

# Bergen Community College and Community Partners Meeting Students Basic Needs



# Introduction

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# Timeline of expansion of Bergen Cares

2002	2009	2010	2014 -
<p data-bbox="313 668 639 758"><b>Increase in student referrals</b></p> <p data-bbox="282 872 639 1122">Personal Counselors noticed an increase in basic needs referrals from Academic, Transfer and International Counselors.</p>	<p data-bbox="787 668 1098 758"><b>Merge with Health Services</b></p> <p data-bbox="787 843 1085 958">Personal Counselors merged with health services.</p> <p data-bbox="787 1029 1123 1193">Health Services began small food bank prior to merger to address to food insecurity.</p>	<p data-bbox="1263 668 1620 808"><b>Received food and monetary donation.</b></p> <p data-bbox="1263 936 1607 1136">professor organized monthly food donations and monetary donation to begin Fishes and Loaves Fund.</p>	<p data-bbox="1747 651 2099 791"><b>Center for Food Action. Expansion of Food Pantry.</b></p> <p data-bbox="1747 858 2163 936">2014- Center for Food Action Arrived on campus.</p> <p data-bbox="1747 1001 2175 1079">2021- Pantry Coordinator was hired due to increased need.</p> <p data-bbox="1747 1143 2099 1222">Name change to Bergen Cares Center</p>



# Center for Food Action

CFA provides emergency services to northern New Jersey's poorest and most vulnerable residents.

CFA provides food, housing, utility, and heating assistance and offers counseling and advocacy services to low-income individuals and families.

CFA is headquartered in Englewood and has sites in Hackensack, Mahwah, Ringwood, and Saddle Brook.

**In 2014, at the request of Bergen Community College, CFA opened a site on BCC's Paramus campus to serve low-income students and their families.**

# Decades of helping students!

- BCC assisting students with food prior to 2009! CFA opened the pantry in 2014
- Started with pre-packed bags of food; open 4 hours, 2 days a week; staffed by CFA
- Moved to a different space in the college and become a choice pantry
- Worked closely with Health and Wellness at BCC
- Students, faculty and staff in need can receive any of CFA's services (help with rental arrears, utilities), as well as assistance from BCC including help with textbooks, transportation and counseling services.
- Over the years, services expanded and became the Bergen Cares Center

A Program of  
Center for Food Action



# Hunger Free New Jersey

*Fueling Change. Feeding All.*

# College Hunger Across the New Jersey

According to the Hope Center survey of NJ Community College students (fall 2019)

- 39% of respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days
- 44% of respondents were housing insecure in the previous year
- 14% of respondents were homeless in the previous year

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), nearly 2 million students nationally who are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) do not participate in the program.



# Expanding Access to SNAP: EATS Act

- This bill would permanently expand SNAP eligibility, eliminating work-for-food SNAP rules that require students to work 20 hours a week or have a federal work-study job to receive SNAP.

- Take Action!!

<https://hungerfreenj.org/farmbill/>

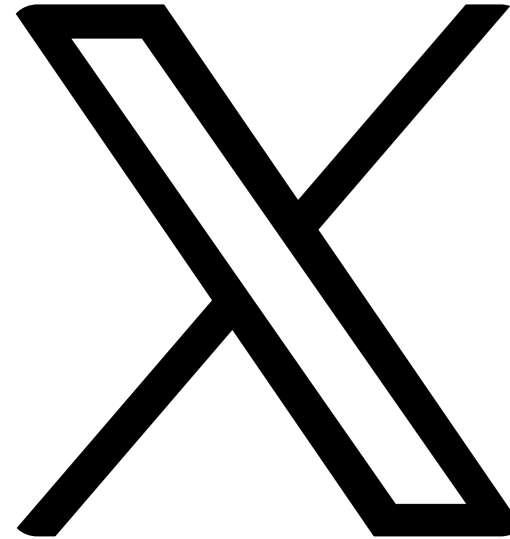
# Changing Policy to Address Student Hunger

