

Virtual Case Study 2020

Western Carolina University

Team Leader:
Caleb Williams

Team Members:
Amber Upton
Jess Gonzalez
Holli Stillman



Learning Outcomes

After this presentation, audiences will:

- Better understand the issue of food insecurity in our nation, state, and region
- Better understand the issue of food insecurity on college and university campuses
- Better understand the effects of food insecurity on college students
- Identify characteristics that place students more at-risk for experiencing food insecurity

Food Insecurity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as *a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life*, and divides food insecurity in to two categories:

Low food security: Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.

Very low food security: Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

According to Feeding America, food insecurity may be **long term** or **temporary**.

Though food insecurity is closely related to poverty, not all people living below the poverty line experience food insecurity and people living above the poverty line can experience food insecurity.



Source: Adapted from the USDA Economic Research Service.

Food Insecurity Continued

Feeding America states that food insecurity can have a wide impact, depending on each individual's circumstances. Some of the most common, yet complex, effects of food insecurity include:

- **serious health complications**
- **damage to an individual's ability to learn and grow**
- **sacrificing critical needs**

National Level

Food insecurity, defined as limited or uncertain availability of food because of inadequate resources, is one of many difficulties associated with poverty. (Nord, Andrews and Carlson, 2005). According to the United States Census, 12.5% of Americans are poor and fall under the level of poverty. In the United States, areas with high poverty are more likely to be food deserts (Dutko, Paula, Ver Ploeg, and Farrigan, 2012). Of those high-risk areas, colleges and universities are located. Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) are some of the colleges and universities whose students do not have access or are limited to healthy food options such as grocery stores and markets (King, 2019).

Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2016-18

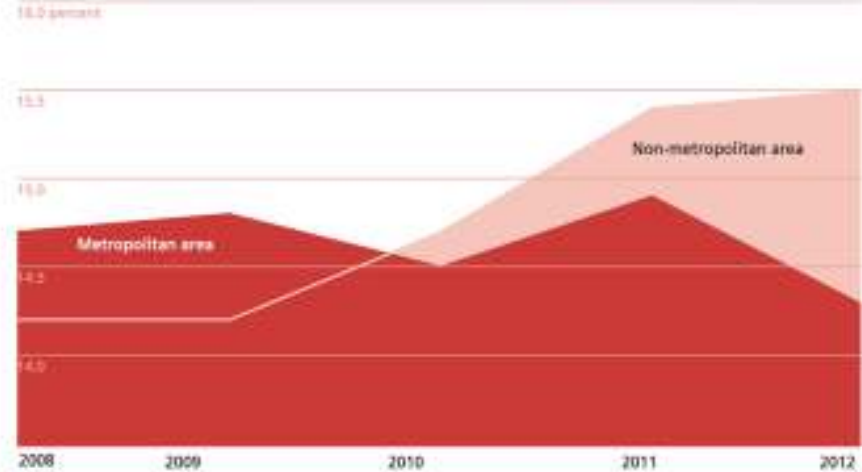


Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data, U.S. Census Bureau.

Rural Region

Regionally, households in the South have the highest rates of food insecurity, and this region includes a large number of rural areas. By examining spatial patterns of food insecurity, it is clear that while food is a household issue, it is shaped by larger patterns of spatial inequality in our economy (Piontak and Schulman, 2014). High unemployment rates are normalized in these areas, especially for the non-white constituents who make up a percentage of the population. These areas have "farm to table" food initiatives. The affordability of the "farm to table" food is typically overpriced because the supply is limited, creating another factor in the scarcity of food.

Percentage of Food Insecure Households by Metropolitan Status



Source: USDA Household Food Security: Annual Reports 2008-2012

On College Campus: Risk Factors

On college campuses, studies conducted show that there are different levels of food insecurity among college students. Risk factors such as being a first-generation student, coming from a single-parent household, and being disabled are just a few of these categories. The cost of tuition, the cost of housing, and overall institution fees contribute to the lack of money or financial support college students have to allocate to food. Wisconsin HOPE Lab states, “The cost of living is increasing, and the cost of a university education is increasing, students are facing basic needs security challenges at higher levels and in ways we haven’t expected (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, and Hernandez, 2017).

