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**HOPE
LAB**

#RealCollege

A National Convening on Food and Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates

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INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the new economics of college, students face substantial challenges in attaining college degrees, and finding ways to alleviating those challenges is the primary work of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab. In particular, we focus on addressing the many hurdles created by the high price of college. [Paying the price](#) of attending college affects who attends and for how long, and it impacts the college experience itself – what classes students take, the grades they earn, the activities in which they engage, and even with whom they interact.

Research reveals an alarming trend on college campuses: students are struggling in college, sometimes even dropping out, because they can't afford a consistent roof over their heads or enough food to eat. Securing students' basic needs requires a social movement bringing together higher education and social policy leaders, practitioners, advocates, and students. #RealCollege is part of the HOPE Lab's answer to this clear need.

In April 2017 we published a report, [Hungry and Homeless in College](#), a follow-up to our 2016 report [Hungry to Learn](#). Drawing on data from more than 30,000 students at 70 community colleges in 24 states, we found high rates of food insecurity among community college students, with 56% of students reporting living conditions that qualify them—according to U.S. Department of Agriculture standards—as food insecure. We also estimated that half of the students experienced housing insecurity, and 14% experienced homelessness.

In April 2018, we published a third report assessing food and housing insecurity, [Still Hungry and Homeless](#). The 2018 study surveyed 43,000 students at 66 community colleges and universities in 20 states and the District of Columbia. The report found that 36% of university students were food-insecure in the last 30 days, as were 42% of community college students. In addition, the report found 36% of university students were housing-insecure in the past year, as were 46% of community college students. Less than half of all students surveyed reported being completely secure, meaning they did not experience any food or housing insecurity, or homelessness, in the past year.

These numbers challenge higher education to redouble its efforts to find ways to effectively address the food and housing insecurities inhibiting college completion. A broad national movement to identify scalable approaches in higher education and a growing commitment to holistic supports that wraparound students as they move through college form key backdrops for this work. A critical next step is bringing together communities of researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and students who ground their work in data and a commitment to securing students' basic needs, in order to facilitate debate, discovery, and the development of solutions.

In October 2017, the HOPE Lab hosted the second #RealCollege conference, a national convening on food and housing insecurity among undergraduates. Built upon the foundation of success from the first event held in 2016 in Milwaukee, the second #RealCollege sought to both broaden and deepen the pursuit of knowledge and engage even more stakeholders in the work. We aimed to increase participation in both teaching and learning, and create dynamic spaces where creative approaches

developed by faculty, students, practitioners, and policymakers could be shared and celebrated. That is why we invited people from every type of college and from coast to coast. It's also why we subsidized the travel of 20% of all the participants. In a no-frills setting that prioritized the work and the students involved above all else, we supported people from around the nation as they connected and developed the relationships needed to effectively solve problems. While the first #RealCollege was attended by just under 150 people, the second conference was far larger—attendance greatly exceeded expectations, with nearly 400 people joining together. This included a dozen college presidents and system leaders, representatives from a wide range of non-profit and advocacy organizations, a former U.S. Secretary of Education and a representative from the White House, Congressional staff, and of course students—58 undergraduate and graduate students in total.



A Program Reflecting our Work and Values

To be successful, conferences focused on students' basic needs must be accessible to the people involved in the work and those affected by it. Far too many conferences about colleges and college students are exclusionary both by invitation and by cost. This is a mistake, since solving the wicked problem of basic needs insecurities requires participation from a diverse set of actors.

We held the conference at Temple University, Philadelphia's public university. America's [poorest big city](#) is not enjoying the economic gains seen elsewhere—instead it is home to declining household incomes, rapidly rising rates of [hunger among children](#), and when it comes to higher education, Temple is subject to the financial pressures common throughout public higher education. As #RealCollege came to campus, the Wisconsin HOPE Lab was in the midst of surveying Temple undergraduates to assess their food and housing insecurity. The figures were revealed a few months later, and when the Temple administration learned that more than one-third of the student body struggled with food insecurity it quickly appointed a university-wide task force to tackle the challenge and opened its [first-ever food pantry](#).

Ensuring the accessibility of #RealCollege while hosting it in an expensive large city was challenging but necessary. The registration fee was capped at \$150, and we waived it for 25% of participants. Thanks to generous sponsors, we also provided travel scholarships, and focused these on supporting students with personal experiences of hunger and homelessness. In total, we spent almost \$100,000 helping bring people from all walks of life to the conversation.

We are grateful to the following organizations and foundations who made this support possible:

- ACT Center for Equity in Learning
- American Educational Research Association
- Barrington Foundation
- Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation
- Jack Kent Cooke Foundation
- Scholarship America
- The Kresge Foundation
- Temple University

In addition, we benefited greatly from resources provided by Temple University, which hosted the event and provided facilities and other essential supports.



AGENDA

Building on the success of the first conference, the second #RealCollege aimed to deepen the connections between services providers, policymakers, students, and researchers to reduce food and housing insecurity undergraduates to improve their odds of college completion, in turn reducing inequality. Our goals included:

1. Bridging action-oriented programs that can coordinate and learn from other programs' successes and failures.
2. Connecting policymakers, service providers, students, and researchers whose experiences and knowledge can point the way toward an effective policy agenda.
3. Identifying current areas of knowledge and gaps in research.
4. Connecting researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to galvanize new data collection and research in this field.

We are committed to an evidence-based approach to this work. That is why all conference sessions and workshops were developed based on a foundation of data and grounded in what we know and need to know.

Day 1 - Setting the Stage

The first day of #RealCollege included speakers, panels, and performances offering an intimate look at the experiences of students enduring challenges with food and housing, and the actions being taken by policymakers and practitioners to address those basic needs insecurities.



Conference participants were welcomed by Helen Gym, Councilwoman at Large in the City of Philadelphia. Gym offered an urgent yet uplifting message about poverty in Philly, discussing the ways in which people are able to get involved and make a difference in the lives of others. Her message about the interdependence of the political and the personal was underscored by her statement, “politics is about the lives of those we love.” Her call to action was simple: “it’s not enough to know what’s wrong with the world...you have to get up and do the work to fix it.”

