



# Maricopa 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 Maricopa County, 10 percent of those with some college or an associate's degree live below the poverty line, compared to 16 percent of those with only a high school diploma.<sup>i</sup> The median annual salary for a Maricopa resident with some college or an associate's degree is \$35,665, 25 percent higher than the \$28,468 earned by the median high school graduate.<sup>ii</sup> These differences in economic outcomes are particularly meaningful in Maricopa, where the cost of living is 12 percent higher than average.<sup>iii</sup> The Economic Policy Institute estimates that, in order to maintain an adequate standard of living, a household with 2 adults and 2 children in Maricopa County must earn \$67,468 annually.<sup>iv</sup> Two adults each earning the median wage for those with associate's degrees ( $\$35,665 \times 2 = \$71,330$ ) can attain this standard. There is a pronounced shortfall, however, for households whose adults have only graduated high school ( $\$28,468 \times 2 = \$56,936$ , or \$10,532 less than what is needed).

Although higher education has become a prerequisite for economic success in Maricopa County, 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 2,665 survey participants in the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD). In addition, the report compares district-level results with aggregated results from other colleges in the West Census Region (not including MCCCD) and from the national survey sample. The West Census Region includes colleges in Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, and Idaho. National sample results are similar to those found in the associated survey report *Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education*.<sup>v</sup>

## 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.<sup>vi</sup> 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).<sup>vii</sup> Table 1 displays results from the FSSM. Across all 6 items in the USDA module, MCCCCD students were slightly less likely to answer affirmatively than students in both the West Census Region and national samples.

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

	MCCCCD	Region	National
<i>The food that I bought just didn't last and I didn't have enough money to get more</i>	47%	56%	52%
<i>I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals</i>	57%	63%	60%
<i>Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	44%	50%	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>	32%	35%	32%
<i>Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	40%	48%	43%
<i>Were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?</i>	33%	40%	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.<sup>viii</sup> Table 2 shows food security scores and categories across the three samples. Sixty-four percent of MCCCCD students reported marginal or worse food security during the previous 30 days. Thirty-one percent of MCCCCD students report very low food security, which reflects, “multiple indications of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to inadequate resources for food.”<sup>ix</sup> MCCCCD respondents reported low and very low food security (52 percent) less frequently than other students surveyed in the regional (61 percent) and national (56 percent) survey samples.

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

	MCCCD	Region	National
<i>Food security (last 30 days)</i>			
High security (score = 0)	36%	29%	33%
Marginal security (score = 1)	12%	11%	12%
Low security (score = 2-4)	21%	24%	23%
Very low security (score = 5-6)	31%	37%	33%

### Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity can involve unaffordable housing, poor housing quality, crowding, and frequent moves.<sup>x</sup> The survey instrument included five items to assess whether a student has experienced housing insecurity in the past twelve months. Students are classified as housing insecure if they answered affirmatively to at least one of those items. Table 3 shows district, regional, and national housing insecurity statistics. MCCCD students reported comparable levels of housing insecurity (49 percent) relative to other students across the West Census Region (54 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)**

	MCCCD	Region	National
Any of the below items:	49%	54%	51%
<i>...Didn't pay full amount of rent or mortgage</i>	20%	22%	21%
<i>...Didn't pay full amount of utilities</i>	27%	30%	28%
<i>...Moved 2 or more times per year</i>	14%	14%	14%
<i>...Doubled up</i>	17%	20%	17%
<i>...Moved in with other people due to financial problems</i>	18%	20%	18%

## Homelessness

Homelessness indicates that a person is without a place to live, often residing in a shelter, automobile, an abandoned building, or outside. Students are considered homeless if they answered affirmatively to at least one of six items. These items, and an overall measure of homelessness, are displayed in Table 4. Students surveyed from MCCCCD indicated slightly lower levels of homelessness (12 percent) than students regionally (17 percent) or nationally (14 percent).