- Hunger Free Campus Act – created Hunger Free Campus grant
- DHS/DFD rule change – allowed community college students enrolled in Perkins funded, vo-tech courses to count towards SNAP work requirements, making thousands more students eligible for SNAP
- SNAP outreach expansion – SNAP navigators in all 21 counties to assist with SNAP applications; outreach on college campuses
- Hunger Free Campus Network – a coalition of students, faculty and staff from two and four year colleges working together to address college food insecurity

Bergen Cares Center actively participates in HFCN

# Join Us!

- Follow and tag us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter/X at @HungerFreeNJ.
- [Hungerfreenj.org](http://Hungerfreenj.org)



# Bergen Cares Center

- Food Pantry
- Threads Clothing Closet



# Bergen Cares Center

- Bergen Cares Serves Students, Staff, and Faculty
- On Campus we have the Food Pantry and our Threads Clothing Closet
- Outside resources that can be provided depending on the need:
  1. Housing
  2. Utility Assistance
  3. Technology
  4. Transportation
  5. Tuition and Book Assistance

# Bergen Cares Center

## STUDENT ASSISTANCE: NO STUDENT'S ACADEMIC SUCCESS SHOULD BE HINDERED BY OUTSIDE FACTORS

- 1. Food Pantry** - Partnership with (CFA) allows us to provide students with: Milk, Eggs, Chicken, and other food items.  

Students are allowed to visit our Pantry on a daily basis or upto 2 times per month for household shopping.

Students are only required to use their SID#
- 2. Intake Process** - Initial visit, if additional assistance is requested student must meet with Coordinator to further discuss.
- 3. Emergency Request** - Student must meet with Coordinator to further discuss their needs and to better assess and assist.
- 4. Assessment for additional needs** - Depending on the situation, additional help like: Food Gift Cards or Meal Vouchers can be provided.

# Bergen Cares Center

**Threads Vintage Closet** - Donations from Staff, Faculty, and Students  
(previous/current)

- **Career Focused** - Interviews, Internships, Work, and Presentations - (Blazers, Slacks, Dress Shirts, Dresses, Skirts, Ties, Shoes)
- **Casual** - School, Everyday wear, Sportswear (Jeans, Hoodies, T-shirts, Shorts, Sneakers)



# Bergen Cares Center- Food Pantry and Threads Events:

1. **Food & Other Drives** - Staff, Faculty and Students participate Tote bags, Free Market (coming this Fall)
2. **Holiday Helpers** - Faculty and Staff donate gifts during the holiday season (December).
3. **Snack Kits for Finals & Boo Bags** - Destigmatizing while promoting the food pantry
4. **Tabling** - Open house, Community Health week, Earthfest, Hunger awareness month
5. **Other** -
  - **Student Success Course** - Food Pantry and Threads has been added as part of their “Resource Quest Scavenger Hunt”
  - **Class Presentation** - At professors request
  - **Bergen Daily** - Online newsletter
  - **Social Media** - Instagram “bergencarescenter” & “threadsclothingclosest” and the BergenCC app
6. **Collaborations** - Fresh Produce (USDA Grant) John Chichowski “For The Students by The Students”, Cooking Classes w/ Culinary dept., Fashion Show w/ Fashion dept. SGA (campus wide initiative)