Dr. Gregory Anderson, Dean of the College of Education at Temple, and Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, founder of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, also offered welcomes. Anderson encouraged participants to “Teach us and inform us!” while Goldrick-Rab urged them think of #RealCollege as a “problem-centered, action-oriented conference.”

As the program got underway, award-winning singer-songwriter Matt Morris reinforced the #RealCollege commitment to social justice by offering a song about the role of money in today’s society. He led the audience, full of students, college presidents, practitioners, advocates, and other leaders in a chorus, singing these words from his song “Money”:

*Money matters when you’re broke, when you’re broke
And money fixes for awhile.
If you got money if your wallet you got permission
To enjoy yourself for awhile.*

*But money burns, money turns the very best into the worst criminal child
Money matters, money kills, money makes the world go ‘round*

*Money. Money ain’t the villain.
Money. It’s greed that’s the killer.*

Panel Discussion #1: State of the Field – Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Going

Participants:

Clare Cady, Co-Founder of the College & University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA)
Ruben Canedo, Research & Mobilization Coordinator, University of California-Berkeley Global Food Initiatives
Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield, Senior Policy Analyst from the Center of Law and Social Policy
Pam Eddinger, President of Bunker Hill Community College
Sara Goldrick-Rab, Founder of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab

A great deal of work has taken place in the basic needs security field over the last year, and this session aimed to highlight that work and provide updates in the areas of practice, programming, and policy while challenging participants to think bigger. Theresa Powell, the Vice President for Student Affairs at Temple, facilitated the conversation.

Clare Cady began by highlighting the growing attention given to the issue of basic needs insecurity on campuses around the nation, citing the growth of CUFBA from just over 10 members in 2012 to more than 500 members in 2017. Stating that campus pantries are a good first step to addressing student food insecurity, she emphasized however “they are not THE solution” and that we must go beyond food pantries. Food insecurity, she pointed out, is a symptom of students attending a sort of college that “wasn’t designed for them” and therefore systems change is needed. She noted that CUFBA was in the process of fielding its very first member survey to collect information needs to help not only improve the work of pantries but also move that work to the next level.

Ruben Canedo expanded on Cady’s remarks, explaining that “basic needs will always be a challenge until the systems we are part of stop producing inequitable environments.” Drawing on the work he is doing with partners throughout the University of California system, he spoke of the imperative to provide students with the kinds of life supports that sustain them and gave examples of how UC is doing that work. For example, he described how using food stamps was normalized by holding weekend social events, broadly attended, where students were provided with support to sign up for CalFresh, that state’s SNAP program. He also reported on a major success in that state, when Governor Jerry Brown included funding for “hunger-free college campuses” in his budget.

“#RealCollege was a fantastic opportunity. It was great to see people bringing expertise on these topics from disciplines and professional backgrounds that I normally wouldn’t have the opportunity to interact with (like campus administrators, epidemiologists, etc.).”
– Student participant

As a college president, Pam Eddinger is implementing many new supports on her campus, including a meal voucher program to help ensure students can get breakfast and lunch while attending college. But the challenges she faces go beyond the programmatic level, and so she voiced a major concern—that the conversation about basic needs insecurity is still an internal one happening only among a small group of people. Recognizing the political realities of basic needs work, she told the audience, “our biggest problem, choir, is that we are an echo chamber.” She spoke of the need to expand the conversation and helping the public understand the harsh realities of what it means to be a community college student today. At her institution, Bunker Hill Community College, the average age of students is 27 and many have children. According to Eddinger, her students “don’t need financial literacy, they need money.”

Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield built on Eddinger’s remarks, noting that a growing number of policymakers are starting to understand that so-called “traditional” students, benefiting from robust family and college resources, are no longer the norm. She called for a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act that turns these understandings into policy changes. In particular, she emphasized the need to ensure all college students who qualify are able to access public benefits programs, saying that “we need to make sure that our social programs better support college students.” She also emphasized the critical role that data play in informing the policymaking process.

Sara Goldrick-Rab agreed and discussed the need for both policy and practice to be grounded in evidence. “We do not have time to implement things that don’t work,” she stated. She highlighted current data collection and program evaluation efforts underway, led by the HOPE Lab and its many partners, including randomized controlled trials testing the efficacy of food scholarships and housing vouchers for students. But she also noted that while these are critical efforts, data collection must happen on national scale and pointed the audience towards a call for integrating questions on food and housing insecurity into studies led by the National Center for Education Statistics. She also called for more attention to student narratives and voices. “We need an asset-based approach to this work. Hungry and homeless students are incredible!” she exclaimed, talking about how research demonstrates that students who experience these challenges work as hard or harder than their peers, and have much to contribute to understanding student need. “Students need to lead the research agenda” she concluded.

Keynote – John King

John King, CEO of Education Trust and Former U.S. Secretary of Education, provided the keynote address. King began by sharing his story, noting that “school was the thing that saved my life,” and formed a critical foundation for his deep commitment to education. He spoke about the ways in which many schools have the opportunity to be a lifeline for students such as himself and those



impacted by basic needs insecurities. He described how current political climate fails to support students and schools, and called for change. “This is urgent work,” he said, then turning to speak of the role of choice in this process. “We choose to invest in prisons instead of higher education,” he explained, “Show me your budget and I’ll show you your values.”

He then described ways that policymakers, researchers, and practitioners can take matters into their own hands by taking responsibility for serving students from foster care, ensuring that students who are homeless have housing, and addressing the challenges of food insecurity schools can lead the charge in ending poverty. King declared “we know it’s not just about tuition. Room and board matters. Resources for books matter,” and “tuition assistance isn’t enough for students who are most economically vulnerable.” He cited examples such as programs at Oregon State University and the University of Northern Colorado, encouraging participants to think about ways they can make a difference even with smaller efforts on their own campuses. He also emphasized the importance of pushing to continue funding for the Pell grant and supporting additional policies that create access to higher education for all. He specifically called for increasing college students’ access to SNAP and endorsed the [HOPE Lab proposal](#) to expand the National School Lunch Program to higher education. This, King said, is “a radical idea that shouldn’t be radical.”

