

# STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE – STRIVING TO SUCCEED

## FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITIES IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from the Community College Success Measure (CCSM). The CCSM is an institutional-level needs assessment tool that is used by community colleges to better understand challenges facing underserved students, particularly students of color. This instrument has been used by nearly 90 community colleges throughout the nation to inform institutional interventions for students, faculty, and staff to redress equity gaps.

Data from this report were derived from a subsample of 3,647 students from California campuses that employed the Stressful Life Events Scale, a scale that accounts for experiences with food and housing insecurities. Based on these respondents, some major study findings included:

- Approximately a third (32.8%) of students experienced housing insecurity. By gender, 31.8% of men and 33.9% of women reported this challenge.
- 12.2% of students experienced food insecurity. Men were more likely to report this challenge (at 15.4%) in comparison to women (at 8.7%).
- 37.9% of students reporting housing insecurity indicated stress from this challenge.
- 48.9% of students reporting food insecurity indicated stress from this challenge.
- African American and Southeast Asian students were the most likely to be affected by food and housing insecurities, particularly men from these populations.
- Students with food insecurity were 67.8% and 79.7% more likely to indicate the goal of updating their job skills or starting a new career than those without insecurities.
- Students with housing insecurity were 60% more likely to have the goal of achieving a certification than those without insecurities.
- Among students experiencing housing insecurity, 65.4%, 59.7%, and 73.9% were concentrated in developmental writing, reading, and math, respectively.
- Students experiencing food insecurity are overwhelmingly concentrated in developmental writing, reading, and mathematics, at 62.4%, 57.8%, and 71%, respectively.
- A lower percentage of students with food insecurity note being on track to achieve their goals in college.
- Students with food insecurity are more likely to indicate their intention to drop out of college than those without food insecurity.
- Students with food or housing insecurities are generally more engaged with their faculty inside and outside of class than those without insecurities.
- Students with food insecurity are significantly less likely to feel confident in their academic abilities, to perceive college as being worthwhile, to feel a sense of control in academic matters, to be focused in school, and to be authentically interested in class.
- Students with food insecurity are significantly less likely to perceive a sense of belonging from faculty, to feel welcome to engage inside and outside of the classroom, to report having access to student services, and to see campus services as being effective in helping them address their needs.

Clearly, these findings illuminate a stark reality that evidences the prevalence and issues associated with food and housing insecurities. Bearing these challenges in mind, community colleges must work proactively to engage in strategic interventions to alleviate insecurities.

# BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness among educators about the prevalence of food and housing insecurities in college and university settings. Largely, this is due to the efforts of scholars such as Jarret T. Gupton and Sara Goldrick-Rab (among others), who have succeeded in raising awareness about extreme cases of insecurities, such as hunger and homelessness. While greater attention is now being paid to these populations, the challenges with insecurities are not new. Common discussions of the college experience involve anecdotes about “couch surfing” as well as the myriad of ways to cook “top ramen” and “instant rice.”

But, these anecdotes illuminate a far darker experience that many college students face with food and housing insecurities. Being unsure about where your next meal will come from and unsure about where you will live and sleep are all too frequent experiences in the lives of college students, particularly students who have been historically underserved in education. And, these experiences can negatively influence college students’ learning, development, and success.

In this report, we provide an expanded analysis of survey data to better understand these challenges among community college students.

This study operationalized food and housing insecurities based on the definitions extended by Goldrick-Rab, Broton, and Eisenberg (2015). These terms are defined as follows: “Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in socially acceptable ways. Housing insecurity also exists along a spectrum where homelessness—lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence—represents the extreme case. Unaffordable housing, poor housing quality, crowding, and frequent moves are other dimensions of housing insecurity” (p. 3).

In this report, we explore the prevalence and influence of these experiences on community college students. The topics of food and housing insecurities are discussed in tandem given the interrelation among students who experience these pressures.

The purpose of this report is four-fold: 1) to examine characteristics of community college students who experience food and housing insecurities, 2) to investigate the influence of these experiences on student success outcomes, 3) to overview factors that distinguish students who experience food and housing insecurities from their peers, and 4) to extend practitioner-developed strategies and practices that can advance the success of these students.

The results from this report represent a critical addition to the research literature, given the manner in which data from this study were collected. In several previous studies, the use of convenience sample responses from online surveys were employed to understand food and housing insecurities. While these studies have been essential for raising attention to these concerns, this study is more representative than previous investigations given that the data were collected through classroom-based sampling.

Moreover, this study also presents data on a range of predictors of student success for underserved students, thereby shedding light on *how* experiences with insecurities may influence differential levels of success in college. These predictors are inclusive of non-cognitive outcomes, gender identity, student engagement, external life pressures, and campus climate.

*Being unsure about where your next meal will come from and unsure about where you will live and sleep are all too frequent experiences in the lives of college students.*

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF INSECURITIES

Poverty is a prevailing challenge often associated with food and housing insecurities. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2015), more than 4.8 million individuals living in the nation live in poverty. Moreover, challenges with poverty are particularly prevalent at community colleges. In fact, data from the CCSM (2016) demonstrate that 56% of community college students in the sample have annual household incomes of \$20,000 or less. Likely, the high rates of poverty in community colleges are a function of open access admission policies that allow for greater participation in post-secondary education opportunities.

As a result, these institutions are more likely than 4-year colleges and universities to serve students who are working, have dependents, attend college part-time, and who are low-income (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). According to Dubick, Mathews, and Cady (2016), food insecurity may be on the rise given the higher cost of education and the growing number of students with the aforementioned characteristics. Likely, this notion can be extended to students with housing insecurities as well.

Colleges have begun responding to these concerns by creating food pantries, free and reduced lunch programs, and partnering with community organizations to create

affordable housing options. These programs exist due to the influence that insecurity challenges have on student experiences and outcomes.

According to Maslow's (1943) foundational work on hierarchy of needs, physiological needs are a requirement for survival. Physiological needs include having food and shelter, which are viewed as primary needs necessary for one to thrive. These needs are even more base-level than other needs, such as safety, a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. In a college and university setting, these basic needs influence a student's ability to engage in the environment, develop a sense of belonging, build self-confidence, and grow academically. As might be expected, insecurities have been shown to have an effect on student learning, development, and success.

Take food insecurity as an example. In a study of Maryland community college students, Maroto, Snelling, and Linck (2014) found that students with food insecurity had significantly lower GPAs than students who did not experience this insecurity. They found that students who experienced food insecurity were significantly less likely than their peers to be high achieving, operationalized as having a GPA of 3.5 or higher. Moreover, they were also more

likely to be represented in the 2.0 to 2.49 category. Similar findings were demonstrated by Patton-López, López-Cevallos, Cancel-Tirado, and Vasquez (2014) who found that students with food insecurity were less likely to be high achieving (operationalized as have a GPA of 3.1 or higher).

Beyond the effects on academic outcomes, insecurities are associated with many long-term health risks. For example, Stahre, VanEenwky, Siegel, and Njai (2011) conducted an analysis of housing-insecure individuals living in Washington state. They found that those who experienced housing insecurity were nearly twice as likely to indicate that their health was only poor or fair than those without housing insecurity. Moreover, these challenging health statuses were also associated with the inability to engage in healthy activities. Beyond these results, they also found that individuals with housing insecurity were more than two times likely to report that prolonged periods of poor mental health (14 days or more) and to delay visits to the doctor for health conditions due to cost.

Similar research has pointed to issues associated with food insecurity. Food insecurity is linked to health risks, including obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular risk factors (Seligman, Laraia, & Kushel,

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF INSECURITIES

2010). In addition to physical health concerns, mental health concerns are also higher among students with insecurities. For instance, students experiencing housing insecurity and successively higher levels of food insecurity had high instances of reported depression, severe anxiety, eating disorders, and even suicidal ideation.

Research indicates that underserved students of color may be at a higher risk of experiencing food and housing insecurity. For instance, Martinez, Brown, and Richie (2016), in an examination of university students, found that students of color were significantly more likely than their White counterparts to experience food insecurity. Moreover, they found that food-insecure students were overwhelmingly more likely to have been food insecure as children (45% to 9%). Similarly findings from Maroto et al. (2014) showed that African American and multiracial students are at great risk of experiencing food insecurity.

However, there may be even more disparate exposure to insecurities among men of color. In a recent paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Vang et al. (2016) explored the stories of students who experienced food and housing insecurities in the community college. Their research titled *Where Do I Sleep? What Do I Eat?* revealed

that experiences with food and housing insecurities were recurrent themes in the experiences of many Black and Latino college men. In particular, they found that men with these insecurities often placed their families first, prioritizing feeding and sheltering their children and dependents over themselves. In some cases, their roles as providers for their families exacerbated their exposure to insecurities.

*Men with these insecurities often placed their families first, prioritizing feeding and sheltering their children and dependents over themselves... (Vang et al., 2016).*



# METHODS

This report is based on data derived from the Community College Success Measure (CCSM). The CCSM is an institutional level needs assessment tool that is used by community colleges across the nation to examine factors that influence success for underserved students.

The CCSM is comprised of 124 items designed to assess environmental pressures, non-cognitive outcomes, student involvement, and perceptions of the campus climate. The instrument was developed based on research on underserved students of color in community colleges, with a focus on men of color (see Wood & Harris, 2013; Wood, Harris III, & White, 2015).

The instrument has been distributed at over 90 community colleges throughout the nation to more than 25,000 students. The CCSM is distributed on campuses to randomly selected course sections using a scantron instrument. Students complete the questionnaire in class. The instrument is often paired with the distribution of two other instruments, the Community College Instructional Development Inventory (CC-IDI) and the Community College Student Success Inventory (CCSSI). Collectively, these instruments assess student experiences, faculty professional development needs, and key student service areas that influence the success of

historically underserved students. Typically, these instruments are used to guide programming for equity-based student success initiatives.

