

# **CSU Office of the Chancellor Study of Basic Needs Brief: Status of Food and Housing Security at Humboldt State University**

## **Quantitative Methods**

The Phase 2 survey was distributed to all students ( $n=8,503$ ) via email at Humboldt State University (HSU) between 10/3-10/24/16 and 16.6% of students participated ( $n=1,415$ ). Students received an initial email invitation to complete the survey along with two weekly email reminders. Students were able to enter their names in a raffle to win an iPad that was donated from HSU Oh SNAP! to further encourage participation. A campus point person, identified by a campus administrator, worked with the research team to recruit students and administer the survey electronically via campus email address. The marketing team through the CSU Office of the Chancellor created marketing materials (e.g., press release, flyer, social media template posts) for the campus point person to disseminate in order to encourage student participation.

## **Qualitative Methods**

Qualitative data were collected at HSU with students ( $n=16$ ) who identified as housing insecure, food insecure, or both on the quantitative survey. Student participants volunteered and were selected for interviews and focus groups based on reported levels of food insecurity and homelessness from the survey. Participants were recruited via email and were offered a \$15 gift card as an incentive to participate. Students participated in semi-structured interviews and focus groups, which lasted 60-90 minutes. Participants were asked broad, open-ended questions about their experiences with food and housing insecurity. Location and logistics for qualitative data collection were arranged collaboratively with a campus point person, identified by a campus administrator. Demographic information about the sample for qualitative methods is located in Appendix B. Students were asked to select pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

## **Comparison of Demographics of Survey Participants to Overall Campus Student Population**

Overall, HSU sample characteristics only moderately varied from some of the demographic categories in the HSU student body [See Table 1]. Asian/Pacific Islander, White and Hispanic students were over-represented in the sample, where: a) Asian/Other Pacific Islander students were 7.8% of the sample and 3.5% of the student body; b) White students were 54.7% of the sample and 43.7% of the student body; and, c) Hispanic students were 38.5% of the sample and 33.7% of the student body. The full time and part time students were represented similarly in the sample and student population. First generation college students were under-represented in the sample (36%) compared with 54% in the student population. Women students were over-represented 69.5% in the sample, compared with 56.3% of the student body. Women often have much higher response rates than men on surveys (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003; Underwood, Kim, & Matier, 2000). The mean age was only slightly higher in the sample ( $x=22.8$  years) when compared with the student body ( $x=22.0$  years).

Table 1

*Humboldt State University Sample and Humboldt State University student population demographics compared*

<u>Demographics</u>	<u>Humboldt State Study Sample</u> n = 1,415	<u>Humboldt State 2016-2017 Academic Year</u> n = 8,503
Race		
Asian/Other Pacific Islander	7.8%	3.5%
Black/African American	3.4%	3.2%
White	54.7%	43.7%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	38.5%	33.7%
Non-Hispanic	61.5%	-
Gender		
Male	26.4%	43.7%
Female	69.5%	56.3%
Transgender	0.5%	-
Do not identify as any of the above	2.1%	-
Class Standing		
Freshman	14.3%	21.0%
Sophomore	12.7%	13.0%
Junior	26.6%	25.0%
Senior	38.1%	35.0%
Graduate Student	8.3%	6.0%
PT/FT Status		
Full time	94.4%	94.3%
Part time	5.1%	5.7%
First Generation Student		
Yes	36.0%	54.0%
No	64.0%	42.0%
Age		
Range	18-69	17-Over 65
Mean	22.8	22
Median	21	-

### **Overall Campus Food Security and Homelessness**

Overall, 45.8% of HSU students reported food insecurity, of those 20.5% experienced low food security and 25.3% very low food security, conversely 36.1% reported high food security and 18.1% reported marginal food security. Overall, 19% of HSU students reported being homeless one or more times in the last 12 months based on the combined HUD and DOE definitions.

Students spoke at length about the how to make money and food stretch. Students compared notes in focus groups, discussing how to eat small amounts of food or eat very inexpensive food in order to feel full, but not feel well. Many students across the CSU spoke about how managing money impacted their personal relationships.

Yeah, it's also socially awkward when you have just a bowl of fries and a couple of your friends have a full meal...it's awkward, and they ask you why not and I had to make up an excuse, Oh well I'm not that hungry. In all reality it's like, Oh I'm starving, but I don't have money and I don't want to tell you, it's hard. Neo (HSU)

Eva (HSU), like others, spoke about the many compromises she had to make to attend school and sustain her basic needs. She said, "It's hard being a student working on minimum wage and affording your food too. It's also hard being a student and working at the same time. But if you don't work, you can't get food stamps, so you've got to weigh your time pretty well."

