

Promoting College Excellence Through Basic Needs Support

February 19, 2025

Dear Student LunchBox Family and Community,

On behalf of our organization, I want to express our appreciation for your commitment to addressing campus hunger. Your generous support has empowered us to amplify our efforts throughout Los Angeles County, assisting thousands of economically disadvantaged college students, many of whom are first-generation learners supporting their families while striving for their education.

Thanks to your partnership, we have enhanced our ability to provide nutritious meals and vital resources to students facing food insecurity, helping to pave the way for academic success and community strength.

Your confidence in our organization has been crucial in promoting educational equity and allowing students to concentrate on their studies instead of worrying about their next meal. Your support reinforces our collective goal of fostering meaningful, positive changes in the lives of at-risk populations through improved nutrition and comprehensive assistance.

We are privileged to share our programmatic report for 2024, which illustrates the substantial impact we have made together and showcases how your support has transformed the lives of students across Los Angeles County.

Thank you for being a driving force behind our mission and creating a lasting impact.

At your service,

At your service,



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Student LunchBox, Inc
2024 Programmatic Report

Student LunchBox, Inc.

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Student LunchBox is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

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Executive Summary

In 2024, Student LunchBox achieved unprecedented growth in addressing campus hunger across the region, demonstrating exceptional stewardship of your investment. Through our innovative three-pronged distribution model, we expanded our reach to **15 college campuses**, serving **43,538 unique participants**, including **25,511 new students** joining the program – a 101.4% increase from 2023 figures of 12,613. Furthermore, SLB recorded **154,249** total visits in 2024 – a rise of 30.6% over the 2023 figure of 118,038.

Our influence reached far beyond statistics, providing 660,000 pounds of food (550,000 meals) and 11,000 pounds of essential items via our new "**Closet**" initiative. This represents an 83.3% rise in food distribution from 2023, showcasing both the increasing demand and our improved operational capabilities.

Your contribution has been essential in sustaining all major areas of our operations—from transportation and occupancy to equipment and food procurement. With 97% of our budget dedicated to direct programmatic efforts, we prioritize every dollar to maximize impact. We operate with the highest level of fiscal responsibility, understanding that economic fluctuations or unforeseen challenges could significantly affect our ability to serve students. This commitment ensures that we remain resilient and adaptable, continuing to provide essential resources to those who rely on our support.

Although we faced challenges with warehouse capacity and logistics, we implemented innovative solutions that strengthened our operational framework and allowed us to overcome these obstacles. These experiences have highlighted the importance of preparing for future growth, demonstrating that we must continue building our capacity to meet the increasing demand for our services. As part of this vision, we plan to establish a comprehensive Basic Needs Resource Center—a centralized facility designed to expand our impact systematically and ensure that basic needs are no longer a barrier to students achieving their educational aspirations.

This report details how your support has helped transform student lives, fostering educational equity and community resilience across Los Angeles County.

Program Activities

Throughout 2024, Student LunchBox (SLB) continued its comprehensive three-pronged approach to combat campus hunger across Los Angeles County. Our activities centered on delivering immediate relief while building sustainable infrastructure for long-term student success through established partnerships with colleges, universities, donors, and community organizations.

Core Program Activities: Our operations focused on three primary service models to ensure maximum accessibility and impact:

- ❖ **Partner Food Pantry Support:** We provide weekly deliveries of thousands of pounds of food and essential supplies to established partner pantries, maintaining consistent access to nutritious resources.
- ❖ **Satellite Pantry Development:** We expand our reach by establishing new food pantries at institutions lacking basic needs infrastructure, creating sustainable access points for students.
- ❖ **Mobile Food Markets:** We transform traditional food distribution into engaging community gatherings through farmers' market-style events, reducing stigma while fostering peer support networks.