During conversation with the audience, King highlighted three important ways that people can work towards addressing #RealCollege concerns:

1. Data are powerful. People still think that hunger and homelessness are not problems on their campus or in their community, so collect and bring the data to illustrate the challenge.
2. Build coalitions by engaging local affiliates. Be sure to include partners who are focused on civil rights, as well leaders in the business and faith communities.
3. Be political – while some people “just want to do their work,” and not get involved in politics, all work is inherently political. This fact must be acknowledged and owned.

#RealCollege, Real Life: Performance and Film

Following lunch, where participants were encouraged to meet, greet, and discuss the events of the morning, students came forward to lead the conversation. Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter from the Community College of Philadelphia and Selma “Justice” Butler from Houston Community College took the stage.

First, Baxter debuted a new short [documentary](#) she co-directed with [Invisible People](#), with financial support provided by the HOPE Lab, documenting her life as a student experiencing homelessness. While pursuing her associate degree and raising a young child, Baxter couch-surfed for more than a year. She explained her commitment to staying enrolled in college despite that hardship, noting that “no one can take learning away from you.” She described the struggle to study and learn, reporting that her efforts were fruitful as she maintained a 3.7 GPA. Baxter also offered recommendations to faculty with regard to how to identify students who may be homeless, explaining that seeming tired, being late to class, and being distracted may be signs that a student is struggling. Her message to students was clear – “find a faculty member you can trust.” To the faculty she said, “be open and listen. Homeless students need you.” Baxter concluded her presentation with a spoken word duet with her son, Rasir.



Next, Selma “Justice” Butler took the stage with a spoken word performance about her experiences being homeless in Houston. She explained the importance that her faith played in survival. She also stressed the role that students can play in creating more opportunities, describing her role doing outreach for her college’s new food scholarship program. She emphasized the need to ensure that students are aware of the supports and services available to them at each college. This includes reaching out to people who are homeless and helping them to attend college. Speaking from experience as someone who felt overlooked on the streets while homeless, she implored colleges to reach out and offer a bridge to a better future.

Panel Discussion #2: Addressing Homelessness in Higher Education

Participants:

Selma “Justice” Butler, Student, Houston Community College

Rashida Crutchfield, Assistant Professor at California State University Long Beach

Dennis Culhane, Dana and Andrew Stone Chair in Social Policy at the University of Pennsylvania

Matthew Morton, Principal Investigator of Voices of Youth Count at Chapin Hall

Russell Lowery-Hart, President of Amarillo College

Liz Waite, a student at California State University-Long Beach who is an outspoken advocate for housing and food insecure students in her area, facilitated this panel. It began with Rashida Crutchfield who pointed out that the issue of homelessness on college campuses is not new – it is just new to researchers. “Colleges discovered collegiate homelessness the way Columbus discovered America,” she said. She spoke about the importance of taking systemic approaches to addressing homelessness among students, sharing the work taking place in the California State System. Students experiencing homelessness are part of “a struggle circle” and there is a spectrum of homelessness, she explained, drawing on data from her qualitative research. They do not always identify as homeless, though objective measures of their living conditions may reveal that they are.

Dennis Culhane opened his remarks by noting the importance of language and its usage in discussing and defining homelessness. As a researcher who has worked extensively with adults experiencing homelessness, he stressed that we should “be careful with language.” We use the word homeless “because it is evocative,” but “homelessness can convey a static status,” he said. That’s wrong, because “it’s not a trait.” Rather, it is important to understand that using the word “homeless” as an identity can distort real experiences, and stigmatize people unnecessarily. Culhane also addressed the major issues currently present in homeless shelters, calling them “abusive” at times, and advocating for services that normalize and destigmatize.

Matthew Morton followed Culhane, highlighting the ongoing theme of the importance of data in addressing basic needs insecurities. “In God we trust. To everyone else, bring data!” he proclaimed. He discussed the need for services for people experiencing homelessness and evaluation of those services to determine if they work. When considering potential interventions, he stated that “Housing First should not be Housing Only,” instead calling for multiple support services to be married with housing services.

Russell Lowery-Hart then talking about the work his college has been doing to address poverty and homelessness. He explained that higher education is “perfectly designed to get the results we’re currently getting,” noting that the problem is that we are missing students in the design. He reported on the No Excuses Poverty Initiative which offers as a precept “love the student we have, not the student we thought we had or wished we had.” He shared his own experience

during a homeless simulation, when he spent three days living on the street. He spoke of the shame and anger he experienced in such a short time, noting that his experience was nothing compared to persons who are truly homeless. He advocated that everyone acknowledge that many students are living in “a war zone of poverty,” and we need to pay close attention and address it.

Then, student Selma Butler asked audience members who have experienced homelessness to stand and be recognized. While she waited, approximately 40 people stood. They included students but also included many practitioners and advocates. Butler looked at them and urged everyone to recognize their role as teachers in this space who can lead the way by drawing on their experiences with homelessness and providing a backbone of support for the work.

During the Q&A, participants shared their own stories of pain and stressed the complexity of developing appropriate interventions. One woman noted that sometimes the street is safer than living at home, highlighting the need for trauma-informed care in higher education.

“The coldest splash of all, though, came from a student. In a Q&A, she mentioned that in her life, she often had to choose between staying in an abusive situation or being homeless. She chose abuse, because it seemed safer. In a later conversation, she mentioned that when couch-surfing, each new couch comes with a new set of strings attached. That’s a lot to navigate while also trying to navigate difficult classes and the stuff of daily life. It also raises tricky questions around choice and agency. Yes, she ‘chose’ to stay. But when the alternative is homelessness, calling that a choice misses a lot.”

