



 Berkeley Staff Assembly  
**Food Security Survey Results**  
May 2017

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## Executive Summary

There often is a stigma placed by society upon adults who are unable to provide for themselves and/or their children. More frequently, those who are struggling feel a self-imposed shame which prevents them from reaching out to get help. The Berkeley Staff Assembly Governing Council (BSA-GC) knew some of our colleagues were having financial difficulty based on experiences they shared with us over the years but because few share the actual depth of their struggles, we do not know how many are impacted or the extent of their difficulties. The cover photograph for this report is from one staff member who overcame their reluctance and shared with us a photo of what food insecurity means for them. When the Occidental College report<sup>1</sup> was released indicating a large number of UC clerical, administrative and support employees represented by the Teamsters reported experiencing food insecurity, we decided to take steps to learn more about the level of food insecurity among all staff on the Berkeley campus. Therefore, we launched an informal survey open to all University of California, Berkeley staff members on November 4, 2016.

The survey contained questions regarding general food security based the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 6-Item Food Security Survey Module, the impact of food insecurity, and the respondent so that we could get a better idea about which segments of our community are impacted. The first contained six required questions. The second section was optional and asked whether respondents had made choices between buying food and basic living, medical, and other expenses. The final section, also optional, collected demographic data about whether the staff member was covered by policy or collective-bargaining agreement, years of service, salary, and whether they were the sole source of income and if they had dependents. The survey was made available in English via an online form and hard copy surveys were available in Chinese, English, and Spanish. We received 247 responses between November 4, 2016 and January 6, 2017. The majority of responses (69%) came from policy-covered staff with 20% of the remaining respondents exclusively covered by collective bargaining, 3% partially covered by collective bargaining/having multiple appointments consisting of policy and agreement-covered positions, and 8% choosing not to identify.

Some of the results of our survey were anticipated. For example, given the campus staff workforce profile, most survey respondents were not currently impacted by food insecurity. In addition, it is understandable that our lowest paid staff, staff who were living on a single income, and staff with dependents would be more likely to experience food insecurity. However, we are deeply concerned by the high percentage of staff experiencing food insecurity (17% experiencing very low food security and another 20% in the low food security category using the USDA scoring method). The results also showed unexpectedly high percentages for staff in the \$50,001-\$80,000 salary band and among those who do not have dependents.

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<sup>1</sup> *Food Insecurity Among University of California Employees*, Urban & Environmental Policy Institute/Occidental College, October 2016 (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3146330-Occidental-UC-Employees-FINAL.html>)

Approximately 23-35% of those who completed the survey experienced some level of food insecurity during the previous 12-month period.

- 35% indicated it was often or sometimes true that "the food that I/we bought just didn't last, and I/we didn't have money to get more".
- 35 % indicated it was often or sometimes true that "I/we couldn't afford to eat balanced meals".
- 32% cut the size of their meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money with 34.6% doing so almost every month.
- 32% ate less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money for food.
- 23% did not eat when they were hungry because there wasn't enough money for food.

In addition, 29% reported having to choose between buying food and paying basic living expenses (e.g., rent/mortgage, utilities, and transportation to work). It was even higher (33%) when it came to paying other additional expenses such as credit cards, car payments, and student loans. Finally, 18% had to choose between food and medicine or medical care. The survey was not set up to be able to provide insight behind why fewer staff had to choose between food and medicine/medical care. We would like to acknowledge that the benefits provided by the University of California are above average. However, while lower medical and health care costs help reduce expenses, for those who are struggling their need is immediate and improved salary and benefits that would increase their disposable income would help them to make ends meet.

According to the Economic Policy Institute Family Budget Calculator,<sup>2</sup> the annual income a family with two adults and two children living in the Oakland/Fremont metro area needs in order to attain a modest yet adequate standard of living is \$81,621. For a single parent with two children it is only slightly less at \$77,091 and a single person is \$39,603. These figures are in 2014 dollars showing the cost of housing for a single person budgeted at \$1,035 per month. Today's cost of living would be even higher. According to the Zillow Rent Index,<sup>3</sup> the median rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in Oakland in February 2017 was \$2,473.

