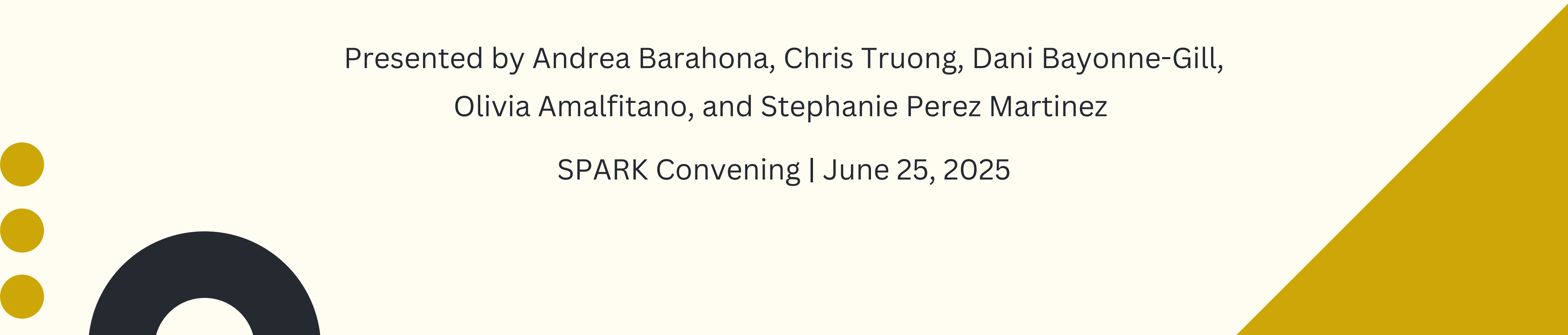




FROM NEEDS TO ACTION: SUPPORTING CSULB UNDERGRADUATES

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OVERVIEW

Background

Methodology

Findings

Recommendations

Student Experiences

BACKGROUND

- We chose this topic to explore how basic needs impact students beyond just food or rent.
- Research shows social support to be an important factor in college students' quality of life, mental health, and academic achievement.^{1,2}
- Peer and family are important resources to students. In 2025, nearly 1 in 5 (24%) of college students live with their parents.³ Peer mentorship and education are effective strategies for promoting student wellbeing.^{4,5}
- Social support can protect against basic needs challenges through resources pooling and information sharing.^{6,7} However, few studies look at the relationship between social support and basic needs in college students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Theme #1: Peer Support

1. Does experiencing food insecurity significantly predict students' feelings of loneliness and/or sense of belonging at CSULB?
2. What role do peers play in students' experiences of basic needs challenges and resources?

Theme #2: Family Support

1. Are students' living situations associated with experiencing food insecurity?
2. What role does family play in students' experiences of basic needs challenges and resources?

Theme #3: Institutional Support

1. Does distance lived from campus significantly predict students' utilization of basic needs resources at CSULB?
2. How supportive do students perceive CSULB to be in addressing student basic needs?

Theme #4: Special Populations

1. Does the type of basic needs resource used differ by age group?
2. Does the reason for not using basic needs resources differ by age group?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

- Our research used an online survey to collect quantitative and qualitative data from CSULB undergraduates.
- The survey included questions on:
 - Student demographics
 - Food- and housing- related basic needs
 - Family, peer, and institutional support
 - Mental and physical health
 - Academic performance
 - Loneliness and sense of belonging
 - Awareness, use, and recommendations for CSULB basic needs resources
- The survey was fielded in March and April of 2025.
- Participants were recruited using multi-stage sampling via academic departments and student services.
- Our final sample included 280 CSULB undergraduate students.
- Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to answer research questions.



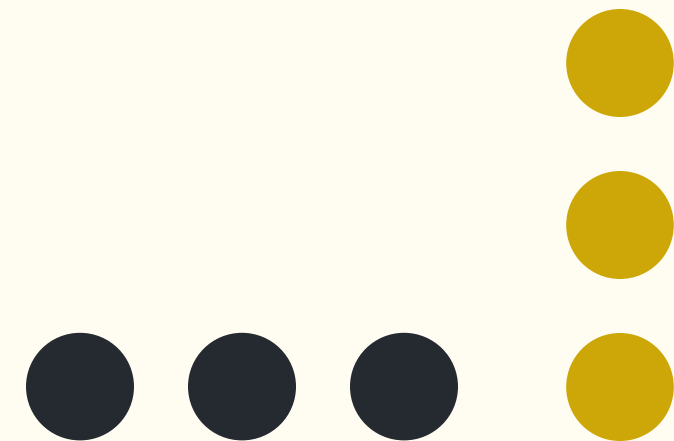
FINDINGS

- Quantitative analyses found significant associations between several indicators of **peer, familial, and institutional support** and students' **experiences of basic needs challenges**, as well as **awareness and use of basic needs resources** at CSULB.
- Qualitative data suggest that **social support is important for accessing basic needs resources at CSULB**. Study participants noted both institutional and social support from friends and family affect whether or not they utilize the basic needs resources at CSULB.

THEME #1: PEER SUPPORT

Andrea + Stephanie

- Theme 1 explored the relationship between **food insecurity** and student well-being at CSULB, focusing on **loneliness and sense of belonging**.
- **Students experiencing food insecurity reported significantly higher levels of loneliness** compared to those who were food secure, indicating that food insecurity may be meaningfully associated with social isolation.
- Students who were **food secure** were over **four times more likely to report a strong sense of belonging** compared to those who were food insecure.
- These findings highlight the broader **emotional and social effects of food insecurity** on students beyond their basic needs.



THEME #1 RESULTS

Does experiencing food insecurity significantly predict students' feelings of loneliness at CSULB?