– Matt Reed, *Inside Higher Ed*

Panel Discussion #3: Creating Systemic Change in Higher Education

Participants:

Michael Baston, President of Rockland Community College

Jim Larimore, Chief Office for the Center for Equity in Learning

Carlos Santiago, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Sabrina Sanders, Director of Student Affairs, California State University Chancellor’s Office

Karen Stout, President and CEO of Achieving the Dream

The final panel on Day 1 of #RealCollege focused on creating systems-level change in higher education. It was facilitated by Kathleen Grady, Director of Sustainability at Temple University.

Jim Larimore opened the conversation by talking about the need to close the gap between public narratives about the student experience and reality. “We don’t take the time to find out the students’ real stories – instead we make up our own,” he said. In his work to address equity challenges, he finds networks are useful to solve problems, and provided several examples.



Carlos Santiago then spoke about his efforts as a state policymaker to address homelessness, hunger, childcare, and transportation. He described the work underway to quantify the challenges in Massachusetts and in particular the efforts to implement the Wisconsin HOPE Lab's survey statewide at all public colleges and universities. He underscored the importance of "changing the discourse to link student success to the mitigation of hunger," and emphasized the role that such work plays in workforce development. By the end of #RealCollege, Santiago and his team were committed to fielding the HOPE Lab's survey of basic needs security at public colleges and universities throughout Massachusetts.

Michael Baston began by explaining that "the first key to sustainable change is the clarity of your position." When working toward systems change, he said, "you've got to have a plan." This plan needs to be distilled and supported by leadership. Without clarity provided by leadership, institutions will create competing narratives and people will be confused. Baston noted that a plan is only as good as the effort committed to following it, noting that "without action steps, we're just having a conversation."

Sabrina Sanders reinforced those themes of planning and leadership, discussing the work underway in the CSU system. She explained how the System used research as a form of action

to develop a plan that is set to transform the university system. She noted that systemic work was part of change, but also that “we need to work not only within systems, but across them as well.”

Karen Stout returned to the day’s opening remarks from Representative Gym, stating “the why for all us is personal,” referring to the many ways people approach working on basic needs insecurity. She discussed the structural barriers on all campuses, noting that in order to create changes to alleviate student challenges we need to personalize them – “to put ourselves in students’ lived experiences to see them.” She said that change will only happen if institutions do this, and they also avoid reacting to the challenges of student hunger and homelessness by creating siloed, boutique services. She described a model for transformative change that includes structural change, process change, and attitudinal change. These three together can lead to change that is sustainable.

Connecting and Growing Communities

Movement building requires community building. Throughout the first day and into the evening #RealCollege provided multiple opportunities for people to connect. During the day, a group of college leaders got together to discuss how they could work together to provide additional leadership for #RealCollege efforts. In the late afternoon there was a networking reception. Every participant at #RealCollege was also invited to a regional or topical dinner so that they could break bread together and form new relationships. And that night there was a Student Summit, held in the Rad Dish CoOp Café, a student-run food cooperative at Temple. The summit highlighted the work of several students engaged in action to address basic needs insecurities. For example, Esperanza Eceves presented on a campus mapping project she developed for students at Cal-State Long Beach. Using the official campus map, she added additional resources that support students’ needs when it comes to food, hygiene, and the ability to secure one’s belongings (lockers). Students learned from Esperanza’s work and her creative process, and asked questions about ways they might replicate similar work on their campuses. They also addressed issues of institutional support and resources. In addition, Julian Plowden, a student from Atlanta, described an app he is developing that will help students to share meals and find other ways to connect to food resources. Students not only reviewed and discussed the app, but thought through ways to help students feel comfortable using it.

Day 2 – Deeper Learning

At #RealCollege we wanted participants not only to get a broad overview of the current work in the field, but also to take time to look more deeply into ways they can take action. Therefore on Day 2 we offered six different workshops focused on different ways in which researchers, practitioners, and policy makers are addressing basic needs insecurities among students. Each workshop was facilitated by experts in their area. These unpaid experts crafted the workshop agendas, arranged for speakers, and facilitated the sessions. Participants were able to select one workshop to attend for the entire day.



Crisis, Intersectionality, and Mobilizing Transformation: A Case Study on the University of California System’s Approach to Basic Needs Insecurity

Led by Ruben Canedo and Tim Galarneau, University of California System Basic Needs Committee

This workshop focused on a case study – the University of California System—to examine the ways in which community action can create change within college systems to address students’ basic needs. The session included a presentation of research from the UC system, and culminated in breakout groups on a range of topics.

Leading with the statement “everything in the UC system is political. We are going to bring up the conversations of who is invisible or not,” Ruben Canedo engaged participants in thought exercises designed to help them consider the challenge of hunger on a college campus, an issue that runs contrary to the notion that there are enough resources in the United States to feed everyone.

Taking a global, macro approach, Galarneau and Canedo shared information about the context in which students are going hungry. Looking at the federal budget in the U.S., they pondered the ways in which the government has created inequity through divestment in education and the widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Drawing this down to the student level they outlined the new economics of higher education – that in which student aid has not kept pace with the costs of college, and students are working more than ever, and ends are still not being met.

Participants then learned about how UC leveraged data to create the UC Food Initiative that has been taking action to address hunger among students across the system. They worked to equip participants with the information they needed to engage in this kind of work on their campuses, highlighting the kinds of questions to ask, people to work with, and committees to develop.

In the second half of the day participants were able to work in smaller groups, addressing different areas within the work. These working groups were:

- Waste awareness
- Leveraging external partnership for social and economic capital
- Health and Wellness
- Leveraging student power to advocate for administrative change for basic needs

Key takeaway: Collective action is key and students are powerful.

Many participants were pleased to be given a student food access and security tool kit that can serve to support their work. There was a strong positive reaction to the collaborative focus that was emphasized by the presenters, and the fact that taking a systems approach is powerful. One participant stated, “a systemic model is the right model to achieve successful outcomes to a complex problem.”

