



# Students' Unmet Basic Needs

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A presentation to the Community College League of California

*"I work really hard to keep up with the rest of my class, because I have lost my place three times due to my inability to pay because of my lack of financial aid. I have done two semesters without books and cry daily because I just want to give up sometimes. I really don't know what to do to prove I want and deserve this other than continue to show up. And I pray I don't get killed in the park while I sleep."*

-- Part-time California Community College student, age 42

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*Debbie Cochrane and Laura Szabo-Kubitz, "On the Verge: Costs and Tradeoffs Facing Community College Students," (The Institute for College Access & Success, April 2016)*



## Defining Basic Needs

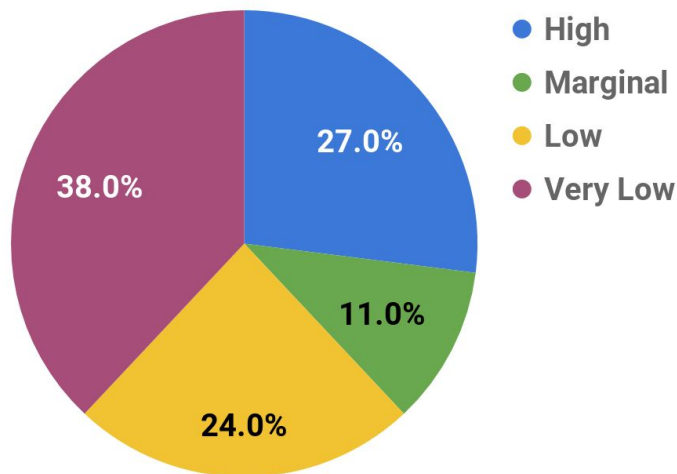
Food insecurity: the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the inability to acquire food in a socially acceptable manner. Four categories -- **high**, **marginal**, **low**, and **very low**.

Housing insecurity: a broad set of challenges that can include the inability to pay rent or utilities, moving frequently, or living doubled or tripled up with other individuals.

Homelessness: HUD defines as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Education defines more broadly to include children and youth sharing the housing of other people due to loss of housing or economic hardship.

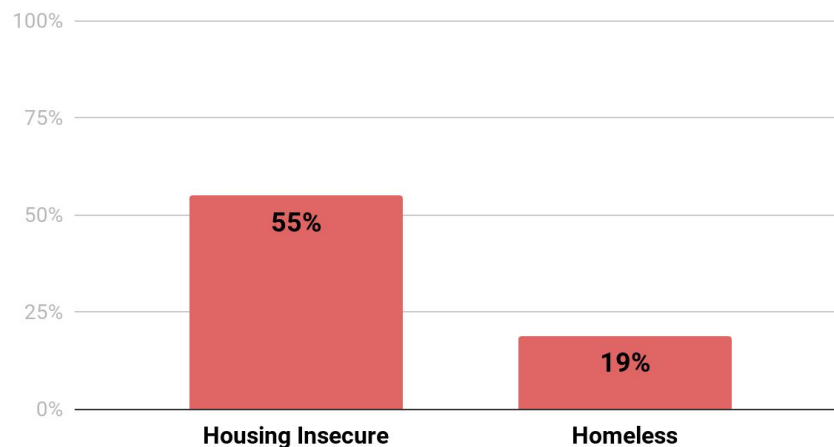
## By the Numbers: Los Angeles Community College District (2016)

Food Security in the Last 30 Days



*Almost 40% of LACCD students experienced very low food security -- multiple instances of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns.*

Housing Insecurity and Homelessness in Past 12 Months



*Over half of LACCD students were housing insecure in the past 12 months, and one in five experienced homelessness.*



## By the Numbers: Peralta Community College District (2017)

*Comprised of:*  
Berkeley City College  
Laney College  
Merritt College  
College of Alameda

- **84%** of Peralta students surveyed had experienced at least one form of housing insecurity in the past year. **30%** had experienced homelessness at least once.
- **One in seven** students slept in an abandoned building, car, or other place not meant as housing.
- Almost **half** of Peralta students reported being “severely rent-burdened” -- spending **50%** or more of their monthly income on rent.
- **60%** had experienced food insecurity in the month prior to the survey.