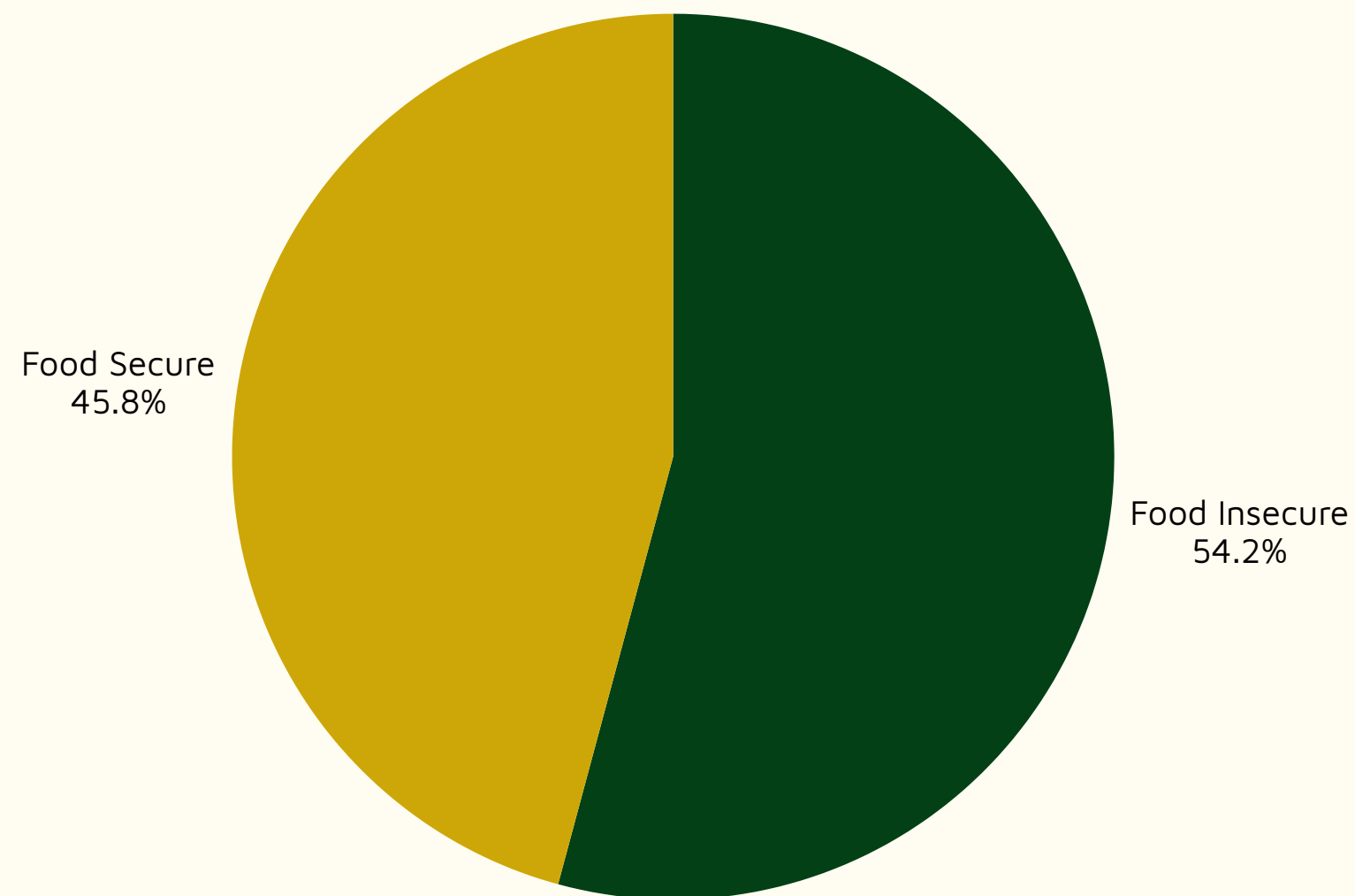


FIGURE 1. FOOD SECURITY PREVALENCE

Does experiencing food insecurity significantly predict students' sense of belonging at CSULB?

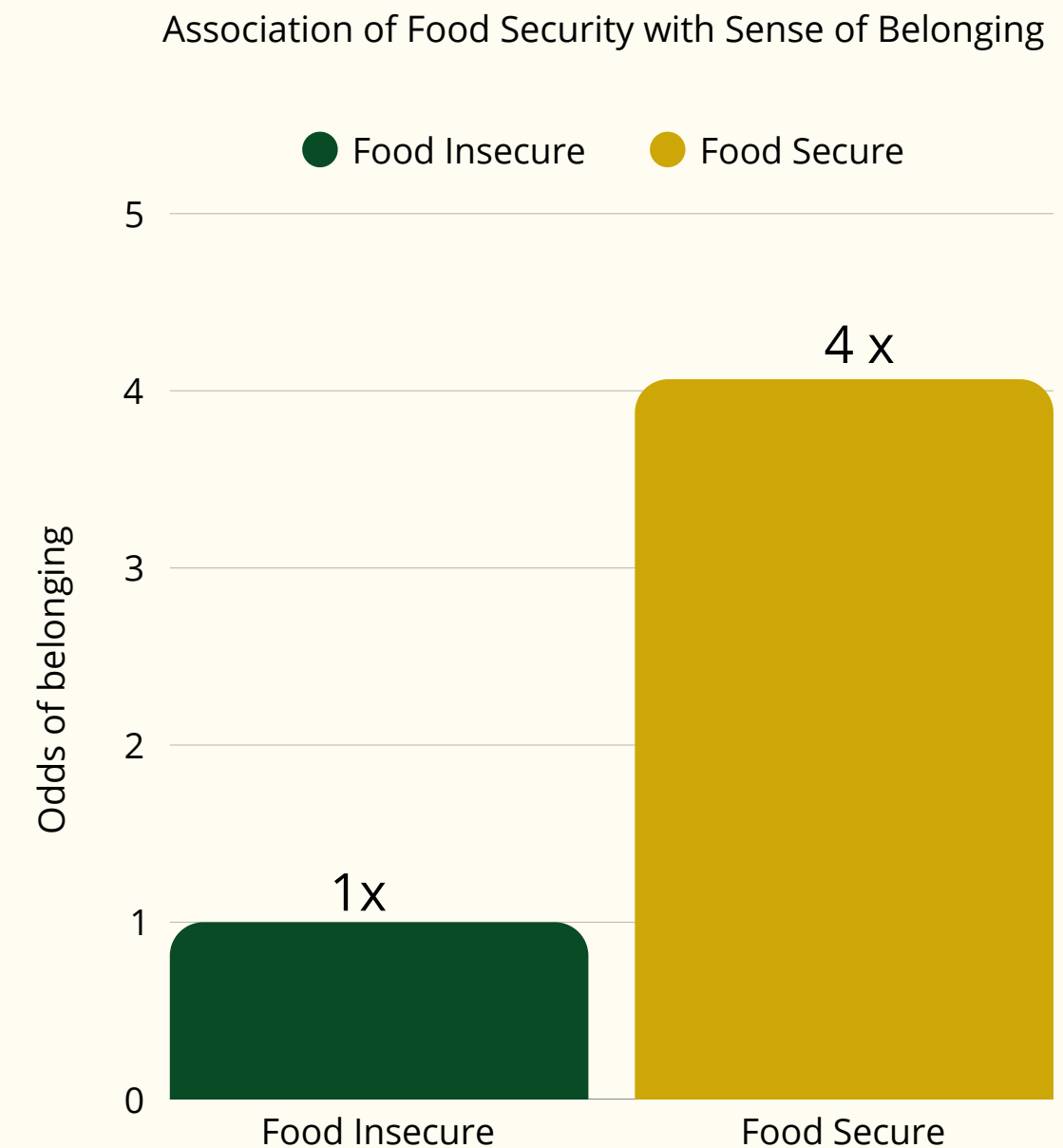


FIGURE 2. FOOD SECURITY AND BELONGINGNESS



THEME #1: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

CSULB students identified peers as a major social support system when it comes to food, housing, and financial security as they receive advice and/or assistance from them.