This specific report focuses on a subset of students, 3,647 who emanate from California colleges that used the revised Stressful Life Events Scale developed by CCEAL that assesses food and housing insecurities. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the sample was as follows:

- 31% White
- 6.5% Asian
- 2.3% Southeast Asian
- 3.5% Filipino
- 13.8% African American
- 37.9% Latino
- 5.7% Multiethnic

Data from Pacific Islander, Native American, and Middle Eastern students were excluded due to limited sample sizes. It should be noted that this report disaggregated Southeast Asian (e.g., Hmong, Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese) and Filipino from the larger Asian aggregation given that students from these communities often have experiences and outcomes that more closely mirror other underserved students of color (Xiong & Lam, 2013; Xiong & Wood, 2016).

One key element of the CCSM is that it assesses the degree to which men ascribe to a hegemonic perspective of masculinity that can influence their success in college. Thus, for men in the sample, the CCSM measures their willingness to seek out help (help-seeking), their perceptions of school as a domain that is equally suited for individuals of all genders (school as an equal domain), and their views on whether individuals of all genders can be breadwinners (breadwinner orientation). As demonstrated by Harris et al. (2015), these factors have been shown to have an effect on student success and engagement in college.

Data for this report were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and analysis of variance procedures. Exploratory analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages). These analyses account for the largest majority of findings presented in this study. T-tests and analysis of variance were used to determine whether significant differences existed between students who did and did not experience food and housing insecurities.

## SECTION 1 – PREVALENCE OF INSECURITIES

Overall, 31.8% of men and 33.9% of women reported experiences with housing insecurity. A smaller percentage, 15.4% and 8.7% of men and women, respectively, indicated challenges with food insecurity. Among those experiencing insecurities, high levels of stress were reported. In fact, 37.9% of students reporting housing insecurity indicated that these challenges were either stressful or very stressful. An even higher percentage of those with food insecurity, at 48.9%, reported that this challenge was stressful or very stressful.

# PREVALENCE OF INSECURITIES

Overall, 31.8% of men and 33.9% of women reported experiences with housing insecurity. A smaller percentage, 15.4% and 8.7% of men and women, respectively, reported challenges with food insecurity. Among those experiencing insecurities, high levels of stress were reported. In fact, 37.9% of students reporting housing insecurity indicated that these challenges were either stressful or very stressful. An even higher percentage of those with food insecurity, at 48.9%, indicated that this challenge was stressful or very stressful.

Among the respondents by gender, Black and Southeast Asian men had noticeably higher rates of housing insecurity than their male counterparts, at 42.3% and 48.4%, respectively. Similarly, female respondents from these groups also demonstrated noticeably higher challenges with housing insecurity, at 40.0% and 41.1%. Also higher than the female average were rates for multiethnic women, at 36.6%.

With respect to food insecurity, men reported greater challenges than their female counterparts. However, among men, Black men had greater experiences with food insecurity, at 22.9%. Moreover, Southeast Asian, Filipino, and Latino men all had more experiences with food insecurity than the average among men.

Multiethnic women had the highest reported exposure to food insecurity, at 15.9%. This was 1.8 times higher than the average among women. Asian women had, by far, the lowest reported incidence with food insecurity. The percentage is so much lower than that of other groups, that there may be a need to further explore this pattern. Possibly, the low response is due to cultural factors that allow for great support of Asian women or an apprehension to report these challenges.

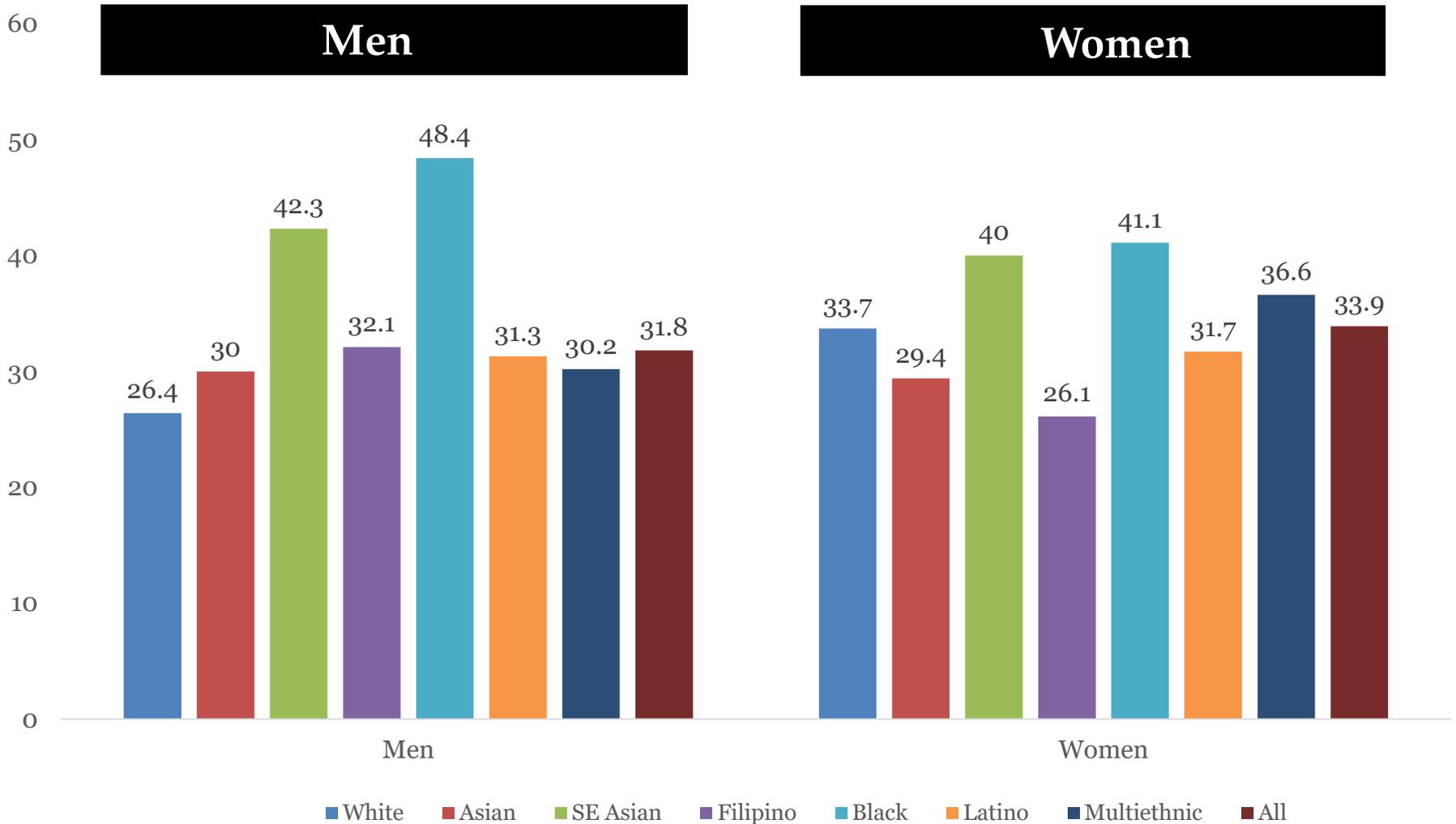
Nearly a quarter of students reported experiencing both food and housing insecurities, with slightly higher percentages among White and Black students. In contrast, Asian students, followed by Filipino students were the least likely to report experiences with both food and housing insecurities in the sample.

