



To: House Committee on Education  
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon  
Subject: Food Insecurity on College Campuses  
Date: May 20, 2019

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Supporting students seeking a better future is good both for individual students and for Oregon. Oregonians with an associates degree are nearly half as likely experience hunger than Oregonians with a only high school diploma<sup>1</sup>. Food insecurity can both be the reason a student is seeking a degree, and at the same time hinder the likelihood that a student will complete that degree.

Nationwide, nearly half of college students at two and four-year institutions experienced food insecurity in the last year<sup>2</sup>. Over half of students reported housing insecurity. And a 2017 study showed half of students at the University of Oregon were classified as food insecure<sup>3</sup>.

Within these alarming rates are even more alarming inequities. African-American or Black, Native American, and transgender students have higher rates of basic needs insecurity when compared to White or Caucasian students. Students with children experience higher rates of food insecurity, 53%, and housing insecurity, 66%, as compared to those who do not have children. All of these basic need insecurities affect student success and students' ability to stay in school.

Heightened awareness of food insecurity on college campuses have led to several initiatives by state, non-profit and higher education institutions in Oregon. Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) expanded community college student SNAP eligibility for students enrolled in Career Training and Education (CTE) courses or the prerequisites for this program track. Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon has partnered with Portland Community College, the University of Oregon, and Portland State University, offering SNAP outreach and application assistance trainings for students and professional staff. More awareness of SNAP for students is needed: nationwide 57% of students at risk of food insecurity and eligible for SNAP did not participate, in part because of confusion created by antiquated federal rules.

We can and must go further. Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon recommends the following actions to reduce college student hunger and housing insecurity in Oregon.

### Recommendations

- **Connect more eligible students with SNAP.** We are encouraged that DHS wants to connect more eligible students with food assistance and we look forward to working together to ensure

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards, Oregon State University, 2018.

<https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/sociology/oregonhungerreportdec2018.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Goldrick Rab, et al., Temple University, 2019.

<https://hope4college.com/college-and-university-basic-needs-insecurity-a-national-realcollege-survey-report/>

<sup>3</sup> Kashuba, University of Oregon, 2017. The Prevalence, Correlates, and Academic Consequences of Food Insecurity Among University of Oregon Students.



clear guidance for students seeking to understand the CTE SNAP eligibility. We recommend a broader outreach campaign to raise awareness about this guidance so more eligible students access SNAP with this opportunity.

- **Maximize SNAP eligibility** based on constraints of work study rules and funding.
- **Gain a clearer picture of hunger on campus:** All higher-education institutions in Oregon should participate in the Hope Center Real College Survey.
- **Create a Statewide initiative to create “Hunger-Free Campuses” that could include, but not be limited to:**
  - Follow the model of Amarillo Community College’s ‘No Excuses Poverty Initiative,’ a strategy guide for creating a culture of caring across campus and in every department that centers students’ definition of success.
  - Codified meal swipe program
  - Meal programs as part of financial aid packages for eligible students (at both 2 & 4 year schools)
  - Food pantries on all campuses
  - Syllabus statements & links in every student portal that connect students to resources including medicaid, SNAP, etc
  - Trained staff on all campuses that can provide SNAP application assistance.
  - Effective SNAP outreach on all campuses that addresses stigma, misinformation, and provides clear guidance on eligibility.
  - EBT on campuses and SNAP meal programs
  - Clarify SNAP eligibility guidance based on meal plan participation:
    - If a student is not living on campus and receiving a meal plan then they should not be denied SNAP.
    - If a student is receiving a meal plan less than a certain number of meals a week (less than 11) then they should be exempt from the meal plan rule.
  - Expand school meals (free and reduced price) to colleges.
  - Expand emergency cash funds available at all public universities and community colleges with simple procedures and access for students that need immediate access to funds when facing car repairs, eviction, and other crisis situations.
  - Increase access for DACA and undocumented students to basic need resources.
- **Address college affordability** by increasing state funding to higher-education institutions so tuition and student fees - which have been increasing at alarming rates - can be reduced.