



Food and Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates

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#RealCollege

- 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!

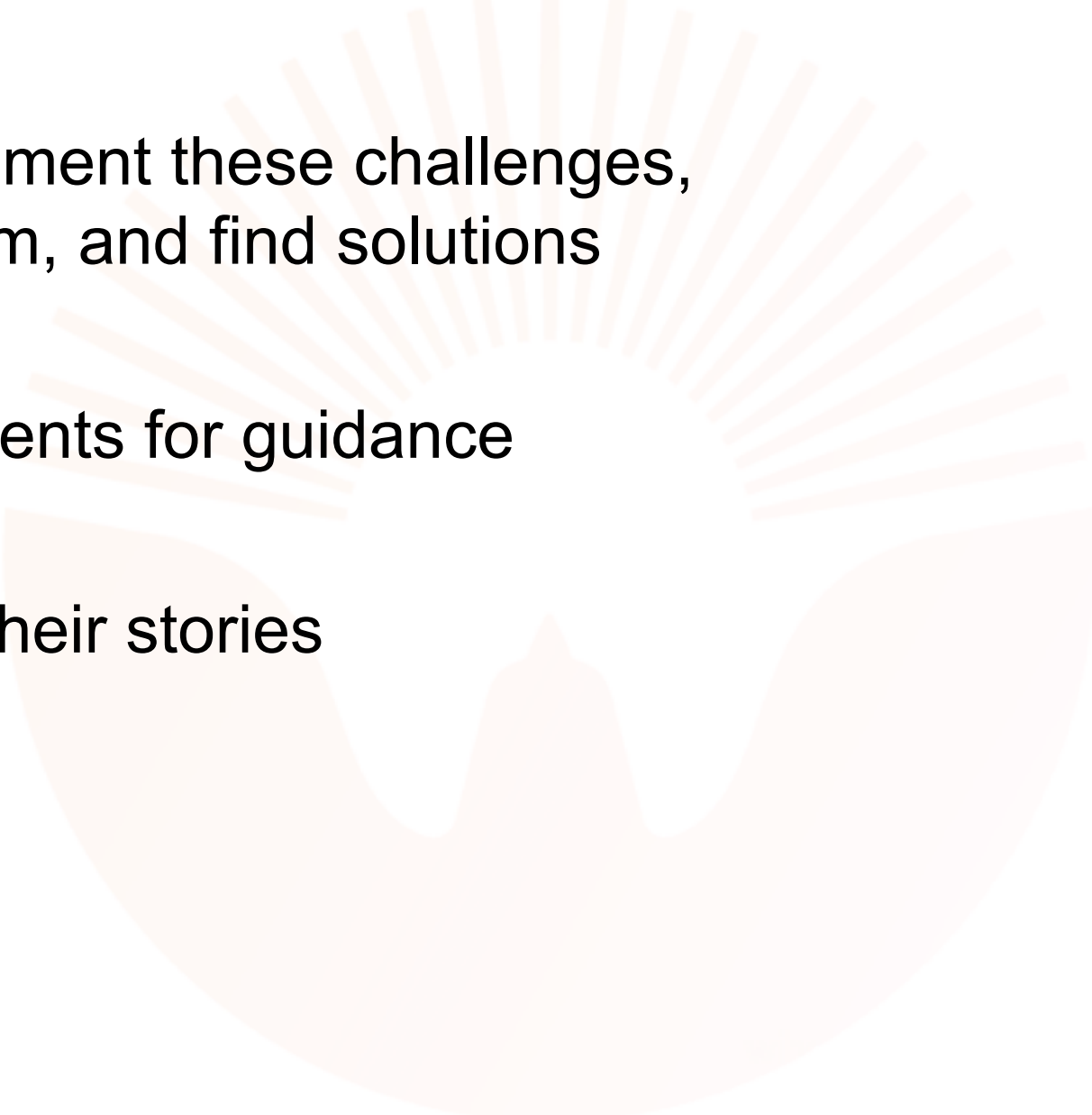
- There's barely a safety net for undergraduates
- Food:
 - **SNAP?** Eligibility rules limit participation & restrictions on retail outlets hinder availability on campus
 - **National School Lunch Program?** Nope
 - **School Breakfast Program?** Nope

- There's barely a safety net for undergraduates
- 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

Our community college survey found:

- Just 1 in 5 food-insecure students receives SNAP
- Only 19% of housing-insecure students get any housing assistance

- We aim to document these challenges, understand them, and find solutions
 - We look to students for guidance
 - Let's attend to their stories
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“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

	Depressed	Severed Anxiety	Disordered Eating	Suicidal Indecation
Overall	32%	29%	10%	11%
Food Insecurity				
High security	20%	18%	5%	6%
Marginal security	33%	28%	12%	12%
Low security	36%	32%	13%	14%
Very low security	55%	52%	16%	20%
Housing Insecurity				
Secure	21%	20%	7%	8%
Insecure	39%	35%	12%	11%
Homeless	54%	50%	16%	24%

Note: the table displays percentages with various mental health problems among each type of student denoted by food and housing insecurity status (i.e. each row)

“We are mission-drive to do something.”

- Typically a community college
- Proud of open-door policy
- Connect students’ economic & academic struggles
- Most likely to act programmatically or via policy changes

“Should these people really be in college?”

- Differentiate between deserving/undeserving students (see M. Katz)
- Concerned about resources
- Think economic security should be addressed before college enrollment

“I just put my head down and pray.”

- Sympathetic and caring
- Wish to do something– but aren’t sure how
- Usually take personal rather than systemic actions

1. What sorts of interventions help institutional leaders and policymakers move from problem recognition to action?
 2. Which interventions are most effective with which types of students?
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