



# San Francisco State University

## CalFresh Help Clinic

Academic Year 20-21 Program Report

June 2021

### Program Summary

Food security is an essential component of student success. Food insecurity, defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as a lack of “secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food,” is associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes, as well as lower academic achievement. The 2021 National College Health Association (NCHA) Survey showed that 41.8% of San Francisco State University students surveyed reported experiencing food insecurity. Part of SF State’s Basic Needs Initiative, the CalFresh Help Clinic (CFHC) aims to improve food security through outreach and awareness efforts centered around destigmatization, application assistance, and connection to free food and nutrition resources on campus. The CalFresh program expands students’ grocery budgets, providing eligible students a minimum of \$234 each month. The CFHC transitioned to 100% virtual services during the 2020-2021 academic year, providing support via email and weekly Zoom appointments.

### Program Outcomes

#### Application Assistance

From September 2020 to May 2021, the CFHC directly served 144 students. Out of 112 total appointments scheduled, 79 were attended for a no-show/cancellation rate of 29.5%. An additional 65 students received CalFresh assistance via email support (**Table 1**).

	Appointments Scheduled	Cancellations/ No-Show	Appointments Attended	Email-Only Assistance	Total Direct Assistance
<b>Fall 2020</b>	54	16	38	39	<b>77</b>
<b>Spring 2021</b>	58	17	41	26	<b>67</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>33 (29.5%)</b>	<b>79 (70.5%)</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>144</b>

**Table 1.** Virtual CalFresh Help Clinic Direct Assistance

Just over 4 in 5 appointments were Consultation/Application Assistance, during which students could ask general questions about CalFresh, complete an eligibility screening and get support submitting an application. The remaining appointments were Post-Application Assistance and geared toward students who had already submitted their CalFresh application and needed additional support (**Table 2**).

	Consultation	Application Assistance	Post-Application Assistance	Total
<b>Fall 2020</b>	13	19	6	<b>38</b>
<b>Spring 2021</b>	33*		8	<b>41</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>65 (82.3%)</b>		<b>14 (17.7%)</b>	<b>79</b>

**Table 2.** Virtual CalFresh Help Clinic Appointments

\*These two separate appointment types were combined into one appointment type for the spring semester

Online applications nearly doubled from the Fall 2020 to Spring 2021 semester (**Table 3**) thanks to mass email outreach sent to all work-study eligible students in early March. The largest volume of online applications through the SFSU getcalfresh.org link was received in March at 220, accounting for 30% of all applications received during the 2020-2021 academic year. The number of students who self-reported being approved for CalFresh benefits increased by 70% in the spring semester, for a total of 27 students this academic year. Online applications spanned 30 different counties (**Table 4**), with San Francisco county accounting for over 40% of submitted applications.

	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Total
<b>Online applications received</b>	258	482	740
<b>Approved for benefits (self-reported)</b>	10	17	27

**Table 3.** Online applications

Counties represented			Top 5 counties: online applications		
Total count: 30				Count	Proportion
Alameda	Merced	San Mateo	San Francisco	307	42.0%
Butte	Monterey	Santa Barbara	Alameda	89	12.2%
Contra Costa	Napa	Santa Clara	San Mateo	79	10.8%
Fresno	Orange	Santa Cruz	Contra Costa	54	7.4%
Imperial	Riverside	Solano	Los Angeles	56	7.7%
Kern	Sacramento	Stanislaus			
Kings	San Bernardino	Sutter			
Los Angeles	San Diego	Tulare			
Madera	San Francisco	Ventura			
Marin	San Joaquin	Yolo			

**Table 4.** Online applications by county

In the spring semester, 25% more online prescreens were completed due to a higher volume of CalFresh 101 virtual workshops being conducted, which incorporates the prescreen as an activity (**Table 5**). A significantly higher proportion of students were determined to be likely eligible, which was likely a result of the targeted mass outreach to work study-eligible students along with EOP and GSP students. Most “Uncertain Eligibility” was due to the student being under 22 years of age, living with parents, and not knowing their household’s combined income. Prescreens were typically not completed during appointments in which the student had recently submitted a CalFresh application.

