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HUNGER ON CAMPUS

The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students

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PREFACE

I remember the first time my research team learned that students on college campuses were going hungry. It was 2008, and we were conducting an evaluation of a financial aid program. Going out to talk to students across Wisconsin, we had just one simple question: "How's college going?" Most spoke of challenges paying for school, fitting in, or doing the academic work. But a few surprised us, speaking instead of difficulty finding food, even being distracted from classes by persistent hunger.

Was this really a problem, beyond a couple of sad stories? We wanted to know, and thus began years of exploring food insecurity among undergraduates. At the time, there were only a handful of studies out there, mainly focused on one or two colleges. We fielded surveys, conducted more interviews, and spoke with experts wherever we could find them. Eventually, in 2015, my team at the Wisconsin HOPE Lab conducted the largest study of campus food insecurity to date, with more than 4,000 students at 10 community colleges around the nation participating.

"We need to move beyond being surprised at the numbers and develop action plans."

The results, revealed in a New York Times op-ed, were stunning. One in five students surveyed had the very lowest levels of food security. Thirteen percent were homeless.

Who was doing something about this? Did colleges and universities know? We received questions like these from all over, and especially from the media. And time and again, I referred people to the College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA), which operates a large network of food pantries on campuses across the country. I was, and am, so grateful for their hard work.

In this new report, the authoring groups go a step further, utilizing their presence on campuses to further develop the knowledge base in this nascent field. Drawing on a survey of almost 3,800 students at 34 community and 4-year colleges across 12 states – the broadest sample to date – the authors find that 22 percent of respondents have the very lowest levels of food insecurity, and 13 percent of students at community colleges are homeless. These figures are strikingly similar to our prior estimates, and help to confirm that far too many students today are struggling.

Beyond the basic question of the incidence of food insecurity, this report helps shed needed light on the conditions these students face. Contrary to popular stereotypes, most food insecure students are working and receiving financial aid, and many are on meal plans. Yet relatively few receive food stamps, reinforcing findings from reports by the Center for Law and Social Policy and others that highlight the thin and failing safety net for undergraduates.

At this point, we need to move beyond being surprised at the numbers and develop action plans, and the authors of this report provide many recommendations for that critical work. The community of scholars and activists studying and testing solutions to food and housing insecurity in higher education continues to grow, and is in need of your support. Please read on with an eye for what you can do to help.

Sara Goldrick-Rab

Sara Goldrick-Rab

Professor of Higher Education Policy & Sociology

Temple University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food insecurity – the lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable, nutritious food – is common at colleges and universities across the country, potentially undermining the educational success of untold thousands of students.

Given its potential impact, the collective understanding of this issue is still far too limited. The existing studies on campus food insecurity have almost exclusively looked at individual colleges and university systems or focused on community colleges.

The coordinators of this report set out to implement the broadest study on this issue to date.

In order to expand the understanding of campus food insecurity, the coordinators of this report set out to implement the broadest study on this issue to date by surveying students across a wide range of regions and school types. In doing so, the goal was to foster a more expansive understanding of campus food insecurity and its impact on students, while also bringing national attention to this critical issue.

Four campus-based organizations – the College and University Food Bank Alliance, the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, the Student Government Resource Center, and the Student Public Interest Research Groups – surveyed college students on food insecurity between March and May 2016. The study sample includes 3,765 students in 12 states attending eight community colleges and 26 four-year colleges and universities. The sample was assembled using in-person recruitment, and represents about 0.5% of the students attending those 34 institutions.

FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- Consistent with prior studies, 48 percent of respondents reported food insecurity in the previous 30 days, including 22 percent with very low levels of food security that qualify them as hungry.
- Food insecurity occurs at both two-year and four-year institutions. Twenty-five percent of community college students qualified as having very low food security, compared to 20 percent at four-year schools.
- Food insecurity was more prevalent among students of color. Fully 57 percent of Black or African American students reported food insecurity, compared to 40 percent of non-Hispanic white students.
- More than half of all first-generation students (56 percent) were food insecure, compared to 45 percent of students who had at least one parent who attended college.

The study also took a close look at the approximately 1,800 students who reported experiencing food insecurity in order to better understand their experiences.

Students experiencing food insecurity often also suffer from housing insecurity, such as difficulty paying the rent, mortgage, or utility bills.

- Sixty-four percent of food insecure students reported experiencing some type of housing insecurity.
- Fifteen percent of food insecure students reported experiencing some form of homelessness – the most extreme form of housing insecurity – in the past 12 months.
- Housing insecurity is greater at community colleges, where 13 percent of all respondents (regardless of food insecurity) experienced homelessness, compared to seven percent at four-year schools.

Problems with food or housing harm students' educational efforts. Of the food insecure students in the study, 32 percent believed that hunger or housing problems had an impact on their education. These students reported a range of consequences:

- Fifty-five percent reported that these problems caused them to not buy a required textbook;
- Fifty-three percent reported missing a class; and
- Twenty-five percent reported dropping a class.

Food insecurity is a problem even for students who are employed, participate in a campus meal plan, or seek other financial or material help.

- Fifty-six percent of food insecure students reported having a paying job. Of those employed students, 38 percent worked 20 hours or more per week.
- Being enrolled in a meal plan with a campus dining hall does not eliminate the threat of food insecurity. Among the respondents from four-year colleges, 43 percent of meal plan enrollees still experienced food insecurity.
- Three in four food insecure students received some form of financial aid. More than half (52 percent) received Pell Grants and 37 percent took out student loans during the current academic year.
- Sixty-one percent of food insecure students reported that their household had utilized at least one existing aid service in the past 12 months. Twenty-five percent reported using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), making it the most widely used food program.

These findings reinforce the growing understanding that food insecurity presents a serious challenge for today's college students, and highlight the need for additional research to better understand this problem and explore effective solutions.

School leaders and policymakers can take a number of steps to help lessen student food insecurity and reduce its threat to educational quality and student success.

- Colleges should pursue a wide range of creative ways to address food insecurity, including the creation of campus food pantries, campus community gardens, food recovery programs, and coordinated benefits access programs.
- More significantly, policymakers should take steps to improve students' access to existing federal programs, including expanding the SNAP eligibility requirements for college students, simplifying the FAFSA process (particularly for homeless students), and adding food security measurements to the annual National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.

COLLEGE STUDENTS FACE MAJOR FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Hunger and food insecurity are a growing problem on college campuses. The rising cost of a college education and the increasing number of nontraditional students mean that more students are living on a shoestring budget.

- Many of today's students must find a way to provide for their own living expenses while also paying for their education. Contrary to the stereotype, today's typical student is not a recent high school graduate who lives in a dormitory and is supported by his or her parents. Fewer than one in four students could be categorized as having parents who are able to pay all of their college expenses.[1]

For students who are not living with relatives or on campus, the poverty rate is nearly 52 percent.

