

Aggie House Application

2023-24 City of Davis HOME Grant

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Request: \$50,000 towards rent for a student-run transitional housing shelter.

1. Overview:

Aggie House is a Registered Student Organization (RSO) at UC Davis that operates a transitional housing unit for UC Davis students facing housing insecurity and homelessness. Modeled after existing student shelters at UCLA and USC, Aggie House is located in the Cal Aggie House Multifaith Living Community (CA House MLC) across the street from UC Davis's campus and International Center. Our shelter has three main target audiences: students experiencing housing insecurity, student-volunteers, and the greater community. For students facing housing insecurity, we provide shelter, food, case management services, and community. Student-volunteers gain a strengthened understanding of the workings of nonprofit organizations, and learn about the effects of housing insecurity. Finally, Aggie House serves as an open-source model to be replicated at universities across California and the nation.

Aggie House currently operates as a project under Students 4 Students (S4S), an LA-based nonprofit. Both of our partner student shelters at UCLA and the University of Southern California – named Bruin Shelter and Trojan Shelter, respectively – operate under S4S, which has an array of career staff that assist in the logistics of each shelter. While we receive some financial and policy support from S4S, student leaders run all operations on the ground at UC Davis.

Aggie House formally opened in Fall of 2021, and has recently completed its pilot season. This grant application will lay out the statistics around student homelessness, our shelter model, the successes we have had as an organization last academic year, and the improvements we are making to ensure long-term success of our program.

2. Statement of Problem

College students experience food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness at alarming rates. Coupled with the need to balance academic rigors with family, work, and social commitments, basic needs insecurity understandably stunts college progress. Students deserve a stable home, but many do not have access to one.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines “*very low food security*” as reduced food intake or disrupted eating patterns at times due to limited resources. “*Homelessness*,” according to the 2017 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), is defined as a lack of stable or reliable housing (e.g., living on the street, in vehicles, motels, campgrounds, or single-occupancy facilities; couch surfing in other people's homes for temporary sleeping arrangements; transient housing and overcrowding; and high cost of housing relative to income) during any time point during the school year. However, “*housing insecurity*” encompasses “a broader set of challenges such as the inability to pay rent or utility or the need to move frequently” (Goldrick Rab and colleagues, 2017). Housing insecurity can also occur when students experience issues such as overcrowding, roommate problems, excessive distance from campus, and poor or unsafe living conditions.

According to a Housing Affordability and Insecurity Survey conducted by the Associated Students of UC Davis (ASUCD) and the UC Davis Graduate Student Association (GSA)¹, 18% of UC Davis students

¹ Saper, Robert M. UC Davis Graduate Student Association, 2019, pp. 7–55, *UC Davis Student Housing Affordability and Insecurity Report for 2017-18*.

experienced either homelessness or some form of housing insecurity over the course of the 2017-18 school year. Further breakdown of the data shows that nearly 7% of students surveyed were homeless at some point during the 2017-18 school year, and approximately 2% spent time living in their car or another place not intended as housing. If this is representative of the UC Davis population at large, this means that over 2,000 students are affected by homelessness at our institution in any given year.

Further, certain populations of students are often disparately affected by housing insecurity. According to the 2017 UCUES survey, students are twice as likely to experience homelessness if they are an Underrepresented Minority (URM) or LGBTQIA+. Homelessness is also notably highest among independent students. This includes students who are emancipated minors, recently homeless, or who have been in foster care for any period of time after the age of 13. 10% of independent students reported experiencing homelessness.

There are several causes of housing insecurity among students. Across all identities, insufficient financial aid is a key cause; the UC Global Food Initiative Report² finds that some students supplement financial aid by working several jobs and extra hours. This is particularly common toward the end of the term, which coincides with exams. Additionally, this report identified unique challenges that non-traditional students face, which lend to higher rates of housing insecurity. They found that first-generation students often feel an obligation to financially support their family back home, and lack guidance in “budget[ing] their financial aid” and “navigat[ing] the University system.” The report also revealed that international students often face difficulties finding off-campus housing, because many property owners require social security numbers and/or a credit history, neither of which international students have. Finally, international students are ineligible for US federal financial aid, which leaves them particularly vulnerable when guardians face a financial crisis.