Our objective in releasing this report is to raise awareness among the campus community that food security is a broader issue on campus affecting not only students and staff covered by collective-bargaining, but policy-covered staff as well. It is our hope that we can work together as a community to bring about change to existing programs and policies, increase awareness of resources currently available, and develop innovative new initiatives and resources to help those staff impacted by food insecurity. Because identifying staff in need of assistance requires self-identification, it will be a challenge to come up with targeted solutions to help those most in need. In the interim, we are providing some suggestions on how we all can help and a list of various resources for those in need (Appendix B).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.zillow.com/oakland-ca/home-values/>

## Background

The Organization for Creative Management was founded in 1972 and was renamed the Berkeley Staff Assembly that we know today in 1981. We are a non-dues paying organization that includes all staff members at the University of California, Berkeley and are governed by a Governing Council (GC) elected by staff consisting of up to 24 members. The current Governing Council members are:

- Elizabeth Geno, Chair
- Erin Simmer, Chair-Elect
- Joanne Straley, Secretary
- Maria Kies, Treasurer
- Cheryl Olson, CUCSA Delegate (2<sup>nd</sup> Year)
- Jeanette Robinson, CUCSA Delegate (1<sup>st</sup> Year)
- Suresh Bhat
- Mark Brindle
- Camille Fernandez
- Rochelle Ford
- Casey Hennig
- Susie Hill
- Connie Hsu
- Carol Rachwald
- Kathleen Valerio
- Ion Vergara

We (the Governing Council) have been hearing from some of our fellow staff that they were having financial difficulties. When the Occidental College report was released indicating a large number of UC clerical, administrative and support employees represented by the Teamsters reported experiencing food insecurity, we wanted to learn more about the level of food insecurity among all staff on the Berkeley campus. Therefore, we launched an informal survey open to all University of California, Berkeley staff members on November 4, 2016.

## Data Collection

Survey Design: The survey contained a total of 15 questions. The first section contained six questions tagged as required and asking the respondent whether they experienced situations considered food insecurity in the USDA Food Security Module and how often this occurred in the previous 12-months. The second section was optional and asked whether respondents had made choices during this same period between buying food and basic living, medical, and other expenses. The final section, also optional, collected demographic data about whether the staff member was covered by policy or collective-bargaining agreements, years of service, salary range, whether they were the sole source of income, and if they had dependents.

Survey Distribution: The survey was made available in English via an online form and hard copy surveys were available in English, Spanish and Chinese. Only the questions on general food security were tagged as required. Google Forms was the tool chosen to collect information electronically. In addition, a paper version was created that could be printed and returned via campus mail. The paper version of the survey was also translated into Spanish and Chinese for staff more fluent in these languages who wished to respond to the survey. The links to all versions of the survey were posted on the BSA website (<http://bsa.berkeley.edu>) and communicated via other BSA channels such as our weekly announcements and BSA social media outlets on facebook and LinkedIn. We also sent the paper version to individuals in Student Affairs and the Real Estate division requesting further distribution to those staff without access to a computer or a CalNet account.

