The Lived Experiences of CSU Stanislaus Students Experiencing Food and/or Housing Insecurity

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In Loving Memory
Anthony Gonzales (1993-2021)

Gone but never forgotten

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Introduction

The Central Valley is the breadbasket of the United States, sustained through the labor and exploitation of mostly non-English speaking migrants. In this region, immigrants are both constantly made available as well as constantly made disposable. The irony is, while sustaining the breadbasket of the country, the individuals laboring in those fields face higher than average food and housing insecurity rates.

Many of the students at CSU Stanislaus, a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), come from a household where the main source of income is dependent on farm or agricultural related labor. With climate change, rising housing and living costs, and stagnant wages, students who come from an agricultural dependent background are experiencing food and housing insecurity at unparalleled levels.

Yet amidst all the hardship, these students are tenacious in the face of their struggles. These struggles include not having access to adequate food and housing while going to school which can inflicts a great deal of mental distress. Food and housing insecurities are made worse by barriers such as the high cost of parking, intergenerational poverty, family responsibilities, and being a person who identifies as LGBTQ.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the challenges that students who face food and housing insecurity struggle with on a daily basis while trying to succeed at CSU Stanislaus. Although literature about the problem of food and housing insecurity exists, there is limited research that illustrates the student perspectives, voices, and lived experiences. Furthermore, there are1 no data that represent students who face food and housing insecurity at CSU Stanislaus. This project also aims to provide these students with an opportunity to conduct research as well as to promote action about this issue and raise awareness of the lack of permanence of the programs at CSU Stanislaus.

Beginning May of 2019, professors affiliated with the Center for Public Policy Studies started recruiting CSU Stanislaus students who were facing food and housing insecurity to become part of the research team.

Most research is conducted by university researchers who control knowledge and serve as the experts, thus know the questions that need to be asked. Our research is based on the belief that students struggling to meet their basic needs are the experts of their situations, and ultimately hold the answers (and are in the best position to raise the questions) to their situations.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) offers an alternative approach to traditional research which fundamentally embraces the concept of approaching issues from the perspective of those most affected by them. Our research approach therefore was based on building partnerships between students and the CSU Stanislaus faculty and administrators who are attempting to create effective interventions to assist students who are experiencing food and housing insecurity (FHI).

The PAR team spent six months engaged in understanding student experiences with food and housing insecurity with the purpose of identifying a guiding research question. The first

phase of the project included sharing stories and building trusting relationships. A conceptual framework involving 11 themes emerged from this research phase. Based on further discussions, the research group decided that the most pressing issue was sharing the experiences of the students at CSU Stanislaus who live with food and housing insecurity.

Ultimately, the team made the decision that the co-researchers would also be the participants of the study. A Flexible Diary Method was the methodology selected to capture the pressing issues of food and housing insecurity. The participants were provided with options for capturing their stories (data). First, they had the option to use 'devices': notebook, computer, and/or camera. Next, they had the option of mediums: written text, photographs, sketches, artifacts, etc. Their instructions for data collection were to use their devices and mediums to tell/document their experience related to 11 themes (that the research team created/defined as a conceptual or theoretical framework for understanding food and housing insecurity):

1) Mental Distress
2) Physical Distress
3) University Barriers
4) Family Responsibilities
5) Intergenerational Poverty
6) First Generation Students
7) Societal Expectations
8) Survival Mode
9) Community Disadvantages (barriers)
10) Cultural & Diversity
11) LGBTQ

Background and Relevance

The food and/or housing insecurity (FHI) of California State University (CSU) students has been the focus of researchers since the ground-breaking study commissioned by Chancellor Timothy White (Crutchfield and Maguire, 2018; Crutchfield, Clark, Gamez, Green, Munson and Stribling, 2016). Study recommendations resulted in many CSU campuses initiating basic needs projects that comprise of various and differing types of supports to students who are experiencing FHI.

A recent CSU Long Beach study of CSU student experiences with food and housing insecurities found little research specific to college students (Crutchfield and Maguire, 2018). Literature in the study cites the deleterious impacts of low income and resulting poverty on the ability of students to meet basic needs such as food, housing, health, utilities, and transportation. The literature indicates that food is the first area of impact. Numerous studies are cited that indicate that between 21% and 52% of students experience food insecurity (Chaparro, Zaghloul, Holck and Dobbs, 2009; Crutchfield, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Broton and Eisenberg, 2015;

Martinez, Maynard and Ritchie, 2016). Other research Crutchfield and Maguire cite, that looks at the effect of food insecurity on younger children, indicates it is linked with adverse effects including lower academic performance (Feeding America, 2017; Winicky and Jemison, 2003). Crutchfield and Maguire indicate the promising benefits of introducing CalFresh benefits (formerly known as food stamps or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) on college campuses anticipating similar benefits found in studies with school-age children who experienced better learning outcomes.

Crutchfield and Maguire (2018) cite research that suggests a significant number of college students are experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness that results in difficulty managing a large range of personal and financial responsibilities (Crutchfield, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Broton and Eisenberg, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, Richardson and Hernandez, 2017; Gupton, 2017). They found that students who are attending CSUs across California are finding it increasingly difficult to find affordable housing in areas where property values are staggeringly high. Stigma around homelessness contributes to students failing to share their situations.

The national prevalence rate for food insecurities is 12.3%. The findings from the CSU study indicate that 41.6% of students across the CSU system report food insecurity (Crutchfield and Maguire, 2018). Demographically, first generation students, former foster youth, first-generation Black/African American students, and students with children presented as at highest risk of experiencing food insecurity.

The researchers also found that 10.9% of students had experienced some sort of homelessness over the past year (Crutchfield and Maguire, 2018). The demographic groups with the highest rates of homelessness were Black/African American students (14%), males (14.1%), and first-generation college students (11.2%) at just slightly higher than the average.

Other studies indicate that students experiencing food and/or housing insecurity score lower on indicators of physical and mental health, and days of inactivity (Crutchfield and Maguire, 2018). Students described negative impacts on most aspects of their lives including struggling academically, having to work long hours, the stress and worry resulting in negative impacts on their mental health (stress, depression, irritability, anxiety), and experiencing more physical health concerns likely related to poor nutrition.

The following recommendations emerged from the CSU study (Crutchfield and Maguire, 2018) and some are being implemented on campuses such as CSU Stanislaus. These actions begin to address and support the needs of students struggling to meet their basic needs for food and housing.

- Develop affordable food and housing options for students.
- Target student populations who are at highest risk.
- Conduct longitudinal research to further explore predictors and protective factors for food and housing insecurity that may better assist students in more positive outcomes (degree completion, time in which it takes to complete degree, etc.)

- Develop single point of contact, trauma-informed perspectives in program responses to students experiencing food and housing insecurity.
- Innovate creative campaigns to impact a more supportive campus culture of awareness and responses to better support food and housing insecure students.
- Use campus-based preventive measures (such as CalFresh enrollment) and other strategies to assist students to avoid issues of food and housing insecurity (Crutchfield and Maguire, 2018).

In August 2018 CSU Stanislaus began to engage in more comprehensive planning to address student Basic Needs by administering an array of services (CalFresh Outreach, the Warrior Food Pantry, food distributions, campus cares emergency fund, counseling services, health care services, community resource/referral information, provision of microwaves, text alerts to students regarding leftover food from campus events) through Student Affairs. A Basic Needs Committee of campus partners (including the CFA and ASI) meet to share information, resources and strategies for further Basic Needs approaches. In November 2019, a manager was hired to coordinate and promote Basic Needs programming on campus. The CalFresh Outreach project is run voluntarily through the placement of student interns from the MSW program field program.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) Approach

Traditional research is predicated on the assumption that researchers are the gatekeepers of knowledge and as the experts thus know the questions that need to be asked (Davis, 1986). According to Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes (1991) traditional research argues for the separation of researcher and "subject." Researchers create the strategies used to gain knowledge; participants are subjects who are to be studied and who serve as a means for testing knowledge (theories).

Participatory Action Research (PAR) offers an alternative approach to research which fundamentally embraces the concept of approaching issues from the perspective of those most affected by them (Babbie, 2001; Townsend, Birch, Langley and Langille, 2000). Babbie (2001) defines PAR as "an approach to social research in which the people being studied are given control over the purpose and procedures of the research; intended as a counter to the implicit view that researchers are superior to those they study" (p. 67).

This research study embodies the belief that students struggling to meet their basic needs are the experts of their situations and ultimately hold the answers (and are in a better position to pose the questions) to their situations. Our research approach therefore was based on building partnerships between students and the CSU Stanislaus faculty and administrators who are attempting to create effective interventions to prevent students from becoming food and housing insecure.

Fundamental to this partnership is the sharing of information. Information is viewed as power. Hall (1982) contends that traditional research creates a situation whereby the knowledge that is generated by the research endeavor is owned by the researchers. Researchers determine the ultimate meaning of the findings and how and when the knowledge will be shared. Ultimately, students experiencing challenges to their basic needs collectively owned and shared the responsibility for naming the consequences of food and housing insecurity, developing the research methodology, evaluating and interpreting the data that were collected. For the purposes of this research project, PAR served as both a mechanism for creating a more meaningful approach to understanding CSU Stanislaus student basic needs and understanding how better to address their needs on our campus.

With the support of the CSU Stanislaus Center for Public Policy Studies, three faculty members (Social Work and Economics) began in May 2019 to recruit students who were experiencing food and/or housing insecurity as potential co-researchers in the research project. Through a number of individual and then group interviews students were familiarized with the purpose of the study and with the principles of PAR. Students were asked to make a one-year commitment to engage in the project. They were provided gift cards to attend these initial meetings. Once committed to the project they were hired and paid an hourly wage for their time

commitments to the study throughout the 19/20 academic year. Most students continued with the project through spring 2021.

Methodology

At the beginning of the fall semester in 2019 the research group comprised of three faculty members, a graduate student assistant, and fifteen student co-researchers began to meet to plan the research approach. During bi-weekly meetings (September to December 2020) student co-researchers were encouraged to share their stories and experiences of food and/or housing insecurity as students within the group. The narrative accounts were used to develop a guiding research question, "What are the lived experiences and struggles of students facing food and housing insecurity at CSU Stanislaus?", a methodological strategy for answering the research question, and a guiding theoretical framework to understand food and housing insecurity that was useful in making sense out of data and anchoring the research study.

To answer the research question, a qualitative phenomenological design was employed. Phenomenological research embodies the essence of qualitative research in the sense that it is intended to capture an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study: in this case food and housing insecurity. It is not unusual in phenomenological research that the "researchers become research participants themselves" (Faulkner & Faulker, 2014, p. 88). Additionally, this is also common in PAR approaches. Such is the case in this study. The co-researchers (food and housing insecure students) opted to fulfill the role of both the researchers and the researched. The 15 undergraduate and graduate students were the "sample" who collected data about their personal experiences to answer the research question.

