

STUDENT LUNCHBOX, INC

Promoting College Excellence Through Basic Needs Support



Dear Valued Supporters and Partners,

Student LunchBox is honored to share this annual programmatic report with the community of supporters, partners, and collaborators who made our work possible. Your collective commitment has provided far more than financial and in-kind support. It has helped create stability for students navigating college while facing financial, emotional, and practical challenges that often remain unseen.

Over the past year, your support enabled students to access nutritious food and essential resources in ways that fit naturally into their academic lives. By reducing the daily tradeoffs between basic needs and college expenses, this shared investment eased financial pressure, supported mental and physical well-being, and helped students remain focused on their coursework and long-term goals.

The impact of this collaboration was felt across participating campuses, where students could reliably access resources without disruption. Through this collective effort, Student LunchBox's mobile markets continued to bring fresh produce, pantry staples, and essential supplies directly to students, offering consistency, dignity, and a sense of belonging during demanding academic periods.

At the same time, partner pantries remained fully stocked, ensuring students could count on support week after week. The expansion of the Closet Initiative further removed quiet but meaningful barriers by providing clothing, hygiene products, and other essentials that support student confidence and daily stability.

Behind every distribution was a foundation of coordination, planning, and shared responsibility that ensured services were delivered consistently and with care. This collective effort supported reliable operations across campuses while maintaining a student-centered approach grounded in dignity and access. The systems in place allowed Student LunchBox to operate effectively and remain focused on supporting students' academic continuity and well-being.

Throughout this report, you will see how collaboration translated into measurable outcomes and lived impact. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and trust, and we are honored to steward this collective investment in service of students working toward a more secure future.

At your service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karlen", enclosed within a simple, hand-drawn oval border.

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Student LunchBox, Inc
2025 Programmatic Report

Date 01/16/2025

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About Student LunchBox

Mission

Student LunchBox (SLB) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization established in 2020 to promote college excellence through comprehensive basic needs support. Using innovative resource recovery initiatives, SLB addresses food insecurity and hunger by providing nutritious meals and essential supplies to economically disadvantaged college students across Los Angeles County, enabling them to focus on their education and reach their full academic potential.

Program Context & Approach

Guided by a commitment to dignity, consistency, and student success, Student LunchBox exists to address the growing gap between rising college costs and students' ability to meet their most basic needs. As food insecurity continues to affect more than 2 in 5 college students across California, our work remains focused on meeting students where they are, reducing daily financial and emotional stressors, and ensuring that access to food and essential resources supports students' ability to remain enrolled, stay academically focused, and ultimately progress toward graduation.

Project Activities & Milestones

Alignment with Program Objectives

In 2025, Student LunchBox operated as a comprehensive college basic needs program designed to support student persistence and progress toward graduation through three integrated distribution methods:

- ❖ **Restocking partner college pantries** to ensure consistent access to nutritious food and essential items
- ❖ **Developing campus-based basic needs programs** at institutions with limited on-campus resources
- ❖ **Hosting mobile markets** that provide fresh produce, proteins, grocery items, and other necessities in a welcoming, stigma-free environment

Through this approach, Student LunchBox reached students across **17 partner campuses in Los Angeles County**, expanded the **Closet Initiative from 2 to 10 campuses**, and increased the frequency of mobile market distributions during periods of heightened need, including SNAP benefit reductions.

The Closet Initiative was further strengthened to include items for student parents and their children, recognizing that family stability is closely tied to educational success. These efforts directly advanced Student LunchBox's mission by reducing daily financial pressures, supporting students' mental and physical well-being, and creating dignified, reliable access to resources that help students remain enrolled, stay academically focused, and continue progressing toward degree completion.

Accomplished Milestones

In 2025, Student LunchBox reached several defining milestones that strengthened both its public presence and operational capacity. The organization received its first national celebrity endorsement from Chrissy Teigen and her company, Cravings. Their combined food and financial support, along with expanded social media visibility, helped elevate national awareness of college food insecurity and amplified Student LunchBox's mission beyond the local level.

Building on this momentum, Student LunchBox increased its media presence across multiple platforms, including K-LOVE Radio, Growing Inland Achievement, and The Giving List by the Montecito Journal, among other outlets. These features broadened public understanding of college basic needs insecurity and positioned Student LunchBox as a leading voice in the field.