## **Results**

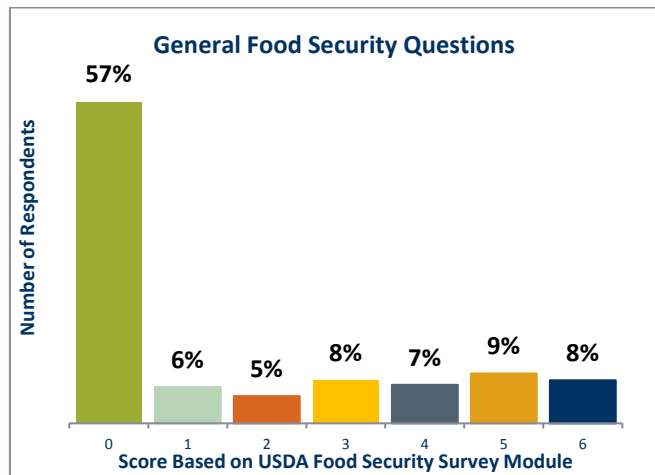
We received 247 responses through January 26, 2017. 228 surveys were completed online, 18 used the English language hard copy version, and one person utilized the Spanish-language version. Since there was nothing to prevent a respondent using the hard copy survey from skipping one or more of the required questions, we did not receive responses to all the required questions. However, the variance was statistically insignificant (245 versus 247 responses for the last two required questions) and so the non-responses are not included in the relevant charts. The same was true for the three questions regarding the impact of food insecurity. A copy of the full survey can be found in Appendix A. We are grateful to the staff who shared their thoughts and experiences with us by responding to Question 10 in the Impact of Food Security section. Many who responded acknowledged food insecurity as a potential issue for others and expressed their gratitude that they were not in the same situation. Others shared that they had experienced food insecurity in the past and those currently experiencing food insecurity shared their personal experiences. We've included some of their comments in text boxes throughout this section. Many of those who commented attributed financial difficulties to high cost of living in the Bay Area and salaries not keeping pace with rising costs. More than one person reported that they rely on credit cards to cover their expenses. While one respondent was skeptical that people may be answering that they can't afford to eat balanced meals simply due to other priorities, we don't believe this is the case based on the data and the experiences shared. We believe staff at Berkeley are appreciative of what food insecurity really means and would not attribute it to their situation if it were not the case. Even though a small number of total staff responded to our survey, we believe the following results are representative of all staff.

### **General food security questions**

The general food security section of our survey contained five required questions and one follow-up question. According to the instructions for the USDA's Six-Item Food Security Survey

Module<sup>4</sup>, responses of “Yes”, “Often true”, “Sometime true”, “Some months but not every month” and “Almost every month” are considered affirmative and each affirmative answer by a respondent is given a score of 1. Total cores of 0-1 are considered high food security, 2-4 low food security, and 5-6 very low food security. Using those criteria, 20% of our respondents experienced low food security in the previous 12 months with another 17% experiencing very low food security. The graph below shows the percentage of staff for each score, or in other words, the number of situations for which the respondent answered affirmatively.

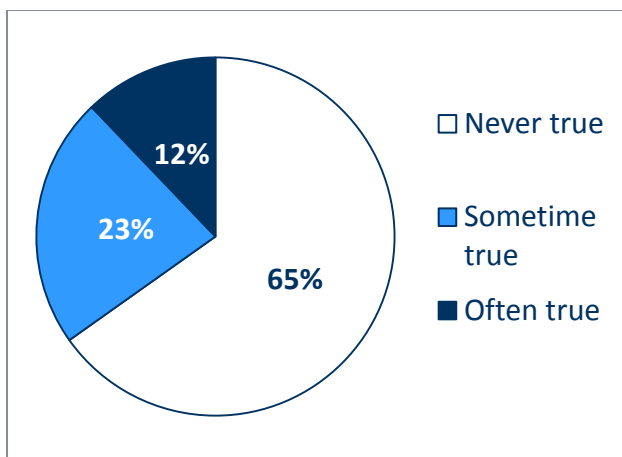
*As a more senior level staff member, I make a good deal more than many others on campus. I am not personally food insecure, but even my "generous" salary does not go very far in the bay area . . . I know there are many who unfortunately make much less than I do, and I wonder how they are making it. . .*



Responses to each question are provided below.