*“My peers, such as friends and roommates, influence my basic needs by **sharing responsibilities like cooking meals, splitting rent, and exchanging financial advice.** Information about budgeting, meal planning, and household tasks is often communicated openly, helping to balance the load and ensure everyone’s needs are met.” - A second year student*

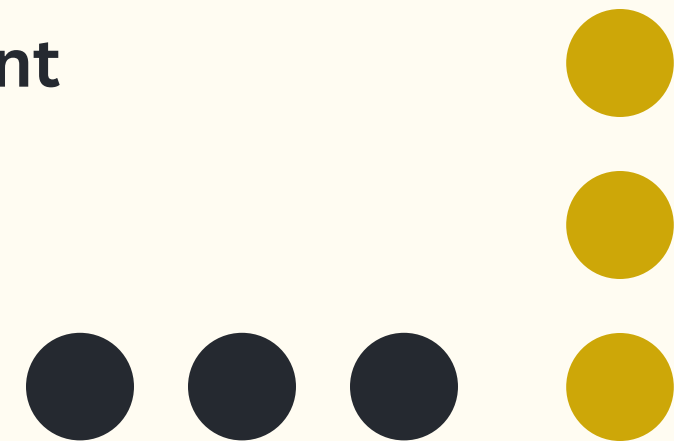
*“We **share food, financial resources and information.**” - A first year student*

*“**A lot of information** I get from peers as well as food when we are together we tend to **share plates.**” - A second year student*

THEME #2: FAMILY SUPPORT

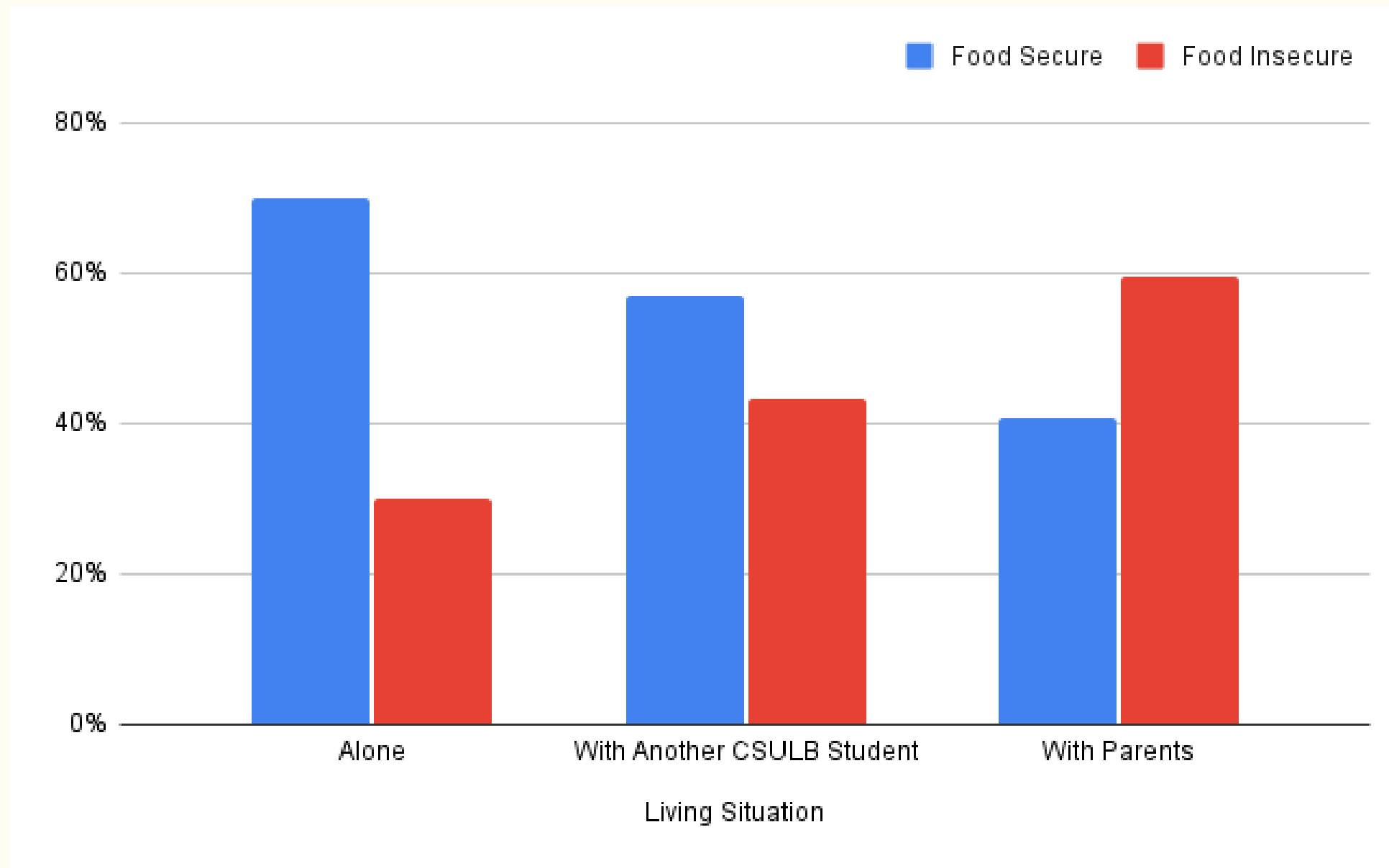
Dani + Olivia

- Theme 2 explored the relationship between **family support and food insecurity** at CSULB, focusing on the association between a student's living situation and food insecurity.
- We found that **students who live alone or with another CSULB student** were significantly **less likely to experience food insecurity**.
- Students described the **important role that their families play** in their ability to access secure housing and food. On the other hand, **many students do not have access to family support**.
- These findings indicate the significant **opportunity for family to support student basic needs**.



