

Understanding the Role of Higher Education in Addressing Students' Basic Needs

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Abstract

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In recent years, attention to the number of students struggling to meet basic needs such as food and housing has grown, and services such as food pantries, emergency grants, and assistance accessing public benefits have become increasingly common on college campuses. However, much is still unknown about why colleges and universities are adopting basic needs services, how colleges and universities are incorporating basic needs services into organizational functioning, and what challenges may make it difficult for colleges and universities to provide basic needs services. The current coverage of basic needs in higher education largely focuses on documenting the prevalence of food and housing insecurity among students and advocating for basic needs services as a strategy to promote student success. To date, little research has been done to explore what it means for higher education to provide basic needs services from an institutional perspective.

To better understand what it means for colleges as institutions to provide basic needs services, the dissertation uses qualitative interviews with individuals from community colleges, public four-year colleges, private four-year colleges, and highly selective private four-year universities to examine the influence of external environmental pressures as well as internal organizational dynamics on the provision of basic needs services. I find that while external pressures and internal dynamics are conveying the message that colleges *should* provide basic needs services, they offer little guidance over *how* to do so. Basic needs services tend to operate on the periphery of organizational functioning, with limited institutional support, and faculty and staff are struggling to define the extent of higher education's responsibility. The study

contributes not only to organizational theory research in higher education, but also to policy research regarding strategies for strengthening the social safety net. It concludes by highlighting remaining unanswered questions about the role of higher education in addressing students' basic needs and offering recommendations for new research into strategies for enhancing the role of cross-sector partnerships in supporting students' basic needs and maximizing the potential of college-based basic needs services.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The extent to which college students are struggling with basic needs such as food, housing, transportation, and child care began emerging as an issue of concern among researchers, higher education practitioners, policymakers, and funders more than a decade ago. Since the late 2000s, numerous studies have highlighted alarming rates of food and housing insecurity among students enrolled in both two- and four-year colleges (Baker-Smith et al., 2020; Chaparro et al., 2009; Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018; Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Klepfer et al., 2019; Lindsley & King, 2014; Mukigi & Brown, 2018; Tsui et al., 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic drew new attention to basic needs insecurity among college students, with a fresh wave of surveys and studies conducted nationally and within individual institutions documenting high rates of basic needs insecurity as well as devastating impacts of the pandemic on students' health, employment, and ability to enroll in college altogether. Additionally, findings from research conducted during the pandemic have underscored racial and ethnic disparities in the experience of basic needs insecurity (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021; Perkins & Savoy, 2021; Townley et al., 2020).

Even before the pandemic, basic needs insecurity had started garnering significant media coverage not only in higher education press such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Field, 2017a; Mangan & Schmalz, 2019) and *Inside Higher Ed* (Reed, 2019), but also in popular press such as the *New York Times* (Harris, 2017; Laterman, 2019), the *Los Angeles Times* (Watanabe, 2018), *Glamour* magazine (Brody, 2016), and *HuffPost* (Piñon, 2019). During the pandemic, the sense of urgency in media coverage of student hunger and homelessness has intensified (Caplan-Bricker, 2020; Crutchfield et al., 2021; Douglas-Gabriel, 2022; Herder, 2021; Mirrer, 2021; Nguyen, 2021; Saul, 2021).

Indications of a growing trend towards institutionalizing basic needs services as a standard part of student services began emerging well before the pandemic (Chaplot et al., 2015; Governor’s Press Office, 2018; Kruger et al., 2016) and have increased significantly since then (Jobs for the Future, n.d.; Kresge Foundation, 2021; Swipe Out Hunger, n.d.b; U.S. Department of Education, 2022). However, despite widespread attention to basic needs insecurity as a mounting crisis in higher education and despite increasing evidence that basic needs services are becoming a standard part of student services, much is still unknown about why colleges are choosing to adopt basic needs services, how services are becoming incorporated into organizational functioning on college campuses, and what challenges colleges face in doing so.

To provide more context about the state of basic needs services in higher education, this chapter first reviews the types of basic needs services being offered on college campuses as well as indications that basic needs services are becoming institutionalized as an expected role for higher education. In relation to the current state of the field, the chapter then lays out the need to understand the provision of basic needs services from an organizational perspective and identifies the specific research questions the study was designed to answer.

1.1 Background and Context

Types of Basic Needs Services in Higher Education

Basic needs services encompass a wide variety of services and student supports, as apparent in several guides that have created typologies of services supporting low-income students (Chaplot et al., 2015; Kruger et al., 2016; Sackett et al., 2016). The *Beyond Financial Aid* institutional self-assessment produced by the Lumina Foundation, for example, identifies twenty-seven ways in which institutions can support low-income students either directly or by partnering with external organizations. Many of the strategies pertain to supports classifiable as

social services, including food banks, low-cost health care, child care, housing, assistance accessing public benefits, and more (Chaplot et al., 2015). While numerous services fall under the umbrella of basic needs services, however, the dramatic growth of campus-based basic needs services over roughly the past 10 - 15 years can be seen most clearly in three areas: food pantries and other services to address food insecurity, emergency grants, and financial counseling / assistance accessing public benefits. In addition, housing, and more recently transportation, have begun emerging as distinct areas of focus.

Food Insecurity. Of all five areas, food pantries and other programs dedicated to alleviating food insecurity are perhaps the most prominent type of services for basic needs on college campuses. One indication of how popular campus food pantries are becoming is the number of institutions belonging to the College and University Food Bank Alliance, a network of colleges offering pantries that provides support, training, and informational resources. Founded in 2012 as a partnership between two universities, Michigan State University and Oregon State University, over the past 10 years the alliance has grown to include over 800 institutions (Carrasco, 2021). Other approaches to addressing food insecurity include various forms of meal plan sharing initiatives. One such example is Swipe Out Hunger, a program started in 2010 by a group of students attending UCLA in which students donate a portion of their meal plan dollars to either provide dining hall credit for students in need or to support campus food pantries. As of February 2022, the organization's website listed 161 college partners (Swipe Out Hunger, n.d.a) According to the organization's most recent impact report, they served 500,000 meals in 2020-2021 and have collectively served 2.5 million meals since their founding (Swipe Out Hunger, 2021). As yet another sign of the growing popularity of services to address food insecurity, CUFBA and Swipe Out Hunger merged in 2021 to collectively expand the reach of each

organization (Carrasco, 2021). The Food Recovery Network is a college-based organization begun in 2011 that currently operates on over 190 campuses in 45 states and Washington D.C. (Food Recovery Network, n.d.) The program eliminates food waste and supports those in need by recovering unused food from campus dining halls. As of five years ago, a small percentage of chapters (approximately 5%) were donating the food back to on-campus food pantries (Seltzer, 2017).

In addition to the colleges participating in these national organizations, many more institutions are providing their own services to address food insecurity independently. For example, Colorado State University has been offering an independent and privately funded meal swipe program since 2015 (Novak & Johnson, 2017). In an effort to understand institutional provision of basic needs services outside of external initiatives, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) conducted a national landscape analysis survey in 2016 and found that among the 439 participating institutions, 55% of public two- and four-year colleges and 28% of private non-profit four-year colleges reported offering a food pantry (Kruger et al., 2016). More recent surveys report even higher percentages. A 2020 survey of student affairs officers conducted by *Inside Higher Ed* and Gallup found that 95% of the 248 participating public colleges (both two- and four- year institutions) and 70% of the 254 private nonprofit institutions offer food donations of some type (Jaschik & Lederman, 2020). Around the same time, 74% (n = 378) of institutions (both public and private) reported offering an on-campus food pantry in a survey conducted by AACRAO and the Hope Center for Community, College, and Justice (2020).

Emergency Aid. Another increasingly popular strategy for addressing students' basic needs is emergency aid. Emergency grants for non-academic needs provide relatively small

amounts of money to cover unexpected expenses such as car repairs or medical bills that might otherwise prevent students from persisting (Great Lakes, 2016; Kruger et al., 2016). One of the earliest examples is the Carroll and Milton Petrie Student Emergency Grant Fund, which was established in 2005 and provides funding for grants at most of the colleges and universities in the City University of New York (CUNY) system as well as several private colleges in New York City (The Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation, n.d.; Ramirez, 2014).

Lumina Foundation also became involved in emergency grants in 2005, launching two programs, the Dreamkeepers Emergency Financial Aid Program and the Angel Fund Program. Dreamkeepers began as a three-year pilot at 11 community colleges while the Angel Fund provided grants to 26 Tribal Colleges and Universities over a period of five years (Geckeler et al., 2008). Scholarship America expanded and has continued to fund the Dreamkeepers program and reported awarding 9,937 students \$18.5 million dollars in 2020 (Scholarship America, 2020).

Ascendium Education Group (formerly known as Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates) began offering its own emergency grant program, Dash Emergency Grant, in 2012 in partnership with the 16 colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System. Ascendium ultimately expanded its emergency grant work to include four separate projects serving 119 two- and four- year colleges. Between 2012 and the conclusion of the emergency grant program in 2019, the foundation made 19,985 awards totaling \$22.6 million dollars (Ascendium, n.d.).

In addition to the growth of foundation support for emergency grant programs, numerous colleges and universities provide their own emergency aid funds. Two-thirds of the institutions responding to NASPA's national landscape analysis survey reported providing emergency loans while approximately half reported providing restricted and unrestricted grants (Kruger et al.,

2016). Emergency aid was also the most common type of basic needs service identified in the AACRAO and the Hope Center for Community, College, and Justice (2020) survey, offered by 75% of responding institutions.

Finally, emergency aid is starting to play a role in national and state policies addressing hunger and homelessness among college students. Emergency aid featured prominently in the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), which was included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, created a student aid program with funds designated for direct distribution to students in the form of emergency grants.

Additionally, in October of 2021 Delaware established an emergency housing assistance fund for undergraduate students attending any college or university in the state. The fund is administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority and received \$90,000 in appropriations for FY 2022 (Delaware House Bill 240, 2021).

Access to Public Benefits and Resources. While food pantries and emergency grants primarily address short-term needs, there is a growing interest in promoting students' long-term financial stability through assistance accessing public benefits as well as financial and legal counseling. The best example of this type of service is the Single Stop Community College Initiative, which started in 2009 as a pilot project at three colleges (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2014). As of 2019, 22 community colleges in 9 states were participating in the initiative¹. In 2020, Single Stop announced that it was expanding its partnerships in two states, North Carolina and

¹ Based on my own calculation from the list of colleges on the Single Stop Community College Initiative website, <http://singlestopusa.org/program/community-colleges/>, as well as announcements on the website about new locations: <http://singlestopusa.org/blog/>. Two colleges have multiple campuses but are counted as single colleges because campus-level data is not available in IPEDS.

Virginia, and developing a new partnership with the state community college system in Colorado to offer Single Stop services at all community colleges in all three states (Single Stop, 2020). With a similar goal of increasing students' likelihood of completing by improving their financial security, the Benefits Access for College Completion initiative provided three years of funding for seven community colleges from 2011 - 2014 to develop services to help students apply for public benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child care and transportation benefits, and Medicaid. (Duke-Benfield & Saunders, 2016; Price et al., 2014). One of the participating colleges, Skyline College in California, received national attention for its work to continue the program, SparkPoint (<https://skylinecollege.edu/sparkpoint/>) after the grant ended (Field, 2016a).

More recently, interest has grown in developing internal support to provide the same kinds of services as organizations like Single Stop. For example, there is a movement to expand the roles of existing college staff, in particular librarians, to include assistance accessing public benefits and local social services (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2019; Wolff-Eisenberg, 2022; Wood, 2020). Additionally, Swipe Out Hunger partnered with the City University of New York (CUNY) system in 2021 to launch a program in which students are trained to help connect their peers to food benefits and other social services. In its first year the program served over 1,500 students (Swipe Out Hunger, 2021). In 2021, Oregon passed legislation mandating that public colleges and universities hire a benefits navigator to help students apply for public benefits (Oregon House Bill 2835, 2021).

