Addressing Students’ Basic Needs with a Culture of Caring

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Have you heard about college “kids” these days?

Babies and College Students:

- Ability to sleep anywhere
- Random bouts of crying
- Will try to eat almost anything
- Enjoy watching cartoons
- Known for their messiness
- Brains are in a constant state of absorbing knowledge
- Irregular sleep schedules
- Often served bland mushy foods
“I want to get a decent job and support my family.”

“I need to finish what I started.”

“This isn’t about me.”
The data stand in sharp contrast to the stereotypes.

Even the 18 year olds in college aren’t “kids” anymore.

This is #RealCollege
If we are going to help students fight for graduation, we have to get real...
The New Economics of College

- College prices are higher than ever
- Most family incomes are stagnant
- The safety net is shredded
- Work doesn’t pay
- Many colleges are underfunded
“I’m having trouble providing for my mom.. at times she needs help so I’ve been helping with her bills...Yeah sometimes I feel like I don’t want to pay for this, but at the same time, when I look back and I needed this when I was younger, she worked hard for me.”  #FamilyMatters
CASH RULES EVERYTHING AROUND ME
It’s easy to forget Maslow
I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.

Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn’t enough money for food?

Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?

**3 or more days:** Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?

Did you lose weight because there wasn’t enough money for food??

I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more.

The food that I bought just didn't last and I didn’t have money to get more.

Were you ever hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food?

Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?

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## Housing Security & Homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Secure</th>
<th>Insecure</th>
<th>Homeless</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Items</td>
<td>Any Item</td>
<td>Any Item</td>
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- **Moved in with other people**
- **Not knowing where you were going to sleep, even for one night**
- **Moved two or more times**
- **Did not pay full amount of utilities**
- **Had a rent increase that made it difficult to pay**
- **Did not pay full amount of rent**
- **Lived with others beyond the expected capacity of the housing**
- **Thrown out of home**
- **Stayed in an abandoned building, car, other place not meant for housing**
- **Stayed in a shelter**
- **Evicted from home**
33,000 students
70 community colleges
24 states

56% food insecure
51% housing insecure
14% homeless
The numbers look similar across Texas, in our studies and others’ like Trellis

- Amarillo College
- DCCCD
- HCC
• 20,000 students
• 35 universities
• 14 states

• 36% food insecure
• 36% housing insecure
• 9% homeless
Homeless Prevalence
Last 12 Months

- White & non-LGBTQ: 4%
- Black & non-LGBTQ: 7%
- White & LGBTQ: 8%
- Black & LGBTQ: 16%
Homeless Prevalence
Last 12 Months

- Parent & Community College: 11%
- Veteran & Community College: 14%
- Pell & Community College: 15%
- Former Foster Youth: 24%
Students enduring poverty spend as much time on college, but more time working & less time sleeping.
Without their basic needs secured, students feel ashamed, alone, and unable to focus on learning. They often feel hopeless.
We can and must do better.
Step 1:
Remember, students are humans first.
Step 2:
Commit to a culture of caring that goes beyond charity. Change systems, policies, and practices.

See our case study on Amarillo College!
Step 3:

Ask questions. Most colleges have some resources to help students. For online students, their communities do too.

College staff do not have to turn into social workers—but everyone needs to know one.
Expand those resources and advertise them:

- Build new partnerships with housing authorities, food banks, childcare providers, mechanics, accountants, lawyers, faith-based communities, and so on...
- Offer benefits access
- Expand emergency funds: aim for grants without repayment delivered in 2-3 days
- Co-location and integration helps
You have wonderful examples throughout Texas:

- Food scholarships in Houston *(go JoEllen & Shar-day)*
- Benefits access via Aunt Bertha in Dallas
- Burgeoning community partnerships in El Paso and San Antonio
- *But most are now doing referrals & food assistance, while few are supporting housing and public benefits access*
Step 4: Share information on the syllabus.

“Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess.”
Step 5: Do the #RealCollege survey. Share the data. Share the stories. Humanize. Destigmatize.
Advocate

• For greater access to public benefits for college students
• For expanding the national school lunch program
• For affordable housing and childcare
• For work that pays
• For a financing model for public higher education that is inclusive and effective.
#RealCollege is a movement- and a conference
Sept 28-29, 2019 at HCC!

RealCollege.org
Stay in touch

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