WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FOOD INSECURE?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as the lack of “consistent, dependable access to enough food for active, healthy living.”¹ In other words, it means going hungry or being at risk of going hungry.

For some, food insecurity is a lifelong struggle, but for most the cause is a temporary financial setback. Every person has needs, which in our society include food, shelter, health care, transportation, and sometimes child care. When an unexpected and costly event happens and money suddenly becomes scarce, individuals may find they have to temporarily forgo one of these needs. Often, that need is food.

Food insecurity is an all-too-common problem for today’s college students. Research by the University of Wisconsin shows that one-third of students at two-year colleges are without adequate nutrition.²

The REAL PROBLEM OF HUNGER

BY THE NUMBERS

food insecurity affects as many as 1 IN 3 undergraduate students²

20 MILLION undergraduates nationwide¹

35 PERCENT attend community college³

HARDSHIPS

Nationally, students experiencing food insecurity often suffer from other hardships, such as housing insecurities.

38% had trouble paying rent²

49% borrowed money from friends²

15% experienced homelessness²

STUDENTS & FOOD

In Fall 2016, NOVA students participated in a survey about their eating habits. Their responses, summarized below, reflect the food-related challenges faced by many NOVA students.⁴

39% “The food that I bought just didn’t last and I didn’t have enough money to get more.”

47% “I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.”

38% “I have cut the size of my meals or skipped meals.”

30% “I have been hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food.”


Estimated cost of $82 per book for four courses.

Cities and counties used in calculation include: Arlington County, Alexandria City, Fairfax City, Fairfax County, Falls Church City, Loudoun County, Manassas City, Manassas Park City, Prince William County.

Food insecure students seek many ways to help fund their education, including employment and financial aid.

**HARDWORKING STUDENTS**

- 56% of students are employed
- 38% of employed students work more than 20 hours a week
- 75% of students receive some form of financial aid
- 52% of students receive a Pell Grant

**MONTHLY CHOICES**

Food insecure students must make choices on how to spend their money, often making the difficult decision between food and school-related expenses.

- $169 average monthly cost of food for a single adult
- $225 monthly public transportation costs
- $183 cost of one credit hour at NOVA
- $328 cost of textbooks for one semester

**HUNGER & EDUCATION**

- 31% of households must choose between paying for education or food
- 59% of food insecure households do not possess a post-secondary education
- 56% of first-generation undergraduate students are food insecure

**FEDERAL POVERTY LINE**

The federal poverty line is set annually to reflect the minimum income needed for food, clothing, transportation, shelter, and other necessities. Federal poverty lines are used to determine the eligibility of an individual or family for certain federal assistance programs.

**ALICE**

Created by the United Way, ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE households are above the federal poverty line, which means they do not always qualify for aid. However, they often struggle to afford basic necessities. The ALICE Household Survival Budget was created to provide a more realistic estimate of the cost of living compared to the federal poverty line.

**ALICE SURVIVAL BUDGET**

**HUNGER & EDUCATION**

- $1,458 Housing
- $2,184 Child Care
- $561 Food
- $416 Transportation

**EDUCATION**

- $550 Taxes
- $219 Miscellaneous
- $199 Health Care

**ALICE Survival Budget**

- $7,314 Monthly Survival Budget
- $2,541 Federal Poverty Line

52% of students receive a Pell Grant.

6,9 of food insecure households do not possess a post-secondary education.

5 of households must choose between paying for education or food.

5 of first-generation undergraduate students are food insecure.

75% of students receive some form of financial aid.

2 of students receive a Pell Grant.

56% of students are employed.

2 of employed students work more than 20 hours a week.

75% of students receive some form of financial aid.

52% of students receive a Pell Grant.
On-campus and community resources are available to NOVA students to help fill the gaps left by federal nutrition programs. Food pantries, shelters, and counseling are available in all Northern Virginia counties, offering services to those in need such as nutritious meals and financial assistance to pay for groceries.

NOVA is helping to combat food insecurity by running one food pantry on each of our six campuses, open to all students to feed themselves and their families. For more information, go to blogs.nvcc.edu/wssn/resources-services/food-pantries.

ON-CAMPUS RESOURCES
NOVA operates a Food Pantry on each of our six campuses. Pantries are operated by volunteers and are open during normal business hours (8:30 A.M.–5:00 P.M.) to provide free food to students who may need it.

GET ASSISTANCE
NOVA's Working Student Success Network (WSSN) helps students apply for food assistance programs to help with buying food at local grocery stores. WSSN can help you check your eligibility and fill out an application. To schedule an appointment, email rpthompson@nvcc.edu.

DONATE
Become a NOVA Food Ambassador and help stock our campus food pantries! Ambassadors are provided with a NOVA Green Bag to fill with nonperishable food items. Set the bag out on designated collection days and we will pick it up and supply you with a new bag. Pick-ups occur six times per year.
To sign up, visit our website at blogs.nvcc.edu/wssn/ and search “Green Bag.”

VOLUNTEER
Those interested in Volunteering can sign up to collect NOVA Green Bags, volunteer at one of our Food Pantries, or organize a Food Drive.
For more information on volunteering, email rpthompson@nvcc.edu.

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