**Percentage of students with housing *and* food insecurities**



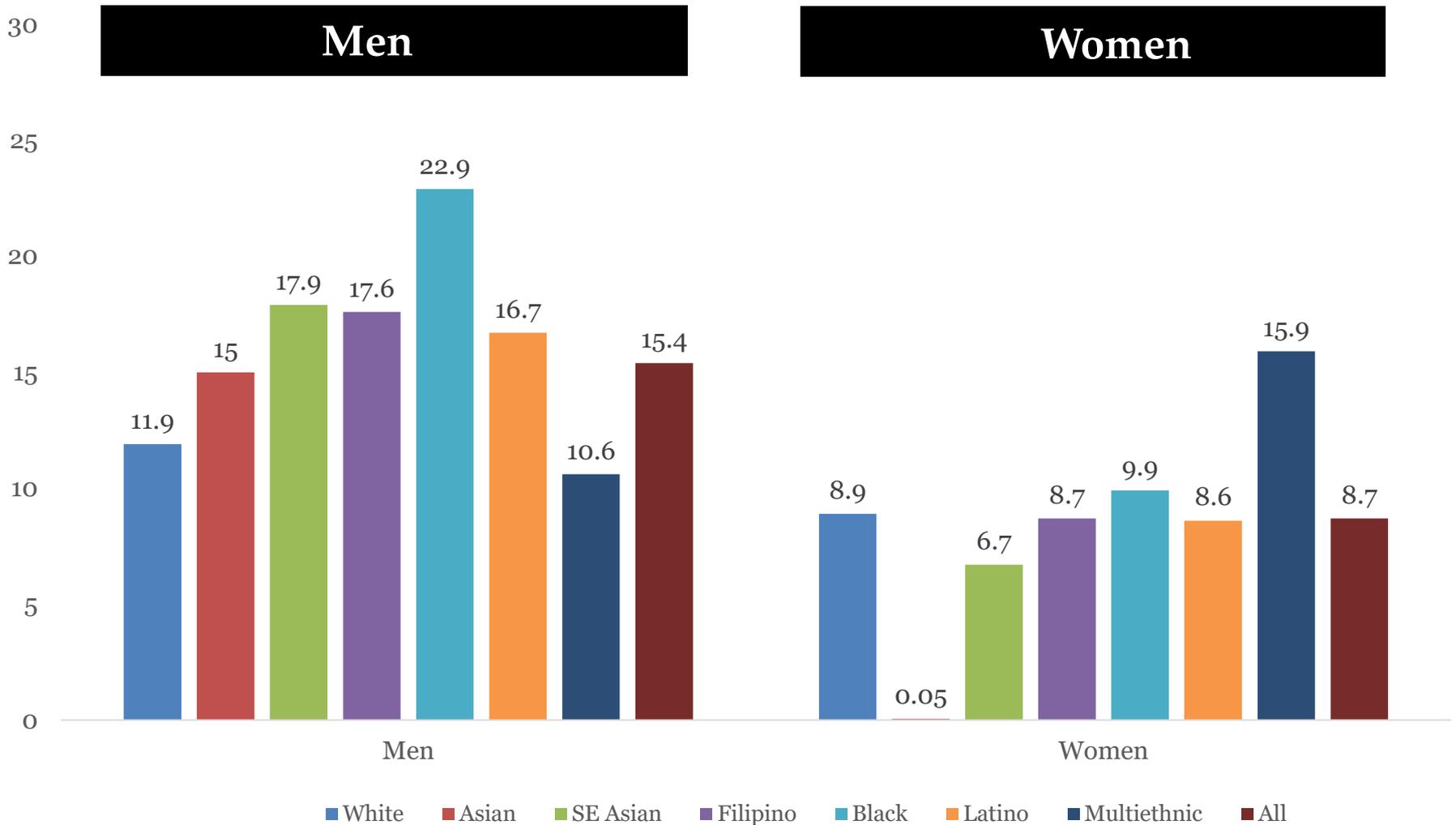
# PREVALENCE OF INSECURITIES

## Exposure to housing insecurity, by race and gender



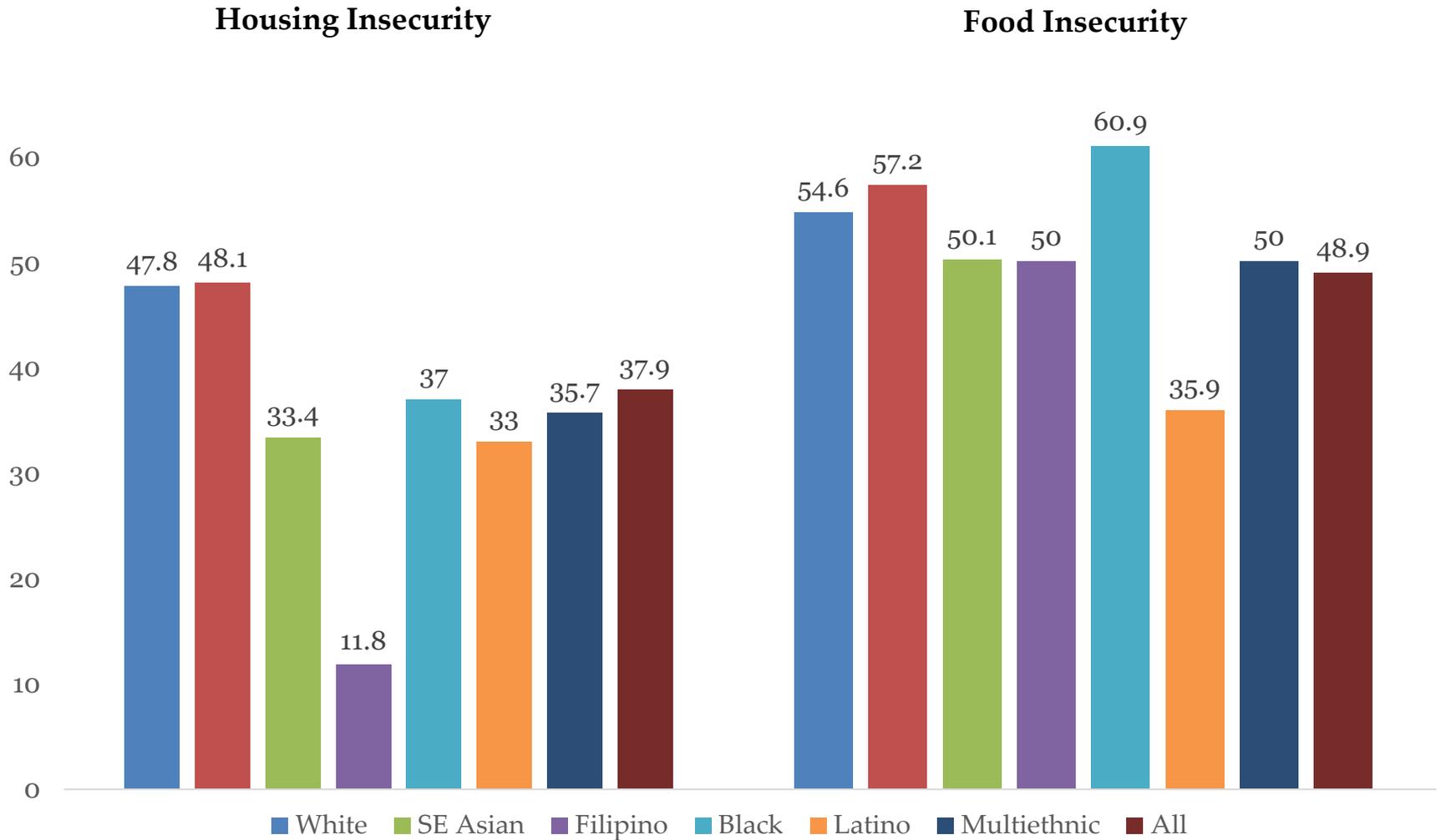
# PREVALENCE OF INSECURITIES

## Exposure to food insecurity, by race and gender



# PREVALENCE OF INSECURITIES

Percentage of students by race, reporting “stressful” “very stressful”



## SECTION 2 – DEFINING AND DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

In general, there are several factors that distinguish students with food and housing insecurities from other community college students. Students with food insecurity were 67.8% more likely to indicate the goal of updating their job skills and 79.7% of starting a new career than those without insecurity. Among students experiencing housing insecurity, 65.4%, 59.7%, and 73.9% were concentrated in development writing, reading, and math, respectively. In general, students experiencing food and housing insecurities are overwhelmingly concentrated in developmental math.

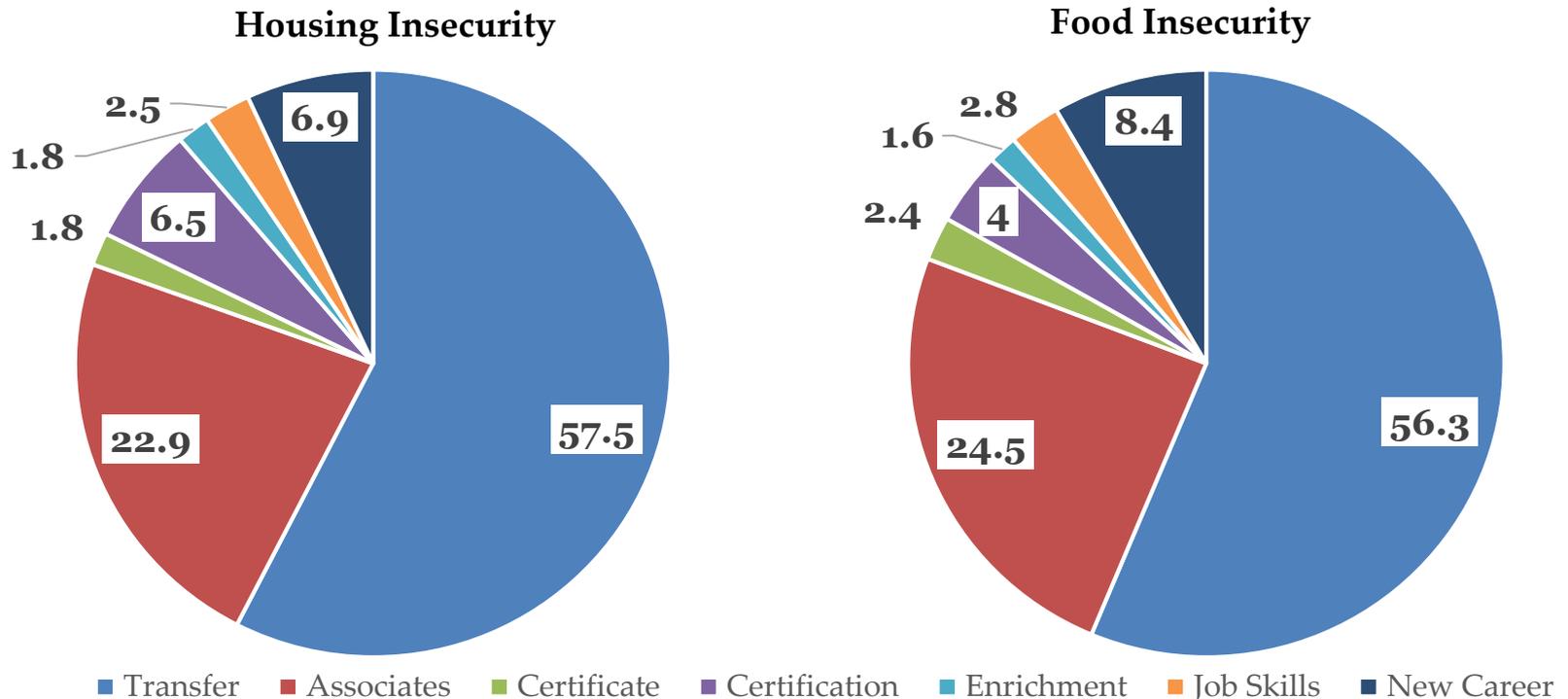
# DEFINING AND DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

The majority of students experiencing food and housing insecurities, at 57.5% and 56.3%, had the primary goal of transferring from a community college to a 4-year university. The second most common goal was to earn an associates degree, at 22.9% for students exposed to housing insecurity and 24.5% for those with food insecurity. Interestingly, these percentages mirror data in the sample for students who did not

experience insecurities for earning an associates degree and transferring. The most clear differences detected focused on certificate and certification goals. For instance, students with housing insecurity were 60% more likely to have the goal of achieving a certification. In contrast, students who did not experience housing insecurity were two times as likely to have the goal of earning a certificate.