Leveraging Non-traditional Financial Aid Programs to Address Food & Housing Insecurity

Led by Rebecca Schreiber-Reis, Dickinson College and Andy Howe, Independent Consultant



The session examined a range of programs on college campuses to provide additional resources to students beyond financial aid. Topics included: leveraging current public benefits to increase student resources; utilizing small grants to facilitate completion; helping students meet satisfactory academic progress requirements to retain financial aid; and emergency aid. The presenting team leaned into the work with a strong commitment to ensuring participants would walk away with necessary information, providing them with a workbook that allowed participants to take notes, engage in thought exercises, and review action frameworks.

Several presenters participated in this workshop. Travis York, Director of Student Success, Research, and Policy at APLU spoke about completion grants. Michael Baston, President of Rockland Community College, spoke about ways to enroll students in public benefits. Margo Wright, Founder of Yenko, addressed the workshop talking about the ways to maximize aid eligibility and minimize emergency need. Omari Burnside, Director of Strategic Initiatives at NASPA, spoke about policy approaches to addressing student aid. Jordan Herrera, Director of Social Services at Amarillo College spoke about the emergency aid program they have at their Advocacy and Resource Center.

In the second half of the workshop, Howe and Schreiber-Reis shared strategies for developing non-traditional approaches to student aid, addressing each of the approaches described that morning so that participants could consider each and determine if it was an appropriate approach for their students or community. Participants were then given the opportunity to work on a plan of their own, with a guided focus in the areas of: organizational readiness, workforce development, program development, funding models, implementation, and processes.

Key takeaway: Leadership buy-in and support are critical for engaging in successful interventions that go beyond financial aid and collaborative approaches are necessary.

One participant stated, “we will create change on a broad spectrum only if we communicate across campuses and organizations; working in silos only serves to hinder our process.

Promising Practices for Addressing Food Insecurity in Higher Education

Led by Clare Cady, Co-Founder and Director of the College & University Food Bank Alliance

This workshop focused on diverse programs seeking to address food insecurity among college students, including food pantries, food scholarships, emergency funds, benefits access, food recovery, and donation of dining swipes. Participants heard about ways to fund programs and engaged in a marketing and outreach gallery offering ideas on how to connect students to their services. The day opened with a panel providing an overview of different programs that are currently addressing hunger among students. Seated on the panel were:

- Terrence Walker, who spoke about his work creating the Ram Pantry at Virginia Commonwealth University
- Nicole Hindes, who spoke about the Mealbux food scholarship program from the Human Services Resource Center at Oregon State University
- Talia Berday Sacks from Challah for Hunger
- Kathleen O'Neill who spoke on food vouchers from her work running the Single Stop office at Bunker Hill Community College
- Paula Umana who spoke about helping students enroll in public benefits from her work running the Single Stop office at Community College of Philadelphia
- Annie Wheeler who spoke about the work of food recovery done with Campus Kitchens
- The panel was moderated by Sonal Chauhan from CUFBA

Participants were invited to engage in a conversation with the panelists. Many asked questions about issues of sustainability and what it takes to get a program started up. Panelists highlighted the importance of leadership and collaboration in getting programs up and running. One participant stated they learned, "that there are inventive people and organizations working to address student needs in ways I had never imagined." During lunch participants were invited to sit with others to discuss key topics in the work. These included starting a campus pantry, growing and sustaining a campus pantry, developing new food insecurity initiatives, research and assessment in food insecurity initiatives, meal vouchers and food scholarships, community gardens, and SNAP outreach. Panelists sat at tables and participated in conversation, bringing their expertise to each table.

"As someone new to this issue, I was moved by the depth and quality of the conversation and research on college hunger and homelessness. I appreciate the focus on intersectionality and the honest, pleading reflection that we aren't going to food bank our way out of this."
– Philanthropist participant



A second panel was offered to go deeper into the issue of funding and sustaining programs. Panelists discussed the ways in which they had engaged in sustainability (food, funding) activities that allow them to serve students. This panel included:

- Nate Smith-Tyge from CUFBA who spoke about fundraising events on campuses
- Marbeth Holmes from Nash Community College who spoke about getting donations from alumni and writing grants
- Brandon Mathews from the Arkansas Food Bank who spoke about corporate sponsorships and major gifts
- Rachel Sumekh from Swipe Out Hunger who spoke about campaigns and talking to donors
- The panel was moderated by Samuel Chu of MAZON

“I’m looking at the work I have been doing at my campus food bank in an entirely new framework, with a lot of missing pieces filled in for me. I have such a sense of clarity and vision for how to move forward and to give goals/ steps for doing so.”
– Community-based practitioner participant

During the afternoon all participants were able to share ways in which they marketed their work. In advance of the workshop they were asked to bring materials, websites, and other marketing items they use. These were presented in a gallery format, with participants able to walk around to view and take pictures of marketing materials. The day concluded with a conversation about research and assessment led by Clare Cady.

Key takeaway: addressing hunger on campus is about more than creating a campus food pantry.



Shelters, Showers, and Scholarships: Solving Housing Insecurity in Higher Education

Led by Barby Moro, Southern Scholarship Foundation

This workshop consisted of a series of presentations on promising and successful strategies to serve students experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. These included not only programs and services, but policy interventions as well.

The day started with participants hearing from Shahera Hyatt, Director of the California Homeless Youth Project. Hyatt offered insights into the scope of the issue being addressed in California, and the work currently being done. She discussed recent research at California schools that looked at different resources for homeless youth, their presence, and their affordability. One of the things she highlighted about resources being available on campus was that many schools did not advertise them for fear of not being able to meet the need. Her recommendation to campuses that engage in this kind of behavior is to “keep track of the number of students that have to be turned away.” This kind of data can help campuses make a case for additional resources to provide services. She offered additional recommendations:

- Require all campuses to have homeless and foster student liaisons
- Provide the option of year-round student housing
- Expand eligibility of foster youth programs to include homeless students
- Help low-income students enroll in public service programs when they access campus resources

Barbara Duffield, Executive Director of School House Connection, spoke about state and federal policy and how it could support best practices in housing. She noted the ways in which states in particular are engaging in laws such as requiring single points of contact for homeless students, which are in effect in California, pending in Texas, and not law but are happening in practice in Michigan, Colorado, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Georgia. She discussed challenges in serving homeless students including the fact that administrators are often not versed in the proper language let alone laws surrounding working with homeless students.

