



Dallas County Community College District

District Report from Fall 2016
Survey of Student Basic Needs

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

More than ever, maintaining an adequate standard of living requires postsecondary education. In Dallas County, 12 percent of those with some college or an associate's degree live below the poverty line, compared to over 17 percent of those with only a high school diploma.ⁱ The median annual salary for a Dallas resident with some college or an associate's degree is \$34,173, 29 percent higher than the \$26,426 earned by the median high school graduate.ⁱⁱ These differences in economic outcomes are particularly meaningful in Dallas, where the cost of living is 11 percent higher than average.ⁱⁱⁱ The Economic Policy Institute estimates that, in order to maintain an adequate standard of living, a household with 2 adults and 2 children in Dallas County must earn \$61,150 annually.^{iv} Two adults each earning the median wage for those with associate's degrees ($\$34,173 \times 2 = \$68,346$) can attain this standard. There is a pronounced shortfall, however, for households whose adults have only graduated high school ($\$26,426 \times 2 = \$52,852$, or \$8,298 less than what is needed).

Although higher education has become a prerequisite for economic success in Dallas, college students themselves often have difficulty accessing sufficient food and housing as they pursue their academic goals. To better understand the challenges faced by community college students in particular, this report presents a profile of 1,230 survey participants in the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD). In addition, the report compares district-level results with aggregated results from other colleges in the South Census Region (not including DCCCD) and from the national survey sample. The South Census Region includes colleges in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Texas. National sample results are similar to those found in the associated survey report *Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education*.^v

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.^{vi} To assess food insecurity among students, the survey instrument included the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) 6-item Food Security Survey Module (FSSM).^{vii} Table 1 displays results from the FSSM. Across all six items in the USDA food security survey module, DCCCD students answered similarly to students in the regional sample but indicated less food insecurity across all items when compared to students in the national sample.

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

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>The food that I bought just didn't last and I didn't have enough money to get more</i>	46%	45%	52%
<i>I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals</i>	55%	52%	60%
<i>Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	41%	42%	46%
<i>3 or more days: Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	23%	28%	32%
<i>Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	39%	38%	43%
<i>Were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	31%	32%	36%

The USDA recommends assigning each respondent a score based on the total number of affirmative answers on the 6-item instrument. That score determines a person’s food security status via a four category scale, where a score of zero corresponds to high food security, one to marginal food security, two to four translate to low food security, and scores of five or six indicate very low food security. Taken together, people who report low and very low food security can be referred to as food insecure.^{viii} Table 2 shows food security scores and categories across the three samples. Sixty-four percent of DCCCD students reported at marginal or worse food security during the previous 30 days. Twenty-seven percent of DCCCD students report very low food security, which reflects, “multiple indications of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to inadequate resources for food.”^{ix} DCCCD respondents reported low and very low food security (51 percent) at a similar rate as other students surveyed in the regional sample (50 percent) but less frequently than students in the national (56 percent) survey sample.

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

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Food security (last 30 days)</i>			
High security (score = 0)	36%	39%	33%
Marginal security (score = 1)	13%	11%	12%
Low security (score = 2-4)	24%	22%	23%
Very low security (score = 5-6)	27%	28%	33%

Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity can involve unaffordable housing, poor housing quality, crowding, and frequent moves.^x The survey instrument included five items to assess whether a student has experienced housing insecurity in the past 12 months. Students are classified as housing insecure if they answered affirmatively to at least one of those items. Table 3 shows district, region, and national housing insecurity statistics. DCCCD students reported comparable levels of housing insecurity (46 percent) relative to other students across the South Census Region (47 percent) and the nation (51 percent). These rates are also similar to those measured in the Wisconsin HOPE Lab’s 2014-15 survey.

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

	DCCCD	Region	National
Any of the below items:	46%	47%	51%
<i>...Didn't pay full amount of rent or mortgage</i>	16%	17%	21%
<i>...Didn't pay full amount of utilities</i>	23%	25%	28%
<i>...Moved 2 or more times per year</i>	12%	14%	14%
<i>...Doubled up</i>	15%	14%	17%
<i>...Moved in with other people due to financial problems</i>	17%	17%	18%

Homelessness

Homelessness indicates that a person is without a place to live, often residing in a shelter, automobile, an abandoned building, or outside. Students are considered homeless if they answered affirmatively to at least one of six items. These items, and an overall measure of homelessness, are displayed in Table 4. Students surveyed from DCCCD (11 percent) indicated slightly lower levels of homelessness than students regionally (13 percent) or nationally (14 percent).