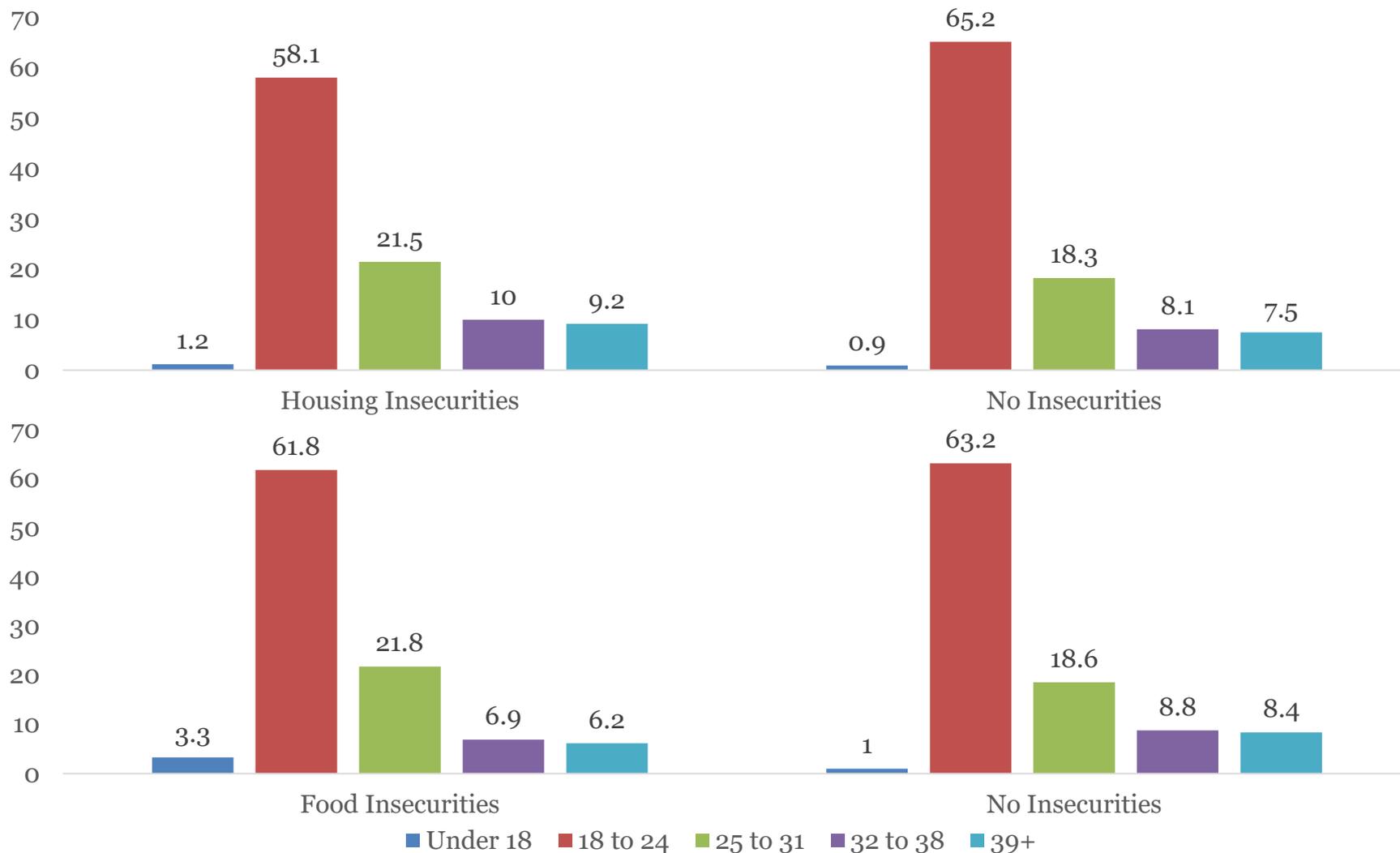
In terms of students with food insecurity, their intent to earn an associates degree or transfer largely mirrored that of students without food insecurity. However, students experiencing food insecurity were 67.8% more likely to indicate the goal of updating their job skills and 79.7% of starting a new career. However, they were less likely (by 53%) to have the goal of earning a certificate.

## Primary goals at the community college for students with food and housing insecurities



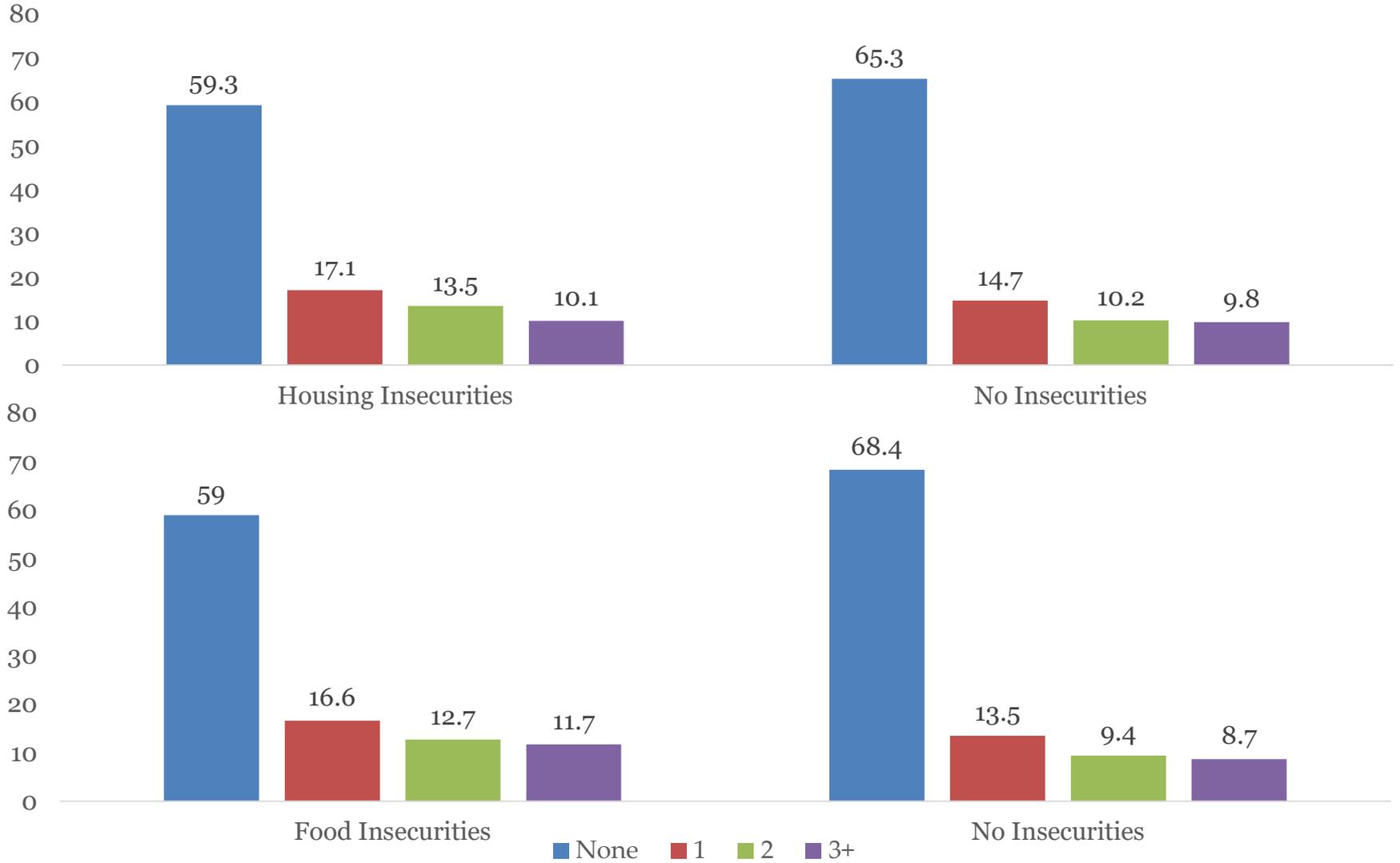
# DEFINING AND DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

Comparison between students with insecurities vs. no insecurities, by age



# DEFINING AND DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

Comparison between students with insecurities vs. no insecurities, by total dependents



