EAB

RESEARCH BRIEF

Student Hunger and Homelessness

Raising Awareness and Providing Services to Students in Need

Student Affairs Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Student hunger and homelessness is a widespread issue at four-year institutions. According to a 2016 survey of both four-year and community colleges, about 20 percent of students at four-year institutions reported very low levels of food security, while seven percent experienced homelessness. Among the four profiled institutions in this report, only the **University of Minnesota** quantifies the scope of hunger and/or homelessness on its campus, where about one in 10 students experienced food insecurity in 2015.

Aministrators raise awareness about homelessness and food insecurity to equip students, faculty, and staff to self-refer or refer others in need. Contacts organize or participate in large events to disseminate information to large populations. For example, **Kennesaw State University** organizes an annual Homeless Awareness Week, during which students learn about homelessness through events spread out over six days. The event also serves to recruit students in need to Kennesaw State University's programs for homeless students. All profiled institutions also use social media, emails, signage, and other methods of communication to maintain awareness about the issues and their services throughout the year.

Most profiled institutions provide services to students experiencing hunger or homelessness through a decentralized model. Several profiled institutions deliver services through two or more offices or organizations. For example, the **University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)** provides services through its Community Programs Office and a crisis response team within Student Affairs. At the **University of Minnesota**, services are provided through its campus primary care clinic, the Office of Student Affairs, and Student Counseling Services. In contrast, **Kennesaw State University** provides both homeless and food insecurity services through a single office.

Food pantries are the primary resource for food-insecure students at profiled institutions, while services for students experiencing homeless vary. **Kennesaw State University**, **North Carolina State University**, and **UCLA** currently operate food pantries, while **University of Minnesota** is opening one in fall 2017. Meanwhile, resources for students experiencing homelessness include case management, crisis response teams, and access to emergency/temporary housing.

Profiled institutions solicit monetary and in-kind donations to support their programming. Partnerships with campus stakeholders and external organizations are integral to this process. For example, most contacts partner with other departments on campus for food drives and receive donations from grocery stores. **Kennesaw State University** and **UCLA** established specific funds through their offices of development to raise money for their services.

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2) Awareness of Student Hunger and Homelessness

Identification

Few Profiled Institutions Quantify Food and Housing Insecurity on Campus

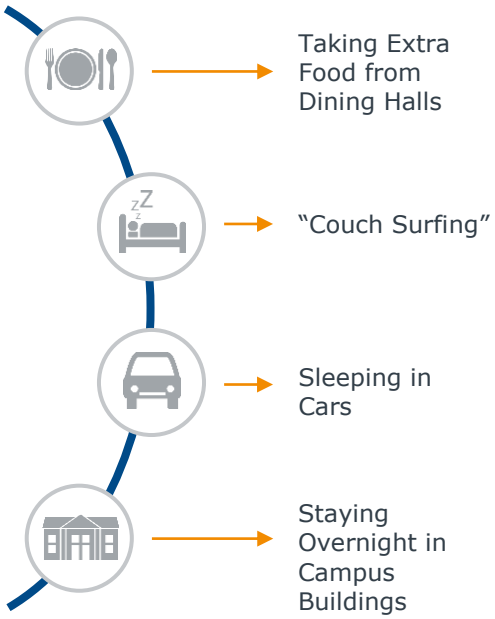
Student hunger and homelessness affects students across most, if not all, four-year institutions in the United States. In one study, about 20 percent of students at four-year institutions reported very low levels of food security in 2016. Meanwhile, seven percent of students experienced homelessness.[1]

Among the four institutions profiled in this report, only the **University of Minnesota** quantifies the percentage of students who experience hunger and/or homelessness. Every three years, the University of Minnesota's primary care clinic conducts a random sample survey as a surveillance tool to measure an array of health indicators, including how many students are experiencing food insecurity. Respondents are asked whether in the last 12 months they were worried their food would run out before they got money to buy more, or whether the food they bought did not last long enough and they could not afford to buy more. In 2015, the survey found that 15.8 percent of respondents reported experiencing a food shortage, while 22.7 percent reported worrying about whether their food would run out before they had money to buy more. The clinic plans to include questions about homelessness during the next survey cycle in 2018.