Table 4: Prevalence of Homelessness (Past 12 Months)

	DCCCD	Region	National
Any of the below items:	11%	13%	14%
<i>...Thrown out of home</i>	4%	5%	6%
<i>...Evicted from home</i>	2%	3%	3%
<i>...Stayed in a shelter</i>	2%	1%	2%
<i>...Stayed in an abandoned building, auto, or other place not meant as housing</i>	3%	4%	4%
<i>...Did not know where you were going to sleep, even for one night</i>	6%	7%	8%
<i>...Didn't have a home</i>	2%	2%	2%

Demographic Disparities in Basic Needs Security

Tables 5, 6, and 7 present measures of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness, respectively, across demographic groups. As shown in Table 5 below, the relationships between food insecurity and students' demographic characteristics were weaker for DCCCD than for the South Census Region or the nation, reflecting generally lower rates of food insecurity among survey respondents in DCCCD. DCCCD students were more likely to experience low or very low food security if they were African American, over the age of 20, did not have at least one parent who completed a bachelor's degree, those who received the Pell Grant, were divorced or widowed, were independent, those with children of their own, and those who were ever placed in foster care. These patterns of relationships between food insecurity and demographic characteristics were similar across DCCCD, the South Census Region, and the nation.

Table 5: Demographic Disparities in Food Insecurity

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	52%	53%	58%
Male	48%	45%	52%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	45%	49%	52%
African American	64%	57%	69%
Hispanic	46%	49%	57%
American Indian		69%	70%
SE Asian	46%	43%	47%
Other Asian	52%	34%	47%
More than one race	54%	56%	61%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	38%	44%	46%
21-25	54%	54%	59%
26-30	55%	54%	62%
Over 30	57%	53%	61%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	54%	56%	61%
Some college	58%	50%	59%
Associate's degree	55%	49%	53%
Bachelor's degree	40%	47%	48%
Graduate degree	38%	42%	44%
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	49%	50%	56%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	55%	47%	51%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	49%	51%	56%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	58%	44%	53%

Table 5: Demographic Disparities in Food Insecurity (Continued)

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	45%	44%	49%
Yes	63%	59%	65%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	50%	51%	56%
Yes	54%	42%	54%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	51%	49%	55%
Divorced or widowed	68%	60%	70%
In a relationship	46%	55%	59%
Married	48%	45%	50%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	55%	53%	60%
Yes	38%	44%	48%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	47%	48%	53%
Yes	59%	57%	63%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	50%	50%	56%
Yes	76%	63%	75%

Table 6 shows that in DCCCD there were substantially increased rates of housing insecurity for older students. Those over the age of 20 were 16 to 26 percentage points more likely to be housing insecure than students ages 18 to 20. There were also substantial differences for independent students (51 percent versus 28 percent), those with children (60 percent versus 40 percent), and those who were ever placed in foster care (69 percent versus 44 percent). Increased rates of housing insecurity were also evident for students who were African American, reported their race as Asian other than Southeast Asian or as more than one race, received the Pell Grant, or were divorced or widowed.

Table 6: Demographic Disparities in Housing Insecurity

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	49%	49%	53%
Male	36%	40%	44%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	44%	46%	48%
African American	54%	54%	64%
Hispanic	37%	43%	49%
American Indian		62%	68%
SE Asian	35%	39%	42%
Other Asian	54%	38%	40%
More than one race	50%	50%	54%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	29%	34%	33%
21-25	45%	47%	52%
26-30	55%	60%	62%
Over 30	53%	54%	60%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	46%	51%	54%
Some college	49%	46%	53%
Associate's degree	43%	43%	48%
Bachelor's degree	39%	44%	43%
Graduate degree	42%	39%	43%

Table 6: Demographic Disparities in Housing Insecurity (Continued)

