Special Committee on Student Affairs

February 2025

February 13, 2025

1:30 p.m.

Boardroom, McNamara Alumni Center

BOARD OF REGENTS
DOCKET ITEM SUMMARY

Special Committee on Student Affairs   **February 13, 2025**

AGENDA ITEM: Student Basic Needs

☐ **Review**   ☐ **Review + Action**   ☐ **Action**   ☒ **Discussion**

☐ *This is a report required by Board policy.*

PRESENTERS: Jeremy Leiferman, Interim Vice Chancellor of Student Life, Duluth campus
Michelle Trumpy, Director of Public Health, Boynton Health, Twin Cities campus

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS

The purpose of this item is for the special committee to engage in a conversation focused on student basic needs insecurity across the system. The discussion will provide information on changes in recent decades to how students access food, the support services available, service expansion efforts, and current funding requests.

The discussion will also focus on the following key points:

- The definition of basic needs insecurity and data about the current rates of basic needs insecurity systemwide:
  - 1 in 4 University students are experiencing food insecurity
  - 1 in 3 are worried about covering the cost of housing
- The way students access to food has changed, with the traditional dining hall model shifting to include additional programs to address food insecurity such as:
  - Food pantries
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) support
  - Emergency grants
- Highlight the ways that students can learn about these services:
  - Digital and in-person marketing
  - Awareness events
  - Campus taskforces,
  - MentalHealth@UMN website
  - Internal partners' referrals including One Stop, Care Teams, and case managers.
- Outline systemwide expansion efforts that are underway to offer additional programs (including additional dates for food pantries) and provide more resources at the existing services (more food per student during food pantry visits).
- Spotlight additional requests for in-kind donations, philanthropic gifts, grants, and the state legislative request will support expansion efforts.

Student Basic Needs
Background Materials

Basic needs are goods and services that are essential to the wellbeing and success of our students. Insecurity refers to either limited or uncertain access to these basic needs. Addressing basic needs insecurity is an important focus for the University of Minnesota system because it impacts academic achievement.

Support for basic needs has been a focus across the state, including the Minnesota Free School Meals bill signed into law in March 2023. The MN Free School Meals Program is a permanent program that provides state reimbursement to K–12 schools so that all students can have one breakfast and one lunch at no cost at school. This program recognizes that when students do not have to focus on hunger, they can focus on their academic pursuits. The same is true for college students — removing barriers to securing food and other basic needs will allow them to focus on their academic and personal success. It is critical that we continue to expand basic needs support on our campuses to meet the needs of our students.

Data on Student Food & Housing Insecurity

Prevalence of food insecurity among University of Minnesota students has increased since 2015 (see table below). The most recent University of Minnesota College Student Health Survey data from spring 2024 shows approximately one in four students across the system experience food insecurity, which aligns with national data of 23% of undergraduates experiencing food insecurity. In 2024, approximately 15,000 students reported experiencing food insecurity systemwide.

Questions about housing insecurity were added to the 2024 survey for the first time (see table below). In 2024, almost a third of students reported housing insecurity; or approximately 17,000 students systemwide.

Boynton Health's College Student Health Survey (CSHS) is a comprehensive survey on college student health exploring key areas such as mental health, substance use, sexual health, and nutrition and examines the impact of health on academic performance. The CSHS has been conducted approximately every three years systemwide since 2007.

- **Food Insecurity in the Past 12 Months**
  In 2015, two questions about food insecurity were added to the CSHS. These questions were based on the United States Department of Agriculture Household Food Security Survey.

  On the CSHS, students who respond 'often true' or 'sometimes true' to one or both of these questions are considered to be experiencing food insecurity:

  o *"Within the past 12 months, I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more."*

- o *"Within the past 12 months, the food I bought just didn't last and I didn't have money to get more."*

The table below shows the percentage of students that have experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months:

Survey Year	Food Insecurity in the Past 12 Months					
	Systemwide	Crookston	Duluth	Morris	Rochester	Twin Cities
2024	25.1%	28.1%	23.5%	30.0%	28.8%	23.6%
2021	19.4%	23.7%	20.9%	21.7%	30.6%	14.9%
2018	22.6%	21.6%	24.2%	25.5%	35.7%	19.6%
2015/2016*	22.7%	24.0%	26.0%	27.3%	28.6%	18.7%

*Crookston, Duluth, and Twin Cities participated in 2015 survey; Morris and Rochester participated in the 2016 survey

- **Housing Insecurity in the Past 12 Months**
  In 2024, two questions about housing insecurity were added to the CSHS to better understand this emerging issue.

  On the CSHS, students who respond 'often true' or 'sometimes true' to one or both of these questions are considered to be experiencing housing insecurity:

  - o *"Within the past 12 months, I worried I would not have enough money to cover the cost of my housing."*
  - o *"Within the past 12 months, I was unable to pay all of the cost of my housing on time."*

  The table below shows the percentage of students that have experienced housing insecurity in the past 12 months:

Survey Year	Housing Insecurity in the Past 12 Months					
	Systemwide	Crookston	Duluth	Morris	Rochester	Twin Cities
2024	29.4%	26.3%	29.5%	30.3%	32.9%	29.5%

Systemwide Basic Needs Services

Each campus offers services for students tailored to their local population and context. Below are links to each campus' website with an overview of their unique food pantry and related services. Examples include food pantries, prepared meals, clothing, information about SNAP benefits, and resources for community support.

- Crookston
- Duluth
- Morris
- Rochester
- Twin Cities

Each campus offers student emergency grants with eligibility and access details available on their One Stop Student Services webpage. These pages also link to additional campus and community resources.

- Crookston
- Duluth
- Morris
- Rochester
- Twin Cities

Campus-specific resources addressing a wide variety of concerns, including basic needs, can be found at mentalhealth.umn.edu. Students, faculty, staff, friends, and family can access this systemwide site. "Basic needs" is the second most queried search.