- Roughly 74 percent of college students are nontraditional students, meaning that they fit one of six criteria: they attend college part-time, are employed full-time, are financially independent, must provide for dependents, are a single parent, or do not have a high school diploma.[2]
- Nearly 24 percent of students are considered highly nontraditional (they fit four or more of the criteria) and an additional 31 percent are moderately nontraditional (they fit two or three of the criteria).

Given these challenges, many students find it difficult to support themselves while also paying for college. Nearly three-quarters of college students (72 percent) work while attending college, with 20

1 Citigroup, "New Citi/Seventeen Survey: College Students Take Control of Their Financial Futures," August 7, 2013, http://www.citigroup.com/citi/news/2013/130807a.htm.
2 National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, "Demographic and Enrollment Characteristics of Nontraditional Undergraduates: 2011–12," September 2015, http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015025.pdf.

percent of them working full-time.[3] However, this employment usually doesn't provide enough income to allow students to support themselves. Only 18 percent of students report being able to cover their college expenses by working a job. Instead, 41 percent depend on financial aid to cover their college expenses and 16 percent utilize scholarships.[4]

The result is that a surprising number of students live at or near the poverty level. The national poverty rate in 2011 was 15.2 percent, but for students who were not living with relatives or on campus the poverty rate was nearly 52 percent.[5]

One common consequence of poverty is food insecurity – the lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable, nutritious food.

3 Jessica Davis, U.S. Census Bureau, "School Enrollment and Work Status: 2011," October 2012, http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acsbr11-14.pdf.
4 Citigroup, "New Citi/Seventeen Survey: College Students Take Control of Their Financial Futures," August 7, 2013, http://www.citigroup.com/citi/news/2013/130807a.htm.
5 Alemayehu Bishaw, U.S. Census Bureau, "Examining the Effect of Off-Campus College Students on Poverty Rates," May 1, 2013, http://bit.ly/2dtoOxG

FOOD INSECURITY IS COMMON AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

The most recent data indicate that 14 percent of U.S. households experience some form of food insecurity each year.[6] No comprehensive national research has been conducted to firmly establish the prevalence of food insecurity among college students, but available literature suggests that the rate of food insecurity among college students is up to four times greater than the national average.[7]

Local studies performed at individual colleges and university systems in recent years have documented extensive food insecurity among college students at those institutions.

- The Wisconsin HOPE Lab, a leading research lab at the University of Wisconsin that aims to increase college attainment, studied Wisconsin Pell Grant recipients in 2008 and 2009 and found that 71 percent of Pell recipients reported changing their eating habits due to lack of funds; 27 percent said that were eating less than they should or cutting meal sizes; and 7 percent of two-year college students reported going an entire day without food.[8]
- A 2011 study done at the City University of New York (CUNY) system found that 39 percent of respondents were food insecure.[9]

6 U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Food Security in the U.S.: Key Statistics & Graphics," September 8, 2015, http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx.
7 Clare Cady, "Food Insecurity as a Student Issue," Journal of College and Character, no. 4 (2014), 265-271, doi:10.1515/jcc-2014-0031.
8 Katharine Broton et al, Wisconsin HOPE Lab, "Safety, Security, and College Attainment: An Investigation of Undergraduates' Basic Needs and Institutional Response," October 2014, http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/APPAM.Draft.10.28.2014.pdf.
9 Nicholas Freudenberg, Healthy CUNY Initiative, "Food Insecurity at CUNY: Results from a Survey of CUNY Undergraduate Students," April 2011, http://bit.ly/1MkQ2Vx

- A 2014 study found that 59 percent of students at Western Oregon University had experienced food insecurity at some point over the span of a year.[10]
- A 2015 study by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab surveyed students at 10 community colleges and found that 19 percent of students were experiencing low food security and 20 percent were experiencing very low food security.[11]
- A separate 2015 study by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab surveyed low- and moderate-income students at 10 Wisconsin colleges and universities and found that 61 percent were food insecure at some point during the school year.[12]
- In July 2016, the University of California published the results of a survey conducted across their 10-campus system. They found that 23 percent of students were experiencing low food security and another 19 percent were experiencing very low food security.[13]
- Also in 2016, a study at California State University, Long Beach found that 24 percent of students were in some way food insecure.[14]

Currently, one of the challenges in interpreting these studies is the variation in the way food insecurity was measured from study to study. While the literature does not provide a clear overall picture of the prevalence of student food insecurity, it plainly indicates that food insecurity affects many U.S. college students.

10 Megan Patton-Lopez et al, Western Oregon University, "Prevalence and correlates of food insecurity among students attending a midsize rural university in Oregon," http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/45177/PattonLopez_JNEB_foodinsecurity_11414.pdf.
11 Sara Goldrick-Rab et al, Wisconsin HOPE Lab, "Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates," December 2015, http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Wisconsin_HOPE_Lab_Hungry_To_Learn.pdf.
12 Wisconsin HOPE Lab, "What We're Learning: Food and Housing Insecurity among College Students: A Data Update from the Wisconsin HOPE Lab," January 13, 2016, http://bit.ly/2dHI8L1
13 Suzanna Martinez et al, University of California Global Food Initiative, "Student Food Access and Security Study," July 11, 2016, http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/regmeet/july16/e1attach.pdf.
14 Rashida Crutchfield, California State University, "Serving Displaced and Food Insecure Students in the CSU," January 2016, http://www.calstate.edu/AcadAff/documents/ServingDisplacedandFoodInsecureStudetnsintheCSUJanuary20163.8.16.pdf.

SURVEY OF FOOD INSECURITY ON THIRTY-FOUR CAMPUSES

To better understand the extent and consequences of food insecurity for college students, four organizations – the College and University Food Bank Alliance, the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, the Student Government Resource Center, and the Student Public Interest Research Groups – surveyed college students at 34 community colleges and four-year colleges in 12 states.

HOW FOOD INSECURITY WAS EVALUATED

Staff and volunteers of the organizations used face-to-face outreach to collect 3,765 surveys from March through May 2016. At most schools, this was done by setting up an information table and asking students to stop and fill out a survey on food issues. At schools where this approach was not an option, students handed out leaflets with the survey website in classrooms.

Twenty-two percent of respondents qualified as hungry, meaning they experienced very low food security.

The participating schools included 8 community colleges and 26 four-year colleges. The collected surveys represent roughly 0.5 percent of the student population at the participating schools. The gender, racial, and ethnic breakdown of survey respondents closely aligns with students enrolled at these particular campuses. However, the sample is more heavily weighted toward younger students and students of color than the national student population.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture measures food security along a scale from "high food security" to "very low food security," with three categories to indicate levels of food insecurity.

