Addressing Students’ Basic Needs with a Culture of Caring

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“I want to get a decent job and support my family.”

“I need to finish what I started.”

“This isn’t about me.”
Even 18-year-olds aren’t “kids” anymore.

*This is #RealCollege*
The New Economics of College

- College prices are higher than ever
- Most family incomes are stagnant
- The safety net is shredded
- Work doesn’t pay
- Many colleges are underfunded
“I’m having trouble providing for my mom. At times she needs help so I’ve been helping with her bills... Yeah sometimes I feel like I don’t want to pay for this, but at the same time, when I look back and I needed this when I was younger, she worked hard for me.” #FamilyMatters
CASH RULES EVERYTHING AROUND ME
It’s easy to forget Maslow
Food Insecurity
(18-item USDA, last 30 days)

1. I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more.

2. The food that I bought just didn't last and I didn’t have money to get more.

3. I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.

4. I cut size of meals or skipped meals

5. Three or more times

6. I ate less than I should.

7. I was hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food.

8. I lost weight.

9. I didn’t eat for a whole day.

10. Three or more times

If the student has a child, scoring differs somewhat.
Housing insecurity & Homelessness

(Last 12 months)

Rent increase made it difficult or impossible to pay

Didn’t pay full gas, oil, electric bill

Moved in with others, financial problems

Overcrowding

Left home b/c felt unsafe

Moved at least 3 times

Account defaulted/went into collections

Received summons to housing court

Have you been homeless?

Have you slept in:

- Temporary residence/couch
- Temporary hotel/motel
- Shelter
- Camper
- Transitional housing
- Group home
- Treatment center
- Indoor location not meant for habitation
- Outdoor location (street, sidewalk, alleyway, bus stop)
Nation’s largest college basic needs survey

Administered across CCC’s in 2016 and 2018

~40,000 student participants in 57 colleges

USDA 18-item measure of food insecurity

Hope & CSU measures of housing insecurity & homelessness
50% of students are food insecure.
60% of students are housing insecure

Rent and utilities are the most common challenges
19% of students are homeless

Only 6% self-identify;
15% are couch-surfing
Homeless Prevalence
Last 12 Months

Age: 18-20
15%

Age: >30
20%

African American
31%

Transgender
37%
Homeless Prevalence
Last 12 Months

- Parent: 19%
- Served in Military: 25%
- Former Foster Youth: 43%
- Returning Citizen: 44%
Too Little Support

These students have jobs and Pell Grants – it isn’t enough

Just 22% of food-insecure students receive CalFresh

40% of homeless students receive no government assistance
Students enduring poverty spend as much time on college, but more time working & less time sleeping.
Without their basic needs secured, students feel ashamed, alone, and unable to focus on learning. They often feel hopeless.
We can and must do better.
Step 1: Remember, students are humans first.
Step 2:
Commit to a culture of caring that goes beyond charity. Change systems, policies, and practices. Go beyond a single program.
Step 3:

Ask questions. Green River has some innovative resources to help students.

College staff do not have to turn into social workers—but everyone needs to know one.
Bridge college and community and think PREVENTION:

• Advance partnerships with food banks, childcare providers, mechanics, housing authorities, faith-based communities, and so on...

• Increase takeup of public benefits

• Expand emergency funds: aim for grants without repayment delivered in 2-3 days
Step 4: Share information on the syllabus.

“It can be challenging to do your best in class if you have trouble meeting basic needs like safe shelter, sleep, and nutrition. If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, I urge you to contact XXX and/or me. We are here to help.”

-- See hope4college.com/guides for more!
Step 5: Iterate and evaluate. Focus on what is viable, effective, and sustainable.
Advocate

• For greater access to public benefits for college students

• For expanding investments in students’ basic needs (food, housing, childcare)

• To empower students and professionals to lead #RealCollege policy and program changes together

• For a financing model for public higher education that is inclusive and effective e.g. CA Tuition-Free Master Plan
California is one of the few states where progressive change is possible. In a state with a multi-billion dollar budget surplus, why aren’t we investing more in students?

Join our movement @Hope4College on social media, and support our student advocacy partners @RiseFreeOrg.
Stay in touch

THE hope CENTER
FOR COLLEGE, COMMUNITY, AND JUSTICE

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