# Bergen Cares Center

## Faculty and Staff -

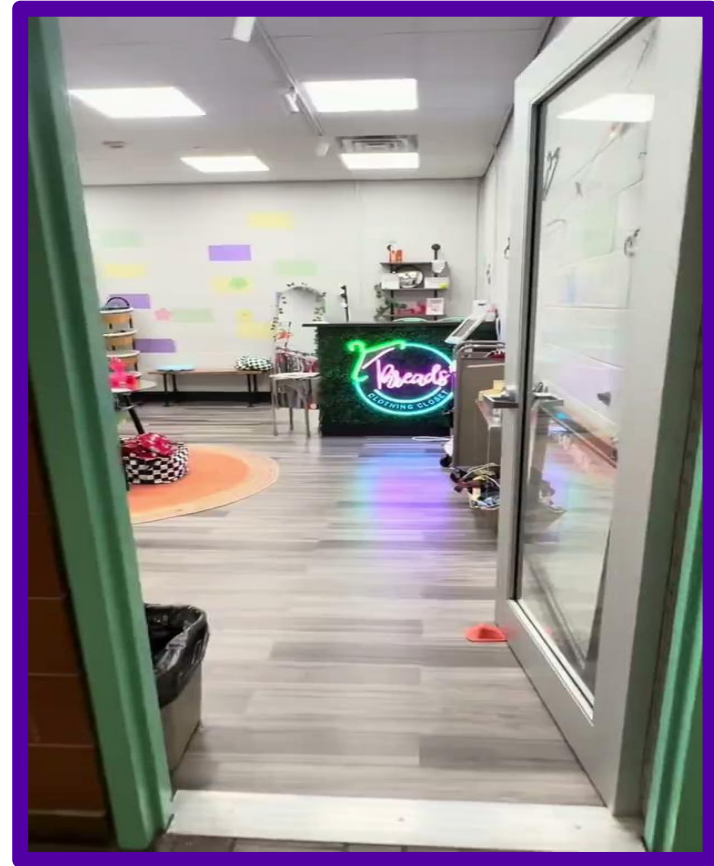
- Food Pantry
- Referrals to community for assistance (Utility, Rental).
- Threads clothing closet



# Bergen Cares Stats

1. Snapshot- January we had 83 walkins; In April we had 203 walkins
2. Began assisting 20 - 30 households a month (2022) since then our numbers have reached as high as 70 households in a month.
3. Spring 2024 (January 3rd - May 7)
  - Walkins - 603
  - New Intakes - 107
  - Households - 127

# Bergen Cares Center Food Pantry and Threads



# Basic Needs, Mental Health and Community Resources

# Relationship: Basic Needs and Mental Health-What do we know.

- Basic needs insecurity are strongly associated with physical and mental health, particularly anxiety. (Coakley et al., 2022)
- Students with marginal food security had higher odds of anxiety, depression, when compared to students with high food security. (Coakley et al., 2022)
- College students who experience basic needs insecurity are more than likely to report depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation to include a plan or attempt. (Broton, Mohdbali, Lingo, 2022).

# Student Survey on Hunger - 2024

50% of respondents indicated Often True or Sometimes true.  
**I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more.**

56% of respondents report Yes.

**Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?**

45% of respondents indicated Often True or Sometimes True.  
**The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more.**

# Four initiatives to Address Student Mental Health at Bergen Cares

1. Improve access to mental health services
2. Increase Training
3. Provide Supervision
4. Engage college and community resources

# Basic Needs and Student Mental Health

## 1. Improve access to mental health services

- In Spring 2024, Food Pantry relocated closer to the Center for Health, Wellness and Personal Counseling.
- Mental Health Resources are in the Food Pantry (988, UWill, Bergen CC Center for Health, Wellness and Personal Counseling).



# Basic Needs and Mental Health

In the event of a student concern, student workers will contact the Bergen Cares Coordinator or Part Time Assistant.

Students who required immediate assistance are walked The Center for Health, Wellness and Personal Counseling for assistance by a student worker or the Bergen Cares Coordinator.

# Basic Needs and Mental Health

## 2. Training

- Coordinator, P/T assistant and **student workers** in the Food Pantry complete QPR - Question, Persuade and Refer Gatekeeper training. QPR training is provided by NJ Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- We will expand training to Threads student workers beginning Fall 2024.
- Personal Counselor will present at Bergen Cares student worker training.

# Basic Needs and Student Mental Health

## 3. Supervision

- Weekly meeting with Coordinator and part time assistant to review student visits and notes. Personal Counselor will reach out to students as needed.

# Campus and Community Resources

4. Continue to collaborate with resources to reduce food and housing insecurity.

## Bergen Community College Foundation

- Emergency Fund - Tuition and Transportation (Bus)
- Fishes and Loaves fund – Shoprite Gift Cards, Vouchers to Dining Services on campus.
- Book Assistance: Follett Fund
- Compassion Fund – Formerly United Way of Bergen County-Student, Staff and Faculty
- Bergen Cares Student Assistant Fund

## Center for Food Action

- Food for Pantry
- Homeless Prevention -Rent Utility Assistance, Homeless Prevention

# Campus and Community Resources

## Women's Rights information Center

- Shared Housing Program

## Bergen County Housing, Health, & Human Services Center (Shelter)

Member – Bergen County Homeless Youth Task Force.

