FOOTHILL COLLEGE
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH & PLANNING

DATE: August 29, 2018

TO: Sean Bogle, Dean, Student Affairs & Activities

FROM: Elaine Kuo, College Researcher
Ben Kaliczak, Research Assistant

RE: Food, Housing and Transportation Security Survey, Spring 2018

Overview

The Food, Housing and Transportation Security survey was developed to assess the basic needs levels of Foothill College students during the spring term. Students were invited to participate in an online survey that was accessible for a month. They were asked to indicate whether they experienced any food, housing, or transportation insecurity during the past 12 months. All enrolled students could participate (11,799), and 781 surveys were completed, resulting in a 7% response rate.

Highlights

- Less than half the students indicate they experienced higher levels of insecurity in housing (323 or 41%), transportation (311 or 40%), or food (299 or 38%).
- Homelessness is reported by 11% of survey respondents or 84 students.
- More Foothill students are likely to indicate they *doubled up or shared a room* and *moved in with other people due to financial problems* at a higher rate compared to the national rate (+9 and +2 percentage points).
- Almost one-fourth of survey respondents (23%) indicate they *spend two or more hours per day community to and from Foothill*, while close to one-fifth (19%) note they *missed class because of an issue with public transportation*.
- Compared to national and regional rates, Foothill students are less likely to indicate basic needs insecurity. As such, housing insecurity is reported at a rate that is 10-percentage points lower (41% vs. 51%) and food insecurity is reported at a rate that is 18-percentage points lower (38% vs. 56%) compared to national rates.
- Open-ended responses indicate students believed there could be better campus advertising regarding basic needs resources (including shelters, food banks, ECO Pass).

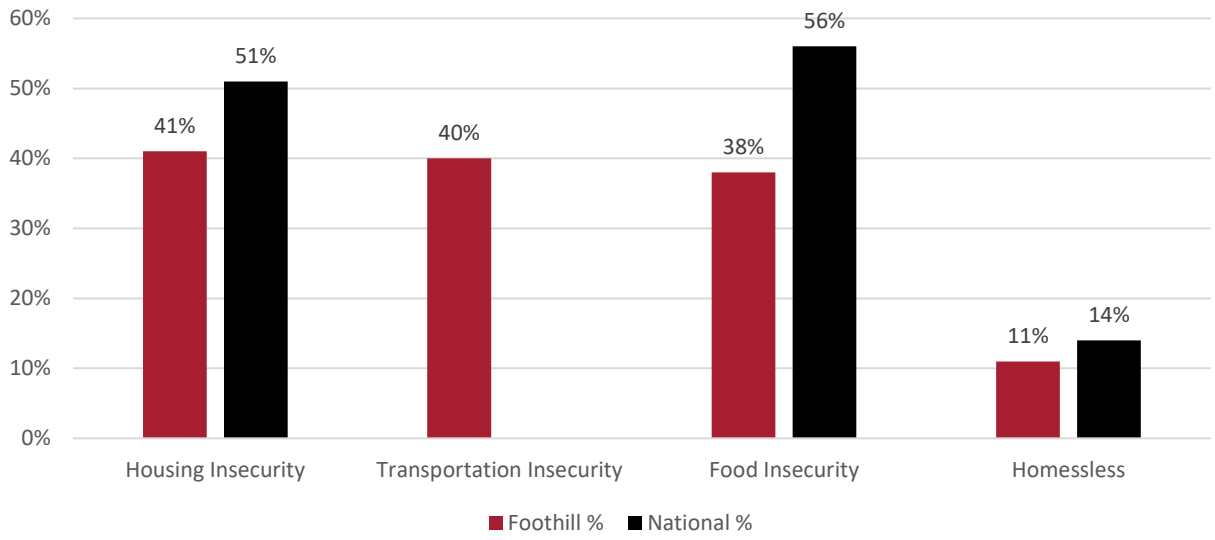
Demographics[1]