Unfortunately, food and housing insecurity are often coupled. A college student should never have to choose between having a meal and paying their rent, and yet this dilemma is all too common. Food and housing insecurity limit students’ time and energy to focus on academics; unsurprisingly, the UCUES report reveals a clear correlation between housing security and academic performance. Average UC GPA is highest for undergraduate students who are food and housing secure, and lowest for students who experience both food insecurity and homelessness.

3. A Year in Review

To address these alarming trends in homelessness, housing insecurity, food insecurity, and achievement gaps among UC Davis students, Aggie House provides a safe and stable home for 10 to 40 unhoused students each year. Students stay at our transitional housing program for anywhere between a couple of weeks to a full academic year. Students who are able to find stable and permanent housing during their stay at Aggie House are not required to reside for a full quarter; the rolling basis of our program allows us to accommodate as many students as possible. Students who are unable to secure permanent housing during their stay at Aggie House are welcome to reapply for the next school year, but these cases are rare.

² Martinez, Suzanna, et al. University of California, 2020, pp. 4–46, Redefining Student Basic Needs for Higher Education.

Aggie House operates every day of the year, including on holidays and during the summers. On weekdays, Aggie House opens each night at 7pm, and closes at 12 noon the next day. On weekends, the shelter is open all hours. At the beginning of our pilot year, Aggie House closed each weekday morning at 8am, modeled after Bruin and Trojan shelters. This was adjusted to 12 noon during our second quarter to better meet the health needs of our residents, providing extra hours to sleep in the mornings. While Aggie House is closed between 12 noon and 7pm each weekday, residents are able to use the main community house at CA House, which has locker room for their belongings, fridge space for their meals, and ample space to study, sleep, and socialize. This daytime availability was an unexpected benefit of operating out of CA House's living community, and CA House has worked with us throughout the year to improve the main house space for daytime occupation of Aggie House residents.

In our first year of operation, Aggie House hosted 22 student residents. For the vast majority of the year, our unit was at full capacity, hosting ten residents simultaneously. The exception to this was one month-long period during winter quarter when capacity was limited due to a COVID peak. We often have a few beds available at the beginning of each new quarter, which we offer to our waitlist immediately, and then advertise publicly if they are still not filled. Residents were provided with free breakfast and dinner each day this year, as well as Aggie Cash gift cards to supplement lunch costs during Spring Quarter. Finally, residents benefitted from our case management program, despite some difficulties we experienced retaining case management volunteers. More details on our meals and case management strategies and their revision for next year are included under "Updated Approach."

After our pilot year, 22 residents transitioned out of Aggie House. 19 moved into permanent housing, 2 moved into a more independent rapid rehousing program through the University Basic Needs Center, and 1 resident stopped communicating with Aggie House due to safety concerns unrelated to their stay with us. The 19 residents who moved into more permanent housing found a unique variety of new homes, including the dorms (1 resident moved back into first year housing as an RA), other townhouses within the CA House Multifaith Living Community, family homes, and apartments both in and out of Davis. 1 former resident even returned to Aggie House as a live-in RA during a COVID peak, which is described in more depth under "COVID-19 Crisis Response."

Updated Approach

In order to ensure that all resident basic needs are met and the transition to permanent housing is smooth, we employ a four-pronged model, providing residents with 1) housing 2) food 3) holistic case management and 4) community. This layout is modeled after the student transitional housing units at UCLA and USC that preceded us. The model and its updates for next year are described below:

1. **Housing:** Our organization partners with CA House, a 501(c)(3) located in Davis that is enthusiastic about hosting our program. CA House owns and operates a student Multifaith Living Community on Russell Boulevard, within close proximity to campus. Their organization is committed to several goals that align with the focus of Aggie House, and they have worked with us to convert one of their townhouse units, which has six bedrooms, three bathrooms, a living area, and a kitchen facility, into our fully furnished transitional housing unit. Aggie House comfortably hosts ten student residents and two student-volunteers at once amongst the six

bedrooms, and has ample study and social space for residents to use. CA House also holds weekly community events that our residents partake in. We hope to continue this relationship with CA House throughout the Aggie House lifespan if finances allow.

2. **Food:** This past year, we provided Aggie House residents with two meals per day, which our student volunteers budget for, purchase, and prepare for residents each night and morning. Residents have had the opportunity to cook and eat dinner together to foster a friendly environment, and take food to go in the morning.