	Online Prescreens	Likely Eligible		Likely Not Eligible		Uncertain Eligibility	
Fall 2020	31	11	35.5%	9	29.0%	11	35.5%
Spring 2021	39	27	69.2%	3	7.7%	9	23.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>54.3%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28.6%</b>

**Table 5.** Prescreens

### Outreach

Outreach was primarily done via virtual modalities including workshops, social media posts on Instagram, YouTube videos, and a basic needs guest blog post. While not included in the outreach data, the HPW nutrition education team also provided information about the CFHC across 50 virtual events reaching more than 700 students. In-person outreach consisted of quarter-sheet flyers that were distributed via the campus food pantry (Associated Student Gator Groceries). The flyers promoted our virtual CFHC and included a QR code to schedule a Zoom appointment. A copy of the flyer can be found in **Appendix B**.

Email was a primary mode of outreach this past academic year given the continuation of remote learning. A significantly higher number of emails were sent in the Spring in response to the temporary CalFresh student exemption changes that made the work study verification requirement less restrictive (**Table 6**). Email outreach was facilitated through the financial aid office after temporary changes went into effect in February. In total, the work study verification letter was sent to 10,779 students in early March. These students were directed to apply via the SFSU application link and were also provided information about application assistance available through the virtual CFHC.

	Emails	Events/ Activities	Event/Activity Reach
Fall 2020	4,647	3	89
Spring 2021	14,765	10	359
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,412</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>448</b>

**Table 6.** Outreach Efforts

A total of 13 virtual CalFresh outreach events/activities were delivered reaching 448 students (**Table 6**). These included:

- 6 workshops: CalFresh 101, CalFresh Group Application Assistance
- 2 YouTube videos: *Applying for CalFresh: Fact or Fiction?*, *CalFresh Application Tips*
- 2 CalFresh-themed cooking demonstrations
- 1 campus partner training: Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC)
- 1 Basic Needs blog post: *CalFresh- Free Money for Food, Say What?*
- 1 Instagram post (along with a multitude of Instagram stories)

The CalFresh outreach team partnered with the HPW nutrition education team for two virtual “Cooking with CalFresh” cooking demo events. The demos featured recipes that utilized ingredients that could be purchased with CalFresh benefits and also incorporated basic information about CalFresh and provided awareness of the virtual CalFresh Help Clinic.

Among the 14 students who attended and completed the Cooking with CalFresh post-survey:

- 92.9% increased knowledge of CalFresh
- 28.6% intend to apply for CalFresh
- 35.7% intend to connect with the CalFresh Help Clinic
- 92.9% would recommend this event to a friend

*I really found the workshop to be super fun and informational! With a mix of lecture about Food Stamps and a recipe, I really saw the connection between the two.*

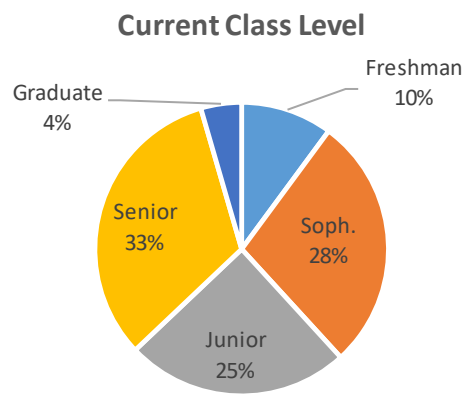
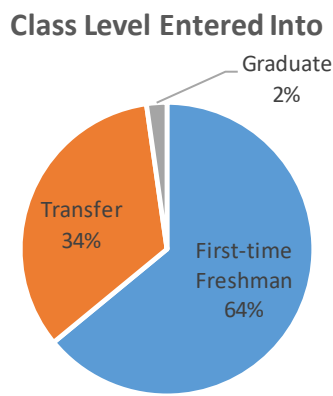
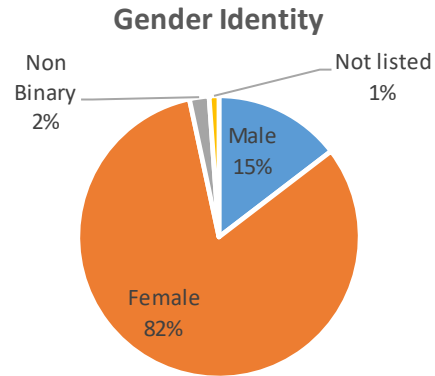
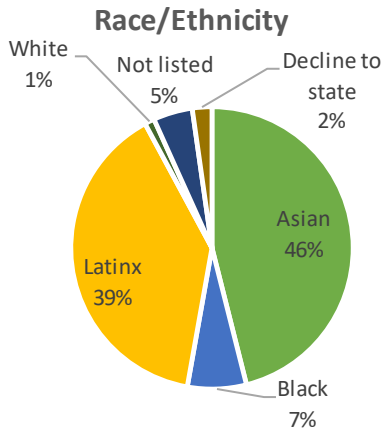
– Cooking with CalFresh Attendee

Workshops increased knowledge of CalFresh and other free food resources (**Table 7**). The CalFresh 101 workshop enhanced students' confidence in their ability to apply for CalFresh, and most (90%) planned to submit an online application and/or connect with the CFHC as a result of attending. Fewer students attending the CalFresh Group Application Workshop intended to connect with the CFHC, likely because of the more detailed instruction and higher level of assistance provided during this workshop.