Key Milestones: We significantly exceeded our initial objectives:

- ❖ **Warehouse Capacity:** Surpassed our 50% growth target, achieving an 83.3% increase in processing capability.
- ❖ **Closet Program:** Through our new “Closet Program,” over 600 students gained access to essential items like clothing and hygiene products. This initiative eased financial burdens and improved their overall academic journey, ensuring they could focus on their studies with dignity and confidence.
- ❖ **Volunteer Engagement:** Successfully recruited a part-time intern to coordinate mobile markets and enlisted 130+ student ambassadors and volunteers to support programming, with a total of 4503 hours donated to Student LunchBox in 2024.
- ❖ **New Partnerships:** Established new strategic partnerships with Jewish Family Services JFSLA SOVA, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, and Shelter Partnership (S. Mark Taper Foundation Shelter Resource Bank), strengthening our resource pipeline.

LA2050 Grant Challenge: In 2024, Student LunchBox was honored as one of the winners of the LA2050 Grant Challenge, a milestone that recognized our commitment to college basic needs. Winning this competitive grant validated our vision for a future where every student in Los Angeles County has the support they need to thrive, connect, and reach their full potential.

This achievement was further celebrated through formal recognition from the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles and Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager-Dove of California's 37th Congressional District.

- ❖ **Campus Expansion:** Six new institutional partners were added.

Mobile Markets

- ❖ University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
- ❖ Los Angeles City College
- ❖ Charles Drew University

Satellite Pantries

- ❖ Emerson College
- ❖ Montclair State University (LA)
- ❖ Los Angeles Mission College

Our partnership model proved highly effective, with each institution designating 3-6 staff members while SLB provided trained student ambassadors. Through weekly collaborative meetings and rigorous monitoring, we maintained high program quality while expanding our reach cost-effectively.

These activities aligned seamlessly with our broader organizational objectives of expanding access to nutritious food, building sustainable campus partnerships, and creating an efficient, scalable model for addressing college basic needs across Los Angeles County.

Facts and Figures

In 2024, Student LunchBox (SLB) made groundbreaking strides in our mission to combat food insecurity and support college students across our service area.

Expanding Food Assistance:

660,000 Pounds of Food Distributed: Equivalent to 550,000 meals, this represents an 83.3% increase from the previous year, ensuring thousands of students had access to nutritious meals.

Innovating Holistic Support:

Beyond food assistance, our "Closet" initiative provided 11,000 pounds of essential items, such as clothing, bedding, hygiene products, and household supplies, to students facing severe hardships.

Student Served:

- ❖ **43,538 unique participants served**
- ❖ **25,511 new students** joined our network of support—a **101.4% increase** from 2023
- ❖ **154,249 total visits** - representing a **30.6% growth** from the 2023 figure of 118,038, reflecting the success of our outreach goals.

Driving Environmental Sustainability:

SLB rescued thousands of pounds of surplus food, yielding measurable environmental benefits:

- ❖ **424.77 metric tons of CO2e emissions reduced**
- ❖ **75.80 million gallons of water conserved**

In 2024, Student LunchBox not only ensured that students had the resources they needed to thrive academically but also contributed to a more sustainable and equitable future. Each meal, visit, and rescued pound of food represents a step closer to eliminating barriers to education caused by hunger and hardship.

Program Impact

Through comprehensive program evaluation, we identified five key areas of transformative impact:

1. **Economic Relief:** Students reported monthly savings of \$400-\$600 on food expenses, allowing the reallocation of resources to educational essentials.
2. **Mental Health:** Students experienced reduced anxiety and improved emotional stability through consistent access to nutritious meals.
3. **Physical Health:** Regular access to fresh produce and balanced nutrition led to increased energy and improved overall wellness.
4. **Academic Success:** Students reported enhanced concentration, better retention, and improved academic performance.
5. **Social Integration:** Our innovative distribution model created stigma-free spaces that normalized basic needs support within campus life.