Profiled Institutions Rely on Anecdotal Evidence to Identify and Assist Students in Need

Although taking extra food from the dining hall or taking naps on campus might seem insignificant, these indicators can point to serious problems. When faculty, staff, and students see these and other signs of homeless and/or food insecurity, they can refer students in need to on- and off-campus resources.

Common Signs of Student Hunger and Homelessness



[1]Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students, http://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf

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Organize or Participate in Large, Annual Events to Raise Awareness of Issues and Services

To effectively include faculty, staff, and students in the referral process, institutions must raise campus awareness about hunger and homelessness and the services available to students in need.

The food pantry at **North Carolina State University** participates in a broader back-to-school campus and community event called Packapalooza. Over 50,000 people attend the one-day event each year. During the event, the pantry's student leadership team hosts a booth where attendees can learn about the pantry and why it is needed on campus.

At **Kennesaw State University**, contacts organize an annual Homeless Awareness Week in November to educate campus stakeholders about homelessness and reach students who might need their services. The six-day event takes eight to 10 months to plan. A steering committee of five to seven members determines what activities to host. Typical activities throughout the week include food drives, meal plan swipe exchanges, meal preparation for local community kitchens, a homelessness candlelight vigil, and a video-game tournament to raise money. The week culminates in a "sleep out," during which participants sleep in their cars, in a replica Red Cross Shelter, or outside for one night to simulate the experience of individuals experiencing homelessness.

1,370

More than 1,300 students participated in **Kennesaw State University**'s 2016 Homelessness Awareness Week.

Supplement Annual Events with Recurring Outreach

The Community Programs Office provides a variety of recruitment, retention, and support services.

Contacts conduct regular outreach campaigns to increase and maintain awareness of student hunger and homelessness. At the **University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)**, the director of the Community Programs Office emails Student Affairs leaders to notify them about upcoming events related to food insecurity. These emails include event logistics, a link to a flyer to be handed out, and an invitation to contact the director with questions.

Contacts at **Kennesaw State University** occasionally partner with classes to raise awareness of hunger and homelessness among students. These partnerships can also benefit the service provider with new programming ideas. For example, the homeless and food insecurity service provider at Kennesaw State University partnered with a marketing class on campus to develop new outreach and awareness strategies, such as a chalk-writing campaign.

Common Outreach Strategies to Maintain Awareness

Signage | Social media | Classroom presentations and partnerships | Email blasts

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3) Addressing Student Hunger and Homelessness

Service Delivery Structure

Most Profiled Institutions Do Not Offer Services through a Centralized Office

Three profiled institutions provide services for students experiencing homelessness and food insecurity through multiple offices and campus organizations. **UCLA** provides food insecurity services through the Community Programs Office, and services for homeless students through a crisis response team within Student Affairs. At the **University of Minnesota**, the primary health clinic, the Office of Student Affairs, and Student Counseling Services provide case management services to students in need, and a student-run food pantry is scheduled to open in the fall of 2017. The pantry will be considered part of the clinic. At **North Carolina State University**, a student-run food pantry within the Department of Academic and Student Affairs offers resources to students facing food insecurity.

Kennesaw State University is the only profiled institution that provides services for both homeless and food-insecure students through a centralized office, which is called Campus Awareness, Resource & Empowerment (CARE) Services. The office is part of the institution's Student Success Services, which is a division of Student Affairs. The office is staffed by three employees (i.e., director, clinical case manager, and program coordinator) who split their time with the division of Counseling and Psychological Services. Contacts at Kennesaw State University report that consolidating availailable services in one location simplifies the process for students who seek assistance.

Food Insecurity Services

Food Pantries Provide Essential Items to Students in Need

All profiled institutions either operate a food pantry or plan to open one soon. Pantries serve as the primary resource for students facing food insecurity on campus. Students at the **University of Minnesota** piloted their food pantry in the spring of 2017. Like **UCLA** and **Kennesaw State University**, the pantry will be open to only students. In contrast, the pantry at **North Carolina State University** is open to students, faculty, and staff.