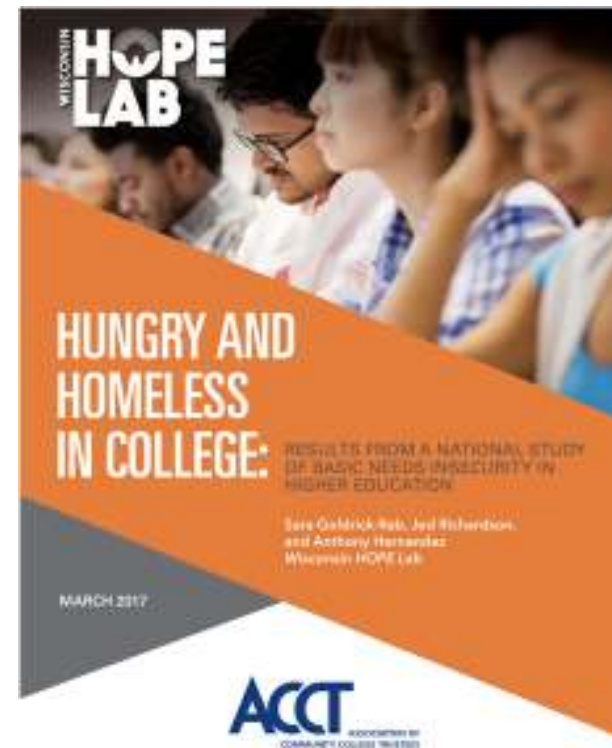
Table 1: Prevalence of Risk Factors Associated with Food Insecurity among Low-income U.S. College Undergraduate Students, by College Type in 2016

Risk factor	Total		4-year schools		2-year schools		Less than 2-year schools	
	Number of students	Percent of low-income students	Number of students	Percent of low-income students	Number of students	Percent of low-income students	Number of students	Percent of low-income students
First generation ¹	2,290,206	31%	1,015,283	28%	1,188,839	34%	95,053	35%
Receiving SNAP ²	2,287,121	31%	1,024,774	29%	1,128,133	33%	104,214	38%
Single parent	1,815,888	25%	756,385	21%	943,168	27%	115,602	42%
Disabled ³	1,591,962	22%	757,267	21%	773,159	22%	61,538	22%
Homeless or at risk of homeless	1,100,714	15%	504,397	14%	548,235	16%	57,082	21%
Former foster youth ⁴	788,866	11%	391,819	11%	371,419	11%	25,628	9%
Total Low-income students⁵	7,339,571	100%	3,597,419	100%	3,466,962	100%	275,291	100%

Source: GAO analysis of 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study Data. | GAO 17-46


On College Campus: Exhausted Resources

[Hungry & Homeless in College](#) study included 70 community colleges in 24 states; largest study to date (2017) included more than 33,000 students. In this report, we find that 67 percent of the students are food insecure (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, and Hernandez, 2017, p. 13). Students who are affected by this scarcity are already exhausted their financial resources. Between 31 and 32 percent of students experiencing food or housing insecurity were both working and receiving financial aid (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, and Hernandez, 2017).



References

- Appalachian Foodshed Project. (2012). Retrieved from <http://appalachianfoodshedproject.org/>
- Coleman-Jensen, A., Gregory, C. A., & Rabbitt, M. P. (2019, September 4). Definitions of Food Security. Retrieved February 23, 2020, from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>
- Dutko, Paula, Michele Ver Ploeg, & Tracey L. Farrigan. Characteristics and Influential Factors of Food Deserts. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2012. N. pag. Print.
- Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Hernandez, A. (2017). *Hungry and homeless in college: Results from a national study of basic needs insecurity in higher education*. University of Wisconsin - Madison. Madison: Wisconsin HOPE Lab.
- Host an Oxfam Hunger Banquet®. (n.d.). Retrieved February 23, 2020, from <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/take-action/events/oxfam-hunger-banquet/>
- King, M. (2019, July 17). *Education*. Retrieved from Politico: <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/07/17/hbcu-food-deserts-1531173>
- Morrison, R. M. (2019, September 12). Food Security and Nutrition Assistance. Retrieved February 23, 2020, from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-security-and-nutrition-assistance/>
- Nord M, Andrews M, Carlson S. Measuring Food Security in the United States: Household Food Security in the United States, 2005. Washington, DC: USDA Economic Research Service. Economic Research Report No. 29; 2007.
- Piontak, J. R., & Schulman, M. D. (2014). Food Insecurity in Rural America. *Contexts*, 13(3), 75–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504214545766>
- Twill, S. E., Bergdahl, J. & Fensler, R. (2016). Partnering to build a pantry: A university campus responds to student food insecurity. *Journal of Poverty*, 20 (30), 340-358.
- United States Government Accountability Office. *Food Insecurity: Better information could help eligible college students access federal food assistance benefits*. (2018, December 21). <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-95.pdf>
- What Is Food Insecurity in America? (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/understand-food-insecurity/>



How will we address food
insecurity issues on our
campus?

