



Aloha mai kākou!

A recent survey of students across the UH System found that “56% experienced at least one form of basic needs insecurity, including 39% who experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days, 40% who experienced housing insecurity in the previous year, and 8% who experienced homelessness in the previous year.” Indeed, the evidence that many students have difficulty meeting their basic needs is widespread. In this quarter’s Kūkulu Kaiāulu Hō’ike Hapahā Makahiki (Quarterly Impact Report) Winter 2024, Lindsey Millerd, President of the Associated Students of University of Hawai’i–West O’ahu (ASUHWO) gives voice to the needs of students. We know that if basic needs are not met, students will not be able to stay in school and graduate. Dr. Loea Akiona, chair of UH West O’ahu’s Kōmike Kumu Ola Basic Needs Committee provides an overview of the work we are doing to meet our students’ needs.

Currently, UH West O’ahu provides students with mental health services, campus transportation, clothing through the Campus Closet, and free menstrual products through the Ma’i Movement. In the fall of 2023, Kōmike Kumu Ola joined UH Mānoa’s Student Life program in a pilot partnership with Aloha Harvest to recover unused food products that are distributed through our new Food Vault program. Read the story of Alex, one of our many grateful students. In truth, we know that there is more we need to do.

There are many ways you can support UH West O’ahu’s Kōmike Kumu Ola Basic Needs Committee efforts! We hope that this issue of our quarterly report inspires you to think of how you might support the basic needs of our UH West O’ahu students. Please help us to ensure our students fulfill their dreams. They are our future professionals and leaders!

E mālama pono!

Maenette K.P. Ah Nee-Benham

Maenette K.P. Ah Nee-Benham
Chancellor, UH West O’ahu



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Kōmike Kumu Ola Basic Needs

The purpose of the Kōmike Kumu Ola Basic Needs fund is to provide basic needs services for the University of Hawai’i–West O’ahu campus community. Funds will support the development and sustainment of a campus-wide basic needs support system.

Funds will be used for, but are not limited to, basic needs items; staffing, supplies and equipment to operate basic needs services; and renovation/maintenance of physical campus space to operate a comprehensive and fully accessible center that supports the provision of goods and services. Basic needs items include, but are not limited to, food, housing and security, school supplies (e.g. textbooks and class/course equipment), hygiene products (e.g. menstrual products, toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss), one-time emergency funds to resolve unexpected and disruptive funding needs, clothing, transportation (e.g. HOLO Cards), keiki items, and childcare.

Supplementing Basic Needs

- \$15 supports one week of food items for one individual
- \$20 ensures a student has access to safe and hygienic menstrual products for one menstrual cycle
- \$30 pays for basic dental hygiene products for one semester
- \$100 buys diapers, wipes, and/or formula for one month
- \$225 provides a semester of transportation for one student through a HOLO pass
- \$500 aids one student with a semester of school supplies and textbooks



A fresh loaf of bread at a Food Vault event at UH West O’ahu campus center.
Cover: Native plant māla at Camp Pālehua.

Winter 2024

Kūkulu Kaiāulu *Building Community*

Hō’ike Hapahā Makahiki

Quarterly Impact Report



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Students browse the professional closet at a campus career fair.

Committee to address campus basic needs

Recognizing the prevalence of need of its campus members, UH West O’ahu formed a committee dedicated to addressing their basic needs. The Kōmike Kumu Ola Basic Needs Committee recognizes that addressing basic needs is a concern for all faculty and staff and aims to foster a campus-wide effort in providing essential support.

Chair Loea Akiona, the UH West O’ahu Director of Student Development, leads a committee that has a rotating membership consisting of faculty and staff from the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Vice Chancellor for Administration, and the Chancellor’s Office. This wide representation reflects the campus commitment to finding solutions to aid in the health, well-being, and success of its community.

Akiona has served as a member of the UH System Basic Needs Committee, gathering insights from other UH campuses about how they serve their students. He brings that knowledge to the campus to build on System initiatives and customize those services for its students.

Based in part on the UH System Student Basic Needs Master Plan and corresponding campus plan, UH West O’ahu wants to expand its services and outreach, including providing campus members with menstrual supplies, and assistance with transportation costs and school supplies. A 2020 survey of UH West O’ahu students found that 39% experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days, 40% experienced housing insecurity in the previous year, and 8% experienced homelessness in the previous year.