This next academic year, Aggie House has received sufficient grant funding to provide three meals per day and upgrade our menu. Residents will now be able to take both lunch and breakfast to-go in the mornings, and will return to dinner in the house at night. Additionally, we will be able to significantly increase the amount we spend per resident per meal, meaning we can increase the nutritional value of the meals we provide.

Lastly, CA House maintains a food pantry available to all residents living in the Multifaith Living Community, which is open to Aggie House residents. Our residents consistently take single ingredients such as fruits, vegetables, and spices, as well as full meals such as pasta from the CA House pantry. Additionally, Aggie House is able to give back any groceries that we do not use for the week to CA House residents who need them via the pantry.

3. **Holistic Case Management:** In our pilot year of operation, Aggie House provided case management services on a volunteer basis. We were able to obtain one part-time MSW student volunteer who oversaw all resident cases during Fall Quarter, but this volunteer was unable to stay with the organization into the winter. We have also seen two volunteer advisors come and go, each of whom were professors at UC Davis who found new positions outside of Davis and needed to resign from Aggie House. Thus, we have worked with Students 4 Students to upgrade our case management plan, and are in the process of hiring a *paid* case manager to onboard this summer. This case manager will either 1) serve on their own and oversee every resident case throughout the year, or 2) serve as a field site director for Aggie House through Sacramento State's Masters in Social Work program, through which we would be provided multiple new case management interns to serve our residents each quarter. We are open to either pathway at the time of writing this grant, and will make our final decisions based on the qualifications of our candidate pool. We predict that this case manager will have a much higher retention length due to their compensation, and look forward to them starting in the fall. The following three categories encompass the support that our case manager(s) have provided in the past, and will provide next year:

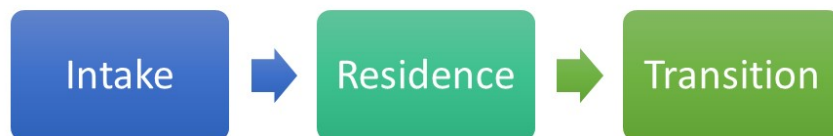
- a. **Social Needs:** our case manager(s) will assist residents with the transition into permanent housing following their stay at Aggie House. Weekly meetings between residents and their assigned case manager will be required. Our case manager(s) may also assist residents with applying for government aid, managing finances, accessing on-campus academic support, and applying for employment.
- b. **Mental Health Needs:** counselors are available for all UC Davis students through UC Davis Counseling Services. We will ensure that our case manager(s) are connected with UC Davis Counseling Services so that any Aggie House residents in need of psychological assistance receive referrals to mental health case management through the university.

- c. Medical Needs: case managers are the first stop for residents with non-urgent medical needs. In partnership with campus clinics and S4S's medical student volunteers, our case managers aid residents with acquiring health insurance and affordable or free health care.
4. **Community**: For Aggie House residents and volunteers, the nature of living together in a common space is fundamentally conducive to community building. Beyond this, both Aggie House and CA House offer events intended to build community with our residents. Our organization offers community service projects, communal meals, and social events for residents and volunteers. Likewise, CA House invites Aggie House residents to join the Multifaith Living Community in their group dinners every week.

Ultimately, by providing housing, food, case management, and community, residents of Aggie House can transfer their focus from fulfilling basic needs to academic and professional priorities, while simultaneously working to transition into permanent stable housing. The success of our transitional housing model is informing the creation of future student shelters across the state, including at UC Santa Cruz and UC Berkeley.

4. Operations

The Resident Process



1. Intake

To be eligible to apply as a resident for Aggie House, individuals must have documentation of student status at UC Davis.

Our intake process consists of a written application followed by an in-person interview, wherein case managers with expertise in social work and members of the Aggie House Executive Team consider several factors such as financial need and requested length of accommodation of each applicant. We accept students to Aggie House based on availability and demonstrated need. Some variables that we review, in no particular order of priority, include: financial need, level of housing insecurity or homelessness, and experiences with domestic violence or unsafe living conditions. It will be up to the discretion of the case management team to decide which students to approve for program admission. Residents who are approved while all beds are full are placed on a waitlist and contacted when a space opens, so that we are able to assist as many students as we can each year.