THEME #2 RESULTS

Do students' living situations significantly predict their likelihood of experiencing food insecurity?



Among students living alone, a **significantly higher percentage were food secure**, $\chi^2(1) = 5.055$, $p = 0.025$ (2-tailed).

Among students living with at least one other CSULB student, a **significantly higher percentage were food secure**, $\chi^2(1) = 4.729$, $p = 0.030$ (2-tailed).

Living with at least one parent was not significantly associated with food security at $p=0.05$, $\chi^2(1) = 3.313$, $p = 0.069$ (2-tailed). However, we observed a trend of **higher food insecurity among these students** that was significant at $p=0.10$.



THEME #2: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

CSULB students indicated that family support positively impacted their ability to access food, and housing.

*“I am very grateful that **my parents gave me the resources i need** in order to continue my education without a problem.” – A third year student*

*“I live with my family so I buy and take care of all my needs but **pay no rent until i finish school**. I give my parents money every few months just to help out but it is not necessary.” – A first year student*

*“They are a big impact **if my parents aren’t around** or have no job then **I’ll be in a survival mode**.” – A third year student*

Many students do not have family support, are financially independent, or do not want to take resources away from their families.

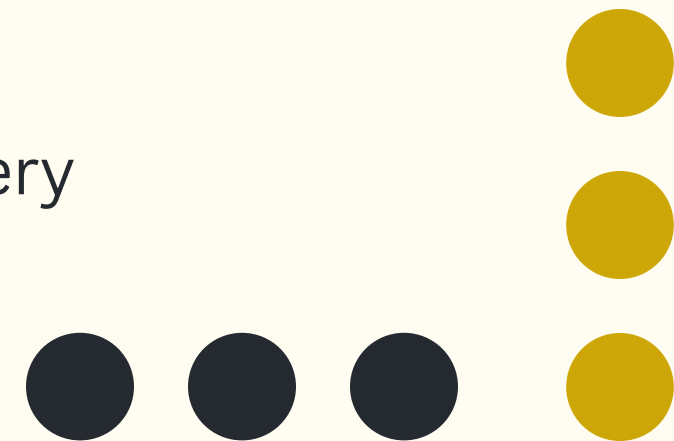
*“I am financially independent from my family. This is mainly because **they don't have enough resources to sustain my living expenses as well as their own**. In other words, they already have a lot on their plate so I am financially self sustaining for as long as I'm still attending school at CSULB. **They always say they're willing to help, but I know better to stretch what little resources they have to accommodate for me**.” - A second year student*

*“**I don't live with my family** so I don't share food, housing, and financial responsibilities with them.” - A third year student*

THEME #3: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Dani + Stephanie

- Theme 3 explored the relationship between CSULB students' **housing situation** and their likelihood of **utilizing different types of basic needs resources** on campus.
- Housing situation was measured in terms of how far a CSULB student lived from campus. Distances were categorized into 4 groups: 1-2 miles, 3 to 10 miles, 11 to 20 miles, and 21 miles or more.
- We found that **CSULB students who lived 3-10 miles, 11-20 miles, or 21 miles or more were more likely to use financial literacy education, emergency grants, and meals assistance services.**
- Distance from campus was not significantly associated with use of the following resources: Beach Pantry, Rapid Rehousing, Beach Bites Mobile App, Calfresh Grocery Assistance Program, and Emergency Housing.



THEME #3 RESULTS

Does distance lived from campus significantly predict students’ utilization of CSULB basic needs resources?

