



Los Angeles Community College District

District Report from Fall 2016
Survey of Student Basic Needs

In fall 2016 the Wisconsin HOPE Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), with support from the Kresge Foundation, conducted a large-scale survey to better understand food and housing insecurity among community college students. The effort built on a similar survey of ten community colleges during the 2014-2015 academic year. In total, seventy institutions from twenty-four states participated in the 2016 survey.

More than ever, maintaining an adequate standard of living requires postsecondary education. In Los Angeles County, 12 percent of those with some college or an associate's degree live below the poverty line, compared to 17 percent of those with only a high school diploma.ⁱ The median annual salary for a Los Angeles resident with some college or an associate's degree is \$35,085, 34 percent higher than the \$26,203 earned by the median high school graduate.ⁱⁱ These differences in economic outcomes are particularly meaningful in Los Angeles, where the cost of living is 52 percent higher than average.ⁱⁱⁱ The Economic Policy Institute estimates that, in order to maintain an adequate standard of living, a household with 2 adults and 2 children in Los Angeles County must earn \$73,887 annually.^{iv} Two adults each earning the median wage for those with associate's degrees ($\$35,085 \times 2 = \$70,170$) could not quite attain this standard. The shortfall is extreme for households whose adults have only graduated high school ($\$26,203 \times 2 = \$52,406$, or \$21,481 less than what is needed). Not surprisingly, Los Angeles County has the highest number of homeless individuals and the highest number of unaccompanied homeless youth of any metropolitan area.^v

Although higher education has become a prerequisite for economic success in Los Angeles, college students themselves often have difficulty accessing sufficient food and housing as they pursue their academic goals. To better understand the challenges faced by community college students in particular, this report presents a profile of 5,925 survey participants in the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD). In addition, the report compares district-level results with aggregated results from other colleges in the West Census Region (not including LACCD) and from the national survey sample. The West Census Region includes colleges in Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, and Idaho. National sample results are similar to those found in the associated survey report *Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education*.^{vi}

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner.^{vii} To assess food insecurity among students, the survey instrument included the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) 6-item Food Security Survey Module (FSSM).^{viii} Table 1 displays results from the FSSM. Across all 6 items in the USDA module, LACCD students were more likely to answer affirmatively than students in both the West Census Region and national samples.

Table 1: Responses to Specific Items in USDA 6-Item Food Security Scale (Last 30 Days)

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>The food that I bought just didn't last and I didn't have enough money to get more</i>	59%	50%	52%
<i>I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals</i>	65%	59%	60%
<i>Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	52%	46%	46%
<i>3 or more days: Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	36%	33%	32%
<i>Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	50%	43%	43%
<i>Were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	42%	35%	36%

The USDA recommends assigning each respondent a score based on the total number of affirmative answers on the 6-item instrument. That score determines a person’s food security status via a four category scale, where a score of zero corresponds to high food security, one to marginal food security, two to four translate to low food security, and scores of five or six indicate very low food security. Taken together, people who report low and very low food security can be referred to as food insecure.^{ix} Table 2 shows food security scores and categories across the three samples. Seventy-three percent of LACCD students reported marginal or worse food security during the previous 30 days. Most strikingly, 38 percent of LACCD students report very low food security, which reflects, “multiple indications of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to inadequate resources for food.”^x

Table 2: Prevalence of Food Insecurity (Last 30 Days)

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Food security (last 30 days)</i>			
High security (score = 0)	27%	33%	33%
Marginal security (score = 1)	11%	12%	12%
Low security (score = 2-4)	24%	22%	23%
Very low security (score = 5-6)	38%	33%	33%

Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity can involve unaffordable housing, poor housing quality, crowding, and frequent moves.^{xi} The survey instrument included five items to assess whether a student has experienced housing insecurity in the past twelve months. Students are classified as housing insecure if they answered affirmatively to at least one of those items. Table 3 shows district, regional, and national housing insecurity statistics. LACCD students reported comparable levels of housing insecurity (55 percent) relative to other students across the West Census Region (52 percent) and the nation (51 percent). These rates are also similar to those measured in the Wisconsin HOPE Lab's 2014-15 survey.