Student Testimonials:

- ❖ "As my summer academic grant funds were finishing, the partnership between Emerson and Student LunchBox came at the perfect time... I am extremely grateful for this collaboration, which has allowed me to cook as though I was home without missing meals."
- ❖ "The food pantry was my lifeline during my first year in college. I had no way of surviving without the food pantry and the services of Student LunchBox. I will always be grateful for them."
- ❖ "It has been such a wonderful thing to have weekly access to fresh produce and protein... its consistency means it has become a staple in my meal planning and essential to my weekly diet. Without it, I would certainly not have such a healthy diet."
- ❖ "Amazing to know that there is food to be given at a moment's notice to students who are less fortunate and may not be under the best circumstances. It allows me to breathe more easily knowing the school takes the students as seriously as they may treat their own families."
- ❖ "It was great to be able to know that each week I would be able to access free groceries. The stipend I earned from my internship was already going towards debt, so this program was vital to me."
- ❖ "This program has allowed me to focus on my academics and not have to worry about how or what I am going to eat. This program has been very beneficial to my health and overall well-being."

These outcomes demonstrate the profound impact of addressing food insecurity in higher education, creating lasting positive change in students' lives while building more resilient campus communities.

Additional testimonials may be found at <https://www.studentlunchbox.org/impact>.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

In 2024, as Student LunchBox experienced remarkable growth, we encountered operational challenges that prompted strategic adaptations and valuable insights. Our success in building partnerships and expanding services revealed infrastructure limitations that we've actively addressed through creative solutions and strategic planning.

1. Logistics: Transportation emerged as a primary challenge as our network expanded to 15 locations. Our current Ford Transit Extended vehicle, while reliable, can transport only two pallets per trip, requiring multiple journeys to deliver approximately 20 pallets weekly across Los Angeles County. This limitation has highlighted the need for a larger vehicle to enhance our operational efficiency and meet growing demand more effectively, positioning this to be our **top priority**.

2. Staffing: As our operations continue to grow, we recognize the need to strengthen our organizational capacity to sustain and expand our impact. While the CEO's hands-on leadership has been instrumental in ensuring high-quality service delivery and fostering strong relationships with students and partners, the increasing scale of our programs presents an opportunity to build a more robust infrastructure. To meet these demands, SLB will require the addition of three key staff members: a development consultant to lead fundraising and grant writing efforts and two program coordinators to oversee program execution. These strategic roles will enhance our ability to secure resources, streamline operations, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our mission.

3. Occupancy: Similarly, our warehouse space—initially adequate for our operations—became constrained as food donations and partnerships multiplied exponentially. Rather than viewing this as an obstacle, we recognized it as a positive indicator of our program's impact and success. We responded by implementing creative space optimization solutions, including installing high-rack systems along walls for pallet storage and strategically reorganizing equipment to maximize operational flow.

Additionally, we developed systematic approaches to maintain service quality while expanding our reach:

- ❖ Implemented structured daily delivery schedules with partner institutions
- ❖ Engaged volunteer drivers to supplement transportation capacity
- ❖ Delegated university staff to oversee mobile market distributions as needed

These adaptations have not only improved our current operations but have positioned us to be able to add two potential colleges to our network without straining resources in 2025. While we've temporarily paused major expansion plans until securing a larger vehicle, these experiences have strengthened our operational framework.

Program Sustainability

Resilient Donor Partner Network

Student LunchBox (SLB) has cultivated a sustainable and growing network of partnerships that ensures a consistent supply of nutritious food and essential supplies. This strategic approach provides the resilience needed to meet the increasing demand for our services, even during periods of funding fluctuations. By fostering strong relationships with donors and suppliers, SLB is equipped to adapt to the evolving needs of college students facing food insecurity.

Financial Stability Through Reserves

Since 2023, SLB has solidified its financial foundation by establishing a \$750,000 sustainability reserve fund. This fund, strategically invested in high-yield savings accounts, is dedicated to supporting core operations in the event of revenue shortfalls. Allocations from this reserve ensure that essential expenses, including occupancy, transportation, and base staffing—are covered without disruption. This financial safety net enables SLB to maintain consistent and reliable services, ensuring that students in need are continuously supported.

Comprehensive Fundraising Strategy

SLB employs a robust and multi-faceted fundraising approach led by the executive team, board of directors, interns, and student ambassadors.

