STUDENT BASIC NEEDS

Food and housing security for students in the CSU

Faculty Research & Curriculum
Systemwide Coordination
Community Partnerships & Collaboration
Policy & Legislation
Background and Research Motivation

College Student Food Security

- Study of 10 community colleges in the US found 39% of students were found to have low food security.
- City University of New York found 39% of students were food insecure.
- University of California system found that 42% of students experienced food insecurity (23% low and 19% very low food security).
College Student Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

- University of Massachusetts Boston found that 5.4% of students experienced homelessness and 45% of participants reported housing insecurity.
- City University of New York reported that 40% of students experienced housing instability.
- Community colleges range from 30% to 50% of students experiencing housing insecurity and 13% to 14% experiencing homelessness.
- Empirical research is inadequate on the possible impacts of college student food and housing insecurity on student success indicators related to academic performance, health, and mental health.
PHASE 1:
Staff, Faculty, and Administration

INTERVIEWS
Qualitative interviews with CSU staff, faculty, and administrators

SURVEYS
Preliminary online survey of CSULB students

ANALYSIS
Analysis of campus websites and student support service
# Defining Basic Needs

## Food Security

(USDA ERS, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Security Level</th>
<th>Indications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High food security</strong></td>
<td>No reported indications of food access problems or limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marginal food security</strong></td>
<td>One or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low food security</strong></td>
<td>Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very low food security</strong></td>
<td>Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Defining Basic Needs
Food Security

Low Food Security

“Well, I can afford food. I can't afford great food, but I can afford food. Umm... It was tough

Dilbert (CSUSB)
Defining Basic Needs

Food Security

Very Low Food Security

“So basically what I used to eat three days out of the week was like Minute Maid and chips and that’d be it...I wouldn’t eat anything ‘cause I didn’t have any money”

Tiffany (CSULB)
Defining Basic Needs

Homelessness

(The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Subtitle B of Title VII)

HOMELESSNESS

= A lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
And so, I ended up being homeless for about four months. Sleeping on friends’ couches, staying in my car...

Elizabeth (FSU)
Defining Basic Needs

Homelessness

(The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Subtitle B of Title VII)

INADEQUATE RESIDENCE

- Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or a similar setting
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Sharing the housing of others due or “couch surfing”
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds

Defining Basic Needs
Methods

Quantitative

Locational data was where students entered the city and location of two streets that intersected nearby their residence.

23 Campus Surveys

5.8% Students participated
Survey Respondents Living Locations
• **5.8% of all CSU students participated** \((n=24,324)\)

• Overall survey sample characteristics were similar to the demographics of the CSU student body.

• Racial and ethnic groups were similar, with the percentage of White and Asian/Pacific Islander participants represented slightly higher within the sample.

• The largest difference was regarding gender, where females were overrepresented and males were underrepresented in the sample.
CSU Survey Instruments

1. HUD and US Department of Ed definitions of Homelessness

2. U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module (10-item)

3. Presenting Problems List (Academic Concerns)

4. CORE Healthy Days

5. Geospatial Point Data
Methods

Qualitative
Representative from northern, southern, and central California and included urban, rural, and suburban areas

CSU campuses with students who identify as housing and/or food insecure
CSU Interviews and Focus Groups
Sample Description

- Drawn from survey responses with experiences of food, housing or both food and housing insecurity
- 213 student participants
- Northern, southern, and central California and to include perspectives from urban, rural, and suburban areas
- Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, CSU Bakersfield, CSU Dominguez Hills, CSU Long Beach, CSU Los Angeles, CSU Northridge, CSU San Bernardino, Fresno State University, Humboldt State University, San Diego State University, and San Francisco State University
Prevalence
Food Security

41.6%
CSU Students reported food insecurity

20%
experience low food security

21.6%
experience very low food security
CSU Student Food Security
Prevalence
Food Security

• Women (42.6%) reported slightly higher food insecurity than men (39.3%)

• First generation students (49.0%) reported higher food insecurity

• Students both first generation and Black/African American had the highest levels of food insecurity (65.9%)
Prevalence

Homelessness

10.9% of CSU STUDENTS report being homeless

18% of African American and first-generation college students experienced homelessness (a higher rate than any other group)
CSU Student Homelessness
Prevalence
Homelessness

• Men (14.1%) experienced more homelessness than women (9.6%)

• First generation students (11.2%) slightly higher incidences of homelessness

Table 2
Percentage of student homelessness by race/ethnicity and first generation college student status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Homeless %</th>
<th>Housed %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/First generation</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/First generation</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American/First generation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander/First generation</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Participants/First generation</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/First generation</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH, AND PERSONAL CONCERNS
Food Security and Academics

Figure 4
Food security as it is related to academics.