2. Residence

Residents are provided with all of the services outlined in our four-pronged model. In order to begin residence, students complete a Behavioral Agreement form and verify that they will comply with Aggie House policy.

Each quarter, residents complete an anonymous review of Aggie House programming, which includes questions around their food security, our volunteer team, our meals program, their

financial stability, and more. This survey allows us to assess the effectiveness of our model and revise any programs as residents need. For example, it is due to resident feedback that we will be updating our meals program to include lunch next academic year, and that we expanded our hours until 12 noon on weekdays beginning this winter.

3. Transition

The overarching goal of our four-pronged approach is to ensure that each student transitions successfully to a more permanent form of housing after residence at Aggie House. There is no circumscribed minimum timeline for this transition – residents may leave Aggie House as soon as they have alternative housing secured. Additionally, students in rare circumstances who are unprepared to transition to permanent housing after each year are given the option to reapply to continue their stay at Aggie House, although we cannot guarantee space beyond one year.

Staff

Aggie House's transitional housing unit is operated by a student volunteer staff, including an Executive Board and an on-site team of at least 60 students. The board and volunteer team receive extensive training in Aggie House policy to ensure the safety of all residents and staff.

Our Executive Team consists of three Co-Presidents (two internal, one external), a Treasurer, and a Secretary. The Board of Directors consists of seven positions, many of which operate in Co-Director pairs. Based on the successes and challenges of our pilot year, director positions and numbers were adjusted to now include:

- 1) One Publicity Director, who manages Instagram and Facebook accounts for Aggie House, emphasizing community outreach. They work to build our reputation on campus and in the greater Davis community, both to attract student volunteers and community crowdfunders, and maintain our partnerships with local nonprofits and other philanthropic organizations;
- 2) One Finance Director, who manages our annual budget which is modeled after those of Bruin and Trojan Shelters. The finance director is distinct from our Treasurer in that our Treasurer will oversee grant applications and crowdfunding, while our finance director will oversee spending.
- 3) Two Staff Directors, who develop the training program for on-site volunteers and train new hires during each recruitment cycle, and organize the volunteer schedule each quarter;
- 4) Two Materials Directors, who are responsible for managing the acquisition and allotment of groceries, cleaning supplies, and other household items;
- 5) One Policy Director, who develops and continually reviews and amends our Policy Book, which is modeled off of Bruin and Trojan Shelters;
- 6) Two Case Management Directors, who are responsible for maintaining partnerships with our case management support organizations, keeping updated on local apartment complexes and housing availability, and supporting residents; and
- 7) One Advocacy Director, who develops partnerships with external organizations for Aggie House staff to complete additional volunteer hours, and leads any city-wide housing policy advocacy.

Our on-site staff team, on the other hand, consists of a minimum of 60 students, each of whom perform nearly identical tasks on a shift-by-shift basis. Student volunteers staff Aggie House during open hours of operation and monitor the facility to ensure all rules are followed. Volunteers have the code to open the unit doors, and then take resident attendance, cook dinner, clean, and remain in the unit overnight to oversee operations. Volunteers answer any questions residents may have, handle emergencies, and bond with residents. They also have the option to plan and host community events. Two volunteers staff the unit per shift in case of emergency.

The community-oriented structure of Aggie House allows for personal growth of our on-site student staff as well as our residents. By building community within Aggie House, volunteers develop a greater understanding of what it means to be a student who is housing insecure. Ultimately, we hope to reduce the stigma surrounding homelessness and housing insecurity, and foster increased inclusion of the unhoused student population on our campus.

Aggie House Policy

Aggie House maintains a policy book modeled after those of Bruin and Trojan Shelters', managed by our Policy Director. The policy book outlines:

- 1) The structure of the Executive and Board teams and roles of on-site staff;
- 2) The resident intake process;
- 3) Safety policy;
- 4) Resident agreement requirements;
- 5) The case management process; and
- 6) Emergency policy

All staff will undergo repeated policy training, and every resident will be given this Policy Book upon arrival. Additionally, Aggie House borrows all liability insurance policy from Students 4 Students.

Safety Policy

Robust protocols are in place to ensure the safety of our residents. All prospective residents are required to undergo the thorough interview process conducted by our case managers and Executive Team, and the foremost priority when making decisions about potential residents will be ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all residents and volunteers.

