

Food Insecurity

The University of Texas at El Paso



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Financial Challenges Faced
by
College Students
...

What is Food Insecurity?



Feeding America defines food insecurity as “a federal measure of a household’s ability to provide enough food for every person in the household to have an active, healthy life.”

Important Terms



- About 72% of college students work while attending college
- 20% work full time
- only 18% of students report being able to cover their college expenses by working a job
- 41% of national college students depend on financial aid to cover for college expenses
- only 16% of national college students use scholarships to pay for school

Important Terms

- Nontraditional students are defined by fitting 1 of the following 6 criterias:
1. they attend college part-time
 2. are employed full-time
 3. are financially independent
 4. must provide for dependents
 5. are a single parent
 6. or do not have a high school diploma

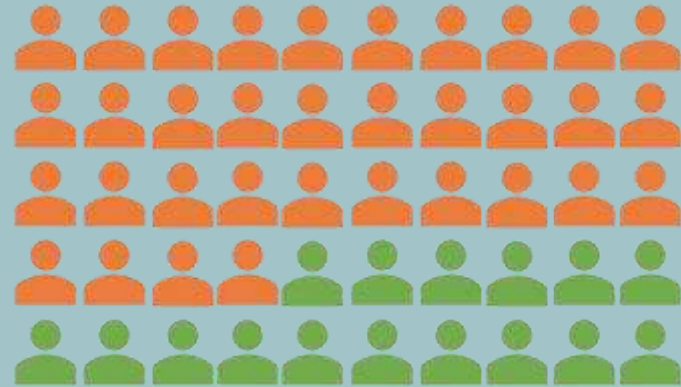


Photograph by UTEP University Communications

Average Cost of Tuition 4-Year Public Institution

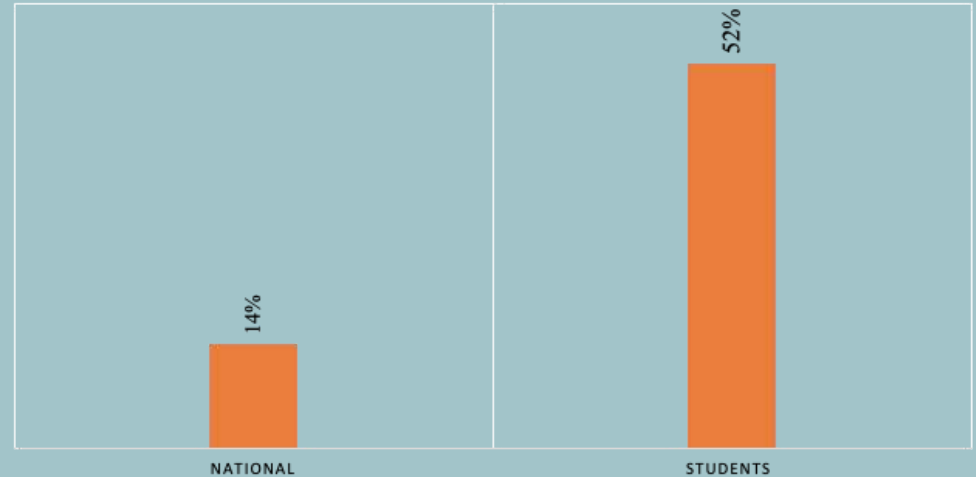


The rising cost of college tuition and the increasing number of nontraditional students is a growing problem on college campuses



about 74% of college students are nontraditional students

**NATIONAL POVERTY RATE
&
COLLEGE STUDENT POVERTY RATE
(2013)**



The combination of the rising cost of tuition and the increase of nontraditional students has resulted in a surprising number of students living at or near the poverty line.

An unfortunate consequence of poverty is food insecurity

Food Insecurity Among College Students

How is Food Insecurity Measured?

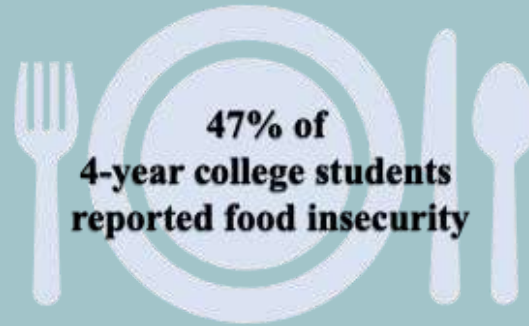
Food insecurity is a growing problem on college campuses, yet no comprehensive national research has been conducted to establish the percentage of food insecurity in college students.