Food Insecurity Plan Proposal 2020-2021

Our mission: Western Carolina University is a public regional institution located in a rural area of the Smoky Mountains. Western Carolina University creates learning opportunities for teaching, research, service, and engagement serving all students. In order to best serve students, the university will ensure that all students are set up for success. Research shows that students who have secure access to food display more areas of success than those students that do not have secure access to food. Western Carolina University will focus intentionally on this issue by providing resources and education that can be built upon to more effectively address food insecurity.

Spring 2020

Our first step in addressing issues of food insecurity on our campus is to establish a university committee comprised of faculty, staff, and students. We propose establishing the committee in Spring 2020 to serve for one year, through the Spring 2021 semester. This committee should include:

- **Faculty from the Department of Health Sciences: Nutrition & Dietetics program**
 - To provide expertise on food insecurity and its effects on students
- **Staff from the Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning**
 - To coordinate partnerships with community and provide volunteers for programs
- **Staff from Campus Dining Services**
 - To provide insight on current food budgets and statistics on when, where, and how students utilize their meal cards
- **Faculty, Staff, and/or Student representatives from the Department of Campus Activities**
 - To assist with marketing of programs and fundraisers and to raise awareness of food insecurity issues
- **Faculty, Staff, and/or Student representatives from the Intercultural Affairs office**
 - To help raise awareness of food insecurity issues, end the stigma, and normalize asking for help when you need it

This committee will review applications and appoint a Graduate Assistant who will serve with the committee for Summer 2020 and the Academic Year 2020-2021.

Summer 2020

The university committee to address campus food insecurity will appoint a graduate assistant (GA) to serve summer 2020 and the academic year 2020-2021. We will invest our \$3000 into a summer research assistantship. The GA will be paid \$3000 to complete an assessment of the state of food insecurity on campus. Summer duties will also include assisting the committee with grant writing efforts and program planning for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Summer grant writing efforts will ensure funding for future programs and the continuation of pay for graduate assistants and research.

Summer 2020

Application for and Description of Summer Research Graduate Assistantship:

The University Committee on Food Insecurity and Education has funds available for a Summer Graduate Research Assistantship. Award includes a \$3000 stipend.

Purpose: To support the university committee in researching the state of food insecurity on WCU's campus; to support grant-writing efforts to bring continued funding into committee programs.

Work Requirements: 30 hours per week with a start date of May 11, 2020 and continuing to June 30, 2020. The pay date will be June 30, 2020.

Eligibility: Continuing resident credit program graduate students do not have to be enrolled for the 2020 summer term, but must be enrolled for the 2020 spring and 2020 fall terms.

Application Process and Deadline: Application deadline is Friday, March 13, 2020. Submit applications via online system; all attachments must be .pdf format.

Evaluation and Criteria: Applications will be reviewed by the committee. Preference will be given to students who indicate the ability and willingness to serve as a graduate assistant to the committee for the upcoming academic year.

Award Notification: Decision will be announced no later than April 3, 2020.

Fall 2020-Spring 2021

Once a graduate student assistant has been appointed for the summer research assistantship, efforts will be made to have the same graduate student serve on the University Committee for Food Insecurity & Education for the 2020-2021 academic year.

The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, Department of Health Sciences, Department of Campus Activities, and Intercultural Affairs office all have annual funding for graduate assistants. They will pull funds from each department to pay for one joint GA who serves them all via this university committee work.

Fall 2020-Spring 2021

For the 20-21 academic year, the university committee will adjust already existing programs to include food education curriculum:

Program: First Year Experience courses are offered to guide successful transitions to college. Students are introduced to the academic, procedural, and social elements of their new community. The objective is to help students make a seamless and holistic transition to WCU

Update: Include education on food security, nutrition, and campus and community resources

Rationalization: Including food education in the first year will normalize the conversation surrounding food insecurity and combat the stigma and shame associated with asking for help.