# DEFINING AND DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

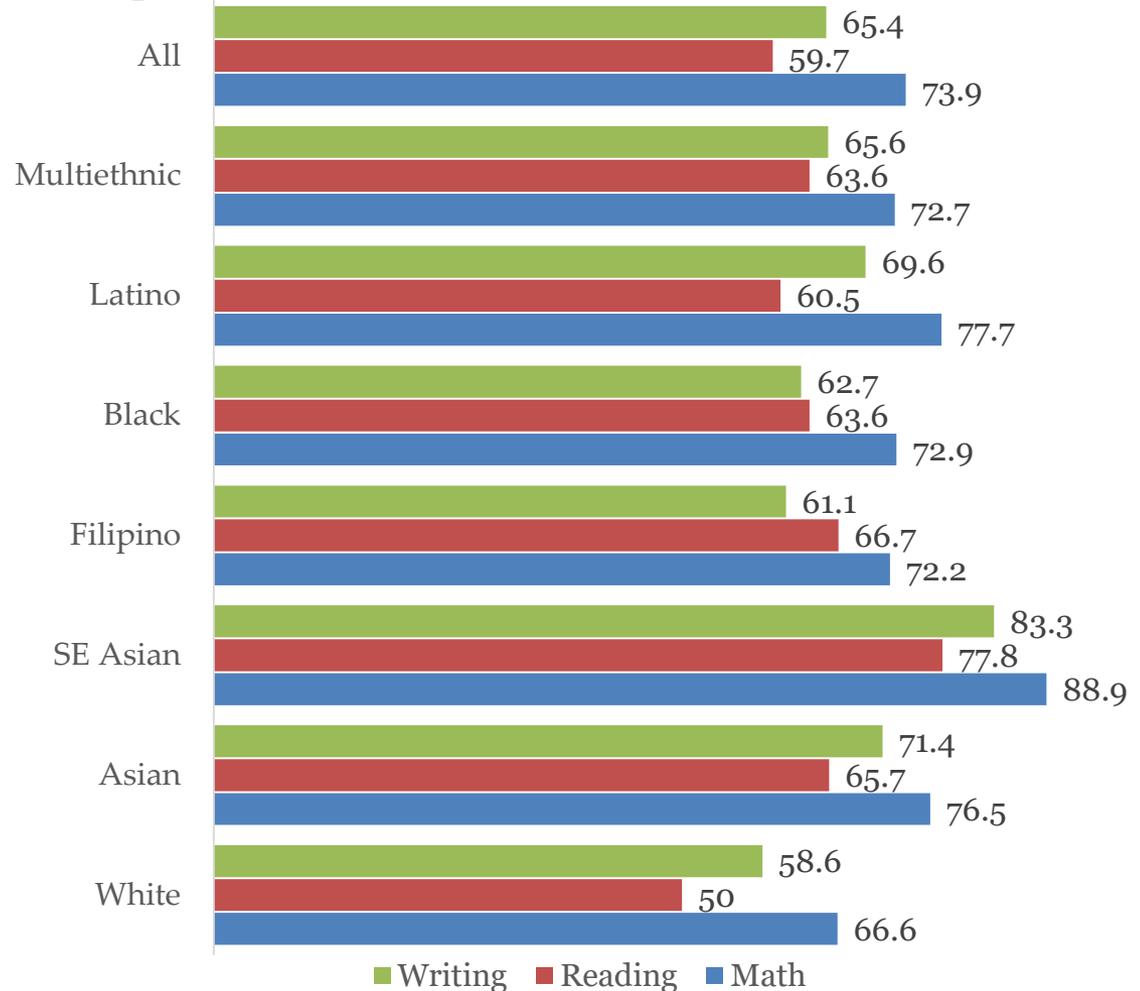
In examining age differences between those with and without food and housing insecurities, some interesting patterns emerge. A higher percentage of students with housing insecurity fell within the age range of 25 years of age or older, at 40.7%. In contrast, only 33.9% of those without insecurity fell into this designation. In contrast, there were only minimal differences in student representation of 25 years of age or older among those with food insecurity.

A smaller percentage of students with housing insecurity had children than those who did not, by 6 percentage points. Similarly, students exposed to food insecurity also had fewer children than those without insecurity, by 9.4%.

Overwhelmingly, students who experienced food and housing insecurities are concentrated in developmental education. This is inclusive of students who have taken developmental education or plan to do so in a specific subject area. Across groups, roughly 60 to 70% of students who experienced food insecurity were in developmental education.

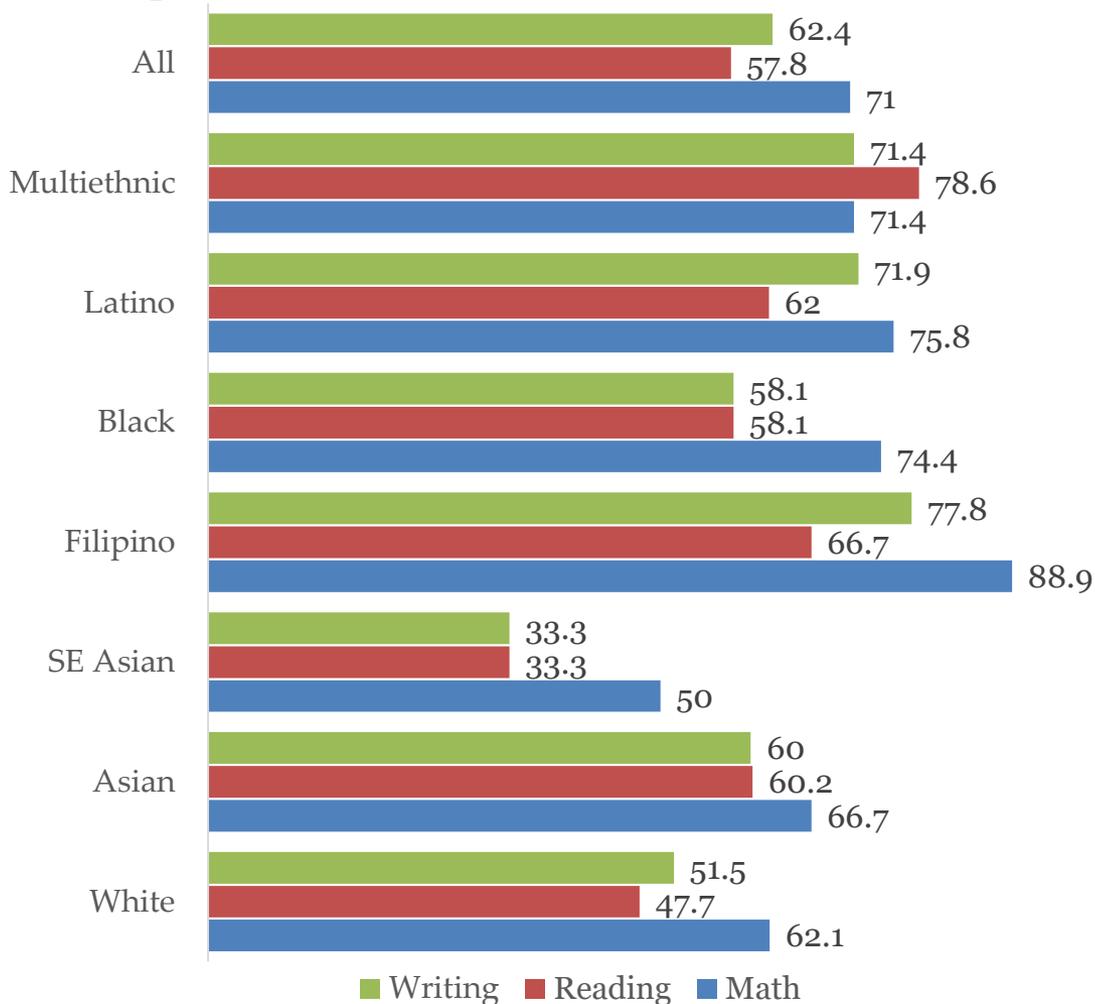
Specifically, among students experiencing housing insecurity, 65.4%, 59.7%, and 73.9% were concentrated in development writing, reading, and math, respectively. Across

**Percentage of students with housing insecurity in developmental education**



# DEFINING AND DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

## Percentage of students with food insecurity in developmental education



developmental areas, students with housing insecurity were most concentrated in developmental math. For example, 73.9% of students experiencing housing insecurity were in developmental mathematics. For instance, 88.9% of Southeast Asian students experiencing this challenge were in developmental math.

Overall, among students experiencing food insecurity, they are concentrated in developmental writing, reading, and mathematics, at 62.4%, 57.8%, and 71%, respectively. Patterns among food-insecure students in developmental education demonstrated more differences across groups. Among students with food insecurities, Latino and Filipino students were the most concentrated across developmental writing, reading, and mathematics.

Taking developmental math as an example, 88.9% of Filipino students who were food insecure were also in developmental math, however, among Southeast Asian students the percentage was lower, at 50%. In fact, Southeast Asian students experiencing food insecurity account for a small percentage of those in developmental writing and reading (at 33.3%).

Taken together, students experiencing food and housing insecurities are overwhelmingly concentrated in developmental math.

## SECTION 3 – A COMPARISON OF INDICATORS

Students experiencing food insecurity were less likely than those who did not experience food insecurity to report that they were on track to achieve their goals in the community college. In fact, while 83.9% of students who did not experience food insecurity said that they were on track, only 77.8% of those who did experience insecurity reported this. Among students with food insecurity, 7.6% indicated their plans to drop out of college. In comparison, only 2.7% of students without food insecurity did so.

# A COMPARISON OF INDICATORS

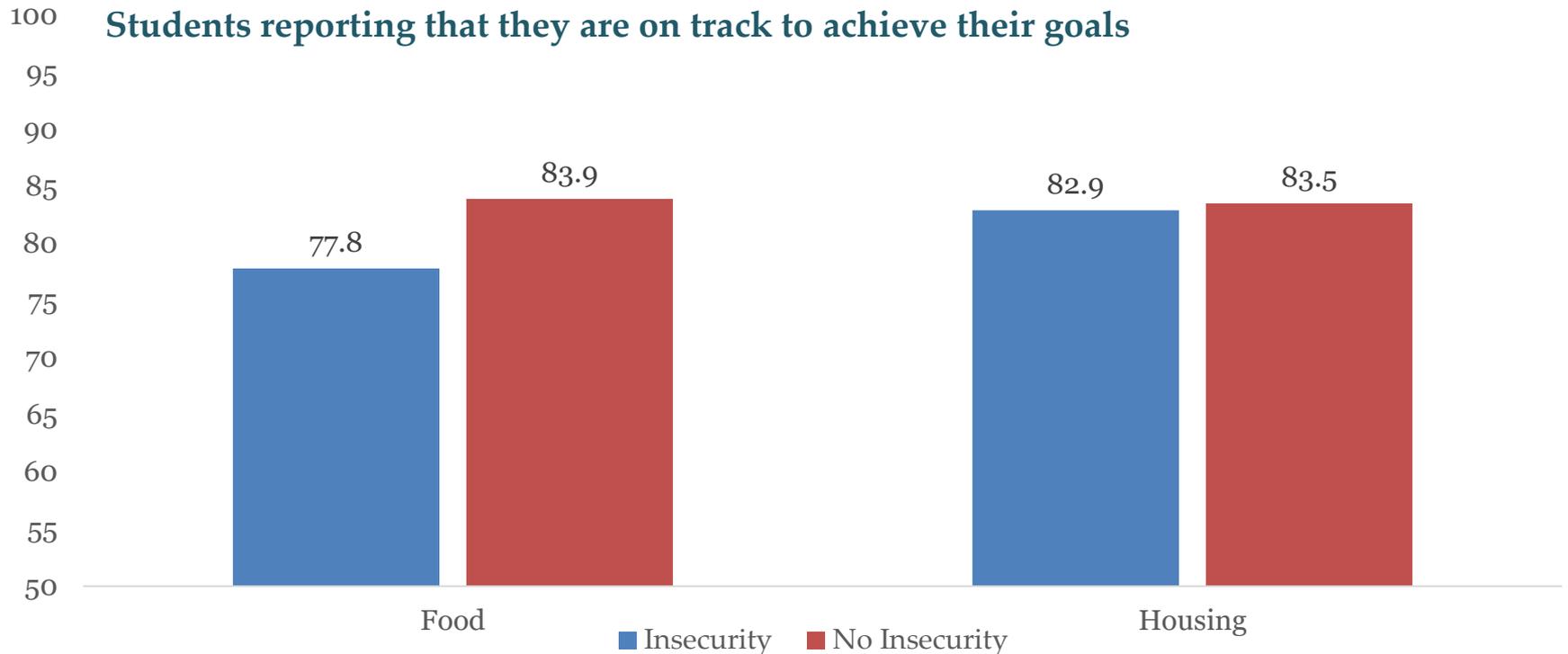
As noted earlier, prior research has shown that experiences with food and housing insecurities can influence student success. In this section, we focus on indicators of student success that are assessed in the CCSM.

