



LEHMAN
COLLEGE

Baraka Corley

Director, Student Affairs
Basic Needs Center

Stability is Strategy: How Meeting Basic Needs Moves The Needle On Equity

Key Themes:

- Evolution of our model
- Cross-Divisional Collaborations;
- Leadership Alignment





WHO DO WE SERVE

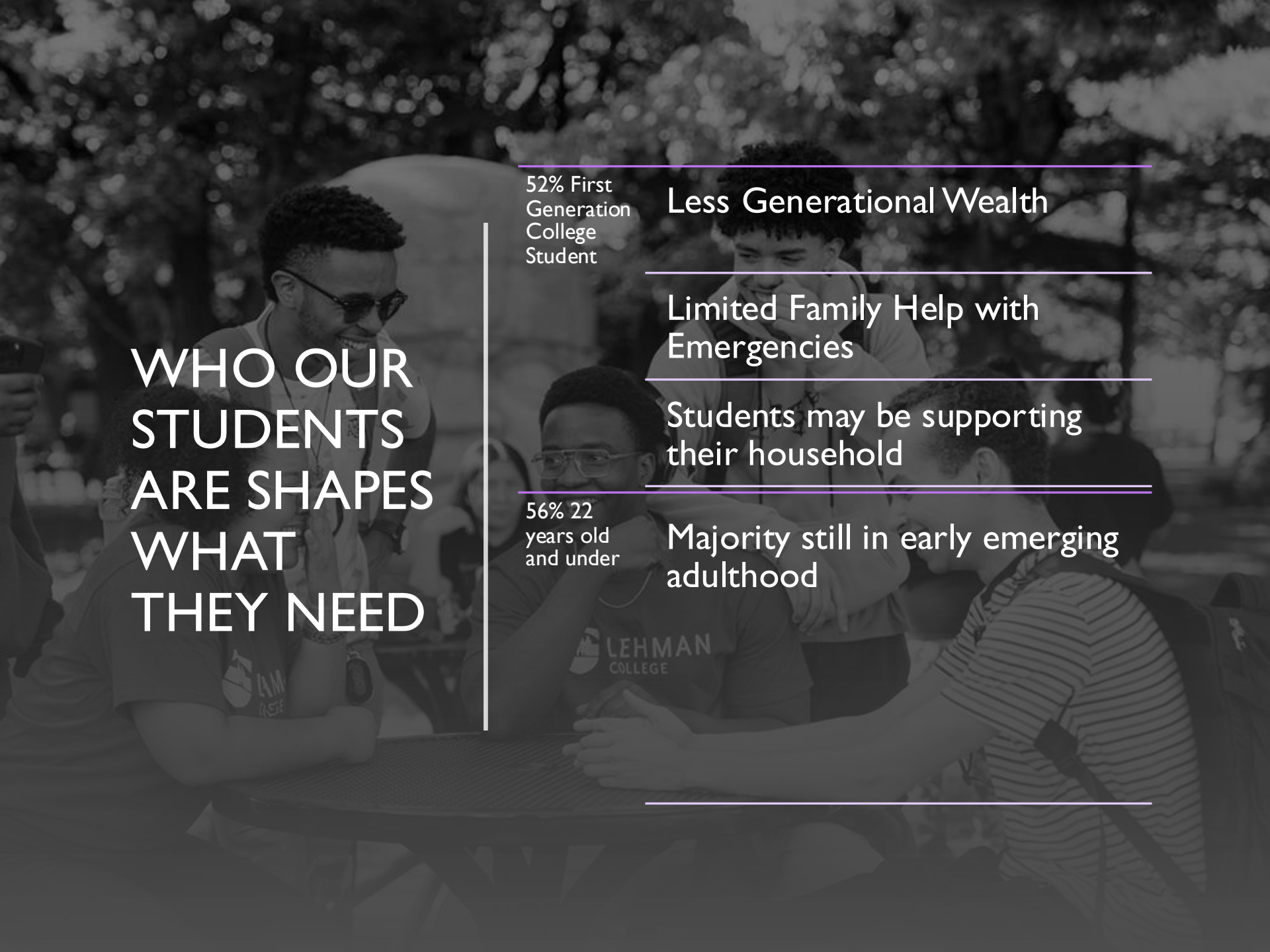
68% Student from the Bronx

52% First Gen College
Students

56% 22 years old and under

13,000+ Enrolled

77% Pell Grants



WHO OUR
STUDENTS
ARE SHAPES
WHAT
THEY NEED

52% First
Generation
College
Student

Less Generational Wealth

Limited Family Help with
Emergencies

Students may be supporting
their household

56% 22
years old
and under

Majority still in early emerging
adulthood

“What Do
Students
Really
Need?”



LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!



THIS IS NOT CHARITY. *THIS IS STRATEGY.*

Students face barriers: food insecurity, housing instability, financial stress. “This Is Not Charity. This Is Strategy.”