Housing. A growing number of colleges and universities are beginning to provide direct assistance with housing for students who lack a stable place to live. The most well-known efforts to provide direct housing assistance are being led by individual institutions in partnership with

non-profit organizations or public housing authorities and serve a relatively small number of students. An early example of a non-profit partnership dedicated to supporting students experiencing housing insecurity is the Dax Program offered by DePaul University through the national homelessness organization DePaul USA. Started in 2015, the program began by recruiting local families to host students in need of emergency housing. Since then, DePaul USA has also opened two Dax houses for students facing homelessness. Students pay \$150 a month for rent and have access to case management services, counseling referrals, transportation, food stipends, textbook assistance, and educational reimbursements. According to the DePaul USA website, they have served 44 students and provided housing for 14 students since 2015 (De Paul USA, n.d.).

The College Success Initiative operated by Jovenes, an organization dedicated to helping homeless youth in the Los Angeles area, began working with seven local community colleges in 2016 to provide rental subsidies for students who are homeless. (Jovenes, 2017). Since 2016 the organization has also expanded its support to include bridge housing (temporary emergency housing at apartments leased by Jovenes), dormitory housing (provided in real estate obtained through joint fundraising with colleges), and host homes (local homeowners provide a spare bedroom for up to six months) (<https://jovenesinc.org/college-housing/>). Between 2016 – 2020 the organization provided housing for 100 students (Jovenes, 2020).

Partnerships with local housing authorities are also emerging as a strategy for assisting students experiencing housing insecurity. Tacoma Community College partnered with the city's housing authority in 2014 to provide housing for homeless students (Vakil, 2018). The partnership started as a pilot program offering vouchers for 25 students and by the 2018-2019 academic year had grown to support up to 150 students (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021). In the spring

of 2021, the Community College of Philadelphia formed a similar partnership with the Philadelphia Housing Authority to provide low-cost housing (maximum rent of \$125 per month) for up to 16 students (Community College of Philadelphia, 2021).

More rarely, colleges are independently investing in purchasing housing designated for students experiencing housing insecurity. Jackson College, a community college located in Michigan, started a unique housing program providing low-rent (\$425 a month) “tiny homes” for student parents and their children in 2021. The program started with five houses, but the college has the capacity to accommodate up to 25 houses (Mooney, 2021).

In addition to direct housing services, colleges are beginning to explore alternative means of supporting students experiencing housing insecurity. For example, Long Beach City College, a community college in California, recently started a safe parking program allowing students to sleep overnight in a campus parking garage monitored by security officers. Students also have access to Wi-Fi, restrooms, and showers. The program is modeled after a state assembly bill in California that would have required community colleges to allow students without housing to park in campus parking lots overnight (Weissman, 2021). The bill was introduced in January 2019 and died in the Senate in November 2020 (California AB-302, 2020). Even as a pilot limited to no more than 15 students, however, the Long Beach program generated controversy. Detractors argue that the funds spent on security would be better spent on more permanent housing solutions, but the college views the program as a temporary support for students who might otherwise potentially find themselves in even worse situations and as a supplement to the motel vouchers and emergency aid for housing it already provides (Weissman, 2021).

Overall, however, there are fewer services dedicated to housing than to other types of basic needs services, despite the fact that housing insecurity is often discussed in conjunction

with food insecurity (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2016). Furthermore, I am not aware of any coordinated national efforts dedicated to working with colleges and universities to provide housing assistance for students struggling with housing insecurity and homelessness that are comparable to national organizations addressing food insecurity, such as Swipe Out Hunger, and increasing access to public benefits, such as Single Stop.

Transportation. Although colleges and universities have been providing transportation services in the form of shuttle programs and free or discounted passes for public transportation for at least 20 years (Price & Curtis, 2018), transportation has not received the same kind of attention in conversations about students' basic needs as food and housing. However, findings from a 2021 report which highlighted the fact that only slightly over half (56.5%) of the 1,373 community colleges included in the College Scorecard database are located within walking distance (defined as within ½ a mile) of a public transportation stop appear to have played an instrumental role in raising awareness about the importance of transportation for college access and success (Crespi et al., 2021).

Following the release of the report, several more recent articles have explicitly framed transportation as a basic need and highlighted work that colleges are doing to improve access to transportation. For example, an article from January 2022 in *The Chronicle of Higher Ed* pointed out that transportation assistance is a key component of the successful CUNY ASAP program (<https://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/about/>), which started in 2007 and includes free MetroCards as part of a comprehensive suite of supports, and profiled newer initiatives, such as a partnership started in 2017 between the Dallas Community College District and Dallas Area Rapid Transit. Through the partnership the district pays a reduced fee (\$20 per student) to obtain free passes and

the transit authority agreed to change its timetable to align with students' schedules (Blumenstyk, 2022). Other transportation assistance programs that have been written about lately include services offered by Rio Hondo College in California, Chattanooga State Community College in Tennessee, American University in Washington D.C., and the Los Angeles Community College District (LA Metro, 2021; West, 2022).

Indications of the Institutionalization of Basic Needs Services in Higher Education

In addition to the number of institutions and partner organizations providing different forms of basic needs services on college campuses, several other indicators across a variety of fields suggest that the provision of these types of services is becoming an expected role for higher education.

Higher Education Field. Among higher education researchers and practitioners, this trend can be seen in higher education press, journals, conferences, and technical assistance initiatives. In 2017, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* identified the movement to provide social basic needs services on college campuses for students struggling with hunger and homelessness as one of the ten most important trends in higher education that year (Editors, 2017; Field, 2017a). That same year, the *ASHE Higher Education Report* dedicated an entire special issue (Volume 43, Issue 6) to homelessness and housing insecurity among college students. Also in 2017, NASPA launched Student ARC (Advancing Retention in College), a website containing “tools, reports, news, and insights” intended to be “the ultimate resource for news and knowledge on emergency aid” (<https://studentarc.org/>).

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (formerly the Wisconsin Hope Lab) has hosted a national conference dedicated to food and housing insecurity among college students, #RealCollege, every year since 2016 (<https://hope4college.com/realcollege/realcollege->

annual-convening/). In August 2021, the Hope Center began a year-long partnership with five states participating in Jobs for the Future's Student Success Center Network to provide technical assistance for 52 community colleges related to scaling best practices for emergency aid services (Jobs for the Future, n.d.). Achieving the Dream (ATD), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving student success in community colleges, includes basic needs services as a central part of its holistic student support model (Achieving the Dream, n.d.). In 2017, ATD, released a guide to starting campus food pantries and connecting students to a wider range of social services based on lessons learned from 13 member colleges (Lenhart & Petty, 2017).

Federal and State Policy. Over the past several years, there have been an increasing number of calls to strengthen federal and state safety-net supports for college students. In 2018, a report prepared by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) in response to a request from several Democratic senators estimated that nearly two million college students who were potentially eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2016 did not receive benefits. (Sloane, 2017; Smith, 2018; U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). The report recommended that the department responsible for overseeing SNAP, Food and Nutrition Service within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, improve the information about eligibility for college students on its website and work with state SNAP agencies to identify promising strategies for increasing college student enrollment (U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). Other proposals have been made to revise the eligibility criteria of existing policies in order to increase access to benefits for college students. For example, to qualify for SNAP college students must either be working 20 or more hours a week or have dependents. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 has temporarily lifted those requirements (until 30 days after the federal designation of COVID-19 as a public health emergency ends) (U.S.

Department of Agriculture, 2021) but there was a movement to permanently lift the restrictions on college students even prior to the pandemic (College Student Hunger Act, 2019). The Housing for Homeless Students Act (2019) would remove the restriction prohibiting college students from qualifying for affordable housing through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.

Support for proposals to lift restrictions on college students reflect a growing awareness that the traditional college students whom the regulations were originally intended to prevent from accessing public benefits – students entering college straight from high school with financial support from their parents – are no longer the norm. Of interest from an organizational theory standpoint, however, is the fact that several bills introduced in the past few years rely on colleges and universities to administer a variety of safety-net supports related to food, housing, and transportation. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened policymakers' expectations of higher education's involvement in addressing students' basic needs.

Food Security. At the state level, New York became the first state to require that public colleges and universities provide food pantries or other access to food for students struggling with food security (Governor's Press Office, 2018). The New York mandate was enacted soon after a 2017 California bill was passed providing financial incentives for colleges in the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems to earn designation as a "hunger-free" campus by offering three types of services dedicated to alleviating food insecurity: food pantries, meal sharing programs, and assistance applying for food stamps (California Senate Bill No. 85, 2017). Since 2017, three more states (New Jersey, Maryland, and Minnesota) have followed California's lead and passed similar legislation and 10 more have introduced bills (Swipe Out Hunger, n.d.b). Anderson (2021) credits the COVID-19 pandemic

with galvanizing recent state activity in this area. At the federal level, the Food for Thought Act (2019) would essentially serve as a pilot expansion of the National School Lunch program by providing grants to community colleges to offer free meals.

Housing. The Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act was first introduced in the Senate in 2013 (S. 1754, 2013), and has been repeatedly reintroduced in both the Senate and House since then (S. 2267/H.R. 4043, 2015; S. 1795/H.R. 3740, 2017), most recently in 2022 (Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act, 2022). Among other things, the bill would require higher education institutions to give homeless and foster youth priority for campus housing, make housing available over breaks, and establish a liaison dedicated to helping homeless and foster youth access support services and local resources. In 2019 the state of Tennessee passed its own legislation requiring degree-granting postsecondary institutions to appoint a liaison for students experiencing homelessness. Liaisons are responsible for assisting homeless students with financial aid and ensuring they have access to relevant services and resources (Tennessee Public Chapter No. 266, 2019). Arkansas followed suit in 2021, passing legislation allowing state-supported two- and four-year higher education institutions to designate an existing staff member as a liaison for homeless and foster youth (Arkansas House Bill 1462, 2021).

Transportation. Motivated by findings from a recent Seldin / Haring – Smith Foundation report (Crespi et al., 2021) that only 57% of community colleges are accessible by public transportation, the Promoting Advancement Through Transit Help (PATH) to College Act was introduced in the U.S. House and Senate in November 2021 (Seldin / Haring-Smith Foundation, n.d.). The bill is targeted specifically to community colleges, historically Black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and universities, and minority serving institutions and would increase

access to public transportation by creating a competitive grant to fund partnerships between colleges and local transit authorities. Allowable uses of grant funds include building new stops, developing new routes, increasing service frequency or changing service schedules to align with class schedules, and subsidizing the cost of transportation for students (Promoting Advancement Through Transit Help to College Act, 2021).

Pandemic Relief. Multiple relief efforts included in the federal response to the pandemic place higher education in the role of directly addressing students' basic needs. Notably, it is up to colleges and universities to decide how to distribute the student aid portion of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) as well as how to use the institutional portion. In January 2022 the Department of Education under the Biden-Harris administration released guidelines for using the institutional portion of the fund to develop infrastructure for basic needs services, citing examples from colleges that have used the money to develop or expand services for child care, food, housing, and transportation (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). At the same time, the Department of Education also published a "Dear Colleague Letter" urging all public and private higher education institutions in the country to use Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data to identify students who may be eligible for benefits such as SNAP and develop a plan for informing them of their potential eligibility (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). In addition, in January 2022 the Department of Education announced that it had awarded six community colleges nearly \$5 million in grant funds to establish new basic needs services (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Foundations. Multiple foundations are advocating for and financially supporting the development of basic needs services in higher education and in so doing are bolstering expectations that colleges and universities have a critical role to play in providing services. In

addition to highlighting basic needs services as a strategic focus area, foundations have adopted a multi-pronged funding approach that involves supporting research and technical assistance as well as direct service provision.

Two of the 11 best practices the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation identified as strategies for making college more affordable for low-income students relate to basic needs: emergency aid and social services that help students access public benefits (Coker & Glynn, 2017). After funding the Dreamkeepers and Angel Fund emergency grants, the Lumina Foundation developed the toolkit and resource guide previously mentioned, *Beyond Financial Aid*, which identifies best practices for supporting low-income students and offers recommendations for implementing them. The report “expands the traditional concepts of what social and financial supports are necessary to address the broader needs of low-income students. Those needs include access to reliable and adequate nutrition, transportation, housing and child care — as well as financial, tax and legal services” (Chaplot et al., 2015, p.1). In the Fall of 2018, Lumina devoted an entire issue of its quarterly magazine to highlighting the work that leading colleges and universities are doing to take a “wraparound approach” to student aid by providing basic needs services (Lumina Foundation, 2018).