Most institutions also accept in-kind donations from partner grocery stores. For example, **UCLA** receives food donations from Whole Foods almost daily.

Pantries are typically stocked with donated food items and food purchased through financial contributions to the pantry. At North Carolina State University and Kennesaw State University, students, faculty, and staff can donate food at various drop-off locations across campus. Both institutions provide an online map of donation locations. Contacts at North Carolina State University add temporary donation locations to capitalize on popular campus events. For example, contacts often host food drives with campus partners (e.g., residence halls, fraternities and sororities, athletics departments) during large events (e.g., homecoming, Greek Week).

Common pantry items include foods with long shelf-lives (e.g., pasta, oatmeal, peanut butter), but contacts report a growing emphasis on fresh and healthy foods. For example, UCLA's food pantry asks for donations of vegetables and eggs. Meanwhile, the University of Minnesota's food pantry, which will officially open in fall 2017, secured a farming plot at its sister campus in St. Paul, where the Cornercopia Student Organic Farm will grow and donate fresh produce to the pantry. At North Carolina State University, student leaders are developing a free cookbook to help individuals make healthy meals with the food they obtain at the pantry. CARE

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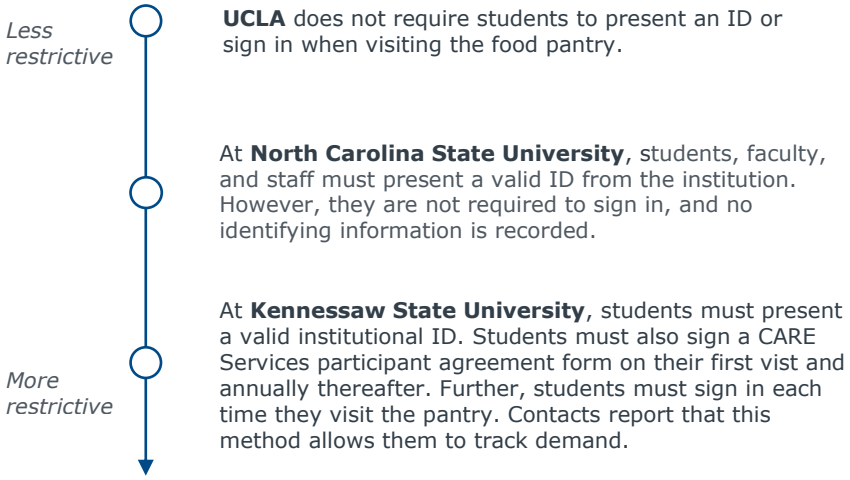
Services at Kennesaw State University also published a cookbook that is available at no cost to students in need and for $5 to others. The cookbook's proceeds support the office's programming.

Contacts Report that Anonymous Access to Food Pantries Reduces Stigma

At **UCLA** and **North Carolina State University**, access to the food pantry is largely anonymous. Further, students can access the pantry as needed. In contrast, **Kennesaw State University** imposes stricter requirements to access its pantry, and students can only acess it once every 30 days, unless a case manager determines they have an urgent need.

Requirements to Access Food Pantries at Profiled Institutions



Student Support is Vital to Campus Pantry Operations

Staffing structures at profiled institutions range from primarily student-run to primarily run by employees at the institution. However, all profiled institutions rely on student support in some form.

At **North Carolina State University**, a student leadership team comprising about six members oversees the pantry's daily operations. The team is divided into three branches: pantry management, community outreach, and media and branding. An advisory board, composed of about 15 students, staff, faculty, and community members, provides the student leadership team with guidance for strategic planning. Meanwhile, volunteers staff the pantry during its hours of operation and pick up food from donation sites on campus.

North Carolina State University's food pantry partners with a golf cart service to help pick up donations.

At **UCLA**, an office manager within the Community Programs Office serves as the food pantry's coordinator, while about 70 paid student interns help conduct daily operations (e.g., stocking and organizing the pantry). The student interns are employed by the broader Community Programs Office, and therefore have responsibilities that extend beyond the pantry. The office also employs six to seven student interns who are solely responsible for food security coordination. In this role, students transport donated food from community members to campus.