A major operational milestone was the establishment of a permanent partnership with Whirlpool Corporation. Through this collaboration, Student LunchBox began equipping partner pantries with commercial-grade appliances, enabling campuses to safely store and distribute larger quantities of fresh food and expand access to high-quality resources for students.

In early 2025, Student LunchBox launched a strategic partnership with Zoho Corporation to develop a custom operations and project management platform. The system enables real-time tracking of inventory, volunteer engagement, student participation, survey outcomes, and testimonials across all partner campuses. This capability strengthened operational oversight and provided the data clarity needed to guide future planning and scale services with confidence.

Partnerships & Leveraged Resources

Student LunchBox continued to maximize the impact of every dollar through a strong network of community partnerships and a deeply engaged student workforce. Core collaborations with organizations, including Food Forward, the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Food Finders, Jesus Connection Project, Superior Grocers, Shelter Partnership's S. Mark Taper Foundation Shelter Resource Bank, and local faith-based groups, enabled the organization to source a diverse range of nutritious food and essential goods at scale, significantly increasing the volume, quality, and consistency of resources available to students.

These partnerships allowed Student LunchBox to respond quickly to campus-level demand, reduce food waste, and ensure equitable distribution across all partner sites. At the organizational level, **563 student volunteers contributed 5701 hours of service**, powering core logistics, warehouse operations, outreach, and mobile market distributions. This student-led workforce significantly expanded operational capacity while maintaining a cost-effective, peer-driven model rooted in trust and lived experience.

In parallel, **over 90 campus staff, student ambassadors, and volunteers** provided weekly support totaling **5,640 hours** to aid Student LunchBox operations across partner campuses. Their involvement strengthened on-site coordination, extended distribution capacity, and ensured that services were delivered consistently and with care. This level of campus engagement ensured consistent access to resources and strengthened the reliability of services students depended on throughout the year.

Results, Outcomes & Impact

In 2025, Student LunchBox recorded **153,395 students (53,671 unduplicated)** across 17 campuses. We distributed **992,180 pounds of food**, ultimately meeting our 2025 goal of 900,000 pounds and ensuring access to fresh produce, proteins, a variety of grocery products, and prepared meals that formed the foundation of consistent, nutritious diets. In tandem, our Closet Initiative provided over **\$314,974** worth of essential items, including clothing, toiletries, and hygiene products.

These large-scale food recovery efforts also generated significant environmental benefits. In 2025, SLB diverted an estimated **490.48 metric tons of CO₂e** from the atmosphere, equivalent to **approximately 1.25 million miles driven by an average gasoline-powered passenger vehicle**. These efforts also conserved an estimated **66.41 million gallons of water**, roughly equal to the volume of **101 Olympic-size swimming pools**, reinforcing Student LunchBox's role as both a student support program and a sustainability-driven organization.

Beyond reach and sustainability, SLB's impact is reflected in student experiences. Based on feedback from more than **2,500 students surveyed**, participants consistently reported improved financial stability, stronger mental and physical health, and a greater ability to remain enrolled and academically focused. These results reflect the power of a community that believes in Student LunchBox's mission and stands alongside students as they work toward a more secure future.

75.43% Experienced Significant Financial Relief

Students reported saving an estimated \$400–\$600 per month by accessing food and essential supplies through Student LunchBox, thereby redirecting limited financial resources toward rent, transportation, textbooks, and other education-related costs.

62.07% Reported Improved Mental Well-Being

Students shared that consistent access to food and essential resources reduced daily stress and anxiety, helping them feel more stable, supported, and better able to focus on their academic responsibilities.

63.65% Experienced Improved Physical Well-Being

Access to nutritious food, with an emphasis on fresh produce and balanced grocery items, supported healthier eating habits, more regular meals, increased energy levels, and improved students' ability to manage the physical demands of school.

63.41% Reported Stronger Academic Focus

Students indicated that reliable access to food helped them maintain concentration, complete coursework more consistently, and stay engaged with their academic goals.

63.44% Felt More Comfortable Accessing Support

Student LunchBox's on-campus presence reduced stigma around seeking assistance, fostering a culture of dignity, inclusion, and belonging that encouraged students to access support when needed.