# Campus and Community Resources

## New Jersey Community Food Bank

- SNAP information for students.

## Bergen County Board of Social Services

- Process SNAP applications.

# ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Our hope is that students who receive these supports in college generally experience various positive academic outcomes.

Supports can include many services, such as what Bergen Cares Center has to offer, academic advising, tutoring, mental health services, these are all designed to help students overcome barriers to their success.

Here are some specific academic outcome expectations we look at for our students who receive these supports:

**Improved Academic Performance**

**Higher Retention Rates**

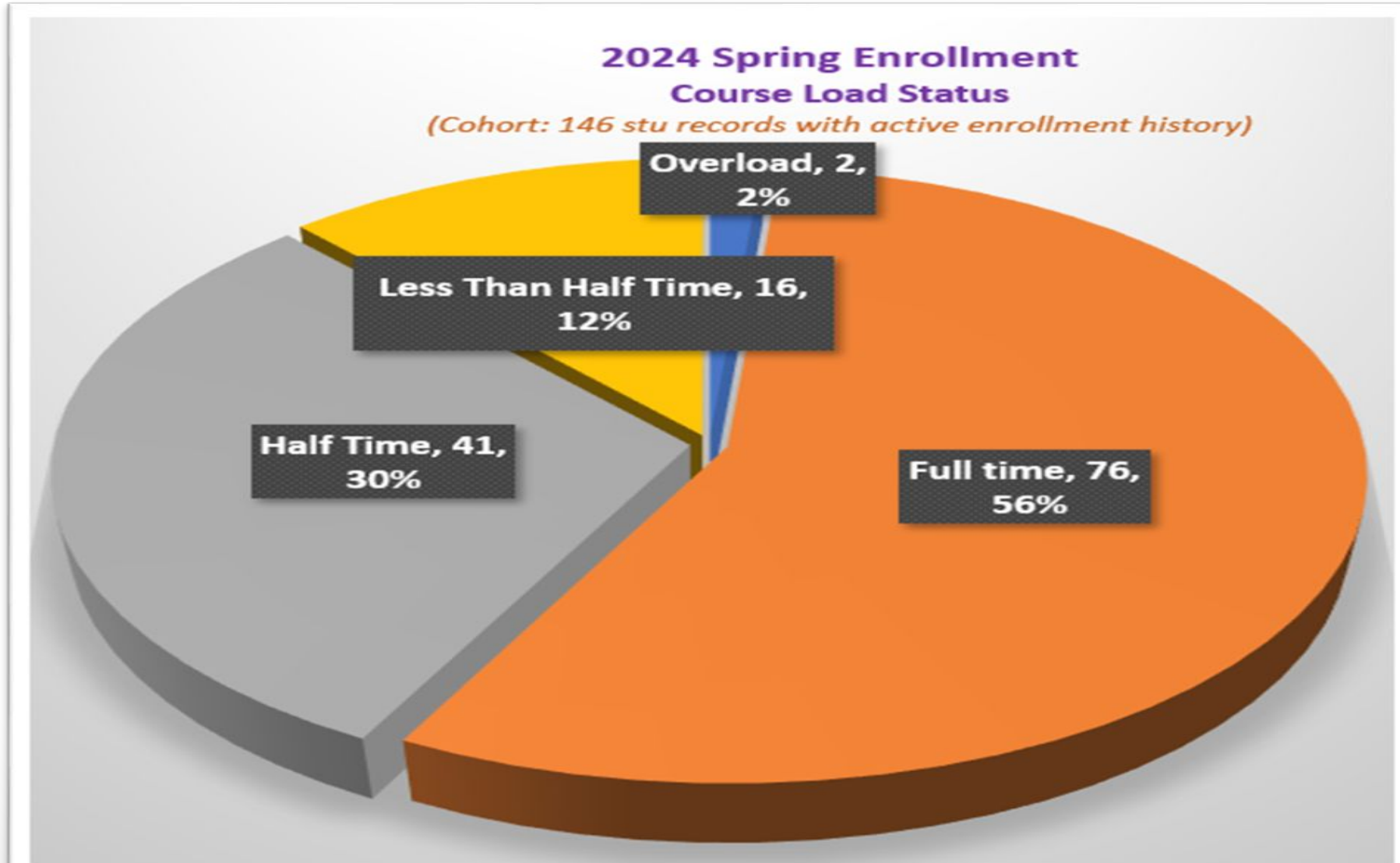
**Enhanced Graduation Rates**

**Better Mental and Emotional Health**

**Enhanced Sense of Belonging and Engagement**

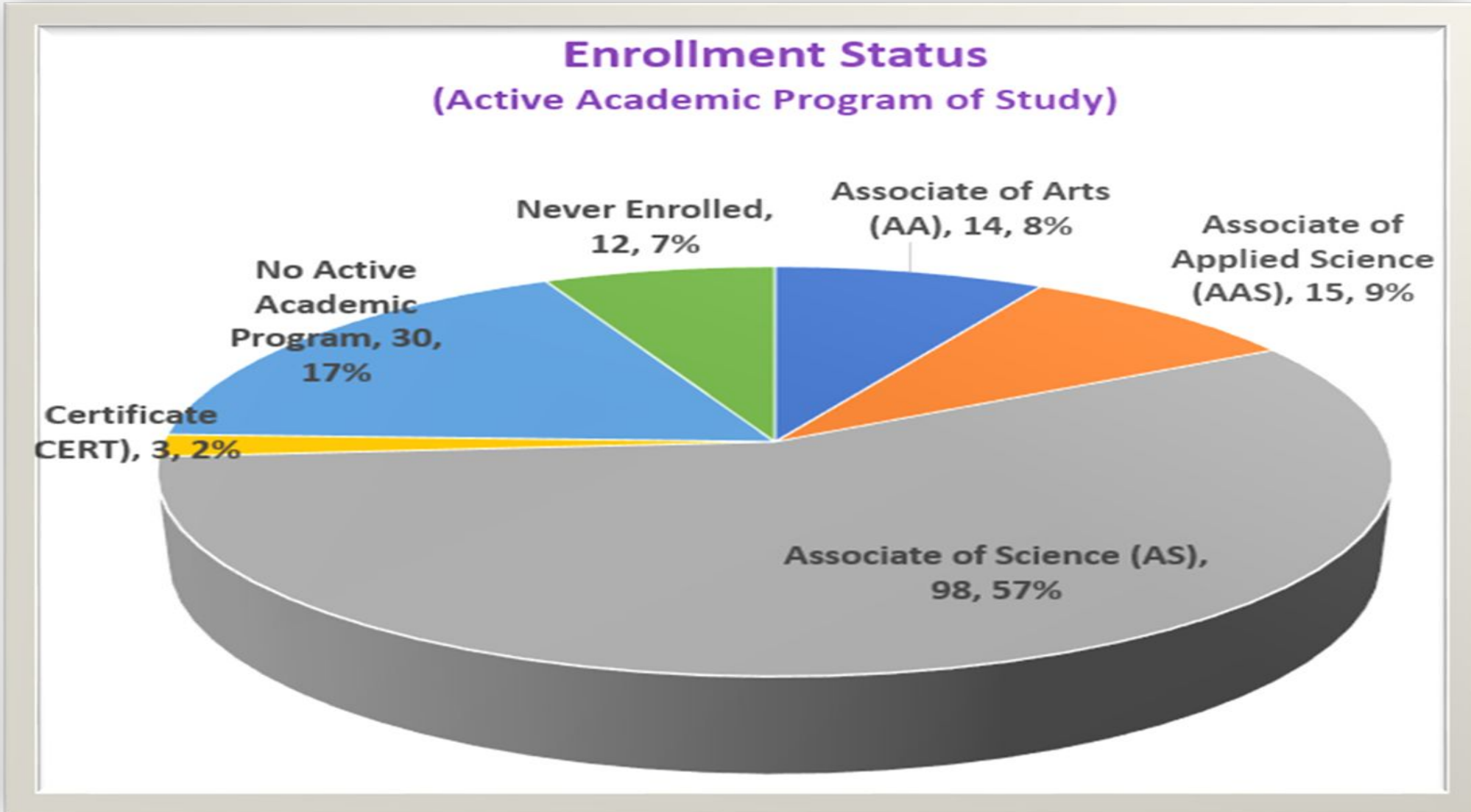
**Increased Awareness of Resources and Opportunities**

