

University of Central Florida

From the Selected Works of Andrew Ezigbo

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Homelessness and Hunger in College

Andrew Ezigbo, *University of Central Florida*



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Introduction

- ❑ College leaders are noting a rise in hunger, homelessness among enrolled students (Levenson, 2017).
- ❑ Food and housing insecurity are prevalent among many community college students. A survey of 4,000 students at 10 community colleges revealed that more than half are at risk of hunger or homelessness (Wisconsin Hope Lab, 2015).
- ❑ A student is considered homeless if he or she lacks fixed, regular, and adequate housing. This includes students who are living in shelters, motels, cars, or parks, or who are temporarily living with other people because they have nowhere else to go. Students are also considered homeless if they are fleeing an abusive parent(s) who would otherwise provide the student with financial support and a place to live. (Students who are 22 and 23 years old who are unaccompanied and homeless or self-supporting and at risk of becoming homeless qualify for a dependency override (U. S. Dept. of Education).



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Andrew Ezigbo, Civic Engagement LEAD Scholar

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Data Analysis

Research Finding 1: *The third annual Massachusetts Department of Higher Education survey of the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities found that most campuses are seeing an increase in student hunger and homelessness. Many reasons were proposed to explain the increases, including cost of living, lack of family support, low-paying jobs and financial aid issues (2016 Hunger & Homelessness Survey, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education).*

Research Finding 2: *Homeless and hungry college students are often “invisible” students (Paden, 2012).*

Research Finding 3: *A new trend has arisen: Hungry college students are turning to food pantries on college and university campuses.*

Why Does this Research Matter?

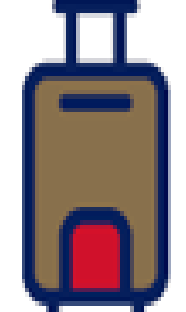
34% 
of campuses report an increase in students being served by food pantries

Student homelessness on the rise
A record number of students became homeless in 2012, with the homeless student population growing steadily in many states to include tens of thousands of children.

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SCHOOL, 2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR.

STATE	NUMBER OF HOMELESS STUDENTS ENROLLED	PERCENT CHANGE BETWEEN 2011-2012
California	248,904	13%
New York	96,881	7%
Texas	94,624	11%
Florida	63,414	13%
Michigan	43,418	42%
Illinois	43,025	11%
Kentucky	35,658	5%
Georgia	34,101	7%
Arizona	31,178	>1%
North Carolina	27,652	53%
Pennsylvania	19,905	7%
National	1,168,354	10%

Source: U.S. Department of Education Post-Gazette

45% 
of campuses report an increase in student homelessness

Social Implications

- ✓ “Food insecurity among college students is an important public health concern that might have implications for academic performance, retention, and graduation rates” (Payne-Sturges, 2017).
- ✓ Food insecurity among college students is higher than the national average of 12.7 percent. Prevalence studies report a range of 14–59 percent of students being food insecure at some point during their college career.
- ✓ Food secure students are less likely to report depression symptoms than at-risk or food insecure students.
- ✓ Universities that measure food insecurity among their students are better able to support inclusion and diversity. These institutions will also be better positioned to advocate for policy changes at state and federal levels—based on data—regarding college affordability and student financial assistance.
- ✓ Colleges and universities can provide crucial support to homeless and hungry college students, while also providing invaluable civic engagement and volunteer opportunities to students who are not at-risk.

Recommendations

- **MORE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES SHOULD:**
 - Establish campus food programs, such as *The Knights Helping Knights Food Pantry* on the University of Central Florida campus, as students are struggling to balance their education expenses with their basic needs.
 - Partner with local businesses to redistribute surplus food and bakery items.
 - Create student-run community gardens and arboretums to support homeless and hungry students.
 - Use Financial Aid Office to provide greater awareness of special conditions for homeless and hungry students in terms of receiving federal aid.

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ON CAMPUS FOOD PANTRY
OFFERS PEER TO PEER CHARITY