SNAP Benefit Information

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is a federal program that provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of low-income individuals and families so they can purchase healthy foods. Overall, limited numbers of students are eligible due to the many federally mandated criteria students must meet, and even fewer apply even though there is support available. Eligibility is difficult for students, who must meet an exemption in addition to all the criteria required of non-student applicants. There are unique concerns for graduate students and their eligibility for SNAP benefits. Graduate students' annual income would typically qualify for SNAP benefits, however the calculation for SNAP benefits is by monthly income. Graduate students are often paid over a nine-month academic year, which makes their monthly income higher than the minimum and thus they are often ineligible for benefits.

Monthly SNAP benefit amounts vary based on income, expenses, and household size. For a one-person household, the monthly SNAP benefit ranges from $20-$291. Pandemic-era waivers expanded eligibility for SNAP and were beneficial in increasing the number of students who

received benefits. Unfortunately, these waivers expired in 2023, which resulted in many students no longer being eligible for SNAP benefits.

Each campus provides information and support for accessing SNAP benefits. One Stop alerts students who may be eligible for SNAP benefits on each campus. [Here is an example of SNAP benefit application information shared with students on the Twin Cities campus](#).

State Funding Support

- **Minnesota Legislative Request**
  As part of the Fiscal Year 2026–2027 Biennial Budget Change Item, "Enhancing the Student Experience," a request has been made for new funds for basic needs that will enable the creation of a comprehensive continuum of wellbeing care across the system.

  The $1.5M requested for basic needs resources will expand programs that address food insecurity and help students with other basic needs through short-term emergency grants, expanded hours and locations of University food pantries, and hiring of additional staff who can assist them with navigating university, state, and federal programs or services. Expansion of food pantries also includes increasing the availability of a variety of fresh foods that meet the dietary and cultural needs of students and health/hygiene products on each campus.

- **Minnesota Office of Higher Education**
  - All University of Minnesota campuses participated in the Minnesota Office of Higher Education "Student Basic Needs" Working Group in 2024. The working group provided 32 recommendations across 8 basic needs domains which were shared in [a report to the legislature](#).
  - The Twin Cities and Duluth campuses earned "[Hunger Free Campus](#)" designations and have received grant funding to support their campus food pantries. Other campuses are exploring seeking this designation.

Partnerships

Addressing basic needs on each campus is done in partnership with a variety of internal and external entities. These partners provide valuable resources such as funding, donations, and promotion for the work. Each campus has a robust network of internal and external partners that includes government, private, and nonprofit organizations. Each campus has expressed intent to expand partnerships in an effort to expand services. Here are some examples of partnerships across the system:

- Funding support and in-kind donations are given by a range of private organizations including Walmart (Crookston), EA Sween (Twin Cities), and Blue Cross Blue Shield of

Minnesota (Morris); the University of Minnesota Foundation dedicates fundraising resources to support basic needs efforts across the system.

- Internal partnerships with dining programs include emergency meal swipe plans (Duluth, Morris, Twin Cities) and a food rescue program that collects and packages surplus meals from the dining hall and provides them free of charge to students (Morris and Rochester).
- Keystone Community Services is a mobile food shelf serving Ramsey County that brings their "foodmobile" to the St. Paul campus twice per month (Twin Cities).
- Kitchen Coalition turns food bank ingredients to meals via a network of local restaurants/caterers; students then pick up the "heat and serve meals" on campus (Rochester and Twin Cities).
- The tribal Cheyenne River Lakota Department of Games, Fish, and Parks provides individually packaged frozen USDA-inspected elk and bison that is offered to students free of charge via a freezer in the 24-hour lounge in the Student Center (Morris).

Student Impact

Student governments on all campuses are actively involved in advocating for basic needs resources. They provide an important voice to guide the work. These quotes about the impact of basic needs insecurity are from students attending the University of Minnesota. Names have been excluded to protect student privacy:

- "A lot of students, myself included, use the food pantry to fill a variety of different needs, whether that's toiletries, fresh produce and dairy, or shelf items like rice. "
- "I skip meals. Usually lunch and breakfast. I do have like maybe a [granola] bar or something. I mean there are days where I don't have to go out then I'll just like… not move so much so I don't get so hungry."
- "I'll put off grocery shopping. I'll be like, okay, I have these 3 things, what can I do with them to make them last until the weekend. And that sort of thing."
- "Being [a student] is really difficult, especially when you have all these things on your mind, like, 'Oh, where am I going to get my food.' And it's led me to be really crafty which is cool, like shaving off my head so I don't have to buy shampoo and conditioner, or use as much water."
- "I could not afford rent for the month… because my work wasn't scheduling me as much as I wanted, and my parents couldn't help. So, I did end up finding the money, but it was extremely anxiety-inducing. Just having that over me for last semester was very, very hard, and it was like, how could I focus on my schoolwork when I was like, 'Am I going to be homeless in the next two weeks?"

Okanagan Charter

The Okanagan Charter is an international charter for health promoting universities and colleges. The charter is an outcome of the 2015 International Conference on Health Promoting Universities and Colleges. As of October 10, 2024, 31 institutions in the United States have signed on as adopters

of the charter and 282 U.S. colleges and universities have joined as institutional partners. The Okanagan Charter's call to action is to "generate thriving communities and a culture of well-being." It provides common language and a framework for colleges and universities to become "health and wellbeing promoting campus[es]." Specific action items for higher education institutions include:

- embedding health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates; and
- leading health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally.

This charter serves as a framework that the Student Representatives to the Board of Regents recommended exploring to solidify the University of Minnesota's commitment to be a campus that supports health and wellbeing. Addressing basic needs through a holistic, systemwide lens is essential not only for the health and wellbeing of students, but all their academic success.