Individual college and universities have conducted studies to determine the extent of food insecurity on campus.

There are opposing ideas of how food insecurity should be measured among college students, what questions should be asked, and various levels of food insecurity.

One common conclusion is that food insecurity in college students is a problem on college campuses

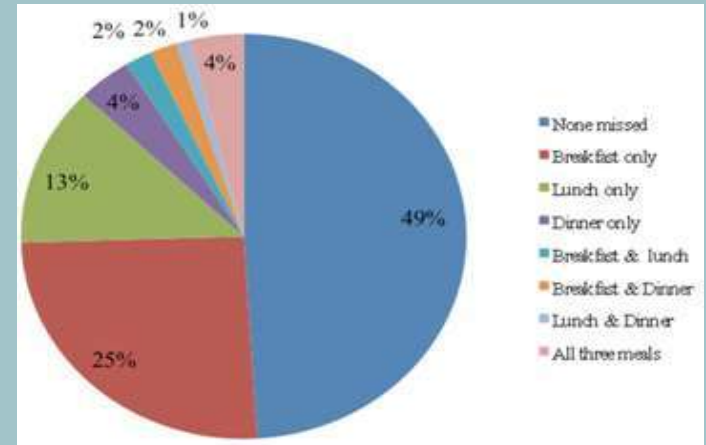
How Common is Food Insecurity Among College Students?



College students US rates

”Over the last decade, multiple studies of food insecurity among college students have found rates from 20% to more than 50%, considerably higher than the 12% rate for the entire US population.”

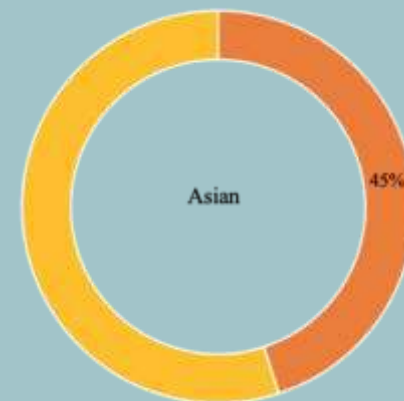
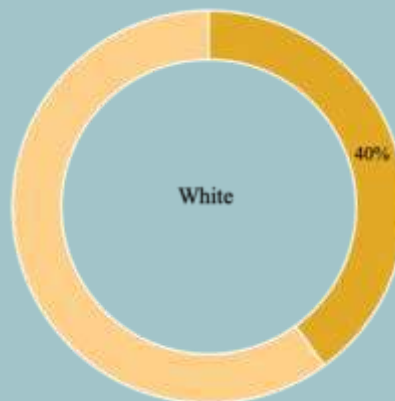
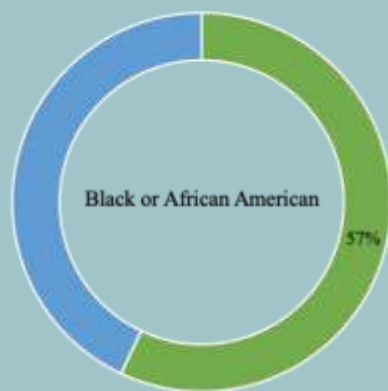
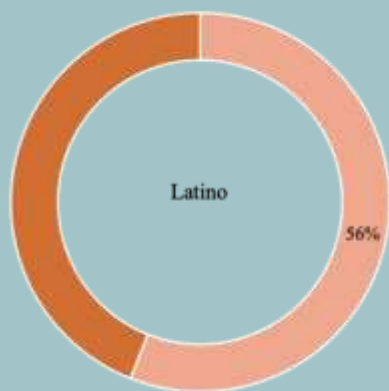
Freudenberg, N., Goldrick-Rab, S., & Poppendieck, J. (2019). College Students and SNAP: The New Face of Food Insecurity in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health, 109*(12), 1652–1658. <https://doi-org.lib.utep.edu/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305332>”



TRENDS

- First, a much higher proportion of college students face financial challenges today than in the past. By 2016, 39% of college students were from households with incomes at or below 130% of the federal poverty line, an increase from 28% in 1996
- Second, college has become more expensive. Between 1989 and 2016, the price for a 4-year degree doubled, even after inflation
- Third, as the proportion of students from low-income households has increased, the purchasing power of the Pell Grant, the main federal subsidy for low-income undergraduate students, has declined.
- Fourth, it is now harder to pay for college by working. The value of the minimum wage has declined substantially, and college students are competing in a labor market where people are often underemployed and wages are low.
- Finally, today's public colleges have less money to put toward supporting students and providing affordable food and housing. State funding for higher education has decreased by 25% per student over the last 30 years

A national survey conducted by Hunger on Campus demonstrated that students of color face more insecurity.