- Over two-thirds of survey respondents indicate the majority of the courses they enrolled in were held at a physical location (main campus, Sunnyvale Center, off-campus) (72%), while 28% reported taking their courses primarily online.
- Half of the students were between the ages of 18 to 25, and these students were more likely to indicate basic needs insecurities compared to other age groups.
- While two-thirds of student respondents were White (37%) or Asian (29%), Latinx and African Americans were more likely to indicate higher rates of basic needs insecurity compared to all other population groups.
- Pell grant recipients and those with disabilities were more likely to indicate a higher rate of basic needs insecurities compared to their peers (approximately 10-percentage points difference).

Foothill vs. National Comparisons

The following chart shows the response rate among Foothill students compared to the national administration results. As noted earlier, Foothill response rates across all the basic needs insecurity measures are lower compared to the national rate. Note that the homeless rate at 11% is only 3-percentage points lower compared the national reporting (14%). There is no comparison data available for transportation insecurity as these questions are not included in the national survey instrument.

Chart 1. Basic Needs Insecurities Rates, Foothill College vs. National.



[1] Detailed data regarding respondents' demographics can be found in the Appendix.

Student Suggestions[2]

Student experiences documented through open-ended questions include feedback and tips for other students who might be struggling with basic needs insecurity. Below are comments from six students:

- *You are not alone, others struggle as well. Finding others who share the same issues might offer some support or even motivation.*
- *Call 211. They will provide referrals to resources such as food banks and shelter. Also, discuss your issues with friends and family members who might be able to help.*
- *Don't let pride stand between you and taking care of your basic needs. Ask for help if you truly need it.*
- *Foothill has a food pantry on campus, but not a lot of people know about it. For housing, it's very helpful to try and get in touch with other students who are in a similar situation and room with them. Foothill gives a clipper card that helps students get around.*
- *More information about help, I have noticed that info about food and transportation help is not spoken enam* [sic] *about.*
- *Transporting from home to Foothill every day is very expensive! It would be nice if* [we] *received discounts with Uber for being students or something that would just help us spend less*

Food Insecurity

Food security among survey respondents was measured using the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Six-Item Short Form of the Food Security Survey Module[3]. The food security scale was adjusted to use in a self-administered survey format. Responses to each item on the food security scare are scored based on the number of affirmative responses. The score for each respondent determined their food security status.

- High / Marginal Food Security: 0-1 affirmative responses
- Low Food Security**:** 2-4 affirmative responses
- Very Low Food Security: 5 affirmative responses

The top three food insecurity experiences reported were *The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more (32%)*, *Cutting the size of meals or skipping meals because there wasn't enough money for food* (33%), and *I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals (40%)*. Half of the survey respondents (390) reported experiencing at least one of the six circumstances described in the survey.

[2] Themes based on student's open-ended responses can be found in the Appendix. Full responses can be requested from FH IRP

[3] (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2012): https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8282/short2012.pdf

	Foothill #	Foothill %	National %	Difference %
Any of the below items:	390	50%	-	-
The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more	253	32%	52%	-20%
I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals	314	40%	60%	-20%
Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?	256	33%	46%	-13%
Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?	225	29%	43%	-14%
Were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?	167	21%	36%	-15%