Figure 3. Basic Needs Utilization

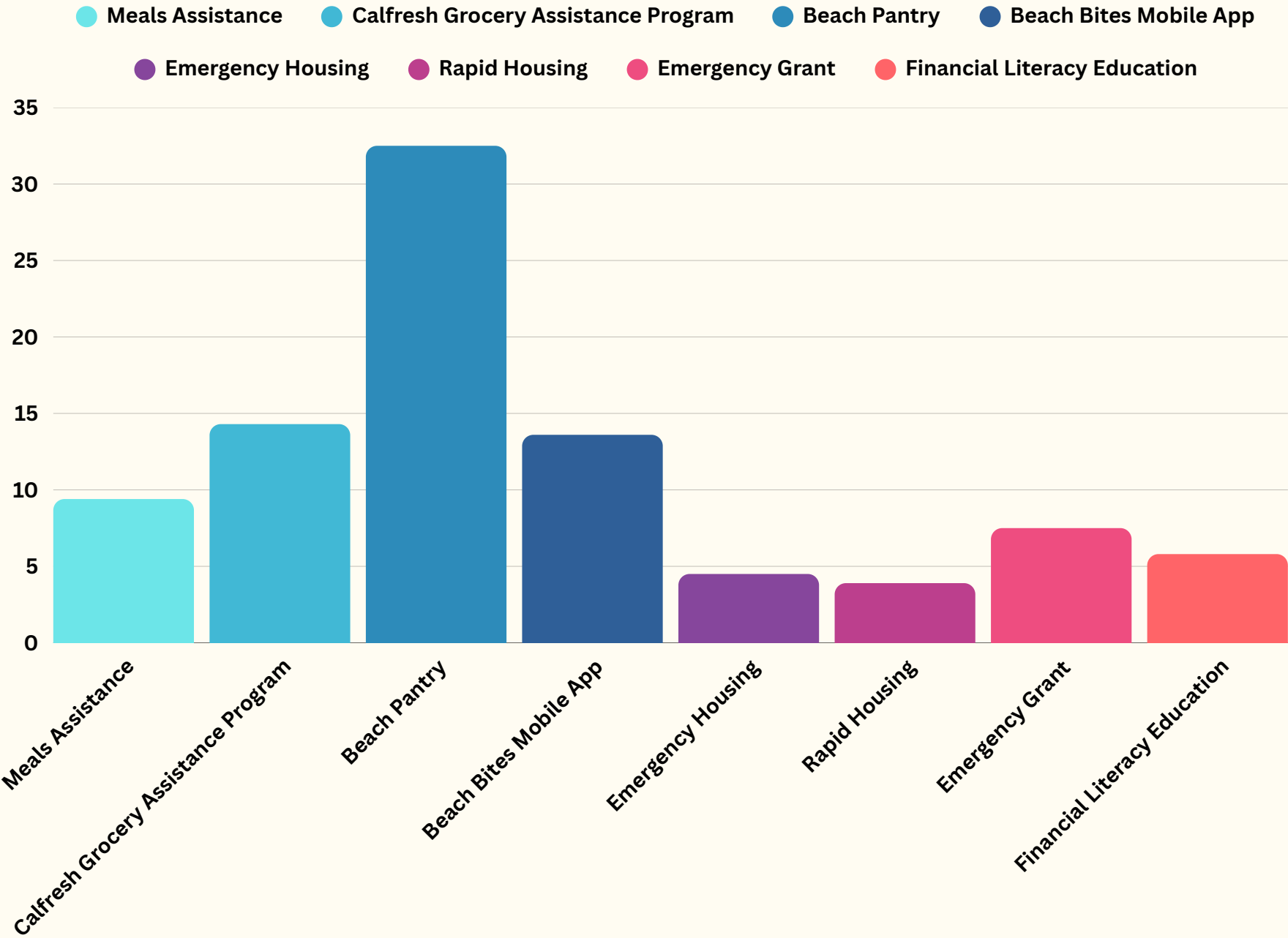
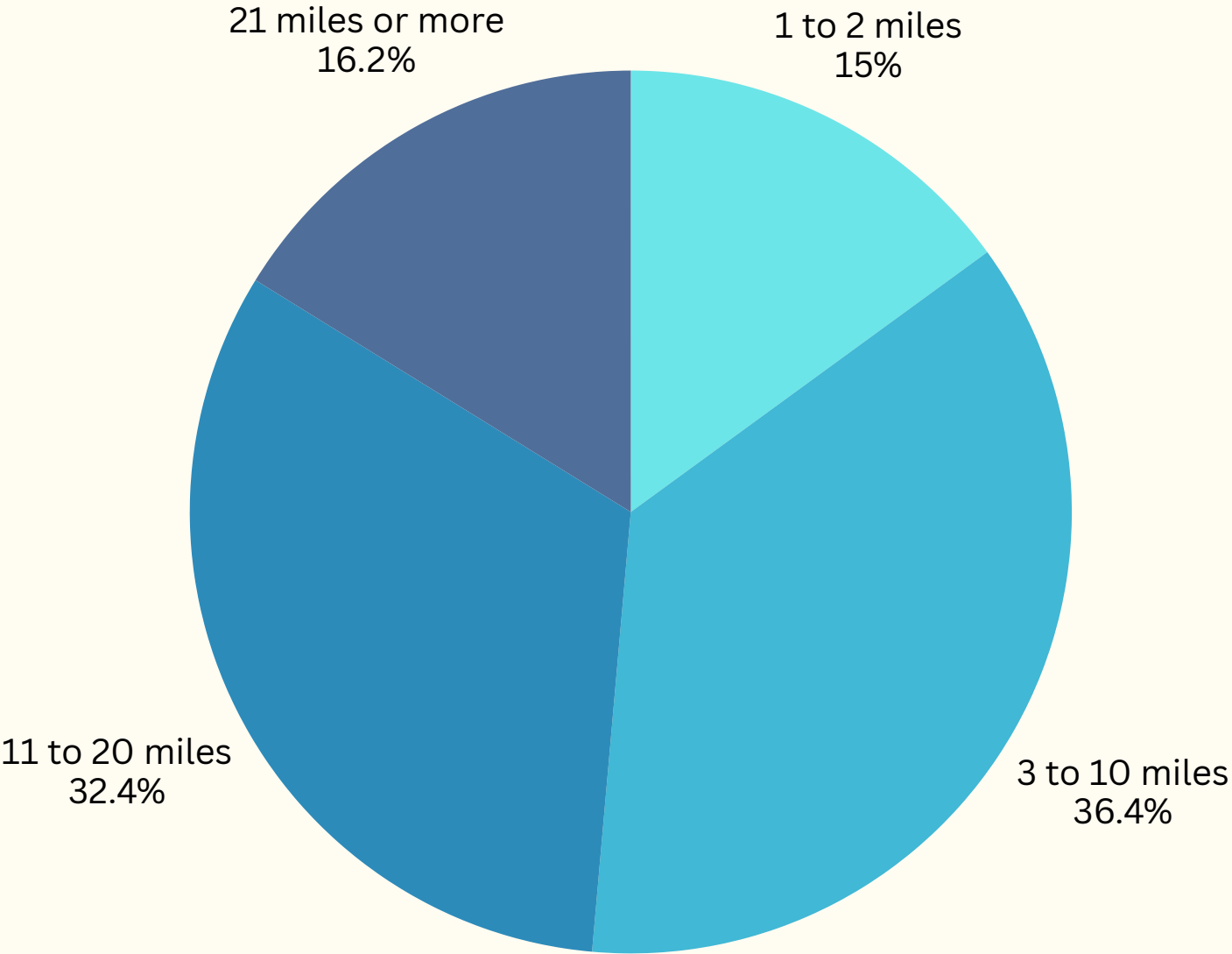
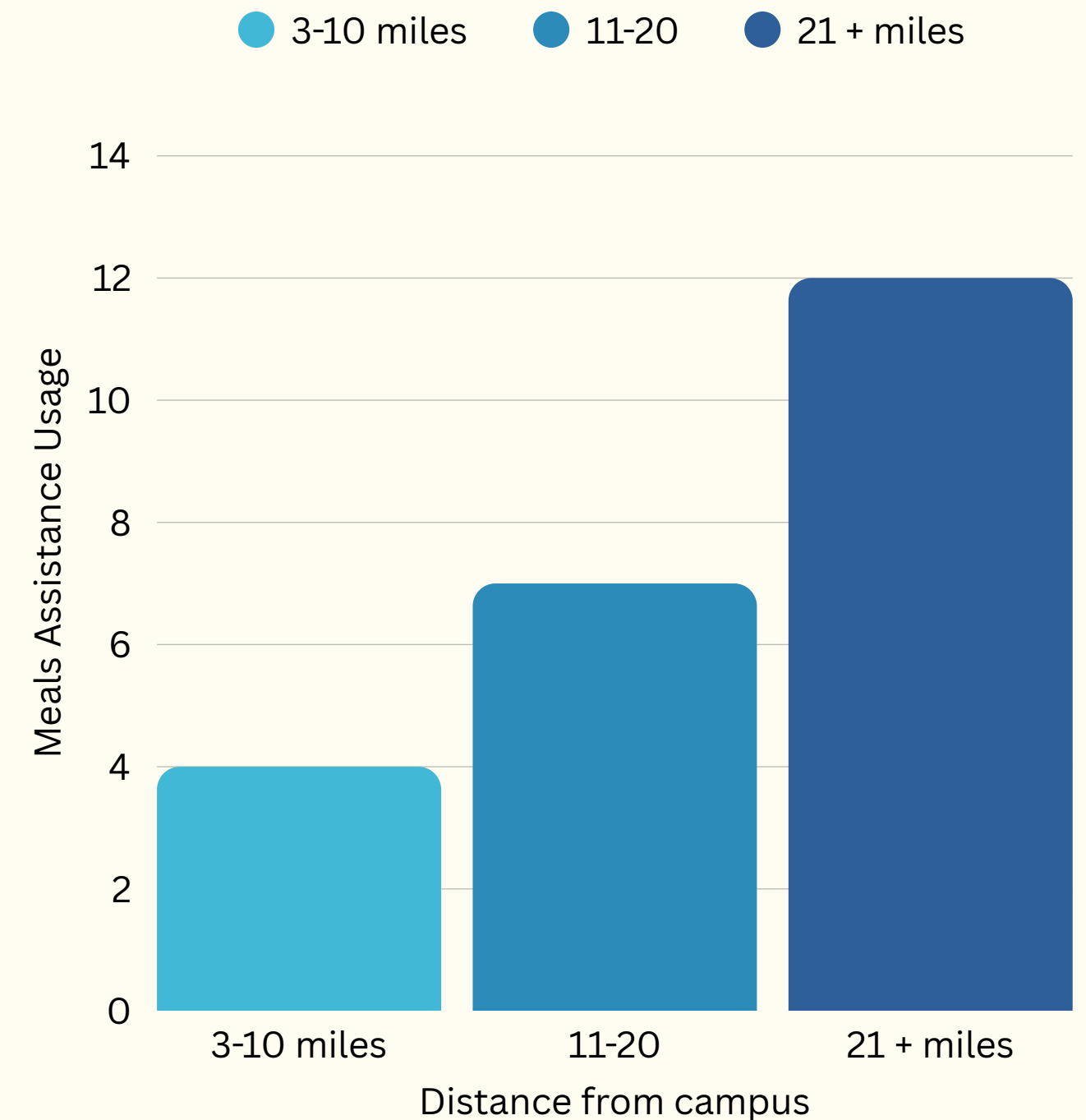


