

Proceedings of the
VOICES OF HUNGER
Convening

January 30, 2018

**Pathways to Access, Retention and
Completion in Higher Education**



Voices of Hunger on Campus

As institutions of higher education, administrators and educators work within the framework of student access, retention, completion and their graduates' success. Food insecurity and hunger has emerged as a major hurdle for students who wish to transform their lives through education.

On Friday, May 5, 2017, Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) hosted representatives from public and private universities and colleges across the state, along with community leaders and partners for the first convening of *Voices of Hunger on Campus*.

Renowned Temple University Education Sociologist Sara Goldrick-Rab, whose book *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream* enlarged our traditional understanding of the cost of education beyond tuition and fees, keynoted the event.

Together, we wove a cogent local, regional and national narrative of student hunger, listening to student voices on hunger and contextualizing their stories through the analysis of collected data. These exercises paved the way for deep interactions surrounding short-term and long-term solutions for hunger on college campuses.

BHCC captured the proceedings of the gathering and compiled the following report for participants and public distribution. The College hopes this annual convening will continue to share practices and research and to monitor progress in advocacy and policy change.

Worcester State University will host the second *Voices of Hunger on Campus: Meaningful Change Together* on Friday, May 11, 2018.

High Impact Practices and Partners

Participants in the convening were asked to address short-term as well as long-term solutions to food insecurity and hunger among students.

Short Term

What are the immediate steps we can take to help hungry students? Who will do this work with you at your college, and in your community?

1. Strengthen Partnerships

Foster relationships with community partners to leverage and share resources. Build personal connections within the community to benefit students—from fellow community colleges and public schools to local food banks and food rescue organizations that collect and distribute food from participating stores and restaurants. Consider creating an Advisory Board comprised of community partners; and observe and adopt others' best practices for food insecurity.

2. Reduce Stigma

Shift the conversation around food insecurity and the way it is talked about (“wellness” vs. “need”). Consider how services and resources are delivered and publicized. Ensure food is provided with dignity; create a welcoming environment; respect anonymity.

3. Enlist Faculty

Educate students and community members about food insecurity. Incorporate the issue into syllabi; create a social justice practicum; employ academic departments to connect hunger and service learning through internships and experiential education.

4. Progress Campus Practices

Create a campus culture that is welcoming to food insecure students. Offer a dedicated student resource center; training for faculty and staff; and a campus task force.

5. Expand Access

Connect students to resources and benefits available—SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) screening and application assistance; grocery store gift cards; free breakfast on campus; meal voucher programs; or a mobile food pantry.

6. Communicate Resources

Improve the way information about food insecurity is distributed and shared. Create a publicly posted statement outlining resources; hold orientation and professional development days to circulate information for students, faculty and staff; create city-specific resource binders; notify students of upcoming food pantries and markets.

7. Invest in Student-Centered Solutions

Listen to students and respond. Take action to connect students to services. Integrate new ways to help students, such as peer mentoring groups, student focus groups and monthly lunches with administrators; work-based community learning opportunities; textbook assistance programs; emergency assistance; and financial literacy coaching.

8. Revisit Institutional Practices

Make changes at the institutional level to reduce food insecurity. Institute food waste reduction practices; commit to positive change; create a taskforce; and recognize the efforts of individuals. Introduce a one-stop model for student services including financial aid, benefits and admissions.

Steps Toward a Policy Solution

Long Term

What steps will you take to inform and affect policy solutions that are long-term and sustainable?

1. Hire a Dedicated Staff Member to Address Food Insecurity

Create a position to support food-insecure students in the immediate, near and long-term.

2. Advocate for Changes in Policies

Develop cross-sectional teams to discuss policies and solutions. Lobby to change policies locally, regionally and nationally, and within your own institutions. At the college or university level, gain the support of executive administration. Ensure that resources are easy for students to access and understand.

With other institutions of higher education, create a presidential working group (community colleges, public and private four-year institutions.) Hold *Voices of Hunger on Campus* forums; encourage student, faculty and staff participation. Leverage local spheres of influence. Educate policy makers at the federal and state level.

3. Increase Student Involvement

Make students equal partners in decision-making; allow students to lead advocacy efforts.

4. Gather and Use Data

Use data to educate decision-makers (commissioners, legislature) on systemized response programs (i.e. food pantries, housing scholarships.) Document and share best practices across Massachusetts public colleges and universities.

Collect and assess data and research using existing and new methodologies; listen to students; keep informed on state and national statistics. Track and identify opportunities for action, advocacy and intervention, and develop new programs based on results. Continue to determine scope and solutions once a full dataset has been collected.

5. Digitize Services to Accommodate Students

Integrate technology into student services and resources (i.e. Skype, live chat) especially during off hours (11 p.m.–7 a.m.)

6. Raise Awareness

Use data and storytelling to build awareness, decrease resistance, reduce stigma and dispel myths about hunger and program abuse. Prioritize the human angle over departmental policies and procedures. Make student hunger and food insecurity data accessible to the public, policy makers, faculty, staff and alumni.

7. Increase Access and Support

Expand economic support systems for students who are ineligible for federal and state benefit programs due to immigration status and loan default. Develop policy solutions that extend free and reduced-price lunch and breakfast programs to low-income students in higher education. Provide students with meal options that are affordable; access to a school nutritionist; and the opportunity to apply for food scholarships. Enroll evening and weekend students at community-based satellite locations.

Educate policy makers on the restrictions students face in qualifying for SNAP. Urge campus dining services to accept SNAP benefits at dining halls and on-campus food vendors.

8. Support Hunger-Adjacent Issues

Provide alternative resources and services for students who do not qualify for federal and state benefits programs. Counsel students on the impact of financial aid on benefits programs.