



Higher Education Fights Hunger and Homelessness

On top of tests, essays and group projects, many college students in Colorado are burdened with even more dire challenges: securing adequate food and housing.

Hunger and homelessness strike rural and urban campuses alike but disproportionately affect low-income and first-generation students. The problems are often intertwined: About 65% of food insecure students reported experiencing some type of housing insecurity.ⁱ

Colorado public institutions are working to meet these needs so all students have the chance to thrive. Of the 31 state colleges and universities, 19 have established food or housing support programs, and many will roll out resources in the coming years.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner.ⁱⁱ

In Colorado, many institutions have opened food banks to mitigate hunger on campus. Most students self-identify to receive food and personal hygiene items. Examples include:

- The University of Northern Colorado has established the UNC Bear Pantry, which is a registered 501(c)3. Any enrolled UNC student may receive up to five toiletry and food items twice a week. The university also allows students to donate unused meal swipes to classmates in need.
- Fort Lewis College and Adams State University have partnered with Sodexo food services to provide weekly hot meals to qualifying students.
- Arapahoe Community College provides students with non-perishable supplies, donated meal vouchers and gift cards for the campus cafe.

Fast Facts

According to the national [2016 Hunger on Campus](#) report, costly tuition and stagnant wages are two main drivers of campus food and housing insecurity.

48% of respondents reported food insecurity in the previous 30 days. More than **20%** experienced very low levels of food security that would qualify as hungry.

25% of community college students qualified as having very low food security, compared to **20%** at four-year schools.

57% of African American students reported food insecurity, compared to **40%** of non-Hispanic white students.

56% percent of first-generation students were food insecure, compared to **45%** of students who had at least one parent who attended college.

- Front Range Community College has partnered with Food Bank of the Rockies to support students. Upon intake, students may report additional stressors, such as personal budget or body image issues, so staff can have more intentional conversations in resolving food insecurity.
- At the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, Clyde's Cupboard grew out of a student project and now supplies students with six items per week. Campus food drives and cash donations keep the pantry stocked year-round.

Housing Insecurity

Students may experience **homelessness** when they lack a place to live, often residing in a shelter, an automobile, an abandoned building or outside. **Housing insecurity** may include the inability to pay rent or utilities or the need to move frequently. ⁱⁱ

More Colorado colleges and universities are working to prevent homelessness and housing insecurity.

- The Fostering Success Program at Colorado State University in Fort Collins offers scholarships, emergency housing, academic and financial aid outreach and more to program participants, students who came from foster care or are on the brink of homelessness.
- The Community College of Denver offers payment assistance for off-campus housing and works with community organizations to provide scholarships for displaced students and single parents.

What can we do about it?

On the state level, CDHE is working with other agencies to help students access critical resources like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Individuals may support their local university efforts by organizing food drives, making cash donations and forging partnerships with businesses and nonprofits.

Where can I learn more?

For more information on campus and hunger and homelessness, we recommend:

- ⁱ Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education
<http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf>
- ⁱⁱ Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students
http://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf