

Excerpts from Association of American Colleges & Universities at <https://www.aacu.org/aacu-news/newsletter/facts-figures/jan-feb2017>

Disproportionality Evident Among Students of Color, First Generation, and Community College Students – Food & Housing Insecure

A recent study, [Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students](#), looked at the responses from 3,800 students at thirty-four community colleges and four-year institutions. Among the students who responded from twelve states, there is a clear and common educational crisis of food and housing insecurity among students of color, community college attendees and first-generation students. For students struggling to pay rent, mortgages or utilities and who lack adequate nutrition, the study shows that these students are skipping classes, withdrawing from courses, or opting out of buying required textbooks.

These kinds of insecurities affect learning with 81 percent of the students in the study indicating that their academic performance was affected. The most common of these affects were:

- 53% missing class
- 54% missing study sessions
- 55% opting out of extracurricular activities
- 55% not buying textbooks

One quarter of the students dropped at least on class. Additionally, students facing food/housing insecurity ended up taking more developmental courses for reading, writing and mathematics causing these students to feel less on-track, confident, in control focused and interested in their school work. Many felt that attending college was less worthwhile, they felt less welcome by faculty, and felt less engaged both in and out of the classroom.

Efforts to earn money or tap into financial aid have not been successful ways to solve food insecurity. Fifty-six percent of the students in the study with food insecurity had paying jobs, 43 percent were enrolled in meal plans and 52 percent received Pell Grants. Thirty-seven percent took out loans and 25 percent used SNAP to help cover gaps in obtaining sufficient amounts of food.

What Can Be Done?

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.