The day continued with a presentation from Wesley House Student Residence Inc. including: Nicole Marquel, Grants Manger; Melanie Lucero, Program Manager; and Dr. Christopher Scott, Vice Chair, Head of Board Development Committee, Board of Directors. The presentation covered the work of Wesley House, an affordable housing option for students attending San Diego State University. The program is just off campus allowing low income students to still have a positive and supportive “on campus” experience. Their hope is to become a national model.

Matthew Morton, Principal Investigator of Voices of Youth Count and Research Fellow at Chapin Hall, addressed the question “is there something unique about college homelessness, or do these

individuals resemble homeless youth in general?” In his work he stated they seek to build better data from student voices, trying to improve the lives of students experiencing homelessness in areas such as housing, permanent adult connections, education and employment, and social and emotional well-being. He talked about how “housing is just a stepping stone,” and that a housing alone approach will not solve the issues students are facing. He called for a “paradigm shift” to better understand the lives of youth experiencing homeless because they are so often invisible.

Ellen Sloan, Founder of Host Habitat Solutions, outlined a pilot program through Safe Place for Youth (SPY), which connects students who are homeless with hosts who are willing to provide space in empty bedrooms. This program is covered by the United Way and offers hosts \$500/month for up to 9 months to house the student – with the option of not taking the money and putting it aside for the student when they move out. They do additional work creating community connections that provide food and other forms of assistance to the host families and guests, and seek to make connections for students through existing services that can help.

Mary Chikwinya, Interim Co-President of Tacoma Community College and Michael Mirra, Executive Director of the Tacoma Housing Authority spoke about the partnership between Tacoma Community College and the Tacoma Housing Authority that seeks to maximize housing dollars by helping homeless and housing insecure students get housing vouchers. They have built out the program since 2014, including hiring staff who can provide support to the students who get vouchers. They are expanding the program due to high rates of homelessness among their students (27%) as well as high rates of housing instability (69% of students). They are currently working with a research team led by Sara Goldrick-Rab to do an [evaluation](#) of the program that will help understand the impact of providing housing vouchers on student success.

Participants also heard from session leader Barby Moro, Director of Student Affairs for North Florida Southern Scholarship Foundation about their rent-free cooperative living program for students. Serving 7 institutions in Florida, the program supports students with housing, a hot meal every night, and additional supports to students, with priority to students coming from foster care, who are wards of the court, who are orphans, or who are unaccompanied minors. The program is funded privately, and operates 27 houses. Students who live in the houses also receive leadership training, career planning support, and living skills training.



Key takeaway: Creative partnerships between colleges and public and nonprofit agencies are required to address housing insecurity among students.



Addressing Postsecondary Student Basic Needs Insecurity: Existing Policies and Future Opportunities for Change

Led by Amy Ellen Duke-Benfled, Center for Law and Social Policy and Katherine Sydor, U.S. Office of Management and Budget

This workshop examined federal and state policies impacting students' experiences regarding food and housing insecurity. The workshop explored questions such as “do our public benefits and tax credit policies support our state completion goals?” and, “why don't more students access public benefits?” Panels were utilized to bring in the voices of experts in areas where social policy intersects with higher education. Participants were able to develop strategies for taking action towards policy change.

The day started with a panel on federal policy regarding food and housing for low-income students. The panel included:

- Erin Berg, Policy Advisor from the Department of Education
- Ellen Vollinger, Legal/Food Stamp Director for the Food and Research Action Center
- Adam LaRose, Presidential Management Fellow for Representative Lawson
- Bryce McKibben, Higher Education Policy Advisor for the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
- The panel was moderated by Katherine Sydor of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget

As the discussion focused on food and housing the panel explored the challenges students face in accessing public benefits while enrolled in school. Access to many social safety net programs

is more challenging for students, such as work requirements for SNAP if a student is enrolled more than half time. Students who are enrolled full time may lose their housing subsidies. One key takeaway from the conversation was that the support public benefits can provide to students augment financial aid and can enable persistence and completion.

A second panel was held after lunch that looked at state policy initiatives. The panelists were:

- Jessica Bartholow, Policy Advocate from the Western Center on Poverty Law
- Louise Hayes, a Supervising Attorney from Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
- Mary Chikwinya, Co-President of Tacoma Community College
- Michael Mirra, Executive Director of the Tacoma Housing Authority
- The panel was moderated by Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield from CLASP

This panel explored potential solutions to the challenges students face in accessing public benefits offering ideas about how states can leverage their control over programs such as SNAP. If a state chooses it can deem postsecondary programs eligible to meet work requirements, making it easier for students to access the benefit. If students must work, making changes to policy to average out a students' hours of work across a month may make it easier for students to demonstrate they are meeting the hourly work requirements. Additionally the discussion touched on what campuses can do, including forging partnerships with Public Housing Authorities to ensure students can get housing vouchers, and developing employment practices that help students become aware that they can apply for SNAP when they are working.

“This is my area of expertise and I still learned a ton. Took lots of notes and met people from my own state that are working on this issue that I didn't know before.”
– Policymaker participant

One population that was addressed in more detail was students with children. This is a population that is eligible for a wide range of programs, but often do not access benefits because of caps on program funding, lack of awareness of the programs, or burdensome processes that deter students from trying to establish and maintain eligibility. Student-parents may be eligible for more programs than students without children, or they may be given greater access or amounts based on their status as parents. These benefits can include SNAP, TANF, child care subsidies, and housing subsidies. One conclusion drawn is that as states utilize their influence over benefits policy they can create greater access to student-parents, and not only serve the students more effectively but their children as well.

The program wrapped up with a section on coalition building and messaging, seeking to set participants up with ways they can engage in work going into the future. The group was asked to participate in a discussion supported by panelists Barbara Duffield, Executive Director of School House Connection, and Mark Mitsui, President of Portland Community College.