- **"Moderate food security"** describes households with some level of concern or challenge in accessing quality food without significant decreases in quality, variety, or quantity.
- **"Low food security"** describes households where quality, variety, and desirability are negatively impacted, but quantity is not.
- **"Very low food security"** indicates decreases in all areas (quality, variety, desirability, quantity) as well as disrupted eating patterns due to inability to access adequate food.[15]

The survey assessed the food security level of the respondents using the questions provided in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Adult Food Security Survey Module.[16] Based on their responses to these questions, respondents were given a score of zero through ten. Their food security status was then determined based on their score:

- Score of zero – High food security
- Score of 1-2 – Marginal food security
- Score of 3-5 – Low food security
- Score of 6-10 – Very low food security

Students with a score of three or more were considered "food insecure." Students with a score of six or more were considered to be "very food insecure" and likely to be suffering from hunger.

15 U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Definitions of Food Insecurity," September 8, 2015, http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx.
16 U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, "U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module: Three-Stage Design, With Screeners," September 2012, http://www.ers.usda.gov/datafiles/Food_Security_in_the_United_States/Food_Security_Survey_Modules/ad2012.pdf.

STUDENT FOOD INSECURITY IS WIDESPREAD

Of the respondents, 48 percent qualified as food insecure in the previous 30 days. That figure includes 22 percent who qualified as hungry, meaning they experienced very low food security.

TABLE 1: FOOD SECURITY LEVEL OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS IN LAST 30 DAYS

FOOD SECURITY SCORE	
Zero (High food security)	31%
1-2 (Marginal food security)	21%
3-5 (Low food security)	26%
6-10 (Very low food security)	22%

When comparing these findings to existing research on student food insecurity, the rates of low and very low food insecurity are in keeping with other studies. However, this report found a lower than normal percentage of respondents who qualify as highly food secure, which may suggest that the survey oversampled students with a tendency toward food insecurity.

In their answers to the survey questions, respondents expressed significant concern both about their ability to afford food and their ability to afford nutritious food.

TABLE 2: RESPONSES TO INITIAL FOOD SECURITY QUESTIONS, LAST 30 DAYS

	SOMETIMES TRUE	OFTEN TRUE
I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more.	38%	16%
The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more.	35%	11%
I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.	36%	18%

Respondents who showed signs of food insecurity in these initial questions were then asked a series of follow-up questions. Forty-four percent said that they had been forced to cut back on the size of their meals or skip meals entirely in the last 30 days due to lack of money, and 35 percent said that they were hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food (see Table 3).

In addition, a significant percentage reported more severe levels of food insecurity. Twenty percent of these survey-takers reported having skipped eating for an entire day due to lack of money in the last 30 days, and 15 percent said that they had lost weight in the last 30 days because they couldn't afford to eat.

TABLE 3: RESPONSES TO FOOD SECURITY FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS, LAST 30 DAYS

	YES
Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?	44%
Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?	43%
Were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?	35%
Did you lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food?	15%
Did you ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?	20%

Note: The sample for these questions was made up of respondents who answered "sometimes true" or "often true" to one of the initial food security questions listed in Table 2.

When the study looked at responses by demographic groups, the results showed that food insecurity was more prevalent among the students of color who participated in the survey. Students who identified as "Hispanic or Latino" or "Black or African American" were more likely to be food insecure and much more likely to experience very low food security.

The study also found that 56 percent of first-generation students were food insecure, compared to 45 percent of students whose parents did attend college.

TABLE 4: FOOD SECURITY LEVELS BY RACE/ ETHNICITY AND PARENTAL EDUCATION

	FOOD SECURITY LEVEL			
	High	Marginal	Low	Very Low
RACE/ETHNICITY				
White	38%	21%	23%	17%
Asian	34%	22%	28%	17%
Hispanic or Latino	22%	22%	31%	25%
Black or African American	22%	23%	29%	28%
PARENTAL EDUCATION				
Neither parent attended college	22%	21%	25%	31%
At least one parent attended some college	34%	22%	26%	19%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Food insecurity was moderately more prevalent among the community college students in the study. Twenty-five percent of community college students qualified as very food insecure, compared to 20 percent at four-year schools.

TABLE 5: FOOD INSECURITY AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND FOUR-YEAR SCHOOLS

	COMMUNITY COLLEGE	FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE
Food insecure	50%	47%
Very food insecure	25%	20%

The food insecure category includes respondents who had low or very low food insecurity.

Community colleges serve a wider range of non-traditional students and are often seen as a more affordable pathway to higher education, so it's not surprising that community college students are more likely to be financial insecure and thus vulnerable to food insecurity.

FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS ARE OFTEN HOUSING INSECURE

Food insecurity is rarely an isolated condition, but instead is a sign of deeper financial hardship. As a result, people who are food insecure often experience other types of financial hardship as well, such as housing insecurity.

There is less research available about student housing insecurity than about food insecurity, but the existing research indicates a serious problem. In the most recent data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), 58,000 college students indicated that they were homeless. The actual number is likely much higher, since the FAFSA requires students to show complicated documentation of their homelessness to be classified as such.[17] In addition, the FAFSA fails to identify undocumented students who are homeless.

Sixty-four percent of food insecure students also reported experiencing some type of housing insecurity.

The survey conducted for this report found that housing problems were commonplace among food insecure students. Sixty-four percent of food insecure students also reported experiencing some type of housing insecurity in the past 12 months. Of even greater concern, 15 percent of food insecure students reported experiencing some form of homelessness – the most extreme form of housing insecurity.

17 National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, "Financial Aid for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth," 2014, http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/fafsa-survey-report.pdf.

TABLE 6: HOUSING INSECURITY AMONG STUDENTS, LAST 12 MONTHS

	ALL RESPONDENTS	FOOD SECURE RESPONDENTS	FOOD INSECURE RESPONDENTS
HOUSING INSECURITY			
Experienced any of the following	48%	33%	64%
Had difficulty paying rent or mortgage	24%	12%	38%
Didn't pay full amount of rent or mortgage	12%	4%	20%
Didn't pay full amount of gas, oil, or electricity bill	15%	6%	25%
Borrowed money from friends or family to help pay bills	35%	21%	49%
Moved in with other people, even for a little while, because of financial problems	12%	5%	20%
Moved 2 or more times per year	12%	7%	16%
HOMELESSNESS			
Experienced any of the following	9%	3%	15%
Thrown out of your home by someone else in the household because of financial problems	4%	<1%	8%
Evicted from home	3%	1%	6%
Stayed in a shelter	2%	<1%	4%
Stayed in an abandoned building, an automobile, or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night	4%	1%	6%
Didn't know where you were going to sleep at night, even for one night	5%	2%	9%
Didn't have a home	4%	1%	8%

Housing insecurity was greater for students at community colleges than at four-year schools. Thirteen percent of community college students reported experiencing homelessness, compared to seven percent at four-year schools. These rates of housing insecurity and homelessness among community college students, while disturbing, align closely with past research focused on two-year campuses.[18]

18 Sara Goldrick-Rab et al, Wisconsin HOPE Lab, "Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates," December 2015, http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Wisconsin_HOPE_Lab_Hungry_To_Learn.pdf.