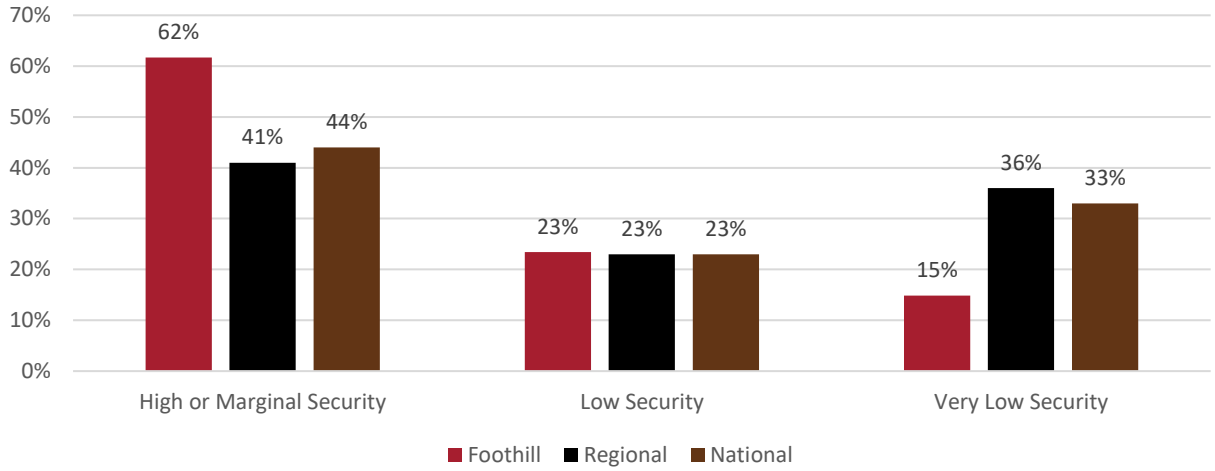
Student voices captured through the open-ended questions reflected concerns with struggling with food security. Five students commented:

- *In this country it is very expensive to eat healthy.*
- *I think the school should offer reduced cost lunches or free lunches at school for the students in poverty. Something similar to what they did in grade school.*
- *Need more cheaper healthier snacks. Cannot live on cup noodles all the time.*
- *I used to qualify for free lunch and breakfast at school. This comprised most of my calories for those years… Access to healthy food is a big deal to poor students, and Foothill has healthy food.*
- *Maybe offer a reduced meal price for those who quality.*

Chart 2 show student respondents' food security status compared to the regional and national rates retrieved from the Wisconsin Hope Lab study of food security among college students[4]. Foothill students report a higher rate of high/marginal food security compared to their regional and national peers (almost 20-percentage points higher).

[4] (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, & Hemandez, 2017): http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf

Chart 2. Comparison of Food Security Levels, Foothill College vs. Regional vs. National.



Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

Housing insecurity is defined by a set of broad housing issues including: frequent moves, crowded living space, poor housing quality, or the inability to afford rent or bills. Homelessness describes the absence of a place to live, which includes those who live in shelters, vehicles, or abandoned structures[5]. Students' experiences with housing insecurity were measured by five survey items, with the addition of a locally added question. An affirmative response to any one of these items indicated evidence for housing insecurity or homelessness.

The top three housing insecurity experiences students reported were that they had to *double up or share a room* (26%), *move in with other people due to financial problems* (20%), and *didn't pay the full amount in utilities* (15%). Among the national survey respondents, *didn't pay the full amount of utilities* (28%), *didn't pay the full amount of rent or mortgage* (21%), and *moved in with other people due to financial concerns* (18%) represented the highest response rates.

	Foothill #	Foothill %	National %	Difference %
Any of the below items:	323	41%	51%	-10%
Didn't pay the full amount of rent or mortgage	93	12%	21%	-9%
Didn't pay the full amount of utilities	119	15%	28%	-13%
Moved two or more times in the year	74	9%	14%	-5%
Doubled up or shared a room	205	26%	17%	+9%
Moved in with other people due to financial problems	156	20%	18%	+2%
Were unable to attend class at Foothill due to housing issues	48	6%	-	-

[5] (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, & Hemandez, 2017): http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf

Student experiences documented through open-ended questions reflect concerns with struggling with housing issues. Four students commented:

- *I just feel for international students finding suitable and affordable housing is tough. Like we don't know kinda [sic] where to look for housing and stuff or where to find roommates who would like to share.*
- *In Bay Area, the rentals are too expensive and unaffordable for these students to live close nearby Foothill College.*
- *Foothill should probably make a college housing near Foothill that are way more affordable because rent prices in Silicon Valley area is very expensive.*
- *Housing is obscenely priced here, so I don't know how you can help with that, but something desperately needs to be done.*

The two homelessness survey items that had the highest response rates are: *did not know where they were going to sleep, even for one night* (9%) and that they *didn't have a home* (5%). Top homelessness issues among the national sample include: *did not know where you were going to sleep, even for one night* (8%), and *was thrown out of your home* (6%).