Key Takeaway: State and federal policies can be leveraged to support students' basic needs. A wide range of policy improvements are attainable.



A National Research Conference on Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education

Led by Sara Goldrick-Rab, Founder of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, Professor at Temple University

The Research Conference was embedded within the larger #RealCollege conference to bring researchers together with practitioners, policymakers, philanthropists, college leaders, students, and the like. Such opportunities are rare for researchers yet necessary for stimulating new research and data collection. Participants came from a diverse array of colleges and universities, not only the most elite research-focused institutions but also many offering broad access to higher education following their mission of educating under-served and vulnerable populations. In addition, in an effort to support and grow the subfield, we included both faculty (of all levels) and some graduate students, as well as the growing number of non-academic researchers doing work in this area.

Prior to coming to the Research Conference, participants were given a document to read and consider. That document contained “provocations” assembled from a select group of participants who were asked to weigh in on pressing questions in advance of the workshop. Their thoughts were assembled in a manner that highlighted similarities and differences in their thinking. This document served to help all participants get up to speed on major debates, and begin to formulate their ideas and responses before they arrived at the Day 2 conversation.

“It was most satisfying to learn how widespread the movement is and to learn about the amazing work of caring and industrious people in that movement, at all levels.”

– Researcher participant

That conversation focused on five research topics shaping the study of food and housing insecurity in higher education: (1) measurement and conceptualization; (2) prevalence and disparities; (3) qualitative research; (4) quantitative research on the impacts on academics and health; and (5) research on interventions.

Key Takeaway: Researchers need to better define terms in this work, improve the consistency of measurement and the quality of sampling in research designs, engage in theory-building, and do more to test specific interventions to support students.

OUTCOMES

Evidence matters, and we hope to improve #RealCollege from year to year based on data. Therefore, in order to assess the success of #RealCollege, we enlisted M. Davis and Company (a minority-owned small business in Philadelphia) to conduct a survey of participants.

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the workshop by indicating the level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means totally disagree and 10 means totally agree. We consider scores of 8 or above to be a successful experience and report the percent in that category following each item.

There was a high level of satisfaction with the event as a whole, with 81% of participants rating the conference with an 8 or higher.

We next report on participant feedback according to the conference's goals:

1. Bridge action-oriented programs that can coordinate and learn from other programs' successes and failures

For the second year in a row, participants were overwhelmingly pleased with the offerings of the conference, with many noting the richness and diversity of speakers, topics, and experiences shared throughout the program. One participant summed up this feeling stating, "I loved the diversity of the conference, both in terms of job titles of the people involved and the socioeconomic factors of the participants. This made every session more meaningful because the viewpoints were not limited to a small subsection. I also appreciated the inclusion of students so that their voices were part of the conversation." Another said, "the conference brought together policy makers, practitioners, researchers, students and philanthropists to create real change. Most conferences don't bridge the gap between these groups of people which is a huge mistake. This made it much more effective."

Surveys also revealed that 84% of participants made new connections with other people working on issues they care about, and 78% of participants developed new or improved ideas about how to help college students facing basic needs insecurities.

2. Connect policymakers, service providers, students, and researchers whose experiences and knowledge can point the way toward an effective policy agenda

Participants shared stories regarding the ways in which they were able to learn and be impacted by the #RealCollege program. Many cited the power of individual narrative. One practitioner noted, "I've never been in a room of so many college presidents and I wonder when I will be again...it was the narratives...two from amazing community college presidents and from homeless students (one son) who really made the day and who demonstrated that personal stories are key to making data

and research human in this work.” Over and over a common theme was not only that there were so many things to learn, but so many people to learn them from.

We asked participants to indicate from whom they learned new information at #RealCollege. Here is how they responded:

- 79% stated they learned from a practitioner
- 77% stated they learned from a researcher
- 70% stated they learned from a student
- 61% stated they learned from a policymaker

3. Identify current areas of knowledge and gaps in research

Fully 78% of participants noted that while at #RealCollege they learned something they did not previously know about basic needs insecurity. When asked about the kinds of learning that occurred participants stated:

“I learned from a diverse group of stakeholders attempting to meet cultural needs with competent and evidence-based practice.” – College Practitioner

“I sat in circle with 40+ innovative and engaged researchers working on solving issues related to basic needs security in higher education. We shared what we have learned so far, what we are working on now, and how we might continue to work collectively to disseminate research that calls leadership to action.” – Researcher

“The most satisfying aspect of this conference was learning that institutions are doing the work that I envision on my campus.” – College Practitioner

“It was incredibly meaningful to be in an environment with so many people involved in this work who I learned from beyond formal sessions of the conference.” – Student

4. Connect researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to galvanize new data collection and research in this field

The #RealCollege experience led participants to develop new connections and ideas that can lead to a future of innovation and growth in the field. The workshops were particularly powerful catalysts for the development of new ideas. When we asked participants topics on which they had new ideas this is what they said:

“I’m thinking about how we can utilize the idea of completion grants in order to assist our students in completing their goals and positively affect our graduation and transfer rates.” – Emergency Aid Workshop Attendee

“I want to continue to work on affordable housing solutions for students. I also love the idea of putting our supports on the syllabus!” – Addressing Postsecondary Student Basic Needs Insecurity Workshop Attendee

“We will use our pantry as a portal for discussing homeless students and a way to do outreach.” – Food Insecurity Workshop Attendee

“I met a campus administrator in my state system and we’re going to start some policy work together.” - Food Insecurity Workshop Attendee

“I’d love for our group to develop interdisciplinary perspective on this work – for starters economists, public health, and housing studies researchers.” – Research Workshop Attendee

“I’m inspired to reach out to local housing authority for partnership.” – Housing and Homelessness Workshop Attendee



NEXT STEPS

The work of creating better opportunities for #RealCollege students continues. It is clear that practitioners and policymakers, students and college presidents alike need much more support to engage in on the ground implementation. Preparations are already underway for the next #RealCollege, to be held at Temple University in Philadelphia on September 29 and 30, 2018.