TABLE 7: HOUSING INSECURITY AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND FOUR-YEAR SCHOOLS

	COMMUNITY COLLEGE	FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE
Housing insecure	53%	46%
Homeless	13%	7%

The housing insecure category includes respondents who were homeless.

FOOD INSECURITY HARMS STUDENTS' EDUCATION

Food insecurity on college campuses has a negative impact on the educational experience. It's hard to concentrate in class or to focus on your studies when you're hungry or worrying about financial obstacles. Whether due to nutritional deficits or the stress and distraction of dealing with financial hardship,[19] food insecurity can compromise students' ability to perform well in their classes.[20] In extreme cases, food insecurity can force students to take time off from school or discontinue their education entirely.

In one recent survey of food insecure students at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, 80 percent of respondents reported that their food insecurity affected their class performance. More than 55 percent indicated that food insecurity compromised their ability to attend classes, and four percent stated that they had to forego college for one or more semesters due to food or housing insecurity.[21]

Of the food insecure students surveyed for this report, 32 percent believed that hunger or housing problems had an impact on their education. When asked about the impact caused by their hunger and housing problems, 55 percent reported that these problems caused them to not buy a required textbook, 53 percent reported missing a class, and 25 percent reported dropping a class.

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19 Roger Hughes et al, "Student Food Insecurity: The Skeleton in the University Closet," Nutrition and Dietetics 2001, 68: 27-32.
20 Maya E. Maroto, "Food Insecurity among Community College Students: Prevalence and Association with GPA, Energy, and Concentration," Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 39(6), 515–526.
21 Meghan R. Silva et al, "The Relationship Between Food Security, Housing Stability, and School Performance among College Students in an Urban University," Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 1521025115621918, December 14, 2015, doi:10.1177/1521025115621918.

TABLE 8: EDUCATIONAL IMPACT OF FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY ON FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS, LAST 12 MONTHS

	YES
Have hunger or housing problems had an impact on your education?	32%
HAVE HUNGER OR HOUSING PROBLEMS CAUSED YOU TO DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?*	
Done any of the following	86%
Miss a class	53%
Miss a study session	54%
Miss a club meeting	37%
Opt not to join an extracurricular activity	55%
Not buy a required textbook	55%
Drop a class	25%
Not perform as well in your academics as you otherwise could have	81%

**Asked only of students who responded "yes" to the previous question about educational impact.*

FOOD INSECURITY PERSISTS DESPITE STUDENTS' EFFORTS

Food insecurity is a problem even for students who participate in a campus meal plan, are employed, or seek other financial or material help.

STUDENTS WITH CAMPUS MEAL PLANS ARE NOT IMMUNE TO FOOD INSECURITY

Ideally, participating in a meal plan with a campus dining hall would eliminate the threat of food insecurity. Responses from students at four-year universities (community colleges generally do not have dining programs) show that this is not necessarily the case. Forty-three percent of students who were enrolled in a campus meal plan were still food insecure.

Forty-three percent of students who were enrolled in a campus meal plan were still food insecure.

To understand this finding, consider the way that campus meal plans are structured. At most universities, students have several options for the number of meals to buy as part of their meal plan. For example, many students choose to buy a plan with 7 or 14 meals per week and then find their remaining meals someplace else, either because they want to have more variety in their eating options, they don't want to pay for a larger meal plan, or they can't afford a larger meal plan.[22]

Fifty-six percent of meal plan enrollees reported eating nine meals or fewer per week in the dining hall. Not surprisingly, meal plan enrollees

22 Sara Goldrick-Rab et al, The Century Foundation, "The Real Price of College," March 3, 2016, https://tcf.org/content/report/the-real-price-of-college.

who were food insecure tended to eat less often in the dining hall – 69 percent reported eating nine meals or fewer there per week. In addition, 46 percent of food insecure students reported having run out of meal points before the end of the term at some time in the past, compared to 33 percent of all students on a meal plan.

It seems clear that access to a dining hall meal plan is not necessarily a cure for food insecurity.

TABLE 9: FOOD INSECURITY AMONG CAMPUS MEAL PLAN ENROLLEES AT FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

MEAL PLAN ENROLLEES AT FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES		YES
Experiencing food insecurity		43%
	ALL STUDENTS ON MEAL PLAN	FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS ON MEAL PLAN
Have you ever run out of meal points before the end of the term?	33%	46%
MEALS EATEN PER WEEK AT DINING HALL		
Less than 5 meals	24%	31%
5-9 meals	32%	38%
10-14 meals	30%	22%
15 or more meals	13%	9%

THE MAJORITY OF FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS ARE EMPLOYED

Since financial problems are at the root of most food security issues, the survey asked food insecure students about their employment situation.

The study found that 56 percent of food insecure students were currently employed. Of those employed students, 38 percent worked 20 hours or more per week.

TABLE 10: EMPLOYMENT AMONG FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS

	YES
Currently employed	56%
HOURS WORKED PER WEEK*	
Less than 5 hours	9%
5-9 hours	17%
10-14 hours	20%
15-19 hours	17%
20-24 hours	14%
25-29 hours	10%
30-34 hours	6%
35-39 hours	3%
40 hours or more	5%

**This sample consisted of food insecure students who were currently employed. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.*

MOST FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS RECEIVE FINANCIAL AID

Given the wide range of financial aid programs available to students, the study investigated whether food insecure students are utilizing these programs. The study found that 75 percent of food insecure students received some form of financial aid. Fifty-two percent reported receiving Pell Grants during the current academic year and 37 percent reported taking out student loans.

TABLE 11: FINANCIAL AID USE AMONG FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS

	RECEIVED THIS ACADEMIC YEAR
Received any of the following	75%
Pell Grant	52%
Other government grant (FSEOG, TEACH, etc.)	15%
Private scholarship	18%
Stafford Loan	24%
Other government loan (Perkins Loan, etc.)	24%
Private (e.g., bank) loan	9%
Other aid	24%

The study also asked food insecure students how much student debt they had accumulated during their academic career. Forty-eight percent reported having some level of student debt.