When the food pantry at the **University of Minnesota** officially opens, organizers plan to staff it with about 20 students from the School of Public Health's nutrition

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program. A newly hired nutritionist will oversee the student group. At **Kennesaw State University**, the three employees of the centralized office manage the food pantry, but they receive support from volunteers who sort donations.

Food Pantries are Testing New Strategies to Alleviate Food Insecurity

In addition to standard access to food pantries, many contacts report that they are pursuing other creative ideas to support students.

Ideas in Place or in Development at Profiled Institutions

SNAP Benefits
The food pantry at the **University of Minnesota** plans to help students determine if they qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. A group called Second Harvest provided this service during a pilot of the pantry.

Food Shuttle
In April 2017, **UCLA**'s Community Programs Office implemented a shuttle service that transports students to low-cost markets.

Food Bundle Program
UCLA's food pantry offers students with higher needs, such as student parents, food for an entire week.

Sponsor a Shelf
To help keep shelves stocked at **North Carolina State University**'s pantry, departments and organizations can sponsor a shelf, which entails monthly donations for at least one semester.

Homeless Student Services

Crisis Response Teams Coordinate Holistic Support for Students in Difficult Situations

The Economic Crisis Response Team is the primary support for homeless students at **UCLA**. Students in crisis email the response team, and a coordinator manages the case and collects details. The team also accepts referrals from faculty, staff, and students. The full response team discusses each new case at a weekly meeting and recommends resources to support students in need.

The Dean of Students officially oversees the team, but a representative from the financial aid office manages day-to-day operations. Contacts at UCLA report that the response team comprises representatives from the campus departments that are best equipped to address a student's financial and wellness needs. Though membership fluctuates, there are departments commonly represented on the team.

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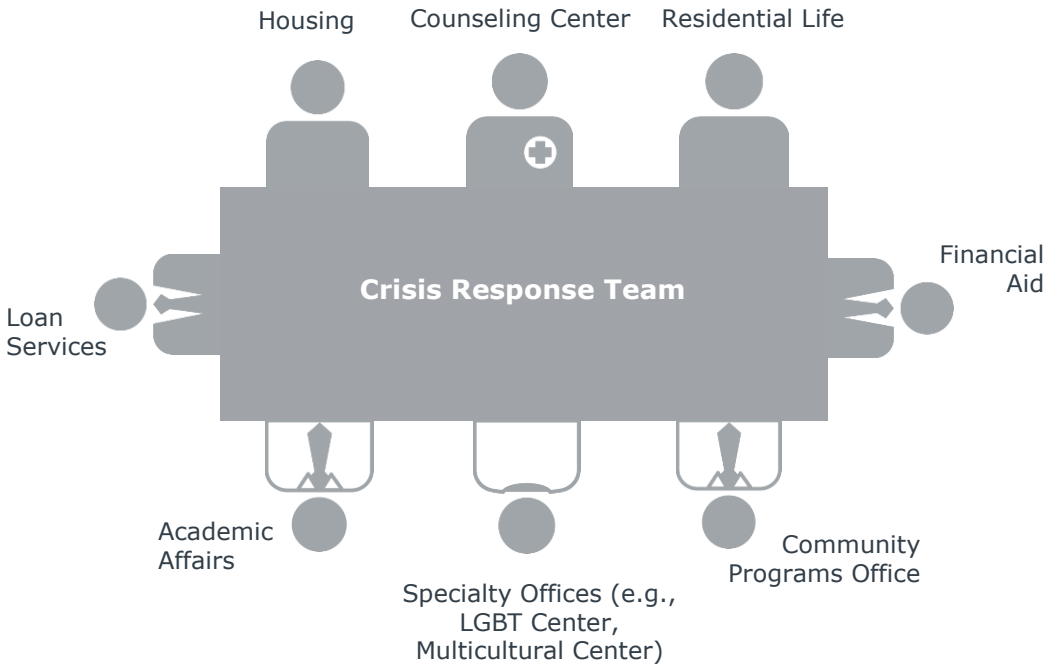
Example Composition of Economic Crisis Response Team