### **Academic Achievement**

As a general trend, students who experienced food insecurity in the last 30 days and/or homelessness in the last 12 months had lower GPAs and higher academic concerns than students who reported being food secure and/or housing stable [See Tables 2-5]. Although, GPAs of students who reported experiencing homelessness were comparable to those who were not. GPA was based on self-report. Academic Concerns is a variable created from the Presenting Problems Scale using a continuous variable from 1-5 based on current level of stress, where the score goes up with greater concern. Items relate to concerns about grades, motivation, time and stress management, and concentration among others.

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Table 2

*Mean GPA by Food Security*

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	<u>GPA</u>
High Food Security	3.33
Marginal Food Security	3.20
Low Food Security	3.14
Very Low Food Security	3.02

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Table 3

*Mean GPA by Homelessness*

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	<u>GPA</u>
Not Homeless within Last 12 Months	3.16
Homeless within Last 12 Months	3.13

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Table 4

*Mean Academic concerns by Food Security*

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	<u>Mean Academic Concerns</u>
High Food Security	2.43
Marginal Food Security	2.85
Low Food Security	3.01
Very Low Food Security	3.24

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Table 5

*Mean Academic Concerns Homelessness*

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	<u>Mean Academic Concerns</u>
Not Homeless within Last 12 Months	2.89
Homeless within Last 12 Months	3

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### Physical Health & Activity

There were also heavy tolls on students' physical health and daily activity as well. Students who experienced food insecurity in the last 30 days and homelessness in the last 12 months as a pattern scored more adversely on physical health indicators. In the past 30 days, students experienced far more days with inactivity and physical health issues, such as physical illness and injury, than their secure peers [See Tables 6-9].

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Table 6

*Poor Health Days by Food Security*

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	<u>Mean Poor Health Days</u>
High Food Security	3.23
Marginal Food Security	4.64
Low Food Security	4.51
Very Low Food Security	6.83

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Table 7

*Poor Health Days by Homelessness*

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	<u>Mean Poor Health Days</u>
Not Homeless within Last 12 Months	4.74
Homeless within Last 12 Months	5.76

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Table 8

*Mean Inactive Days by Food Security*

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	<u>Mean Inactive Days</u>
High Food Security	3.6
Marginal Food Security	4.97
Low Food Security	6.03
Very Low Food Security	7.86

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Table 9

*Mean Inactive Days by Homelessness*

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	<u>Mean Inactive Days</u>
Not Homeless within Last 12 Months	5.65
Homeless within Last 12 Months	6.46

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**Mental Health**

Students spoke at length about how deprivation of basic needs was related to their mental health and this was demonstrated in reports of personal concerns and poor mental health days in the last 30 days with food insecurity or homelessness [See Tables 10-13]. Personal concerns is a variable created from the Presenting Problems Scale using a continuous variable from 1-5 based on current level of stress, where the score goes up with greater concern. Items relate to concerns about anxiety, fear, physical health problems (i.e., headaches, stomach pains, etc.), sleeping problems, fatigue, and suicidal feelings, among others.

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Table 10

*Mean Personal Concerns by Food Security*

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	<u>Mean Personal Concerns</u>
High Food Security	1.84
Marginal Food Security	2.11
Low Food Security	2.34
Very Low Food Security	2.56

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Table 11

*Mean Personal Concerns by Homelessness*

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	<u>Mean Personal Concerns</u>
Not Homeless within Last 12 Months	2.19
Homeless within Last 12 Months	2.44

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Table 12

*Mean Poor Mental Health Days by Food Security*

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	<u>Mean Poor Mental Health Days</u>
High Food Security	7.3
Marginal Food Security	10.02
Low Food Security	11.82
Very Low Food Security	13.81

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Table 13

*Mean Poor Mental Health Days by Homelessness*

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	<u>Mean Poor Mental Health Days</u>
Not Homeless within Last 12 Months	10.57
Homeless within Last 12 Months	12.55

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**Patterns of campus-based resource use**

HSU has been making progress closing the gap between the number of students who were likely eligible for CalFresh based on federal income criteria combined with California student exemptions (31.9%) and those who used it (19.4%). Evidence that outreach about the service was successful was notable in that only 9.8% of the students had never heard of the service. Increased outreach efforts about how to access CalFresh Application Assistance may help more students apply and qualify based on the fact that many students had heard about the service, but never used it (62.7%). [See Table 14].

Many HSU students recounted how utilizing support to increase their food and housing security was critical. Specifically, on this campus, student spoke about the importance of a campus community that encouraged students to access programmatic offerings. Penny's (HSU) observation reflected many of the students who discussed the Oh SNAP! program. She said, "I really like that too. It's nice to see how many people do come over there because you're like, okay, I'm not the only one who needs to take this can of beans home with me."