The study found that students experiencing food insecurity were less likely than those who did not experience food insecurity to report that they were on track to achieve

their goals in community college. In fact, while 83.9% of students who did not experience food insecurity said that they were on track, only 77.8% of those who did experience insecurity reported this.

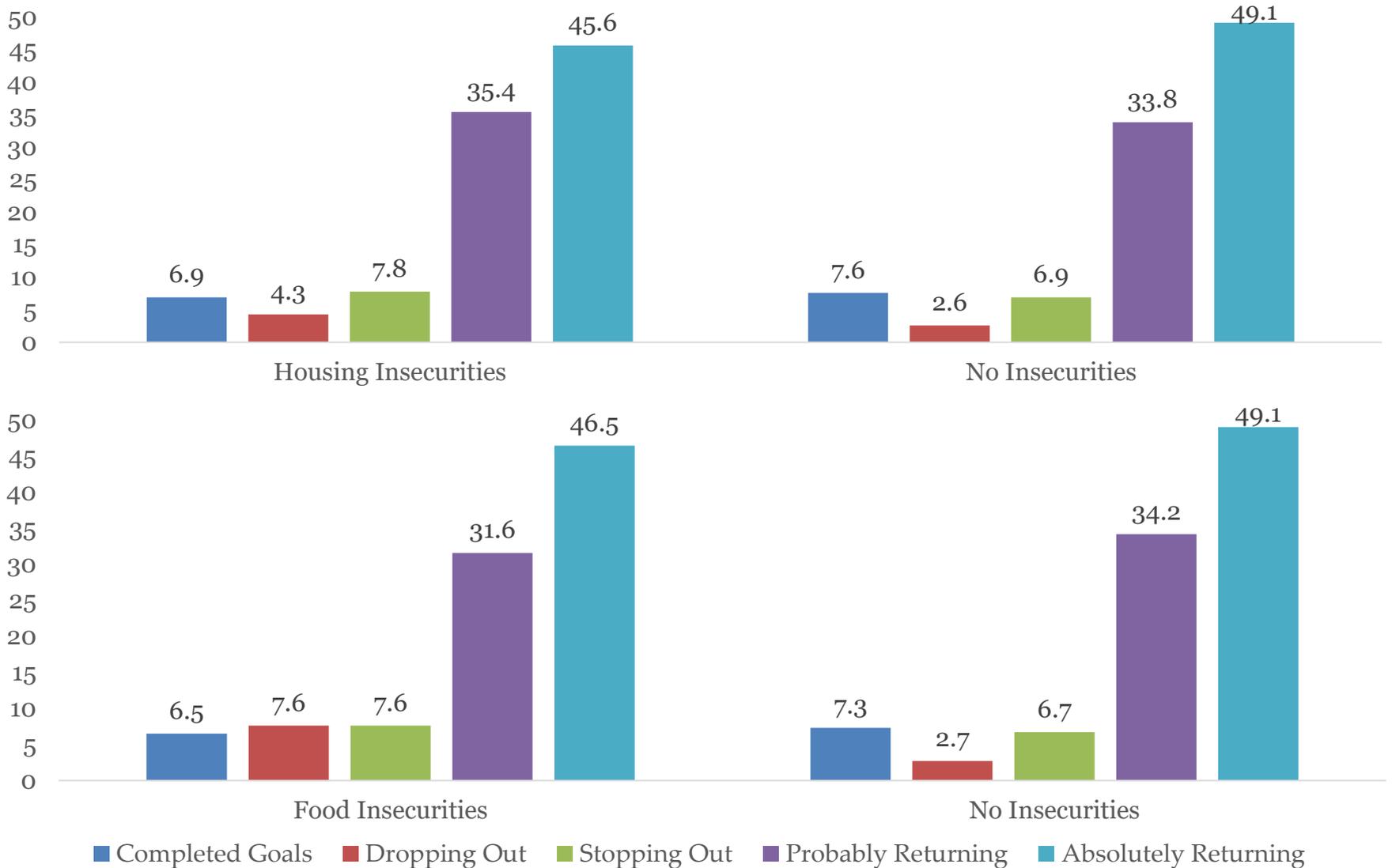
In contrast, analyses comparing students who were exposed to housing insecurity did not reveal any meaningful difference between those students who did and did not experience this type of insecurity.

This study also examined anticipated persistence among students. Anticipated persistence refers to a student's intent to continue in college. There were no meaningful differences between students experiencing housing insecurity and those that did not. However, among students with food insecurity, 7.6% indicated plans to drop out of college. In comparison, only 2.7% of students without food insecurity did so.



# A COMPARISON OF INDICATORS

Comparison of anticipated persistence between students with insecurities vs. no insecurities



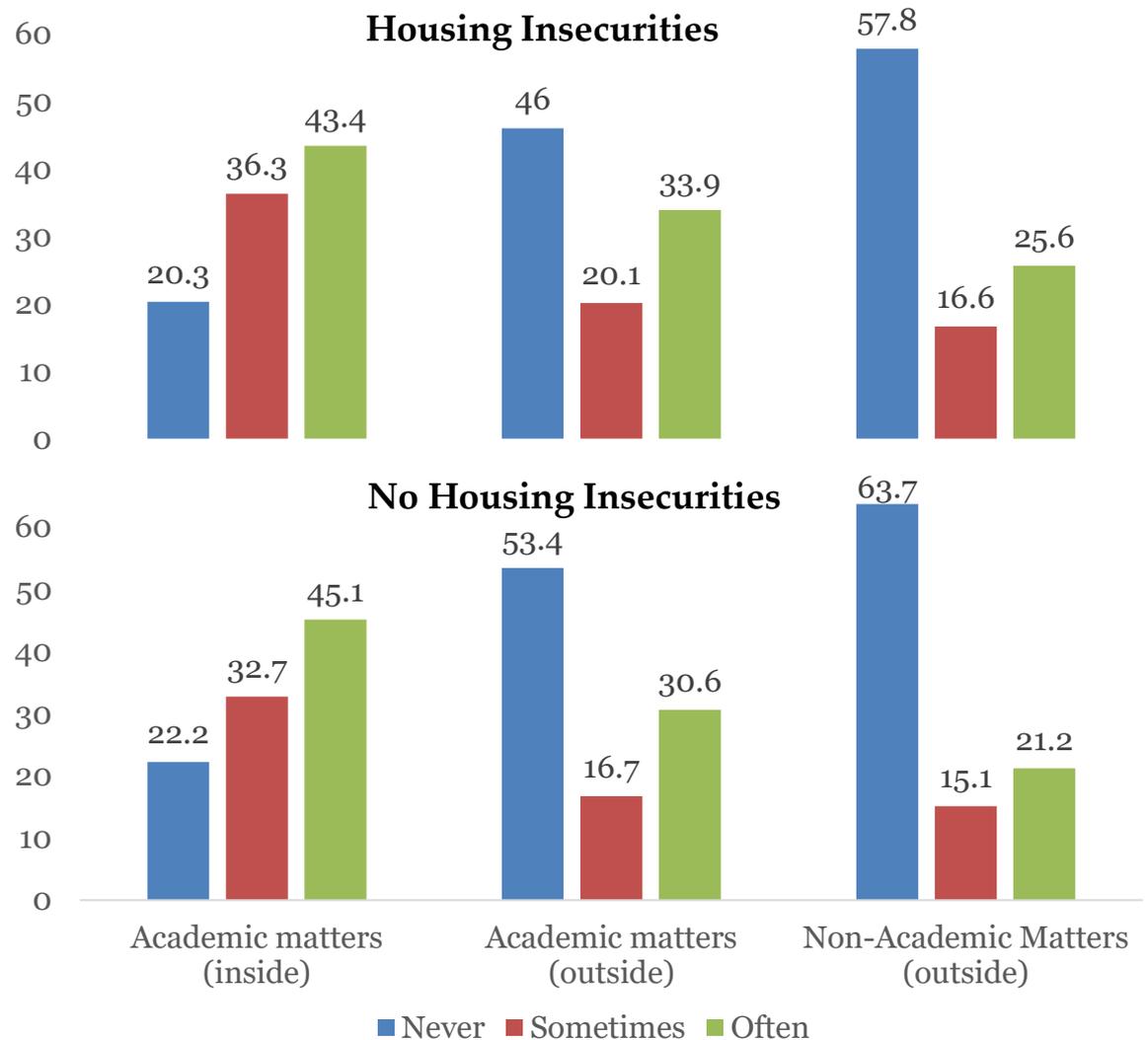
# A COMPARISON OF INDICATORS

## Comparison of faculty-student interactions by students with insecurities and no insecurities

Interestingly, this study found that students with housing insecurity had more frequent interactions with faculty members than those who did not. In particular, they accounted for a higher percentage of students, by 7.4%, who indicated that they interacted with faculty members outside of class on academic matters “sometimes” or “often.” Similarly, a higher percentage, at 5.9%, indicated that they interacted with faculty about non-academic matters outside of class “sometimes” or “often.”

