

Addressing College Students' Basic Needs

Food and Housing Insecurity on Campus



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Student Affairs Forum

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As the costs of higher education rise and institutions expand access to more diverse students, the number of students on campus financially unable to meet their basic needs is growing. This research initiative will:

- Help institutions serve these students with existing resources today, and
- Plan for a growing population in the future

Four-Part Webconference Series

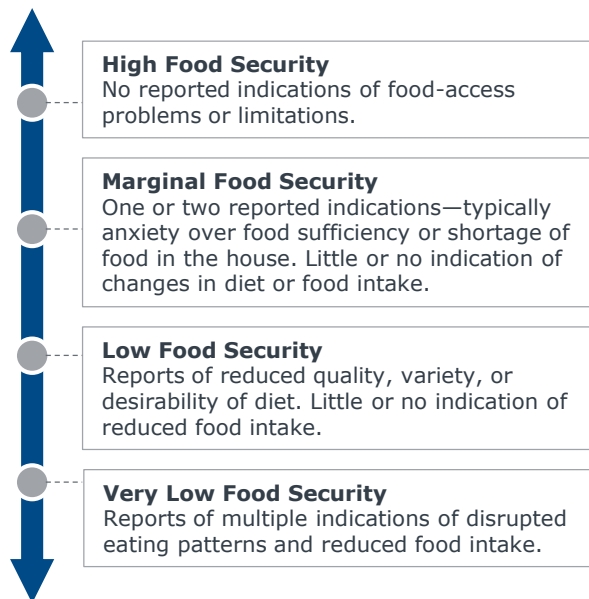
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March 15, 1:00-1:30 ET
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June 6, 1:00-2:00 ET

Speaking the Same Language

Key Terms and Definitions

Range of Food Security

USDA Economic Research Service



Indicators of Housing Insecurity

Experienced any of the following in the last 12 months...

- Had difficulty paying rent
- Didn't pay full cost of utility bills
- Didn't pay full cost of rent
- Borrowed money to help pay bills
- Moved in with others, even briefly, because of financial problems
- Moved two or more times

Indicators of Homelessness

Experienced any of the following in the last 12 months...

- Didn't know where you were going to sleep, even for one night
- Thrown out of home by someone else in the household because of financial problems
- Stayed in any place not meant for regular housing, even for one night
- Didn't have a home
- Stayed in a shelter
- Evicted from home

The “Starving College Student”

Outdated Stereotypes Shape Public Perception of Struggling Students

Widespread Misperceptions Abound



Skimps on Meals to Buy Beer

"I remember many nights where I traded dinner for beer money!"



Eats Ramen Because They Like It

"They could always go to the dining hall if they're really hungry."



Works to Supplement Spending Money

"I worked through college too...kids these days are just spoiled."



Access to Additional Resources

"They're paying tuition, they can't really be hungry."

“

A No-Win Situation

“For many people, it’s a **contradiction in terms – homeless college student**. If you’re a college student, you had to be with it enough to get yourself into college, so obviously you can’t be homeless.”

*Paul Toro
Professor of Psychology
Wayne State University*

”

Contrasting Stereotypes with Reality

Hunger and Housing Insecurity a Real Problem for Today's Students

College-Going at an All-Time High...

17%

Growth in **undergraduate enrollment** in the U.S.,
2004 - 2014

2X

Number of **FT university students** in Canada has
doubled since 1980

...But No Longer the Ticket Out of Poverty

“Students and families all over the country are saving, working, taking out loans... Yet they still find themselves facing an unreasonably high price for college, **and fall short of the resources they need to successfully complete degrees.** Unexpected costs, even those that might appear modest in size, can derail students from families lacking financial cushions.”

The Real Price of College
The Century Foundation



Alarming Prevalence of Basic Needs Insecurity

20%

Of students at four-year institutions in the U.S. qualify as having very low food security

64%

Of food insecure students also experience housing insecurity

39%

Of Canadian university students experience food insecurity

Source: NCES Digest of Education Statistics: 2015, retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/ch_3.asp; Dubick, James, Brandon Mathews, and Clare Cady. *Hunger on Campus*. 2016; Silverthorn, Drew. *Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses*. 2016. Toronto: Meal Exchange; Goldrick-Rab, Sara, Kendall, Nancy. *The Real Price of College*. 2016. The Century Foundation; EAB interviews and analysis.