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	44%	46%	50%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	51%	50%	49%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	43%	46%	50%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	50%	45%	49%
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	41%	40%	44%
Yes	55%	57%	60%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	45%	46%	50%
Yes	40%	48%	54%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	43%	44%	48%
Divorced or widowed	61%	59%	71%
In a relationship	44%	48%	50%
Married	48%	48%	51%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	51%	52%	57%
Yes	28%	34%	35%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	40%	42%	45%
Yes	60%	56%	63%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	44%	45%	49%
Yes	69%	63%	72%

In general, the relationships between homelessness and students' demographic characteristics shown in Table 7 were slightly weaker in DCCCD than they were regionally or nationally, reflecting lower rates of homelessness among survey respondents in DCCCD. Students in DCCCD were more likely to report homelessness over the past 12 months if they were African American, Asian, or reported more than one race, were over the age of 20, were not a citizen or permanent resident, did not have at least one parent who is a citizen or permanent resident, received the Pell Grant, never served in the armed forces, were independent, or were ever in foster care. Relative rates of homelessness were extremely high for students who were ever in foster care (41 percent, versus 10 percent for those never placed in foster care).

Table 7: Demographic Disparities in Homelessness

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	10%	12%	14%
Male	13%	13%	16%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	8%	13%	12%
African American	17%	18%	22%
Hispanic	6%	9%	12%
American Indian		15%	22%
SE Asian	15%	11%	13%
Other Asian	20%	11%	14%
More than one race	17%	16%	19%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	9%	12%	13%
21-25	12%	13%	15%
26-30	11%	15%	15%
Over 30	11%	11%	15%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	11%	14%	15%
Some college	12%	12%	15%
Associate's degree	6%	9%	13%
Bachelor's degree	11%	12%	12%
Graduate degree	11%	12%	12%

Table 7: Demographic Disparities in Homelessness (Continued)

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	10%	12%	14%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	17%	16%	14%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	10%	12%	14%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	17%	13%	14%
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	10%	11%	12%
Yes	15%	15%	16%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	11%	13%	14%
Yes	6%	10%	16%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	13%	14%	16%
Divorced or widowed	9%	17%	20%
In a relationship	10%	15%	14%
Married	7%	5%	7%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	13%	13%	14%
Yes	6%	11%	12%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	12%	13%	14%
Yes	10%	11%	14%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	10%	12%	13%
Yes	41%	26%	29%

Accessing Public Assistance

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

Students' utilization of public assistance is shown in Tables 8 and 9. Table 8 displays public assistance received by students who reported low or very low food insecurity. Students surveyed in DCCCD were less likely to receive grants (48 percent) than those regionally (60 percent) and nationally (61 percent). The most common types of assistance for food insecure DCCCD students were SNAP (23 percent), receipt of free food or meals (14 percent), Medicaid or public health insurance (18 percent), and tax refunds (28 percent). Food insecure students in the DCCCD sample were less likely to receive food assistance than their regional and national counterparts. Twenty-three percent of DCCCD students reported SNAP receipt and 14 percent reported receiving free food or meals, less than those in the South region (24 percent and 24 percent) and in the nation (29 percent and 23 percent). On most measures of housing and other assistance, food insecure students in DCCCD were similar to those in the regional and national samples.

Table 8: Public Assistance for Food Insecure Students

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Financial aid receipt and employment</i>			
Pell Grant	41%	47%	49%
Other federal or state grants	12%	22%	23%
Institutional grants	6%	8%	8%
Any grant	48%	60%	61%
Employed in last week	60%	59%	56%
Any grant and employed in last week	28%	34%	31%
<i>Food-related public assistance</i>			
SNAP (food stamps)	23%	24%	29%
WIC (nutritional assistance for pregnant women and children)	3%	5%	6%
Receive free food or meals	14%	24%	23%
<i>Housing-related public assistance</i>			
Housing assistance	10%	10%	13%
Utility assistance	4%	2%	5%
<i>Other public assistance</i>			
TANF	1%	1%	4%
SSI	3%	3%	4%
SSDI	2%	3%	4%
Medicaid or public health insurance	18%	20%	26%
Child care assistance	4%	4%	5%
Unemployment compensation/insurance	2%	2%	3%
Transportation assistance	3%	2%	4%
Tax refunds	28%	23%	24%
Veteran's benefits	3%	8%	4%

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

Table 9 displays public assistance received by students who reported experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness. Similar to the results in Table 8, rates of grant receipt were lower for DCCCD students than students surveyed regionally and nationally. Only 10 percent of housing insecure and homeless

students in DCCCD received housing assistance in the past 12 months, comparable to others in the South Census Region (10 percent) and the national (13 percent). Most measures of public assistance were similar across the DCCCD, regional, and national samples. However, DCCCD and South Census Region students were less likely to receive SNAP and Medicaid or public health insurance.