The 2018 #RealCollege conference will include more opportunities to engage with not only other participants, but speakers and presenters as well. We will continue to expand opportunities for students to connect, collaborate, and share their experiences and recommendations. We will increase the variety of session offerings in terms of content as well as the ways in which information is presented, with an emphasis on increasing the interactive nature of sessions. There will opportunities for introductory learning as well as intermediate and advanced participation, and far less of the conference's time will be devoted to whole group sessions facing static panels.

We seek new partners in this effort. If you are willing to support the #RealCollege conference, whether with funding or leadership, please let us know. We aim to continue to offer a widely accessible and affordable opportunity for the movement to address students' basic needs insecurities to deepen, ground itself in data and evidence, and achieve success.

APPENDIX A: #REALCOLLEGE 2018 CONVENING AGENDA



WISCONSIN HOPE LAB

#RealCollege: A National Convening on College Food & Housing Insecurity

October 23–24, 2017

Temple University Mitten Hall | 1913 N. Broad Street Philadelphia, PA 19122

MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2017

8:30 am – 9:00 am

Breakfast

9:00 am – 9:30 am

Welcome

- **Helen Gym**, Councilwoman At-Large, Philadelphia City Council
- **Greg Anderson**, Dean of Temple University's College of Education
- **Sara Goldrick-Rab**, Founder of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, Professor at Temple University
- **Special performance by Matt Morris**

9:30 am – 11:00 am

State of the Field: Where We've Been and Where We're Going

- **Clare Cady**, Co-Founder and Director of the College and University Food Bank Alliance
- **Ruben Canedo**, Research & Mobilization Coordinator, University of California Global Food Initiatives
- **Pam Eddinger**, President, Bunker Hill Community College
- **Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield**, Senior Policy Analyst, Center for Law and Social Policy
- **Sara Goldrick-Rab**, Founder of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, Professor at Temple University
- **Facilitated by Theresa Powell**, Vice President for Student Affairs, Temple University

11:00 am – 11:15 am

Break

11:15 am – 12:00 pm

Keynote

- **John King**, CEO of Education Trust & Former U.S. Secretary of Education
- **Introduced by William T. Bergman**, Vice President for Public Affairs of Temple University

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

Lunch and Group Discussions

12:45 pm – 1:15 pm

#RealCollege, Real Life: Performance and Film

- **Mary Enoch Elizabeth Baxter**, Student, Community College of Philadelphia
- **Selma "Justice" Butler**, Student, Houston Community College

1:15 pm – 2:45 pm

Addressing Homelessness in Higher Education

- **Selma "Justice" Butler**, Student, Houston Community College
- **Rashida Crutchfield**, Assistant Professor of Social Work, California State University-Long Beach
- **Dennis P. Culhane**, Dana and Andrew Stone Chair in Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania
- **Matthew Morton**, Principal Investigator of Voices of Youth Count and Research Fellow, Chapin Hall
- **Russell Lowery-Hart**, President, Amarillo College
- **Facilitated by Liz Waite**, Student, California State University-Long Beach

MONDAY, CONTINUED

2:45 pm – 3:00 pm

Break

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Creating Systemic Change in Higher Education

- **Jim Larimore**, Chief Officer for the Center for Equity in Learning, ACT
- **Carlos Santiago**, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
- **Frank Sanchez**, President, Rhode Island College
- **Sabrina Sanders**, Director of Student Affairs, California State University Chancellor's Office
- **Karen Stout**, President and CEO, Achieving the Dream
- **Facilitated by Kathleen Grady**, Director of Sustainability, Temple University

4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Networking Reception

The Performing Arts Center
1837 N. Broad Street

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2017

8:30 am – 9:00 am

Breakfast

9:00 am – 10:00 am

Kickoff Speaker

- **Jessica Sutherland**, Homeless to Higher Ed
- **Introduced by Sara Goldrick-Rab**, Founder of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, Professor at Temple University

10:30 am – END

Deep Dive Workshops

- All workshops require advance registration and include lunch.
- Conference registrants may attend ONE workshop.
- Ending time of workshop will depend on the workshop; see workshop information on the following page.

Workshops are closed to the media.

Event Sponsors



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WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2017

Promising Practices for Addressing Food Insecurity in Higher Education

Led by **Clare Cady**, Co-Founder and Director of the College and University Food Bank Alliance

10:30 am – 5:00 pm
Fox-Gittis Room at the Liacouras Center
1776 N. Broad Street

Shelters, Showers, and Scholarships: Solving Housing Insecurity in Higher Education

Led by **Barby Moro**, Southern Scholarship Foundation

10:30 am – 4:30 pm
Welcome Center at the TECH Center, Ground Floor
12th Street at Montgomery Avenue

Crisis, Intersectionality, and Mobilizing Transformation: A Case Study on the University of California System's Approach to Basic Needs Insecurity

Led by **Ruben E. Canedo** and **Tim Galarneau**, University of California System Basic Needs Committee

10:30 am – 5:00 pm
Tuttleman Learning Center Conference Room 300AB
1809 N. 13th Street

Leveraging Non-traditional Financial Aid Programs to Address Food & Housing Insecurity

Led by **Rebecca Schreiber-Reis**, Dickinson College and **Andy Howe**, Independent Consultant

10:30 am – 5:00 pm
Shusterman Hall
1834 Liacouras Walk

Addressing Postsecondary Student Basic Needs Insecurity: Existing Policies and Future Opportunities for Change

Led by **Amy Ellen Duke-Benfeld**, Center for Law and Social Policy and **Katherine Sydor**, U.S. Office of Management and Budget

10:30 am – 4:30 pm
Kiva Auditorium, Ritter Annex Room 106
1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue

A National Research Conference on Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education

Led by **Sara Goldrick-Rab**, Founder of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, Professor at Temple University

This research conference was supported by a grant from the Education Research Conferences Program of the American Educational Research Association.

10:30 am – 5:30 pm
President's Room at the Diamond Club, Lower Level Mitten Hall
1913 N. Broad Street

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