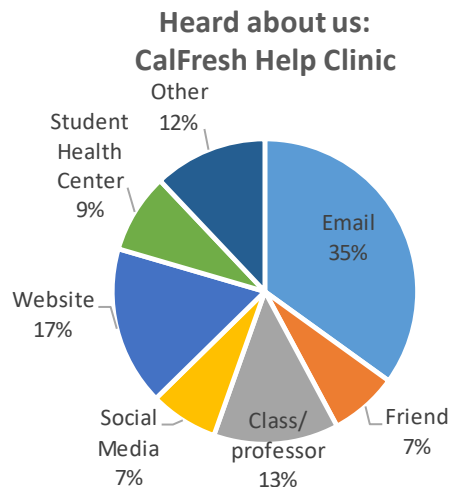
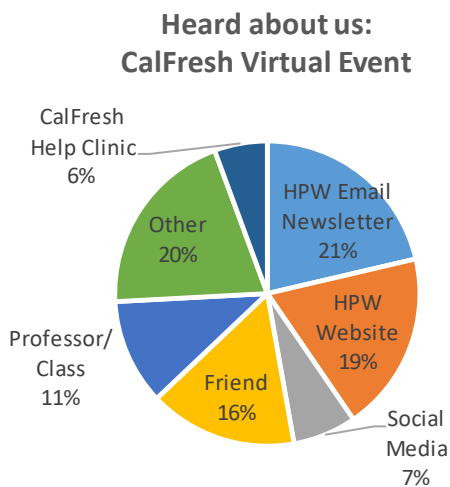
	CalFresh 101 Workshop		CalFresh Group Application Workshop		Cooking with CalFresh	
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Increased knowledge of CalFresh	95.0%	19	98.2%	54	92.9%	13
Increased self-efficacy for applying for CalFresh	90.0%	18	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Intend to apply for CalFresh	90.0%	18	N/A	N/A	28.6%	4
Intend to connect with the CalFresh Help Clinic	85.0%	17	47.2%	25	35.7%	5
Increased knowledge of other free food resources	100.0%	20	96.4%	53	N/A	N/A
Would recommend this workshop to a friend	85.0%	17	79.3%	42	92.9%	13

**Table 7.** Post-Event Survey Results

The majority of students who attended a CalFresh workshop or Cooking with CalFresh event and completed the post-survey identified as Asian (46%) and Latinx (39%) followed by Black (7%). The vast majority identified as female (82%). Just over one-third were transfer students, with seniors, sophomores and juniors comprising 86% of attendees.



Most students surveyed (n=89) heard about the CalFresh virtual events through the HPW or Basic Needs website, HPW or EOP email newsletter, or friends. A large proportion of students (18%) selected “Other,” listing EOP or GSP as their source of information, which was expected as a result of strategic partnerships with these departments. Students who scheduled an appointment with the CFHC (n=83) heard about it primarily through email outreach (35%).



One campus partner training was completed this year with the Disability Programs and Resource Center on campus. This training was requested by the department manager, and eight professional staff members attended and received training that focused on increasing knowledge of CalFresh, how to determine basic eligibility, special considerations for students with disabilities, and how to refer to the CFHC for additional support.