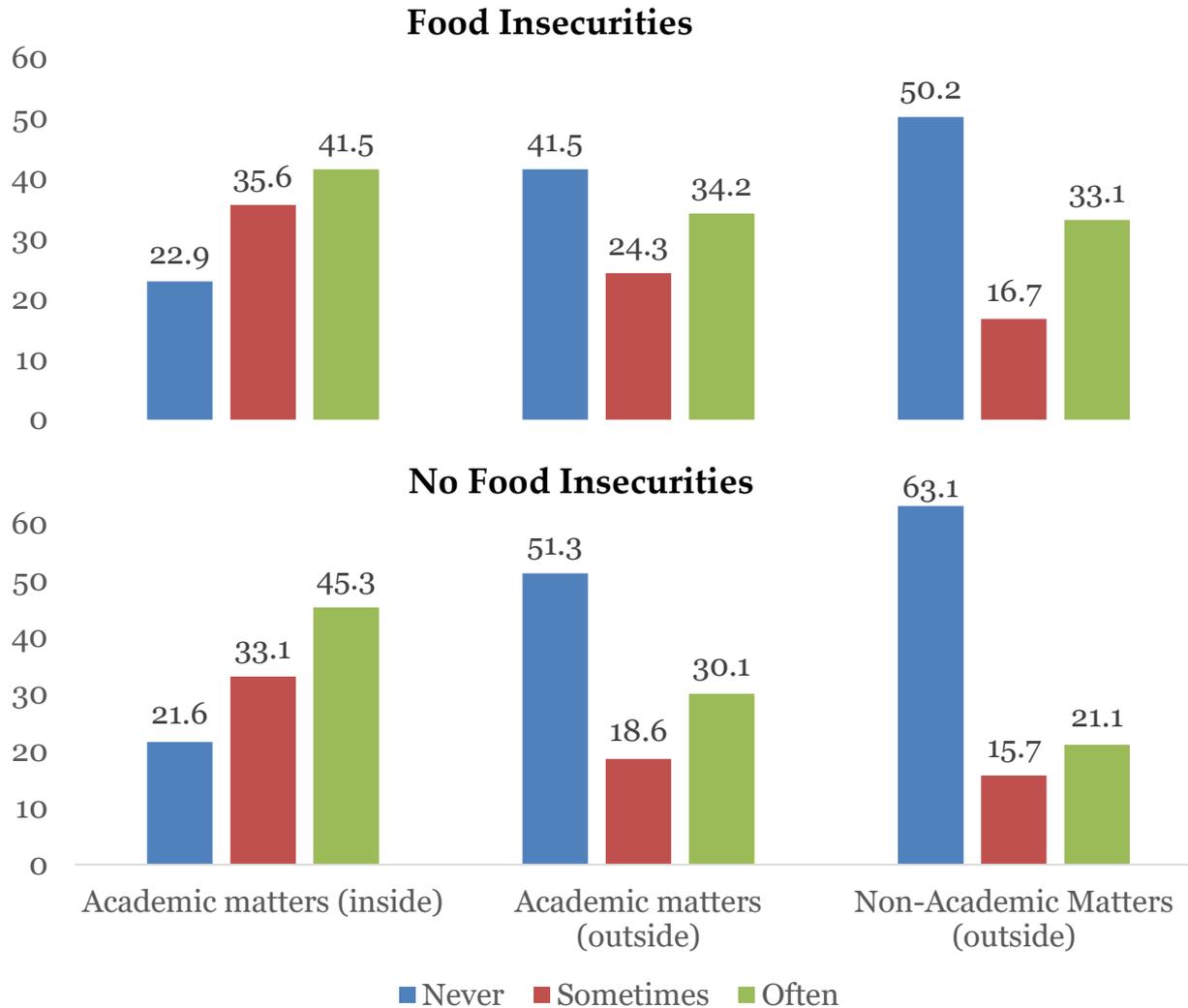
Similar findings were identified among food-insecure students. For instance, a higher percentage of these students, at 9.8%, indicated interacting with faculty on academic matters outside of class either “sometimes” or “often.” Moreover, an even higher percentage, at 12.9%, also indicated that they interacted “sometimes” or “often” with faculty on non-academic matters outside of class.

These findings around engagement are critical to understanding success for these populations. Specifically, research on student success has shown that out of class interactions have an intensified benefit on student success, particularly for students who have been underserved in education (Wood et al., 2015).



# A COMPARISON OF INDICATORS

Comparison of faculty-student interactions by students with insecurities and no insecurities



*Interestingly, the study found that students with food and housing insecurities had more frequent interactions with faculty members than those who did not. This finding is critical as research on student success has shown that interactions, particularly those that occur out of class, have an intensified benefit on student success.*

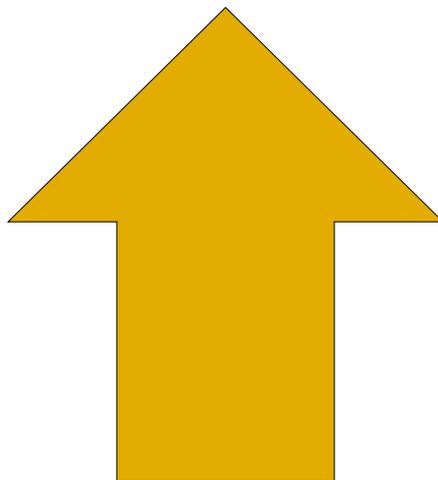
# A COMPARISON OF INDICATORS

## Significant differences between students with housing insecurity in comparison to students without housing insecurity across CCSM scales

Our final set of analyses examined the extent to which students with food and housing insecurities differed from their peers. These results are essential as they illuminate assets that can be leveraged as well as areas in need of enhanced attention.

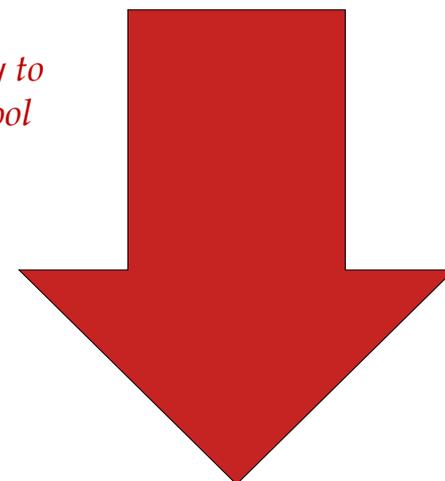
Students with housing insecurity were more likely to receive validating messages from faculty and staff that affirmed their abilities, successes, and place in college. They were also more likely to use key student services on campus, such as advising, tutoring, the library, and career center.

In comparing the general student population, the only areas of significant challenge facing students on the CCSM measures were specific to men in the sample. Specifically, our analyses indicated that men with housing insecurity were less likely to seek out help when they needed it. This includes a willingness to ask for help, accept help that is offered, and follow through with that help. Moreover, they were also less likely to perceive school as a domain that is equally suited for men and women. Stated differently, they were more likely to see school as a domain for women, not men.



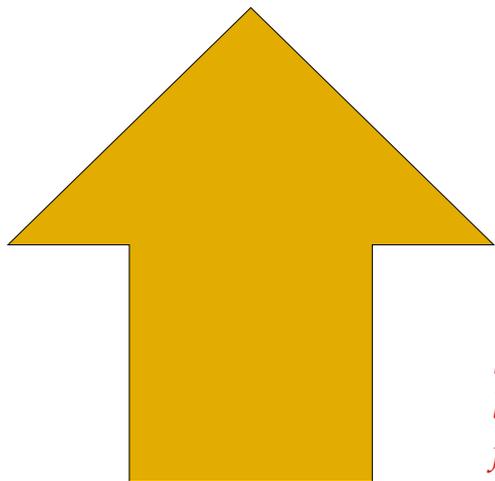
*Students with housing insecurity are more likely to receive validation from faculty and staff and to use key student services.*

*Men with housing insecurity are less likely to engage in help-seeking and to perceive school as a domain that is suited for men.*



## A COMPARISON OF INDICATORS

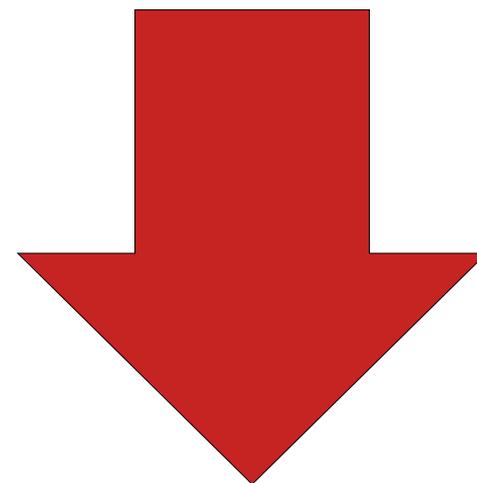
Significant differences between students with food insecurity in comparison to students without food insecurity across CCSM scales



*Students with food insecurity are more likely to receive validation from staff and to use key student services*

*Students with food insecurity are significantly less likely to perceive a sense of belonging from faculty, feel welcome to engage inside and outside of the classroom, to report having access to student services, and to see campus services as being effective in helping them address their needs.*

*Students with food insecurity are significantly less likely to feel confident in their academic abilities, to perceive college as being worthwhile, to feel a sense of control in their academics, to be focused in school, and to be authentically interested in class.*



*Men with housing insecurity are less likely to engage in help-seeking and to perceive school as a domain that is suited for men.*

# A COMPARISON OF INDICATORS

Our analyses indicated that the most stark differences were evident among students who faced food insecurities in comparison to those that did not.

Fortunately, students with food insecurity were more likely to report that they received validation from staff on campus. They were also significantly more likely to report that they used key student services.

However, there were numerous differences between students exposed to food insecurity and their peers who did not have this challenge that provide a clarion call for action around this issue.

