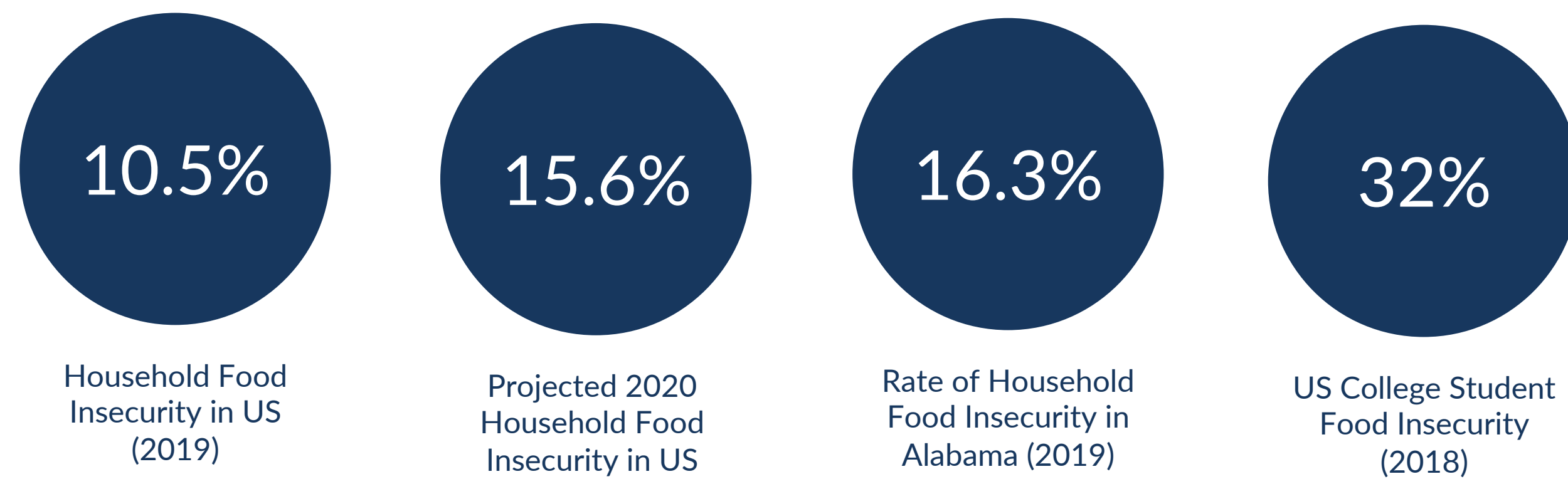


# Assessing Food Insecurity Resources and Culture at Alabama 4-year Colleges & Universities

Sara Rains | College of Human Sciences

## Introduction



### Food Insecurity and College Students:



The Alabama Campus Coalition for Basic Needs (ACCBN) was established in spring 2019 with the mission of unifying college campuses throughout Alabama to ensure student basic needs are met, thereby empowering all students to succeed in school, earn their degrees, and open doors to opportunity. ACCBN consists of 10 four-year universities across AL, and these campuses served as the sample for the study. To achieve their mission, members elected to follow a six step process with an initial focus on food security: (1) Engage, (2) Assess, (3) Plan, (4) Implement, (5) Evaluate, (6) Celebrate. This study took place during the Assess phase of the ACCBN process.

## Purpose

This study was conducted to determine the structural and content validity of the Campus Food Aid Self-assessment Tool (C-FAST). The Hunger Solutions Institute (HSI) developed C-FAST to bridge the gap between measuring food insecurity prevalence and identifying appropriate campus responses. C-FAST is a survey based tool designed to gauge campus performance across 6 dimensions associated with student food insecurity: *student services and supports; involvement; advocacy; campus culture and awareness of food insecurity; education and training; and research, scholarship, and creative works.*