Table 3: Prevalence of Housing Insecurity (Past 12 Months)

	LACCD	Region	National
Any of the below items:	55%	52%	51%
<i>...Didn't pay full amount of rent or mortgage</i>	23%	21%	21%
<i>...Didn't pay full amount of utilities</i>	31%	28%	28%
<i>...Moved 2 or more times per year</i>	13%	15%	14%
<i>...Doubled up</i>	20%	19%	17%
<i>...Moved in with other people due to financial problems</i>	20%	20%	18%

Homelessness

Homelessness indicates that a person is without a place to live, often residing in a shelter, automobile, an abandoned building, or outside. Students are considered homeless if they answered affirmatively to at least one of six items. These items, and an overall measure of homelessness, are displayed in Table 4. Students surveyed from LACCD indicated higher levels of homelessness (19 percent) than students regionally (14 percent) or nationally (14 percent). For each of the six questions indicating homelessness, 1 to 3 percentage points more LACCD students answered affirmatively relative to students in the region and in the nation.^{xii}

Table 4: Prevalence of Homelessness (Past 12 Months)

	LACCD	Region	National
Any of the below items:	19%	14%	14%
<i>...Thrown out of home</i>	8%	6%	6%
<i>...Evicted from home</i>	4%	3%	3%
<i>...Stayed in a shelter</i>	3%	1%	2%
<i>...Stayed in an abandoned building, auto, or other place not meant as housing</i>	6%	4%	4%
<i>...Did not know where you were going to sleep, even for one night</i>	11%	8%	8%
<i>...Didn't have a home</i>	4%	2%	2%

Demographic Disparities in Basic Needs Security

Tables 5, 6, and 7 present measures of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness, respectively, for various demographic groups. As shown in Table 5 below, the relationships between food insecurity and students' demographic characteristics are stronger for LACCD than for the West Census Region or the nation, reflecting generally higher rates of food insecurity among survey respondents in LACCD. LACCD students are more likely to be food insecure if they are African American, American Indian, or report more than one race, if they are over the age of 20, do not have at least one parent who completed a bachelor's degree, receive the Pell Grant, are divorced or widowed, are independent, have children of their own, or were ever placed in foster care. These patterns of relationships between food insecurity and demographic characteristics are similar across LACCD, the West Census Region, and the nation.

Table 5: Demographic Disparities in Food Insecurity

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	63%	56%	58%
Male	62%	51%	52%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	58%	52%	52%
African American	79%	70%	69%
Hispanic	61%	55%	57%
American Indian	70%	73%	70%
SE Asian	48%	47%	47%
Other Asian	46%	47%	47%
More than one race	68%	61%	61%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	51%	47%	46%
21-25	65%	60%	59%
26-30	67%	59%	62%
Over 30	67%	58%	61%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	65%	58%	61%
Some college	63%	59%	59%
Associate's degree	63%	54%	53%
Bachelor's degree	55%	49%	48%
Graduate degree	55%	44%	44%
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	63%	55%	56%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	56%	46%	51%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	64%	56%	56%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	58%	49%	53%

Table 5: Demographic Disparities in Food Insecurity (Continued)

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	58%	49%	49%
Yes	70%	64%	65%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	63%	55%	56%
Yes	69%	53%	54%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	63%	53%	55%
Divorced or widowed	79%	70%	70%
In a relationship	66%	60%	59%
Married	50%	49%	50%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	65%	58%	60%
Yes	56%	48%	48%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	61%	52%	53%
Yes	67%	62%	63%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	62%	54%	56%
Yes	81%	74%	75%

Table 6 shows that in LACCD there were substantially increased rates of housing insecurity for students who are African American (74 percent) or American Indian (85 percent), relative to the district average (55 percent). Students over the age of 20 were 19 to 32 percentage points more likely to be housing insecure than students ages 18 to 20. There were also substantial differences for independent students (60 percent versus 38 percent), students with children (65 percent versus 51 percent), and those who were ever placed in foster care (76 percent versus 53 percent). Increased rates of housing insecurity were also evident for students without at least one parent who completed a bachelor’s degree, those who receive the Pell Grant, ever served in the armed forces, or are divorced or widowed.