The type of data that were collected in this study was qualitative. The research team opted to utilize a Flexible Diary Method (Herron, Dansereau, Wrathall, Funk, Spencer, 2018) to capture the qualitative data. The participants were provided with options for capturing their stories (data). First, they had the option of using "devices": notebook, computer, and/or camera. Next, they had the option of mediums: written text, photographs, sketches, artifacts, etc. Their instructions for data collection were to use their devices and mediums to tell/document their experience related to the 11 themes (that the research team created/defined as a theoretical framework for understanding food and housing insecurity): 1) Mental Distress; 2) Physical Distress; 3) University Barriers; 4) Family Responsibilities; 5) Intergenerational Poverty; 6) First Generation Students; 7) Societal Expectations; 8) Survival Mode; 9) Community Disadvantages (barriers); 10) Cultural & Diversity; 11) LGBTQ. Participants selected which categories were the focus of their data collection/story telling.

For the first round of data collection (which coincidentally coincided with the beginning weeks of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020), a designated "two week" data collection period was established. The participants were instructed to document experience(s) (that occurs during the data collection period) that is contained in or related to the various 11 categories. Due to uncertainties created by the pandemic, an additional two week period was provided for data collection that followed the same process as the original data collection period. Following the

data collection period, the team came back together and each participant shared their story (data) with the team. While the story/experience was being told, notes were taken by the research facilitators. Co-researchers asked questions for clarification purposes and were also provided the opportunity to "relate" to the experience that is being described. This process continued until all members had shared their data.

The data were analyzed as a team. The research team organized the data around the 11 themes (the theoretical framework) and used Neuman's (2003) five-step approach to qualitative data analysis: sorting; open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and elaboration.

Food and housing insecurity is a difficult and emotional topic. As students collected data about their experiences and shared their stories, it was possible that they may have experienced discomfort. To minimize risk, all participants were instructed that the data collection was voluntary—they were not required to document their experience or share their story. They were able to choose not to divulge information that they were not ready to share. Their risk was also minimized by the fact that they had spent the first semester engaged in conversations about food and housing insecurity, and in the conceptualization of the research study, they were able to build relationships with one another and develop a sense of trust. They all also agreed to protect confidentiality of one another and not share any information with others about the persons who are part of the study. They have since then all decided to include their names in the report, knowing that this identifies them as potential participants.

Study Results

It is clear from our research that FHI has significant negative impacts on mental and physical health. As a result of these significant impacts, students often resort to operating in survival mode. There are also a number of factors including intergenerational poverty, first generation students, family support, culture and diversity of family, and LGBTQ that are beyond the control of students that exacerbate and deepen experiences of FHI. Study results also illuminate particular university, societal, and community barriers that further marginalize students who experience FHI. What was repeatedly expressed by the participants/co-researchers was the ways that multiple variables intersect with food and housing insecurity to compound the impacts of going without food and or having adequate and stable housing. This 'intersectionality' creates situations more harmful and difficult for students. Particular social, institutional and cultural barriers may also compound student ability to address FHI. The end result of food and housing insecurity is to make it more difficult for students to participate in academic life in meaningful ways and can ultimately impact student learning.

The results below are grouped in these three thematic categories of impacts, exacerbators, and environmental factors that cause marginalization. The co-research team summarized the data into definitions and statements of the sub-theme categories. Raw data are provided to support these statements.

Each category in what follows begins with the definition of the category that was created by the co-researcher team. The definition was based on the lived experiences of the co-researchers who experienced food and housing insecurity.

Food and Housing Insecurity Impacts

Mental Distress Definition

Participants identified that students who are made FHI are more likely to experience a multitude of mental distress concerns than other students. Mental distress concerns involve a range of factors that encompass psychological and emotional well-being. These factors create chemical imbalances which may produce long term anxiety, depression and stress.

As a consequence of the negative impacts, students experience hopelessness, stigma and shame. If these issues are not addressed, they can lead to repercussions such as risky behaviors, imposter syndrome and isolation. These affect students' academic performance and productivity level at a negative rate compared to those who are not facing food and housing insecurities. Students who are made food and housing insecure are then at risk of missing classes, assignments and not participating in extra-curricular activities. This results in students being pushed out of the university.

Mental Distress Data

One participant provided the following picture and explanation to illustrate the impact of relying on fast food over a prolonged period of time:

A lot of the times there is a long period of time where there's not enough food in the house, not enough money to go out and buy groceries so, fast food has become the norm in my house. . . . I put this under health because eating this every day for a long period of time is detrimental on one's health. Not only physically but mentally. I have eaten fast food so much that it makes me sick. . . . Mentally it makes me also sluggish and not as coherent, giving me mood swings and depressing tendencies.

Another participant wrote about the stress experienced from using an EBT card (food stamps):

I'm very grateful for my EBT Card and I have become more comfortable with using it at the grocery store, but I quickly put it away after I pay for my purchases and I PREFER to go to the self-checkout line. I cook a lot because I consider that the healthiest choice of

eating and I can't afford to eat out often, but I basically have to monitor how much I spend on food and water and the amount that I get once a month has to last 30 days so this thought is constantly on my mind. I always pay attention to the "SNAP BALANCE" on my receipts and a behavior I noticed I do is keep receipts like kind of hoarding them but I am definitely not a hoarder, it's just something I've noticed that I do. It messes with your head when you live with a lack of security. It feels like a heavy weight is on your shoulder.

Other participants talked about their struggles with depression:

Moving to the Valley to attend Stan State has definitely changed me as a person. The picture I had painted for myself as a transfer student never came true. In a way I feel like I don't belong at CSU Stan, this has influenced the mentality that I have of "I just want my degree so I can put it on my resume". A little over a month ago I went thru a depression funk but the intensity was something I had never experienced, some days I am sad or moody and I definitely deal with anxiety, but there was a week that I cried everyday throughout the day, and I didn't understand why I was crying. I hated how negative I was being, but I couldn't stop. This whole experience for me has led to pretty much isolating myself and it's hard for me to be vulnerable. I did take advantage of the Psychological Counseling services up until January and had a great relationship with my counselor. I honestly don't know what I would have done without her!

I am aware that I have Situational Depression. A year and a half ago I was working 40 hours a week and had a social life. I find myself overthinking a lot and I battle with regretting moving to Turlock. As a student, I am quiet during class and I don't like doing group work. I don't even give myself credit anymore for being the only one in college out of my sisters and I. I know I was not this unhappy throughout my community college journey. I am having a hard time accepting that I won't get to walk the stage in May. I understand why graduation has to be canceled, but the reality is I just feel highly unmotivated, frustrated, and depressed. I pray that I can keep my faith in everything will get better after May.

This participant detailed how poverty, job and housing insecurity affected her mental health as a student and how it was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic:

I have unique circumstances in attending school. I am an older student that was a single mom and suffered extreme poverty. I never had the support that I needed in order to care 100% for my family, support my family 100% financially, and attend school. However, as my children began leaving me to work towards their higher education, I felt that it was important for me to go back to school to better myself, increase my earning power, and set an example for my children. I did not suddenly become rich. I lived with family and received school grants and loans to go back to school. Almost three years ago I got remarried. My husband is a wonderful, supportive man, who helps me with the logistics of raising my last child. He is always willing to pick up and drop off from school.

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However, marrying my husband did not make my financial situation better. He had been supporting himself off of his previous wife's life insurance policy and gig jobs, such as umpiring. He had taken the last of his money and had invested it in his own tax and bookkeeping business. At the start of a business many times you lose more money than you make, and that is the situation we are currently in. My husband did have his own home, however, with our financial situation we were unable to pay the mortgage for almost 2 years.

Suffering from poverty is not something that gives you a little stress here and there. It is an ever looming cloud that hangs over your head. Every single month for over a year I would see that my house was ready to be auctioned off at the first of the month. We would call our attorney and say, "is this going to happen?" EVERY MONTH. We had nowhere to go. If you rent a place, you typically need to make 3 times what the rent is, plus have first and last month's rent and a deposit. We had no money. Thinking of renting an apartment was out of the question for us. I was beside myself, devastated, never knowing what was going to happen. And this looms over your head... not for minutes or hours during the day, but always. A constant reminder of looming disaster. I go to bed thinking of money, I wake up thinking of money, sometimes I dream of money. It is a sense of panic deeply imbedded in me as I have been the only provider for my family.

Last summer, we were able to get a new mortgage on the house. We owe $200,000 on our house, which I feel is a tremendous blessing, because we will never be able to buy a house for that price again. Our mortgage is $1,430 a month, which is also a huge blessing because that is less expensive than an apartment. We are able to keep our dog and our cats. My daughter has a sense of stability. The problem is $1,430 a month seems almost impossible to come up with each month. It seems that it costs my husband more money each month to run his business than he actually brings in. I have always worked, but when I went back to school, I committed to getting my degree. So now, I can only work side jobs. I was working at Domino's Pizza. They worked around my school schedule, minimum wage is pretty good, and I got tips on top of that, which really helped. But honestly it was just enough money to feed us and put gas in the cars.

The non-stop stress of trauma and finances in my life have led to an on-going diagnosis of depression and anxiety in me. Last summer, when so many blessings came in and I should have felt so blessed and relieved, my dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. My younger sister had lived with my parents for over 8 years, and my siblings and I always knew things weren't right in their household, but my parents were very protective over my younger sister and never let us know what was going on. After a little investigation, I found that my sister was severely abusing my parents. I had been wrapped up so much in my own survival I had not opened my eyes to what my parents were experiencing. With no other option, I quit my job, and took care of my parents for

the summer. This caused distress in my marriage because my husband was extremely unhappy with me being out of town to not take care of him.

Before school began again, I moved my parents into my home. All of my bedrooms are upstairs, so my parents lived in my living room/dining room. My dad was bedridden so he required 24 hour care. I went to school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On the days I went to school my husband stayed home with them. Caring for my terminally ill father did not help my mental health status or my financial situation. My parents began worrying about their own financial well-being as they tried to sell their house. My dad died at the end of September. I told my mom I needed to go back to work because we desperately needed the money. My mom told me she emotionally needed me home, that I could go back to work next semester.

