Student Affairs Committee

Food Insecurity on Campus

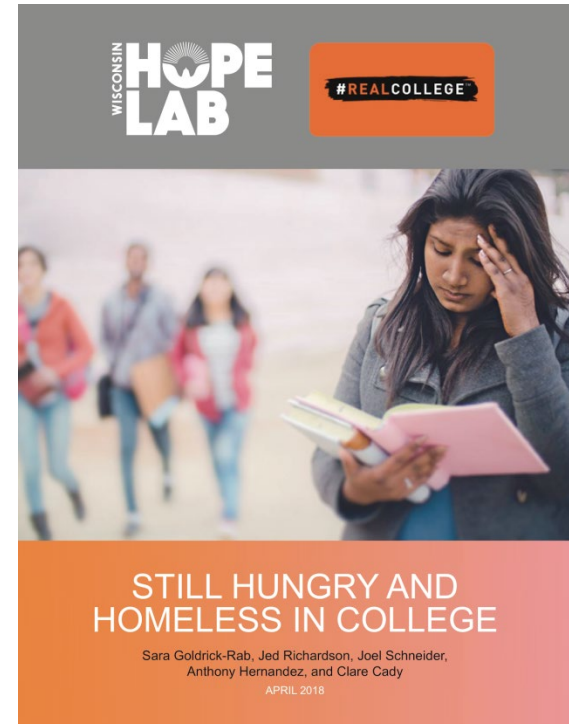April 5, 2019

UNIVERSITY SENATE

eat right.

The Struggle Is Real: A Systematic Review of Food Insecurity on Postsecondary Education Campuses

WHEN STUDENTS ARE HUNGRY

An Examination of Food Insecurity in Higher Education

Cheryl Sternman Rule, Ed.M., Bon Appétit Management Company
Anthony Abraham Jack, Ph.D., Harvard University

WISCONSIN HOPE LAB

#REALCOLLEGE

STILL HUNGRY AND HOMELESS IN COLLEGE

Sara Goldrick-Rab, Jed Richardson, Joel Schneider, Anthony Hernandez, and Clare Cady
APRIL 2018

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Defining Food Insecurity

The USDA offers two categories of food insecurity:

- **Low food security**, also known as *Food insecurity without hunger.* Individuals in this category report "reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet" but with "little or no indication of reduced food intake."

- **Very low food security,** also known as *Food insecurity with hunger.* Individuals in this category report "multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake."

In sum: Students who are food insecure have *inconsistent* or *intermittent* access to meals marked by periods of uncertainty. When food is available, it may not be *affordable, nutritionally adequate,* or *safe to eat.* Food insecurity is a physiological, economic, and social condition—"a significant public health concern."

Sternman Rule, C., & Abraham Jack, A. (2018). *When Students Are Hungry: An Examination of Food Insecurity in Higher Education.* Bon Appétit and Harvard University. Retrieved from http://www.bamco.com/timeline/food-insecurity-report/

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Scope of the Problem

Largest national survey assessing basic needs security of university students. Sample is of 43,000 students at 66 institutions in 20 states and D.C. This includes over 20,000 students at 35 4-year colleges and universities, as well as students at community colleges.

Findings:
- 36% of university students were food insecure in the 30 days preceding the survey.

Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., Schneider, J., Hernandez, A., & Cady, C. (2018). *Still hungry and homeless in college*. University of Wisconsin–Madison. Retrieved from https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Wisconsin-HOPE-Lab-Still-Hungry-and-Homeless.pdf

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Scope: Narrowing In (cont.)

Groups that tend to be disproportionately food insecure at colleges and universities include students of color, first-generation students, older students, students who work longer hours at their jobs, students from the foster care system, veterans, and students who identify as LGBTQ.

Food insecurity also exists at wealthy, well-funded, elite institutions—especially for students from low-income backgrounds, emancipated students, and international students.