Figure 4. Distance From Campus



THEME #3 RESULTS

- Students who lived **3 or more miles** away from campus were significantly **less likely to use the meals assistance program**, compared to students living on or within 1 mile of campus, OR=0.16-0.18, SE=0.67-0.84, $p=0.006-0.044$.
- Use of the meals assistance program was not significantly different between students living 1-2 miles from campus and those living on or within 1 mile from campus ($p=.365$).





THEME #3: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

CSULB students reported a positive experience with institutional support, with majority reporting that they received information about where to access basic needs resources through their professors.

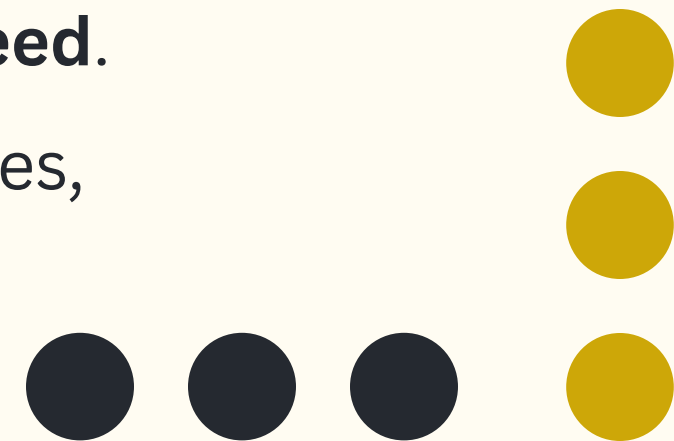
*“Services like the **Basic Needs Program, the Beach Pantry, and emergency housing** support have been incredibly helpful. Knowing that these resources are available gives me **peace of mind**, especially during stressful times. They show that **the university understands the struggles students face beyond the classroom.**”* - A first year student

*“**Professors and advisors are supportive**, often providing guidance on academic and personal challenges, while campus services help ensure that **my basic needs for food, housing, and mental well-being are addressed.**”* - A second year student

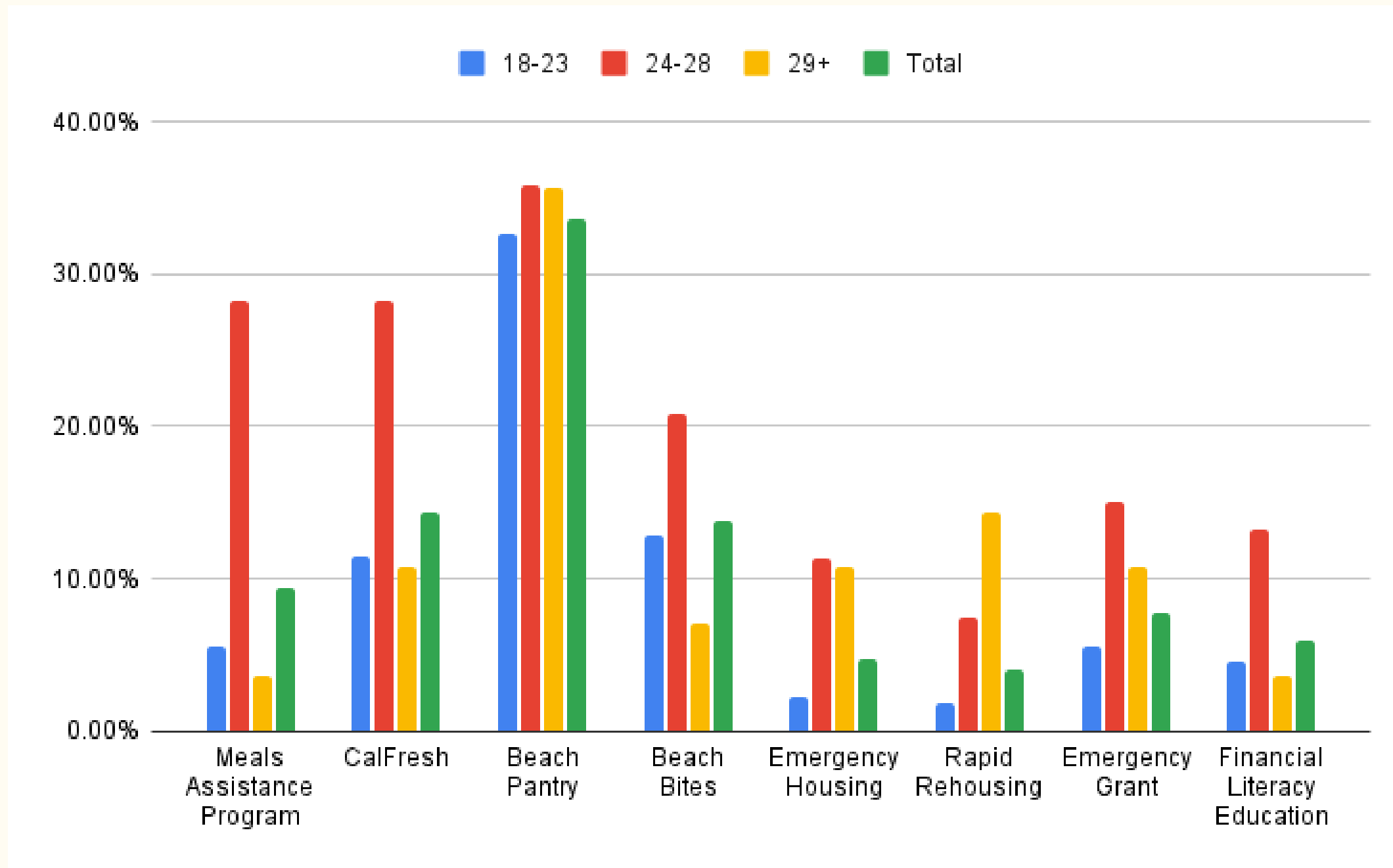
THEME #4: SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Chris + Olivia