I don't know a lot about FAFSA, but for 2019-2020 I qualified for work study. I was excited to get a work study job in January when school started back up. I understand being poor, that has become my new normal, but not being able to make any money at all is even more stressful. It is a sense of no control at all. A friend of mine told me about an internship position at a program on campus. I reached out to the director of that program, and told her I needed an internship position and a work study position. She told me that she had both available and hired me for the internship immediately. She said the work study position had to go through HR (Human Resources) but that it would be up shortly. She said that she had done all she needed to do but that it had to be posted online before she could hire me. It took forever for the job to post online. I looked every day, several times a day. The day the job posted I applied and told the manager I had applied. She seemed excited, and then it seemed nothing was ever said about the work study job. I was beginning to feel paranoid. I heard her talking to others about the position and I felt like the things she had told me would not come to fruition. I understand that I do not know all that goes on behind the scenes. HR needed to be involved in the transaction and things take time. But I had not worked for many months, which is detrimental to my life. When you don't have enough to begin with, any set back can be devastating. Working in a work study position you would think they would understand that urgency.

Finally, on March 13, 2020, I got a job offer for the work study position; Ironically, that was the last day I attended school because of the pandemic. The director has been super sweet and sensitive to the needs of my family. My 81 year old, frail mother lives with me. The Coronavirus could and probably would be fatal to her. The program I work at is considered an essential job position so the next week I worked on campus in ways that I could without harming my family. After that week, I was told that I could continue to work from home. With this national pandemic I am still getting paid. This is my last semester as an undergraduate. I will be graduating in May. I am struggling emotionally

with being locked indoors 24/7. I am an extrovert and need human contact. I have found this time of uncertainty to be scary and worrisome.

This participant used a picture of a closed grocery store to express the stress experienced from not being able to get groceries:
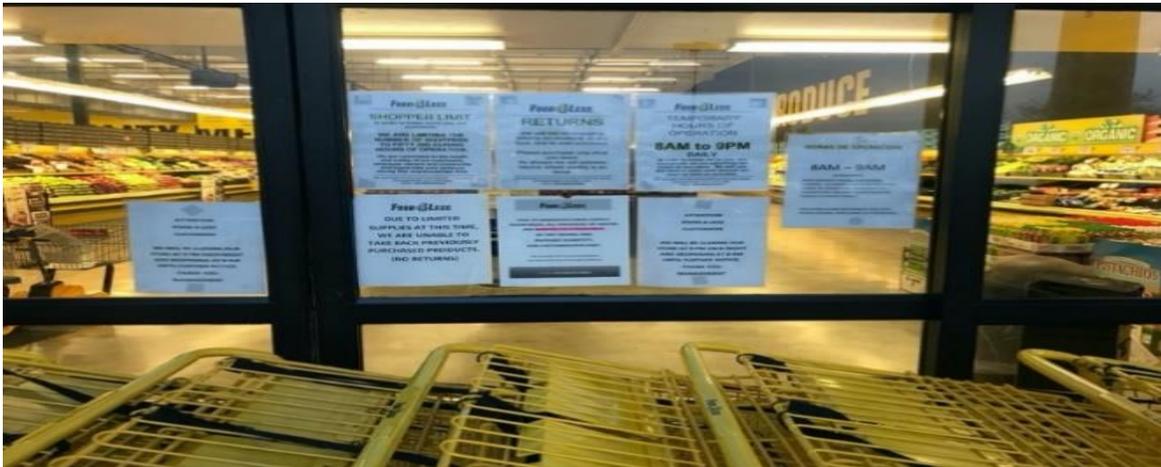
I can see the food but not access it, and with the new change of everything I have a work a different schedule now. This change in schedule makes it so I can't access the store early in the morning to get groceries before I leave to school. As a commuting student it's challenging to keep fresh food in my house with a myriad of things to do.

This participant shared a picture of their disabled parent who is home alone when the student is an hour away at school for extended hours of the day and how stressful this was. This left this participant feeling "*like I shouldn't focus on my education":*

The same participant, shared another picture that symbolizes the real concern that it may not be safe to be on campus as a student of color, saying *"this really affects my mental health by affecting my anxiety and PTSD":*

One student discussed the stress of living with family that does not tolerate the LGBTQ+ community:

Another reason I resist to live with my family is because of their beliefs about the LGBTQ community. I have to suppress my feelings in that environment because I know they are not accepting of that. Some of their comments include: "It's not normal," "It's weird," "It's a disease." There's just so much hostility that some of my family members have with the LGBTQ community, and I don't want to live in that environment of animosity (LGBTQ). It stresses me out to the point that I become depressed and can't do daily chores without forcing myself to.

This participant shared a picture of their anxiety medication, along with the following to describe how their financial and academic issues also increase their mental distress:


I have been diagnosed with extreme anxiety but I've known longer than before the doctor told me. The last straw and the moment I knew I needed to I had a take home exam that was 200 questions and had a complete mental breakdown. This exam was able to be done over a four day period, but I forced myself to complete it in one sitting because I had work two of those days and I don't like doing things the day before their due date. Not only is this irrational, but during that breakdown I knew I had to do something, and so I made a doctor appointment.

I go through my parents' health insurance. If I didn't have that, I have no idea how I'd be able to see a doctor. I took two tests with simple questions about how many hours you sleep, how often you feel anxious and questions revolving around anxiety and depression in general. The doctor then diagnosed me with anxiety. She asked me about the possibility of therapy along with psychiatry, but as a student who goes to school full-time and works part time I have no time. I asked for medication and went on my way. I was given 10 mg of Lexapro to start out with. After a couple weeks I felt no effects and was still spiraling. I messaged my doctor and she upped my dosage to 20 mg of Lexapro. This worked for about a year and I start to feel myself slipping back into my old ways. I finally decided to go to my doctor to see if I could be prescribed something more and along
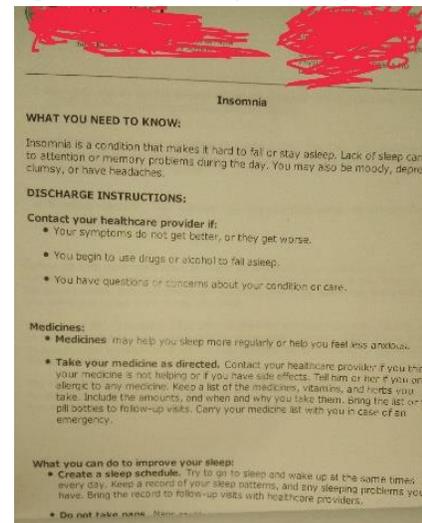
with my Lexapro I was given 10 mg of Buspirone. She once again urged me to consider therapy and psychiatry and I told her I would try psychiatry as this was the highest medicine she could prescribe me and I wanted to know if there was something more another doctor could do for me. I wanted to try the possibilities that would cost the least amount of money and time.

After my appointment, I was billed a large sum of money that I could not afford. The payment is due April 4. I was unaware that my parents switched insurance plans so not only was the co-pay bill a lot higher, but I owed money. I am currently attempting to dispute the claim because from what I understand my insurance seems to think there is another insurance that should pay the money though I do not have other insurance. Not only has this caused me financial stress and basically wiped the possibility of me being able to see another doctor, but it has worsened the little mental stability I have. Also, the doctor referred me to a psychiatrist that does not accept my insurance so not only am I not able to keep that appointment, but I feel as though there is no second glance or understanding of my needs and budget. Due to COVID-19 I am not able to make another appointment with another psychiatrist as it is not an emergency.
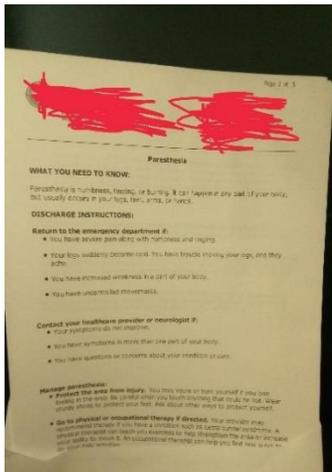
Obviously financial problems and mental health do affect my day-to-day academic life. In terms of my actual anxiety, I'm very strict on myself when it comes to deadlines and I obsess over what needs to be done until it gets done. My anxiety is pretty constant even with medication but it does relieve the physical symptoms most of the time. I do believe my anxiety comes from food and housing insecurity because growing up I was worried about whether or not I would get free lunch at school. I was worried because my dad constantly lost jobs due to his mental health and if we would be able to keep our house.

As an adult who is a full time student, I constantly think about money because I am only able to work part time. My anxiety obsesses over where to shop for the best deals, how much money I have in my bank account, whether or not I can afford my full half of the rent money this month or if my boyfriend has to cover me, and even whether or not I have to pay debit or credit to for my medicine which I desperately need.

I need melatonin – stressing and need something to fall asleep

Physical Distress Definition

Students who are made food and housing insecure are more likely to experience a multitude of physical distress concerns than other students. Physical distress concerns involve a range of factors including lack of health insurance, poor nutrition, physical exhaustion, and substance abuse. These factors may produce escalating illnesses and high medical bills. Many students who cannot afford medicine or doctor visits resort to self-medication through drug and alcohol abuse. This can be exasperated by poor nutrition or malnutrition. Left unaddressed this can lead to repercussions such as risky behaviors, physical illness and overall degrading health. These negatively affect students' academic performance and productivity compared to those who are not facing food and housing insecurities. This results in students being pushed out of the university.

Physical Distress Data

One participant provided the following picture and explanation to illustrate the impact of relying on fast food over a prolonged period of time:

A lot of the times there is a long period of time where there's not enough food in the house, not enough money to go out and buy groceries so, fast food has become the norm in my house. I put this under health because eating this every day for a long period of time is detrimental on one's health. Not only physically but mentally. I have eaten fast food so much that it makes me sick. It's very hard to focus in class and out of class when my body lacks the nutritious healthy food it needs and I'm running on fast food. Physically it makes my body feel sluggish and gross.

This participant shared an image of their snack that must sustain them for half of their day:

Sometimes my budget only allows for me to have one snack while I'm at school sometimes 10-12 hours. This is what I'll get along with what I bring for lunch. It just cost so much money to buy 2 meals while at school all day.

The same participant discussed the inconvenience that is created with the lack of microwaves.

> *Locating microwaves while carrying a heavy backpack and your food is not fun for me, and usually creates a daily hardship when on campus. Because I have to carry all of my belongings with me as I warm up my food, instead of leaving it near my eating area.*

Another participant discussed their family's cultural outlook towards food insecurity that has led to physical distress.

> *I will be graduating this semester, and the struggle I'm facing right now is housing insecurity because I will have to move out of the dorms by May. I know I can move back in with my family, but their beliefs and mindset will negatively affect me. For example, my family would rather buy food that is cheap and low quality versus food that is slightly more expensive and of higher quality. There have been a few instances where some of my family members got food poisoning for eating bad eggs, seafood, or any low-quality meat (physical health). They also have the mindset of keeping leftovers to eat until it's inedible. I would love to throw all the bad food away and buy better quality food, but my family would yell at me for spending more money.*

University Barriers Definition

University barriers are the result of restricting campus policies. These impact access to student jobs, financial aid, food affordability, child care, and other resources. Students are also affected by the long hiring process for campus jobs. These experiences directly impact students by forcing them to seek other employment due to university hour limitations causing students to focus less on academics. The high cost of food provided on campus causes students to either not eat or spend money that they do not have. This not only increases debt, but also causes the student to fall behind in class because they cannot focus on an empty stomach. Students often miss out on workshops they could greatly benefit from due to time conflicts and having to negotiate between attending and other pressing needs. The lack of accessibility causes students to feel excluded.