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation includes emergency aid as a critical component of its focus on holistic student supports (The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.). The foundation has funded several initiatives and research studies related to emergency aid, including NASPA’s national landscape analysis survey of emergency aid programs (Kruger et al., 2016), and the collaboration between the Hope Center for Community, College, and Justice and Jobs for the Future (JFF) to provide technical assistance around scaling emergency aid programs (along with funding from the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors) (Jobs for the Future, n.d.).

Citing the Hope Center’s research on the prevalence of food and housing insecurity among college students, the ECMC Foundation launched the three-year Basic Needs Initiative in 2019 to fund a cohort of seven institutions and organizations (two community college systems, two universities, two non-profit organizations, and one research organization) taking a variety of different approaches to enhancing support for students’ basic needs. Collectively the grantees are working with over 70 two- and four- year institutions (ECMC Foundation, n.d.). Education Northwest is evaluating the initiative and has released two initial reports describing the types of services grantees are offering. Two additional reports are scheduled to be released in 2022 and 2023 that will link service use to student outcomes (Education Northwest, 2022).

The Kresge Foundation has also funded a number of projects related to basic needs. In 2017, the foundation supported three evaluations of basic needs services (food vouchers, food scholarships, and subsidized housing) led by Sara Goldrick-Rab (Kresge Foundation, 2017). In 2020, the foundation awarded grants to six community colleges working in partnership with local nonprofits to increase students’ access to social services (Kresge Foundation, 2020). And in 2021, the foundation identified promoting student persistence during the pandemic by helping colleges connect students to support for food, housing, internet, and mental health as one of its top five priorities (Kresge Foundation, 2021). Finally, from July – December 2021 the Spencer Foundation funded the #RealCollege Research Collaborative, enabling a group of scholars to conduct research on basic needs insecurity using data from the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, n.d.).

Colleges and Universities. Importantly, colleges themselves are beginning to portray the work of providing basic needs services as a core institutional responsibility. While many colleges offer one or two discrete services, most often either a food pantry or emergency aid, some

colleges are developing more robust organizational infrastructures to support these services (Bombardieri, 2018). Amarillo College in Texas, for example, is considered a national model of this comprehensive approach (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2018). After launching the No Excuses Poverty Initiative in 2010 as a means of fostering an institution-wide commitment to supporting students living in poverty, the college established the Advocacy and Resource Center (<https://www.actx.edu/arc/>) in 2016 as a central location for managing an array of services, including a food pantry, clothing closet, and access to emergency aid and referrals for childcare and other social services (Bombardieri, 2018; Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2018; Smith, 2018). In describing the rationale for establishing the center, the president of Amarillo College explained, "...we've adopted a no-excuses philosophy. No matter what is causing our students to taste failure, they are not responsible for it. We are" (Smith, 2018). Reflecting the extent to which this philosophy is becoming infused in institutional functioning, the college's 2020 strategic plan, No Excuses 2020, listed "systematically remove barriers of poverty" as a key strategy for achieving one of the plan's five goals, building systems for equity gains. Tasks associated with removing poverty barriers included scaling systematic approaches to poverty through both policy and practice, and increasing connections to community services (Amarillo College, 2016).

At the system level, California State University (CSU) offers the best example of an entire university system that has institutionalized basic needs services as a core function. After a 2015 survey of food and housing insecurity commissioned by the chancellor revealed high rates of both (9% of students reported lacking stable housing and 21% reported experiencing food insecurity), CSU launched the Basic Needs Initiative in 2016 as a framework for coordinating a systematic and comprehensive approach to supporting students' basic needs across all 23 CSU institutions (California State University [CSU], 2018; Crutchfield, 2016). In 2015, 11 campuses

offered programs to address food insecurity and one campus offered services to address housing insecurity (Crutchfield, 2016). By 2020, all 23 campuses had established either a food pantry or another means of food distribution and the majority also offered programs for meal swipes or food vouchers (CSU, 2020). Additionally, all 23 were offering emergency temporary housing either on or off campus, and all 23 were offering assistance applying for CalFresh (California's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) (CSU, 2020).

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

It is readily apparent from the increasing number of colleges providing a wide array of basic needs services and the growing support for these services from higher education practitioners, foundations, and policymakers that the provision of basic needs services is becoming a standard part of higher education. However, this information provides little insight into how the provision of basic needs services operates from an organizational standpoint. Most of the literature on basic needs among college students has focused on the student experience – documenting the extent of need and the impact of services. To date, few studies have examined the adoption of basic needs services from an institutional perspective.

One of the few that has is a 2021 survey of community college provosts conducted by Ithaca S+R regarding the extent to which community colleges are looking beyond standard retention and completion measures and prioritizing holistic measures of student success, including measures related to basic needs such as food and housing (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2021). A key finding is that even though the vast majority of respondents indicated higher education has a responsibility to address students' basic need by providing social services and reported that they believe there are financial incentives for doing so in terms of increased student success, few institutions had the infrastructure or capacity to track data related to

understanding students' basic needs or the impact of basic needs services (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg. 2021). A qualitative study conducted with representatives from 16 college food pantries in Michigan similarly found that infrastructure, resources, and capacity to collect and analyze data were significant challenges (Price et al., 2019). Overall, these reports suggest a need for greater attention to the organizational functioning of basic needs services within colleges and universities.

Despite growing expectations that colleges should provide basic needs services, this is still an emerging role for higher education. The higher education field has long been cognizant of the fact that lower-income students are more likely to struggle in college, but until recently has never claimed to have a responsibility to provide social welfare services (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1994; Delbanco, 2012; Lucas, 2006). Thus, there is much we don't know about how and why colleges are providing services. There is also an absence of information about the challenges colleges may face in providing these services. Furthermore, while the movement to address basic needs within higher education was well under way prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in many ways the pandemic has only made understanding this responsibility even more critical. As a respondent to the recent Ithaca S+R survey commented, the pandemic has underscored the impact of basic needs and students' lives outside of class on their ability to succeed in class (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg. 2021). From this perspective, it is all the more urgent to examine what higher education's role in addressing basic needs currently entails and consider how it might be strengthened moving forward.

The overarching purpose of this study is to use organizational theory to understand why colleges are providing basic needs services and how services become integrated into

organizational functioning. To achieve these aims, the study will explore the following research questions:

- 1) How are colleges making sense of the increasing attention being paid to the prevalence of hunger, homelessness, and other issues related to poverty among students? What do they view as causes and as potential solutions?
- 2) Why are colleges providing services that address students' basic needs? What factors might make it challenging for a college to provide services?
- 3) To what extent and how are basic needs services integrated within the technical core of organizational functioning? In what ways is service integration affected by the availability of external and internal funding?
- 4) How do individual administrators, faculty members, advisors, and other student services staff members understand the provision of basic needs services in relation to their perceptions of the college's mission and/or strategic priorities?

1.3 Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation proceeds as follows. Given the absence of a body of literature examining the provision of basic needs services on college campuses from the perspective of colleges as organizations, in Chapter II I review a variety of sources of literature to describe what is known about the causes, prevalence, and effects of basic needs insecurity among college students and to compare the provision of basic needs services to the traditional role of student services in higher education.

This information provides useful context for the development of a theoretical framework in Chapter III. To consider how the ways in which college stakeholders make meaning of external environmental influences and internal organizational dynamics inform a college's

approach to the provision of basic needs services, I use the concept of sensemaking (Weick, 1993, 1995) alongside Scott's (1995) conceptualization of the cognitive, normative, and regulative components of institutions. To understand how services become integrated into organizational functioning, I apply Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model of organizational analysis.

Chapter IV outlines the study's methodology, including the research design, sample, and approach to data analysis.

Chapters V, VI, and VII present the study's main findings. Chapter V uses sensemaking and institutional theory to identify the main internal dynamics and external pressures shaping the development of basic needs services on college campuses. Chapter VI uses the model of organizational congruence to review the types of services offered by the institutions represented in the study and describe how they are organized, staffed, and funded. Chapter VII builds on the preceding chapter by applying Nadler and Tushman to discuss challenges to the provision of basic needs services in terms of areas of disconnect and tension across the main areas of organizational functioning described in Chapter VI.

Finally, Chapter VIII concludes with a brief summary of the study's findings as well a discussion of the study's limitations and directions for new research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter is divided into five parts: establishing how basic needs are defined and measured, documenting the prevalence of basic needs insecurity among college students, identifying factors that contribute to basic needs insecurity among college students, analyzing the impacts of experiencing basic needs insecurities on college outcomes as well the effects of receiving services to address basic needs insecurities, and, finally, placing basic needs services on college campuses in the historical context of student services in higher education.

2.1 Definitions and Measurements of Basic Needs

Before examining survey findings regarding the number of college students experiencing basic needs insecurities, it is first important to understand how basic needs insecurities are defined and measured. The most clearly defined and readily identifiable basic needs, and the ones most often reported on in higher education, are food and housing. The federal government defines food insecurity and housing instability for the general population, and several recent surveys have used variations of these and other definitions to measure the extent of need among college students. Needs related to both food and housing are typically thought of as occurring on a spectrum, with hunger representing the most acute form of food insecurity (Dubick et al., 2016) and homelessness representing the most acute form of housing insecurity or instability (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015). Select examples illustrating the range of definitions used to measure food and housing insecurity are discussed below.

Food Insecurity and Hunger

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as an “economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food” and hunger as an “individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity” (U.S.

Department of Agriculture, 2021a.) The USDA has developed three surveys related to food insecurity: the 10-question U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module, the 18-question U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module, which includes the same questions as the adult survey as well as questions pertaining to food insecurity for children; and a six-question “short form” (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2021b). The adult survey and the household survey include one question related to worrying about running out of food while the remainder ask about reducing food consumption due to financial constraints. The short survey asks exclusively about reducing food consumption. All three surveys ask about the experience of food insecurity within the past 12 months, but also provide options for modifying questions to ask about food insecurity within the previous 30 days. The surveys are scored based on the number of positive responses, with greater numbers of positive responses associated with lower food security. (For the Adult Survey, High security = 0, Marginal security = 1-2, Low security = 3-5, Very low security = 6-10. For the Household Survey, High security = 0, Marginal security = 1-2, Low security = 3-7, Very low security = 8-18. For the short survey, High / Marginal security = 0-1, Low security = 2-4, Very low food security = 5=6.) (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 2021b). Respondents are classified as food insecure if their score falls within the “low” or “very low” food security range (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 2021a).

Although most studies about food insecurity among college students use one of the USDA surveys, there is a fair amount of variation in the version used (18-, 10-, or six-questions) and the time period assessed (previous 12 months or 30 days). Studies reporting on food insecurity among students attending the University of Hawai’i (Chaparro et al., 2009), the California State University system (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018), and a sample of 110 California colleges and universities (all institutions in the California State University and

University of California systems as well as a sample of California Community Colleges, non-profit private institutions, and private for-profit colleges) (California Student Aid Commission, 2019) used the 10-question version of the USDA survey. Of the three, one (Chaparro et al., 2009) assessed food insecurity over the previous 12 months while the other two asked about the past 30 days (California Student Aid Commission, 2019; Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). A comprehensive survey of students' financial wellness conducted by the Trellis Company at 58 colleges and universities in 12 states, including public, private, and community colleges, used the six-item short version of the USDA survey and asked about food insecurity within the past 30 days (Klepfer et al., 2019). Portland State University assesses food insecurity among both students and staff in the past 30 days using the 18-question version for respondents with children and the 10-question version for respondents without (Townley et al., 2020).

In one of the first efforts to attempt to obtain a nationally representative estimate of food insecurity among college students, the Urban Institute used the Current Population Survey (CPS) to identify college students and the Food Security Supplement to the CPS, which assesses food security over the prior 12 months using the 18-question U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module for households containing children and the 10-question U.S. Adult Food Security Survey Module for households without children, to measure food insecurity. While most efforts to measure food insecurity among college students survey individual students, the Urban Institute study was unique in using data on households in which a college student resided (Blagg et al., 2017).