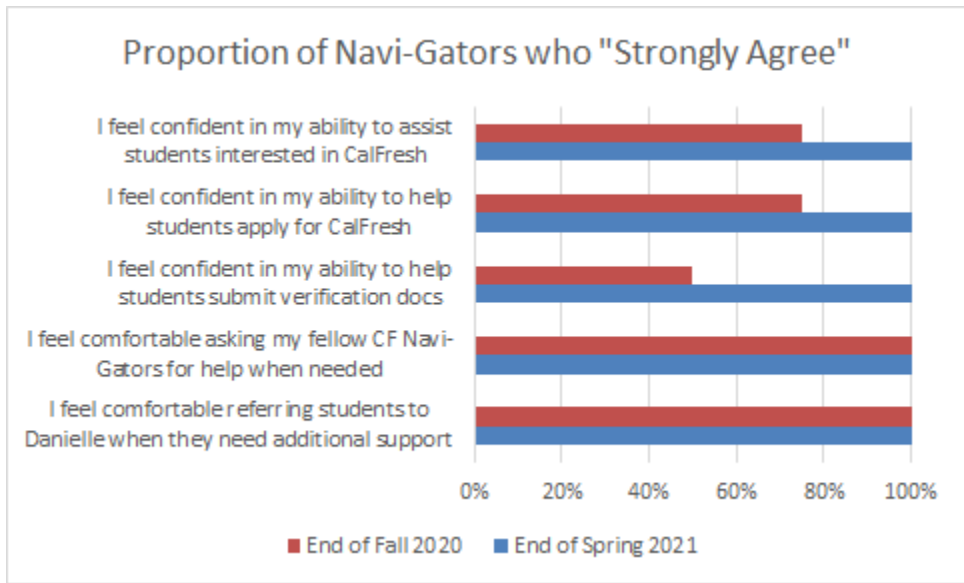
#### Navi-Gators (Student Assistants)

Five paid student assistants were trained as CalFresh Navi-Gators at the start of the Fall 2020 semester (see Appendix C). Through a peer-to-peer model, these students provided direct assistance to students, including answering general questions about the CalFresh program, screening students for likely eligibility, assisting with online application submissions, gathering verification documents and connecting students with other basic needs resources. Navi-Gators received a refresher training at the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester.

Navi-gators' self-efficacy for providing CalFresh assistance increased from the fall to spring semester, with 100% of Navi-Gators feeling fully confident in their ability to help students apply and submit verification documents. The Navi-Gator team worked well together and felt comfortable asking one another for help when needed. Responding to an end-of-year survey, 100% of students indicated that they enjoyed being a CalFresh Navi-Gator.

*Being a CalFresh Student Assistance was such an enjoyable experience! Thank you all for a wonderful year together (:*

- CalFresh Navi-Gator



## Best Practices and Lessons Learned

**Campus partnerships enhance awareness and outreach efforts**—On-campus partnerships with EOP, GSP and the financial aid office allowed for mass targeted outreach to likely eligible students and directly supported high attendance of virtual CalFresh outreach events. Inter-departmental collaboration with the nutrition team also enhanced outreach efforts through new CalFresh-centered virtual nutrition education programming.

**Community partnerships are essential**—A continued partnership with the a key community partner, the SF-Marin Foodbank, was essential for receiving timely updates about CalFresh policy and program changes, ongoing training opportunities, support with unfamiliar and/or complex cases, and advocating for students who submitted an application in San Francisco or Marin county.

**Student-led programming is effective**—The successful development and implementation of virtual CFHC services could not have happened without the support, input, and expertise provided by our student staff. This model of peer-to-peer support enhances our ability to connect with and assist students and allows student staff to gain valuable experience.

**A year-long service commitment improves students' self-efficacy**—With the transition to virtual services, our volunteer Navi-Gator program was paused. Instead, five paid students staffed our virtual CFHC appointment hours. This model was effective, reduced administrative time, and allowed for enhanced knowledge and skill-building. These five students committed to a full academic year of CalFresh assistance, allowing for advanced training opportunities which helped them become more confident in their abilities to assist students, particularly those with more complex situations.

**Team building is essential**—Fostering connections among student staff was more challenging in a virtual environment. Utilizing messaging software (e.g. Slack) provided a space for Navi-Gators to connect with one another in a more informal setting. Monthly team meetings helped to facilitate collaboration and allowed students to feel more comfortable asking for support from one another. Lastly, collaborations with other health education student assistants allowed the Navi-Gators to build relationships amongst the larger HPW student team.

**Quantifying effort increases staff morale**—Student Navi-Gators found it encouraging to receive weekly updates on assistance and reach numbers. One student wrote, “We had weekly emails where we are consistently updated as to how many emails have been sent out for outreach and how many people the CalFresh Help Clinic has helped out. Seeing the statistics has helped me feel that what I am doing is really helping others and is reaching many students.” This is a low-effort, high-reward practice.

**CFHC supports students in accessing other basic needs resources on campus**—Informing and connecting students to additional basic needs resources during the CalFresh appointment is an effective referral strategy that can facilitate wrap-around basic needs care. When time allowed, Navi-Gators were encouraged to offer assistance to student to complete any necessary applications (e.g. for an emergency meal card) during the appointment to promote timely resource connection.