University Barriers Data

One student shared these images and description to reveal the inflated price of food and medication on campus:

These photos are meant to highlight the overpriced items on campus. It may not seem like a lot to someone getting paid more than minimum wage and working more than 20 hours a week, but for me it is. I will avoid buying food on campus because it is so expensive and I just don't have the money to spend. If that means I don't eat then I don't eat. Sometimes I sit in class struggling to focus on what we are doing because I'm starving. It's not just like this with food, it's like this with any fees all over campus. The fees to use the atm is $3.00 and another $3.00 from my bank. The parking passes are $200.00 and that is money that can be spent on food. The prices for things on campus are so unrealistic for someone doing their best to make it through college without much support.

The same student also presented this image to highlight the tension created by searching for off-campus parking:

This represents the distance away from campus I walk to find parking. The fees for parking are $200.00 a semester and I have to make a choice that food and family responsibilities are more important. It's unfortunate that even making decisions like this doesn't guarantee any security. I still may be struggling to get by with what I have. I leave my house early so that I hopefully can find a

parking spot. Some days it can take almost a half-hour just to make it class and that is speed walking. I have to navigate my choices carefully always keeping me under some sort of pressure and stress. These worries and concerns are more than just normal student concerns this on some days are running on basic survival just to get through the day.

One participant shared several images that illuminated the lack of amenities provided for students:

The microwave is located approximately 50-70 yards away from the arranged eating area for the students and as you can see the room has employee information in the room. Meaning to me that it was never really set up for students but for faculty. This is possibly why it is 50-70 yards away from students eating area.

The options in this machine I'm sure are different from the vending machines that are readily available to the students.

The same student provided pictures of the meals provided on campus:

A lot of the new menu options are not very filling, and are very expensive for students. This creates a hardship where I can't afford to eat at the school all the time.

The food is good, but very overpriced. Most of the students commute hear so for me it is a challenge to allocate a percentage of my income to gas, and so much for expensive food at school. The school is supposed to give us stuff we need, and not stuff we want.

This student presented images that display the impediments of engaging in resources on campus:

Students are not able to use their EBT/CalFresh benefits on campus. These photos demonstrate University Barriers faced by food and housing insecure students. One of the Basic Needs Initiatives available at CSU Stanislaus is CalFresh assistance. However, once approved, students are not able to utilize this resource on campus.

They also provided pictures of the quad area where Food Box Distributions occur and they express the negative emotions that surface during the monthly events:

Free Food Box Distributions are offered in the quad once a month. Students must walk across campus to carry their food box to their car. This can cause students to feel humiliated and embarrassed because they are receiving their box in the middle of campus. I have personally decided not to get a food box at the food distribution because I felt ashamed to be seen with my box.

The images below are screen shots. One shows the amount of student loan debt the participant accumulated. The other shows the hours logged for a campus job. Students are only able to log 20 hours per week for campus jobs. Since the hours are limited, the student needed to borrow more to pay for school.
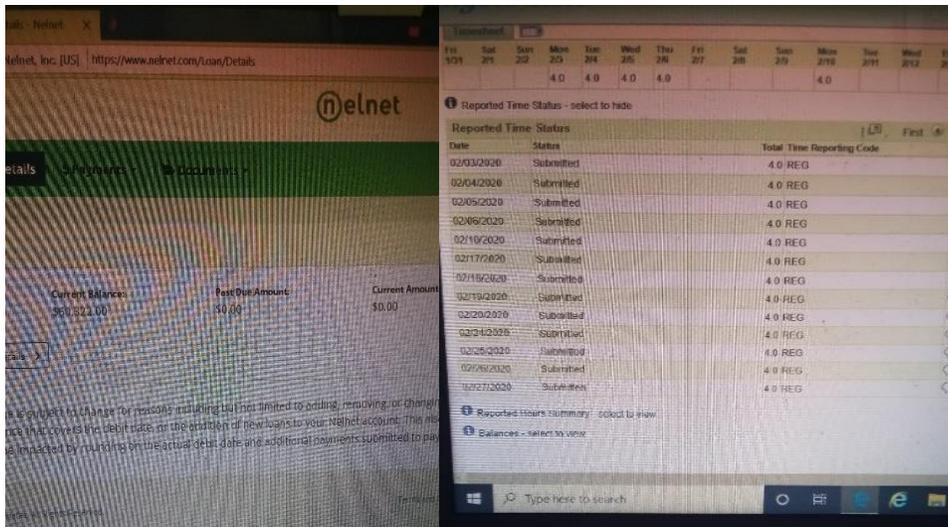
Family Responsibilities Definition

Family responsibilities include maintaining/supporting a household or not having any family support at all. These experiences impact students in ways such as not wanting to ask for financial help and impacts the students' mental health causing them to miss classes. Certain situations such as immigration status limits students' available resources and can cause them to drop out, fall behind academically because they are trying to provide for themselves without support.

When students are relied on for family support they have to prioritize their needs and disregard school needs which impacts the grades and chances of passing their classes. Certain circumstances such as immigration status are further penalized by universities when institutions restrict access to resources, causing them to further be pushed out of the university.

Family Responsibilities Data

This student provided an image that embodies the personal accountability to their mom's health and the stressors that impact their academic work:

This picture represents my mom's health. Eight years ago, she had a heart attack which led her to have a stroke. Ever since then our lives have changed forever. Before this, I always thought we were rich. We always had enough money if not extra. My mom was the bread winner of our household but because of the stroke, she became physically paralyzed on her entire left side and had bleeding in her brain. After this, the road to recovery was very long and hard. She couldn't go back to work after this and hospital bills piled up one after one. My dad always did odd jobs here and there but our steady income came from my mom's job. Pretty soon my dad had to quit work all together and stay home full time to look after my mom. With no one working in our home, times got very tough. Over the past eight years life has changed completely. I never used to have to worry about food or where would we live. We almost lost our house because my parents had to use all their savings to cover medical bills and everything else. It's been

extremely difficult, and my mom's health has not gotten better, things haven't gotten easier and I carry this immense weight with me every day. Being a student makes it harder because I'm in school full time and now my dad does have a full-time job but that leaves my mom home alone the majority of the time. This adds a lot of stress on me and affects me mentally with school and with feeling a responsibility to help with my mom but I have a ton of other responsibilities with school as well to take care of.

The same participant shared a picture that exhibits the pressure of working during the COVID-19 pandemic:

This picture is my dad's work car. He works for a company that transports patients from being discharged out of the hospital. This is my dad's full-time job and when he first started it was hard because he had stayed home with my mom for a long time before this to take care of her. Bills were stacking up and there was no other option except for my dad to go back to work. There has been a lot of bumps in the road with this job, a lot of the times he doesn't get paid on time and his check has been as late as a month. With bills to pay and a mortgage this is very stressful not only for my dad but for me and my mom. We don't have any other options, my mom can't work and I can't work so my dad is the only income we have. To add on top of this, the current situation we're in now with the Coronavirus has made things 100 times more stressful and difficult. Having shared my mom's health condition, she is very vulnerable to getting sick and if she were to get really sick or contract anything she probably wouldn't make it. But my dad can't quit this job or stop going to work because now more than ever we definitely need his income. This had added so much worry and stress on me not only being scared of my mom getting sick but also my dad. The other day he shared how there were families outside weeping for their loved ones because they couldn't be inside with them. This on top of adjusting with how classes and everything is now has made it difficult to concentrate on any type of work or anything in general.

This student provided an image that displays the stress caused by the hurdles their family faces at the grocery store:

This affects me because my father and grandmother are unable to get groceries, so this affects my ability to assist my family. Making it more difficult to focus on school knowing they don't have needed supplies.

The student also shared an image of the participant's grandmother and the negative impact commuting to school has on family responsibilities.

On my grandma's birthday I had class, and this right here is the time I made it home by after requesting to get out of class early. It's hard keeping up with family responsibilities while commuting to and from school.

A participant provided an image of a resource flyer that is not widely displayed to students who may need childcare:

One of the personal disadvantages of students with children are the limited child care options on campus. Currently, the child development center only accepts twenty-five children aged 2 months-5 years old. The CCAMPIS program (Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program) is available for undergraduate and graduate students at CSU Stanislaus who have children aged 2 months-5 years. You can receive 50-90% off of tuition fees if eligible. However, this program is not advertised so student parents do not know it is available.

This participant provided pictures of a car accident that expanded their financial stressors and the responsibilities to their mom:

A week before Spring semester started, my mom and I had a car accident on the 99 freeway. All of the sudden a car jumped into my lane and pushed me to the dirt side of the freeway. In the roll-over, I thought for a second that everything was over but then I heard my mom and I felt I had to do something to protect her. After the accident, I personally did not want to go to the hospital because I thought I would have to pay everything out of the packet which by the way I could not afford. However, I wanted my mom to have medical attention. During this period, I felt so overwhelmed due to the fact that I need to make family, financial and personal decisions. This flashback comes to my mind over and over again and I could not concentrate in school for weeks. Of course, I was not able to work for a week since my head was hit, and my mom was in the hospital. I thought I would drop out from school because I would need to work even more hours. I was driving to take my mother to her job. My mom doesn't know how to drive so I have the responsibility to take her everywhere; doctor appointment, grocery store, her job, etc. She depends on me as I am her youngest and only child with whom she lives in the United States. As her daughter, I want to be able to provide for my mom because she is over 60 years old and she is unable to work due to her condition of chronic arthritis. Until today, I still feel that it is up to me to provide for my mother and myself.

Intergenerational Poverty Definition

Food and housing insecurity experienced by students is at times perpetuated by intergenerational poverty. Intergenerational poverty puts students on an unfair baseline with students who benefit from generational wealth and advantages. Intergenerational poverty is a social and economic disadvantage of the previous generation. Some of the consequences experienced due to intergenerational poverty include lack of financial support, family lacking knowledge of systems, and individuals feeling little control, choice or agency.

Other consequences include stigma related to poverty, having to ask for support, and feeling an intense pressure to succeed. One of the major impact students' face is lower educational performance which is linked to overworking, feeling disconnected from other students, feeling shame, and lower self-esteem. Other impacts include guilty feelings of not being able to help family and becoming overwhelmed by the family situation which takes over the ability to focus on school, often resulting in lower educational performance.