Table 9: Public Assistance for Housing Insecure or Homeless Students

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Financial aid receipt and employment</i>			
Pell Grant	41%	48%	50%
Other federal or state grants	13%	21%	23%
Institutional grants	7%	7%	8%
Any grant	48%	60%	62%
Employed in last week	61%	60%	57%
Any grant and employed in last week	30%	34%	32%
<i>Food-related public assistance</i>			
SNAP (food stamps)	24%	27%	32%
WIC (nutritional assistance for pregnant women and children)	5%	5%	7%
Receive free food or meals	15%	25%	24%
<i>Housing-related public assistance</i>			
Housing assistance	10%	10%	13%
Utility assistance	4%	3%	6%
<i>Other public assistance</i>			
TANF	1%	2%	5%
SSI	2%	3%	4%
SSDI	2%	3%	4%
Medicaid or public health insurance	19%	20%	28%
Child care assistance	5%	5%	5%
Unemployment compensation/insurance	3%	2%	4%
Transportation assistance	2%	3%	4%
Tax refunds	30%	22%	26%
Veteran's benefits	3%	9%	4%

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

Summary Statistics

To better facilitate comparisons with regional and national data and to assess which students at your colleges may have been more or less likely to respond to the survey instrument, Table 10 presents summary statistics for each of the three samples. Compared to the regional and national samples, the DCCCD sample contains fewer White and more Hispanic students. Students in DCCCD were less likely to be a citizen or permanent resident, have a parent who is a citizen or permanent resident, to be in their first year of college, or to be enrolled full time.

Table 10: Summary Statistics

	DCCCD	Region	National
Female	71%	68%	72%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	22%	35%	44%
African American	21%	11%	11%
Hispanic	36%	34%	25%
Native American	0%	0%	1%
SE Asian	3%	2%	2%
Other Asian	7%	4%	5%
More than one race	10%	13%	12%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	27%	35%	30%
21-25	31%	25%	26%
26-30	16%	13%	15%
Over 30	24%	26%	29%
<i>Highest level of parental education</i>			
High school or less	40%	31%	35%
Some college	25%	28%	29%
Associate's degree	6%	9%	9%
Bachelor's degree	17%	19%	17%
Graduate degree	12%	12%	10%
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	86%	95%	95%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	14%	5%	5%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	80%	92%	91%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	20%	8%	9%

Table 10: Summary Statistics (Continued)

	DCCCD	Region	National
<i>Family characteristics</i>			
Parent or guardian claims student as dependent	27%	34%	30%
Ever placed in foster care	2%	3%	5%
Have children	23%	28%	28%
<i>Relationship status</i>			
Single	54%	49%	49%
Divorced or widowed	4%	4%	4%
In a relationship	25%	28%	29%
Married or domestic partnership	17%	20%	18%
<i>Year in college</i>			
Less than 1	15%	34%	29%
1 to 2	49%	40%	39%
More than 2	36%	26%	32%
<i>Financial aid and employment</i>			
Receives the Pell Grant	32%	39%	42%
Enrolled full-time	46%	62%	59%
Employed in last week	58%	59%	58%
Number of hours worked last week	30	28	27

Resources Available in Dallas County

211 Texas connects Texans with public assistance, including food and housing resources. Dial 2-1-1 anywhere in Texas, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 211 Texas also operates a local Dallas information center at the Community Council of Greater Dallas, which can be found at ccadvance.org.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care (CoC) program is designed to coordinate local resources that address homelessness. The Dallas City and County CoC is the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (MDHA) at <http://www.mdhadallas.org> or (972) 638-5621. The MDHA website includes information on local resources for shelters, housing programs, employment, childcare and youth services, physical and mental health services, alcohol and substance abuse resources, and general services.

Questions?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the Association of Community College Trustees

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