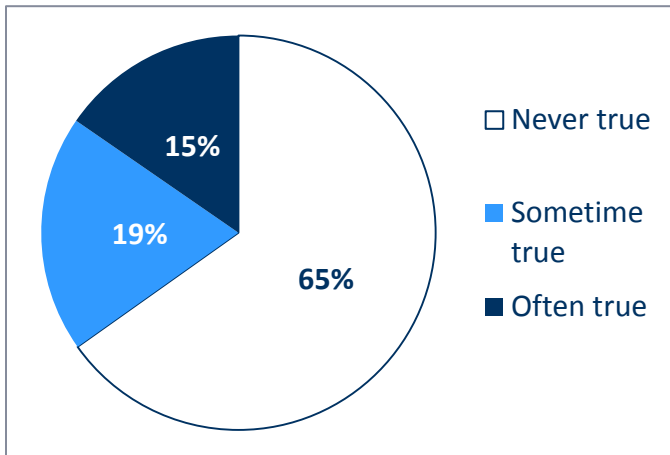
Question 1: "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." In the last 12 months this statement was

*I visit Food Pantries at my local church to have enough food for my family of 4.*



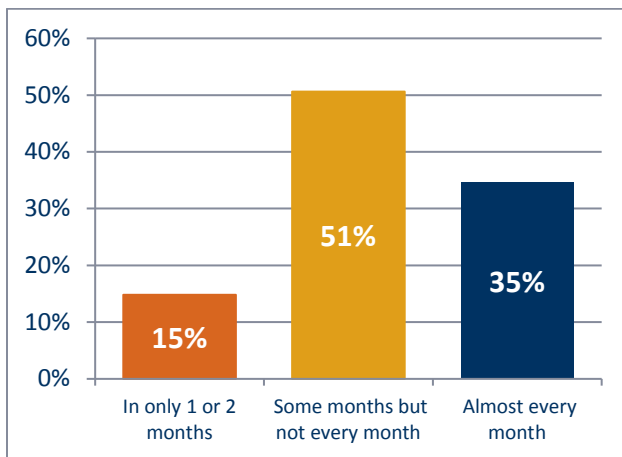
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/survey-tools/>

Question 2: "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." In the last 12 months this statement was



*I currently budget \$100-\$200 per month for food. While a person can survive off of \$100 a month for food, that limits the amount of fresh fruits and veggies and increases cooking times, which may not always be possible. I think that a lot of staff members are not always able to eat healthy and nutritious foods--- especially those of us earning below \$60,000 a year.*

33% of the respondents answered yes to the third question: "In the last 12 months, did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money?". If they responded yes, they were asked a follow-up question inquiring about how often this happened with 86% indicating this was not an exceptional occurrence for them.



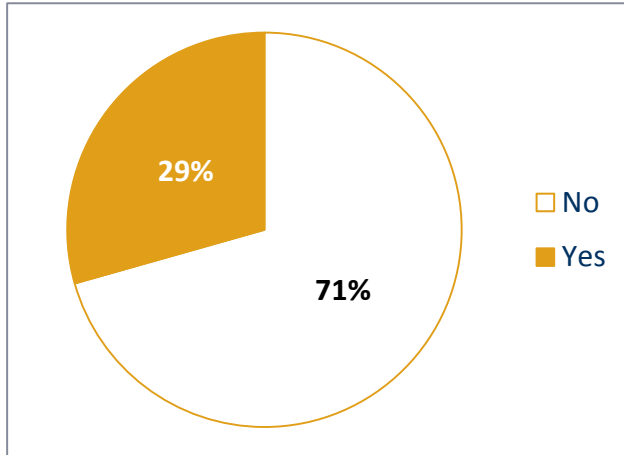
*Yes, instead of paying \$50+ per week for lunch, in order to economize what I do is order a burrito split in half twice a week & that serves me for lunch for 4 days (running around \$18 altogether), in between I order chicken wings (running for \$4) so the total amount I spend is more like less than \$25 weekly. Meanwhile I supplement by eating crackers/chips/nuts/granola bars, having some instant oatmeal, an occasion egg or two in order to stifle hunger pangs unless there's an event at work then I can eat of what is provided then. A savings of \$100 monthly.*

The last two questions in this section asked whether the respondent ever ate less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money for food and whether they were ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food. 32% and 23% of staff responding to these questions answered "Yes" to these questions respectively.