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (formerly the Wisconsin HOPE Lab) has conducted extensive research on food insecurity in higher education using the USDA

surveys. The center initially used the shorter 6-item² USDA survey in its first two surveys of food insecurity conducted in 2015 and 2016 before switching to the 10-question version in 2017 (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Since 2018, the Hope Center has been using the 18-question version of the survey that includes questions about food insecurity amongst respondents' children (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019; Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021). Throughout, the center has assessed food insecurity within the past 30 days.

A few studies have relied on alternative means of assessing food insecurity. For example, a survey of community college students in California conducted by Wood et al. (2016) used the Stressful Life Events Scale developed by the Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL) to categorize students as either experiencing food insecurity or not over an unspecified period of time and to assess the level of stress associated with the experience of food insecurity. Another example is a study by Freudenberg et al. (2011) in which food insecurity was defined as answering "often" or "sometimes" to two or more out of four questions about access to food over the past 12 months. Similarly to the longer versions of the USDA survey, one question pertains to worrying about being unable to afford food while the others assess the extent to which respondents have reduced their food consumption as a result of being unable to afford food.³

Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines housing insecurity in

² Items on the 6-item version of the USDA food security scale: 1) The food that I bought just didn't last and I didn't have enough money to get more. 2) I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals. 3) Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food? 4) 3 or more days: Did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food? 5) Did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food? 6) Were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?

³ 1) How often did you worry that you would not have enough money for food? 2) How often did you cut or skip a meal because you didn't have enough money to buy food? 3) How often were you unable to eat balanced or nutritious meals because of a lack of money? 4) How often did you go hungry because of a lack of money?

relation to five types of conditions: high housing costs (more than 30% of household's gross monthly income), poor housing quality (lacking adequate plumbing, heating, electricity, kitchen appliances or general upkeep problems), unstable neighborhoods (characterized by poverty, crime, lack of job opportunities, noise, traffic, litter, limited city services), overcrowding (more than one person living in a room), and homelessness (lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence) (Johnson & Meckstroth, 1998). The federal government also defines homelessness among college students for the purpose of financial aid in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): "A student is considered homeless if he or she lacks fixed, regular, and adequate housing. This includes students who are living in shelters, motels, cars, or parks, or who are temporarily living with other people because they have nowhere else to go. Students are also considered homeless if they are fleeing an abusive parent(s) who would otherwise provide the student with financial support and a place to live" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

However, although federal definitions of housing insecurity and homelessness exist, surveys have used a variety of different approaches and questions to assess housing. In addition to using the Stressful Life Events Scale to assess food insecurity, Wood et al. (2016) also used the survey to classify students as either having experienced housing insecurity or not over an unspecified period of time and to identify the level of stress associated with the experience of housing insecurity. Tsui et al. (2011) defined housing instability as having experienced one or more of 12 separate events over the past 12 months.⁴ Gupton (2017, p. 197) used a single

⁴ Items on Tsui et al.'s housing insecurity survey: 1) Not having enough money to pay rent, 2) Experiencing a rent increase that made it difficult to pay rent, 3) Being required to appear in housing court, 4) Leaving because of feeling unsafe in the household, 5) Being threatened with foreclosure, 6) Being thrown out by someone in the household, 7) Being evicted by a landlord, 8) Trying but not being able to get into a shelter, 9) Being removed from a shelter, 10) Losing housing as a result of fire or other building problems, 11) Losing housing as a result of a foreclosure, 12) Losing housing as a result of a Workfare requirement.

definition of homelessness as “having lived on the streets or in a shelter for at least a 1-month period over the past 2 years.”

Citing the lack of a consistent measure for assessing housing insecurity among college students, Crutchfield and Maguire (2018) developed their own questions for a survey of students enrolled in the California State University (CSU) system based on the definitions of homelessness established in the McKinney-Vento Act and used by U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). The CSU survey assessed housing insecurity over the previous 12 months (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018).

The California Student Aid Commission (2019) first asked where students live (on campus, off campus, with parents, or no consistent place). “No consistent place” was defined as homeless, couch-surfing, or living in a car / shelter. It also asked about experiences with a series of housing challenges over the past 30 days, including not paying the full amount of a gas, oil, or electricity bill; having difficulty paying for an increase in rent or mortgage; not paying or underpaying rent or mortgage; living in a house or apartment with more people than listed on the lease or rental agreement; moving in with others, even for a little while, because of financial problems; and moving two or more times.

The Hope Center’s basic needs #RealCollege surveys have included questions about housing insecurity and homelessness since the center began conducting surveys in 2015. Over the past few years, the questions have been revised several times. Goldrick-Rab et al. (2017) defined housing instability as the occurrence of any of five types of events during the past 12 months: didn’t pay full amount of rent or mortgage, didn’t pay full amount of utilities, moved 2 or more times per year, doubled up, moved in with other people due to financial problems. The authors used a separate measure of homelessness, consisting of the occurrence of any of six

different events during the past 12 months: thrown out of home, evicted from home, stayed in a shelter, stayed in an abandoned building, auto, or other place not meant as housing, did not know where you were going to sleep, even for one night, didn't have a home. The following year, the survey added one question about housing insecurity pertaining to living with others beyond the expected capacity of the housing, eliminated one question about homelessness (didn't have a home) and asked respondents to answer all questions for the past 30 days in addition to the past 12 months. Additionally, to understand the extent to which students self-identify as an individual who has experienced housing insecurity or homelessness, the survey included two questions that directly asked whether the respondent had ever couch-surfed or been homeless during the past month and the past year (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Beginning in 2018, the center adopted a more detailed set of 9 questions to address housing insecurity based on the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) Adult Well-Being Module and expanded questions about homelessness to cover 13 different types of locations stayed overnight that are included in the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act's definition of homelessness (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019).

Over the past few years, several surveys have adopted the Hope Center's questions regarding housing insecurity and homelessness, with some variations. For example, a recent survey conducted at Portland State University (PSU) used the same nine questions that the Hope Center uses to assess housing insecurity as well as three questions from other university surveys of housing insecurity related to evictions, being forced to leave housing, and moving into a household without informing the landlord. The PSU survey also added questions pertaining to potential indicators of housing vulnerability, including living in public housing, receipt of housing vouchers, and feelings of safety. To assess homelessness, the PSU survey adopted the

Hope Center's approach of asking respondents to self-identify as having experienced homelessness followed by questions about types of locations stayed overnight. Like more recent versions of the Hope Center survey the PSU survey asked about housing insecurity and homelessness over the past 30 days and the past 12 months. Unlike the Hope Center survey, the PSU survey also asked about lifetime experiences of homelessness (Townley et al., 2020).

In their comprehensive survey of student financial wellbeing, Klepfer et al. (2019) note that they intentionally selected questions about housing security and homelessness used by other researchers to increase the study's validity and facilitate cross-study comparisons and specifically referenced the Hope Center. Other than a few slight variations in wording, the six questions related to housing insecurity and the 10 questions related to homelessness align with questions asked in different versions of the Hope Center surveys.

2.2 Prevalence of Basic Needs Insecurity Among College Students

Because surveys of food and housing insecurity among college students have been conducted in different settings using different sampling and measuring strategies, findings vary widely, and it is difficult to compare across studies (Broton, et al., 2018). Additionally, surveys ask about the discrete experience of food and housing insecurity over different time frames, typically either the past 30 days or 12 months, without attempting to establish the duration of food or housing challenges. This failure to distinguish between temporary acute needs and chronic needs makes it difficult to identify the scope of the problem and thus to understand whether the services provided by colleges are adequate solutions. Weekly or monthly use of a food pantry may be sufficient for someone who has acute needs while temporarily working reduced hours as a student, but not for someone struggling with chronic poverty.

The lack of clarity about the extent of the problem was one of the primary motivations for the review of food insecurity among college students conducted by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) (Sloane, 2017; Smith, 2018; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). Complicating matters further, more recent research has identified additional challenges with measuring food insecurity among college students, pointing to discrepancies between college students and the general population in responses to the commonly used USDA 10-item food insecurity survey (Nikolaus, 2019). Nonetheless, despite the challenges associated with assessing students' needs, the consensus has been that significant numbers of students are struggling (Broton et al., 2018; Smith, 2019).

In many ways the COVID-19 pandemic has only made it more challenging to understand the full extent to which college students are struggling with basic needs insecurity, as those students most likely to be at risk of experiencing basic needs insecurity are also those most likely to have been forced to abandon or delay college plans due to the pandemic and thus would not be represented in recent surveys (Geary, 2022). Given what we do know about the extent to which the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities, however, concerns about basic needs insecurity among college students have heightened (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021; Townley et al., 2020).

Food Insecurity

Prior to the pandemic, 10.5% of US households qualified as having low or very low food security in 2019, down from 12.3% just a few years prior in 2016 according to the results of the USDA's annual survey of food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2018; Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). In comparison, the percentage of students classified as experiencing food insecurity in direct surveys of individual students ranges from 12% among a subsample of 3,647 students

attending select California community colleges (Wood et al., 2016), to 56% among a sample of over 33,000 students attending 70 community colleges in 24 states (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017).

Other studies, including Chaparro et al.'s (2009) survey of students attending the University of Hawai'i Manoa (21%), the California Student Aid Commission's survey of California colleges and universities (35%), Freudenberg et al.'s (2011) study of the City University of New York (CUNY) system (39%), Crutchfield and Maguire's (2018) report on the California State University system (42%), Townley et al.'s (2020) study at Portland State University (47%), Dubick et al.'s (2016) survey of eight community colleges and 26 four-year colleges and universities in 12 states (48%), and, and the Trellis Company's (Klepfer et al., 2019) comprehensive survey of students' financial wellness conducted at 58 colleges and universities in 12 states (55%) found rates falling within those bounds. Summarizing the results of the first five years of the Hope Center's #RealCollege Survey from 2015 – 2019, Baker-Smith et al. (2020) reported that rates of food insecurity ranged from 42% - 56% at two-year institutions and from 33% - 42% at four-year institutions.

In addition to using different time frames to measure food insecurity, the wide variation in findings likely also reflects differences in sampling and survey framing. While the Urban Institute study, which reported some of the lowest rates of food insecurity, used nationally representative data collected at the household level in the context of the Current Population Survey, a comprehensive survey of "economic and social well-being"⁵ (Blagg et al., 2017), many of the campus-based surveys were not necessarily representative of the college population and focused exclusively on food and housing insecurity. In those cases, students experiencing basic needs insecurity may have been more likely to respond and complete the survey, thus

⁵ See <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/about.html>

overestimating the prevalence of insecurities (Freudenberg et al., 2011). For example, the Wisconsin Hope Lab survey (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017), which reported the highest rate of food insecurity (56%), was sent by each of the 70 participating colleges to all enrolled students and had a response rate of 4.5% (33,934 out of 750,000). Although this is the largest sample among the studies reviewed, it is unclear how representative it is. One of the few other surveys to report such a high rate of food insecurity (also 56%) relied on a relatively small convenience sample of 301 students attending two community colleges in Maryland (Maroto et al., 2015).

In contrast, other studies that made more intentional efforts to address the representativeness of results reported lower rates of food insecurity. The Urban Institute's nationally representative study of food insecurity among households with college students found rates of food insecurity among college students close to national averages, although the rates were slightly higher among households with a student enrolled in vocational education or in a two-year college. According to the report, 11.2% of households with a student in a four-year college, 13.5% of households with a student in vocational education, and 13.3% of households with a student in a two-year college had experienced food insecurity at some point over the past year (Blagg et al., 2017). The study of California community college students (N = 3,647) reporting one of the lowest rates of food insecurity (12%) used classroom-based sampling to distribute the survey to randomly selected course sections in which students were asked to complete the survey in class, which presumably resulted in a much higher response rate although it is not provided (Wood et al., 2016). The CUNY study, which also found a lower rate of food insecurity (39%) than the Hope Lab survey, weighted data by key demographic variables to ensure that the sample was representative of the entire CUNY undergraduate population (Freudenberg et al., 2011).