Intergenerational Poverty Data

This participant provided an image that exposes the isolation that is faced by students who are experiencing intergenerational poverty:

The lack of resources available to the people affected by generational poverty does not allow them to buy 3.00 chips plus tax. This leaves me to feel disconnected from the campus.

One participant shared a picture that displays the quality of their home and the influence it has on their college experience:

This picture represents the type of living condition my parents live in which is why I have to live on my own. Being the first one in my family to go to college is a way for me to stop the pattern of intergenerational poverty. Having family members who live in

poverty can also bring on the burden of others asking to live with you or borrow money. There is this misconception that because I am in college, have a steady job working on campus, and have my own apartment; I am well off. As a student, this brings on stress which could negatively impact my educational experience. Being the first person in my family to go to college has led me to do everything on my own, including buying my first car with no help from family. I have had to choose between paying for car repairs or using my money for food and rent.

First Generation Students Definition

Many students who experience food and housing insecurity are the first in their family to attend a four-year college or university to attain a bachelor's degree. Some of the consequences experienced due to being a first-generation student are lack of guidance and support available from family. As a result first-generation students are overworking, feeling disconnected from other students, feeling shame, and lowered self-esteem. Other impacts include guilty feelings for not being able to help family. Being overly focused on the family situation may take over the ability to focus on school. These impacts may result in lower educational performance**.**

First Generation Students Data

This student shared an image of their strained hands that characterizes the responsibilities of a first-generation college student and the fatigue that hinders them from participating on campus:

This picture represents over-working as a first-generation college student. During the summers, I worked as a seasonal field worker which is really exhausting. I had to wake up at 3:30 in the morning, make my lunch and go to work. I was exposed long hours in the sun as well as chemicals (i.e., pesticides). I was also exposed to poor health conditions. My knees, back and hands hurt, I couldn't do anything but to continue working. I feel overworking is a necessity in order to cover my personal and family responsibilities. During the semester, I was always looking for job opportunities on campus. Sometimes I could not socially connect with my classmates, professors and/or family because I would think about this constantly. As a student, I would not participate in class, programs and/or clubs at school because I just felt physically and mentally exhausted.

Societal Expectations Definition

Societal expectations are what others (family, professors, peers) expect of us by placing labels and stereotypes. Expectations include being independent by a certain age, providing for our family, and assumptions on how we should feel and behave. As college students we are expected to suffer to some extent, but some push too hard, and use it as an excuse to ignore or devalue what we are experiencing. This causes extra stress and pressure to be put on students who experience food and housing insecurities which negatively affects performance as students that may cause less participation, less connection to peers and professors, and missed classes.

Societal Expectations Data

This student provided images that are commonly shared online and the negative attitude she faces as someone who utilizes government benefits:
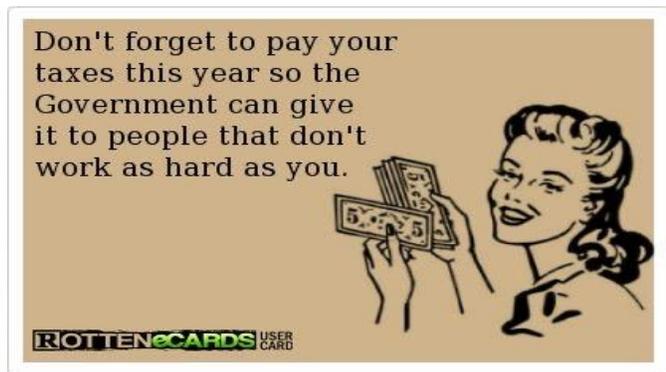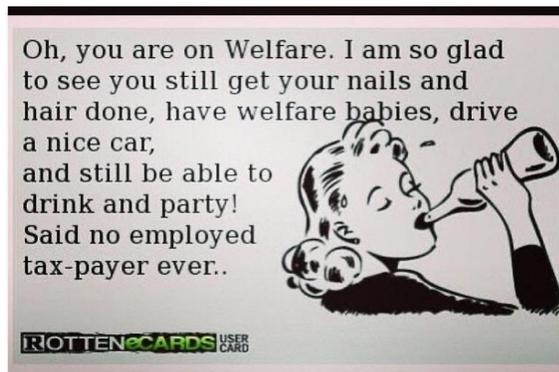
This demonstrates the stigma associated with being on welfare. When I go into a store and use my EBT card for groceries I get filled with anxiety. I rush to pull out my card and quickly put it away. I have had experiences where people have made disgruntled sounds or faces when using my card. I feel so small and so embarrassed even though the judgments they make I know aren't the truth. It creates separation and low self-esteem. Even though I know my story, others are so quick to pass judgment rather than to understand.

One participant shared about societal misconceptions about students buying and eating food sold on campus:

A lot of people may think that students are eating at the warrior grill all the time. Most of the time my budget will allow for me to get French fries in which I eat with the lunch I brought from home.

They also provided an image of their average commute time to eradicate societal expectations for students:

(This is how long it takes me to get home Wednesday night 9pm.)

Many people do not expect to be driving on average 40-60 minutes to and from a university. For me I have to leave very early for school sometimes 7-8 am just to beat traffic, and find a decent parking place outside of campus. It would cost me 200 to park on campus, so I park on the streets.

The student provided another image to illustrate that the university campus may not be as inclusive as it may seem just because there is a diverse student population:

A lot of people would expect that a university community is very diverse and supporting of diverse people, but I found this across the street at a restaurant from campus. When I see this in a community that I travel to get an education from a community that has the most diverse population in the country, it makes me question what am I really learning.

The final image this participant provided was of the inflated prices for groceries that students are expected to readily purchase:

A lot of people expect for students to shop on campus. But for me I would not purchase these overpriced small volume items. This leaves me disconnected from campus.

One student expressed their frustrations with the expectations of their peers who may seem to not understand the struggles of facing basic need insecurity:

Lastly, I've spoken about my food and housing insecurities to a few of my friends who are relatively successful, and it's starting to make me angry to hear them tell me how easy life is, and that I just have to find a job. I'm also getting tired of the phrase "If I (or they) can do it, you can do it," because I'm finding out that's not true, especially when you're vulnerable. Hearing them tell me all that makes me feel lazy, and when I take their advice, it's impossible for me to do because I don't know how to do it properly. For example, I'm not sure how to apply for decent jobs and actually get them and I'm not sure where's the best and most affordable places to live. The best answers that I get from them are "Just do it," and that "It's easy" (Societal Expectations).

Survival Mode Definition

Students who experience food and housing insecurities, face personal disadvantages. Personal disadvantages are things that students experience that make it more difficult to reach their goals and be successful. The personal disadvantages are unique to students suffering from food and/or housing insecurity. These are things that their peers do not have to face. Disadvantages include a lack of resources, money, and choices. The consequences may include not being able to utilize critical resources such as going to the doctor, obtaining food, and school and personal supplies (textbooks, backpacks, clothes). There is a constant need to prioritize which basic needs to meet. On top of these, students who are made food and housing insecure lack adequate time to study. Some of the consequences include negative impacts their mental health and functioning as students. There is a negative impact students' ability to learn that prevents them from reaching their full potential which affects our grades, GPA, choice of major, scholarships, class schedules, and overall graduation goals.

Survival Mode Data

When students are in survival mode they rely on resources such as the food pantry. The food pantry is not always enough especially when it is the only resource available. Students reported always being tired, less focused, and less motivated when in survival mode. This can result in missing classes. Being in survival mode also can mean that it is hard to find time to study, hang with friends, or just find time to rest.

The food panty alone is not always enough. There was a time that the only way I had any food at all was the food pantry and the 10 items a week is definitely not enough. This affects my physical and mental health. When I was solely relying on the food pantry, I lost 45 pounds and was sick all the time. This puts me in survive mode because I never knew if I was going to have enough to eat or if I was even going to eat. I did whatever I could like go to events that had free food but that was hard because I wasn't eating much, I was tired all the time, I felt like I had no time or energy to do anything. I couldn't even focus in classes because I was more worried about my next meal or how I would eat.

When I food out about food stamps I was fearful to applied because I had it when I was a

kid and my family never wanted us to be on them again, but it felt like my only way out. I had to apply about 5 times before I finally got them. And using them never got easier because I always felt like I was being judged. The process made it so difficult on my mental health because I didn't understand what I was doing wrong or why I was expected to struggle so long when it was obvious that I wasn't eating and that I was struggling. During this time so many people told me that I looked sick all the time.

At one point I was working 20 hours a week and had 16-18 units of courses for the semester. I was always stressed and always on the verge of breaking down because between the not eating and dealing with all my financial issues I still had to work and go to school. I couldn't just quit my job because I use nearly all of that income to pay for a place to live.

The picture below is a nail clipper. The student submitted it and stated "this illustrates risky behavior because it was lifted." Students in survival mode take risks that can lead to negative outcomes.

Nail clippers – guess how much – I snagged them – risky behavior

The pictures below are meant to illustrate what it can be like to be in survival mode. Papers and clothes pile up as a result of being forced to live in this precarious situation.