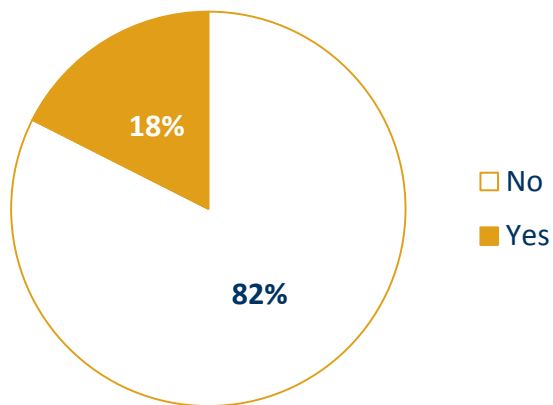
## Impact of Food Insecurity Questions

Question 7: In the past 12 months I have had to choose between paying for food and paying for basic living costs (rent/mortgage, utilities, transportation to work, etc.).



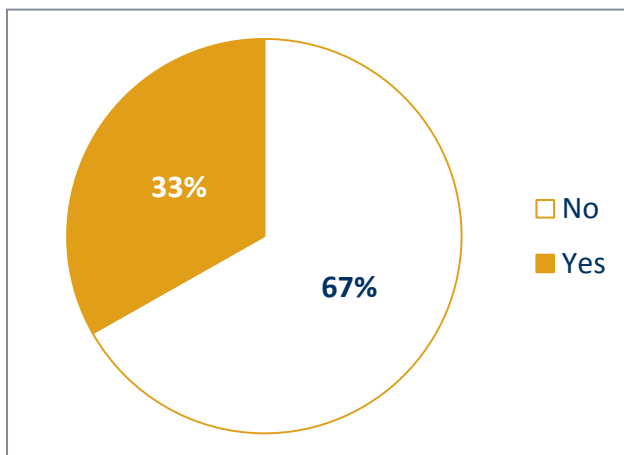
*I often have to rely on close friends or family to hope they can spare any food or money so I can feed my family. I make sacrifices to make sure my 1 year old son eats 3-4 meals and 4-5 snacks a day. Compare to my 3 meals a day by standard living. How am I to afford healthy food if I can't even afford to get on transportation for most work days. . . .*

8: In the past 12 months I have had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.



*This has had a direct impact on how I feel about myself and my work. Even though I've always managed to make ends meet eventually, the food insecurity has been the most stressful thing I've ever dealt with in my life. I'm lucky I don't have a family to support.*

Question 9: In the past 12 months I had to choose between paying for food and paying other bills (e.g., credit card debt, car payments, student loans).



*Credit cards help me through when I don't have enough money to buy what I need. Obviously this is not a great thing.*

## Responses by Self-Identification

The below table provides a breakdown for affirmative responses using the demographic data collected. It indicates the percentage of respondents who answered “Sometime true” and “Often true” to questions 1 and 2, “Some months but not every month” and “Almost every month” to question 4, and “Yes” to the remaining questions. Note: due to rounding totals in these tables may not always equal 100%.

Question 11: Are you represented by collective bargaining?

Question	Policy-Covered	Exclusively Represented	Non-Exclusively Represented	Did not identify
1	51%	36%	1%	12%
2	50%	36%	1%	13%
3	51%	38%	1%	10%
4	49%	42%	--	9%
5	51%	35%	1%	13%
6	50%	36%	2%	12%
7	49%	39%	--	12%
8	47%	44%	--	9%
9	52%	36%	1%	11%

Question 12: How many years have you worked for UC Berkeley?