Sternman Rule, C., & Abraham Jack, A. (2018). *When Students Are Hungry: An Examination of Food Insecurity in Higher Education*. Bon Appétit and Harvard University. Retrieved

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Food Insecurity at Columbia

FOOD INSECURITY

Food Security by Cumulative GPA Group
(3-point scale)

■ Very Low Food Security ■ Low Food Security ■ High or Marginal Food Security
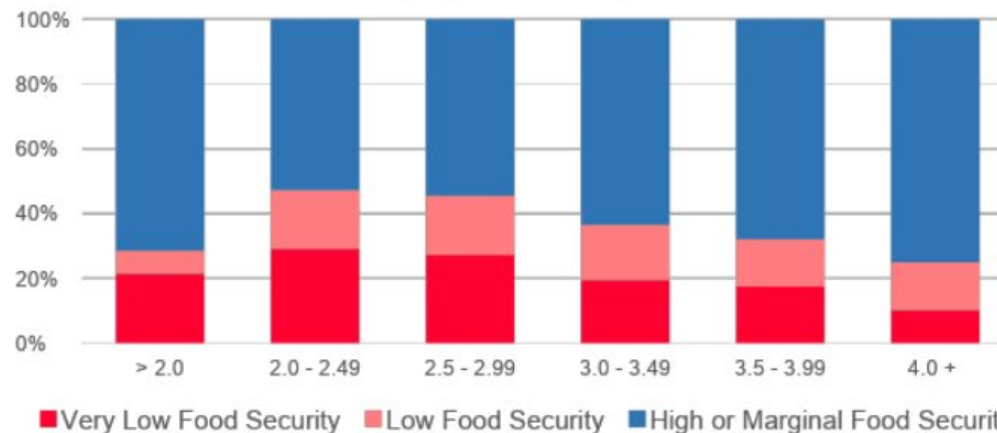
Program Type	Very Low Food Security	Low Food Security	High or Marginal Food Security
2.0 – 2.49	16 (29%)	10 (18%)	29 (53%)
2.5 – 2.99	51 (27%)	34 (18%)	102 (55%)
3.0 – 3.49	83 (19%)	73 (17%)	271 (63%)
3.5 – 3.99	101 (17%)	82 (15%)	394 (68%)
4.0 +	9 (10%)	13 (15%)	66 (75%)
	260 (19%)	215 (16%)	862 (65%)

Food Pantry - Historical Overview

Since its founding, the Food Pantry at Columbia has:

- Received the Virginia Xanthos Awards from Columbia Community Service

- Partnered with the New York City Food Bank

- Partnered with Corbin Hills Food Project

- Surpassed 1,500 disbursements to 20 of the 21 schools at Columbia

In additional, several leading universities have reached out to the Food Pantry at Columbia to learn how to replicate our success.

The Food Pantry today

Today, the Food Pantry at Columbia:

- Is the only student-run and fully operational food pantry in any of the eight Ivy League institutions

- Is contributing to research pertaining to food insecurity

- Has grown from two volunteers to 145 volunteers, seven committees, and an eight-person Executive Board

- Is the focal point at Columbia in addressing issues pertaining to food insecurity. *Because of the Food Pantry, Columbia is leading the way in addressing the issue of food insecurity.*

Obstacles

Unfortunately, the Food Pantry at Columbia has continued to face obstacles to its continued success:

- Campus awareness

- Space

- Financial security and stability

Progress Addressing Obstacles

Recently, progress had been made in regard to several of these issues, in large part thanks to work done in Senate committees:

- Progress towards a satellite location at CUIMC

- Greater Senate awareness

- Successful first-annual Hunger Awareness Week, in partnership with the First Generation Low Income Partnership (FLIP)

However, more work is needed to ensure the Food Pantry's continued success!

The Columbia Community

The GS Senator recently released a questionnaire asking GS students questions pertaining to food insecurity. Of 266 students who answered "yes" to 1 or more questions indicating food insecurity, 205 had not used the Food Pantry. Of those 205, 76 students, or almost 40%, did not even know about the Food Pantry. Numbers at other colleges are likely even more dire.

- Students are largely navigating this public health concern alone, by the efforts of a dedicated group of volunteer students.