Table 14

*Overall CalFresh Eligibility vs Use*

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
CalFresh Eligible	451	31.9
Not CalFresh Eligible	964	68.1
CalFresh Patterns of Use		
Never heard of it	88	9.2
Heard of it but never used it	599	62.7
Used it in the past	84	8.8
Currently use it	185	19.4

HSU is one of the few CSU campuses with EBT access at a college market during the time the survey was administered [See Table 15]. Students reported using the EBT at the time of the survey or in the past (10.5%); however, since 19.4% of students had CalFresh benefits, increased marketing about where EBT is on campus and how to use it might increase the use of the benefit on campus. When the number of students who were using the campus food pantry were combined with those who had it in the past, 35.7% students had utilized this service, demonstrating the effective outreach their program staff and peer educators engaged in.

Table 15

*Frequency & Percentage of Participants Using EBT on Campus*

Use of EBT on Campus	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Never heard of it/Not offered at my campus	301	31.1
Heard of it but never used it	565	58.4
Used it in the past	53	5.5
Currently use it	48	5

*Note.* In ‘CalFresh Patterns of Use’ students may have selected more than one item.

Table 16

*Overall Percentages of Participants Using On-Campus Food Pantry*

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Never heard of it/Not offered at my campus	153	15.7
Heard of it but never used it	474	48.6
Used it in the past	157	16.1
Currently use it	191	19.6

*Note.* Students may have selected more than one item.



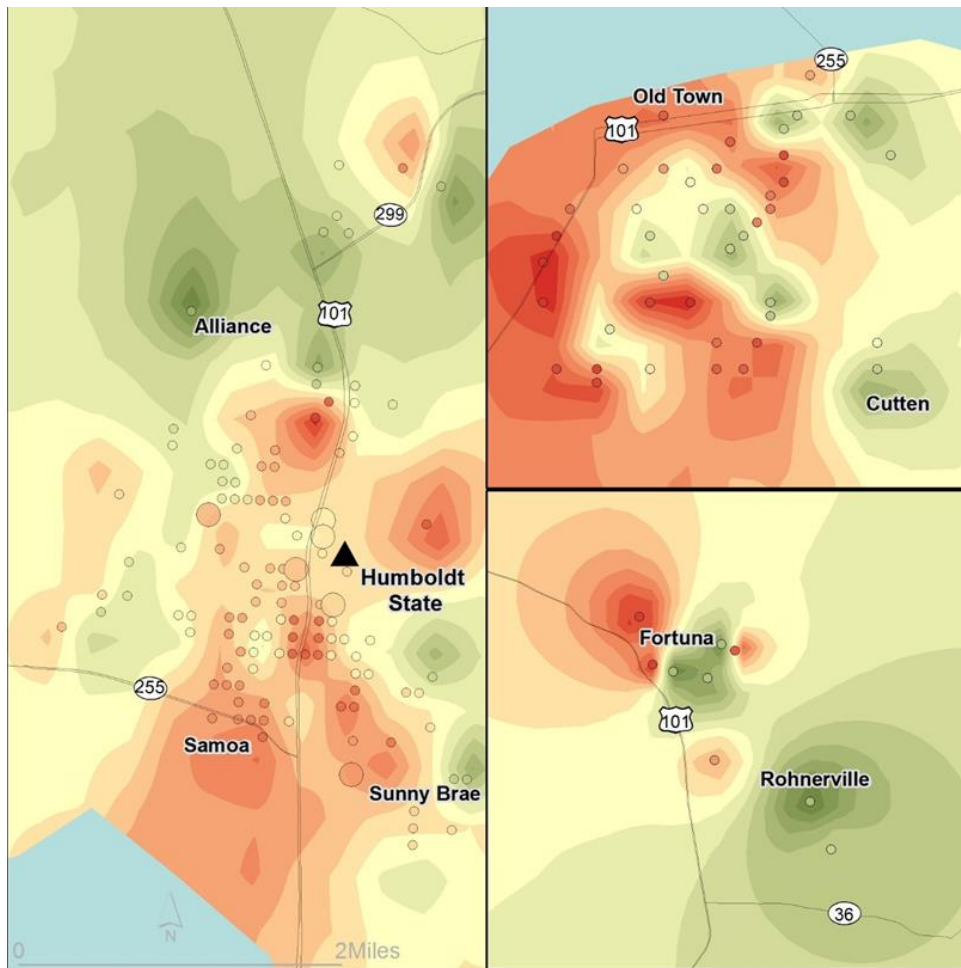


Figure 1

*HSU Student Food Security by Location*

This map shows where student respondents reported the closest major cross streets to where they were staying/living at the time the survey was completed. To measure food security, the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module (10 items) was utilized, using a 30-day time frame. Food security numbers range from 1 (very low food security) to 4 (high food security). Food secure students are represented by the green, while food insecure students are represented by red. The darker the shade, the more food secure or insecure the students in that area. The overlaid circles indicate the number of students who were staying/living in that location, the bigger the circle the more people.

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