Question	< 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	Did not identify
1	10%	40%	21%	15%	5%	7%	1%
2	13%	41%	20%	15%	5%	6%	1%
3	11%	42%	19%	15%	5%	7%	1%
4	10%	42%	17%	17%	4%	7%	1%
5	14%	39%	20%	15%	8%	3%	1%
6	16%	34%	27%	16%	4%	2%	2%
7	12%	40%	18%	11%	7%	10%	1%
8	12%	30%	21%	14%	7%	14%	2%
9	11%	37%	22%	14%	6%	9%	1%

Question 13: What is your annual salary (UC Berkeley only)?

Question	\$50,000 or less	\$50,001-80,000	\$80,001-110,000	\$110,001-140,000	More than \$140,000	Did not identify
1	53%	39%	3%	2%	--	3%
2	55%	38%	5%	--	--	2%
3	52%	42%	2%	--	--	4%
4	52%	43%	3%	--	--	1%
5	67%	35%	3%	--	--	1%
6	59%	32%	5%	--	--	4%
7	60%	35%	1%	--	--	4%
8	53%	40%	2%	--	--	5%
9	54%	38%	2%	--	1%	4%

Question 14: Are you the sole source of income for your household?

Question	Not Sole Income	Sole Income	Did not identify
1	25%	73%	2%
2	23%	74%	2%
3	26%	73%	1%
4	23%	75%	1%
5	24%	75%	1%
6	18%	80%	2%
7	17%	81%	3%
8	21%	74%	5%
9	23%	74%	2%

Question 15: Do you have dependents?

Question	No Dependents	Dependents	Did not identify
1	43%	55%	2%
2	43%	55%	2%
3	41%	58%	1%
4	41%	48%	1%
5	44%	54%	1%
6	46%	52%	2%
7	43%	54%	3%
8	40%	56%	5%
9	41%	57%	2%

## Suggestions

### For Administration

Given the high cost of housing in the Bay Area and other rising costs, we concur that relatively stagnant staff salaries over the years, especially for those who do not change jobs, contributes to this problem. We recognize that campus administration is in the midst of trying to eliminate the \$150M structural deficit. However, we believe not taking action will only make the situation worse and cause even more talented and valuable staff to seek employment elsewhere. Therefore, we are providing the following suggestions on ways administration can address food insecurity among staff.

- Ensure that merit pools are kept intact and not reduced for other uses.
- Provide additional funding to address equity issues.
- Provide additional resources to assist staff with obtaining the skills and experience needed to move to higher level positions on campus.
- Promote internal hiring as much as possible.
- Extend [UC Berkeley Food Pantry](#) services to staff
- Partner with local governments on affordable housing programs

### For Staff

For those staff who are interested in helping their colleagues who are struggling financially, we would like to offer the following suggestions on ways you may be able to help.

- Practice greater awareness. Although those struggling often do not share what is going on, they sometimes provide clues such as skipping lunch, stress-induced behavior, etc.
- Practice random acts of kindness by inviting a colleague to lunch.
- Be an active listener if a colleague does share that they are experiencing financial difficulty.
- Assist them with finding resources to help (see Appendix B for some ideas).

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to everyone who took the time to respond to our survey and share their stories. In addition, we would like to thank Isela Pena-Rager and Jaylene Tang for translating the survey into Spanish and Chinese.

## Appendix A: BSA Staff Food Security Survey

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 2010 representing UC staff recently conducted a survey to gauge the level of food security among their members. The Berkeley Staff Assembly Governing Council is interested in learning whether this is an issue for Berkeley staff in general and so is conducting this informal survey. We are not tracking names or e-mail addresses of respondents.

Once we have gathered sufficient data, the results will be shared with the campus community. Only the questions in the first section are required. The remaining two sections are voluntary and will help us better understand how food insecurity impacts our community.