Student Basic Needs

Board of Regents | Special Committee on Student Affairs | 2.13.25

Jeremy Leiferman
Interim Vice Chancellor
Student Life, Duluth campus

Michelle Trumpy
Director of Public Health
Boynton Health, Twin Cities campus
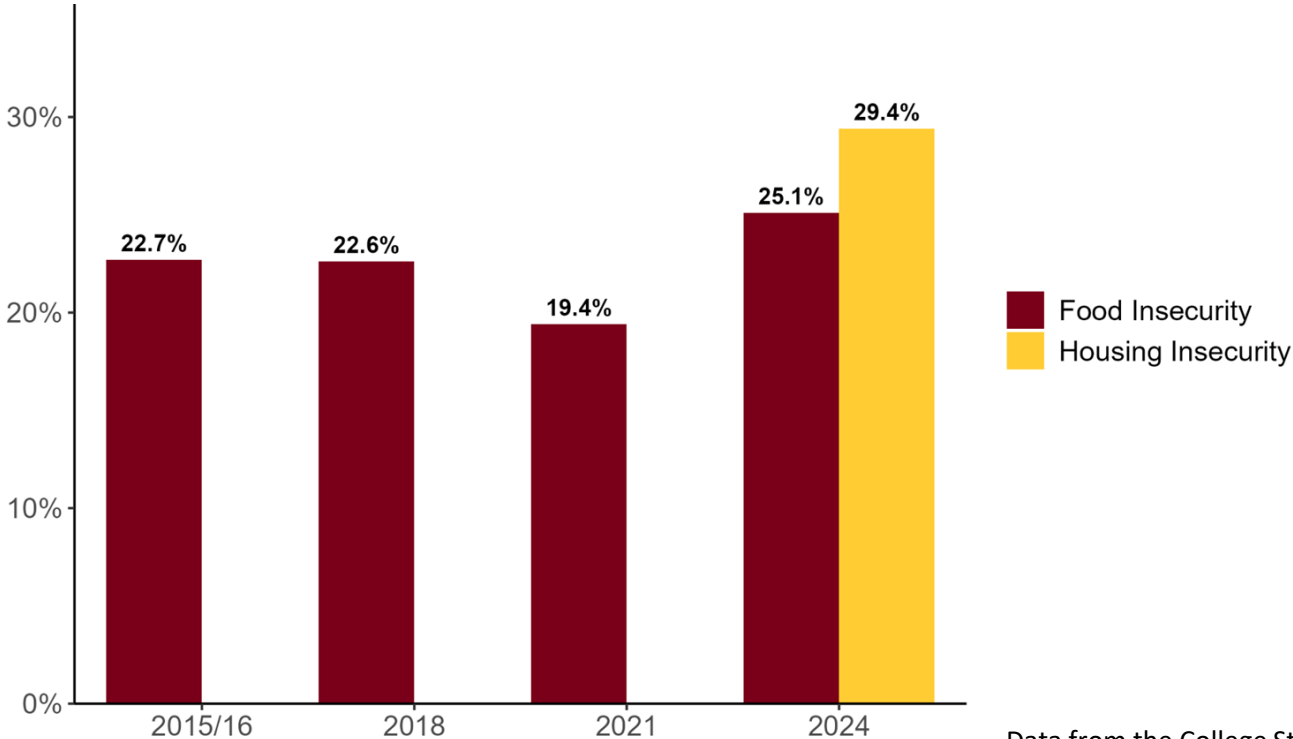
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover℠

Defining Basic Needs Insecurity

Basic Needs Insecurity
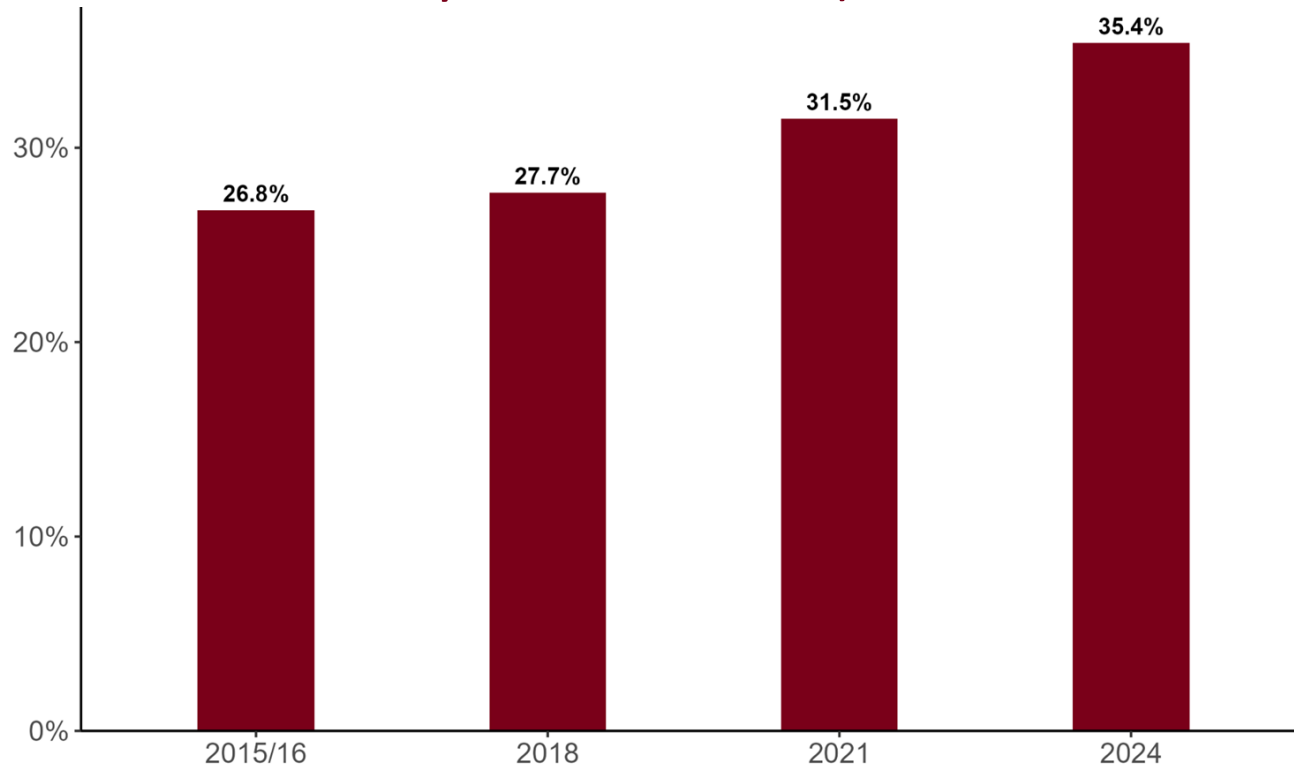## (Past 12 months, UMN System Students)