Table 6: Demographic Disparities in Housing Insecurity

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	57%	53%	53%
Male	49%	47%	44%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	53%	50%	48%
African American	74%	69%	64%
Hispanic	51%	52%	49%
American Indian	85%	66%	68%
SE Asian	44%	44%	42%
Other Asian	40%	36%	40%
More than one race	60%	54%	54%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	34%	35%	33%
21-25	53%	56%	52%
26-30	66%	61%	62%
Over 30	64%	58%	60%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	55%	55%	54%
Some college	57%	55%	53%
Associate's degree	58%	49%	48%
Bachelor's degree	47%	44%	43%
Graduate degree	50%	45%	43%

Table 6: Demographic Disparities in Housing Insecurity (Continued)

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	55%	52%	50%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	54%	44%	49%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	55%	52%	50%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	51%	46%	49%
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	52%	44%	44%
Yes	60%	62%	60%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	54%	51%	50%
Yes	61%	57%	54%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	54%	48%	48%
Divorced or widowed	72%	71%	71%
In a relationship	55%	54%	50%
Married	50%	49%	51%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	60%	57%	57%
Yes	38%	37%	35%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	51%	46%	45%
Yes	65%	61%	63%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	53%	50%	49%
Yes	76%	72%	72%

In general, the relationships between homelessness and students' demographic characteristics shown in Table 7 were stronger in LACCD than they were regionally or nationally, reflecting generally higher rates of homelessness among survey respondents in LACCD. Students in LACCD were more likely to report homelessness over the past 12 months if they were African American or American Indian, over the age of 20, or ever served in the armed forces. Relative rates of homelessness were extremely high for students who were ever in foster care (38 percent, versus 17 percent for those never placed in foster care.) Relative to the West Census Region and the nation, in LACCD those who ever served in the armed forces (27 percent) reported experiencing homelessness much more than those who never served (18 percent).

Table 7: Demographic Disparities in Homelessness

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	17%	14%	14%
Male	21%	14%	16%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	20%	12%	12%
African American	30%	24%	22%
Hispanic	14%	12%	12%
American Indian	30%	23%	22%
SE Asian	13%	15%	13%
Other Asian	12%	14%	14%
More than one race	23%	17%	19%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	13%	13%	13%
21-25	18%	16%	15%
26-30	20%	14%	15%
Over 30	21%	14%	15%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	17%	15%	15%
Some college	20%	15%	15%
Associate's degree	20%	12%	13%
Bachelor's degree	16%	10%	12%
Graduate degree	16%	12%	12%

Table 7: Demographic Disparities in Homelessness (Continued)

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	18%	14%	14%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	16%	12%	14%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	19%	14%	14%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	15%	12%	14%
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	17%	12%	12%
Yes	21%	17%	16%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	18%	14%	14%
Yes	27%	14%	16%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	20%	15%	16%
Divorced or widowed	29%	19%	20%
In a relationship	17%	16%	14%
Married	10%	7%	7%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	19%	15%	14%
Yes	14%	11%	12%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	18%	14%	14%
Yes	20%	14%	14%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	17%	13%	13%
Yes	38%	28%	29%

Accessing Public Assistance

In addition to measuring basic needs insecurity, the survey included multiple items to characterize food insecure and housing insecure students' strategies for addressing the shortfalls they experience. Students were asked whether they had received assistance from a variety of social programs during the past year. Undergraduates may be eligible for multiple social programs to assist with food, housing, child care, transportation, health care, and other expenses. However, program restrictions often prevent students from receiving assistance. For example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) requires undergraduates without children to work at least twenty hours per week. Due to shortages in subsidized housing, eligibility for housing assistance does not guarantee participation.

Students' utilization of public assistance is shown in Tables 8 and 9. Table 8 displays public assistance received by students who reported low or very low food insecurity. Across the three samples, rates of grant receipt are similar for food insecure students, although LACCD students were less likely to be employed (43 percent) relative to students regionally (55 percent) and nationally (56 percent). The most common types of assistance for food insecure LACCD students were SNAP (29 percent), receipt of free food or meals (22 percent), housing assistance (17 percent), Medicaid or public health insurance (24 percent), and tax refunds (17 percent). On most measures of assistance, food insecure students in LACCD were similar to those in the regional and national samples. Notable exceptions include TANF, which LACCD students received more often than their counterparts, and tax refunds, which LACCD students received less often.