TABLE 12: STUDENT LOAN DEBT AMONG FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS

STUDENT LOANS TAKEN OUT TO DATE	
No loans	45%
$1-$4,999	11%
$5,000-$9,999	12%
$10,000-$14,999	7%
$15,000-$19,999	4%
$20,000-$24,999	4%
$25,000-$29,999	2%
$30,000-$39,999	3%
$40,000-$49,000	2%
$50,000 or more	3%
Don't know	7%

UTILIZING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS DOES NOT ELIMINATE FOOD INSECURITY

There is a wide range of services available to assist students in need, ranging from local food banks and pantries to government programs like SNAP (food stamps). However, some students may not be taking advantage of these services, possibly because they are unaware of some programs, are intimidated by the enrollment process, or are avoiding these programs due to social stigma.[23]

The survey asked students about their use of more than a dozen available benefits and found that 61 percent of food insecure students reported that their household had taken advantage of at least one aid service in the past 12 months. The survey asked about a wide range of benefits, with the assumption that any benefits that address poverty might help to reduce food insecurity.

Sixty-one percent of food insecure students reported that their household had taken advantage of at least one aid service in the past 12 months.

The most widely used services were public benefit programs like Medicaid, which was used by 28 percent, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which was used by 25 percent. These usage rates are comparable with those found by other recent research on food insecure students.[24]

In terms of other food programs, seventeen percent of food insecure students reported utilizing a campus food pantry, while 14 percent reported going to an off-campus food pantry or food bank.

Given these low rates of usage, it's likely that many of the food insecure students in the study are missing out on benefits for which they would be eligible, including easily accessed services like local food banks.

23 Tara Bahrampour, "More college students battle hunger as education and living costs rise," Washington Post, April 9, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/more-college-students-battle-hunger-as-education-and-living-costs-rise/2014/04/09/60208db6-bb63-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html.
24 Sara Goldrick-Rab et al, Wisconsin HOPE Lab, "Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates," December 2015, http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Wisconsin_HOPE_Lab_Hungry_To_Learn.pdf.

TABLE 13: USE OF AVAILABLE SERVICES BY FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS, LAST 12 MONTHS

SERVICES USED	
Used any of the following	61%
SNAP (food stamps)	25%
WIC (nutritional assistance for pregnant women and children)	8%
Free or reduced-price school meals	20%
Campus food pantry	17%
Off-campus food pantry or food bank	14%
Home in a public housing project	5%
Public housing voucher	4%
Utility assistance	6%
TANF (welfare)	6%
SSI (social security)	11%
SSDI (disability)	7%
Medicaid or public health insurance	28%
Child care assistance	5%
Unemployment compensation/insurance	6%
Transportation assistance (discounted transit fares, dial-a-ride, etc.)	12%
Tax refunds based on low-income tax credits	18%
Tax refunds based on higher education tax credits	11%
Veteran's benefits	4%

It is also worth noting that use of these services was not exclusive to food insecure students. For example, nine percent of food secure respondents reported making use of SNAP in the past 12 months. This suggests that there may be some students who are at risk but have managed to avoid food insecurity by utilizing SNAP and other available services.

CONCLUSIONS

This study's findings paint a picture of campus food insecurity that raises deep concerns. The data suggests that a large segment of the student population – nearly 50 percent – may be food insecure, and that life for these food insecure students is full of financial hardship and educational roadblocks.

There are many reasons for such a high percentage of students to experience food insecurity. Today's college students are expected to pay both their living expenses and the cost of their education, all at a time when their income is limited because their classes make it difficult to work full-time. The inevitable

result of high expenses and low income is poverty. While financial aid is meant to cover the difference, it regularly falls short. For example, the Pell Grant – the premier aid program for low-income students – no longer provides the level of financial assistance necessary to meet most students' needs.[25]

Additionally, this study suggests that the majority of food insecure students are struggling to make ends meet despite working or reaching out for assistance. Seventy-five percent report receiving some form of financial aid, 56 percent report working while going to school, and 61 percent report taking advantage of benefit programs like SNAP.

When a student can receive financial aid and earn a part-time salary and still not be able to afford adequate, nutritious food, our educational system is failing to provide that student with a viable path to success in their higher education. Moreover, the students who often need support the most – first-generation college students and students of color – appear to be the most likely to be food and housing insecure.

Ultimately, the findings of this study highlight the need for additional research to explore a number of important questions in greater depth. A better understanding of this issue is needed in order to develop comprehensive solutions. The most compelling questions that demand scrutiny include:

- What percentage of U.S. students actually experience food insecurity?
- Which are the largest factors contributing to food insecurity among college students? What can be done to prevent these risks?
- How can we increase the number of food insecure students who utilize the existing safety net of services?
- Which services or combination of services are the most effective in meeting these students' needs?
- What is the impact of food insecurity on students' educational success?
- What is the combined impact of food and housing insecurity?
- How do we specifically reduce food insecurity among students of color and first-generation students?
- Do food insecure students continue to be food insecure after graduation?

25 Sara Goldrick-Rab et al, Wisconsin HOPE Lab, "Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates," December 2015, http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Wisconsin_HOPE_Lab_Hungry_To_Learn.pdf.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The growing awareness of hunger and food insecurity on college campuses has triggered a national conversation in higher education over how to assist students in overcoming these challenges. Reducing the number of food insecure students will require action by colleges, universities, and policymakers.

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities

For colleges and universities, the task of improving student retention and completion is only becoming more difficult. Fortunately, college and university administrations, student organizations, and nonprofit organizations are pioneering a wide range of programs designed to support food insecure students.

Schools are also becoming creative in finding ways to fund these new programs, with support coming variously from the universities themselves, student governments, alumni associations, local businesses, and charitable foundations.

PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE FOOD SECURITY

Colleges and universities should support and develop on-campus programs that directly address food insecurity. The following are examples of successful programs that schools should replicate.

▶ Campus Food Pantries

One of the fastest growing movements to combat hunger on college campuses is the development of campus food pantries. In 2009, fewer than ten campus food pantries existed; today there are more than 350.[26] Because of their flexibility in operating styles and limited need for physical infrastructure, campus food pantries can be easy to establish. On-campus pantries are easier for students to utilize, since they don't require students to travel off campus to receive food benefits. In addition, because the food pantry is a campus-run program, students seem more likely to utilize its services because they see it as a student resource rather than a community program.

▶ Food Recovery Programs

Programs like the Food Recovery Network[27] and the Campus Kitchens Project[28] collect unused food from campus dining halls and other sources, then utilize on-campus kitchen space to repurpose this food into ready-to-eat meals that can be donated to the campus food pantry or an off-campus food program. In addition to reducing food waste and stocking local food programs, one benefit of these food recovery programs is that they provide students with ready-made meals that just need warming.

The MEANS mobile app offers a different model for food recovery.