Data from the College Student Health Survey

Academics Impacted by Food Insecurity
(Past 12 Months, UMN System Students)

Data from the College Student Health Survey

Changes: Then vs. Now

Present

1970

Duluth

Crookston

Morris

Rochester

Twin Cities

One Student's Story

Systemwide Basic Needs Services

All campuses offer:

- Campus food pantry
- SNAP support
- Emergency grants

Services that vary by campus:

- Prepared meals
- Food rescue
- Meal vouchers
- Dining dollars
- Clothing
- Emergency housing
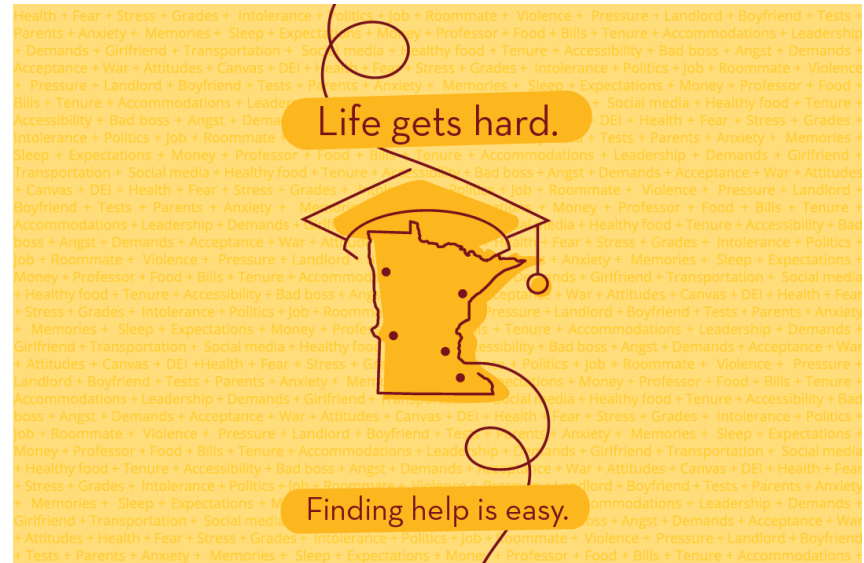- Hygiene and personal care items

Promotion of Services

- Awareness events
- Food drives
- Promotion via online and in-person channels
- Campus task forces

Internal UMN Referrals

- MentalHealth@UMN

- One Stop

- Care teams

- Case management

Life gets hard.

Finding help is easy.

Help is literally just a few clicks away.

mentalhealth.umn.edu

Systemwide expansion efforts

- Duluth
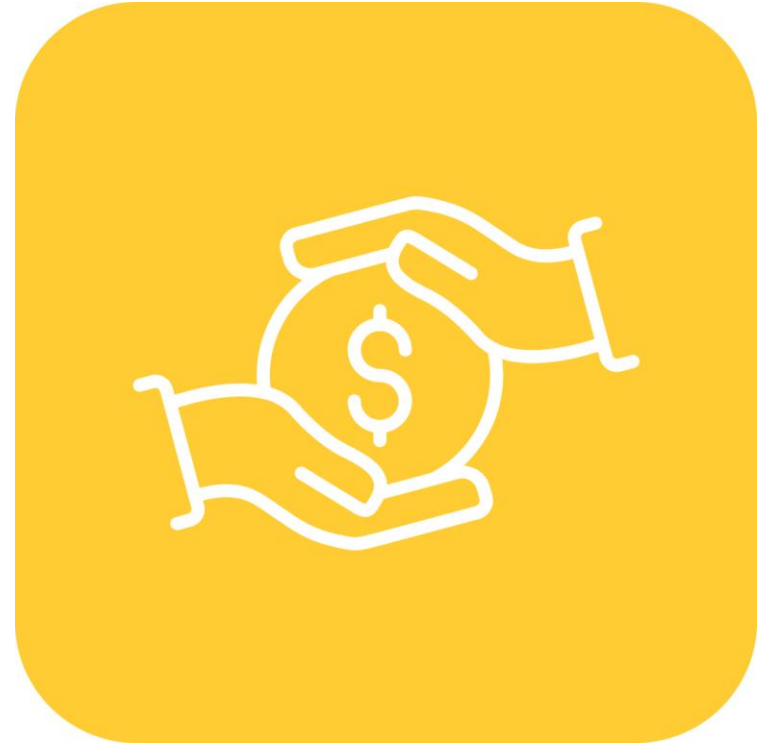- Rochester
- Twin Cities

Twin Cities

Duluth

What's Ahead: Basic Needs

- Continue expansion of services
- Meet cultural and dietary needs
- Deepen collaborative partnerships
- Adopt Okanagan Charter - wellbeing

What's Ahead: Funding Opportunities

- In-kind donations
- Philanthropic gifts
- Grants
- State legislative request

Basic Needs Legislative Request: *$1.5 million*

Increase availability of food, health, and hygiene products on campuses

More support and systems to help students meet basic needs

Expanded availability of short-term grants

Questions & Discussion

Our vision: Create an environment
where no student has to worry about hunger.