**Virtual CalFresh assistance increases accessibility**—Having completed a year of virtual services, it is clear that this can be an effective way to support students in accessing food security resources. Adding another “arm” to CFHC outreach focused on virtual assistance is recommended moving forward as a way to enhance accessibility, particularly for commuter students and students with disabilities.

## Challenges

**Transitioning to 100% remote programming**—Because CalFresh outreach programming had previously been set up to serve a campus centered around in-person learning, transitioning to virtual services necessitated building out a new service model. Setting up virtual appointments required extensive time and effort, and the new model also led to the need for the development and implementation of new training content for student staff. Transitioning workshops to virtual also proved challenging, particularly for group application assistance. Innovation and flexibility were essential for success.

**Understaffed**—The pandemic and resultant campus budget crisis resulted in a hiring freeze, which halted the process of hiring a Basic Needs Programs Coordinator. This resulted in campus basic needs programs being staffed at a lower level than anticipated and required the HPW Nutrition Health Educator to take on management of the CFHC program manager. Given limited staff capacity, outreach efforts were not as extensive as they could have been.

**Virtual outreach**—The CFHC's community outreach arm was an incredibly effective method of outreach that was centered on meeting students where they were at. This was not feasible to duplicate in a virtual environment, resulting in lower reach numbers than the previous academic year. While social media was utilized as a key strategy to engage students this past year, being integrated with the campus Health Promotion & Wellness social media account has its pros and cons. While we benefit from the visibility of a growing audience of 3,000+ followers, we are limited in terms of the quantity and frequency with which we can put out CalFresh-themed stories and posts.

**CalFresh Outreach Day turned CalFresh Outreach Week**—The national awareness day was expanded to become a week-long event for Spring 2021. This was an unanticipated change, and the limited notice provided along with the time at which subcontractors were notified (end of Fall 2020 semester) made planning difficult. Because our student assistants do not work during the winter break, our team had limited time to plan, prepare, and coordinate outreach for this event at the start of the spring semester.

**Follow-up with students**—An ongoing challenge in both in-person and remote environments, emails are a convenient form of communication but are not always an effective method to elicit a reply from students. This makes it difficult to provide continued support to students throughout the application and post-application process, and at times led to students having to submit a brand new application as their 30-day application window had closed.

**Recertifications**—A total of seven known students had their CalFresh benefits discontinued this past school year as a result of not submitting their recertification documents in a timely manner. The current lack of information regarding application approvals makes it challenging to provide targeted outreach to provide timely reminders and better support students through the recertification process.

**Student restrictions**—With the transition to remote instruction, many of the students we interacted with who were under the age of 22 were living with parents/guardians. While the vast majority of these students shopped for and prepared meals on their own, the CalFresh rule that requires students who are under the age of 22 and living with their guardians to apply with their guardians led to a large number of students being likely ineligible for benefits, despite needing the assistance.



Changes in CalFresh policy—CalFresh policy is constantly evolving, often with a narrow window of time from announcement to implementation. This past year saw numerous changes, many of which are still “temporary” with an unknown end date. While many of these changes positively impacted our students (expanded eligibility, increased allotments), the temporary student exemption changes in particular resulted in inconsistent approval and denials at the county level. Additionally, these changes necessitated quickly updating website information and program materials, developing large-scale outreach efforts, and providing additional training to our student Navi-Gators.

Serving students from multiple Counties—SF State is a commuter school during normal times, but this past year of remote learning found us interacting with students all across California, spanning 30 counties. Each county manages CalFresh independently, and it was unrealistic to connect with and build formal partnerships with each county, making it difficult to maximize support for all students.

## **Moving Forward**

Looking to the year ahead as the campus repopulates, we look forward to bringing back the community outreach arm of the CFHC, which allows us to physically meet students where they are. This, in addition to continuing to offer virtual appointments and/or drop-in hours, will allow us to reach more students. One population of students that would benefit from more strategic outreach is our freshman, who were underrepresented in our reach numbers this past year. Supporting these students in accessing CalFresh benefits earlier in their academic career is likely to have a larger impact when it comes to increasing food security and promoting student success.

One opportunity for improvement is to determine a way in which the CFHC can more effectively provide outreach about and support to students for timely completion of the SAR-7 and annual recertification processes. This would help to ensure continuation of benefits for students. An additional idea for improvement is to incorporate information on trauma-informed care and inclusive language in the CalFresh Navi-Gator training to enhance our values of health equity, cultural humility and student-centered service. Incorporating these concepts into the training would also support the professional development of the paid student staff and volunteers.