Student LunchBox has become more than a resource; it is a trusted part of campus life. By embedding support directly within the college environment, it reduces stigma and redefines how basic needs assistance is delivered. This approach does not just respond to emergencies; it builds lasting systems of care that help students stay enrolled and succeed academically. As the program grows, it offers a replicable model for sustainable, student-centered support in higher education.

The Voices of Our Students

“Since the program came to our campus, I've been able to get enough food to last me for the week, in which there would be times I wouldn't have enough for a week, let alone for a couple of days. There would be times I would go without eating breakfast, or go to bed without eating dinner only to ration what I had. Not having enough food is hard when I can't sleep well, concentrate in class, do homework, or have enough energy to do much. Regardless, I still push through it. So, thank you for allowing our campus to have this program.”

“The times I've come to school on an empty stomach because I wasn't able to make dinner, and there was food, there has been a great blessing. I've utilized the vegetables and the frozen meats to ensure that I can have dinner for the next day or even lunch, and to make sure that I have a meal that I know I can make with what's still needed. CBD College is of great help, and it's not just a blessing for me, but it's a blessing for other students that are possibly in the same boat as I am.”

“As a single mom and parenting student, it is DIFFICULT to sustain a living these days on my own. These people have made my life MUCH BETTER by providing me with fresh produce for my family!!!”

“It's not an exaggeration to say that Student LunchBox saved my life. The food they provided was a lifeline for me when I needed to put money towards other priorities. Having food FOR FREE without judgment or shame from the incredible people running this service feels like a dream come true. Thank you, Student LunchBox!”

“Interning at Student Lunchbox has been such an impactful time in my life. I love seeing familiar faces excited to grab their fresh fruits and vegetables every week. While this is an on-campus job, I would still help out even if it were a volunteer position. Every week, one student in particular tells my co-worker and me, “Thank you for setting this up for us every week. We really appreciate it.” It's comments like that and the smiling faces I see at Student LunchBox that make it even more meaningful.”

“The provided foods through this program have helped my family during a few tough times when we were unable to get fresh produce or frozen meats. Those food donations greatly supported me and my family, allowing us to have nutritious meals and allocate more time to other necessities.”

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPI Category	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Description & Purpose
Participation & Reach	Monthly Participation 12,782	Measures the number of students participating in SLB programs monthly.
	Meal Equivalents (MEQ) \$1 = 5 meals	Standardizes meal types into a common unit for financial analysis. Used to calculate revenue and costs per meal.
Financial Health	Program Expenses (%) 98%	Percentage of revenue spent on direct programming:
	Administrative & Indirect (%) 2%	Percentage of revenue spent on administration:
	Cost Per Meal Equivalent (MEQ) \$0.21	Total program expenditures divided by total meal equivalents.
	Inventory Turnover Rate Food - Weekly – 19,000 pounds Essentials Quarterly - \$78,743 worth	Measures how many times inventory is used and replenished over a period. Indicates efficiency in inventory management and control of food investments.
Operational Efficiency	Meals Per Labor Hour (MPLH) 32 meals	Number of meals served per hour of labor. Measures staff productivity and operational efficiency.
	Staff Turnover Rate 5%	Percentage of student volunteers leaving the program. Mainly due to graduation.
	Volunteer Engagement 218 hours/week	Tracks volunteers' hours donated to Student LunchBox operations.

Program Impact	Academic Focus 63.41%	Meeting basic needs allowed students to stay enrolled, focus academically, and progress toward graduation.
	Mental Health 62.07%	Students reported improved emotional stability and reduced stress through consistent access to basic needs support.
	Physical Health 63.65%	Reliable access to nutritious food and essentials helped students maintain better physical health and energy.
	Financial Relief 75.43%	Students experienced meaningful cost savings that reduced financial strain and supported day-to-day stability.
	Stigma-Free Environment 63.44%	Students felt increased dignity and reduced stigma when accessing campus-based basic needs support.