Housing Insecurity

Considerable variation also exists across survey findings reporting on the prevalence of housing insecurity and homelessness among college students. At the lower end, both the survey of 3,647 California community college students conducted by Wood et al., (2016) and the California Student Aid Commission study (2019) (N = 15,419) found that 33% of students reported experiencing housing insecurity. Other reports of housing insecurity range from 42% among a sample of 1,086 undergraduate enrolled across all 17 colleges in the City University of New York (CUNY) system (Tsui et al., 2011), to 44.6% in the survey of 3,511 Portland State University students (Townley et al., 2020) to 50% among a sample of 15,311 students included in Trellis Company's (Klepfer et al., 2019) comprehensive survey of students' financial wellness. Between 2015 – 2019, the percentage of students identified as experienced housing insecurity through the Hope Center's #RealCollege survey ranged from 46% - 60% at community colleges and from 35% - 48% at four-year institutions (Baker-Smith et al., 2020).

Fewer students experience homelessness than other forms of housing insecurity, but the numbers are still significant. Several surveys conducted over the past few years have reported rates of homelessness ranging from 11% - 18%. Crutchfield and Maguire's (2018) study of the California State University system found that 11% of students had experienced homelessness while Klepfer et al. (2019) found that 16% of students had been homeless. Reviewing the results of the Hope Center's #RealCollege Survey from 2015–2019, Baker-Smith et al. (2020) reported that rates of homelessness ranged from 12%-18% at community colleges and from 9%-16% at four-year institutions.

Highlighting the extent to which the framing of questions influences responses, surveys that have used alternative questions to assess homelessness and that have compared multiple

versions of questions have found different results. The California Student Aid Commission (2019) used one question to assess homelessness pertaining to whether students had a “consistent place to live,” with not having a consistent place to live defined as being homeless, couch surfing, or living in a car or shelter, and found that only 1% of students reported not having a consistent place to live. The survey of students attending Portland State University found that students were much more likely to report having experienced discrete forms of homelessness (e.g., temporarily staying with friends or family, or staying in a shelter) than to self-identify as being homeless and that reports of both discrete experiences of homelessness and self-identification as homeless were higher over the past 12 months than the past 30 days (Townley et al., 2020). Over the past 30 days, 1.8% of students self-identified as having been homeless compared to 7.4% who reported experiencing discrete forms of homelessness. Over the past 12 months, 4.4% of students self-identified as having been homeless compared to 16.1% who reported experiencing discrete forms of homelessness (Townley et al., 2020).

Correlation between Food and Housing Insecurity

In addition to reporting rates of food and housing insecurity, several studies have examined the relationship between the two and identified a high degree of correlation. Dubick et al. (2016) found that among students who reported experiencing food insecurity, 64% had also experienced some type of housing instability (difficulty paying the rent, mortgage, or utility bills) and 15% had been homeless over the previous twelve months. Studies of food insecurity and housing instability among students enrolled in the CUNY system found that 31% of students had experienced both (Freudenberg et al., 2011; Tsui, et al., 2011). Wood et al. (2016) reported that 26% of students experiencing housing insecurity were also experiencing food insecurity, and that 75% of students experiencing food insecurity were also experiencing housing insecurity.

Altogether, 61.6% of students participating in Portland State University's survey of basic needs insecurities had experienced either food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness. Of that 61.6%, 10.8% of respondents had experienced all three and 25.4% had experienced two (Townley et al., 2020). Finally, results from the Hope Center's 2019 #RealCollege Survey indicated that 32% of respondents from two-year colleges and 20% of respondents from four-year institutions had experienced both food and housing insecurity and that 12% of respondents from two-year colleges and 9% of respondents from four-year institutions had experienced both food insecurity and homelessness (Baker-Smith et al., 2020).

Subgroup Differences in Food and Housing Insecurity among College Students

Surveys of basic needs have consistently revealed that food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness are not experienced equally across the student population, reflecting larger patterns of inequality within higher education and within the United States as a whole. Community colleges enroll disproportionate numbers of low-income students (Fountain, 2019), and multiple studies have found that community college students experience basic needs insecurities at higher rates than students attending four-year colleges. For example, Dubick et al. (2016) found that compared to students attending four-year colleges (7%), nearly twice as many community college students (13%) reported experiencing homelessness. Additionally, among the 247 public two-year institutions, 138 public four-year institutions, and 23 private not-for-profit four-year institutions that participated in the Hope Center's #RealCollege Survey from 2015–2019, rates of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness were repeatedly higher at the two-year institutions (Baker-Smith et al., 2020).

Poverty is strongly associated with experiencing basic needs insecurities, with income being the strongest predictor of food insecurity among college students (U.S. Government

Accountability Office, 2018). In 2020, the official poverty rate for Black (19.5%) and Hispanic populations (17%) was more than twice as high as that for the non-Hispanic White population (8.2%) (Shrider et al., 2021). Higher rates of poverty among Black and Hispanic populations are closely linked to higher rates of basic needs insecurities. The national average rate of food insecurity among U.S. households in 2020 was 10.5%, compared to 21.7% among Black non-Hispanic households and 17.2% among Hispanic households (Coleman-Jensen, et al., 2021). According to the most recent estimates published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, although individuals identifying as Black or African American comprised 12% of the U.S. population in 2020, they represented 39% of the homeless population and 53% of those experiencing homelessness as members of a family with children (Henry et. al., 2021). Individuals identifying as American Indian, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian, and as Hispanic or Latino were also overrepresented among the homeless population. Collectively, individuals identifying as American Indian, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian made up 1% of the U.S. population in 2020, but 5% of the homeless population. Individuals identifying as Hispanic or Latino made up 16% of the U.S. population, but 23% of the homeless population (Henry et. al., 2021).

Racial and ethnic disparities in basic needs insecurities among college students mirror those in the general population and frequently intersect with additional factors related to disparities in basic needs, including gender, being a parent, and status as a first-generation college student. Dubick et al. (2016) found that 57% of Black or African American students reported experiencing food insecurity compared to 40% of non-Hispanic White students, and that 56% of first-generation college students reported experiencing food insecurity compared to 45% of students who had at least one parent who had attended college. Among CUNY students, Black

and Latino students and students with an annual household income of less than \$20,000 reported higher rates of food insecurity, while women, students raising children, and students with an annual household income of less than \$50,000 reported higher rates of housing instability (Freudenberg et al., 2011; Tsui et al., 2011). Crutchfield and Maguire (2018) also found significant subgroup differences among California State University students, with students who identified as both Black / African American and first-generation college students reporting the highest rates of food insecurity (65.9%) and homelessness (18%).

At Portland State University (PSU), 56.7% of respondents identifying as first-generation college students reported experiencing food insecurity compared to 41.4% who did not (Townley et al., 2020). Additionally, Asian or Asian American and White students at PSU reported the lowest rates of food insecurity (42.8% of White respondents, 44% of Asian or Asian American respondents), housing insecurity (35.9% of Asian or Asian American respondents, 45.1% of White respondents) and homelessness (14.6% of Asian or Asian American respondents, 15.7% of White respondents), while Native American and Multiracial students reported the highest rates, with 66.4% of Native American and 60.6% of Multiracial respondents reporting experiencing food insecurity, 60% of Multiracial and 58.9% of Native American respondents reporting experiencing housing insecurity, and 29% of Native American and 28.9% of Multiracial students reporting experiencing homelessness (Townley et al., 2020).

The Hope Center's 2019 #RealCollege Survey revealed similar trends in racial and ethnic disparities surrounding basic needs, finding that students identifying as White, Southeast Asian, and other Asian or Asian American reported the lowest levels of food and housing insecurity while students identifying as Indigenous or as American Indian or Alaska Native reported the highest rates (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). Additionally, the 2019 #Real College Survey identified

significant disparities in basic needs insecurities for parenting students. Overall, 39% of respondents reported experiencing food insecurity and 46% had experienced housing insecurity (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). In comparison, 53% of parenting students had experienced food insecurity and 68% had experienced housing insecurity (Goldrick-Rab, Welton, & Coca 2020). Parenting students attending community colleges and identifying as Black female and Latinx female reported the highest rates of food insecurity (66% of Black females, 60% of Latinx females) and of housing insecurity (81% of Black females, 76% of Latinx females), while parenting students attending community colleges and identifying as Latinx male, Black male, and Black female reported the highest rates of homelessness (22% of Latinx males, 21% of Black males, 21% of Black females) (Goldrick-Rab, Welton, & Coca., 2020).

Basic Needs Insecurities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Although mitigated to some extent by federal relief efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating impacts on employment, financial stability, and food and housing security and these effects have been disproportionately born by communities of color (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2022). Likewise, communities of color have disproportionately suffered from illness, hospitalization, and death during the pandemic (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). In the wake of these economic and health crises, many students have been forced to postpone or abandon plans for the pursuit of a postsecondary education, with Multiethnic, Black, and Latino students being the most likely to do so (Ahn & Dominguez-Villegas, n.d.). Between fall 2019 and fall 2021, enrollment across all sectors of higher education fell by 5.1%, with community colleges seeing the largest decline (13.5%) (National Student Clearinghouse, 2022). Black and Native American male community college students left higher

education in the largest numbers, with their enrollment declining by 24% and 26% respectively between fall 2019 and fall 2021 (Geary, 2022).

Given that the students most likely to be at risk of basic needs insecurity are the most likely to have been negatively impacted by the pandemic and to have left higher education, basic needs surveys conducted during the pandemic may not capture the pandemic's full impacts. Additionally, students who were able to continue in college may have temporarily benefitted from the emergency aid provided through the Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Recovery Act (CARES) Act (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021). Even taking these issues into account, however, it is clear that significant numbers of students have been struggling with basic needs insecurities during the pandemic and that persistent inequities remain.

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (2021) conducted the sixth annual #RealCollege Survey in fall 2020 with 130 two-year colleges, 51 public four-year colleges and universities, and 21 private four-year colleges and universities. Over 195,000 students participated, representing an estimated response rate of 11%. Overall, 58% of students reported experiencing at least one form of basic needs insecurity (food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness). Rates of food insecurity and housing insecurity were higher at community colleges (39% of respondents reported experiencing food insecurity and 52% reported housing insecurity) than at four-year institutions (29% reported food insecurity and 43% reported housing insecurity), while students at community colleges and four-year institutions were equally likely to report having experienced homelessness (14%) (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021).

Mirroring pre-pandemic trends, disparities in the experience of basic needs insecurities

were observed based on race and ethnicity, gender, income, being a parent, and status as a first-generation college student. Across the full sample, 75% of Indigenous students, 70% of Black students, and 70% of American Indian or Alaska Native students had experienced at least one form of basic need insecurity, compared to 54% of White students – a difference of 21 percentage points for Indigenous students and 16 percentage points for Black students and American Indian or Alaska Native students. Highlighting the connection between income and basic needs, the next largest disparity existed between students who were receiving the Pell grant and those who were not. Sixty-seven percent of Pell grant recipients had experienced at least one basic needs insecurity while only 50% of non-recipients had. In terms of gender, 60% of students identifying as female had experienced at least one form of basic needs insecurity compared to 53% identifying as male. Additionally, 64% of first-generation students had experienced at least one basic needs insecurity compared to 55% of students who did not identify as a first-generation student, and 70% of parenting students had experienced basic needs insecurity compared to 55% of students who were not parents (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021).

To understand how the pandemic affected students who were already vulnerable to food and housing insecurity, Portland State University asked a subsample of students who reported experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness in its fall 2019 survey to complete a follow-up survey in July 2020 (Townley et al., 2020). Rather than the full 18-item USDA survey used to assess food insecurity in the fall 2019 survey, the follow-up survey used the shorter 6-item version and found that among those completing the survey ($n = 166$), 55.4% of respondents had experienced food insecurity within the past 30 days. Using most of the same questions regarding housing insecurity, the follow-up survey found that 64.5% had experienced at least one form of housing insecurity since March 2020 and 32.5% had to leave their housing

during the pandemic. In addition, 20.5% of respondents reported staying places overnight that qualified them as having experienced homelessness (Townley et al., 2020).