Accepted residents are required to sign a Behavioral Expectations form, which lays out house policy and the grounds on which residents can be dismissed. Aggie House prohibits possession of illegal drugs, alcohol, or weapons while residing in our transitional housing program, and any legal substances must be kept in resident lockboxes while in the facility.

Aggie House has adopted a strike system for behavior violations and a zero tolerance policy in regards to violence and sexual assault to enforce resident behavior within the facility. Violations will be recorded by student volunteers and passed along to case managers, who will work with individual students to address their behavior. To date, no major violations have occurred, but these systems are in place in case the need arises.

To ensure safety of the facility, Aggie House maintains a consistent locking and unlocking schedule. Residents are required to check into the unit by 9:00 pm each night that they wish to sleep at the unit. Residents who want to check in after 9:00 pm must fill out a Curfew Exception form and contact the volunteers staffing that night in advance.

Outreach

Aggie House uses various methods of outreach to connect with students and the Davis community at large. We maintain an organization website, which includes general information about Aggie House, a donations page, a volunteer application page, and our resident application form. To reach prospective residents and student volunteers, our organization uses social media (Tiktok, Facebook, and Instagram), and sends publications through campus departments and student organizations. We have been in contact with various news outlets as well, including campus's California Aggie, the Davis Vanguard, and CBS Sacramento. We display flyers throughout campus, with an emphasis on spaces where students experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity often spend time, such as the showers/bathrooms of the Activities and Recreation Center, and the Shields Library 24 hour study room. Lastly, we plan to contact Davis local businesses and philanthropic organizations to receive donations from and publicity within the local Davis community. All of these outreach processes will be overseen and facilitated by our Board of Directors.

COVID-19 Crisis Response

In order to continue operating the shelter safely during a Winter Quarter COVID peak, Aggie House quickly restructured its volunteering format. For a one-month long period, Aggie House operated with one live-in volunteer, who was a former resident that had moved out and rejoined the program on the other side. They lived in the house full-time and covered night shifts, while a small team of 6 other volunteers covered daytime hours. The reduction of the volunteer team to seven individuals significantly reduced COVID risk within the organization.

This quick restructuring demonstrates Aggie House's ability to successfully respond to crises. Not only do our volunteers contribute the flexibility and the energy needed to execute quick changes to our format, but our student leadership demonstrates excellent creativity and critical thinking in times of uncertainty. We were able to successfully limit COVID exposure, and had only 2 cases over the course of the year. We are confident that this level of success will repeat itself in any other future cases of emergency.

Finances and Sustainability

Given the high turnover rate of our student leadership, we have a targeted multi-year plan to ensure that our organization is both financially and operationally sustainable over time.

Aggie House recognizes the importance of long-term financial plans in sustaining a project of this size. We plan to hire one Finance Director and one Treasurer by January of each year to ensure that we always have ample ability to reapply for grants and crowdfund. Furthermore, the primary logistical support that Students 4 Students offers to student shelters is identifying and applying for external federal, state, and philanthropic grants each year. With their extensive experience in securing grants for Bruin and Trojan Shelters, we anticipate that collaborating with their organization will help us to fund the project each year, becoming consistently less reliant on university-based funding over time.

This upcoming year, Aggie House may move into a new shelter space. CA House projects a significant rental rate increase will be required next year (around \$20,000), and depending on our funding, this may result in the relocation of Aggie House. We are looking for a new 6-bedroom facility to host our program that is in the \$50,000 annual rental range, and are requesting this \$50,000 from the HOME Grant. We will provide updates as this facility search unfolds, and submit our finalized rental rate to the City of Davis once it is available.

Aggie House will overshoot funding goals each year to ensure that we develop sizable reserves in the case that we need emergency funding in any future years. We outperformed our goal of acquiring \$5,000 - \$10,000 in reserves by the end of our pilot year, with over \$13,000 currently saved. Additionally, we have large crowdfunding goals this year due to a new Tiktok presence. Students 4 Students now has a Tiktok account that has amassed over 80,000 followers, and just one fundraising video brought in over \$1,000 overnight. Our new followers show a deep interest in supporting our organization, and we hope to translate that into a donation stream down the line. We will also continue our crowdfunding efforts on the ground in Davis, through partnerships with local congregations, ASUCD, GSA, and Heart of Davis.