BOARD OF REGENTS
DOCKET ITEM SUMMARY

Special Committee on Student Affairs   **February 13, 2025**

AGENDA ITEM: Fostering Community and Belonging at the University

☐ **Review**   ☐ **Review + Action**   ☐ **Action**   ☒ **Discussion**

☐ *This is a report required by Board policy.*

PRESENTERS: David Israels-Swenson, Senior Director, Student Engagement and Wellbeing, Student Affairs, Morris campus
Meaghan Miller Thul, Assistant Vice Provost, Student Life, Student Affairs, Twin Cities campus

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS

The purpose of this item is to highlight the University's efforts to foster a sense of community and belonging among students. Student community and belonging are essential to ensure that students can meet developmental goals and achievements, as well as persist and obtain a degree. The presentation will show how efforts in this area can impact student success, including an overview of campus-based assessment data, impactful practices being implemented across the system, and growth opportunities.

The item will also focus on the following key points:

- Provide systemwide data that shows how student community and belonging are measured.
- Spotlight impactful practices across the University's campuses that have a positive impact on community and belonging. Examples include:
    - Welcome week/incoming student programming/training
    - On campus housing
    - Recreational sports and athletics
    - Student engagement events and organizations
    - Student employment
- Outline opportunities to increase feelings of community and belonging, including support for student basic needs, campus climate, campus spaces, students living on or near campus, and awareness of existing programs and events.

Community and Belonging at the University
Background Materials

The overarching goal of student affairs is broadly defined as supporting students' education, development, and success through cocurricular experiences and programs outside of the classroom. A sense of community and belonging is essential to ensure students can meet further developmental goals and achievements, as well as persist and obtain a degree.

Cross-disciplinary definitions of community and belonging, listed below, draw upon work from the fields of student affairs, sociology, psychology, and numerous other disciplines focused on understanding human behavior and development:

> **Community:** A form of human association, interaction, and shared identity defined by geographic boundaries, social networks, shared interests, or common values.

> **Belonging:** Students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus. (Strayhorn, 2012)

Measuring Community and Belonging

Across the University of Minnesota system, community and belonging is measured by several survey instruments. Outlined below are summaries from the four main surveys utilized by campuses to measure community and belonging. These surveys are: Student Experience in the Research University, National Survey of Student Engagement, Student Needs Assessment, and the Campus Climate Survey. The Campus Climate Survey is the only survey in which all system campuses participate.

Student Experience in the Research University Survey

The Student Experience in the Research University Survey (SERU) is a comprehensive survey administered to all degree-seeking students on the Twin Cities campus. There are two separate surveys, one for undergraduate and another for graduate and professional students. Both are administered during spring semester on alternate years and are sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Education and the Graduate School respectively. The following information is from the most recent surveys.

2024 SERU
- Survey response rate of 18.3%; 5,218 of 28,570 undergraduate students
- 89.1% of undergraduate students agree that they belong at the U of M.
- The graph below highlights how the Twin Cities campus compares to peer research universities:

SENSE OF BELONGING COMPARED TO PEERS

Students that *Somewhat agreed*, *Agreed*, or *Strongly agreed* that they **feel that they belong at the U of M** by comparison group
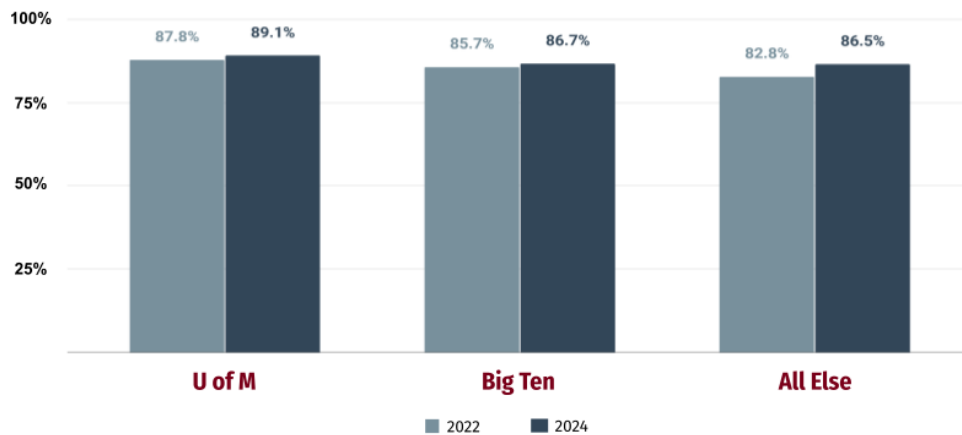
2023 gradSERU
- Survey response rate of 36.6%; 4,846 of 13,239 graduate/professional students
- 88% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement:
  "I belong in my graduate/professional program."
- [Examples](#) of how graduate programs are using gradSERU results to improve the graduate education experience

National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students' participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. The Crookston, Duluth, and Morris campuses each participate in the NSSE on set schedules. The data below is from the most recent implementation of the NSSE on each campus, 2022 for Crookston and 2023 for Duluth and Morris.

