Community of Care: Basic Needs Security @ CSU

Jennie Baran, Michael Buttram, Shay Lentz, & Lindsay Mason
Colorado State University acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations and peoples. This was also a site of trade, gathering, and healing for numerous other Native tribes. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as original stewards of this land and all the relatives within it. As these words of acknowledgment are spoken and heard, the ties Nations have to their traditional homelands are renewed and reaffirmed.

CSU is founded as a land-grant institution, and we accept that our mission must encompass access to education and inclusion. And, significantly, that our founding came at a dire cost to Native Nations and peoples whose land this University was built upon. This acknowledgment is the education and inclusion we must practice in recognizing our institutional history, responsibility, and commitment.
What are basic needs?

Food, shelter, health, transportation, connection
Definitions

**Food Insecurity (USDA)**

**Marginal food security:** Reports anxiety about accessing adequate food, but the variety and quantity were not substantially reduced.

**Low food security:** Reports of reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.

**Very low food security:** Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.


---

**Housing Insecurity**

One agreed upon definition does not exist, but it does include inability to pay rent or utilities\(^1\), the need to move frequently\(^1\), cost-burdened rental rates\(^2\), fear of eviction\(^2\), couch surfing, living in a car, and homelessness.


Individual Impact

Academic
• GPA
• Retention and persistence
• Graduation rates

Health and Wellness
• Loss of self-esteem or belief that one can succeed
• Depression, anxiety, and other mental health consequences
• Impacts physical health
40% said financial concerns have caused them to neglect their academic work

33% said financial concerns caused them to reduce their class load

39% said financial concerns caused them to consider dropping out of college

Study on Collegiate Financial Wellness

- Spring 2020
- CSU N = 764
- Multi-institutional survey administered by the Center for the Study of Student Life and College of Education and Human Ecology and The Ohio State University
Inclusion
We create and nurture inclusive environments and welcome, value and affirm all members of our community, including their various identities, skills, ideas, talents and contributions.

Integrity
We are accountable for our actions and will act ethically and honestly in all our interactions.

Respect
We honor the inherent dignity of all people within an environment where we are committed to freedom of expression, critical discourse, and the advancement of knowledge.

Service
We are responsible, individually and collectively, to give of our time, talents, and resources to promote the well-being of each other and the development of our local, regional, and global communities.

Social Justice
We have the right to be treated and the responsibility to treat others with fairness and equity, the duty to challenge prejudice, and to uphold the laws, policies and procedures that promote justice in all respects.
What's the University's role/obligation?

*Access without support is not opportunity.*
- Vincent Tinto –

CSU is committed to living up to its mission as a land grant institution. We do this by broadening the doors of access to students from populations traditionally disenfranchised from higher education. But as the above quote from Vincent Tinto aptly states, access alone is not enough. In order to provide true opportunity to every student who enters our classrooms we must be honest about the realities our students face. We must contend with the alarming data that tells a story of too many students having to forego meals or spend periods of time without a stable roof over their heads in order to pursue a degree.
Food Security is a Social Justice Issue

Food Insecurity is the result of "inequitable distribution of resources and uneven relations of power" (p.4).

These inequities do not exist in silos and are reflective of the relationship between whiteness and power.

Food Justice and Food Sovereignty "aim to institutionalize equity in and control over the food system" (p.3), from production through consumption.

Food Justice means addressing how the following factors perpetuate food insecurity and hunger:

- Structural Racism and Classism
- Land rights and sovereignty
- Labor and worker's rights

What does the data tell us?

2 poll questions
• 55% of respondents experienced at least one form of basic needs security, including:
  • 29% of students experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days
  • 43% of students experienced housing insecurity in the previous year
  • 17% of students experienced homelessness in the previous year

• 13% of respondents who experienced basic needs insecurity used emergency aid, but 43% had not heard of emergency aid programs on campus.

• 55% of respondents experiencing basic needs insecurity did not apply for campus supports because they did not know how.

• 37% of respondents experiencing basic needs insecurity received some form of public assistance.

Food insecurity examples: Worried about running out of food before having money to buy more, not be able to afford balanced meals, reducing the size of meals.

Housing insecurity examples: Did not pay utilities on time, did not pay rent or mortgage on time, moved in with others due to financial problems, left household because they felt unsafe.

Homelessness examples: Self-identified as homeless, temporarily lived in a hotel/motel with a permanent home to return to, lived in a camper or RV, temporarily stayed with friend or relative or couch surfed.
• 33% of respondents had a close friend or family member who was sick with COVID-19, while 5% were sick with COVID-19 themselves.

