High School To Higher Education: Supporting Students Through Coordinated Services

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Focus on the transition challenges homeless students face
- Identify the supports students need to be successful in college
- Discuss how a student worked with their University to bring awareness to their campus regarding students who are experiencing homelessness and how working with University officials to review policies on campus that were barriers for students and advocated for changes/amendments to policies
- Address what the University's and the State are doing to support students to stay in school, have a safe place to live during their college career, and graduate with a degree.
While in High School...

Discuss with students:

- Their learning styles and academic needs
- Community College vs. Universities
- What colleges may be a good fit based on their academic and personal needs

Take one minute and discuss with your neighbor other items that should be discussed with a student as they are thinking about college.
While Applying for College....

- Discuss with students:
  - Housing options - on campus or off campus
  - Transportation to college and around the campus
  - Campus visit options – virtual, on-site
  - Loans, grants, scholarships
  - Meal plans
  - Campus resources

Take one minute and discuss with your neighbor other items that should be discussed with a student as they are applying for college.
When Accepted to College...

Discuss with students:
- Dorm kits
- Review orientation and the importance of attending
- Transportation to orientation, for move in day, etc.
- Class Schedule
- Working – on/off campus options
- Supplies, including computers
- Ordering of books
- Resources on campus
- Connecting with a professor in the area they are interested to cultivate mentorship
When Classes Begin...

- Discuss with students:
  - Resources on campus
  - Financial Aid
  - Clergy
  - Student Services
  - Advisor for classes
  - Medical resources
  - Counseling
  - Nutrition/Meal Program
  - Emergency contacts
Holiday & Summer Breaks...

- Discuss with students:
  - Plans for where to stay when the dorm closes
  - Meal plan during the time campus is closed
  - Support systems – family, friends, community
  - Transportation needs
  - Other
What’s Next in Year 2, 3, 4 and Beyond!

- Time to talk with your neighbors. Four people to a group should discuss the following questions:

- What should students think about / know in their Sophomore, Junior and Senior years in college?
- How can you prepare them? Do you have a strategy to share?

Please be prepared to share with the group.
Making Changes & Removing Barriers

JORDYN

Jordyn has successfully navigated high school into higher education while experiencing homelessness.

In her video, major barriers, creative resources, collaboration between K-12 and higher education professionals will be discussed.
Questions?
Stay Connected

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Perspective from the College

- Learning about students experiencing homelessness
- Supporting our students experiencing homelessness
- What campus officials did for change
- Moving forward
Currently, 58,000 students are categorized as unaccompanied homeless by the federal government. Experts believe this figure is an underestimate since it only captures a very narrow segment of the homeless student population. For example, Goldrick-Rab and colleagues (2015) found that 13% of the students surveyed in their sample of 10 community colleges reported experiencing homelessness. These results suggest that the population of students experiencing homelessness may be much larger than is currently reported by the federal government.
New Program to Support College Students Experiencing Homelessness

Purpose of the Program

- Learn about the challenges students experiencing homelessness in higher education encounter.
- Decrease stigma felt by students
- Decrease social isolation
- To find possible ways to increase social capital amongst students experiencing homelessness in higher education.
- Make systemic change at the university level to ensure the retention and graduation of students experiencing homelessness
Components of Program

- Mentorship is the central component of the program- address stigma and social connection
- Provide social support through interacting with peers
- Provide service learning activities (Community In Schools)
- Provide some financial assistance
- Provide supplemental food and meal card assistance
- Prioritize students in program for Work Study
- Fundraise to provide summer school scholarships and other needs
- Increase social capital through fostering social belonging
Social Capital Through Game Night

- It is posited that social capital can be increased amongst college students experiencing homelessness through engagement of the university community and broader geographical community with the students. One type of a community engaged activity is **Game Night**.
- Community members, university volunteer students and faculty, and students experiencing homelessness could play board games and eat free food in a nonthreatening environment. It would allow students to informally interact and build relationships with new community members.
- Positive social connections could result in help with basic needs, internship opportunities, job opportunities, and emotional support system.
Students experiencing homelessness would build social connections which could lead to social and economic opportunities.

The social and economic opportunities could lead to immediate benefits in the form of internships and part-time employment during college.

The social and economic opportunities could also lead to after graduation opportunities in the form of career advancement.

Social connections can also ameliorate the social isolation and stigma that students experiencing homelessness endure on a daily basis.

Higher Education Institutions would benefit from the retention of a highly motivated and resilient segment of the student body.
Introduction

Students experiencing homelessness are often invisible on university campuses. Currently, 58,000 students are categorized as unaccompanied homeless youth by the federal government. However, experts believe this figure is an underestimate since it only captures a very narrow segment of the homeless student population. For example, Goldrick-Rab and colleagues (2015) found that 13% of the students surveyed in their sample of 10 community colleges reported experiencing homelessness. These results suggest that the population of students experiencing homelessness may be much larger than is currently reported by the federal government.