# Impact on Community College Students

## Academic performance challenges:

- Food insecure students consistently report **lower GPAs** and **less confidence** in academic abilities than their counterparts.
- At Peralta, almost **half** of food insecure students had suspended their studies.
- Nexus to developmental/remedial education? A 2017 report found that basic needs insecure students were concentrated in developmental courses at rates as high as **60-70%**.

## Mental health and wellness:

- High instances of depression, severe anxiety, and suicidal ideation.
- Frequently experience eating disorders, headaches, and fatigue.

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*“Colleges that want their students to graduate will engage in this work.”*

-- Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, founder of the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (formerly the Wisconsin HOPE Lab)



## Current Efforts

- Cal Grant B Access Award, Pell Grant, other aid for living expenses
- CalFresh food assistance and acceptance of EBT on campuses
- Campus food pantries and emergency grant programs
- Referrals to shelters and local housing programs
- \$2.5 million for food insecurity efforts in SB 85 funds from 2018

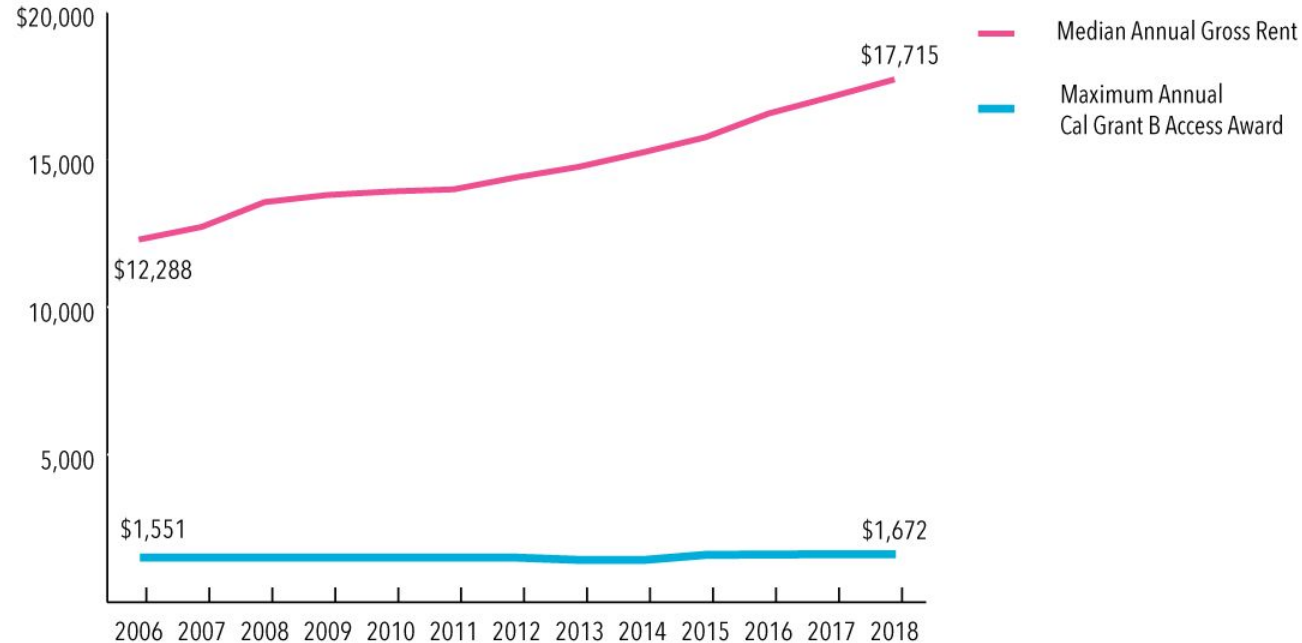
## Barriers

- Tuition vs. total cost of attendance -- available grant aid at CCCs covers only  $\frac{1}{3}$  the total cost of attendance
- Extremely high housing costs and low rental vacancy rates
- Existing social safety net programs are poorly structured or outright exclude students
- Lack of capacity in existing shelter and homelessness programs