> *When you do spend money – if you do survey you get 10% off. Constantly looking for things to save money.*
> *Loans only go so far*
> *I've had same shoes for a year – only one year – rough shape*
> *No basic kitchenware – using a takeout cup for months – take multiple plastic cutlery from taco bell*
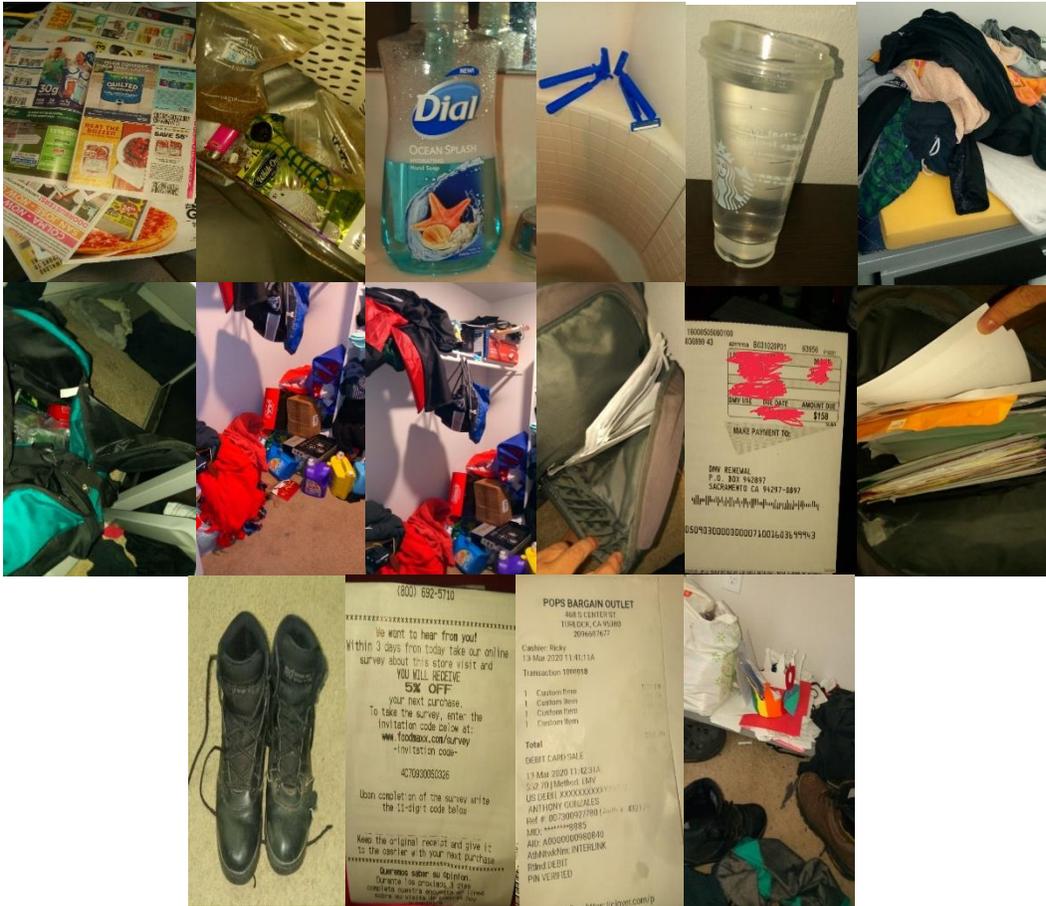
> you do what you need to do – however I can save money – stranger meetings to get what you can do – STD free/use planned parenthood which is free. This is what I had to do.

Community Disadvantages (Barriers) Definition

Community disadvantages include lack of jobs for students, employers who are not willing to work with student schedules, distance between home, school, and work, and lack of public transportation. These community disadvantages are another barrier for students who experience food and housing insecurities. These community disadvantages make it difficult for students

experiencing food and housing insecurities to earn enough income to purchase food, pay rent, buy gas, and other basic items. It also means there is less money and time available for school. Negative attitude in class and the way you view and interact with other classmates.

Community disadvantages (Barriers) Data

This student provided pictures that displays the shortage of resources for their community during the COVID-19 pandemic:
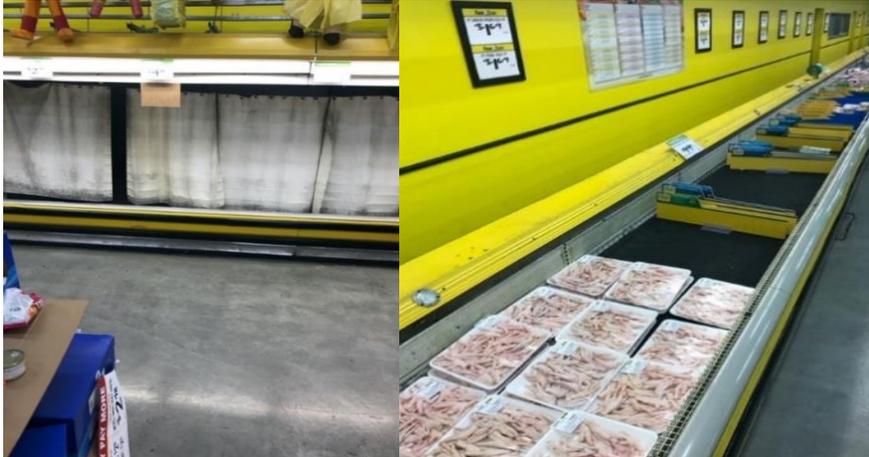
The community I live in during this pandemic seemed to be lacking available resources for life. Right here displays the amount of water that is available in the store during the time of the pandemic.

Lack of available meat which it is none, because I don't eat red meat. So, the last few weeks during this pandemic depending on the availability of meat I won't have meat at all.

Here is a quote from the same student about community disadvantages and the impact they have on learning. The quote is specifically referencing the impact of the pandemic.

In times like these I'm unable to put my 100 percent focus on school because there is so many resources that I'm in lack of.

This student used this image to explain the distress they feel in their biased community:

I see this as a disadvantage that when I am in certain communities I may be looked at as not equal based of the color of my skin.

They also provided this image to display the inflated prices and the disadvantage of purchasing groceries on campus:

I'm being disadvantaged because I know that If I was to drive within a 5-mile radius I can find the same items in larger volume at a cheaper price. Seeing things like this dissuades me from purchasing items like this from campus at all. In a commuter school is the demand so high for overpriced jelly.

This student used these images to showcase the inconvenience and uncertainty resulted by the limited resources provided in their community.
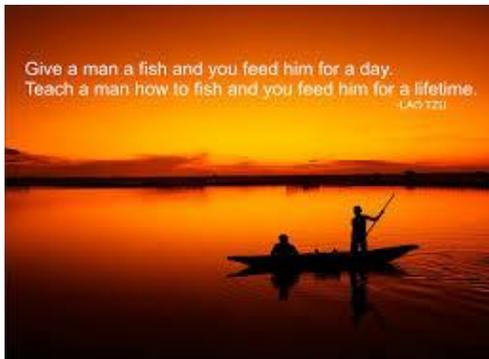
Because living with my family is not a great option, I must find housing. Ideally, I plan to live here because I finally built connections with many people, but I'm not sure where to start. I chose the city limit sign below because it represents my uncertainty of where I'll live in two months. I was never properly taught on how to live independently, how to get a job in a timely manner, and how to find cheap places to live. The quote I chose below

represents my lack of knowledge of the real world. It also represents the fact that all the help I'm getting right now is only temporary. Once I stop being a student, I won't be able to live in the dorms, go to the food pantry or go to the food distributions. All the help I'm receiving right now is temporary, and once it's gone, I have to figure out how to be self-sufficient (University Barriers). I have to also relearn how to drive and buy a car because the public transportation here is limited to this city, it comes at inconvenient times and I would have to pay more for regional buses to go outside of the city. All these costs of buying a car, housing, paying bills and other basic needs obviously require a lot of money that will drain my bank account, and I'm afraid I don't know enough on how to maintain it all.

One participant shared pictures of documents from the local housing assistance program. The student highlighted the ZERO Tolerance policy for failing to show up for appointments. Because of the chaos associated with being food and housing insecure, it can be difficult to meet all of the time demands.
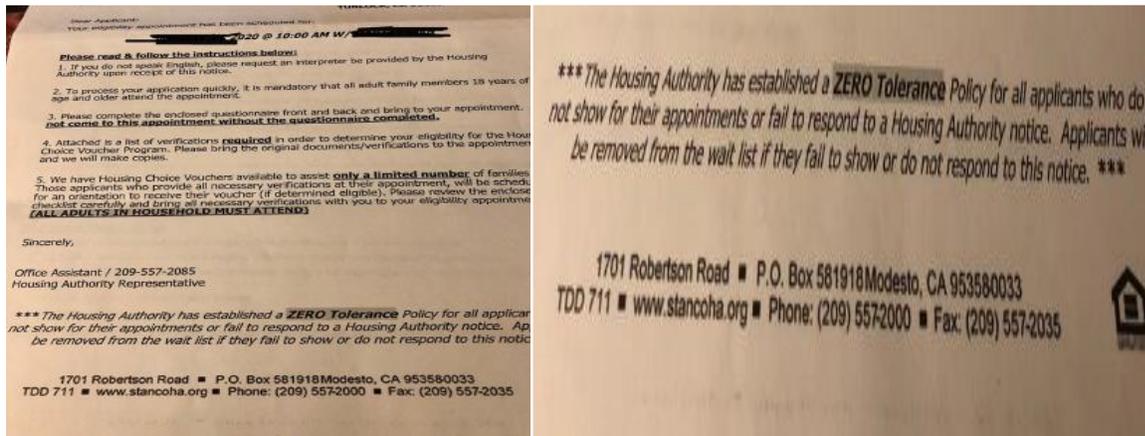
Some of the disadvantages for students seeking housing assistance are the long wait periods, short notice of appointments and appointment time conflicts during class sessions. I was on the Housing Authority waiting list for several years before getting approved. Had I been approved at the start of my college journey, rather than the end, I would have benefited more from this community resource.
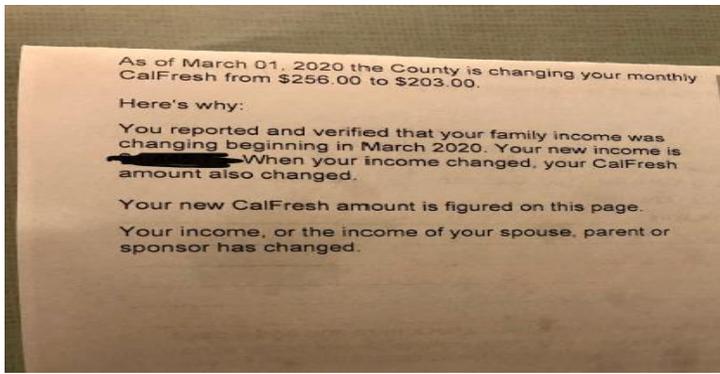
> Students like me who rely on CalFresh benefits are penalized when they work more hours because their income increases which makes their benefits decrease. This makes me feel like I will be stuck in the cycle of poverty.

Cultural and Diversity Definition

Culture and diversity issues can contribute to food and/or housing insecurity. Family may kick a person out because of cultural values. Individuals can't see their own culture so it is hard to see the impact of this. Some are not accustomed to or will not ask for help. Certain cultures have food prohibitions (pork, roots, vegan, and vegetarian) that are not met by food choices on campus. Some families do not see the value or importance of education. Going to college separates students in these families from their families. It is hard to feel connected to the university when feeling that many others at the university do not come from a similar socioeconomic background. Students feel further disadvantaged when they feel like they do not belong. Students are pushed further from the university. Students who are made food and housing insecure are then at risk of missing classes, assignments and not participating in extra-curricular activities. This results in students being pushed out of the university.

Cultural and Diversity Data

Here is what one student wrote about culture and diversity.

> *I will be graduating this semester, and the struggle I'm facing right now is housing insecurity because I will have to move out of the dorms by May. I know I can move back in with my family, but their beliefs and mindset will negatively affect me. For example, my family would rather buy food that is cheap and low quality versus food that is slightly more expensive and of higher quality. There have been a few instances where some of my family members got food poisoning for eating bad eggs, sea food, or any low-quality meat (physical health). They also have the mindset of keeping leftovers to eat until it's inedible. I would love to throw all the bad food away and buy better quality food, but my family would yell at me for spending more money.*

LGBTQ Definition

LGBTQ individuals experience more issues that contribute to food and/or housing insecurity. Families reject their LGBTQ children and this has consequences. These students must figure things out on their own. This can make it more likely that LGBTQ students are going to be food and/or housing insecure. Within this broad category, there are compounding barriers.