- ❖ The CEO, Karlen, actively pursues multiple grant opportunities each week, fostering relationships with foundations and corporate sponsors.
- ❖ The board of directors leverages its extensive networks to establish new philanthropic partnerships.
- ❖ Student ambassadors execute targeted marketing campaigns, creating additional avenues for donor engagement.

Diversified Funding Model

SLB has successfully diversified its funding streams through innovative outreach initiatives.

- ❖ Celebrity and influencer outreach to raise awareness and generate support.
- ❖ Targeted digital campaigns utilizing Google Ads, Meta Ads, and other platforms.
- ❖ Engaging newsletters and social media presence to keep donors informed and involved.

Leveraging College Partnerships

Collaboration with partner colleges and universities remains a cornerstone of SLB's sustainability strategy. These partnerships bring together volunteers, staff, and student ambassadors to support SLB's operations. This youth-driven model not only provides an enthusiastic and skilled workforce but also helps us minimize payroll expenses, allowing donor contributions to advance SLB's mission directly.

Future Goals

Looking ahead, Student LunchBox's vision is anchored in the development of a transformative Basic Needs Resource Center. This strategic initiative responds directly to the exponential growth we've experienced and the increasing demand for our services across Los Angeles County. The center will serve as more than a distribution hub—it will be a comprehensive support facility where students can access nutritious food, essential supplies, and community resources in a dignified environment.

This goal represents our commitment to scaling impact while maintaining service quality. As our current operations demonstrate increasing demand—serving over 49,000 students in 2024—this infrastructure expansion is critical for meeting the growing needs of our student population. The facility will enable us to:

- **Student-Centered Food Pantry:** Establish an inclusive, grocery-store-like environment where students can access nutritious food with dignity. This space will reinforce our role as a supportive partner in students' academic journeys, fostering a sense of community and empowerment.
- **Resource Distribution Center:** Provide essential non-food items, such as toiletries, clothing, and bedding, in a single, accessible location, complementing our food distribution services to address comprehensive basic needs.
- **Student Leadership Academy:** Offer internships that build critical professional skills, including project management and organizational leadership, preparing students for successful careers.
- **Job Placement Partnerships:** Collaborate with local businesses and organizations to create pathways for employment, ensuring students transition into meaningful job opportunities after their time with Student LunchBox.

Leadership Overview

At the heart of Student LunchBox's mission lies the leadership of Karlen Nurijanyan, CEO, and Marco Gonzalez, CFO & treasurer. Their personal journeys and professional achievements form the cornerstone of SLB's success. Having navigated adversity and food insecurity, they bring profound empathy and commitment to the cause.

CEO Karlen Nurijanyan possesses a multifaceted skill set. He has managed media advertising for nonprofit youth initiatives and has served in HR, Operations, and Program Management. Karlen's experience with hunger and poverty during his childhood and academic years ignited a passion from which Student LunchBox was born. Karlen holds a Master's in Public Administration and has strategically guided SLB since its inception in 2020.

CFO and Treasurer Marco Gonzalez has 18 years of experience in accounting and finance. Marco is dedicated to philanthropy and community service and has contributed to such notable causes as Teach for America and The Trevor Project. His expertise in financial administration, acquired via public universities and private equity, ensures SLB's fiscal health and sustainability.

Demographics of Service Population

Ethnicity:

American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.37%
Asian: 9.73%
Black or African American: 14.68%
Hispanic or Latino: 33.89%
Pacific Islander: 0.48%
Filipino: 6.69%
Multi-Ethnic: 9.52%
Unreported: 5.0%
White: 18.17%
Prefer not to Disclose/Unknown: 1.47%

Age Groups:

16-25: 48.6%
25-35: 28.5%
55 and over: 3.2%
35-55: 16.4%
Prefer not to Disclose/Unknown: 3.3%

Gender Identification

Male: 39%
Female: 56%
Non-Binary: 4%
Prefer not to Disclose/Unknown: 1%

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 Gisell, 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