**Table 4: Prevalence of Homelessness (Past 12 Months)**

	MCCCCD	Region	National
Any of the below items:	12%	17%	14%
<i>...Thrown out of home</i>	6%	7%	6%
<i>...Evicted from home</i>	3%	4%	3%
<i>...Stayed in a shelter</i>	2%	3%	2%
<i>...Stayed in an abandoned building, auto, or other place not meant as housing</i>	4%	5%	4%
<i>...Did not know where you were going to sleep, even for one night</i>	7%	10%	8%
<i>...Didn't have a home</i>	2%	3%	2%

## Demographic Disparities in Basic Needs Security

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

**Table 5: Demographic Disparities in Food Insecurity**

	MCCCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	53%	61%	58%
Male	49%	59%	52%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	50%	55%	52%
African American	61%	78%	69%
Hispanic	50%	61%	57%
American Indian	71%	75%	70%
SE Asian	47%	47%	47%
Other Asian	41%	47%	47%
More than one race	55%	66%	61%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	43%	50%	46%
21-25	55%	64%	59%
26-30	55%	65%	62%
Over 30	56%	64%	61%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	57%	63%	61%
Some college	54%	63%	59%
Associate's degree	48%	60%	53%
Bachelor's degree	47%	53%	48%
Graduate degree	41%	50%	44%
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	52%	61%	56%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	38%	54%	51%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	53%	61%	56%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	42%	56%	53%

**Table 5: Demographic Disparities in Food Insecurity (Continued)**

	MCCCD	Region	National
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	44%	56%	49%
Yes	62%	68%	65%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	52%	60%	56%
Yes	52%	61%	54%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	50%	61%	55%
Divorced or widowed	71%	74%	70%
In a relationship	57%	64%	59%
Married	46%	51%	50%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	55%	63%	60%
Yes	45%	53%	48%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	47%	59%	53%
Yes	61%	65%	63%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	51%	59%	56%
Yes	66%	81%	75%

Table 6 shows that in MCCCCD there are substantially increased rates of housing insecurity for students who are African American (61 percent) or American Indian (65 percent), relative to the district average (49 percent). Students over the age of 20 were 26 to 31 percentage points more likely to be housing insecure than students ages 18 to 20. There were also substantial differences for Pell recipients (59 percent versus 41 percent), independent students (54 percent versus 34 percent), those with children (60 percent versus 43 percent), and those who were ever placed in foster care (66 percent versus 48 percent). Increased rates of housing insecurity were also evident for students without at least one parent who completed a bachelor’s degree or were divorced or widowed.

**Table 6: Demographic Disparities in Housing Insecurity**

	MCCCCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	51%	55%	53%
Male	42%	50%	44%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	47%	52%	48%
African American	61%	74%	64%
Hispanic	49%	51%	49%
American Indian	65%	75%	68%
SE Asian	40%	44%	42%
Other Asian	36%	39%	40%
More than one race	46%	59%	54%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	29%	36%	33%
21-25	55%	55%	52%
26-30	60%	65%	62%
Over 30	56%	62%	60%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	52%	56%	54%
Some college	51%	57%	53%
Associate's degree	46%	54%	48%
Bachelor's degree	42%	46%	43%
Graduate degree	44%	48%	43%



**Table 6: Demographic Disparities in Housing Insecurity (Continued)**

	MCCCD	Region	National
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	49%	54%	50%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	38%	51%	49%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	49%	54%	50%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	45%	50%	49%
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	41%	49%	44%
Yes	59%	62%	60%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	48%	53%	50%
Yes	51%	61%	54%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	44%	53%	48%
Divorced or widowed	69%	72%	71%
In a relationship	52%	55%	50%
Married	48%	50%	51%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	54%	60%	57%
Yes	34%	38%	35%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	43%	50%	45%
Yes	60%	63%	63%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	48%	53%	49%
Yes	66%	76%	72%

In general, the relationships between homelessness and students' demographic characteristics shown in Table 7 were slightly weaker in MCCCCD than they were regionally or nationally, reflecting lower rates of homelessness among survey respondents in MCCCCD. Students in MCCCCD were more likely to report homelessness over the past 12 months if they were African American or American Indian, reported their race as Asian other than Southeast Asian, were over the age of 20, had parents who never attended college, received the Pell Grant, were divorced or widowed, or were independent. Relative rates of homelessness were extremely high for students who were ever in foster care (24 percent, versus 12 percent for those never placed in foster care.)