Stock image from pexels.com

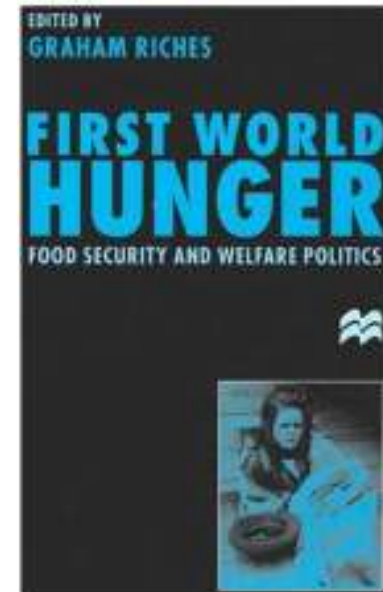
Fall 2020-Spring 2021

For the 20-21 academic year, the university committee will adjust already existing programs to include food education curriculum:

Program: First Year Experience's One Book common reading program is to engage first-year students, as well as the campus community, in a common intellectual experience that promotes critical thinking and interdisciplinary conversation.

Update: The theme and book selection for 20-21 will focus on food security and education. Our recommendations: *The Evolving Sphere of Food Security* and *First World Hunger: Food Security and Welfare Politics*. Final book selection will be made by the appointed university committee and the Office of First Year Experience.

Rationalization: Selecting a book about food insecurity will open dialogue around the issue, create opportunities for students to talk about their situations and learn from others, and normalize the conversation.



Fall 2020-Spring 2021

For the 20-21 academic year, the university committee will adjust already existing programs to include food education curriculum:

Program: The Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning has a theme for each academic year which guides its programs, partnerships, and volunteer efforts.

Update: The 20-21 theme will be food security and education. CCESL will focus its efforts this year on partnerships with local food banks and pantries, including Homebase College Outreach, Manna Food Bank, and the Community Table.

Rationalization: Focusing their volunteer opportunities on food security will bring awareness of the issue to campus faculty, staff, and students. Programs focused on food security and education will open dialogue around the issue and continue to reduce the stigma surrounding it. Partnerships with local organizations will increase faculty, staff, and student knowledge of local resources and make approaching these organizations easier.

Fall 2020-Spring 2021

For the 20-21 academic year, the university committee will implement new programs on food education through committee partnerships:

Program: Monthly food education series, offering classes on topics such as:

- How to budget
- Are you eligible for SNAP? How to apply
- Creative Meals Via Campus Dining Options
- Campus and Community Resources

Partners: The Department of Health Sciences, Nutrition & Dietetics program and Department of Campus Activities

Rationalization: Monthly courses will bring awareness of food insecurity issues and provide students with education on how to combat this issue personally and as a campus advocate for others.



Stock image from pexels.com

Fall 2020-Spring 2021

For the 20-21 academic year, the university committee will implement new programs on food education through committee partnerships:

Program: Poverty Simulations, Tours of Campus & Local Food Pantries

Partners: The department of Intercultural Affairs and the Department of Campus Activities

Rationalization: Similar to WCU's Tunnel of Oppression event, these simulations would put participants in the shoes of someone experiencing food insecurity. They would see and feel first-hand the struggles of someone facing this issue.

Program: OxFam Hunger Banquet

Partners: The Intercultural Affairs office, Department of Campus Activities, and Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning

Rationalization: The OxFam Hunger Banquet creates awareness of global hunger issues and gives participants the opportunity to experience situations of poverty. The goal of these events is to “help increase our power to respond to global crises, highlight issues of injustice, and change the laws that keep people trapped in poverty.”

Future Programs

Spring 2021: Appoint new or extend current university committee members for another year-long term of service on the food insecurity and education committee.

Summer 2021: Hire summer research graduate assistant to create food insecurity survey for students on campus and plan for 2021-2022 programs. The focus would be on donation of meal swipes at on-campus locations, and opportunities for food delivery services to campus mailboxes to maintain anonymity of students who request food donations.

Academic year 2021-2022: Trial run of new meal swipe donation and food delivery services, with evaluation of use to determine if programs are successful, being utilized by students, are cost-effective, and should continue for future academic years.