• 41% of respondents reported experiencing at least moderate anxiety, while 35% reported experiencing at least moderate depression.

• 88% had difficulty concentrating in classes and 41% had problems with internet or computer access since the spring of 2020.

• 38% of students with part-time jobs lost their jobs.

• 56% of parenting students reported helping their children with schooling while attending classes and 49% missed work or class due to childcare arrangements.
• 78% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed they feel stressed about their personal finances in general.

• 48% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed they worry about being able to pay their current monthly expenses.

• 63% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed they worry about having enough money to pay for school.
• Food insecurity is significantly higher for marginalized populations

• Identifying as low or very low food secure:
  • Latinx: 63%
  • Black/African American: 60%
  • American Indian/Native Alaskan: 53%
  • LGTBQ: 49%
  • First-gen: 57%
  • Off-campus: 53%
How does CSU support basic needs?
1. Foster **Intentional Partnerships** and outreach to on-campus programs and offices where students regularly seek support

2. Train faculty and staff to identify, respond and refer students to appropriate point of contact

3. Address and **combat** institutional and systemic barriers services/resources
1) Foster **Intentional Partnerships and outreach**

Why?

- Demographic disparities in Basic Needs Insecurity
- Address lack of awareness and stigma in safe spaces
- Foster the most appropriate and student-centered referrals
- Increase sense of community, most especially throughout COVID


Let us know, we will come to you!
Campus Resources:

Food Security
• Rams Against Hunger (RAH): SLICE Office and LSC Theatre
• SNAP Outreach: Student Case Management – SNAP4Rams@colostate.edu

Housing Security
• Rent/Utility Assistance: Student Case Management – Help4Rams@colostate.edu
• Housing search: Off-Campus Life (OCL)
• Housing Voucher Application: Student Case Management – Help4Rams@colostate.edu

Transportation Security
• Transfort
• RamRide: RamRide x Lyft, RamRide Secure

Health/Medical Security
• Medicaid Application – Colorado Peak
• Health Network

Connection
• Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement (SLICE)
• Student Affairs, Academic Colleges, and many more
SNAP4Rams

Students CAN be eligible for SNAP!

The GAO estimates that 57% of students at risk of food insecurity and eligible for SNAP did not collect those benefits (Hope Center, 2019). Why?

• **Stigma:** often politically and socially motivated. Food insecurity is a systemic issue, not that of an individual.

• **Barriers:** application process, lack of information, transportation

• **Eligibility Standards:** changes due to COVID waivers!

Myth Busting:

• **Available to those who qualify:** Participating in SNAP doesn’t take benefits away from anyone else.

• **It’s your Money:** You’ve paid into the system with your taxes. For every dollar spent by SNAP, $1.7 are added to the economy!

• **Convenient and discreet:** It looks and works just like a debit card. Up to $234 per month for one-person household.

• **Children of undocumented individuals can be eligible**
How to Access these Services as a CSU Community Member

• Browse out website for more detailed student and staff eligibility requirements. You can also fill out a brief eligibility screening and we will contact you!

• Contact SNAP4Rams@colostate.edu for more information and to set up an appointment to submit application remotely
  • Ask about a WIC or LEAP referral or Medicaid application!

• Visit the Rams Against Hunger Food Pantry to apply in-person (Wednesday and Thursday; 4pm-7pm).
Food Security Programs supporting our RAM Community

- Meal Swipe Program
- RAH Food Pantry
- In-person and virtual assistance with SNAP Benefits
- Pocket Pantries
- Ram Food Recovery (currently not operating)
- RamRide Food Ops
Students apply online. Recipients receive meals loaded onto their RamCard.

Criteria for qualifying:
- Have an Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) of $15,000 or less based on FAFSA or CSU Asset Bill Institutional Aid Application.
- No current meal plan in the dining halls.
- Undergraduate student enrolled in 6 or more credits.

Over 800 applicants last year; ~425 accommodated this semester.

Paid for primarily through Donations.

Also, students can donate 2 unused guest passes (1 x per semester).
Rams Against Hunger Food Pantry

To help address financial stress and food insecurity, Rams Against Hunger offers a permanent food pantry on campus.