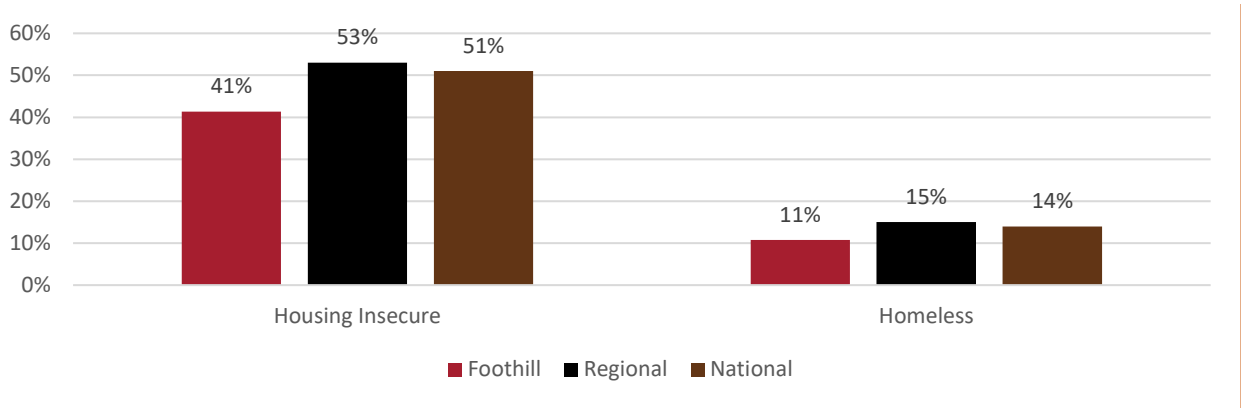
	Foothill #	Foothill %	National %	Difference %
Any of the Below Items:	84	11%	14%	-3%
Was thrown out of your home	33	4%	6%	-2%
Was evicted from your home	19	2%	3%	-1%
Stayed in a shelter	13	2%	2%	0%
Stayed in a vehicle, abandoned building, or other place not meant as housing	34	4%	4%	0%
Did not know where you were going to sleep, even for one night	67	9%	8%	+1%
Didn't have a home	42	5%	2%	+3%

Through open-ended questions homelessness experiences are documented. Four students detailed their struggles and offered advice to the college:

- *The housing crisis is effecting many people's education. I have lived in my car or crashed people's floors.*
- *I have been homeless some months, living out of my car or couch surfing.*
- *There is a lack of awareness on campus about homelessness, etc. I think it would be beneficial for Foothill to better advertise the services that are offered and make it known that homelessness is an immediate problem for students on our campus.*
- *You should give any student access to the gyms or locker rooms so they can be healthy and take a shower if they don't otherwise have access to one.*

Chart 3 shows student respondents' housing security and homelessness status compared to regional and national rates identified in a Wisconsin Hope Lab study of housing security and homelessness among college students.

Chart 3. Comparison of Home Insecurity Levels, Foothill College vs. Regional vs. National.



Transportation Insecurity

Transportation insecurity is defined by a set of broad transportation issues including unreliable access to public or private transportation; accessible methods of transportation being unaffordable; having an extended commute; and transportation access being limited by weather or personal health. In this survey, transportation insecurity was measured with five survey items; an affirmative response to any one of the items indicates evidence for transportation insecurity.

The top three transportation insecurity experiences reported are students having to *spend two or more hours per day commuting to and from Foothill* (23%), *miss class because of an issue with public transportation (e.g. running late, missed a connection)* (19%), and *having to decide between using money for gas or public transportation to get to work versus to class* (16%).