The NSSE also allows the participating institutions to identify peer groups and gives comparison data for those groups. Peer institutions as defined by each campus in this NSSE data are:

Crookston
   o Bemidji State University (Bemidji, MN)

- Black Hills State University (Spearfish, SD)
- Dakota State University (Madison, SD)
- Dickinson State University (Dickinson, ND)
- Mayville State University (Mayville, ND)
- Metropolitan State University (Saint Paul, MN)
- Minnesota State University Moorhead (Moorhead, MN)
- Minot State University (Minot, ND)
- Missouri State University (Springfield, MO)
- Missouri Western State University (Saint Joseph, MO)
- North Dakota State University (Fargo, ND)
- Oglala Lakota College (Kyle, SD)
- Peru State College (Peru, NE)
- South Dakota State University (Brookings, SD)
- Southwest Minnesota State University (Marshall, MN)
- Truman State University (Kirksville, MO)
- University of Missouri (Columbia, MO)
- University of Nebraska at Kearney (Kearney, NE)
- University of Nebraska at Omaha (Omaha, NE)

Duluth
- College of Charleston (Charleston, SC)
- Minnesota State University, Mankato (Mankato, MN)
- South Dakota State University (Brookings, SD)
- Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL)
- University of Michigan-Dearborn (Dearborn, MI)
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte (Charlotte, NC)
- University of Northern Iowa (Cedar Falls, IA)
- Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo, MI)

Morris
- Commonwealth University (Bloomsburg, PA)
- Eastern Connecticut State University (Willimantic, CT)
- The Evergreen State College (Olympia, WA)
- Keene State College (Keene, NH)
- Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (North Adams, MA)
- Midwestern State University (Wichita Falls, TX)
- Northern State University (Aberdeen, SD)
- Ramapo College of New Jersey (Mahwah, NJ)
- St. Mary's College of Maryland (Saint Mary's City, MD)
- The State University of New York at Geneseo (Geneseo, NY)
- Truman State University (Kirksville, MO)
- University of Illinois Springfield (Springfield, IL)
- University of Maine at Farmington (Farmington, ME)

- o University of Mary Washington (Fredericksburg, VA)
- o University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (Chickasha, OK)
- o University of South Carolina Aiken (Aiken, SC)
- o The University of Virginia's College at Wise (Wise, VA)
- o University of Wisconsin-Superior (Superior, WI)

The table below shows the percentage of students who responded that they agree or strongly agree with the statement: "I feel like a part of the community at this institution."

Campus	First Year (FY) Students	Senior Year (SY) Students	Peer institutions FY/SY
Crookston	88%	77%	77% / 75%
Duluth	77%	73%	75% / 71%
Morris	77%	74%	76% / 74%

Student Needs Assessment

The Rochester campus conducts a Student Needs Assessment and does not participate in the NSSE survey. The first year of implementation for the student needs assessment was in fall semester 2023, when baseline data was collected. Data was recently collected for the second time in fall 2024. Student sense of belonging data from the past two surveys is shared below.

Needs Assessment Fall 2024: *N=123*
73% of students strongly agree or somewhat agree with the statement: "I feel like I belong at UMR."

- 28% strongly agree
- 45% somewhat agree

Needs Assessment Fall 2023: *N=107*
62% of students strongly agree or somewhat agree with the statement: "I feel like I belong at UMR."
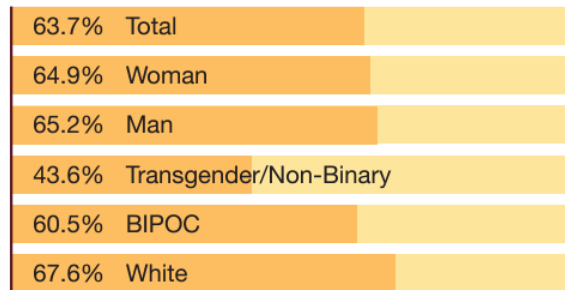
- 33% strongly agree
- 29% somewhat agree
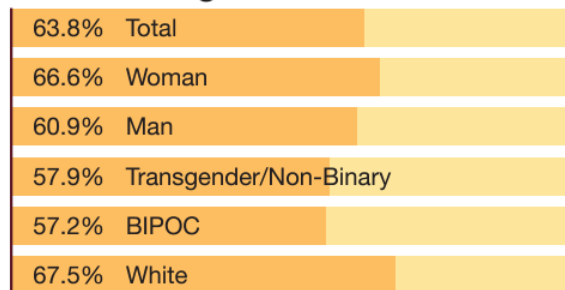
UMN Systemwide Campus Climate Survey

- In February 2023, the University conducted its first systemwide campus climate survey to assess the experiences of students, faculty, and staff.
- At the October 2023 Board meeting, a report was provided summarizing the results of the survey. This summary report highlights key findings.

- Relevant items of note from the 2023 survey include:
  - Systemwide Response Rate: 21.8%
  - 32.7% of respondents were students (undergraduate or graduate and professional)
  - Survey participants were asked to respond to the question: "I feel a sense of belonging at UMN." Data for all students who responded that they agree or strongly agree are shown below and are broken down by demographic information (graduate student data includes professional students).

Graduate Students

63.7%	Total
64.9%	Woman
65.2%	Man
43.6%	Transgender/Non-Binary
60.5%	BIPOC
67.6%	White

Undergraduate Students

63.8%	Total
66.6%	Woman
60.9%	Man
57.9%	Transgender/Non-Binary
57.2%	BIPOC
67.5%	White

Impactful Practices for Student Success

The success of students across the University is dependent on a variety of factors. The Office of Undergraduate Education on the Twin Cities campus identifies elements of student success as part of a framework. These elements include:

- Academic Success
- Sense of Belonging
- Wellbeing
- Thriving

Student persistence and degree completion are most likely achieved when these four elements are fulfilled as part of a student's university experience. While this particular framework is a Twin Cities example, each campus focuses on holistic student success as a key component of student support.

Specific to the sense of belonging factor of student success, data informs work with students on all five campuses. Data from the surveys previously highlighted are utilized in many ways:

- Informing practices of all who work directly with students.
- Providing greater understanding of the effectiveness of the programs and services delivered on each campus.
- Offering insight into the needs of different groups to allow for the tailoring or addition of offerings to meet those needs.