Again mirroring pre-pandemic inequities, students of color were disproportionately represented among students experiencing basic needs insecurities at Portland State. Among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students, 61.1% had experienced food insecurity compared to 49.5% of White students, 70.8% had experienced housing insecurity compared to 59.3% of White students, and 30.6% had been homeless compared to 13.2% of White students. Furthermore, 45.8% of BIPOC students had to leave their housing during the pandemic compared to 23.1% of White students (Townley et al., 2020).

2.3 Factors Contributing to the Rise of Basic Needs Insecurity on College Campuses

Several factors are making it harder for today's college students to meet basic needs than those of previous generations, including changing labor market demands that have shifted the demographics of who attends college, the failure of income to keep pace with inflation, and gaps between financial aid and the costs of tuition and living. As of 2017, two out of three jobs in the United States required some form of postsecondary education and jobs at the Bachelor's degree level represented 56% of all good jobs (defined as paying at least \$35,000 for workers 25-44 and at least \$45,000 for workers 45-64) (Carnevale et al., 2018). Yet in 2019, only 51.9% of Americans ages 25-64 had completed any education beyond high school and only 34.5% had obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher (Lumina Foundation, 2022).

In response to changing labor market demands and the growing need for a college degree, college enrollment among low-income students has increased steadily over the past two decades (Fountain, 2019; Fry & Cilluffo, 2019). According to the Pew Research Center's analysis of National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) data, between the 1995-1996 and 2015-

2016 academic years, the proportion of undergraduate students in poverty (defined as below 100% of federal poverty thresholds) increased by 10 percentage points, from 21% to 31%. During that time the national poverty rate for adults aged 18–64 remained relatively stable around 12%, indicating that the higher percentage of students in poverty reflects greater numbers of low-income students entering high education, rather than an increase in the poverty rate overall (Fry & Cilluffo, 2019). Using NPSAS data covering the same time period, Fountain (2019) reached similar conclusions about the increase in the proportion of low-income students and also observed that when students classified as living near poverty (defined as between 100% and 200% of federal poverty guidelines) are included in the analysis, the proportion of low-income undergraduate students enrolled in college in both the 2011–2012 and the 2015–2016 academic years increased to over 50% from a low of 35% in the 1999-2000 academic year.

However, although more low-income students are entering higher education, their access to all sectors of higher education is not equal. Increased enrollment of students in poverty has been concentrated primarily in public two-year colleges, the least selective broad access four-year institutions, and for-profit institutions. Examining the share of dependent undergraduate students living in poverty by sector reveals that while the percentage of students in poverty only increased from 10% to 13% at the most selective institutions between 1996-2016, it increased from 13% to 27% at public two-year colleges, from 14% to 25% at minimally selective four-year institutions, and from 23% to 36% at private for-profit institutions (Fry & Cilluffo, 2019).

Additionally, significant disparities exist in terms of who is experiencing poverty. Students in poverty are more likely to be independent (24 or older, or under 24 but receiving little to financial support from parents) and to be Black or Hispanic. In 2015–2016, while independent students represented 50% of the total undergraduate population, they represented close to 70% of

students living in poverty (Fountain, 2019). Furthermore, while 42% of white students reported incomes 200% below federal poverty guidelines in 2015-2016, 70% of Black students and 64% of Hispanic students did so (Fry & Cilluffo, 2019).

At the same time that more low-income students are attending college, a variety of analyses find that both two- and four-year public colleges have grown increasingly unaffordable for low-income students. The National College Attainment Network (NCAN) calculates the affordability of two- and four-year institutions by comparing the total price of in-state tuition plus \$300 for emergency expenses to the total amount of aid and income available to students through federal grants, loans, work study, expected family contributions, and summer wages. Using this formula, NCAN determined that only 41% of the 514 community colleges and 23% of the 490 public four-year institutions included in the analysis sample in 2018–2019 were affordable (AlQaisi, 2021).

In large part declines in college affordability can be attributed to the fact that tuition and the cost of living have increased faster than income and financial aid. Using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index and the College Board's Trends in College Pricing report, (Mitchell et al., 2019) reported that tuition increases have consistently outpaced increases in income for the past 30 years. Even though financial aid also increased over this time, the average net price of a public four-institution (published tuition and fees plus room and board, books, and supplies minus average aid received) still accounted for 23% of the median household income in 2017. For Black families, the average net in-state price of a public four-year institution represented 40% or more of the median household income in 17 states and the same was true for Hispanic families in seven states (Mitchell et al., 2019). Analyses of National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) data from the 1986-1987 and 2015-2016 academic

years by the Urban Institute indicate that increases in grant aid over the past 30 years have largely covered increases in tuition and fees for low-income students (specifically Pell grant recipients attending public four-year institutions full-time) but have done little to cover increases in the cost of living (Delisle, 2021). Because the costs of tuition and living have both increased faster than inflation, low-income students still face large gaps between financial aid and the total cost of attendance after factoring in the cost of living.

Another way of thinking about the affordability of college is comparing minimum wage to the cost of college. Because minimum wage has failed to keep pace with inflation, in recent years it has become far more difficult for students to pay their way through college by working than it was 40 or 50 years ago (Urban Institute, 2017). During the 1960s and 1970s, 10 hours of minimum-wage work a week for 38 weeks during the academic year combined with 35 hours of minimum-wage work for 12 weeks over the summer covered not only average tuition and fees at public four-year colleges, but also a significant portion of room and board costs. As of a few years ago, working the same amount only covered roughly one-third of those costs (Urban Institute, 2017).

The failure of financial aid and income to keep pace with costs has also resulted in dramatic increases in unmet financial need for community college students (Walizer, 2018). According to analysis of U.S. Department of Education data conducted by CLASP, average unmet need (the difference between the cost of college and financial resources that are not repaid, including scholarships and Expected Family Contributions reported through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)) for community college students increased by 23%, from \$4,011 to \$4,920, in just four years between the 2011-2012 and 2015-2016 academic years (Walizer, 2018). Using 2011-2012 data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study

(BPS), Sublett and Taylor (2021) found that while 22% of community college students had no unmet financial need (defined as the difference between the total cost of attendance - including tuition and fees as well as books and supplies, room and board, and personal expenses - and total funds available through grant aid and Expected Family Contributions), the average amount of unmet need was \$4,865, with the total amount of unmet need ranging from \$10 to over \$28,000. They conclude that in order to increase college access and success, financial aid policies should take the full cost of college into consideration, including non-tuition costs and the opportunity cost of lost labor market participation (Sublett & Taylor, 2021).

Finally, while the long-term economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' financial stability remain to be seen, the pandemic has only exacerbated financial challenges for the low-income students who have not been pushed out of higher education altogether and are the most likely to be at risk of experiencing basic needs insecurity. Between November 2020 and November 2021, the Consumer Price Index recorded the largest 12-month increase since 1982. Overall, the Consumer Price Index increased 6.8%, with food prices increasing 6.1% and energy prices increasing 33.3% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). Adding to the burden of dramatic price increases, between mid-March 2020 and early February 2021, the greatest loss of employment income was concentrated among low-income households. While 29% of adults from households with incomes \$200,000 and above experienced a loss of income, 56% of households with incomes below \$25,000 did so (Carnevale, 2021). Furthermore, Black and Latino workers were disproportionately impacted by loss of employment income, exacerbating preexisting inequities (Carnevale, 2021). Reflecting similar trends, nearly 30% of respondents to the Hope Center's spring 2020 #RealCollege Survey reported losing

employment due to the pandemic, with Black and Latinx workers disproportionately impacted (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2021).

2.4 Effects of Basic Needs Insecurity and of Services to Alleviate Basic Needs

Insecurity

Until recently, relatively few studies had examined the effects of experiencing basic needs insecurity or of participating in campus-based basic needs services on college students' academic outcomes (Novak & Johnson, 2017). As attention to these issues has grown, research has consistently identified a correlation between food and housing insecurity and negative college outcomes. Findings on the effects of campus-based services are mixed but provide some indications that services may have the potential to ameliorate the effects of basic needs insecurity.

Effects of Experiencing Food and Housing Insecurity

The most frequently reported on academic outcomes for students experiencing basic needs insecurity are those related to academic performance and GPA. In a survey of close to 3,800 students at 34 community and 4-year colleges conducted by the College and University Food Bank Alliance and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, nearly a third of students who reported experiencing food insecurity indicated that hunger and / or housing insecurity were negatively affecting their academic performance, and 25% had dropped a class (Dubick et al., 2016). Similarly, other college-based surveys have found that students experiencing food and housing insecurity reported lower GPAs, expressed more academic concerns and were more likely to be considering dropping out (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018; Wood et al., 2016). In a study of food insecurity among 301 students attending two community

colleges in Maryland, students experiencing food insecurity were more likely to self-report a low GPA (2.0–2.49) and less likely to self-report a high GPA (3.5–4.0) (Maroto et al., 2015).

At Portland State University, students experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness had GPAs slightly below average (3.40, 3.41, and 3.42 respectively compared to the sample average of 3.47 and the average of 3.55 for students without any basic needs insecurities) (Townley et al., 2020). Respondents to the Hope Center’s 2019 #RealCollege Survey who were experiencing basic needs insecurity self-reported grades of C or lower slightly more often than students who were not (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). Finally, two of the eight articles about food insecurity among college students that Mukigi and Brown (2018) reviewed reported that students experiencing food insecurity were significantly more likely to have lower GPAs.

Fewer studies have looked at the impact of basic needs insecurity on college completion, but those that have also reported negative outcomes. Based on secondary analysis of longitudinal data from a nationally representative sample of college students included in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), Wolfson et al. (2022) concluded that students who experienced food insecurity had lower odds of completing any type of degree. Additionally, they observed that food insecurity was particularly likely to negatively impact degree attainment for first-generation students (Wolfson et al., 2022). Research on housing insecurity has also found that students who experienced housing insecurity during their first year of college were more likely to be enrolled part-time and were 10% less likely to either have completed a degree or still be enrolled after four years regardless of background characteristics (Broton, as cited in Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017).

These findings support a parallel body of research that has documented negative effects

of basic needs insecurity on K-12 students, including lower scores in reading and math, decreased memory, and higher rates of absenteeism and suspensions (Cady, 2014), as well as research on the association between socioeconomic status and college outcomes. While it is only relatively recently that researchers have begun to explore the association between food and housing insecurity and college outcomes, a robust body of literature has documented the correlation between income and college outcomes. The gap in college persistence between the highest and lowest income quartiles is large and has stayed consistent over time. Among students born between 1961–1964, the gap between those in the highest and lowest income quartiles who enrolled in college and completed a degree by the age of 25 was 35 percentage points. Among students born between 1979–1982, the gap was 36 percentage points (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011).

When looking at postsecondary attainment for all high school students, not just those who enroll in college, the gaps are even larger. Among high school students who were sophomores in 2002, 60% of high socioeconomic status (SES) students had completed a Bachelor’s degree or higher by 2012 compared to 29% of middle SES students and 14% of low SES students, representing a gap of 46 percentage points between high and low SES students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Percentages of students whose highest level of educational attainment was an associate degree were similar (8% of low SES students, 10% of middle SES, and 7% of high SES students), but a much higher percentage of low SES students (28%) had only obtained a high school degree or less compared to high SES students (4%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Effects of Services to Address Basic Needs Insecurities

Research on the impacts of attempting to mitigate the negative effects of basic needs insecurities through campus-based services suggests that these services can be beneficial, but

few rigorous causal studies have been conducted, and the studies that do exist have varied in terms of type of service, service delivery, and target population, making it difficult to compare trends across studies. Evaluations of campus-based services have primarily focused on the three most well-established types of services: those related to food insecurity, emergency aid, and financial counseling and assistance accessing public benefits. Like research on the association between the experience of basic needs insecurity and academic outcomes, most studies have also focused on short-term outcomes such as GPA rather than longer-term persistence and completion outcomes.