	Respondents #	Respondents %
Any of the below items:	311	40%
Unable to pay for gas or public transportation to get to class	111	14%
Had to decide between using money for gas or public transportation to get to work versus to class	125	16%
Missed class because you had to share a car or could not get a ride	113	14%
Missed class because of an issue with public transportation (e.g. running late, missed a connection)	151	19%
Unable to walk or bike due to weather or sickness and did not have another form of transportation available	63	8%
Spend two or more hours per day commuting to and from Foothill	178	23%

Student experiences with their transportation struggles are documented through open-ended questions. Four students commented:

- *If I didn't have a car, I would have to take 2 buses to get to campus and with few connection times it would take so long to get to campus. I would prefer to take public transportation over driving, but it is just too inconvenient.*
- *Biking to Foothill is scary sometimes because there is not a bike lane. Having a bike lane would help my transportation to Foothill because I am trying to save money by not owning a car or taking Uber or Lyft.*
- *If Foothill College can provide a shuttle with stops at San Jose, De Anza College and etc., it will help many students who have to take public transportation and also transfer several buses so spend too much time on the commuting.*
- *I have no access to school on Sundays since there's no bus running.*

Methodology

This basic needs survey is informed by the instrument developed at the Wisconsin HOPE Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and was augmented to measure transportation security. This additional set of questions were added to reflect the challenges related to transportation, including access, costs and time involved with commuting. Wisconsin HOPE Lab survey was identified as a resource because it was specifically developed to assess food and housing security among community college students. The instrument collected more than 33,000 student responses from 70 community colleges from 24 states. The resulting report included regional and national rates based on the data collected, and were used to provide comparisons to the basic needs security levels of Foothill students. Note that the regional rates references results from the West census region (Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana and Idaho). As the transportation-related questions were developed locally, there are no comparable rates to the Wisconsin HOPE Lab instrument. Foothill's survey also included open-ended questions and those responses are reported in this report.

Foothill's survey was created using Remark survey software and administered online by sending an email invite with an embedded link. All students enrolled in the regular spring term (not second spring) were invited to participate. The instrument asked students to reflect on specific experiences over the past 12 months. Two open-ended questions were included that asked students for tips to share with others experiencing basic needs insecurity or suggestions regarding campus services to support those needs. Survey administration occurred from May 23, 2018 to June 13, 2018.

Source

FH IRP [FoodandHousingSecurity – FH.rwsx]

HOPE Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison [Hungry and Homeless in College, March 2017]

Appendix

Table 1. Comparison of Ethnicity Demographics, Survey Respondents vs Foothill College.

	Respondents #	Respondents %	Foothill %	Difference %
African American	18	2%	5%	-3%
Asian	229	29%	33%	-4%
Filipinx	33	4%	6%	-2%
Latinx	140	18%	24%	-6%
Native American	4	1%	0%	+1%
Pacific Islander	10	1%	1%	0%
White	287	37%	29%	+8%
Decline to State	60	8%	2%	+6%
Total	781	100%	100%	0%

Table 2. Comparison of Gender Demographics, Survey Respondents vs Foothill College.

	Respondents #	Respondents %	Foothill %	Difference %
Woman	488	62%	54%	8%
Man	272	35%	46%	-11%
Genderqueer / Nonconforming	7	1%	-	-
Non-binary	5	1%	-	-
Transgender	4	1%	-	-
Not Listed	2	0%	-	-
No Response	3	0%	1%	-1%
Total	781	100%	100%	0%

Table 3. Comparison of Age Demographics, Survey Respondents vs Foothill College.

	Respondents #	Respondents %	Foothill %	Difference %
Under 18	35	4%	1%	+3%
18 - 20	215	28%	28%	0%
21 - 25	180	23%	40%	-17%
26 - 30	107	14%	15%	-1%
31 - 35	63	8%	6%	+2%
36 - 40	39	5%	3%	+2%
Over 40	139	18%	6%	+12%
No Response	3	0%	-	-
Total	781	100%	100%	0%

Table 4. Comparison of Other Demographic groups, Survey Respondents vs Foothill College.