Case Managers Provide Coaching, Referrals, and Financial Assistance

At **Kennesaw State University**, case managers within CARE Services conduct initial needs assessments for students experiencing homelessness. Based on that assessment, case managers can refer a student to on-campus or external resources, or determine the student requires ongoing support from the case manager. When students require ongoing support, they work one-on-one with a case manager to achieve self-sufficiency through a direct services model. Under this model, a student experiencing homelessness and a case manager develop a personalized treatment plan based on the student's needs. They meet periodically to assess progress and modify the plan if necessary. Students who receive ongoing support from a case manager are provided greater access to the office's services, including more frequent access to the food pantry and access to linens and personal items (e.g., toiletries, towels, pillows, coats).

In addition to progress monitoring and referrals, case managers provide life-skills coaching and can connect students with financial assistance. For example, a case manager can help a student find on- and off-campus employment opportunities, assist students in applying for university and community-based grants and scholarships, or work with the Office of Student Financial aid to determine if a student is eligible for additional resources.

Kennesaw State University Offers Scholarships for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Kennesaw State University provides three scholarships, and is adding a fourth, for students experiencing homelessness who work with CARE Services. All scholarships go toward two semesters' worth of tuition, and two of the scholarships are endowed. CARE Services' board selects scholarship recipients.

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Provide Emergency Housing to Students in Crisis

Contacts at **Kennesaw State University** aim to expand their temporary housing options from one bedroom to at least two bedrooms to accommodate more students.

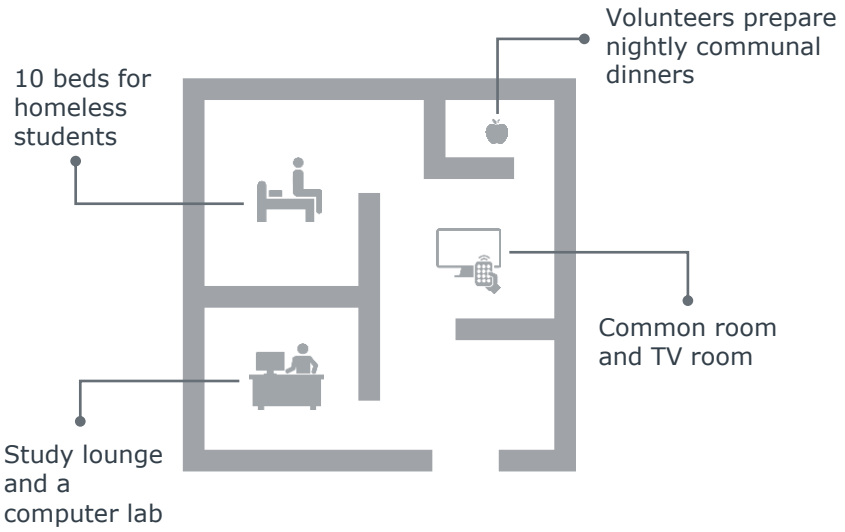
Kennesaw State University maintains a one-bedroom apartment on campus for students in need of emergency housing. Students can stay in the apartment for up to 14 days, with an opportunity to apply for an extension. During this time, students work with a case manager to secure long-term housing.

CARE Services considers students on a first-come, first-served basis for temporary housing. Additionally, students are evaluated using certain guidelines, including whether they are actively enrolled in classes, working with a CARE Services case manager, will imminently lose their primary housing and can provide proof of an eviction notice, or are considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. If selected, a student must sign the Visiting Student Housing Agreement, which supplements the institution's Residence Life Housing agreement. If the campus apartment is occupied when another eligible student is in need, CARE Services case managers work with that student to locate shelters or book a temporary stay at a local hotel if funding permits.

UCLA offers two weeks of emergency housing in its residence halls for students in crisis. Additionally, UCLA students in late 2016 launched a shelter called Students for Students, where students from UCLA and other nearby colleges can apply to stay for up to six months at a time. The shelter is housed in a church in nearby Santa Monica, California.