Immediate and long-term planning for the campus and committee include identifying and establishing a permanent space on campus and operating a comprehensive and fully accessible center that supports the provision of goods and services that effectively reduce or eliminate the non-academic barriers that negatively impact student success and degree completion. The space could house established services like the Food Vault that provides fresh produce through a partnership with Aloha Harvest, the Campus Closet to give students professional attire for job and internship interviews with plans to expand their offerings to casual attire as well, and other basic needs services and supplies.

Increasing food access contributes to sense of community

On the first day of the spring 2024 semester at UH West O’ahu, a student named Alex stopped by a booth and fulfilled two important objectives.

Alex, who picked up bread and fresh produce at the Food Vault Hawai’i West booth, said: “UH West O’ahu is always trying to build community, especially coming out of COVID and all of the insecurities that we faced as a community, and families, and individuals during that time. I feel like this serves as a way to build community, and sends a larger message of how UH West O’ahu is trying to support students.”

UH West O’ahu offers free, fresh produce via the Food Vault Hawai’i West program. A total of 328 pre-packaged sets were given away over nine distribution days spanning from October to December 2023. The service continues in the spring 2024 semester.

UH West O’ahu is participating in the pilot program with UH Mānoa Student Life & Development’s Food Vault Hawai’i program. Food Vault Hawai’i has a partnership with Aloha Harvest, the largest food rescue and redistribution organization in Hawai’i, to recover unsold produce and bread from designated sites. UH West O’ahu’s designated site is the Hawai’i Farm Bureau’s Mililani Farmers’ Market.

“As part of this program, we commit to recovering whatever the farmers’ market vendors would like to donate,” said Dr. Jan Javinar, specialist faculty in student affairs at UH West O’ahu. “On Monday mornings, a team volunteers to pre-bag the goods, working to ensure that there’s an equitable mix of items in each bag, given that Sunday’s recovery.”

The distribution is on select Mondays and Tuesdays throughout the semester at the Nāulu Center. A total of 1,190 pounds of food — or 132 pounds per week — were distributed to students over the nine distribution days in the fall.

Organizers estimate an average of 36 students per distribution day. The pre-bagged goods — which included items such as kale, papaya, and various breads — are valued at about \$12 to \$15 each. Typically the sets are distributed within one hour. Students are not required to show proof of need - they only need to provide a student ID or UH username to receive the food. The message it sends to students is that: “You are inherently part of the community and you deserve to be fed. That is part of the underlying message,” Alex added.



A student opens a bag of fresh food at a Food Vault event at UH West O’ahu campus center.

Student government advocacy leads to change

Students should not be struggling with any of the physical effects or mental stress of hunger, said UH West O’ahu student Lindsey Millerd, President of the Associated Students of University of Hawai’i–West O’ahu (ASUHWO), the university’s student government.

In spring 2023, when Millerd was the ASUHWO Math, Health, and Sciences Senator, she was among the co-authors of ASUHWO’s Senate Resolution (SR) 23-002, titled “Supporting Availability of Organic and Sustainable Food Throughout the University of Hawai’i–West O’ahu.” SR 23-002 was adopted and approved by the ASUHWO 11th Senate on April 3, 2023.

“We created it to address food access, especially with the rising costs of living here in Hawai’i,” Millerd said. “Food is truly an essential for students to stay healthy and take part in all their other responsibilities, so our resolution was pushing for the campus to begin providing free food to students.”

The resolution cites a 2020 survey of UH West O’ahu students that found that 39% experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days, and resolves that “the UH West O’ahu campus shall prioritize, plan and identify an on-campus location to provide available sustainable foods and canned goods by establishing a food pantry for the UHWO community.”

“Many other UH campuses have food pantries, so it’s not a far reach for ours to have one, too,” Millerd said.

Since the approval of SR 23-002, pop-up food distributions on campus began in fall 2023, which is also when UH West O’ahu formed its Kōmike Kumu Ola Basic Needs Committee with faculty and staff; Millerd and ASUHWO Vice President Sydney Whitley also sit on the committee.

“We’re hoping to now get a physical space going where students can come any time and get a wider variety of foods, in addition to other basic needs we are exploring in the committee,” she said.



ASUHWO members at a campus event.