Note. GPA was based on self-report. Academic Concerns were created from the Presenting Problems Scale using a continuous variable from 1-5 based on current level of stress, where the score goes up with greater concern.
I would get bananas and I will cut it in half. I'd eat only half in the morning, and then I would wait five hours, then eat the other half, just so I have something in my stomach consistently…I would struggle to concentrate for sure, because sometimes that's all I could think about was where was my next meal going to come from.

Susan (CSUDH)
Figure 5
Homelessness and academics

Note. GPA was based on self-report. Academic Concerns were created from the Presenting Problems Scale using a continuous variable from 1-5 based on current level of stress, where the score goes up with greater concern.
This semester when my housing was really insecure was rough. I got a D in one class...I just cut down one in order to get fairly good grades in the others...

Clark (SDSU)
It affects my studying if I don't know where I'm going to go, where am I studying or am I concentrating on studying because I'm not worried about where I'm going to go.

Gabrielle (CSUDH)
Housing and Academics

Students spoke about high overall GPAs because they had additional study time as they found refuge in the library and in other campus spaces.
Food Security and Health

Figure 6
Food security and health.
Food Security and Health

"Canned foods just don't do it. Yesterday, all of a sudden I started with these tremors in my arms. Ugh, nutrition [laughs]. Just not enough time, not enough money. It's very hard to concentrate. You're exhausted. You couldn't read a book and you fall asleep. It's not easy, even in class."

Bernard (SFSU)
Housing and Health

Figure 7: Homelessness and health.
Friend’s couches, ya know, a couple nights in my car. Thankfully it was warm enough to where I’m not freezing to death in the...when I stayed at a certain friend’s house and her roommate was kind of getting annoyed I was there, and I didn’t want to overstay my welcome...and I had left that day before showering, and so it really hit me like I didn’t have a place to shower... Something I would never want to wish upon anybody to go through.

Elizabeth (FSU)
Challenges
Meeting Basic Needs

- Most students who were food insecure did not report non-financial reasons
- 70.4% No extra money
- 26.6% Struggle to buy groceries due to budget
- 17.3% Confusion with bills

Figure 9
Budgeting explanations for why students could not buy groceries.
CSU Student Use of On-Campus Supports

Food resource use

- 9.8% of low food secure students are food pantry users
- 12.7% very low food secure students are food pantry users

Housing resource awareness

- 71% unaware of any housing supports
I felt like I had to justify why I was there to them, and they don't need that. They don't need that information, they just want you to be happy and healthy.

... myself and other students have experience where you go in there and it's like, "You can't come in here." Or, "this is supposed to be a temporary solution"

The message was that I shouldn't keep coming down here, it was okay for me to come a few times but I need to move on.
10.1% of students who reported very low food security currently used CalFresh

7.5% of students who reported low food security currently used CalFresh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Does not meet Criteria</th>
<th>Meets Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CalFresh student exemptions</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNAP federal income guidelines</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets both state and federal criteria</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3
College Student CalFresh Eligibility
I don't remember how much I got a month, but that was the only semester in college I've ever made the dean's list. I was getting healthy food. When I think about money problems, obviously, it consumes you... I was getting the nutrition, I was getting the energy. I was awake and eating breakfast every morning. It made a difference.

Fiona (SDSU)
Conclusions

• It is clear that food and housing security play a critical role in the health and personal and academic progress of students
• The enormity of the issues are daunting
• Responding to students who are housing or food insecure will require complex, long term approaches to solution building
Recommendations

- Development of affordable food and housing options for students.
- Target strategies to address the student populations that reported the highest levels of food insecurity and homelessness.
- Conduct longitudinal research exploring basic needs security as predictors and protective factors that may promote persistence and degree completion.
Recommendations

- Incorporate single points of contact who are trained in trauma-informed perspective in programmatic responses
- Identify and institute creative campaigns to develop a campus culture of awareness and response
- Utilize campus-based CalFresh enrollment
Acknowledgements

Staff, faculty and administrators at all 23 Campuses
Study advisory board
Study research teams
Art Center College of Design

And most importantly, the students who share their time and experiences