

Hunger and Homelessness in College

It is well-known that college students are facing a variety of issues (i.e., feeling overwhelmed, eating right and staying healthy, homesickness, lacking study skills, and so much more). However, **students' basic needs** such as food and housing security, are perhaps one of the most important aspects that heavily impacts students, from academic achievement to attrition and graduation rates, and has been long overlooked (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

Food insecurity refers to a limited or uncertain amount of nutritionally adequate and safe foods. In its most extreme form, it manifests through physiological and acute sensation of hunger.

Homelessness means that a person does not have a place to live, and have to resort to living into shelters, cars, abandoned building, or outside.

Housing insecurity includes broad challenges such as inability to pay rent or utilities which may lead to a need to move frequently.

2018 National Survey: 43,000 students at 66 community colleges & four-year universities

Community College

4-year University

42% Food Insecurity **36%**

46% Housing Insecurity **36%**

12% Homelessness **9%**

Disparities in basic needs



Foster Care

Students that have been in foster care throughout their lives were at much greater risk of lacking basic needs



Gender

Females respondents were at significantly greater risk than men to experience food and housing insecurity.



Race/Ethnicity

Native American, Hispanic, and African American students experienced basic needs insecurity at much higher rates than White students did



57% of students experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness **worked 40+ hours** per week for the past year.

Dealing with food & housing insecurity: Implications for Students



Declining Health

Students who constantly skip nutritious meals are at risk for losing weight and developing health issues.



Low Grades

Students who experience food and housing insecurity simply might not have the resources and proper conditions for studying.



Delayed Graduation

The uncertainty of meals and housing can cause significant delays in graduation



Dropping Out of College

The uncertainty of food and housing can lead to students dropping out of college (especially if they have dependents - i.e., adult learners)

How To Help

What Students Can Do

- ✓ Create programs (i.e., most food pantries are started by students)
- ✓ Support each other (i.e., through "swipe" meal donations)
- ✓ Educate & advocate through campus initiatives and local outreach

What Universities Can Do

- ✓ Understand the problem - conduct research and collect data about the issue
- ✓ Take action - create committees & tasks forces
- ✓ Design programs - identify known, accessible, and useful resources (i.e., partner with local food pantries)

What Policymakers Can Do

- ✓ Extend public benefits access for students (i.e., SNAP)
- ✓ Improve Title IV Financial Aid processes and procedures
- ✓ Fund students' living expenses

Conclusion

Students need help! Educational attainment in the USA is hindered by **basic needs insecurity** - a very important issue that should be addressed through specific steps and action. For more information, visit the HOPE Center.

References

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