



# Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates

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An Overview

- College students, like schoolchildren, have basic needs for food & shelter
- They are always are risk of going unmet
- Longstanding problems may be worse today
  - **College prices** are at an all-time high
  - **Family income & wealth** is stagnant or declining
  - **College enrollment** is more common than ever

**Ramen was fine for me**

Learn to live within your means

**Couch-surfing means you're having fun**

***GET A JOB!***

*2015 survey at 10 community colleges across U.S.*

- 20% had very low levels of food security
- 13% were homeless
- 39% were housing insecure but not homeless

**See *Hungry to Learn* at [wihopelab.com](http://wihopelab.com)**

*2015 survey at 8 universities & 2 two-year colleges  
in Wisconsin-- < 200% of Pell eligibility*

- Low levels of food security
  - 45% of two-year college students
  - 28% of university students
- 28% of two-year students (4% of university students) had trouble paying rent or utilities

**See 2015 “Data Update” [wihopelab.com](http://wihopelab.com)**

- There's barely a safety net for undergraduates
- Food:
  - **SNAP?** Eligibility rules limit participation & restrictions on retail outlets hinder availability on campus
  - **National School Lunch Program?** Nope
  - **School Breakfast Program?** Nope

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- Housing
  - **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit?** Eligibility rules often exclude full-time students
  - **Section 8?** Eligibility rules mean that financial aid can count against students & part-time students struggle
  - **Public Housing?** May deprioritize students

- **Financial aid** assumes parents help students
  - But students are often *paying for their parents*
- **Estrangement** from family is common
- **Legal barriers** may also keep students from obtaining support



**“The struggle is real– and it isn’t new.”**

- Material hardship in childhood continues into college
- Ability to support family diminishes (heightening stress)
- Knowledge of coping strategies is relatively strong

**“I thought financial aid would make it ok.”**

- Middle-class upbringing, though often on margins
- High and rising price of college is surprising
- Knowledge of coping strategies is weak

## **“I want to feel whole.”**

- Material hardship intersected with mental health challenges— especially depression & anxiety
- Makes seeking/receiving help especially difficult

- On April 28-29 the HOPE Lab hosted #RealCollege, a national event in Milwaukee
- We are working with HUD on a guidebook & with ED on a proposed NSLP expansion
- Others are seeking to improve benefits access
- See [wihopelab.com](http://wihopelab.com) policy proposals