Reflecting on the past year and the challenges faced in light of the pandemic, we are proud of the work our CalFresh outreach team accomplished as a result of their flexibility, creativity, perseverance and dedication to supporting student food security. We are thrilled to have begun the search for a full-time CalFresh Help Clinic Coordinator and look forward to this position expanding campus outreach and awareness efforts to alleviate food insecurity and support the academic success of SF State students.

## Appendices

### Appendix A. CalFresh Virtual Outreach Event Attendance Demographics

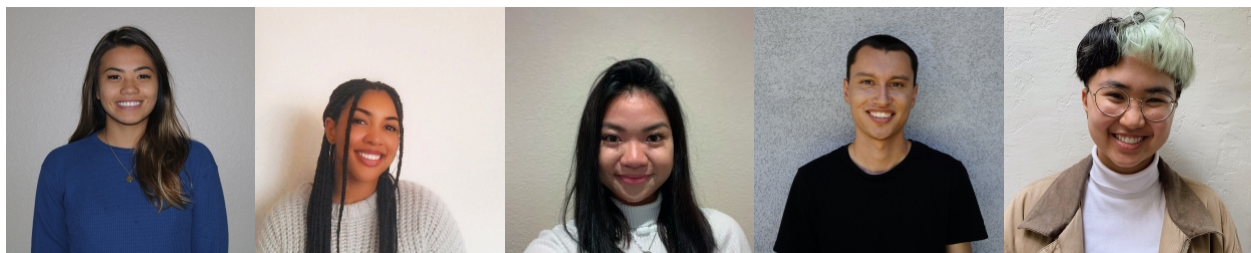
	Cooking with CalFresh		CalFresh Workshops		TOTAL	
<b>Q1 - I identify as: (check all that apply)</b>						
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
American Indian	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Asian	50.0%	7	45.3%	34	46.1%	41
Black	14.3%	2	5.3%	4	6.7%	6
Latinx	28.6%	4	41.3%	31	39.3%	35
Pacific Islander	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
White	7.1%	1	0.0%	0	1.1%	1
Not listed (please describe)	0.0%	0	5.3%	4	4.5%	4
Decline to state	0.0%	0	2.7%	2	2.2%	2
Total	100.0%	14	100.0%	75	100.0%	89
<b>Q2 - What is your gender identity?</b>						
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Male	21.4%	3	13.3%	10	13.3%	10
Female	78.6%	11	82.7%	62	82.7%	62
Trans Masculine	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Trans Feminine	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Non Binary	0.0%	0	2.7%	2	2.7%	2
Gender Queer	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Not listed (please describe)	0.0%	0	1.3%	1	1.3%	1
Decline to state	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Total	100.0%	14	26.7%	20	100.0%	75
<b>Q3 - What class level did you enter into at SF State?</b>						
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
First-time Freshman	50.0%	7	66.7%	50	64.0%	57
Transfer	50.0%	7	30.7%	23	33.7%	30
Graduate	0.0%	0	2.7%	2	2.2%	2
Total	100.0%	14	100.0%	75	100.0%	89
<b>Q4 - What class level are you currently in?</b>						
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Freshman	7.1%	1	10.7%	8	10.1%	9
Sophomore	21.4%	3	29.3%	22	28.1%	25
Junior	14.3%	2	26.7%	20	24.7%	22
Senior	57.1%	8	28.0%	21	32.6%	29
Graduate	0.0%	0	5.3%	4	4.5%	4
Total	100.0%	14	100.0%	75	100.0%	89
<b>Q5 - How did you hear about us?</b>						
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
HPW Email Newsletter	7.1%	1	24.0%	18	21.3%	19
HPW Website	64.3%	9	10.7%	8	19.1%	17

Social Media	14.3%	2	5.3%	4	6.7%	6
Friend	0.0%	0	18.7%	14	15.7%	14
Professor/Class	14.3%	2	10.7%	8	11.2%	10
Other (please specify):	0.0%	0	24.0%	18	20.2%	18
CalFresh Help Clinic	0.0%	0	6.7%	5	5.6%	5
Total	100.0%	14	100.0%	75	100.0%	89

#### Appendix B. CalFresh Help Clinic Flyer



#### Appendix C. CalFresh Student Navi-Gator Team



From left to right: KC Agramon, Victoria Haynes, Mauriene Hilario, Justin Mendoza, Elia Azazel Wee

*For more information please email [basicneeds@sfsu.edu](mailto:basicneeds@sfsu.edu)*