Several practices can have a significant impact on students' feelings of community and belonging. Common practices implemented on all campuses include:

- Welcome Week/Incoming Student Programming/Training
- On Campus Housing
- Recreational Sports and Athletics
- Student Engagement Events and Organizations
- Student Employment

Though each of the campuses execute these practices in their own way, each has successfully implemented a number of programs which contribute to the community and belongingness that students experience. The section below details one program on each campus which has helped students' development of community and belonging and positively contributed to the campus overall.

Crookston

The Crookston campus has made its residential halls and residential life program a significant focus with the goal of developing a stronger sense of community.

- Crookston residence halls have been consistently ranked in the top three in the state by Niche.com. They're ranked third overall in Minnesota and first among public schools in Minnesota for the current academic year.
- The number of students choosing on-campus housing options continues to rise. In Fall 2023, 66% of the total Crookston student body lived on-campus. In Fall 2024 that number rose to 69%. These numbers are strong, especially for a campus that does not have a residential requirement.
- Living in on-campus housing on the Crookston campus has been shown to have a significant impact with student persistence based on internal assessments:

	All students	Students who lived on campus	Students who commuted
First-year students starting in Fall 2023 who	80%	85%	58%

persisted to Fall 2024			

A new community development model began in 2023 and was fully realized for Fall 2024. Through this model, students are intentionally engaged in active learning to cultivate self-awareness, develop meaningful relationships, and engage with the residential and campus community. These learning outcomes are based upon the five education areas of:

1. Academic Strategies
2. Community Building
3. Healthy Relationship Education
4. Social Justice and Inclusion
5. Mental Health and Wellness.

Duluth

The mission of the [Recreational Sports Outdoor Program](#) (RSOP) Department is to foster active, healthy lifestyles and connections to the natural world. RSOP offers programming in recreational sports and outdoor activities to help students engage in ways that support their wellbeing and form community through activity. Comprehensive offerings include:

- Aquatics
- Boulder Lake Environmental Learning Center
- Climbing
- Fitness and Wellness
- Intramural Sports
- Open Recreation
- Outdoor Activities and Trips
- Paddling/Surfing/Kiting
- Outdoor Equipment Rental Center
- Sea Kayaking
- Sports Clubs
- Youth/Community Programs

Below are quotes from students sharing the highlights of their participation in these programs during the 2023–2024 academic year. (Quotes are anonymous to protect participant privacy.)

Outdoor Activities
- *"Your work is absolutely wonderful. The opportunities that you provide for us really help make UMD a wonderful community to be a part of. Thank you so much for making this resource available to everyone!"*
- *"I love the affordability of the programs. It makes it easier for students to participate."*
- *"I love the events where I learned a skill (like spoon carving) and Plant Identification (bog walk). In terms of what I got out of my experience, the bog walk was a ton of fun and I think it*

was a highlight of my time at UMD. It was awesome being able to walk around an ecosystem I don't know too much about being led by my peers who know a lot more about it!!"

- *"I really enjoyed the environment that was there. The leaders were chill, clearly enjoyed what they were doing, and were able to show me a new side of Duluth!"*
- *"It's exciting learning something new. Now I can tell the difference between the pure maple syrup and others. I will consider more RSOP activities in the near future. I love outdoor activities and I love to learn new things."*
- *"You can tell that everyone at RSOP has a passion for the outdoors and sharing their love of it, making the events even more positive!"*

Paddle/Surf Kite
- *"This was a lot of fun!"*
- *"A great experience with inspiring humans!"*
- *"So grateful for this opportunity - Randy is a fantastic instructor. I've learned so much and had so much fun!! The UMD Outdoor Program rocks!!! We are lucky to have this in Duluth."*

Sea Kayak
- *"The instructors were very patient and encouraging to me and other older women in my group. They recognized when we were pushing beyond our comfort zone or to our physical limits."*
- *"The leaders were the best people to have lead this trip. They did an amazing job and I am so glad that I was able to meet them."*

Morris

Morris has traditionally been acknowledged for the engagement of its student body; 68% of students are engaged with at least one of the 65 student organizations on campus. With groups that range from the Bad Movie Club to the Circle of Nations Indigenous Association to the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, and new groups forming each year, students can always find a place where they belong.

Student organizations at Morris see their role on the campus as important in building a vibrant community and collectively hosted more than 100 events in Fall 2024. The student Dance Ensemble, a completely student-run organization with no formal tie to any academic department or program, held three fall performances. These performances featured over 15 individual student-choreographed and performed dances, which drew an audience of over 400 students, faculty, staff, and community.

Student affairs researchers have long held that student organizations strongly contribute to community and belonging on college campuses. The Morris campus has clear evidence to support this. The data tables below show that students engaged in student organizations are more likely to persist and perform better academically than students who are not engaged. Data based on internal assessments confirms that simply attending events on campus correlates positively with student GPA and academic success.

	Students engaged with at least one organization	Students who were not engaged
First-year students starting in Fall 2023 who persisted to Fall 2024	82%	64%
GPA of students Fall 2024	3.207	3.014

	Students who attended at least one event on campus	Students who attended no events
First-year students starting in Fall 2023 who persisted to Fall 2024	85%	26%
Average GPA of Students Spring 2024	3.071	2.702

Rochester

Living learning communities (LLCs) are programs within residence halls that connect students of similar academic or personal interests. Students often live together on the same floor or within the same section of a residence hall. LLCs provide students with the opportunity to interact academically and socially with each other, as well as faculty and staff, sharing the same passion, interests, and possibly the same academic focus.

The Rochester campus offers students many opportunities to engage in living learning communities. Participants in living learning communities typically:
- perform better academically;
- develop a stronger sense of belonging;
- develop meaningful connections with peers and build long-lasting friendships;
- experience a smoother transition to college;
- participate in more student activities;
- are engaged on campus and in the community;
- get opportunities to develop career competencies and leadership skills;
- have higher college completion rates; and
- have higher retention rates.