Challenges Faced

Students experiencing homelessness face many challenges to success while attending college. Homelessness is highly stigmatized in the U.S., thus students often experience social isolation. Social isolation leads to a lack of social capital. Social capital is the foundations of Bourdieu’s theory of capital. Bourdieu posited that social integration leads to social capital. Bourdieu defined social capital as the powerful and influential social networks to which people have access to in society. These networks buffer them from lack of resources and enable them to maneuver through society with less effort due to their privileged relationships with people of power and influence.

A possible way to increase social capital amongst students experiencing homelessness is through increasing Social Capital for students and Higher Education Institutions.

Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Capital

Bourdieu’s theory of capital involves the structure of the social world, specifically the effects of social class (Bourdieu, 1986 & Weininger, 2005). Social class is a complex construct which involves the stratified socioeconomic hierarchy present in society (Bourdieu, 1986 & Weininger, 2005). This stratification privileges some and disadvantages others. Bourdieu postulated that the privilege of those in the upper class manifests itself in the form of power, and power is embodied in various forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, extant members who are rich in capital inhabit a social class position which buffers them from lack of resources and enables them to maneuver through society with less effort due to their privileged relationships to people of power and influence.

Bourdieu posited that social integration leads to social capital. Thus powerful and influential social networks buffer people from lack of resources and enable them to maneuver through society with less effort due to their privileged relationships with people of power and influence (Bourdieu, 1986 & Weininger, 2005).

A Novel Approach to Increasing Social Capital

Given this theoretical stance, it is posited that social capital can be increased amongst college students experiencing homelessness through engagement of the university community and broader geographical community with the students. One type of community engaged activity is Game Night.

During Game Night, community members, university volunteer students and faculty, and students experiencing homelessness could play board games and eat food in a nonthreatening environment. It would allow students to informally interact and build relationships with new community members. Such an activity could lead to an increase in social capital in the form of positive social connections. Positive social connections could result in help with basic needs, internship opportunities, job opportunities, and emotional support systems.

Current Needs

A comprehensive data collection and tracking system to identify homeless students in higher education
Summer Bridge Programs to ensure a seamless transition from high school to Higher Education
Prioritized Work Study Opportunities for students experiencing homelessness
Prioritized on-campus housing for students experiencing homelessness
Aid in Enrolling in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Direct assistance with completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) during Senior Year of High School and throughout university tenure to decrease FAFSA rejection rates.
Housing assistance during winter break and throughout the summer

Implications

This study aims to educate readers on:

• The challenges students experiencing homelessness in higher education encounters.
• Bourdieu’s theory of Social Capital.
• A possible way to increase social capital amongst students experiencing homelessness in higher education.
• The current needs that need to be addressed by higher institutions of learning to address the issue of homelessness on campuses.
• The implications for increasing Social Capital for students and Higher Education Institutions.

References

Goldrick-Rab and colleagues (2015).
Working Together for Change: NCHEP, Homeless Liaisons & Higher Education

- Single Points of Contact (SPOCs)
  - Financial Aid Advisors to Student Support
- Annual webinars
  - The law, FAFSA, and supporting students experiencing homelessness
- Needs Assessments - local and state level
- State Surveys with SPOC, LL’s, Counselors
- Campus Surveys of homelessness, food insecurity, and needs of students
- Focus Groups – SPOC’s and LL’s
- Regional Meetings – Administrators and SPOCs in Community Colleges, LLs
- Verification Form - electronic
- Compliance Forums – 12 in the state for LEAs, Charters, Virtual and Lab Schools
- Annual Conference – Higher Education Sessions
- Monitoring
- Homeless Liaisons and SPOCs review webinar training together
A Work In Progress

- Developing a check list for homeless liaisons, social workers and counselors to use with students on what they need to know and consider
- Check list on website for students to access when in college each year of items to consider and learn about
- A free mobile app that students can download and locate community resources
- For each Community College and University to offer housing, especially when there are breaks from learning.
- For each Community College and University to offer a food pantry, supply corner, and clothing closet.
- For an annual assessment be conducted by campuses to determine student needs and provide resources or have fund raisers to support student needs
- For a Higher Education Homeless Liaison on every campus!
- State Coordinator for Higher Education!
- And MANY others!
State & Community Partners

- College Foundation of NC (CFNC)
- College Foundation, Inc.
- Residential Determination Services (RDS)
- NC State Education Assistance Authority
- University of NC System
- NC Community College System
- NC Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council for Homeless Programs
- NC Student Grants for College Program
- NC Coalition to End Homeless
- Shelters: Youth and Adult
- Continuum of Care
- NC Exceptional Children's Council and Assistance Center
Resources

- NC Homeless Education Program
  https://hepnc.uncg.edu/ and http://www.ncpublicschools.org/

- National Center for Homeless Education
  https://nche.ed.gov/

- US Department of Education – Education for Homeless Children and Youth
  https://search.usa.gov/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&affiliate=ed.gov&query=homeless

- UNC Pembroke
  https://www.uncp.edu/