**Table 7: Demographic Disparities in Homelessness**

	MCCCCD	Region	National
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	12%	16%	14%
Male	12%	19%	16%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	12%	14%	12%
African American	19%	30%	22%
Hispanic	10%	14%	12%
American Indian	19%	29%	22%
SE Asian	13%	14%	13%
Other Asian	19%	12%	14%
More than one race	13%	21%	19%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	9%	14%	13%
21-25	14%	17%	15%
26-30	12%	18%	15%
Over 30	13%	18%	15%
<i>Highest level of parental education (either parent)</i>			
High school or less	15%	17%	15%
Some college	12%	19%	15%
Associate's degree	10%	16%	13%
Bachelor's degree	9%	13%	12%
Graduate degree	11%	14%	12%

**Table 7: Demographic Disparities in Homelessness (Continued)**

	MCCCD	Region	National
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	12%	17%	14%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	11%	15%	14%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	12%	17%	14%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	10%	15%	14%
<i>Pell Grant receipt</i>			
No	10%	16%	12%
Yes	16%	20%	16%
<i>Ever served in the armed forces</i>			
No	12%	16%	14%
Yes	12%	22%	16%
<i>Current relationship status</i>			
Single	12%	19%	16%
Divorced or widowed	22%	23%	20%
In a relationship	14%	17%	14%
Married	8%	8%	7%
<i>Parent claims student as a dependent</i>			
No	14%	18%	14%
Yes	8%	13%	12%
<i>Student has children</i>			
No	11%	17%	14%
Yes	14%	17%	14%
<i>Ever placed in foster care</i>			
No	12%	16%	13%
Yes	24%	35%	29%

## Accessing Public Assistance

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

Students' utilization of public assistance is shown in Tables 8 and 9. Table 8 displays public assistance received by students who reported low or very low food insecurity. Across the three samples, rates of grant receipt were similar for food insecure students, although MCCCCD students were more likely to be employed (57 percent) relative to students regionally (47 percent). The most common types of assistance for food insecure MCCCCD students were SNAP (28 percent), receipt of free food or meals (24 percent), Medicaid or public health insurance (27 percent), and tax refunds (23 percent). On most measures of assistance, food insecure students in MCCCCD were similar to those in the regional and national samples.

**Table 8: Public Assistance for Food Insecure Students**

	MCCCD	Region	National
<i>Financial aid receipt and employment</i>			
Pell Grant	53%	45%	49%
Other federal or state grants	14%	24%	23%
Institutional grants	10%	10%	8%
Any grant	62%	60%	61%
Employed in last week	57%	47%	56%
Any grant and employed in last week	30%	25%	31%
<i>Food-related public assistance</i>			
SNAP (food stamps)	28%	30%	29%
WIC (nutritional assistance for pregnant women and children)	4%	7%	6%
Receive free food or meals	24%	24%	23%
<i>Housing-related public assistance</i>			
Housing assistance	10%	16%	13%
Utility assistance	4%	5%	5%
<i>Other public assistance</i>			
TANF	1%	7%	4%
SSI	3%	4%	4%
SSDI	5%	4%	4%
Medicaid or public health insurance	27%	25%	26%
Child care assistance	2%	4%	5%
Unemployment compensation/insurance	2%	3%	3%
Transportation assistance	2%	5%	4%
Tax refunds	23%	20%	24%
Veteran's benefits	4%	3%	4%

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

Table 9 shows public assistance received by students who reported housing insecurity or homelessness. Similar to the results in Table 8, rates of grant receipt were similar across the three samples but MCCCCD students were more likely to be employed than students regionally. Only 9 percent of housing insecure and homeless students in MCCCCD received housing assistance in the past 12 months, compared to 15 percent in the West Census Region and 13 percent nationally. Otherwise, most measures of public assistance were similar across the MCCCCD, regional, and national samples.