Students with food insecurity were significantly less likely to perceive a sense of belonging from faculty. This means that they were less likely to perceive that faculty members valued them, their presence in class, or believed that they belonged in college. They were also less likely to perceive that faculty members wanted or welcomed their engagement in the classroom and outside of the classroom. This finding is interesting given that they were more likely to report engagement out of the classroom with faculty. However, engagement itself does not necessarily mean that the interactions are perceived by students as welcoming.

Beyond these findings, the results revealed that food-insecure students were less likely to report having access to campus services. This suggests that they perceived that campus services were not open at times, located in places, or available to help resolve issues they faced. They were also less likely to perceive that campus services were effective in helping them to address the barriers that they encountered.

The research study also examined non-cognitive outcomes that have been identified as being critical to student success, including self-efficacy, degree utility, locus of control, action control, and intrinsic interest. Students experiencing food insecurity scored lower on all these key domains in comparison to students without food insecurities. More simply, students with food insecurity were also significantly less likely to feel confident in their academic abilities, perceive college as being worthwhile, to feel a sense of control in their academics, to be focused in school, and to be authentically interested in class.

Finally, the results illuminated challenges that were specific to men who experienced food insecurity. As with men who faced housing insecurity, men with

food insecurity were less likely to engage in help-seeking. They were also less likely to perceive school as a domain that was suited for men.

Overall, findings from these analyses demonstrate that, while food and housing insecurities remain critical areas of focus, food insecurity issues may be more damaging to students' personal well-being and success.

*Students with food insecurity were significantly less likely to perceive a sense of belonging from faculty. This means that they were less likely to perceive that faculty members valued them, their presence in class, or believed that they belonged in college.*

## SECTION 4 – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

There are many strategies that colleges leaders can undertake to improve the lives and conditions of students who experience food and housing insecurities. Specifically, college leaders can address challenges associated with insecurities by creating awareness of the prevalence of insecurities, reducing school costs, having an organized strategy, engaging in direct interventions, and re-envisioning the role and focus of financial aid.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Informed by extant research and our own work in this area, we recently facilitated a session on promising practices for serving students with food and housing insecurities at the Community College League of California (CCLC). Derived from these conversations and research, we offer some strategies for supporting the success of students experiencing food and housing insecurities. College leaders can address challenges associated with insecurities by creating awareness of the prevalence of insecurities, reducing school costs, having an organized strategy, engaging in direct interventions, and re-envisioning the role and focus of financial aid.

## **Raising Awareness**

There are many strategies that colleges can implement to reduce insecurities; however, they cannot address what they don't know. There is a need to understand the prevalence of insecurities and to know which communities are more likely to be exposed to these challenges. Leaders must collect data on campus to better understand *who* is experiencing food and housing insecurities and the influence of these challenges on academic performance. And, this information must be disaggregated to capture differences across racial and gender groups.

Moreover, this data must be made available to the board of trustees, leadership cabinet, and all educators who work and interact with students. In an optimal circumstance, students would be provided with opportunities to help create awareness by sharing their experiences. Raising awareness is particularly important as many educators, particularly faculty, do not live in the communities in which they teach and thus may not realize the barriers students face. Bearing this in mind, some campuses have created reality tours where campus educators take tours to learn about the lives and living conditions of students, especially for educators who do not live in the community. Awareness can also be fostered through intrusive practices that enable faculty and staff to better engage and learn about students. Having faculty employ intrusive practices (e.g., mandatory conferencing with students, performance monitoring) is essential for student success and for structuring interactions to better learn about challenges facing students.

## **Reducing Costs**

College leaders must also work to reduce the high costs of attending college. Tuition and fees are skyrocketing across the nation in spite the proliferation of

initiatives to reduce the cost of postsecondary education. Reducing costs allows students to redirect the monies that they have toward food and housing. Strategies for reducing costs include employing open education resources (e.g., textbooks, videos, software) that are free and readily accessible for learning, contracting with shuttle services and transportation agencies to reduce the cost of commuting to and from campus, and making vouchers available for campus eateries and bookstores. Colleges can even consider how to leverage existing campus facilities (e.g., gym, lockers) for students to shower and store belongings.

## **Having an Organized Strategy**

Ultimately, in order for a campus to improve the lives and conditions of students experiencing food and housing insecurities, it must have a comprehensive plan to address student needs. All campuses have local governing boards that are responsible for institutional and/or district policy. To demonstrate support for efforts to address food and housing insecurity, boards should release policy statements that codify district/campus response to food and housing challenges. This policy should involve the regular collection and presentation of data. Moreover, boards should require on-going reporting on

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

campus goals, objectives, interventions, and intervention effectiveness for combating food and housing insecurities. In addition, this policy should direct campus leaders to development a comprehensive plan (in partnership with community organizations) to address food and housing insecurities in the local community and on-campus. Colleges can support these efforts by strategically using campus space to support meetings and convenings around these issues.

## **Implementing Campus Interventions**

Beyond raising awareness and reducing costs, there is also a need for direct interventions to support students experiencing insecurities. Colleges should provide opportunities for students to participate in the leadership of efforts focused on curbing food and housing insecurities on campus. Colleges can establish campus food pantries to better provide food to students who are in need. To reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking, campuses should institute a policy that students can take food for themselves or someone they believe is in need. This practice will enable students to receive support without self-identifying their own need for assistance; this is an important practice for ensuring that men use available services.

Colleges should have readily accessible baskets full of snacks (e.g., raisins, apples) conveniently located in student services locations across campus. Some colleges are even using technology to fight hunger by creating mobile applications that notify students when campus events take place that have food available or when events have leftover food. However, the college cannot go it alone. Colleges must partner with community organizations (e.g., faith-based, business, county/city, non-profit) that provide resources (i.e., safe and affordable housing options) to individuals experiencing challenges meeting basic needs. It can even provide space on campus for these organizations to better streamline aid and directly connect students in need to available resources and services. As part of this effort, colleges can implement one-stop-shop models for matriculation that can easily transition students through the enrollment process and to partner community organizations that provide holistic support.

## **Re-envisioning Financial Aid**

Campuses should also consider how financial aid policies could be revised to remove barriers facing students in need of support. Students who experience food and housing insecurities could be more

likely to have special circumstances (e.g., selective service registration, incarceration, incomplete parent information) that inhibits their ability to receive financial aid. As a result, colleges must streamline information and processes to improve access to institutional, state, and federal financial aid resources for students with special circumstances. Moreover, colleges should also make emergency funding available to students who experience food and housing insecurities that can be quickly dispersed to students in need. In addition to financial aid policies, there are also important considerations for financial counseling and literacy. Colleges should operate financial aid using a financial counseling model that learns about students' needs and connects them with community resources to address their needs. As part of this model, colleges should also engage students in on-going, mandatory financial literacy training to help them budget, complete FAFSA, and how to save money.

*To reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking, campuses should allow students to take food for themselves or someone they believe is in need.*

# THREE COLLEGES MAKING STRIDES

## San Diego Mesa College

The Mesa College Associated Student Government has a Homeless Outreach Student Transition (HOST) Program. Each semester HOST sponsors a food/hygiene drive. Collected supplies are made available to students in need (they can simply take what they need, no questions asked, from a designated area in the ASG Office throughout the year). Last year, HOST held a Thanksgiving Dinner for more than 60 students, family, and Mesa College community members who had no place to go for the holidays.

In order to address the increasing apprehension over food insecurity on campus, San Diego Mesa College has The Stand, a food pantry and professional clothing closet. The food pantry is being supplied through monthly food drives and campus competitions as well as community donations. In addition to providing immediate food relief, the food pantry provides information

on CAL Fresh, 211 San Diego, and community food pantry resources for students. The Student Success & Equity (SS&E) Department will provide oversight of the food pantry.

In addition, the San Diego Mesa College Office of SS&E is committed to providing direct support to students. Based on referrals from the campus community, the department assists students with a variety of resources, including the purchase of books, supplies, food, and copying/printing. To date, the department has received 172 applications for services and has provided nearly 100 backpacks filled with supplies, over \$10,000 in support for books, over \$3000 in café cards, and \$1200 in copy/print cards.

*San Diego, California*

# THREE COLLEGES MAKING STRIDES

## Napa Valley College

Napa Valley College operates emergency food services through the office of Student Life/ASNVC for students who can't afford meals during lunchtime. Over 230 students have used the pantry service on campus, with nearly an even distribution of men and women and a large percentage of students of color. The program has grown quickly, given the food and housing needs of Napa students. Students who regularly use the service (at least twice) are connected to SparkPoint, a non-profit organization that provides crisis services for housing and food. The organization also assists users in determining eligibility for food stamps and health coverage. The college is partnering with the CCEAL to collect information on food and housing insecurities among students to help scale programs and resources to meet the needs of the community.

*St. Helena, California*

## Cañada College

Cañada College partners with SparkPoint and the Second Harvest Food Bank to provide a Food Pantry on the Cañada College campus for students and community members in need of food. Cañada College also offers an Academic and Transitional Resource List. The college offers specialized resources and services based on targeted student populations and based on where the student is in their college journey. The programs are stratified into *start strong*, *stay strong*, and *finish strong*; based on a student's class level from incoming to outgoing students. The college also has programs that target specific student populations with housing, food access, and financial resources, such as the Bridge to Opportunities (BTO) Peer Mentor Program, The Colts Academy 1 for new incoming students, and retention support services for basic skills students.

*Redwood City, California*

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## OUR LAB

The **Community College Equity Assessment Laboratory (CCEAL)** is a national research and practice lab that partners with community colleges to support their capacity in advancing outcomes for students who have been historically underserved in education, particularly students of color. CCEAL houses the **Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3)**.



THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE EQUITY ASSESSMENT LAB

CCEAL was developed to advance three objectives: **Research**, to conduct and disseminate empirical research on the experiences of historically underserved students in community colleges; **Training**, to provide training that improves practices and research relevant to students of color in community colleges; and **Assessment**, to use assessment and evaluation to facilitate capacity-building within community colleges.



THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE EQUITY ASSESSMENT LAB