- The primary response to food insecurity is continued growth in financial aid for students. However, the food pantry provides an immediate way to address an immediate concern, and it needs broader support.

What more can be done?

- With constant fluctuations in the student body due to incoming and outgoing students, too many students with food insecurity are unaware of the Food Pantry and other resources available to them.

- *An email, once per semester, from the Office of the Provost or the Office of University Life would ensure all students, in all colleges across all Columbia campuses are aware of the Food Pantry and other food insecurity resources.*

- Support for the Food Pantry could also be financial in nature; even an allocation of $5,000 or $10,000 per year would make a large impact.

Institutionalization

Institutionalizing the Food Pantry at Columbia via administrative, financial, or other means of support from the broader Columbia community will ensure Columbia University continues to lead the Ivy League (and higher-ed in general) in addressing food insecurity on college and university campuses.

Next Steps

The Student Affairs Committee and the Food Pantry at Columbia will continue to seek out means of ensuring that food insecurity is understood and addressed at Columbia. Both bodies welcome faculty or administrators who are interested in participating in these efforts.

Interested parties can contact:

- Sen. Jonathan Criswell, School of General Studies
    - jdc2216@columbia.edu
- Michael Higgins, Co-founder and Chair, the Food Pantry at Columbia
    - mh3219@columbia.edu
- To learn more about the Food Pantry at Columbia visit:
  https://thefoodpantry.studentgroups.columbia.edu

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APPENDIX

Table 2
Food Insecurity Among Undergraduates

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4
Food Security Level				
High Security (score = 0)[a]	32.62	47.90	39.42	43.17
Marginal Security (score = 1)	11.56	12.88	10.03	47.23
Low Security (score = 2–4)	22.81	19.41	23.63	
Very Low Security (score = 5–6)	33.01	19.81	26.91	9.60
Items				
1. The food that I bought just did not last and I did not have money to get more.	51.53	38.44	41.91	20.04
2. I could not afford to eat balanced meals.	59.50	43.23	46.97	NA
3. Any days: Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there was not enough money for food?	46.01	27.21	41.51	20.90
4. 3+ days/months:[b] Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there was not enough money for food?	31.79	21.94	19.58	NA
5. Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there was not enough money for food?	43.31	25.78	37.21	20.72
6. Were you ever hungry but did not eat because there was not enough money for food?	36.37	21.59	30.35	NA
N	26,067	3,921	1,007	1,427

Bruening, M., Argo, K., Payne-Sturges, D., & Laska, M. N. (2017). The Struggle Is Real: A Systematic Review of Food Insecurity on Postsecondary Education Campuses. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, *117*(11), 1767–1791. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2017.05.022

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Table 4
Variation in Food and Housing Security Status by Institutional Sector

| | Food Security Status | | | | | | Housing Security Status | | | | |
	High Security	Marginal Security	Low Security	Very Low Security	χ^2	N	Housing Insecure	χ^2	Homeless	χ^2	N
Study 3 (all)	39.42	10.03	23.63	26.91		1,007	15.07		2.30		1,002
Institutional Sector					*			***		**	
2-Year College	27.73	8.40	26.05	37.82		119	48.31		5.93		118
4-Year College	40.99	10.25	23.31	25.45		888	10.63		1.81		884
Study 4 (all)	43.17	NA	47.23	9.60		1,427	23.96		NA	NA	1,436
Institutional Sector								***			
2-Year College	45.49	NA	43.38	11.13		521	32.31		NA	NA	523
4-Year College	41.83	NA	49.45	8.72		906	19.17		NA	NA	913

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Historical Overview:

"Columbia University in New York, N.Y., opened its first food pantry during finals week in 2016. It was the first Ivy League to do so…after encountering initial resistance, the Food Pantry has since relocated to a more permanent spot three times as large. This resource, as well as others like a swipe share program and an anonymous digital platform where students could see where they could get free food, began with students."

Sternman Rule, C., & Abraham Jack, A. (2018). *When Students Are Hungry: An Examination of Food Insecurity in Higher Education*. Bon Appétit and Harvard University. Retrieved from http://www.bamco.com/timeline/food-insecurity-report/

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