**Table 9: Public Assistance for Housing Insecure or Homeless Students**

	MCCCCD	Region	National
<i>Financial aid receipt and employment</i>			
Pell Grant	54%	45%	50%
Other federal or state grants	14%	24%	23%
Institutional grants	10%	10%	8%
Any grant	62%	60%	62%
Employed in last week	60%	49%	57%
Any grant and employed in last week	33%	26%	32%
<i>Food-related public assistance</i>			
SNAP (food stamps)	28%	32%	32%
WIC (nutritional assistance for pregnant women and children)	5%	8%	7%
Receive free food or meals	25%	25%	24%
<i>Housing-related public assistance</i>			
Housing assistance	9%	15%	13%
Utility assistance	4%	5%	6%
<i>Other public assistance</i>			
TANF	2%	8%	5%
SSI	3%	4%	4%
SSDI	4%	4%	4%
Medicaid or public health insurance	27%	27%	28%
Child care assistance	3%	5%	5%
Unemployment compensation/insurance	3%	4%	4%
Transportation assistance	2%	5%	4%
Tax refunds	25%	21%	26%
Veteran's benefits	4%	3%	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 MCCCDC sample contains more White and fewer Hispanic students. Students in MCCCDC were also more likely to have children students than in the Western Census Region and national samples.

**Table 10: Summary Statistics**

	MCCCDC	Region	National
Female	73%	72%	72%
<i>Race</i>			
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	50%	29%	44%
African American	7%	10%	11%
Hispanic	24%	37%	25%
Native American	3%	1%	1%
SE Asian	1%	3%	2%
Other Asian	2%	7%	5%
More than one race	12%	13%	12%
<i>Age</i>			
18-20	27%	25%	30%
21-25	22%	26%	26%
26-30	15%	16%	15%
Over 30	36%	32%	29%
<i>Highest level of parental education</i>			
High school or less	33%	42%	35%
Some college	30%	28%	29%
Associate's degree	9%	7%	9%
Bachelor's degree	18%	14%	17%
Graduate degree	11%	9%	10%
<i>Immigration status</i>			
Student a citizen or permanent resident	97%	94%	95%
Student NOT a citizen or permanent resident	3%	6%	5%
Either parent a citizen or permanent resident	93%	87%	91%
Neither parent a citizen or permanent resident	7%	13%	9%

**Table 10: Summary Statistics (Continued)**

	MCCCD	Region	National
<i>Family characteristics</i>			
Parent or guardian claims student as dependent	26%	28%	30%
Ever placed in foster care	4%	5%	5%
Have children	33%	26%	28%
<i>Relationship status</i>			
Single	44%	53%	49%
Divorced or widowed	7%	5%	4%
In a relationship	25%	25%	29%
Married or domestic partnership	24%	17%	18%
<i>Year in college</i>			
Less than 1	29%	25%	29%
1 to 2	37%	39%	39%
More than 2	34%	36%	32%
<i>Financial aid and employment</i>			
Receives the Pell Grant	43%	39%	42%
Enrolled full-time	56%	59%	59%
Employed in last week	60%	50%	58%
Number of hours worked last week	29	26	27

### Resources Available in Maricopa County

**211 Arizona** connects Arizonans with public assistance, including food and housing resources. Dial 2-1-1 anywhere in Arizona, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 211 Arizona also provides a Maricopa-specific website which can be found at <https://211arizona.org/maricopa/> and also offers an app for download.

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care (CoC)** program is designed to coordinate local resources that address homelessness. The Phoenix, Mesa/Maricopa County CoC is the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) They can be reached at (602) 254-6300.



## 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](mailto:jed.richardson@wisc.edu) or by phone at (608) 890-2946.

<sup>i</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2015). 2015 American Community Survey. Retrieved from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community\\_facts.xhtml](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml).

<sup>ii</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2015). 2015 American Community Survey. Retrieved from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community\\_facts.xhtml](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml).

<sup>iii</sup> Council for Community and Economic Research. (2016). Cost of Living Index. Retrieved from [coli.org](http://coli.org).

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

<sup>v</sup> 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>

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

<sup>vii</sup> 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/>

<sup>viii</sup> 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>

<sup>ix</sup> Coleman-Jensen, A., Rabito, 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>.

<sup>x</sup> 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](http://www.acct.org). Follow ACCT on Twitter at [twitter.com/CCTrustees](https://twitter.com/CCTrustees).