26 College and University Food Bank Alliance, "Our Members," http://bit.ly/2dpDhhx.
27 Food Recovery Network, "About Us," http://bit.ly/2dpEA0c.
28 The Campus Kitchens Project, "How We Do It," http://bit.ly/1bziXNb.

Their online system allows restaurants, dining halls, and other food donors to post a notice when they have excess food available. Local food pantries and food banks, including campus food pantries, can then claim the excess food, at which time they are given the contact information of the donor and can schedule a time to pick up the surplus food.[29]

Another approach seeks to make use of excess food from catered events on campus. At California State University, Fresno, for example, the Catered Cupboard mobile app notifies students when an on-campus catered event ends and there is leftover food available.[30]

▶ Dining Center Meal Donations

Many campus dining hall meal plans provide students with a set number of pre-paid meal dollars or points to spend. If students have unused points at the end of the term, those points are usually lost. At many schools, programs like Swipe Out Hunger have helped students and dining halls create systems where students can donate some of their extra meal points.[31] Depending on the agreement made with the dining hall, these donated points are converted to money that is then given to a local anti-hunger charity, converted to food that is given to local food programs, or used to fund dining hall vouchers for food insecure students.[32]

▶ Improving Access to Benefits

Students often do not know where or how to access benefit programs that could provide them with valuable assistance with needs like food, child care, rent, utilities, and medical care. Programs like Single Stop set up a campus location where students can stop in to learn about available benefits.[33] Trained staff or volunteers help students find out if they qualify for benefit programs, then assist them with the application process. At Oregon State University, the Human Services Resource Center was established to offer many of the services described in this section, including providing students with assistance in applying for benefits.[34]

▶ SNAP Retailer on Campus

29 MEANS, "About," http://www.meansdatabase.com/about.
30 Fresno State University Food Security Project, "Catered Cupboard," http://www.fresnostate.edu/studentaffairs/foodsecurity/mobile-app.html.
31 Swipe Out Hunger, "About," http://www.swipehunger.org/about.
32 Emma Miller, "Columbia University unveils plan to feed students who can't afford to eat," USA Today, September 22, 2015, http://usat.ly/1MHjDHN
33 Single Stop, "Our Work," http://bit.ly/2dHUGC9
34 Oregon State University Office of Student Life, "Human Services Resource Center," http://studentlife.oregonstate.edu/hsrc.

A small number of colleges and universities have started the process to be able to accept SNAP dollars (food stamps) in their campus stores, but the regulatory requirements are extensive. Oregon State University and Humboldt State University are the only two schools that appear to have succeeded so far. At OSU, for example, students can now use their Oregon Trail Card (state-issued benefits card) to buy groceries at the on-campus Cascadia Market.[35]

▶ Campus Community Gardens

Campus community gardens provide a way to increase students' access to fresh produce while also giving students a hands-on way to address food insecurity, build community, and learn agricultural skills. Once established, campus gardens can easily be integrated into existing food programs by providing produce to the campus dining halls or food pantry. At the University of Arkansas, the campus community garden is hosted by GroGreen, a student organization, and donates half of its yield to the Jane B. Gearhart Food Pantry on campus.[36]

▶ Campus Farmers Markets

On-campus farmers markets provide another way to increase students' access to fresh produce, providing them with an additional source for healthy, affordable food. For example, at Humboldt State University, the student-run Oh SNAP! program hosts a weekly farm stand on campus.[37] Campus farmers markets can do even more to support food insecure students by participating in the national "Double Bucks" program, through which farmers markets provide a $1-for-$1 match for SNAP recipients to buy fresh produce. The University of Utah Farmers Market, a mostly student-run operation that provides fresh produce for sale on campus and to the dining hall, is one of several on-campus farmers markets that already participate in Double Bucks.[38]

35 Oregon State University, "On-Campus Markets," http://bit.ly/2dpwrlV.
36 GroGreen, "GroGreen: UARK Community Garden," http://www.facebook.com/groups/151775711209/.
37 Humboldt State University Oh SNAP!, "HSU Farm Stand," http://www.hsuohsnap.org.
38 University of Utah Sustainability Resource Center, "U of U Farmers Market," http://sustainability.utah.edu/resource-center/get-involved/farmers-market.php.

PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE HOUSING SECURITY

Given the relationship between food insecurity and housing insecurity, colleges and universities should replicate these programs to reduce housing insecurity.

▶ Emergency Housing

A growing number of schools now offer emergency housing for students who have been displaced from their existing housing for some reason. Depending on the school, this might come in the form of a room in the residence halls or a voucher for a local motel. At California State University, Long Beach, the short term housing assistance program provides displaced students with a residence hall room until they can find new housing.[39]

▶ Shelters for Homeless Students

In one of the newest approaches to supporting housing insecure students, the Bruin Shelter in Los Angeles is one of the first-ever homeless shelters specifically for students. The Bruin Shelter, which is completely student-run, is scheduled to launch in Fall 2016 and will be open to UCLA and Santa Monica College students who are experiencing homelessness.[40]

39 California State University, Long Beach, Dean of Students, "Student Emergency Intervention Program," http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/studentdean/emergency_grant/.
40 Bruin Shelter, "Home," http://www.bruinshelter.com.

PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

Food insecurity is generally a sign of deeper financial hardship. To promote food security, colleges and universities should replicate these programs which help at-risk students afford the cost of attending college.

▶ Emergency Grants

For students who are living in poverty, even a small unexpected expense can force them to drop out of school. A growing number of schools now offer emergency grant programs[41] to support students who are at risk of leaving school due to emergencies related to medical care, housing, transportation, or child care.[42] For example, Bunker Hill Community College's emergency assistance fund provides grants to students who are facing personal emergencies that might cause them to drop out.[43] Similarly, CUNY students with financial emergencies can apply for support from the Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation Emergency Grant Fund.[44]

▶ Lower the Cost of Textbooks

Ensuring that students have access to the textbooks they need for class is another way that schools are helping make education more affordable. Textbook costs often total hundreds of dollars each term, forcing some students to choose between buying books and food. At some schools, like Mt. San Antonio College in California, book scholarships are available to help students purchase textbooks.[45] Others, like the University of Massachusetts, are supporting the use of free open-source textbooks, which eliminate the cost of books completely.[46]

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41 Kevin Krueger et al, NASPA, "Landscape Analysis of Emergency Aid Programs," 2016, http://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Emergency_Aid_Report.pdf.
42 Karole Dachelet et al, Wisconsin HOPE Lab and Scholarship America, "Investing in Student Completion: Overcoming Financial Barriers to Retention Through Small-Dollar Grants and Emergency Aid Programs," December 2015, http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Investing-in-Student-Completion-WI-Hope_Lab.pdf.
43 Bunker Hill Community College, "The Mary L. Fifield Endowed Student Emergency Assistance Fund," http://www.bhcc.mass.edu/emergencyassistancefund/.
44 Margaret Ramirez, "Single Stop, Petrie Foundation Provide Financial Safety Net for CUNY Students," CUNY Newswire, September 4, 2014, http://bit.ly/1ngObgg
45 Mt. San Antonio College, "Apply For Scholarships," http://www.mtsac.edu/scholarships/applynow.html.
46 University of Massachusetts Amherst, "UMass Library Open Education Initiative," http://bit.ly/2dpw4OP

Recommendations for Policymakers

While colleges and universities should take immediate steps to support their students, some changes are beyond their reach. Federal policymakers should take the following steps to improve the situation for food insecure students.