Effects of Food Insecurity

Stress



Anxiety



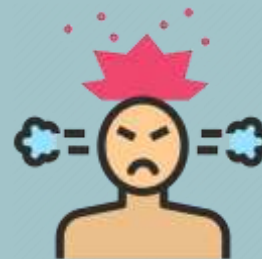
Higher rates of diabetes



Increase incidence of chronic disease



Irritability



Health

“The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life”.

General health status tends to be lower among those who experience food insecurity and studies demonstrate a higher prevalence of obesity, hypertension, and diabetes among those who are food insecure.”

Helmick, M., Smith, T. M., Parks, C. A., & Hill, J. L. (2020). Food insecurity increases odds of diabetes and hypertension, not obesity in medically underserved region. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 15(1), 128–139. <https://0-doi-org.lib.utep.edu/10.1080/19320248.2018.1538921>

Academic Performance

“**Psychosocial health** may be an important mechanism through which **food insecurity** affects **academic performance** among college and university students. Multicomponent interventions that address immediate **food** security needs as well as co-occurring mental **health** and **academic** concerns are needed to ensure **student** success”.



Raskind, I. G., Haardörfer, R., & Berg, C. J. (2019). Food insecurity, psychosocial health and academic performance among college and university students in Georgia, USA. *Public Health Nutrition*, 22(3), 476–485. <https://doi-org.lib.utep.edu/10.1017/S1368980018003439>

Community Support for Students



Food Pantries

More and more colleges are opening food pantries for students.

There are also community food pantries that are open to students



SNAP benefits

SNAP (The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) is available for student who qualify. Local agencies can help with application!



Soup Kitchens

Local community agencies and churches have or host “soup kitchens” where students can get a hot meal.

Proposed Solution

Community Garden at the University

Solution: Community Garden

- Why? Students will be able to use community garden to produce their own food by using raised beds
 - Seasonal fruits, vegetables, and herbs
- What to plant?
 - Seasonal fruits, vegetables, and herbs
- How it will be created
 - Involving stakeholders as volunteers
 - Choose an accessible space
- Maintenance
 - Donations
 - Student volunteers
 - Staff Volunteers



Why a Community Garden



- Students will be able to use community garden to produce fruit, vegetables, and herbs
- Self-sustaining solution

PROMOTE COLLABORATION

- Involves stakeholders in solving the problem
- Faculty and staff can make a connection with students by interacting outside the classroom or office

ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS

- Reduce greenhouse emissions by eliminating transportation, avoiding fossil fuel combustion
- Soil sequesters carbon

Farm to Table

- Sustainable Food Center
 - Grow local
 - Helps the Student Community to learn skills of gardening
 - Farm direct
 - With the support of UTEP Chihuahuan Desert Gardens students will be able to spend time gardening
 - Promote healthy eating habits



Development

- **Volunteers/ Partners**

- **Project Move**

- Almost 2,000 members of the Miner Nation -students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends assists dozens of nonprofit organizations

- **Master Gardeners**

- El Paso County Master Gardeners offers free gardening classes

- **Libraries (Seeds)**

- Public Libraries are handing out free seeds to promote sustainability
 - Non-genetically modified seeds



Additional Funding

- Apply to Grants

- American Public Gardens Association
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Herb Society of America Grants for Education
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Grants
- National Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Cost Share Grant Program
- The Stanley Smith Horticulture Trust

UTEP Partners

Utilize resources available at the University and in the community

- **Chihuahuan Desert Gardens**

- Provide the space for the Garden

- **Project Move**

- Provide Volunteers to maintain the plants

- **Center for Civic Engagement**

- Build greenhouse/raised planters

- **UTEP Food Pantry**

- Partnership with local food bank - El Pasoan's Fighting Hunger
 - Cost of non-perishable food items at a discount



Current UTEP Campus Food Pantry

- The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) has a Food Pantry available for current students, faculty and staff
- The food Pantry was funded by a \$100,000 private donation
- An average of 200 students a month receive food from the Food Pantry



Photo: J.R. Hernandez / UTEP Communications

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