Environmental Impact	Total Emissions CO ₂ e 490.48 Tons	490.48 metric tons of CO ₂ e diverted from the atmosphere. Equivalent to 1.25 million miles driven by an average gasoline-powered passenger vehicle
	Total Emissions CH ₄ 4.36 Tons	4.36 metric tons of Methine diverted from the atmosphere. Equivalent to 300,176 miles driven by an average gasoline-powered passenger vehicle.
	Water Conservation 66.41 million gallons	66.41 million gallons of water saved. Equivalent to 101 Olympic swimming pools.

Challenges, Adaptations, and Lessons Learned

- ❖ Operating a countywide program at scale continued to pose logistical challenges, particularly in transportation and cold storage capacity. Reliance on a standard cargo van required multiple daily warehouse trips, increasing labor demands and limiting distribution efficiency. This reinforced the need for a larger, purpose-built vehicle to support continued growth and timely service delivery. Despite these constraints, Student LunchBox adapted through strong campus partnerships and volunteer engagement. Flexible scheduling, extended delivery windows, and consistent support from campus staff and student ambassadors ensured service continuity and maintained a welcoming, reliable experience for students.
- ❖ Facing cold storage limitations, Student LunchBox identified a cost-effective solution through extensive research, using equipment from StoreItCold to convert a standard trailer into a functional walk-in refrigerator for under \$1,000. This improvement reduced food waste, enhanced product quality, and expanded the organization's ability to safely distribute fresh, perishable items.
- ❖ Storage capacity challenges were addressed through community collaboration. Neighboring businesses, residents, and our landlord coordinated to temporarily remove vehicles during operating hours, allowing Student LunchBox to utilize the surrounding outdoor space for intake and staging. This increased functional pallet capacity from 16 to over 25 and improved distribution flow without adding facility costs.
- ❖ Financially, 2025 was a challenging year, and original budget targets were not fully met. However, through disciplined financial management, strategic banking investments that protected reserves and generated yield, and careful cost control, Student LunchBox closed the year with generated income exceeding operating expenses. This outcome reflects prudent stewardship, resilience, and the ability to sustain and scale services even amid financial pressure.

Future Vision & Sustainability

Next Steps for the Program

In 2026, Student LunchBox officially entered a phase of organizational maturity focused on strengthening infrastructure, expanding reach, and improving operational efficiency. As demand continues to grow, our top capital priority is the acquisition of a larger box truck equipped with a long lift gate and, ideally, refrigeration. This investment would significantly reduce manual labor, increase distribution capacity, and allow us to serve thousands more students from additional campuses currently on our waitlist, while improving reliability across existing sites. In parallel, we plan to add one full-time and two part-time warehouse support staff to maintain consistent operations, reduce bottlenecks, and ensure timely campus deliveries.

Student LunchBox intentionally maintains a lean core team as part of its long-term operational strategy. This structure allows the organization to remain agile, direct more resources toward student-facing programs, and preserve its founding commitment to being led **by students, for students**. By keeping staff size focused and strategic, Student LunchBox creates meaningful opportunities for student internships, leadership development, and hands-on workforce experience, ensuring that students remain actively involved in shaping, operating, and sustaining the programs designed to support their peers.

Sustainability Strategy

Restricted Reserves: To safeguard long-term organizational stability, Student LunchBox established a \$1,000,000 sustainability reserve between 2022 and 2023 through a strategic multi-year investment from a founding partner. These funds are held in an interest-bearing account and are restricted for continuity of operations, covering essential baseline operating costs such as transportation, warehousing, utilities, and core staffing, and may only be accessed during periods of revenue fluctuation or delayed funding. Interest generated from the reserve is unrestricted and is applied annually to support core operations. This structure allows Student LunchBox to sustain uninterrupted services while preserving reserves as a safeguard for future stability.

Donor Partner Network: Student LunchBox maintains a strong, expanding network of donor and community partners who provide nutritious food, essential goods, and other in-kind support. These partnerships ensure a consistent supply of resources for students and allow the organization to meet escalating needs across campuses, even during periods of funding fluctuation.

Fundraising: Student LunchBox employs a comprehensive fundraising strategy led by the executive team, board of directors, interns, and student ambassadors. The CEO, Karlen, targets multiple grant opportunities each week while engaging with foundations and corporate sponsors. Meanwhile, SLB's board leverages its networks to forge new philanthropic partnerships, creating a multi-channel approach to expanding the donor base.