▶ Add Food Security Measurement to the NPSAS

The National Center for Education Statistics implements the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) each year to examine the characteristics of the nation's college students, with special focus on how they finance their education. Adding food security questions to the list of issues assessed by the NPSAS would provide policymakers and researchers with the data to determine the true prevalence of student food insecurity and assess potential solutions.[47]

▶ Simplify the FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the form that determines a student's eligibility for federal financial aid programs. Completing the FAFSA can be an unnecessarily confusing and intimidating process for students. The FAFSA includes up to 136 questions, including detailed questions about income and assets that are difficult to document and often have little or no impact on a student's eligibility for aid. There are an estimated two million students currently enrolled in college who are eligible for a Pell Grant but never applied for aid, likely because they were intimidated by the process or did not know that aid was available.[48] In order to ensure that students receive the aid they deserve, the FAFSA should be simplified to remove unnecessary questions, particularly for the applicants with the greatest need.[49]

47 Sara Goldrick-Rab and Christopher J. Nellum, Wisconsin HOPE Lab and American Council on Education, "Request to Add Measurement of Food Insecurity to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study," http://bit.ly/2d15to9
48 White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Fact Sheet: The President's Plan for Early Financial Aid: Improving College Choice and Helping More Americans Pay for College," September 13, 2015, http://bit.ly/2cR0Uta
49 National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, "NASFAA FAFSA Working Group Report: FAFSA Simplification," July 2015, http://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/fafsa-simplification.pdf.

▶ Expand the SNAP Eligibility Requirements for College Students

College students who are enrolled in school at least half-time are ineligible for SNAP unless they meet certain exceptions (for example, having a child under the age of six or working at least 20 hours per week).[50] These restrictions prevent many students from utilizing SNAP, even though they meet the program's income eligibility thresholds and could benefit from the program. SNAP eligibility requirements should be simplified for students and the rules should be adjusted to remove the work requirement for full-time students.[51]

▶ Improve the Aid Process for Homeless Students

The federal financial aid process provides particular obstacles for homeless students, which can cause them to miss out on aid entirely. These students often face a confusing system which bounces them between high school and college administrators. At both levels, administrators are often confused about their authority to verify a student's homeless status or what type of documentation to require. This bureaucratic nightmare can cause students to miss filing deadlines and be denied aid, preventing them from attending college. Clear guidelines should be provided to financial aid administrators and students to explain the process and students should be given easy access to government records that can help establish their homeless status.[52]

In addition, the process becomes more difficult with each subsequent year, as it typically becomes harder for students to provide documentation of their homeless status the longer they are in college. The process should be changed to eliminate the need for yearly re-determination of a student's homeless status.[53]

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50 Elizabeth Lower-Basch and Helly Lee, Center for Law and Social Policy, "SNAP Policy Brief: College Student Eligibility," February 6, 2014, http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/SNAP_College-Student-Eligibility.pdf.
51 Sara Goldrick-Rab et al, Wisconsin HOPE Lab, "Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates," December 2015, http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Wisconsin_HOPE_Lab_Hungry_To_Learn.pdf.
52 U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Actions Needed to Improve Access to Federal Financial Assistance for Homeless and Foster Youth," May 2016, http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/d16343.pdf.
53 National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, "Financial Aid for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth," 2014, http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/fafsa-survey-report.pdf.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

This report discusses the findings of a survey on food insecurity among college students conducted on 34 college campuses between March and May of 2016. The participating schools were from 12 states and included 8 community colleges and 26 four-year colleges.

In total, the study collected 3,765 surveys. This represents roughly 0.5 percent of the student population at the participating schools.

THE SURVEYS WERE COLLECTED AT THE FOLLOWING SCHOOLS:

Bronx Community College (NY)
Brooklyn College (NY)
City College of New York (NY)
College of Staten Island (NY)
Eastern Washington University (WA)
Fairmont State University (WV)
Harold Washington College (IL)
Hunter College (NY)
Lane Community College (OR)
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MA)
Michigan State University (MI)
North Shore Community College (MA)
Norwalk Community College (CT)
NYC College of Technology (NY)
Portland Community College (OR)
Queens College (NY)
Rutgers University – New Brunswick (NJ)
Rutgers University – Newark (NJ)
Southern Oregon University (OR)
Spokane Community College (WA)
Stony Brook University (NY)
SUNY College at Cortland (NY)
Syracuse University (NY)
University of California – Berkeley (CA)
University of California – Davis (CA)
University of California – Los Angeles (CA)
University of California – Riverside (CA)
University of California – San Diego (CA)
University of California – Santa Barbara (CA)
University of California – Santa Cruz (CA)
University of Oregon (OR)
University of Washington (WA)
Virginia Commonwealth University (VA)
Wake Technical Community College (NC)

Surveys were collected through face-to-face outreach by staff and volunteers from local campus organizations. At most schools, this was done by setting up an information table with laptops and asking students to stop and fill out a survey on food insecurity. At schools where this approach was not an option, students handed out leaflets with the survey web address in classrooms. In both cases, students completed the survey online. The survey form included a statement of consent from the respondent.

Schools were chosen to participate based on the availability of local volunteers affiliated with the organizations that coordinated this research. No incentives were offered to students for taking the survey.

LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The survey used a convenience sample, meaning that the findings are not directly generalizable to the U.S. student population at large. Steps were taken to minimize sample bias in order to produce results that are transferable and will expand the existing knowledge base on student food insecurity. Toward that end, surveying was not allowed outside dining halls, residence halls, campus food pantries, or other locations that might oversample students based on their housing or eating habits. While the sampling method places limitations on this study, it is unclear how it biases the findings, if at all.