Who Is the Basic Needs Insecure Student?

Three Groups of Students Struggling on Campus



1

Chronically Poor

Increased access brings more low-income students to college



51%

Of K-12 students in U.S. public schools who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch



2

Newly Struggling

High costs overextend middle-class families, so basic needs insecurity is often just one unforeseen expense away



57%

Percentage of food insecure students in the University of California system for whom hunger was a new phenomenon



3

In Crisis

Some students unexpectedly lose necessary support (e.g., LGBTQ students, victims of domestic violence)



39%

Of LGBT individuals say they were rejected by a family member or close friend

A Snapshot of Campus-Level Data

Consistent Findings Across Institutional Sizes and Types

U.S. Public Institutions



42%

Of students report low food security at a **large system**



21%

Of students report low food security at a **mid-sized research university**

U.S. Private Institutions



23%

Of students report some level of food insecurity at a **small private institution**



22%

Of students experienced very low food security at a **mid-sized, very selective university**

Canadian Institutions



15%

Of students report severe food insecurity at a **small research university** in Canada



30%

Of students experience some level of food insecurity at a **large research university**

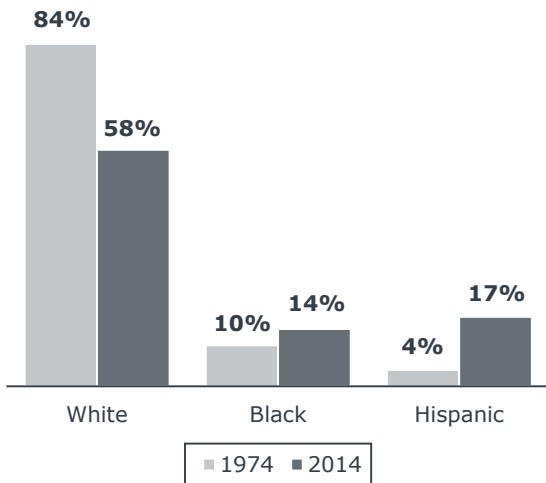
Source: Anderson, Nick. "For the Poor in the Ivy League, a Full Ride Isn't Always What They Imagined." Washington Post. May 16, 2016. Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses. Toronto: Meal Exchange. Martinez, Susanna, Maynard, Katie, and Lorrene Ritchie. *Student Food Access and Security Study*. University of California. 2016. "Starving College Student" Is Not a Joke: *Changing the Culture Around Food Insecurity on Campus*. University of Nevada, Reno. EAB interviews and analysis.

Looking Down the Pipeline

Urgency of Addressing Basic Needs Will Continue to Escalate

Increasingly Diverse Make-Up of Post-Secondary Enrollment

National Center for Education Statistics



Need Will Grow in the Years Ahead



9%

Of white students in four-year colleges come from food insecure households



16%

Of Hispanic students in four-year colleges come from food insecure households



18%

Of black students in four-year colleges come from food insecure households



56%

Of Aboriginal post-secondary students in Canada experience food insecurity

Source: NCES Digest of Education Statistics: 2015, retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/ch_3.asp; Assessing Food Insecurity on Campus, The Urban Institute, 2017; Silverthorn, D. (2016). Hungry for knowledge: Assessing the prevalence of student food insecurity on five Canadian campuses. Toronto: Meal Exchange. Retrieved from: <http://mealexchange.com>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Assess the Current State and Forecast Future Need



Understand the Scope of the Problem on Your Campus

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE



Crowdsourced Intelligence

- Cases referred to the BIT/CARE Team
- Students confiding in trusted advisors
- Students taking extra food from dining halls
- Students sleeping in their cars or in campus buildings
- Students repeatedly applying for emergency loans/grants

PROXIES



Available Data

- Pell eligibility
- FAFSA data
- Unmet need
- Former foster youth
- First-generation college students
- Transfer students
- LGBTQ community

INSTITUTIONAL SURVEYS



Survey Add-On

Add questions to gauge basic needs security onto pre-existing surveys

- **University of Minnesota's** Student Health Survey
- **University of Nevada, Reno's** ACHA Survey
- **Cornell University's** PULSE Survey
- **EAB's Campus Climate Survey**



Standalone Surveys

Develop and administer standalone surveys to assess basic needs security on campus

- **Xavier University**
- **University of California & CSU Systems**

Source: *Guide to Assessing Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education*, Wisconsin Hope Lab, May 2017, retrieved from <http://wihoipelab.com/publications/Basic-Needs-Insecurity-College-Students.pdf>; USDA Survey Tools, retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/survey-tools/>, 2017; EAB interviews and analysis

Assess the Current State

Leverage Existing Resources to Kickstart Survey Administration

USDA Food Insecurity Survey Modules

Sample Question

In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Measuring Food Insecurity

Scale

- 0.0 – 2.32
- 2.33 – 4.56
- 4.57 – 6.53
- ...