	Respondents #	Respondents %	Foothill %	Difference %
Total	781	100%	100%	
Veteran or Active U.S. Military				
Yes	15	2%	2%	0%
No	760	97%	98%	-1%
No Response	6	1%	-	
Pell Grant Recipient				
Yes	116	15%	10%	5%
No	657	84%	90%	-6%
No Response	8	1%	-	
Disability				
Yes	89	11%	5%	6%
No	684	88%	95%	-7%
No Response	8	1%	-	
Ever Placed in Foster Care				
Yes	8	1%	1%	0%
No	768	98%	99%	-1%
No Response	5	1%	-	

Table 5. Student Feedback by Theme

	Count	Percent
Total Additional Comments	168	100%
Comments on Daily Struggles / Misc.	91	54%
The need for better advertised resources within and around campus on shelters / food banks / and ECO Pass	27	16%
Struggling with all expenses (Cost of living, food, books, bills, housing, and gas)	20	12%
Not Struggling with basic needs / Financially Stable or has parental support	14	8%
Appreciative of the help and resources they received through college (BOG waiver, bike program, free food, disability vehicle, and ECO Pass)	11	7%
Getting loans / maxing credit cards / Getting into debt	4	2%
Need for reasonable employment opportunities for students close to school	3	2%
Free mental health counseling while going through tough times	3	2%
The need for more scholarships or grants / student is not receiving help from parents or makes just enough money to be ineligible for financial aid	2	1%
The need to establish a college resource or program for shared housing / Carpools / Ride Shares / or School Shuttle	2	1%
Working more than one Job	2	1%
The need for shower / general hygiene access	2	1%
Struggling to provide for family dependents / single parent cannot afford basic needs because of childcare costs	1	1%

	Count	Percent
Total Additional Comments	168	100%
Comments on Food	40	24%
Food cost on campus is too expensive/ the need for cheaper and healthier meal options	8	5%
Free food vouchers should be available to students in emergency circumstances, not just for low-income students	6	4%
Food banks not enough/ the need for more grocery/ fresh food assistance for homeless or low income students	5	3%
Classes or programs that teach students how to cook fresh healthy meals with limited resources (make the most of food bank items)	5	3%
There are limited/ no healthy food or vegetarian options on campus/ low quality cafeteria food	4	2%
Struggling with cost of food/ diet consists of cheap junk food or fast food/ very small or infrequent meals/	3	2%
Food bank should carry simple snacks for busy students	3	2%
There should be a campus garden to grow fruits and vegetables for students	3	2%
stealing food to survive	1	1%
The need for cheap/ subsidized meal cards that students can purchase (ex. 10 meal punch or swipe card)	1	1%
Extending food court hours to evenings for night course students	1	1%

	Count	Percent
Total Additional Comments	168	100%
Comments on Housing	8	5%
The need for low income and international student housing options	4	2%
Struggling with cost of housing/ rent, working long hours to pay rent/tuition/and other expenses	2	1%
Living in a shelter/ vehicle/ homeless	2	1%

	Count	Percent
Total Additional Comments	168	100%
Comments on Transportation	29	17%
Struggling with transportation/ long commute/ public transportation/ traffic/ relying on others for commute	14	8%
Public transportation is not reliable	4	2%
The need to improve public transportation (Increased service hours to cover night courses/ express bus on highway 85 from San Jose/ more frequent bus stops/ Uber or Lyft discounted rates or pick up area)	3	2%
More night and online courses (to reduce time spent commuting in traffic)	3	2%
Parking tickets are expensive/ parking ticket forgiveness for first-time offenders	2	1%
Faculty and instructors should be more sensitive and understanding of transportation circumstances leading to a missed class	1	1%
More Bike Infrastructure	1	1%
Improve Parking permit services (credit cards, more flexible, etc.)	1	1%