- Theme 4 explored **basic needs resource usage and barriers by age group** at CSULB.
- While food resources like the Beach Pantry were commonly used across all students, **non-traditional students (24–28, 29+) reported higher use of specific programs like CalFresh and Meal Assistance.**
- Housing resource usage was significantly higher among non-traditional students. Financial resource usage was also higher among non-traditional students, especially those aged 24-28.
- The **most cited barriers to use were lack of awareness and lack of perceived need.** Traditional-aged students (18–22) most often reported not needing the resources, while non-traditional students were more likely to be unaware of them.



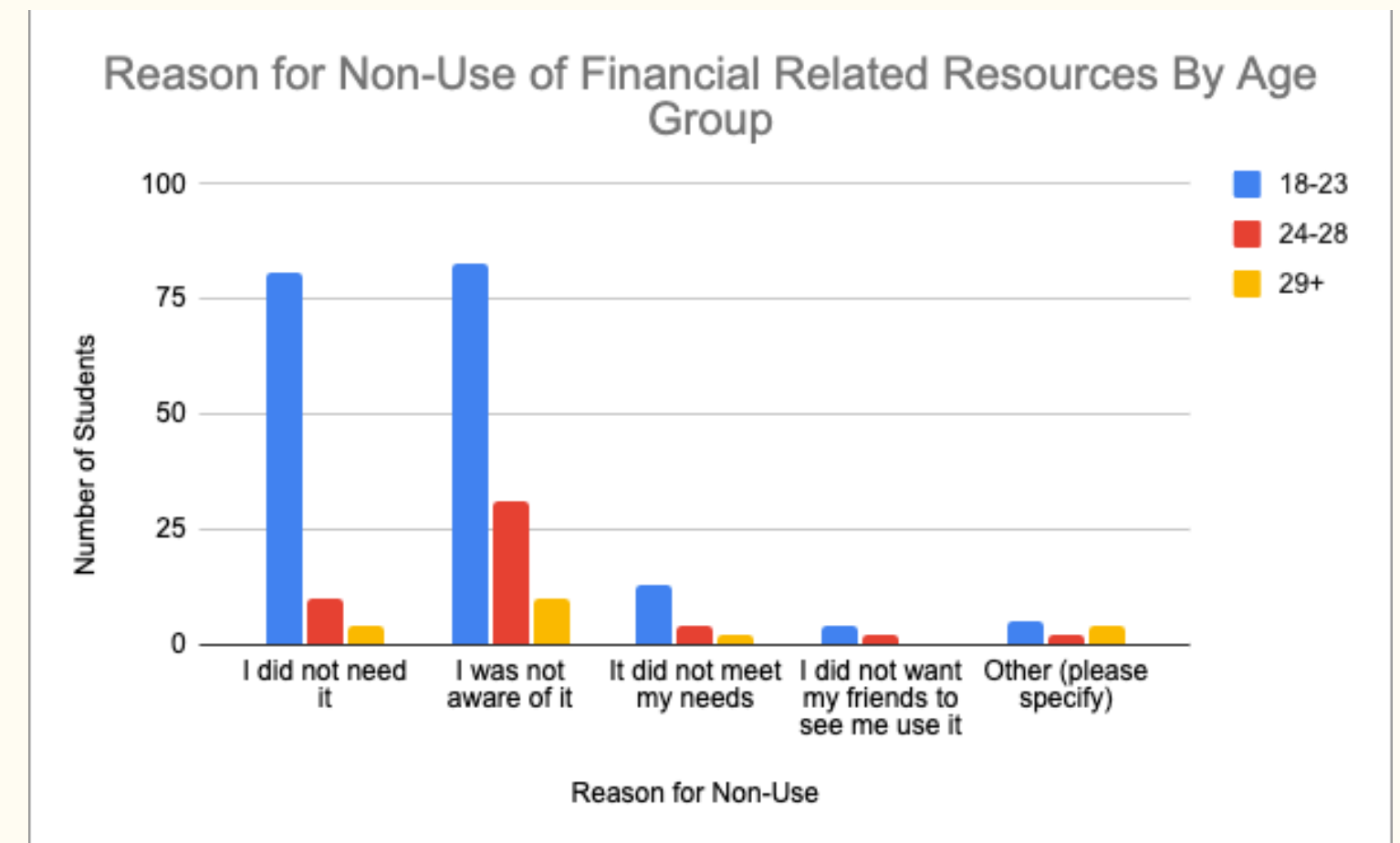
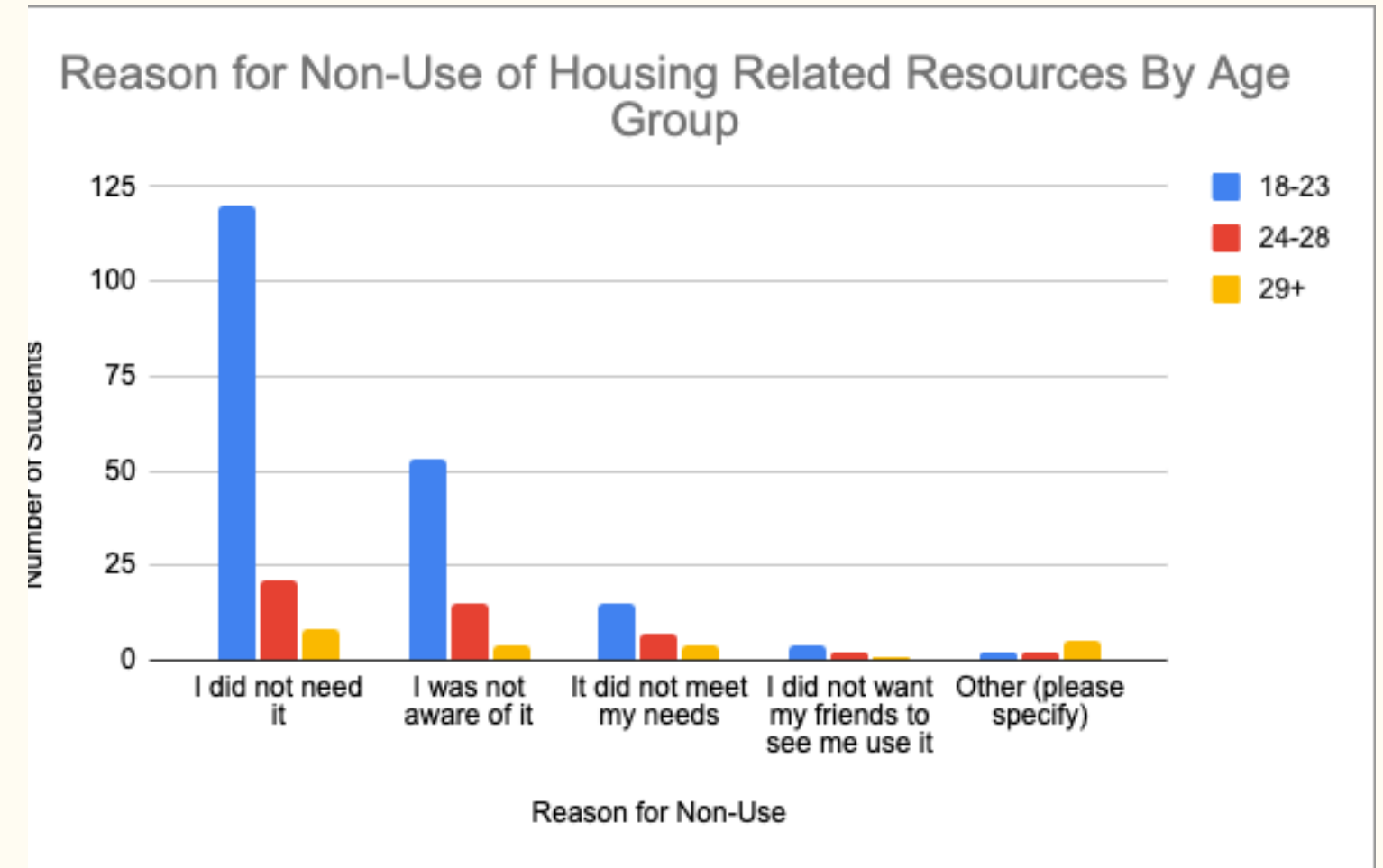
THEME #4 RESULTS