## Methods: C-FAST

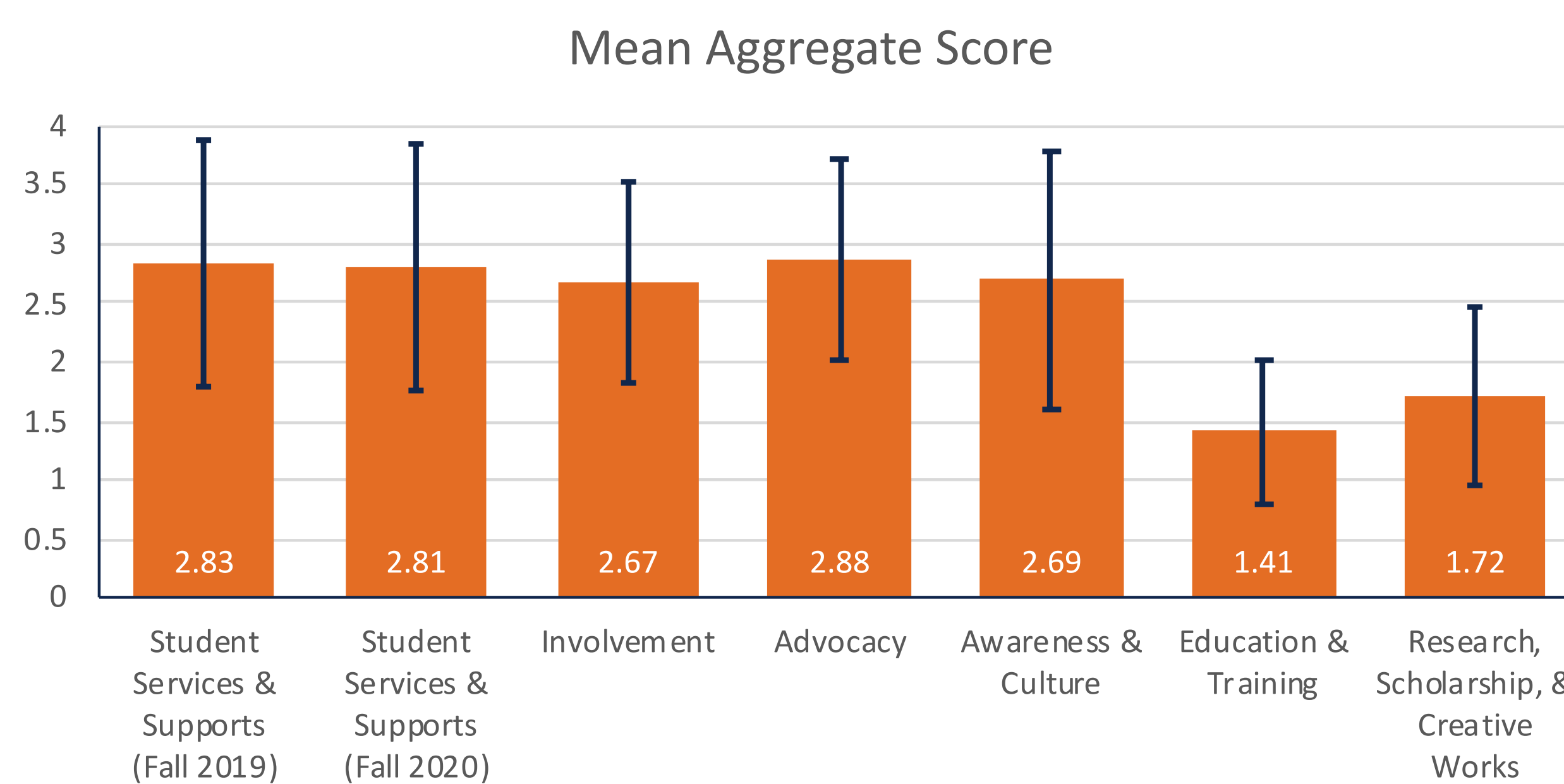
HSI conducted expert panel review and cognitive interviewing. Researchers used purposive sampling to identify and recruit the 10 ACCBN institutions to complete the tool and participate in semi-structured follow up interviews.

Campus representatives participated in a 15 minute training before completing C-FAST with a small cohort of campus representatives in Qualtrics or using a PDF version.

Campus responses were aggregated and assessed to determine overall campus performance within each C-FAST dimension. Continued data analysis and follow-up interviews are ongoing.

## Results: Food Resources Overview

At the time of poster development, 6 of the 10 campus responses had been received. These results have been analyzed and aggregated to provide a preliminary overview of food security resources on campuses in AL.



Universities in Alabama had varied performance across C-FAST dimensions. Campuses performed highest in Advocacy (M=2.88, SD=0.85) and Student Services & Supports in Fall 2019 (M=2.83, SD=1.04). Impressively, campuses managed to maintain high performance in administration of Student Services & Supports during Fall 2020 (M=2.81, SD=1.05), when COVID-19 significantly disrupted campus activities and likely increased student needs.

## Discussion and Implications

These results provide an overview of campus responses to food insecurity in Alabama. Campuses tended to score most highly in the first four dimensions (Student Services & Supports; Involvement, Advocacy, and Awareness & Culture) and lowest in the last two dimensions (Education & Training; Research, Scholarship, and Creative Works). Additionally, while all campuses demonstrated progress in food security response, C-FAST revealed areas where each campus had an opportunity for progress. For each ACCBN campus, these results will be used to guide the action planning process in their campus response to food insecurity.

Further analysis is needed to measure reliability of scale and criterion validity. Current analysis is limited by the small sample size, but researches aim to expand the C-FAST pilot to acquire a larger, more diverse data set.

These preliminary results support the validation of C-FAST as a tool to guide campus food insecurity response. Next steps include finalizing C-FAST validation and offering C-FAST to additional campuses, beginning with the UFWH network.

## Acknowledgments

This study was made possible through funding from the ECMC Foundation. Additional thanks are due to the HSI staff, particularly Dr. Alicia Powers and Malerie Goodman, and the ACCBN Campus Champions.

## References

- Alabama Campus Coalition for Basic Needs. (2020). Alabama campus coalition for basic needs. Retrieved from <http://wp.auburn.edu/endchildhungeral/alabama-campus-coalition-for-basic-needs/#:~:text=Mission,and%20open%20doors%20to%20opportunity>
- Beam, M. (2020). Nontraditional students' experiences with food insecurity: A qualitative study of undergraduate students. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2020.1792254>
- Bruening, M., Argo, K., Payne-Sturges, D., & Laska, M. N. (2017). The struggle is real: A systematic review of food insecurity on postsecondary education campuses. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 117(11), 1767–1791. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2017.05.022>
- Bruening, M., van Woerden, I., Todd, M., & Laska, M. N. (2018). Hungry to learn: The prevalence and effects of food insecurity on health behaviors and outcomes over time among a diverse sample of university freshmen. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 15(1), 9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-018-0647-7>
- Economic Research Service (2017). State-level prevalence of food insecurity. [Data File]. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics/#map>
- Leos-Urbel, J., Schwartz, A. E., Weinstein, M., & Corcoran, S. (2013). Not just for poor kids: The impact of universal free school breakfast on meal participation and student outcomes. *Economics of education review*, 36, 88–107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2013.06.007>