Food Security. An evaluation of academic outcomes for 320 students who applied for Students Against Hunger between spring 2015 – spring 2016, a program at Colorado State University that provides students in need free meal swipes at campus dining halls, found that a higher percentage of students who received the meal credits persisted to the following semester than students who applied and were waitlisted for the program (Novak & Johnson, 2017). Furthermore, while students who received the assistance maintained their grade point average (GPA) during the semester they participated in the program, students who were waitlisted experienced a statistically significant drop in GPA the semester they applied and did not receive assistance compared to the previous semester. Although the analysis was not causal because students were not randomly assigned, the authors suggest that the findings are strong enough to warrant considering meal swipe programs as a potentially effective means of addressing food insecurity on college campuses. (Novak & Johnson, 2017).

Student self-reports from a survey of Swipe Out Hunger participants also indicate that meal swipe programs may have positive effects on persistence and GPA (Swipe Out Hunger, 2018). Among the 800 students attending both private and public universities who completed the

survey in spring 2018, 64% agreed that meal swipes helped them stay in school, and 52% agreed that meal swipes helped them improve their grades. This was true despite the fact that the intensity of support students received varied from three to 90 meals over the course of the semester depending on the institution and the availability of resources (Swipe Out Hunger, 2018).

In what is perhaps the only experimental study to date of meal vouchers, the Hope Center conducted a random assignment evaluation of the Meal Voucher Program at Bunker Hill Community College (Broton et al., 2020). Of the 598 eligible students who either reported experiencing food insecurity on a pre-treatment survey or who reported an expected family contribution of \$0 as well as an adjusted gross income of \$24,000 or less on the FAFSA, 126 were randomly selected to receive meal vouchers for use at the college cafeteria and cafe (\$300 for the fall 2017 semester and \$400 for the spring 2018 semester) while the remainder served as the comparison group. Of the 126 invited to participate, 105 students picked up the debit card for the meal vouchers and 103 used it at least once. Over the course of the 2017-2018 academic year, the invitation to receive meal vouchers was associated with statistically significant increases in the number of credits attempted and completed and with slight increases in GPA and fall-to-spring persistence, although those increases were non-significant (Broton et al., 2020).

Finally, around the same time that the Hope Center released the meal voucher report, it also released findings from a random assignment evaluation of a food scholarship program at Houston Community College (Goldrick-Rab, Hernandez, et al., 2020). Through the food scholarship program, 1,000 randomly selected eligible students were able to receive up to 60 pounds of food two times a month by attending a market operated by the Houston Food Bank. To be eligible for the program, students needed to have reported either an estimated family

contribution of \$0 or an income of \$25,000 or less on the FAFSA. A comparison group was created by randomly selecting another 1,000 students who were eligible for the scholarship but not selected to be part of the treatment group. Data were collected from January 2018–May 2019. Overall, program participation was relatively low. Only 51% of students who were offered the food scholarship accepted it, and only 37% of those who were offered the scholarship attended one of the food bank’s markets to pick up food. The scholarship program had no effects on GPA, credits attempted, credits completed, likelihood of meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) or persistence (Goldrick-Rab, Hernandez, et al., 2020).

Emergency Aid. Several evaluations have been conducted of emergency aid programs, with mixed to moderately positive results. Geckeler (2008) conducted an implementation evaluation of the Dreamkeepers and Angel Fund Emergency Financial Aid Programs and found similar retention rates among recipients and non-recipients. In this case, however, the lack of results could represent a positive impact, in that those who applied for aid likely had greater financial needs than non-recipients and may have been at greater risk of dropping out in the absence of the program. Without having a formal comparison group for analysis, however, it is impossible to know how similar recipients and non-recipients were. A report on the Dash Emergency Grant suggested that the program could be having a positive impact on retention based on comparisons to national retention rates, but no causal analysis was conducted (Great Lakes, 2016). A randomized controlled trial that compared the effectiveness of providing access to emergency financial assistance on its own ($n = 94$) with access to emergency financial assistance plus intensive case management ($n = 126$) and with a control group that did not receive emergency financial assistance or additional services but had access to existing college services ($n = 439$) found that emergency financial assistance on its own had no impact on student

outcomes. In conjunction with case management it had a substantial impact on persistence and degree completion, but primarily among women (Evans et al., 2017). Three years (six semesters) after joining the study, women who participated in the comprehensive treatment group with access to emergency financial aid (treatment on the treated) were 35.8 percentage points more likely to still be enrolled in college and 31.5 percentage points more likely to have completed an associate degree. The program, *Stay the Course*, was designed by Catholic Charities Fort Worth and implemented during the fall 2013 semester on the Trinity River Campus of Tarrant County College. (Evans et al., 2017).

Benefits Assistance. Three significant evaluations of the Single Stop Community College Initiative to provide financial counseling and assistance accessing public benefits have been conducted to date (Daugherty et al., 2016; Price et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2018). All three studies used quasi-experimental causal inference techniques and found that students who utilize the services enroll for more terms and attempt more credits. Using propensity score matching to study the effects of Single Stop at Gateway Community and Technical College, Price et al. (2014) found that students who received benefits such as TANF and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) enrolled for more terms than comparison students. In 2016, the RAND Corporation released a report using multivariate regression and coarsened exact matching, a matching technique used to compare treatment and control groups in observational studies, to assess the association between use of Single Stop services and college outcomes at nine colleges (reported on as four college systems)⁶ participating in the Community College

⁶ Participating colleges included: Bunker Hill Community College, Borough of Manhattan Community College (CUNY), Bronx Community College (CUNY), Hostos Community College (CUNY), Kingsborough Community College (CUNY), LaGuardia Community College (CUNY), Queensborough Community College (CUNY), Delgado Community College, and Miami Dade College. Outcomes for the CUNY colleges were reported in aggregate. Miami Dade College consists of three campuses for which outcomes were also aggregated (Daugherty, Johnston, & Tsai, 2016).

Initiative (Daugherty et al., 2016). The study examined five outcomes: persistence into a second semester, persistence into a second year, credits attempted, credits earned, and the ratio of credits attempted to credits earned. On average, students who used Single Stop attempted more credits and were more likely to persist into their second and third semesters. Findings on both credit enrollment and persistence were positive at two of the college systems, while at one of the systems credit enrollment findings were positive while persistence findings were not significant, and at one system neither findings were significant (Daugherty et al., 2016). Finally, in 2018 Metis Associates published an impact report with findings from an evaluation of the Single Stop program at the Community College of Philadelphia (Zhu et al., 2018). Results of analyses using propensity score matching indicated that the program had statistically significant positive impacts on GPA, the ratio of completed to attempted college-level credits, and semester-to-semester persistence (Zhu et al., 2018).

Based on the studies conducted by Daugherty et al. (2016) and Zhu et al. (2018), the Institute for Education Science's What Works Clearinghouse concluded that there is moderate evidence suggesting that participation in Single Stop may increase academic achievement and college persistence (What Works Clearinghouse, 2020). More information about the effectiveness of Single Stop is forthcoming, as the Institute for Education Science awarded the RAND Corporation a five-year grant in 2020 to conduct a random assignment evaluation that will include approximately 6,400 students from 10 open and broad access colleges (Institute for Education Science, 2020).

2.5 Historical Context on the Role of Non-Academic Student Services in Higher Education

To understand where the provision of basic needs services fits within the field of higher

education, it is helpful to examine the history of non-academic student services, often referred to as student affairs or simply student services, on college campuses. While professions within the field of higher education originally focused on academics and the administrative business of running an institution, student affairs nonetheless has a long and robust history (Manning et al., 2014). The student affairs profession dates back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when two distinct strands of work began focusing attention on higher education's responsibility to students beyond teaching (Coomes & Gerda, 2016).

One of these two strands was the creation of a position for deans, a full-time role dedicated to overseeing multiple aspects of student life, including students' social, academic, and career needs. Originally the role was gender-specific, with separate positions for a dean of women and a dean of men. The development of the first professional organization for deans in 1919, the Conference of Deans and Advisors of Men, represented one of the earliest indicators that attention to students' entire collegiate experience, not just their experience in the classroom, was becoming an established role for higher education. Today the Conference exists as the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (Coomes & Gerda, 2016). NASPA members represent a wide variety of roles and functions within higher education, ranging from “from vice presidents of student affairs to undergraduate student leaders first considering a career in the field” (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, n.d.).

The second strand of work giving rise to the modern student affairs profession was personnel work (Coomes & Gerda, 2016). Lloyd-Jones (1954) traced the origins of student personnel work to the emergence of the mental hygiene movement and the rising use of psychological testing to inform vocational guidance in the early 1900s. She argued that both

trends contributed to an emphasis on career-focused personal counseling. Personnel workers first formed their own professional organization in 1924 (Coomes & Gerda, 2016). In 1931, the organization was renamed the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), by which it is still known today. Since its founding, ACPA's mission has evolved from employment placement to a broader emphasis on their role as an organization that "transforms higher education by creating and sharing influential scholarship, shaping critically reflective practice, and advocating for equitable and inclusive learning environments" (American College Personnel Association, n.d.).

The movement toward ACPA's broad emphasis on supporting student learning began as early as the 1940s, when student personnel work gained further momentum from social science research focusing on individual social and emotional development. Colleges responded by creating positions for student personnel workers who began providing increasingly specialized student services ranging from personal counseling to housing, admissions, fraternities and sororities, and other student activities (Lloyd-Jones, 1954). Other influences on the growth of student personnel work included developments in the use of record-keeping about students' personal backgrounds and academic progress to inform academic advising (Omer & Shepard, 1954; Yoakum, 1919); expansions in dining hall and residential services in recognition of the fact that students "not only must have shelter and food while on campus but also a full-rounded living experience which will develop them into better and more adequate persons" (Brooks, 1954, p. 64); and growing awareness of the negative impacts of high tuition costs and financial strains on students' ability to learn (Bulger, 1954).

Two other particularly noteworthy trends in the development of student affairs are the history of health and mental health services on college campuses, both of which were recognized

as “central to the mission of higher education” as early as 1947 in a report by the President’s Commission on Higher Education (President’s Commission on Higher Education, as cited in Prescott, 2011, p. 467). Coinciding with the rise of personnel work and the mental hygiene movement, mental health services began appearing on college campuses in the early 1900s (Kraft, 2011). Prior to that time, mental health services primarily focused on treating acute psychiatric disorders through institutionalization. In contrast, the mental hygiene movement focused on the benefits of therapy for addressing less severe personality and psychosocial issues (Kraft, 2011).

Drawing from this movement, early mental health services on college campuses operated with the objective of fostering students’ personality development and helping students maximize their potential, rather than of addressing severe mental illness. By the 1960s, college mental health programs had expanded their scope to address a wider array of mental health problems and services had become relatively commonplace (Kraft, 2011). In recent years, mental health services have expanded even further to include support for recovery from substance abuse and drug and alcohol addiction (Kafka, 2019; Valbrun, 2019). As of April 2022, The Association of Recovery in Higher Education (ARHE) included partnerships with 156 college- and university-based recovery programs (Association of Recovery in Higher Education, n.d.).

Health services have an even longer history on college campuses, with Amherst College widely credited as having developed the first campus-based health services in 1860, a hygiene department directed by a physician who was also given faculty status (Prescott, 2011). Initially, health services were primarily preventative in nature, with an emphasis on promoting physical fitness as a means of preventing illness (Prescott, 2011). As college health services grew, however, they became closely intertwined with national conversations concerning access to

health care. The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 not only spurred the expansion of health services on college campuses, but also motivated college health services providers to join a national movement for universal health care access. At the same time, students, particularly those with limited financial means at public universities, began advocating for greater access to affordable health care on campus. In response, some college and student organizations created funds to provide access to health services for students who were unable to afford them (Prescott, 2011). In the 1960s and 1970s, student advocacy was also integral to national efforts to expand access to reproductive health care as well as services for individuals with disabilities. Today, with college health services and student health insurance plans quite common, Prescott (2011) argues that college health services have a valuable role to play not only in promoting access to health care, but also by so doing in promoting student persistence and retention.

In addition to examining how the services that are considered part of student affairs have evolved, it is also important to consider how the evolution of student affairs has been shaped by the changing demographics of the students it serves. Beginning in the 1970s, student affairs began placing greater emphasis on specialized services for specific student populations, including women and students with disabilities (Manning et al., 2014). Since then, the expansion of access to higher education among those historically excluded has led to the continued growth in the range of services available to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population (Manning et al., 2014). For example, initiatives to support Black male students on college campuses have become increasingly common over the past 15 years (Brooms, 2018).