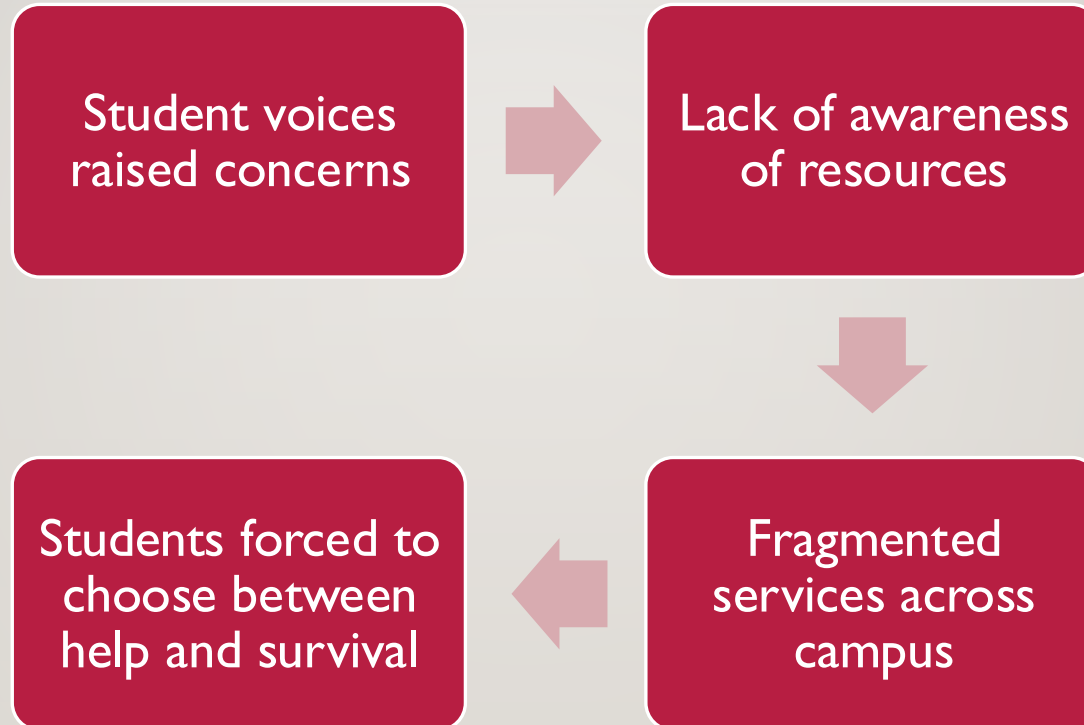
- Stability → Engagement
- Engagement → Persistence
- Persistence → Equity



STUDENT AFFAIRS BASIC NEEDS CENTER – THE VISION



WHY WE BUILT THIS?



OUR MODEL – A HUB OF SUPPORT

- VP Student Affairs Dr. Wright's vision
- From Fragmented Services → One-Stop Support
- Centralized support model – Old Gymnasium
- Reduce barriers
- Increase access + dignity
- An integrated, student-centered ecosystem: needs are met without leaving the building.

Our Purpose

A central hub of support for students facing basic needs emergencies

Basic Needs

Food access (snacks,
groceries, produce)
Housing & eviction
prevention
Public benefits
(SNAP, healthcare)

Stability Supports

Financial assistance
(utilities, childcare)
Legal services
(immigration,
consultations)
Health & wellness
(hygiene kits,
insurance)

Academic Success Tools

Books & academic
supplies
Laptop loans
Career Closet
Disability
accommodations

How We Work

Central campus location
Strong campus partners: Counseling Center, Health & Wellness, CUNY CARES,
Faculty & Advisors
Direct service + warm referrals

Meeting basic needs is foundational to student success

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- Lehman Counseling Center
- Health & Wellness Services
- CUNY CARES partnership
- On-campus + off-campus pipeline
- Short-term relief → long-term stability



THE WORK BEHIND THE MODEL

- “What It Took to Build”
- Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork Mentality & Efforts
- Cross-divisional meetings
- Faculty/staff education
- Student outreach
- Constant re-education (new people every year)
- Institutional buy-in ensures sustainability and scale.

CULTURE SHIFT

“Normalizing Help-Seeking”

- Leadership advocacy
- Staff alignment
- Removing stigma
- Embedding into campus culture



THE TURNING POINT

“When Students Took Ownership”

- Student leaders
- Interns (nutrition, health admin)
- Volunteers
- Peer-to-peer influence



INDICATORS OF IMPACT

“What We’re Seeing”

- Increased engagement
- More appointments across services
- Cross-utilization (health → food bank, etc.)
- Repeat visits
- Volunteer interest



STUDENT EXPERIENCES

What Students Told
Us

“I feel seen and not
judged when I come
here (Counseling -
BNC)”

“This is my very first
suit ever! (Lightning
Career Closet)”

“I didn’t know
where else to go.
(BNC – CUNY
CARES)”

Students arriving in
crisis → leaving with
relief

STABILITY IN ACTION

Housing crisis → student stays enrolled

Utility support → family stability

Books → academic success

Every intervention is a retention strategy

WHAT WE LEARNED

- **Over the three years we've learned...**
- Detecting signs of insecurity
- Clear communication matters
- Language shapes access (not charity)
- Students teach us as much as we teach them

A CAMPUS THAT KNOWS HOW TO RESPOND

- Students → how to access + advocate
- Faculty → how to refer
- Staff → how to guide
- **Include:**
- Navigate referrals
- basic.needs@lehman.cuny.edu
- Walk-Ins & Walk-Overs are welcomed!

FROM SERVICE → INFRASTRUCTURE



Equity Infrastructure



Assessment practices

Learning Outcomes
Success Outcomes
Mixed Method Data
Collection



Storytelling

Destigmatization = Sharing
the Journey
Alumni & Graduates
Funding Opportunities



Leadership alignment

STABILITY IS STRATEGY

- Stability drives equity
- Equity requires systems
- Systems require alignment

- *When students are stable... they don't just survive - they thrive.*



QUESTIONS?

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