Beyond financial sustainability, Aggie House recognizes the need to create a sustainable organizational structure from the outset. Each year, Aggie House holds a minimum of two staff recruitment cycles. General volunteers are onboarded during both cycles, and a new Executive Team and Board of Directors are onboarded once per year at the end of winter quarter. The new Executive and Board teams are onboarded during the middle of the academic year to ensure that they are able to receive guidance from the past cycle of leaders before the retired leaders graduate. Our Publicity Directors and Staff Directors collaborate to undergo this new hiring and training process each year. We expect that as the student population grows, there will continue to be students who need resources such as Aggie House to help mitigate stresses due to housing insecurity. We also expect that students will continue to apply to volunteer at Aggie House as the conversation surrounding basic needs expands.

5. Timeline of Expenditure and Measurable Outcomes

Timeline of Expenditure

Aggie House hopes to utilize the expenditures of the Innovations Grant for the largest part of our budget, which is monthly rent for the townhouse facility.

From September 2023 - August 2024, the funds of the Innovation Grant would be used to pay monthly rent and PG&E bills for the Aggie House facility. We project that our rent for the year will total just under \$50,000, split into 12 monthly payments of approximately \$4,500. The leftover grant funding will be used to cover PG&E

As the HOME Grant funding would solely be used for monthly rent, Aggie House intends to use many other external sources of funding for other expenditures. We have received other grants and anticipate donations, which will be spent on basic operational expenses including groceries, toiletries, cleaning supplies, furniture and appliances, the creation of an Aggie House app, and other miscellaneous materials.

A more in-depth budget is pictured below, wherein the HOME Grant would replace our current “Innovations Grant” category covering rent and PG&E.

Innovations Grant		Non-Innovations Grant Spending				
	Rent Covered by Innovations Grant	One-Time Spending		Ongoing Spending		
		Item	Amount	Item	Monthly Amount	Annual Amount
September 2022	\$4,583	Furniture*	\$8,000	PGE Charges	\$200	\$2,400
October 2022	\$4,583	General Furniture	\$2,500	Cleaning/Toiletries	\$225	\$2,700
November 2022	\$4,583	Kitchen Appliances	\$1,500	Toiletries	1125	\$1,500
December 2022	\$4,583	Move-out Supplies: Bedroom	\$2,300	Cleaning Supplies	\$100	\$1,200
January 2023	\$4,583	Move-out Supplies: Office	\$1,700	Groceries	\$2,555	\$30,660
February 2023	\$4,583	App Development	\$660	Dinner	\$1,095	\$13,140
March 2023	\$4,583			Lunch	\$1,095	\$13,140
April 2023	\$4,583					
May 2023	\$4,583	Rent Supplement (July + August)	\$7,999	Breakfast	\$365	\$4,380
June 2023	\$4,583			Stipend Volunteers	--	\$14,000
July 2023	\$1,167			Morning Volunteer Stipends (September - June)	\$930	\$9,000
August 2023	--			Summer Stipends	--	\$5,000
TOTALS	\$47,000	ONE-TIME SUBTOTAL	\$16,659	ONGOING SUBTOTAL		\$49,760
		TOTAL	\$66,419			

Outside Funding	Uses	Amount
Student Programming Fund	Groceries, toiletries, household/cleaning supplies, furniture	\$41,360
The Green Initiative Fund	App development and groceries	\$10,950
Crowdfunding + Social Media Fundraising	Rent, PGE, and reserves	\$15,000
TOTAL		\$67,310

Measurable Outcomes

Aggie House has demonstrated its success in its pilot year by housing 22 students, rehousing 14 despite inconsistent case management services, serving each student 2 meals per day, and creating community, all while maintaining a budget surplus that created financial reserves. Next year, we will continue to demonstrate our effectiveness as an organization by securing consistent case management services, increasing the number of students that we are able to host and rehouse over the course of an academic year due to this case management support, providing a full three meals per day for all of our residents, and expanding the reach of Aggie House’s model to more universities beyond UC Santa Cruz and UC Berkeley. Thank you for considering our application to the 2023-2024 HOME Grant.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Allie O’Brien at aggiehousedavis@gmail.com or acobrien@ucdavis.edu.