Moreover, while the full sample is not generalizable to the larger student population, the survey did provide a population of 1,801 respondents who qualified as food insecure. The investigation of those respondents provides a useful window into the experience of food insecure college students.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Despite the use of a convenience sample, the survey respondents in this study compared favorably to the combined student population at the participating schools in terms of gender and race (see Table 14). The sample was 57 percent female, compared to 54 percent of students at the participating schools. In terms of race, the sample was 40 percent white, 19 percent Asian, 18 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 14 percent black or African American. This lines up closely with the student population at the participating schools, which is 41 percent white, 19 percent Asian, 17 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 8 percent black or African American. The close alignment in demographics suggests that the sample is reasonably similar to these campuses as a whole.

A comparison was also made to the nationwide undergraduate population. Since the sample consisted overwhelmingly (95 percent) of undergraduate students, this comparison seemed appropriate. In this assessment, the survey sample compares less favorably. The sample is more heavily weighted toward 18-21 year-olds and students of color than the nationwide undergraduate population. This difference is likely to primarily be a function of the schools that participated in the survey. The participating schools happen to have a more racially diverse student body than the national average. In addition, compared to the nationwide population the study oversampled students from four-year universities, which tend to have a younger student population than community colleges.

TABLE 14: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON BETWEEN SURVEY SAMPLE, PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS, AND NATIONWIDE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT POPULATION

	SURVEY SAMPLE	PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS*	NATIONWIDE UNDERGRADUATE POPULATION*
GENDER			
Female	57%	54%	57%
RACE			
White	40%	41%	58%
Asian	19%	19%	6%
Hispanic or Latino	18%	17%	16%
Black or African American	14%	8%	16%
AGE			
18-19	35%	**	20%
20-21	34%		22%
22-24	16%		18%
25-29	7%		14%
30-34	4%		9%
35 and over	4%		17%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME			
Less than $5,000	12%	**	**
$5,000-$14,999	12%		
$15,000-$24,999	13%		
$25,000-$49,999	18%		
$50,000-$74,999	14%		
$75,000-$99,999	9%		
$100,000 or more	17%		
Did not report	6%		
HIGHEST LEVEL OF PARENTAL EDUCATION			
High school or less	27%	**	34%
Some college	21%		20%
Professional (one year or less) certificate	3%		**
Associate (two year) degree	5%		8%
Bachelor's (four year) degree	23%		21%
Graduate degree (e.g., master's, PhD)	21%		18%
OTHER			
Pell Grant recipient	43%	38%	41%
U.S. Citizen	87%	**	94%
Served in military	3%	**	4%
Married	6%	**	18%
Have children	7%	**	**

**Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics*[54]
***Data not available*
Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

54 Data Lab, National Center for Education Statistics, August 1, 2016, http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/.

TABLE 15: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESPONDENTS

YEAR IN PROGRAM	
1st Year	32%
2nd Year	27%
3rd Year	20%
4th Year or Later	16%
Graduate Student	5%
ENROLLMENT STATUS	
Enrolled full-time	86%

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES FOR FOOD INSECURE STUDENTS

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

- The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net. http://bit.ly/1U2ZHBu

- **Medicaid** provides medical benefits to low-income people who have no medical insurance or have inadequate medical insurance. The Federal government establishes general guidelines for the administration of Medicaid benefits. However, specific eligibility requirements to receive Medicaid benefits, as well as the type and scope of services provided, are determined by each individual state. http://bit.ly/2cR1Z42

- The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. http://bit.ly/2dPaIJT

- The **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** program is designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency. States receive block grants to provide families with financial assistance and related support services. http://bit.ly/2dP8Cd7

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** is a federal income supplement program designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people who have little or no income. It provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. http://bit.ly/2dtnBGm

- **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)** provides income supplements to people who can't work because they have a medical condition that's expected to last at least one year or result in death. http://bit.ly/2dCfObh

ORGANIZATIONS

- The **Campus Kitchens Project** partners with colleges and universities to share on-campus kitchen space, recover food from cafeterias, and engage students as volunteers who prepare and deliver meals to the community. www.campuskitchens.org

- The **College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA)** is a professional organization that provides support, training, and resources for campus food banks and pantries that primarily serve students. www.cufba.org

- The **Food Recovery Network** unites students on college campuses to fight food waste and hunger by recovering perishable food that would otherwise go to waste from their campuses and communities and donating it to people in need. www.foodrecoverynetwork.org

- The **National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth** offers a Higher Education Helpline for assistance with issues related to students experiencing homelessness accessing higher education. www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/helpline

- **Scholarship America Dreamkeepers** helps students stay in college when faced with an unforeseen financial emergency. Through Dreamkeepers, students receive financial assistance as well as mentoring and financial counseling. www.scholarshipamerica.org/dreamkeepers/

- **Single Stop** partners with local organizations and institutions that serve low-income families to provide wraparound services and ensure their clients leverage all the major anti-poverty resources available. Since 2007, Single Stop has connected 1.2 million households with $3.5 billion in resources and support. www.singlestopusa.org

- **Swipe Out Hunger** partners with college campuses to allow university students to donate unused meal points to their food insecure community, turning unused resources into action. www.swipehunger.org

- **uAspire** partners with high schools, community organizations, higher education institutions, and individual practitioners to provide college affordability advice to young people and their families. www.uaspire.org

- **United Way** focuses on creating community-based and community-led solutions that strengthen the cornerstones for a good quality of life: education, financial stability, and health. Their 2-1-1 system provides a free, confidential referral and information helpline and website that connects people from all communities and of all ages to the essential health and human services they need, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. www.unitedway.org

- **Wisconsin HOPE Lab** documents the challenges students face in securing food and housing, evaluates efforts to meet their needs, and shares information with policymakers and practitioners. www.wihopelab.com

THE RESEARCH PARTNERS

This report was a joint project of the following campus-based organizations.

- The **College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA)**, co-founded by the Michigan State University Student Food Bank and the Oregon State University Food Pantry, is a professional organization consisting of campus-based programs focused on alleviating food insecurity, hunger, and poverty among college and university students in the United States. CUFBA provides support, training, and resources for campus food banks/pantries that primarily serve students. www.cufba.org

- The **National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness (NSCAHH)** organizes college students to end hunger and homelessness. NSCAHH educates, trains, and engages students to use a variety of strategies to address these problems, including direct service, education, and fundraising. www.studentsagainsthunger.org

- The **Student Government Resource Center (SGRC)** works to strengthen student governments into more effective vehicles for student engagement and empowerment. SGRC provides student government leaders with the training and resources to succeed, from how to run productive meetings to how to win changes in campus policies and be effective advocates for students. www.studentgovresources.org

- The **Student Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs)** are independent statewide student organizations that work on issues including environmental protection, consumer protection, and hunger and homelessness. For more than 40 years, students working with their campus PIRG chapters have been making a real difference in people's lives and winning concrete changes to build a better world. www.studentpirgs.org

HUNGER ON CAMPUS

The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students

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