The shelter is a 501(c)(3) separate from the University, but it is supported by campus stakeholders. For example, UCLA's office of Student Organizations, Leadership & Engagement supplies volunteers for the shelter, whose roles include preparing dinner, packing breakfast bags, and shelter maintenance.

Features of a Student-Run Shelter for Students



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4) Funding Hunger and Homelessness Programs

Funding Sources

Draw Funding from Donations and Permanent Sources to Support Programs

Profiled institutions typically solicit monetary donations to fund their programming. At **Kennesaw State University**, contacts partner with the office of development to raise money through the annual fund and other development efforts. Individuals can donate to a specific CARE Services Fund through the Office of University Development's giving page. Additionally, Kennesaw State University employees can donate directly to CARE Services using the institution's employee payroll deduction form. Similarly, individuals can contribute to the CPO Food Closet and Essential Necessities Fund through **UCLA**'s broader giving page to support the institution's food pantry.

$37,267

CARE Services at **Kennesaw State University** spent $37,267 in donations on student housing, campus meal plans, and other services in 2016.

In some cases, institutions have secured permanent sources of funding. For example, a student government referendum imposing a student fee for various outreach and retention programs at UCLA includes 50 cents per student per quarter to help fund the food closet, totaling about about $50,000 annually. Further, the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) authorized a grant of about $160,000 as part of the Global Food Initiative. The funding from that grant is spread among departments on campus, including the Community Programs Office, to work on food security issues.

$20,000

The Community Programs Office at **UCLA** receives $20,000 of the UCOP grant to fund its food coordinator interns.

At the **University of Minnesota**, the clinic and Student Affairs will help fund the food pantry. Contacts at the University of Minnesota report that they are soliciting other departments on campus to secure additional funding. Meanwhile, contacts at **North Carolina State University**'s food pantry report that they do not actively seek monetary donations. However, any money received generally goes toward purchasing food.

Crowdfunding Campaign

In addition to regularly soliciting donors and partners for monetary and in-kind donations, the Students for Students shelter organized an online crowdfunding campaign with a goal to raise $20,000 to help cover some of its expenses. In total, it costs $35,000 per quarter to run the shelter, including rent, meals, furnishing, and other expenses. The shelter raised $20,250 by the end of the campaign.

To encourage donations through the campaign, organizers offered incentives for different funding levels, including shirts ($50), tours of the shelter ($100), and a meal in the shelter with its founder ($1,000).

Oganizers plan to try another crowdfunding campaign in the future.

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5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What percentage of the student population at institutions has been identified with homelessness and/or food insecurity?
- How are students experiencing homelessness or food insecurity identified?
- What campaigns and/or programs have institutions implemented to raise awareness?
- What services and programs are provided to students in need?
- Where do these programs sit in institutions and how are they staffed?
- What other departments support these programs?
- What scholarships are provided to students in need?
- What partnerships have institutions formed?
- From what sources do institutions draw funding to support students experience homelessness or food insecurity?
- What campaigns and/or programs have institutions implemented to raise funds for their programming?
- What are the ways in which students, faculty, staff, and alumni can donate and/or support these programs?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)
- The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (http://nces.ed.gov/)
- National Student Campaing Against Hunger & Homelessness (https://studentsagainsthunger.org/hunger-on-campus/)
- CARE Services website
- Feed the Pack website
- UCLA Community Programs Office Food Closet website
- Unwrapping Food Insecurity at UCLA newsletter
- Students for Students website

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Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed student affairs leaders, community program office directors, and public health directors at the following institutions:

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total)	Classification
Kennesaw State University	South	30,500 / 33,000	Doctoral Universities (moderate research activity)
North Carolina State University	South	24,000 / 34,000	Doctoral universities (highest research activity)
University of California, Los Angeles	Pacific West	29,500 / 42,000	Doctoral universities (highest research activity)
University of Minnesota	Midwest	34,000 / 50,600	Doctoral universities (highest research activity)

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Networking Contacts

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