- **Food**-related resources were significantly **more utilized by students 24-28**, compared to other age groups, $X^2(2) = 8.585$, $p = 0.013$.
- **Housing**-related resources were significantly more utilized by **students 24-28 and 29+**, compared to younger students, $X^2(2) = 15.970$, $p < 0.001$.
- There was not a significant association between age group and use of **financial** resources, $X^2(2) = 3.663$, $p = 0.147$.

THEME #4 RESULTS

- Non-use of **housing**-related resources was more often due to lack of need among younger students. For **older students**, non-use was more commonly due to **resources not meeting their needs or perceived stigma**, $\chi^2(8) = 36.683, p < 0.001$ (2-tailed).
- Non-use of **financial** resources was more often due to lack of need among younger students. For **older students**, non-use was more commonly due to **lack of awareness or resources not meeting their needs**, $\chi^2(8) = 24.029, p = 0.005$ (2-tailed).



THEME #4: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Barriers to resource use include **lack of awareness, strict eligibility criteria, and lack of support beyond emergency situations.**

While the food-related resources appear to be highly successful, students expressed concern about the **lack of housing-related resources**, especially after the first year.

Older students, international students, students who work full-time, and unhoused students were highlighted as populations with greater basic needs challenges.

- *“...**there’s still room for more awareness and outreach to ensure all students know about them.**” - A First Year Student*
- *The CalFresh program would have been very helpful when I was unemployed but I didn’t qualify then so if there was a way to qualify or get support without working? Money and housing support would be wonderful for **more than just emergencies**” - A Second Year Student*
- *“CSULB makes it as difficult as possible for sophomores, juniors, and seniors to get housing. I had a coworker who had to **move all the way back to Texas because she didn't get on campus housing** her second year.” - A Third Year Student*
- *“As an **international student** getting **waitlisted for housing** was hard” - A Second Year Student*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Targeted communications campaign to raise awareness of basic needs resources

Recommendation #2: Small changes for bigger impact

Recommendation #3: Engaging community and campus partners

Recommendation #4: Research to support evidence-based practice

Recommendation #5:

Programming for students without family support

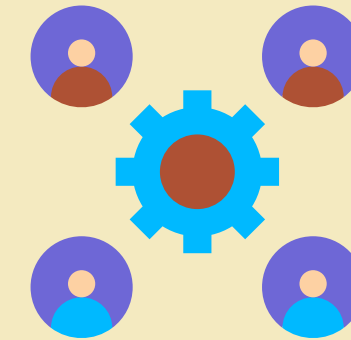
- Many campus programs focus on social support and building campus relationships, but they may not be designed to create **long-term campus connections that can serve as a support system for students**, especially for students without family support.
- This could be achieved by **creating cohorts (pods) of students from diverse backgrounds** that are encouraged to attend events together, and check-in on each other; sharing information and resources.
- **Information could be provided to parents at CSULB orientations and enrollment events** about the significant impact their support has on their student's lives. Many adults may underestimate how valuable their support is in supporting their children's academic success and good health.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Andrea: New adventure



Dani: Connector



Chris: Expanding Horizons



Olivia: Future plans



Stephanie: Investigator



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Thank You

Questions? Email judy.jou@csulb.edu