Respondent Status

- Marginal food insecurity
- Low food security
- Very low food security



Widely-accepted survey questions



Options for six question, 10 question, and 18 question survey modules



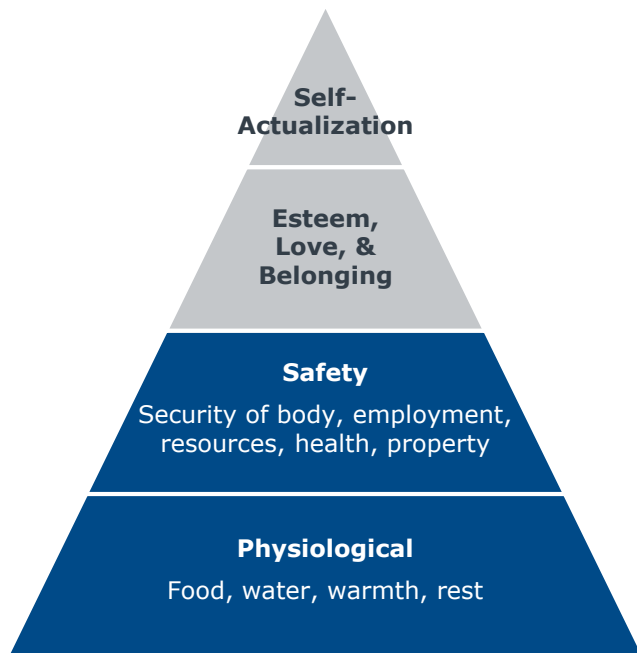
Interpretation guidance

Whatever the Cause, the Consequences Are Real



Severe Personal and Physical Impacts for Basic Needs Insecure Students

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Under-Resourced Students Face Constraints on Their Time and Focus



*"When I leave the dining hall I take an apple or a banana with me. I always think ahead about food – **it never leaves my mind.**"*



*"I'll take photos of a textbook with more than 500 page **so I can avoid buying it.** It takes hours but you get into a rhythm."*



*"Trying to do homework when you **haven't eaten in 70 hours** is not going to happen."*



*"**I never know if I'll have quiet,** or an internet connection at night, so I try to get as much done as I can during the day."*

Source: Anderson, Nick. "For the Poor in the Ivy League, a Full Ride Isn't Always What They Imagined." Washington Post. May 16, 2016. Sj, Taylor. *This is What It's Like to Be Homeless in College.* Vice. July 23, 2015. EAB interviews and analysis.

The New Frontier in Student Success



Institutional Priorities Around Student Outcomes



Mental Health and Well-Being

55%

Of students with very low food security also report symptoms of depression



Early Academic Indicators

25%

Of basic needs insecure students consequently drop a class

A+

Academic Performance

15X

Higher chance food insecure students will fail a class



Retention and Graduation

<20%

Of basic needs insecure students will graduate in five years

Source: Goldrick-Rab, S., Broton, K., and Eisenberg, D., *Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates*, Wisconsin Hope Lab, 2015; Dubick, James, Brandon Mathews, and Clare Cady. *Hunger on Campus*. 2016. Retrieved from http://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf; Goldrick-Rab, S., *Paying the Price*, 2016; EAB interviews and analysis.

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Using This Research on Campus

Forthcoming Resources from the Student Affairs Forum

Webinar Series

Each section spotlighted in 30- to 45-minute webinar sessions; perfect for team meetings and brown-bag workshops



Book-Length Publication

Every best practice from the study compiled in a bound publication, featuring guidance and worksheets for your team



Implementation Toolkit

Templates and examples from profiled institutions help student affairs leaders avoid “reinventing the wheel” and streamline new initiatives



Executive Briefing

Ready-to-go resource for senior leaders that explains the current state of affairs on campus and what institutions are doing to meet students' demand





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