\* Required

### General Food Security

This section contains the six items included in the US Department of Agriculture's Food Security Module.

1. "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." In the last 12 months this statement was \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

2. "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." In the last 12 months this statement was \*

*Mark only one oval*

- Often true
- Sometime true
- Never true

3. In the last 12 months, did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

4. If you responded "Yes" to the above, how often did this happen?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost every month
- Some months but not every month
- In only 1 or 2 months

5. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?\*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

6. In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

### **Impact of Food Insecurity**

7. In the past 12 months I have had to choose between paying for food and paying for basic living costs (rent/mortgage, utilities, transportation to work, etc.).

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

8. In the past 12 months I have had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

9. In the past 12 months I had to choose between paying for food and paying other bills (e.g., credit card debt, car payments, student loans).

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

10. Is there anything else you would like to share?

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### **Voluntary Self-Identification**

The below questions will help us learn, generally speaking, which members of our community are impacted by security.

11. **Are you represented by collective bargaining?**

*Mark only one oval*

Yes, exclusively (100% of appointments are covered by collective bargaining)

Yes, not exclusively (at least one appointment is not covered by collective bargaining)

No

12. **How many years have you worked for UC Berkeley?**

*Mark only one oval*

Less than one year

1-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

More than 20 years

13. **What is your annual salary (UC Berkeley only)?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- \$50,000 and under
- \$50,001-\$80,000
- \$80,001-\$110,000
- \$110,001-\$140,000
- More than \$140,000

14. **Are you the sole source of income for your household?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

15. **Do you have dependents?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

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## Appendix B: List of Resources

### Campus Resources

- Faculty/Staff Employee Assistance Program: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/bewellatwork/employee-assistance>
- Campus Discounts and Free Admission Offers: <http://hr.berkeley.edu/compensation-benefits/perks>
- UC Employee Discounts: <http://ucop.edu/local-human-resources/op-life/employee-discounts/>
- UC Financial Education Classes: <https://www.myuciretirement.com/Classes>
- Eating Better on a Budget: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/sos-eatingbetteronabudget.pdf>
- 7-Day Menu for Less Than \$5 a Day: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/sos-eatingwell5dollarsaday.pdf>

### Community-based Programs

#### State:

- CalFresh Eligibility Guidelines: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CDSS-Programs/CalFresh/Eligibility-and-Issuance-Requirements>
- California Food Stamp Program (for qualified Legal Permanent Resident non-citizens no longer eligible for federal CalFresh assistance): <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CalFresh/California-Food-Assistance-Program>

#### Alameda County

- Alameda County Community Food Bank: [http://www.accfb.org/get\\_food/](http://www.accfb.org/get_food/)
- Berkeley Food Pantry for Berkeley and Albany Residents: <http://www.berkeleyfoodpantry.org/need-food>
- List of various resources for free meals, drop-in centers, and pet assistance in Berkeley/Oakland area: [https://bancroft.berkeley-public.org/documents/uploads/emergency\\_shelters.pdf](https://bancroft.berkeley-public.org/documents/uploads/emergency_shelters.pdf)

#### Contra Costa County

- Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties: <https://www.foodbankccs.org/get-help/foodbycity.html>
- Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa: <http://www.loavesfishescs.org/what-we-do.html>

#### Marin County

- San Francisco-Marin Food Bank: <https://www.sfmfoodbank.org/find-food/>

#### Napa County

- Community Action of Napa County: <http://canv.org/food-nutrition/>

#### San Francisco County

- San Francisco-Marin Food Bank: <https://www.sfmfoodbank.org/find-food/>

### San Mateo County

- Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties: <http://www.shfb.org/getfood>

### Santa Clara County

- Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties: <http://www.shfb.org/getfood>

### Solano County

- Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties: <https://www.foodbankccs.org/get-help/foodbycity.html>

### Sonoma County

- Redwood Empire Food Bank: <http://refb.org/our-work/programs/get-food/>