Table 8: Public Assistance for Food Insecure Students

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Financial aid receipt and employment</i>			
Pell Grant	44%	48%	49%
Other federal or state grants	23%	22%	23%
Institutional grants	10%	10%	8%
Any grant	61%	59%	61%
Employed in last week	43%	55%	56%
Any grant and employed in last week	22%	30%	31%
<i>Food-related public assistance</i>			
SNAP (food stamps)	29%	29%	29%
WIC (nutritional assistance for pregnant women and children)	8%	5%	6%
Receive free food or meals	22%	25%	23%
<i>Housing-related public assistance</i>			
Housing assistance	17%	13%	13%
Utility assistance	4%	5%	5%
<i>Other public assistance</i>			
TANF	8%	3%	4%
SSI	4%	3%	4%
SSDI	4%	4%	4%
Medicaid or public health insurance	24%	26%	26%
Child care assistance	4%	3%	5%
Unemployment compensation/insurance	3%	3%	3%
Transportation assistance	6%	3%	4%
Tax refunds	17%	24%	24%
Veteran's benefits	2%	4%	4%

Table Notes: Housing assistance includes direct housing assistance, living in a housing project, and receiving a housing voucher.

Table 9 displays public assistance received by students who reported housing insecurity or homelessness. Similar to the results in Table 8, rates of grant receipt were similar across the three samples but LACCD students were less likely to be employed than students regionally or nationally. Only 16 percent of housing insecure and homeless students in LACCD received housing assistance in the past 12 months and only 4 percent received utility assistance. Most measures of public assistance were similar across the LACCD, regional, and national samples.

Table 9: Public Assistance for Housing Insecure or Homeless Students

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Financial aid receipt and employment</i>			
Pell Grant	44%	50%	50%
Other federal or state grants	22%	22%	23%
Institutional grants	9%	10%	8%
Any grant	60%	61%	62%
Employed in last week	45%	57%	57%
Any grant and employed in last week	23%	31%	32%
<i>Food-related public assistance</i>			
SNAP (food stamps)	33%	30%	32%
WIC (nutritional assistance for pregnant women and children)	10%	5%	7%
Receive free food or meals	24%	26%	24%
<i>Housing-related public assistance</i>			
Housing assistance	16%	12%	13%
Utility assistance	4%	5%	6%
<i>Other public assistance</i>			
TANF	10%	3%	5%
SSI	4%	3%	4%
SSDI	5%	4%	4%
Medicaid or public health insurance	27%	27%	28%
Child care assistance	5%	4%	5%
Unemployment compensation/insurance	3%	4%	4%
Transportation assistance	7%	2%	4%
Tax refunds	18%	26%	26%
Veteran's benefits	2%	5%	4%

Table Notes: Housing assistance includes direct housing assistance, living in a housing project, and receiving a housing voucher.

Summary Statistics

To better facilitate comparisons with regional and national data and to assess which students at your colleges may have been more or less likely to respond to the survey instrument, Table 10 presents summary statistics for each of the three samples. Compared to the regional and national samples, the LACCD sample contains more Hispanic and fewer White students. Students in LACCD were also more likely to be over the age of 20, and levels of parental education were much lower in LACCD than in the Western Census Region and national samples.

