

November 6, 2023

Jefferey T. Greeson
Graduate Operations (GPA)
Department of Psychology & Neuroscience

Estrella Lastre
Lab Coordinator II
Department of Chemistry

Haruko Greeson
Manager of Finance & Business Operations
Department of Political Science

Patricia Gonzalez
Assistant Dean
Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Marysia Lopez
Program Manager
Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Dear A&S Dean's Innovation Fund Committee,

We are writing to request financial support for a new program aimed at enhancing the well-being and academic success of our A&S CU Boulder international graduate student community, for AY-2024-25 (Fall/Spring 10 months). Our proposed program, "International Graduate Students' Access to Denver Area International Supermarkets," seeks to address a pressing issue faced by a significant portion of our international graduate students who lack access to transportation for essential grocery shopping needs. Boulder possesses a limited number of international foods/markets, they are small, much more expensive than the larger Denver supermarkets, and their inventory doesn't meet the needs of most international students. This is particularly true with regard to access to fresh native fruits and vegetables. We understand the importance of food in bringing familiarity to someone living in an unfamiliar environment. We believe that bringing familiar food culture into a graduate student's kitchen can help relieve the anxiety and stress of attending school abroad.

Program Overview: Recent research reveals that there is an impact of food security on college students' health, stress and well-being (Pope, 2023). Another study discovered that "food contributes to an individual's physical and mental well-being and expresses one's cultural identity through preparation, sharing, and consumption (i.e., foodways)" (Wright et al., 2021). Therefore, finding that inadequate access to cultural foods can create cultural stress and affect one's identity and well-being (Wright et al., 2021). Second-generation U.S. American [and international] student populations may have a higher risk for cultural stress due to being away from family, academic stress, environmental changes, and diminished financial stability to purchase cultural foods (Wright et al., 2021). The 2021 CU Boulder climate survey results revealed that 50% of the graduate student respondents reported feeling a lack of sense of belonging. To the statement, *I have a sense of community at CU*, only 47% of the graduate student respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement. Out of the total number of enrolled A&S graduate students 158 (female self-identified) and 217 (male self-identified) students), more than 10% identify as international graduate students in A&S. The program is

designed to address some of the unique challenges international graduate students face, including access to cultural foods by taking students to food markets and addressing the need for transportation to get to food markets located outside of Boulder (many international students do not have access to a car). While there are some cultural foods in grocery stores like King Soopers, Whole Foods, etc., the isles are limited in food choices (often restricted to a small section of the isle) and often do not provide authentic food options.

Objective: The primary objective of the program is to provide transportation solutions for international graduate students, enabling them to access local international supermarkets. By taking students to food markets once or twice a month, we believe that this will enhance their overall quality of life, contribute to their academic success, reduce stress related to food insecurity and provide them with much needed cultural support. Overall, the program will also increase the students' sense of greater community.

Program Components:

1. **Cost of Commercial Rental Vans/Driver Provided Shuttle Vans:** We plan to utilize rental vans from procurement approved rental companies and shuttle vans, that include a driver (with volunteers as chaperones) from shuttle companies to transport international graduate students to Denver area international supermarkets, ensuring their safety and convenience.
2. **Vouchers/Gift Cards:** In our efforts to address the food insecurity gap that exists on college campuses including CU Boulder and to support their use of the program and to help supplement their food costs, international students will have the option to receive a one-time, in-store gift certificate or voucher, valued at **\$25.00** per student. These vouchers will be used at local grocery stores or markets, allowing students to purchase food items that align with their dietary preferences and cultural backgrounds. While a free food pantry is available on campus, we recognize that there are rarely food items that are culturally familiar to them. Additionally, vouchers will be instrumental in providing food assistance for international graduate students during extended school breaks, ensuring that our international student community has access to nutritious meals, even when the campus facilities are closed.

Budget Breakdown:

- Shuttle Rental Cost: **\$6,000**
- Gift Cards/Vouchers for Students: **\$6,000**
- Total Requested Amount: **\$12,000 (\$6,000 each semester)**

Program Implementation: We plan to initiate this Pilot program at the beginning of the Fall-24 semester and run it for an initial period of up to one academic year (Fall/Spring, approximately 10 months). Our team will work closely with the university's Procurement Service Center to ensure the proper and efficient utilization of university funds. We will also collaborate with student organizations, A&S faculty and staff that are a part of the A&S International Student

Network (full list can be found on the A&S JEDI Office website) and relevant departments to promote this program to international graduate students. Additionally, we will partner with offices such as the A&S JEDI Office, ISSS, Graduate School and academic departments to send out advertisements regarding the program and sign-up instructions.

Expected Impact:

1. **Cultural Connection:** By offering transportation to grocery stores that carry food from their home cultures, international students can maintain a stronger connection to their roots and traditions. This can lead to a more positive overall experience and help them feel more at home
2. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Providing access to culturally familiar foods can foster cross-cultural understanding among students from different backgrounds
3. **Reduced Isolation:** For many international students, access to specific cultural foods can significantly impact their well-being and sense of belonging. Reduced isolation due to access to familiar foods can contribute to their social and emotional well-being.
4. **Community Building:** Monthly trips to these grocery stores can also become social events. Students can bond over shared cultural experiences and food, helping to build a stronger sense of community.

Evaluation and Reporting: We will administer student surveys including feedback forms to continuously improve this pilot program and address unforeseen issues that may arise, providing regular updates, including, but not limited to, expenditure reports at the end of the academic year for review. Data derived from this pilot program might also be helpful in evaluating the possibility of expanding future funding for international undergraduate students.

Conclusion: This program is a valuable investment in the welfare and success of our international student population. We kindly request a grant of \$12,000 (\$6,000 each semester) to support the "International Graduate Students' Access to Local Supermarkets" program. Your financial support will help us meet some of the essential needs of our international graduate students, contributing to their overall well-being and academic achievement.

We look forward to discussing this proposal further and answering any questions you may have. Your support will make a meaningful difference in the lives of our international students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jefferey "Tim" Greeson

Estrella Lastre

Haruko Greeson

Patricia Gonzalez

Marysia Lopez