# Student Aid Has Not Kept Pace With Rising Housing Costs in California

## Student Aid for Living Allowance Compared to Median Annual Rent

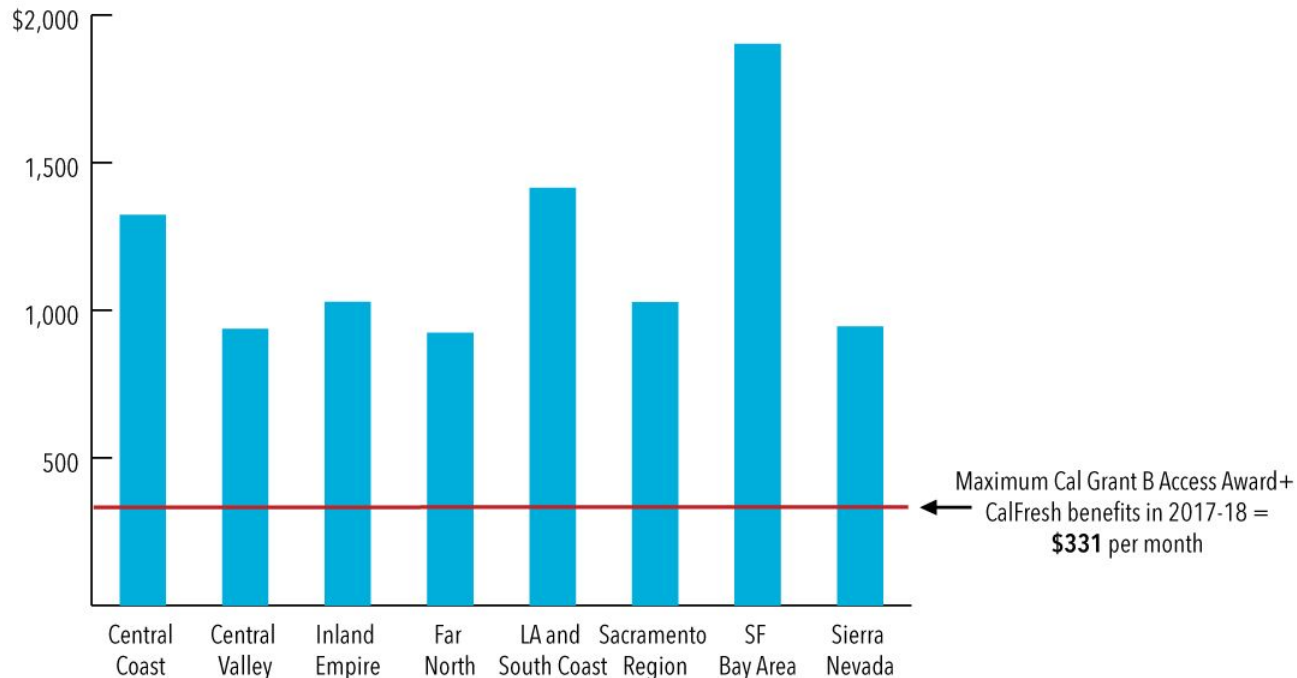


Note: Figures are not adjusted for inflation. Rent reflects gross rent, which includes utilities. For 2017 and 2018, rents are estimated based on the compound annual growth rate between 2011 and 2016. The Cal Grant B Access Award provides low-income students aid for basic living expenses. Source: California Student Aid Commission and US Census Bureau, American Community Survey



# Available Aid Covers Only a Fraction of Students' Food and Housing Costs in Every Region of the State

"Fair Market Rent" (FMR) for a Studio Apartment in 2018 and Food for a Single Adult



Note: Rent reflects gross rent which includes utilities. Food budget reflects USDA's Low-Cost Food Plan. The Cal Grant B Access Award provides low-income students aid for basic living expenses.  
Source: California Department of Social Services; California Student Aid Commission; US Department of Agriculture (USDA); US Department of Housing and Urban Development



California Budget  
& Policy Center  
*Independent Analysis. Shared Prosperity.*



# Policy Recommendations

## State level:

- Increase Cal Grant B Access Award amount for living expenses
- Provide campuses with funding to help students who are experiencing homelessness and/or food insecurity (absent from Governor's budget proposal)
- Increase access to affordable housing
- CalFresh reform -- remove work requirement for students, count academic work towards work requirement

## Campus level:

- Improve on-campus awareness of and access to food assistance, and continue to increase acceptance of EBT in on-campus markets or stores
- Connect with local coordinated entry system for homeless students
- Provide emergency aid or micro-grants to students for unforeseen financial challenges

*“I’m scared. I live with my boyfriend but I can’t break up with him because I’ll be homeless. That’s a horrible feeling.”*

*“My rent plus utilities alone is more than 70% of my income.”*

*“I eat a bowl of rice and tell myself I’m okay. Starving myself for a few days is better than living on the streets.”*

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