Table 10: Summary Statistics

	LACCD	Region	National
Female	70%	73%	72%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	13%	52%	44%
African American	14%	6%	11%
Hispanic	51%	20%	25%
Native American	0%	2%	1%
SE Asian	3%	2%	2%
Other Asian	7%	5%	5%
More than one race	12%	14%	12%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	21%	29%	30%
21-25	28%	23%	26%
26-30	17%	14%	15%
Over 30	32%	34%	29%
<i>Highest level of parental education</i>			
High school or less	50%	32%	35%
Some college	26%	30%	29%
Associate's degree	6%	9%	9%
Bachelor's degree	11%	18%	17%
Graduate degree	7%	11%	10%
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	93%	96%	95%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	7%	4%	5%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	83%	92%	91%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	17%	8%	9%

Table 10: Summary Statistics (Continued)

	LACCD	Region	National
<i>Family characteristics</i>			
Parent or guardian claims student as dependent	26%	29%	30%
Ever placed in foster care	6%	5%	5%
Have children	24%	31%	28%
<i>Relationship status</i>			
Single	58%	45%	49%
Divorced or widowed	4%	6%	4%
In a relationship	24%	26%	29%
Married or domestic partnership	14%	23%	18%
<i>Year in college</i>			
Less than 1	22%	29%	29%
1 to 2	39%	38%	39%
More than 2	39%	33%	32%
<i>Financial aid and employment</i>			
Receives the Pell Grant	40%	41%	42%
Enrolled full-time	57%	59%	59%
Employed in last week	46%	58%	58%
Number of hours worked last week	26	27	27

Resources Available in Los Angeles County

211 LA County connects Angelenos with public assistance, including food and housing resources. Dial 2-1-1 anywhere in Los Angeles County, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or visit <https://www.211la.org>.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care (CoC) program is designed to coordinate local resources that address homelessness. The Los Angeles City and County CoC is the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) at <https://www.lahsa.org>. The LAHSA website includes information on local resources for shelters and housing programs for individuals and families.

California Homeless Youth Project – [Resources Supporting Homeless Students at California’s Public Universities and Colleges](#).

Questions?

If you have any questions about this report or food and housing resources, please contact Wisconsin HOPE Lab Acting Director Jed Richardson by email at jed.richardson@wisc.edu or by phone at (608) 890-2946.

ⁱ United States Census Bureau. (2015). 2015 American Community Survey. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

ⁱⁱ United States Census Bureau. (2015). 2015 American Community Survey. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

ⁱⁱⁱ Council for Community and Economic Research. (2016). Cost of Living Index. Retrieved from coli.org.

^{iv} Economic Policy Institute. (2015). 2015 Family Budget Calculator. Retrieved from <http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>.

^v United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. (2015). The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2015-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

^{vi} Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Hernandez, A. 2017. Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education. Wisconsin HOPE Lab. Retrieved from <http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf>.

^{vii} Anderson, S.A. 1990. "Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficult-to-Sample Populations." *The Journal of Nutrition*, 120(11), 1557-1599.

^{viii} U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2017. Survey Tools. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/survey-tools/>.

^{ix} U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. 2012. U.S. Household Security Survey Module: Six-item Short Form. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8282/short2012.pdf>.

^x Coleman-Jensen, A., Rabbin, M. P., Gregory, C. A., & Singh, A. (2016). Household Food Security in the United States in 2015. U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/err215/err-215.pdf?v=42636>.

^{xi} Cutts, D.B., Meyers, A.F., Black, M.M., Casey, P.H., Chilton, M., Cook, J.T., ... & Frank, D.A. 2011. "U.S. Housing Insecurity and the Health of Very Young Children." *American Journal of Public Health*, 101(8), 1508-1514.

^{xii} For more information on homeless students in California's public universities and colleges, and for more information on supports available to these students, please see Au, N. & Hyatt, S. (2017). Resources Supporting Homeless Students at California's Public Universities and Colleges. California Homeless Youth Project. Retrieved from <http://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov/docs/pdf/CollegeSupportsReportPDF4-27-17.pdf>.

The Wisconsin HOPE Lab – Food and Housing Resources for Students and Institutions

The Wisconsin HOPE Lab was established in 2013 on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus to engage in translational research aimed at improving equitable outcomes in postsecondary education. For more information on material need among college students, and for helpful food and housing resources for those seeking to help struggling students, visit the Wisconsin HOPE Lab at <http://www.wihopelab.com/events/realcollege.html>.

About the Association of Community College Trustees

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) is a non-profit educational organization of governing boards, representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,200 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and beyond. For more information, go to www.acct.org. Follow ACCT on Twitter at twitter.com/CCTrustees.