In 2016, the inaugural Health CORE (Community of Respect and Empowerment) living learning community was launched. The first group of 30 students came from communities underrepresented in higher education to create a group committed to celebrating and supporting one another. Health CORE enhances the UMR student experience through intentional community development while seeking to empower students with the competences they need to achieve success in their aspirations to become a healthcare professional, as well as an effective agent for positive change within their communities. Today, there are over 60 students in HealthCORE.

- 67% of UMR's undergraduates are from underrepresented communities including first-generation students and/or low-income students.
- UMR graduates contribute to the diversification of the health care workforce – a development expected to enhance innovation and public health outcomes.
- At UMR, there is no educational attainment gap for underrepresented students.

HealthCORE alumni (2019 UMR graduate) Maha Siddiqui, who was a member of the first HealthCORE cohort, shared that she and her peers worked with the Health CORE Living Learning Coordinator to develop the program. They provided feedback, worked out challenges, and helped shape the overall direction. "We got to help build the community in a way that we knew would work." Maha shared that she developed strong bonds with her fellow Health CORE members – something for which she is very grateful for. She also credits the Health CORE community and UMR faculty and staff for helping her find the right career path.

Twin Cities
With more than 6,500 student employees across the Twin Cities campus, student employment is an impactful experience for building community and belonging. As students engage in their work, they build community with co-workers in a supportive environment with others who know the campus, including other students, staff, and faculty. Student staff develop skills for resumes and interviews and learn to navigate the expectations of members of a professional community.

One example of a successful student employment program is offered by Student Unions and Activities (SUA). SUA has a long history of emphasizing development in their student employees. In 2023–2024, SUA conducted an annual review of the experience of student staff. Data included in the summary report includes:

- 50% of SUA students are in their second year of employment or more
- 93% of SUA students report that their job has a positive impact on their personal life
- 82% agree that working in SUA contributed to them staying in school
- 79% report that their job has a positive impact on their academic performance
  - The average SUA GPA (3.45) is higher than the Twin Cities campus student body GPA average (3.32)
- 97% say their job has a positive impact on their career development
- 98% of SUA students would recommend working in SUA to others

More broadly, students across the Twin Cities campus working in a variety of roles have shared stories of the impact of their student staff experiences. A selection of these, which are also posted on the Office for Human Resources website, include:

> *"I've had the opportunity to join in on programs like PGA Hope through the golf course and work with disabled veterans at the driving range. Since I am going to school for occupational therapy, getting this experience at the golf course was the best of both worlds. "—Lauren Magnuson, Golf Course Attendant*

"I love working at the U because of the people I get to interact with every day!"—Cayla Bishop, Operations Crew, Orientation & Transition Experiences

"Working for RecWell, specifically in intramurals, has given me confidence in my conflict resolution skills, which is something that is invaluable both in my career path and in life. As someone studying diplomacy, conflict resolution is something that I read, write, and learn about on a daily basis. But there is something very different about reading conflict resolution theory, and putting it into practice. "—Hannah Riley, Senior Supervisor, Intramurals

Another program that is offered to enhance the experience of student employment, for both student employees and their supervisors, is Work+. As part of a national Work+ collaborative, the Twin Cities campus is piloting a Work+ program that coaches campus employers to foster career development and individual growth as a component of student employment. The Twin Cities pilot Work+ program has 68 students and 19 supervisors participating. This project has been highlighted on the Work+ Collective website.

Reference:

Strayhorn, T.L. (2012). *College Students' Sense of Belonging: A Key to Educational Success for All Students* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Fostering Community and Belonging at the University

Board of Regents | Special Committee on Student Affairs | 2.13.25

David Israels-Swenson
Senior Director, Student
Engagement and Wellbeing
Student Affairs, Morris campus

Meaghan Miller Thul
Assistant Vice Provost, Student Life
Student Affairs, Twin Cities campus

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover℠

Defining Community and Belonging

Community: Human association, interaction, and shared identity

Belonging: Students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering and feeling accepted, respected, valued (Strayhorn, 2012)

Systemwide Data: Community and Belonging

- Students indicate they feel a sense of belonging and community on our campuses

- Results are equal to or greater than peer institutions

Student Success Framework

Evidence-based strategies that promote student success, especially for students with underrepresented identities:

- Academic success
- Sense of belonging
- Wellbeing
- Thriving

Impactful Practices – Overview

- Welcome week/incoming student programs and training
- On campus housing
- Recreational sports and athletics
- Student engagement, events, and organizations
- Student employment

Impactful Practice – Crookston

On-Campus Housing Communities

- Community development model; rank in the top 3 in MN
- Increase in students living on campus
- Students living on campus have higher retention rates

Impactful Practice – Duluth

Recreational Sports Outdoor Program (RSOP)

- Freshman outdoor trips

- Courses for all abilities

- Identity based groups

- Broad range of varied activities and programs

Impactful Practice – Morris

Engagement with Student Organizations

- 68% of students engage with at least one of 65+ organizations

- Over 100 club events hosted events on campus in fall 2024

- Student organization involvement increases persistence and academic success

Impactful Practice – Rochester

Living Learning Communities (LLCs): HealthCORE

- Students from underrepresented communities majoring in Health Sciences
- Currently 60 student participants
- Developed in collaboration with students

Impactful Practice – Twin Cities

Over 6500 students work on the Twin Cities Campus

- **Student Unions and Activities:** Working has a positive impact on personal life, academic persistence and performance

- **Recreation and Wellness:** Community spaces and scholarships for student employees

- **Work+ Program Pilot:** Training for student employers

Community and Belonging – Growth Opportunities

- Unmet basic needs
- Campus climate/environment experienced differently by underrepresented populations
- Availability and sufficiency of spaces
- Support for students living near campus or commuting
- Awareness of programs and events

Questions and Discussion