Suppressing feelings and sexuality create stress, anxiety, and reduce overall mental health. This makes a person further disadvantaged so they do not feel a sense of belonging. They are pushed further from the university. Many of these students express fear of talking to professors because they may be treated differently. As a consequence of the negative impacts, students experience hopelessness, stigma and shame. Students who are made food and/or housing insecure are then at risk of missing classes, assignments and not participating in extra-curricular activities. This results in students being pushed out of the university.

LGBTQ Data

One participant shared the following.

Another reason I resist to live with my family is because of their beliefs about the LGBTQ community. I have to suppress my feelings in that environment because I know they are not accepting of that. Some of their comments include: "It's not normal," "It's weird," "It's a disease." There's just so much hostility that some of my family members have with the LGBTQ community, and I don't want to live in that environment of animosity (LGBTQ). It stresses me out to the point that I become depressed and can't do daily chores without forcing myself to.

I can't talk to these people regarding LGBTQ. Must be careful about who to talk to where can I go, and what am I able to say. Certain groups on campus groups are openly discriminating or denouncing students.

Food and Housing Insecurity Logic Model (see as Appendix)

Community culture-Members of the surrounding community are less accepting and provide less security for students who do not fit with community

University Culture & Insensitivity to LGBTQ

University policies and practices that limit access to student jobs, financial aid, affordable food, child care, health care and can stigmatize individuals.

Family Culture and Sensitivity to LGBTQ: many families will not accept the individual, which has significant consequences as LGBTQ students have to figure things out on their own.

Societal Expectations: what others (family, professors, peers) expect by placing labels and stereotypes. Expectations include being independent by a certain age, providing for family, and assumptions on how we should feel and behave.

First Generation College Student: lack of guidance and support available from family, overworking, feeling disconnected from other students, and feeling shame.

Academic Outcomes: Food & Housing insecurity takes over students' ability to focus on school. Students who are made food and housing insecure are then at risk of missing classes, assignments and not participating in extra-curricular activities. There is a negative impact on the ability to learn that prevents them from reaching their full potential, which affects individual course grades, overall GPA, choice of major, scholarships, class schedules, and overall graduation goals. This results in students being pushed out of the university and away from peer group(s).

Students who struggle with food and/or housing insecurity

Mental Distress concerns involve a range of factors that encompass psychological and emotional well-being.

Physical Distress: Not able to prioritize health so students are likely to experience a multitude of physical health concerns including no health insurance, poor nutrition, physical exhaustion, and substance abuse.

Survival Mode: as a result of mental and physical health impacts, there is a constant need to prioritize which basic needs to meet. Consequences include not being able to utilize resources that are needed such as going to the doctor or obtaining food, school and personal supplies.

Family culture-Some families are not accustomed to or will not ask for help. Going to college may separate one from family.

Family Support Responsibilities: maintaining/supporting a household or not having any family support, and not wanting to ask for financial help.

Intergenerational Poverty: social and economic disadvantage of the previous generation. Some individuals feel little control, choice or agency.

University Culture and Diversity-Feeling that others at the university do not come from same socioeconomic background.

Community disadvantages-make it difficult for students to travel, work, and access services.

The above logic model emerged from further analysis of the themes that emerged from our study. As previously shared, this team included graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in California State University, Stanislaus during the 2019-20 academic year. All students in the research team had or were experiencing food and/or housing insecurity during their time at CSU Stanislaus.

Based on the experiences of the co-researcher's it is clear that food and housing insecurity has significant negative effects on mental health and physical health. Students who have experienced food and housing insecurity operate in survival mode. All of this negatively affects the ability of students to reach their full potential in their academic coursework.

The first elements of the model to focus on are in the blue oval in the middle. It was clear from the research that food and housing insecurity impacted the physical and mental health of students. Mental health is impacted by constant stress, anxiety, and worry associated with having inadequate nutrition and housing. Not having adequate food and housing also affects physical health in a negative way. Students who struggle with food and housing insecurity and suffer from poor mental and physical health are forced to live in survival mode. Being forced into survival mode negatively affects academic performance.

The experiences of the co-researchers indicate that many other factors make academic success even more difficult for students who struggle with food and housing insecurity. The orange boxes in the logic model highlight intersectionality that needs to be understood when studying food and housing insecurity and when developing actions to address it. For example, many students who suffer from food and housing insecurity are first-generation college students. Students who are the first in their family to go to college do not have a family member who they can turn for advice or help as they navigate complex university structures. Struggling to understand the processes of the university while dealing with the mental and physical health impacts of inadequate nutrition and housing make for even more stress and anxiety.

Students who experience food and housing insecurity may also experience intergenerational poverty and have responsibilities to support family members.

Because students who are struggling with food and housing insecurity are also experiencing other factors that impact their learning, any actions to address food and housing insecurity must also address these as well. A food bank can provide help to a student who is

food insecure, but this will do little to offset the struggles caused by university barriers or intergenerational poverty.

All of these issues are faced inside the broader university and community. University and community barriers can make it difficult for students suffering food and housing insecurities to access aid, and employment. The institutional culture can make students who are dealing with food and housing insecurities to feel like they belong. This can have devastating impacts for students who are the first in their family that have experienced intergenerational poverty.

Recommendations

After evaluating the data that were collected, the co-researchers developed a list of actions to address the problems and constraints that students who do not have adequate food and housing must face. The full list of the actions is in the appendix. The co-researchers ranked the actions in terms of importance and immediacy. The top two actions centered on including students with lived experience with food and housing insecurities in decision-making and psychological counseling.

Food and Housing Insecure (FHI) Student Advisory Group Recommendations
(Participatory social planning/evaluation approach)

The team feels that the many recommendations that emerge from this participatory action research project provide valuable information that can affect the approaches that CSU Stanislaus (broadly and more specifically through Basic Needs programming) takes to address the causes and impacts of food and housing insecurity on students. What is most valuable about the information is that it comes from those most affected by this issue, and therefore may provide insight to decision makers on campus as to how best create the environment that students need to feel included, validated and valued. In order for the perspective of students who experience FHI to have a meaningful effect on the institutional response they need to be involved through participatory social planning and evaluation approaches.

Participatory social planning and evaluation is used by those who know that involving all stakeholders (and most importantly those most affected by the issues in focus) is tremendously important.

> *It gives them [project/program decision makers] the information they need to design, and to adjust or change, what they do to best meet the needs of the community and of the particular populations that an intervention or initiative is mean to benefit (University of Kansas, 2021).*

Key to this approach is not just informing or consulting this stakeholder group, but including them in decision-making processes by providing access to relevant information, supporting them

to engage the system user perspective, and considering their perspectives alongside all other decision makers.

Therefore, our first recommendation is to form a Food and Housing Insecurity Student Advisory Group that collaborates directly with Student Affairs to provide direct input in to decision making functions regarding the implementation of recommendations from this report.

The Advisory group:

- Primary goal: Will have ongoing responsibility to see that PAR recommendations are implemented through this process – will be primary objective of this group. Will speak to adequacy of existing food and/or housing insecurity supports and resources on campus;
- Will be comprised of 4-5 food and/or housing insecurity students or alumnae – beginning members may come from PAR student co-researchers – as students "retire" the group of students itself will recruit new members – the group will create position description – must be people who care and are passionate;
- Will be situated within Student Affairs/Basic Needs Program (will have direct access to the Campus Care program manager through monthly meetings);
- Will sit on the Basic Needs Committee – source of information/ coordination about what all stakeholders are doing on campus – will be provided the ability to collaborate and build partnerships;
- Engagement Approach: Will engage with other food and/or housing insecurity students through various processes – ASI and student groups (Hunger Network);
  - require resources and ability to engage with larger body of food and/or housing insecurity students, tabling, surveys, meetings/event participation
- Will have a shared governance (collaborative) approach;
- Will be a paid position – Approximately 10-12 hours a month. Students may be paid through gift cards (minimum of $14/hr) to avoid their hours impeding work study commitments.

Psychological Counseling Recommendations

The next set of recommendations is centered on assisting students with food and/or housing insecurity with their physical and mental health distress

The next set of recommendations is centered on assisting students with food and/or housing insecurity with their physical and mental health distress. This research and other research alike reveal that food and housing insecurity takes a physical and mental toll on students, and it is vital that it is recognized and addressed. It is crucial to have conversations about food and housing insecurity to not only erase the stigma, but to gain important knowledge and resources to aid students struggling with food and housing insecurity.

1. Psychological Counseling Services AND the Health Center need to play a more prominent and visible role in the University's Basic Needs programming. Given the understanding of the stressors that food and housing insecurity place on mental health and physical health, the Basic Needs Program (**serving as a hub for services/supports**) must be prepared and equipped to support FHI students' mental and physical health needs. Just as food boxes and the food pantry are vital to meeting FHI students' first order needs, the Basic Needs Programs must have accessible counselors and medical professionals who are knowledgeable about and professionally trained to provide support and intervention to FHI students facing mental health and/or physical health concerns or crises. We recommend that, at minimum, two counselors from PCS and two medical professionals from the Health Center be designated (and fully trained) as Basic Needs Counseling/Health liaisons who are responsible for outreach to and intervention for FHI students.
   a. Our recommendation regarding the designation of two counselors and two health professionals is intended to nurture a relationship between the student and the provider.
   b. The University needs to ensure that all students (but particularly FHI students) have access to low or no cost medical care. For qualified FHI students, we are recommending that they be provided with a fee waiver for medical needs or a sliding fee scale or planned payment plan.
   c. Parallel to the BNP staff helping FHI students apply for CalFresh, there needs to be assistance in helping students apply for Medi-Cal.

2. Related to our first recommendation, the University's Basic Needs Program, in partnership with Psychological Counseling Services and the Health Center, must become more active in creating educational/therapeutic programming "collectively targeting" food and housing insecure students. While individual interventions are critically important to individual FHI students, group support/educational/therapeutic activities that are specifically tailored to students facing food and housing insecurity hold promise in diminishing the isolation and individual blame/shame that often accompanies the experience of being food and housing insecure.
   a. An example of a support group that we recommend as a priority is a group for FHI students focused on learning how to cook and prepare healthy foods based on what is available to them (their budget and access to food).
   b. We also encourage that the FHI student leadership group be a major player in helping to identify health and mental health programming that is needed for FHI students.