Hours of operation are as follows:

- Wednesdays: 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- Thursdays: 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- Fridays: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

RAH is committed to serving ALL members of the CSU community (students, faculty and staff). As a Partner Agency of the local food bank, we'll serve anyone who walks through the doors.
Pocket Pantries

- Small food pantries stocked with “grab n’ go” style food (granola bars, cereal, soup, noodles, etc.)
- Stocked and paid for by ASCSU

Locations currently operating
- ASCSU Plaza Entrance (LSC Level 200)
- Aggie Family Village – International Wing
- University Apartments

Locations "on pause" due to COVID
- S.D.P.S. Kitchens (LSC Level 200/300)
- CSU Counseling Center (3rd level Health Network)
- ALVS Kitchen
- Fostering Success/Student Achievement (Stadium, East Side Room 269)
Housing

- Energy Outreach Colorado – Student Case Management
- Housing voucher application – Student Case Management and Off-Campus Life
- Emergency rent assistance – Student Case Management, Off-Campus Life, Office of Financial Aid
- Small pilot of affordable apartments at Prospect Plaza – 10 students, $325/month

- Student Case Management and Off-Campus Life also offer:
  - 1:1 appointments to help navigate housing security resources
  - Referrals to community resources
    - Neighbor to Neighbor
    - City of Fort Collins Social Sustainability Services
    - Free laundry services
2) Train faculty and staff to **identify**, **respond** and **refer** students to appropriate point of contact

“Students dealing with basic needs insecurity often exhibit symptoms in the classroom.” (Hope Crafting Basic Needs, p. 2).

- Faculty as first point of contact;
  - Important role in reducing lack of awareness and stigma.
  - Negative impact on academics can prompt student to reach out when they might otherwise not have.
Recognize the Signs:

Don't be fooled by the "starving student narrative". These are all common signs of basic needs insecurity:

- Skipping or cutting the size of meals to save money.
- Inability to afford a balanced diet.
- Attending campus events for the sole purpose of obtaining a meal
- Inability to afford rent/mortgage or utility bills.
- Frequent moves or "couch-surfing" or sleeping in your car
- Limited access to shower/bathroom.

You know your students best! Watch for the following:

- Academics
  - Sudden lack of engagement or significant drop in grades/quality of work.
  - Frequent absences or missing class to work.
  - Skimming on basic needs to pay tuition/fees to CSU.

- Health & Wellbeing
  - Both physically and psychologically
  - Change in physical appearance or affect

Building a Community of Care

- Craft a Basic Needs Syllabus Statement
- Welcome Survey
- Provide information on multiple platforms and post in a central location (if not on campus, perhaps on canvas or your website)
- (further considerations on following slides)

Why? Combat the starving student narrative, address stigma, and normalize the use of available resources and systems of support!

Common Negations
- Outside of job description
- Additional emotional labor or investment
- I don't have all the answers

You are not alone in supporting your students! Know your campus and "seek the opportunity to make non-judgmental referrals" (Wright, Hackett & Anderson, 2020, p. 265)
“We learn as whole people. To learn effectively you must have basic security: a roof over your head, a safe place to sleep, enough food to eat. If you’re having trouble with any of those things, please talk with me or with the Dean of Students. Together we can work to make sure those needs are met.”

– Yvonne Seale, SUNY-Geneseo

“It can be challenging to do your best in class if you have trouble meeting basic needs like safe shelter, sleep, and nutrition. If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, I urge you to contact XXX and/or me. We are here to help.”

– Dalie Jiminez, University of Connecticut
Further faculty considerations

• Conduct an analysis of the cost of meeting your course requirements

• Review course structure, policies, and requirements that may be impacted by a student’s access to basic needs (and not their intellect or commitment to succeed in the course) and consider alternatives when appropriate.

• Offer flexible office hours

• Review group and off-campus requirements. Estimate financial AND time cost. Inform students on first day of class or within syllabi.

• Create student research and employment opportunities that pay a living wage. Account for a student’s financial resources, Pell Grant status, economic and first-generation status to increase the diversity of employment opportunities.

3) Address and combat institutional and systemic barriers to services/resources

- Limited access, transportation, and coordination to community-based resources.
- Lack of consistent and centrally located services.
- Arduous and time-consuming application processes.
  - Scarcity and stress reduce executive functioning. Students will have more difficulty planning and navigating bureaucracy during this time. Eliminate application process or assist in their navigation (Eddy Conroy and Sara Goldrick-Rab, 2020)
- Systemic and structural Racism
Remember these addresses:

• Email: Help4Rams@colostate.edu
• Basic Needs: https://studentcasemanagement.colostate.edu/community-resources/
• Rams Against Hunger:
  https://lsc.colostate.edu/slice/slice-engagement/rams-against-hunger/

Poll
What are we missing?

Lindsay.Mason@colostate.edu


Thank you

Jennie Baran, jennie.baran@colostate.edu
Michael Buttram, michael.buttram@colostate.edu
Shay Lentz, shayna.lentz@colostate.edu
Lindsay Mason, lindsay.mason@colostate.edu