500–700	2	5
700–1,000	2	5
More than 1,000	18	44
Number of Students Who Received Swipes		
0–25	8	20
25–50	5	12
50–75	3	7
75–100	5	12
100–150	3	7
150–200	3	7
200–300	3	7
300–400	2	5
400–500	1	2
More than 500	5	12
Unsure	3	7

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Respondents were asked about the total swipes available and the number of students who received those swipes during the past academic year. Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE A-10. Swipe Usage Limits for Students

	N	%
Maximum Swipes Per Semester		
1–5	5	12
5–10	8	20
10–20	7	17
20–50	3	7
No limit	13	32
Unsure	5	12
Maximum Swipes Students Can Receive At One Time		
1–5	12	29
5–10	9	22
10–20	5	12
20–50	6	15
No limit	4	10
Unsure	5	12

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Ranges for swipe usage limits are condensed for clarity. Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE A-11. SOH Program Perceptions of Swipe Availability for Students Who Request Swipes

Availability of Swipes	N	%
Not enough	14	35
The right amount	10	25
More than enough	13	33
Unsure	3	8

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE A-12. Method of Swipe Distribution Among SOH Programs

	N	%
Physical vouchers	4	10
Swipes loaded to student ID cards	31	76
Cards preloaded with a certain number of swipes	4	10
Other	2	5

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE A-13. Swipe Donation Limits Across Institutions

	N	%
Is There A Limit to the Total Number of Swipes Donated?		
Yes	17	40
No	22	51
Unsure	4	9
Maximum Swipes Donated Per Academic Year		
100–500	3	27
600–1,000	0	0
1,500 or 2,000	3	27
2,500 or 3,000	1	9
3,500 or 4,000	1	9
4,500 or 5,000	3	27

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: Respondents only answered the question about maximum swipes donated per academic year if they reported that their institution had a limit on the total number of swipes donated. Ranges for maximum swipes donated are condensed for clarity. Cumulative percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table A-14. Member Program Fidelity Levels

High Fidelity Institutions
UC Irvine
UMBC
University of Connecticut
University of Delaware
3 Unknown
Medium Fidelity Institutions
Boise State
Cal Poly Pomona
Cal State Bakersfield
Cal State East Bay
Georgetown University
UC Santa Cruz
UCLA
University of Arkansas
Western Washington University
19 Unknown
Low Fidelity Institutions
Bowling Green State University
Cal State Monterey Bay
Carnegie Mellon University
UC Davis
UC Santa Barbara
University of New Hampshire
Willamette
3 Unknown

Source: The Hope Center survey of Swipe Out Hunger programs

Notes: The first survey administration did not ask participants for their institution name. If institution could not be identified, it is labeled as "Unknown".