3. Related to items 1 and 2, none of this is possible unless the university makes a commitment to staffing and staffing needs. As it currently stands, Psychological Counseling Services and the Health Center cannot meet the needs of the university population as a whole. FHI students thus are faced with long waits and limited hours for services to get their basic needs met. Services need to be expanded, to include longer and

more flexible hours (and weekend hours). The pandemic has uncovered the reality that remote access is a viable means for delivering mental health and health services. This work must be continued after the pandemic is over. All of these recommendations can only be made possible if the university commits to hiring the human-power that is needed. With these staffing increases, counselors and health professionals need training and education to fully understand the needs of FHI students and to be prepared to work with this population.

4. As food is a critical component to both physical and mental health, we recommend that when the food pantry is low on food that the Basic Needs Program be supplied with gift cards that can be provided to students that allows them to purchase food from local grocery stores.

5. The University must make information available to students by regularly posting updates on services and resources that are available for mental health and physical health. All information on available services and supports must be easily found on the University website.

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Appendix 1: Actions

The co-researchers used the outcomes of the data analysis to develop the logic model that ties food and housing insecurity to the factors that impede success for students experiencing food and housing insecurity. These were then used to develop a list of actions that can address these impediments.

Goal 1 of the University's strategic plan is to "be a student-ready University." The plan includes a number of strategies to achieve this goal that relate specifically to the issues that were exposed in this research project. These include establishing and implementing first-generation student success programs (A.1.), enhancing financial aid services (A. 2.), increasing opportunities for students to become more engaged and connected to the University (A. 6.), increasing student and faculty participation in mentoring opportunities (B. 1.), enhancing more affinity organizations and clubs (B. 2.), utilizing research on belongingness and growth mindset (B. 4), developing a wellness model that builds resilience (B. 6.) addressing students' food and housing insecurity (B. 8.), increasing student opportunities for formal and informal educational and career mentorship (B. 11), developing a micro-grant program to assist students (C. 6.), and expanding the use of affordable course materials (C. 8).

The list of actions developed by the co-research team are consistent with all of these strategies that are in the University's strategic plan, but they also go beyond what is in the plan. The list actions developed out of the research are more extensive. They address more structures and practices of CSU Stanislaus that negatively impact students who experience food and housing insecurity. They also provide more specific actions so they provide a more detailed set of recommendations that can turn strategies into real policy and practices to improve the success of students who struggle with food and housing insecurity.

The research and data analysis indicate that there are a number of university policies and practices that negatively impact students struggling with food and housing insecurity. University barriers were separated into three broad categories. The largest was University Policies and Practices, University Culture and Diversity, and University Culture and Sensitivity to LGBTQ Concerns In response to this the co-researchers developed several actions to change some policies and practices. They also identified a number of actions that can be implemented that can help address the existing barriers.

University Policies and Practices
The actions to address university barriers are grouped in the following categories: financial aid/scholarships, campus food distribution and pantry, student wellness, on-campus dining and housing, communication about resources and support, university employment, child care, parking, student clubs and organizations, and additional barriers.

Financial Aid/Scholarships
- Increase financial aid and scholarship opportunities to keep pace with the increasing costs of going to school.

- Streamline the scholarship process so that students who qualify based on need for scholarships are automatically applied for them.
- Need scholarships that are open to all majors (look at programs with few scholarships)
- Take away limit on the grants that you can get (Cal Grant, Pell Grant, State Univ. grant) need more information about this.
- More work study jobs available to low income students
- Make it easier and have more support for students to get work study jobs
- More support for first gen college students from Financial Aid office (Incorporate more remote workshops, tutoring, SI sessions, etc. so students can join when they are not on campus-Financial aid/loan workshops online and recorded) Let students know how they can get grants and loans
- Financial aid office could do a better job letting students know that they can get a grant for grad school if their income is low.
- Reduce student fees and course fees because of classes being all online
- Programs that prevent students from becoming food and housing insecure
    - Allow access to Campus Cares before students have used all other fin aid (loans)
    - Campus Cares needs to respond faster (need resources, more staff)
    - More funding such as Campus Cares, Financial aid is not sufficient
- Allow remaining grant (Pell) to transfer to graduate education
- Loan forgiveness-loan reduction (taxable income)
- Reduce loans and use grant money instead

Campus food distribution and pantry
- More programs to help students-food pantry restrictions on number of items More than 10 items
- More food boxes for distribution and more items in boxes
- Give students choices of what is in boxes.
- Location of food box distribution-stigma associated with having to walk long distance closer to parking lot, closer to resident hall, carts available
- Temporary 15-minute parking for people using food pantry.
- Make food assistance programs more known (advertising)
- Extend hours of assistance programs into the evening
- Make it easier for Stockton students (make available on Stockton Campus)
- More than a canned food drive
- Add fresh food
- Basic needs committee needs to have students who are experiencing food and housing insecurity as committee members.
- Board of Directors for food pantry made up of students who are experiencing food and housing insecurity.
- University support for food distribution more than just one-time money and donations (line item in university budget)
- More information so students know about this

Student Wellness

- Counselling center needs more counselors, month long wait is too long.
- Health center open longer and on weekends
- Stronger connection between mental health and physical health resources on campus.
- Counselling open on weekends
- More access to health center and gym after graduation
- Reduce the price for alumni for Student Rec. center

On-Campus dining and housing

- Cheaper meal options for students
- Cheaper meal plan options and cheaper food options (but still healthy)
- Easier access to microwaves, (More of them) make it clear that it is for students to use. Put in eating areas.
- Make it so that students can use EBT on campus.
- More than a canned food drive
- Add fresh food
- Free lunch once a week
- More affordable campus housing
- Program to help students get housing off campus
- Housing available without all the amenities
- More laundry facilities in on campus apartments
- The university should provide information about off-campus housing.
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus food prices, parking. (University Barrier)

Communication about resources and support

- More informative about programs for all students
- More individual connections for students who do not know where to go
- Create networking opportunities for students
- Professors and advisors and department chairs

University Employment

- When students apply to campus jobs, prioritize students who do not have off campus jobs. This should be part of the application. (University Barrier)
- Streamline employment process on campus. Make it easier and faster for students to get on campus jobs.
- Connect students to EDD offices in the area.
- Need more training for students so they can learn computer programs while they are working.
- Provide on the job training.
- Let students work more than 20 hours for on-campus jobs.
- Pay students more per hour
- On campus jobs need medical benefits (workers comp)

- Make sure students have resources to make sure they are protected at work. (lifting heavy objects)
- More work study jobs available to low income students

Child Care
- On campus day care needs to be expanded because we have a large student body. (University barrier, family support)
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus childcare.
- Needs to be more information about the resources that are available.

Parking
- Waivers for parking passes for students (All fees should consider student ability to pay)
- Commuting students should have more access to parking.
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus food prices, parking. (University Barrier)

Student Clubs and Organizations
- Some clubs have fees to help students with grad school-Fee waiver for students who experience financial hardships
- Set course time in a major for activities of the student club for that major.
- Zoom meetings for student clubs.
- Clubs meet at more times

Additional barriers
- More hours for printing services and lower cost printing
- More credit on printing account
- Offering a chat line or program where we are able to ask questions about our academic path or whatever questions we have, and this would be helpful for those of us with time constraints. (Academic Advice)
- More after-graduation resources. Student loan help (financial and advising) Make any existing programs more visible. More known.
- Make more classes available on the Stockton Campus (commuting students)
- Make it clear if students can complete degree on Stockton campus
- Lunch breaks in long classes

University needs to be aware of barriers that students are dealing with.

University Culture and Diversity
- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support-mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Food/housing insecurity month
- Art/statue/mural/pictures
- Larger diversity center

- Training for faculty and staff
- Academic departments need to advertise food and housing programs

University Culture and Sensitivity to LGBTQ Concerns
- LGBTQ clubs Mentor program and club-University needs to commit funding and support
- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support-mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Art/statue/mural/pictures
- Training for faculty and staff
- Academic departments need to advertise food and housing programs
- Larger diversity center

First Generation College Student
- Fin. Aid office for first gen. college students
- More support for first gen college students from Financial Aid office (Incorporate more remote workshops, tutoring, SI sessions, etc. so students can join when they are not on campus-Financial aid/loan workshops online and recorded) Let students know how they can get grants and loans
- Financial aid office could do a better job letting students know that they can get a grant for grad school if their income is low.
- Need more training for students working on campus so they can learn computer programs while they are working.
- Provide more on-the-job training for students working on campus.
- Some clubs have fees to help students with grad school-Fee waiver for students who experience financial hardships
- Set course time in a major for activities of the student club for that major.
- Zoom meetings for student clubs.
- Clubs meet at more times
- Offering a chat line or program where we are able to ask questions about our academic path or whatever questions we have, and this would be helpful for those of us with time constraints.
- More after-graduation resources. Student loan help (financial and advising)
- Make any existing programs more visible. More known.
- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support-mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Increase financial aid and scholarship opportunities.
- Revise scholarship program so that students who qualify for scholarships are automatically applied for them.
- Need more general scholarships
- Limit on the grants that you are able to get (Cal Grant, Pell Grant, State univ. grant)
- More scholarships for social sciences majors.

- Allow remaining grant (Pell) to transfer to graduate education

Intergenerational Poverty

- Waivers for parking passes for students (All fees should consider student ability to pay)
- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support-mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Scholarships that address student need as well
- Multiple scholarships each have a unique application-streamline the scholarship process.
- More work study jobs available to low income students
- Financial aid office could do a better job letting students know that they can get a grant for grad school if their income is low. Let students know how they can get grants and loans
- Provide aid (Campus Cares) to students before they have used all other fin aid (loans)
- Campus Cares needs to respond faster (need resources, more staff)
- More funding or support students experiencing intergenerational Poverty
- More funding such as Campus Cares, Financial aid is not sufficient
- Incorporate more remote workshops, tutoring, SI sessions, etc. so students can join when they are not on campus-Financial aid/loan workshops online and recorded
- On campus day care needs to be expanded because we have a large student body. (University barrier, family support)
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus childcare.
- More affordable campus housing
- Program to help students get housing off campus
- Housing available without all the amenities
- More laundry facilities in on campus apartments

Family Support Responsibilities

- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support-mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Provide aid (Campus Cares) to students before they have used all other fin aid (loans)
- Campus Cares needs to respond faster (need resources, more staff)
- Loan forgiveness-loan reduction
- On campus day care needs to be expanded because we have a large student body. (University barrier, family support)
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus childcare.
- Some clubs have fees to help students with grad school-Fee waiver for students who experience financial hardships
- Set course time in a major for activities of the student club for that major.
- Zoom meetings for student clubs.
- Clubs meet at more times

Community Disadvantages

- Connect students to EDD offices in the area.
- The university should provide information about off-campus housing.
- More internships/information about what is available for students

Societal Expectations

- University adds student advisor to student portal