



FALLING SHORT: COLLEGE STUDENT HOMELESSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

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The Promise of a College Education

- 74% of 9th graders from low-income families expect to earn college degrees
- Average economic returns lure them, and a low-wage labor market pushes them
- College is perhaps *the only* avenue for upward mobility
- But most simply seek basic security
- And an increasing number of middle-class students seek to prevent downward mobility

The Promise of a College Education

- 1 in 2 high school graduates from low-income families enters college
- Just 2 in 5 of those students complete degrees
- Most of those who don't nonetheless leave with debt

The New Economics of College

- College prices are higher than ever
 - *Financial aid is hard to get and underfunded*
 - *Living costs are the biggest struggle*
- Most families' incomes are stagnant or declining
- And many public colleges lack resources to provide adequate support

Basic Needs Insecurity Appears Prevalent

- Food insecurity– between 10-40% depending on the study and the sector
- Housing insecurity– as high as 50% depending on the sector
- Homelessness– estimates suggest 13-14% of community college students, and some at 4-year colleges too
- *There is no nationally representative data to assess prevalence*



HUNGRY AND HOMELESS IN COLLEGE:

RESULTS FROM A NATIONAL STUDY OF BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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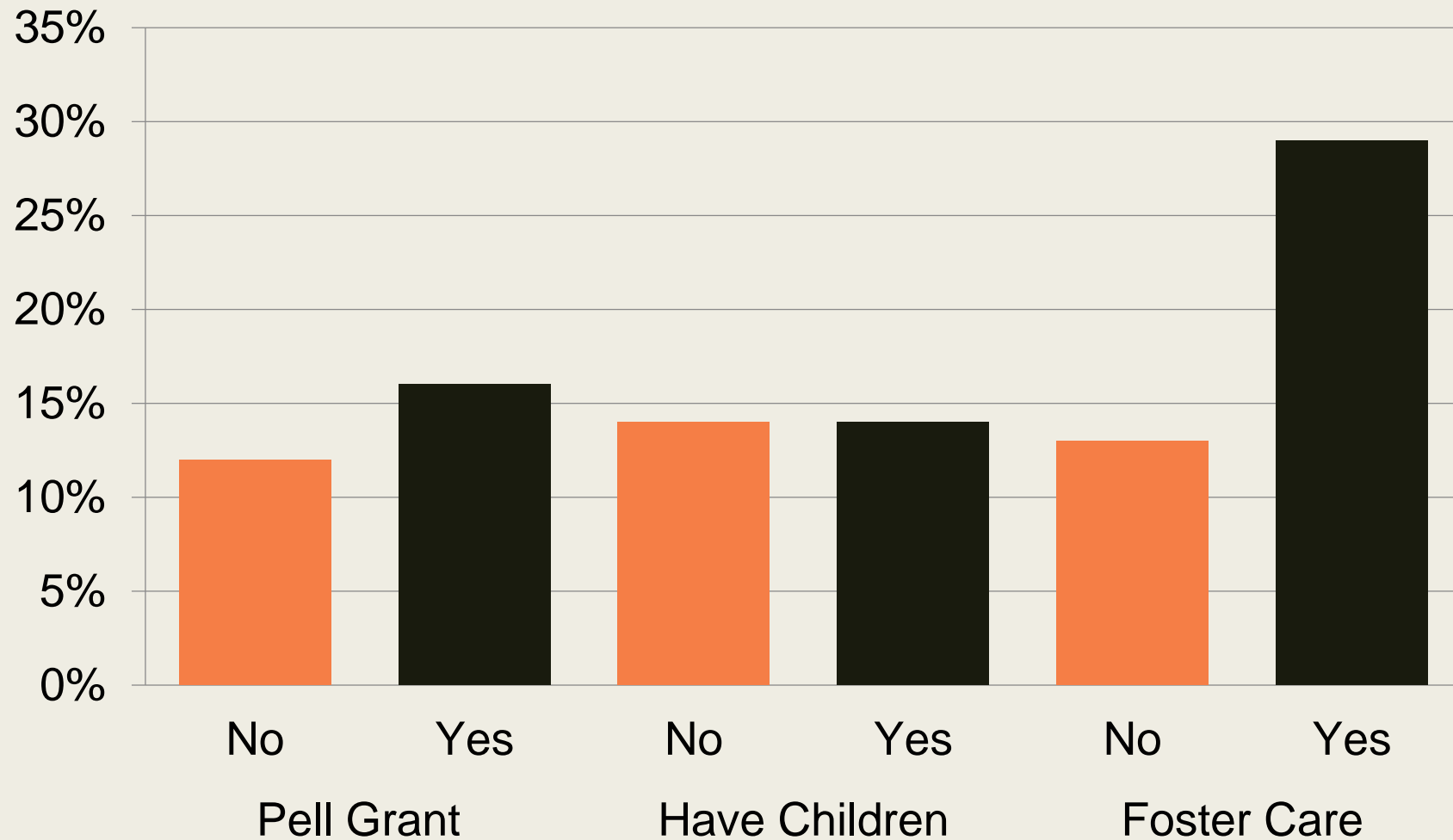
Fall 2016 Survey

- 33,000 students, 70 community colleges, 24 states
- E-survey, minimal incentives, very low response rates
- 2 in 3 students were food-insecure
- 1 in 3 students were hungry
- 1 in 2 students were housing-insecure
- 14% of students were homeless

Where Are Homeless College Students?

- In every region, irrespective of cost of living
- In colleges with both high and low rates of low-income enrollment
- More prevalent where county unemployment rates are high

Some students are at greater risk of homelessness



Homelessness Students Work Hard

- 50% were working and 54% were seeking (more) work
- They were far less likely than other students to earn at least \$15/hour
- They spent less time sleeping
- But they spent as much time as other students in class

Underlying Causes

- Varied life course trajectories– some students experience homelessness as a continuation from their youth, while others encounter it only in college
- Shortfalls in the social safety net that draws bright lines demarcating youth from adults
- Silos between social institutions
 - *Very few receive any food or housing supports*

Debates Over Response

- Organizational quandaries:
 - Complicated by institutional desire for status, respect
 - Fragmented by lack of role clarity, cohesion
- Legislative response:
 - Policy diffusion from k-12 to higher education missing
 - Complex political economy of aid policy
- Underlying challenge:
 - Charitable impulses are insufficient, rendered more difficult by "empathy walls"

Current Approaches

- Tacoma: Housing authorities offering vouchers via HUD's Moving to Work program
- Los Angeles: Rapid rehousing offered by Jovenes and UCLA's Bruin Shelter
- Tallahassee: Rent-free housing provided by Southern Scholarship Foundation
- Guardian Scholars for foster youth

Next Steps

- Strategic external partnerships– referrals to existing community programs
- Single Points of Contact on campus
- Emergency aid programs
- Rigorous program evaluations & longitudinal qualitative research
- The **HOPE Center for College, Community, and Justice** at Temple University will open in September 2018 to become a home for this work