# Academic Outcomes





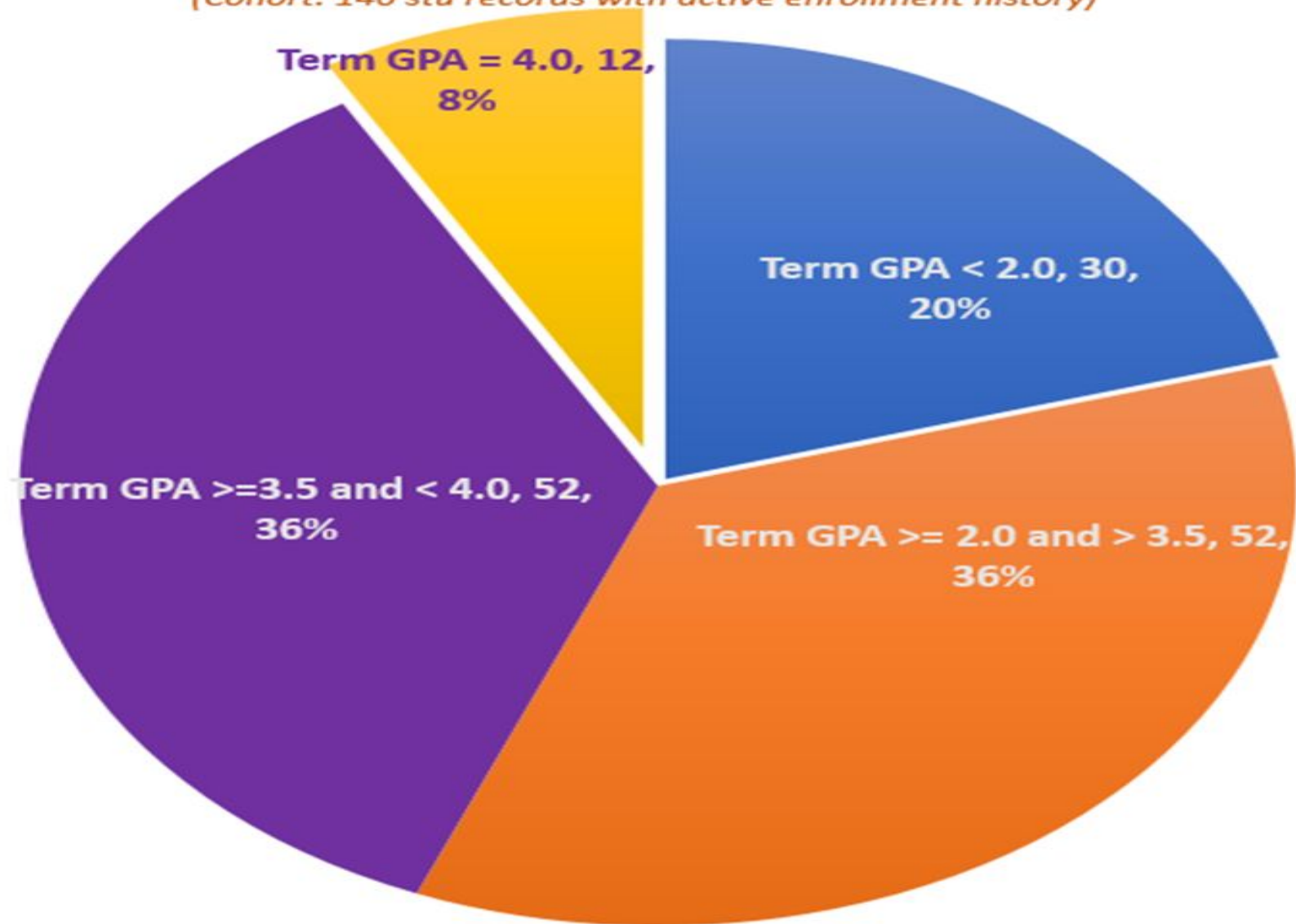
# Academic Outcomes



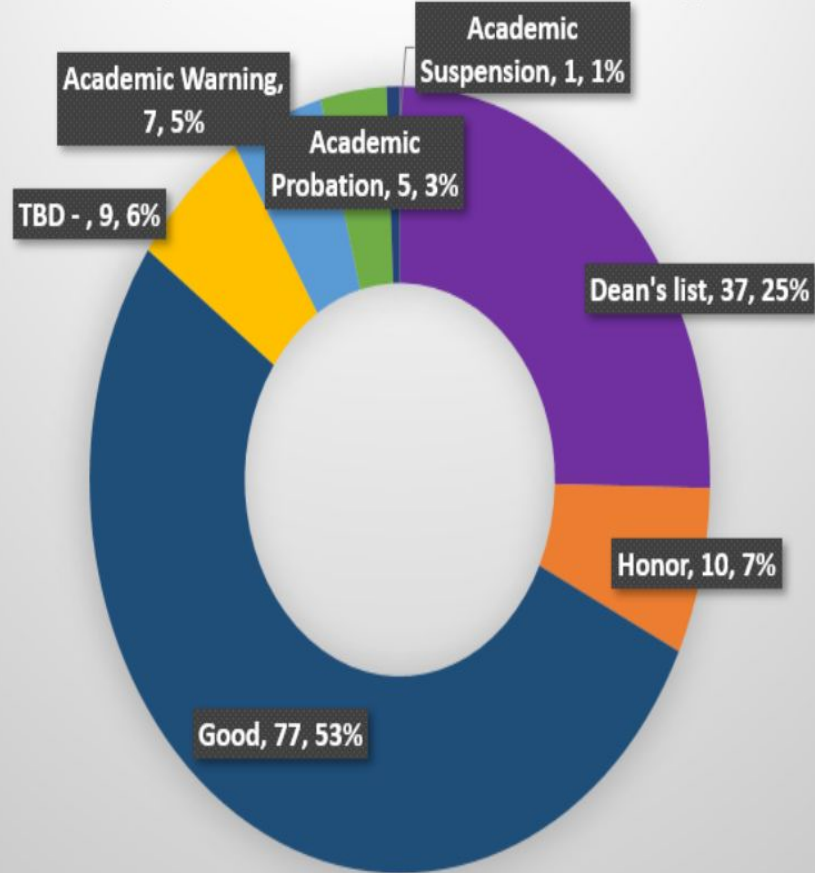
## Academic Progress

### Earned Term GPA at the End of Spring 2024 Semester

*(Cohort: 146 stu records with active enrollment history)*



**Academic Progress**  
Academic Standing after Spring 2024 Term  
(Cohort: 146 stu records with active enrollment history)



Students experiencing food insecurity face numerous challenges that hinder their academic performance and overall well-being.

- ★ Academic performance (retention and graduation)
- ★ Mental and Physical Health
- ★ Additional Financial Strain

Addressing basic needs is crucial for supporting the academic success and overall well-being of our students. When we recognize and actively work to mitigate food insecurity we can help ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed academically and thrive personally.

# Questions???

## Contact Information:

**Bergen Cares Center**

**400 Paramus Rd.**

**Paramus, NJ 07652**

**Room: S-118**

**Tel: 201-879-7191**

**[bergencares@bergen.edu](mailto:bergencares@bergen.edu)**

# References

Broton, K. M., Mohebali, M., & Lingo, M. D. (2022). Basic Needs Insecurity and Mental Health: Community College Students' Dual Challenges and Use of Social Support. *Community College Review*, 50(4), 456-482. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00915521221111460>

Coakley KE, Cargas S, Walsh-Dilley M, Mechler H. Basic Needs Insecurities Are Associated with Anxiety, Depression, and Poor Health Among University Students in the State of New Mexico. *J Community Health*. 2022 Jun;47(3):454-463. doi: 10.1007/s10900-022-01073-9. Epub 2022 Feb 6. PMID: 35124789; PMCID: PMC8818275.