Funding Diversification: In parallel, the CEO leads efforts to expand Student LunchBox’s visibility through public relations, strategic communications, and digital outreach, strengthening brand positioning and raising awareness of college hunger. These efforts include leveraging the talents of marketing interns, deploying targeted Google and Meta advertising, engaging supporters through newsletters and social media, and exploring collaborations with user-generated content creators and public figures to further amplify reach and support long-term fundraising growth.

College Partnerships: Our partnerships with colleges and universities mobilize student volunteers, ambassadors, and campus staff to strengthen capacity and cost-effectiveness. In 2025, 563 student volunteers contributed 5,701 hours supporting logistics, warehouse operations, outreach, and mobile markets, while over 90 campus staff, student ambassadors, and volunteers provided an additional 5,640 hours to support the shared mission. This student-led, peer-driven model enables rapid response to campus demand, equitable distribution, and consistent, trusted service delivery.

Long-Term Vision

We recognize that not every student enters college with the same resources or support systems. Each year, thousands of students begin their academic journeys while navigating financial limitations, family responsibilities, and limited access to necessities, often in pursuit of a better future for themselves and their families. Student LunchBox exists to ensure that these students are not left behind and that support is available when it is needed most.

SLB envisions a future in which every student in Los Angeles County has uninterrupted access to nutritious food, essential supplies, and a strong system of support throughout their academic journey. In parallel with its regular distribution models, our long-term goal is to establish a centralized Basic Needs Resource Center, a student-centered facility offering wraparound support in a dignified, welcoming environment.

The center would include a grocery-style space where students can select fresh, nutritious food, alongside a department-store-style area providing non-food essentials such as clothing, bedding, and hygiene products. It would also function as a leadership and training hub, creating opportunities for students to build real-world skills and professional experience.

As part of this vision, Student LunchBox aims to develop partnerships with prospective employers, connecting students who gain experience through our programs to meaningful job opportunities that reflect their growth and dedication. In the years ahead, we will continue strengthening partnerships, securing sustainable infrastructure, and refining systems that ensure the work we do today supports students well into the future.

Demographics of the Student LunchBox Service Population:

Ethnicity:

- ❖ Hispanic / Latino: 49.7%
- ❖ Asian: 14.7%
- ❖ White: 15.6%
- ❖ Black / African American: 9.2%
- ❖ Two or More Races: 6.4%
- ❖ Middle Eastern / North African: 2.4%
- ❖ Pacific Islander: 0.8%
- ❖ American Indian / Alaska Native: 0.8%
- ❖ Other / Not Listed: 0.2%
- ❖ Prefer Not to Disclose / Unknown: 0.2%

Age Groups:

- ❖ 16–24 years: 42.6%
- ❖ 25–34 years: 23.0%
- ❖ 35–44 years: 15.7%
- ❖ 45–54 years: 7.7%
- ❖ 55+ years: 11.0%

Gender Identification

- ❖ Female: 63.4%
- ❖ Male: 34%
- ❖ Non-Binary: 2.4%
- ❖ Prefer Not to Disclose / Unknown: 0.2%

Educational Institutions

1. CSU Long Beach
2. CSU Dominguez Hills
3. CSU Los Angeles
4. CSU Northridge
5. University of California, Los Angeles
6. Los Angeles Pierce College
7. Los Angeles Valley College
8. Los Angeles Mission College
9. Los Angeles City College
10. Emerson College Los Angeles
11. NYU Los Angeles
12. Montclair State University, Los Angeles
13. Ithaca College Los Angeles
14. CBD College
15. University of Texas at Austin, UTLA Center
16. James Madison University, Los Angeles
17. Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science

Board of Directors & Leadership

Laurie Settle, Board Chair, Student LunchBox, Inc.	2024 - present
Kelly Alarcon, Board Secretary, Student LunchBox, Inc.	2024 - present
Maggie Gisel, Board Member, Student LunchBox, Inc	2025 - present
Marco Gonzalez, Board Treasurer, Student LunchBox, Inc.	2020 - present
Armine Badalyan, Board Member, Student LunchBox, Inc.	2023 - present
Karlen Nurijanyan, MPA, CEO & Founder, Student LunchBox, Inc.	2020 - present