



August 19, 2022

Systemwide Student Wellness Case Managers

In an effort to advance the Board's Strategic Plan strategy of ensuring systemwide institutional supports for student basic needs, OCHE will seek a legislative sponsor to champion a \$975,000 funding request to create eleven full-time, regional student wellness case manager positions to service USHE campuses. These positions will be housed at an institution and shared regionally, as appropriate. Student wellness case managers will be responsible for conducting outreach and case management to help students secure the campus-based, community-based, state, and federal resources they need to achieve wellness and succeed in their education, including food security resources such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), public housing assistance, mental health services, affordable childcare, etc.

Throughout the year, the Commissioner and his staff have purposefully and meaningfully engaged campus, student, staff, and community stakeholders who may be affected by this potential course of action by reviewing literature, visiting campus basic needs centers, seeking input on student wellness from the Campus Safety and Equity and Advisory Council (CSEAC), and facilitating multiple discussions with institutional presidents and senior student affairs officers (SSAOs). These efforts revealed the fact students face significant barriers that limit their knowledge of, and access to, existing basic needs resources and public benefits. For example:

- [52%](#) of students facing basic needs insecurity do not apply for supports because they don't know how
- [89%](#) of SNAP-eligible Utah students do not apply for the program, leaving approximately \$61.5 million in SNAP benefits on the table each year

Research also reveals that basic needs insecurity affects underrepresented students at [higher rates](#) and leads to adverse educational outcomes such as [declines](#) in GPA and [decreased likelihood](#) of timely degree completion. Therefore, this request intervenes in existing educational disparities and works to close attainment gaps by providing students with the resources they need to secure their basic needs and focus on their education.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is a discussion item only; no action is required.