In considering how the student affairs field has developed to meet the needs of various student populations, one other critical area to examine is the history of student services on community college campuses. In many ways, the development of student services in community

colleges has followed a similar path to that of four-year colleges and universities. For example, what was at the time it was published in 1967 “the most definitive list of student service functions for the two-year college,” identified many of the same services that had long been associated with four-year institutions (Creamer, 1994, p. 442). The list, which was created as part of the Project for Appraisal and Development of Junior College Student Personnel Programs, included 24 functions divided into seven categories: 1) orientation services, 2) appraisal services (personnel records, educational testing), 3) counseling and advising services, 4) student activities, 5) registration functions, 6) financial aid, and 7) organizational administrative functions (Collins, as cited in Creamer, 1994).

However, the development of student services on community college campuses has also been strongly shaped by its unique mission. Manning et al., (2014) note that community colleges have historically served four distinct purposes: providing vocational education, preparation for transfer to four-year institutions, developmental education for academically underprepared students, and continuing education. To carry out these multiple roles, student services on community colleges have developed greater emphases on areas such as educational testing and helping students navigate the transfer process (Manning et al., 2014).

Given their role as open-access institutions designed to serve the local community, one other distinctive aspect of student services on community college campuses is the general lack of residential services (Manning et al., 2014). Because community college students are primarily commuter students, many of whom attend part-time, community college students have historically been less involved in student services and activities than those attending four-year residential colleges (Astin, 1984). Nonetheless, despite this limitation student services on many community college campuses today are strongly focused on providing a comprehensive array of

supports. For example, Achieving the Dream, a national non-profit dedicated to improving student success on community college campuses and currently working with over 200 colleges in 41 states, has outlined a platform for holistic student support including services for advising, basic needs, career planning, tutoring and academic support, mental health, and financial planning (Achieving the Dream, n.d.).

The history of the development of student affairs clearly establishes strong precedents for higher education's assumption of a comprehensive and holistic role in addressing students' needs both within and outside the classroom. Further insight into how and why the field of student affairs evolved in the way it did can be found in the mission statements and core philosophies guiding the work. One of the earliest of these is the 1937 report "The Student Personnel Point of View" produced by the American Council on Education (American Council on Education, 1937). The report, which was updated in 1949, has since become regarded as the foundation of the organization of student affairs into a distinct field that is integral to the functioning of higher education (Manning et al., 2014).

"The Student Personnel Point of View" contributed to the development of the field in two ways. It identified the range of programs and services⁷ offered by student personnel workers, and it established the emerging field's philosophical orientation. The authors argue that if higher education is to fulfill its purpose of helping students develop their full potential so that they are prepared to make meaningful contributions to society, colleges must "consider the student as a whole – his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional make up, his physical condition,

⁷ The complete list of programs and services can be summarized as follows: admissions, new student orientation, aptitude testing, academic advising (selection of course of study), academic and non-academic counseling (study habits, emotional and social development), career counseling, physical and mental health, housing program, food service, extra-curricular activities, social and religious life, financial aid, student records, discipline, and employment placement after graduation.

his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, his aesthetic appreciations" (American Council on Education, 1937, p. 1). This orientation not only reflected John Dewey's broader educational philosophy on the importance of educating the "whole student," but also identified a particular role for student personnel workers in supporting the development of the whole student (Creamer, 1994).

Echoing this same sentiment nearly twenty years later, Lloyd-Jones (1954) stated that student personnel workers were guided in the provision of services by a core belief in the importance of supporting "the *whole* person and not merely in his mind or his economic productivity or some other one of his aspects" (p. 5). After conducting a historical review of philosophical statements made about student affairs as a profession from 1937–1999 (Evans & Reason, 2001) concluded that the core value of attention to the development of the whole student remained largely the same over time. Reflecting on how the ways in which the student affairs profession carries out this mission of supporting the whole student has evolved over time, Manning et al. (2014) note that the field has progressed from offering a series of discrete, disconnected services, to organizing services into a comprehensive strategy for supporting student development outside of the classroom, to integrating services throughout the institution as an essential component of student learning inside and outside of the classroom.

Despite increasingly sophisticated attention to the "whole person," however, analyses of the origins and purposes of higher education in the United States have never suggested that addressing students' inability to meet basic needs, as opposed to providing residential and dining services for those who can afford to pay for them (either independently or with the assistance of financial aid), represents part of the core mission of educating students (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1994; Delbanco, 2012; Lucas, 2006). In fact, the common perception has historically

been quite the opposite – that it is normal for students to have to scrimp and pinch pennies, to “live on ramen noodles” and “couch-surf” to get through college. (Field, 2017a; Harris, 2017).

The expectation that students should work to pay their way through college is also deeply embedded in the federal government’s approach to financial aid. Since 1964, one of the largest federal employment subsidy programs in the country and one of the oldest forms of federal financial aid for low-income students has been the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program (Scott-Clayton & Minaya, 2016). Karen Stout, the president and CEO of the nonprofit student success organization Achieving the Dream, described the difference between the traditional mission of student affairs and the new emphasis on the provision of social basic needs services in higher education as the difference between providing services for the purpose of educational attainment versus providing services for the purpose of poverty alleviation (Smith, 2018).

Finally, it is important to note that expanding the mission of higher education beyond the strictly academic has always been met with at least some degree of criticism and resistance. At the time she was writing, Lloyd-Jones (1954, p. 1) claimed that student personnel work constituted the “fastest growing development within the broad context of education.” However, this development was not without its detractors. While some viewed the growth as an accomplishment, others viewed it as “excrescence,” causing Lloyd-Jones to position the book as a defense of the contributions made by student personnel work to “deeper teaching” and the broader purpose of education (Lloyd-Jones, 1954, p. 1). Similarly, the expansion of health services on college campuses in the first half of the twentieth century was also met by resistance, particularly from private physicians. An editorial in a medical journal from 1927 contended that colleges were “under no more obligation to supply medical care” than they were “to supply clothing, food or any other necessities” (*AMA Bulletin*, as cited in Prescott, 2011). A similar

tension exists today, with some higher education practitioners viewing the provision of basic needs services as beyond the purview of colleges' responsibility. (Field, 2016b; Price et al., , 2014; Smith, 2018).

Interestingly, the expansion of basic needs services is occurring in tandem with an expansion of student services at the other end of the spectrum, so-called "luxury amenities" such as the \$85 million-dollar recreation center at Louisiana State University (LSU) complete with a lazy river profiled in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Stripling, 2017) or the "campus concierge" service at New Mexico State University that provides everything from laundry to travel booking services (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). In some ways these types of services can be seen as an extension of the student affairs' mission to attend to the whole student. Leaders at New Mexico State, for example, view the concierge services as a means of reducing student stress and improving retention (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). Critics, however, question the necessity of these services and argue that they represent a means of "status differentiation" intended to attract a large enough number of applicants to guarantee that only a select few will be granted admission, thereby maintaining an institution's elite status (Stevens, 2009, p. 22).

2.6 Conclusion

In addition to underscoring the complexity of competing interests that fall under the umbrella of student services, debates surrounding the evolution of the field raise multiple questions related to organizational theory that are pertinent to the widespread growth of basic needs services on college campuses. How do colleges decide what constitutes an appropriate role for higher education? How and why do certain types of services become institutionalized as an expected role for higher education to play? To what extent are colleges' decisions to provide services driven by internal goals versus external pressures?

Understanding how the provision of basic needs services relates to traditional student services is made even more complicated by that fact that there is no clear consensus around what constitutes a basic needs service. Interestingly for example, health and mental health services are typically not included in discussions of basic needs on college campuses, perhaps because many colleges and universities have an infrastructure in place for delivering these services. Only a few reports have linked food and housing insecurity with health and mental health (Eisenberg et al., 2016; Townley et al., 2020; Wood, et al., 2016). The NASPA definition of basic needs services focuses on what they term “emergency aid” and includes a mix of direct, in-kind services (e.g. food pantries, campus vouchers), financial supports for material hardships (e.g. emergency loans for unexpected expenses such as car repair bills), and financial support for students who are experiencing material hardships to cover college costs (e.g. completion scholarships), but does not include health or mental health services (Kruger et al., 2016). The Lumina report on improving financial well-being for low-income students addresses health services indirectly, calling for more programs to help students apply for public benefits, including health insurance (Chaplot et al., 2015).

Adding to the lack of clarity concerning what constitutes a basic needs service, the same type of service often operates quite differently at different institutions. For example, studies of emergency aid programs have found a great deal of variation in the definition of an emergency, eligibility criteria, target populations, funding sources, and other administrative aspects of the programs – sometimes even within the same institution if the college had funding for more than one program (Dachelet & Goldrick-Rab, 2015; Geckeler, 2008).

Finally, anecdotal evidence also suggests that programs which begin with the goal of providing a specific service or set of services may expand over time based on students’ needs.

For example, an article about the Single Stop office at the Borough of Manhattan College noted that the office initially provided the four types of services that comprise the core components of the Single Stop model: legal services, financial counseling, tax preparation, and assistance accessing public benefits. The process of providing of those services, however, revealed student needs in other areas so the office began offering services related to health care, immigration, and housing (Ramirez, 2014).

By applying an organizational theory lens to consider the role of higher education in addressing students' basic needs, this study aims to provide insight into exactly these kinds of issues. The following chapter lays out the theoretical framework for the study and describes how it was used to guide the research design.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

To better understand the provision of basic needs services on college campuses, I applied two perspectives from organizational theory. Institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995) provided tools for understanding the broad political and cultural environment shaping the provision of basic needs services on college campuses, while Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model of organizational analysis provided a model for understanding how colleges are integrating basic needs services into their organizational functioning. To connect these two theoretical perspectives and develop a comprehensive picture of the factors influencing how colleges are approaching the provision of basic needs service, I used the concept of sensemaking (Weick, 1993, 1995) as a framework for analyzing how colleges make meaning of both external environmental pressures and internal organizational dynamics.

3.1 Understanding the External Environment: Institutional Theory

One of the primary organizational theories addressing the relationship between organizations and their external environment is institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer et al., 1983). This theory examines why organizational structures exist in the forms that they do, and posits that organizations rationalize decisions about how to develop structures and undertake core tasks based on their perceptions of what society and the external environment have institutionalized as legitimate organizational functions. In some cases, this may result in inefficiencies or even detract from the work of the organization, but without being perceived as legitimate by those external to the organization, many organizations would be unable to succeed (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In fact, Meyer and Rowan (1977, p. 341) go so far as to propose that the "formal structures of many organizations... reflect the myths of their institutional environments instead of the demands of their work activities." In other words, they suggest that

organizations can become isomorphic with their interpretations of what the environment demands of them. As a field, education is subject to deeply embedded cultural norms regarding the roles and functions of schools. Metz (1989) found that the schools she studied were so beholden to the “common script” (schedule, curricula, textbooks, pedagogical methods) of a “real school” that teachers had difficulty deviating from the script even when it alienated students from the education process and contributed to poor student outcomes. Although Metz identified multiple dynamics at play in the adherence to the common script, one of the primary drivers of its persistence was demand from parents and the community. Even when schools were not serving students well, the common script represented confirmation that schools were fulfilling their function of providing equal educational opportunity, thus legitimizing them as real schools (Metz, 1989).

Nonetheless, organizations, including schools and higher education institutions, also act on their environments. To cope with the tension between satisfying external and internal demands, an organization may maintain surface-level compliance with its environment while continuing to conduct its work in ways that make the most sense for internal functioning (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Policies that exist on paper may not be enforced in practice or may be implemented inconsistently; workplace norms may vary dramatically from official regulations. These ceremonial performances buffer the organization from its external environment while simultaneously allowing it to maintain its legitimacy. For this study, it will be important to consider how environmental expectations for the provision of basic needs services affect colleges’ efforts to maintain organizational legitimacy, and to assess whether colleges are interpreting those demands as necessitating either deep changes to the technical work of the organization, or a more symbolic response.

Scott's Institutional Pillars

Further insight into how organizations establish legitimacy in response to their external environments can be found in Scott's (1995) analysis of what he describes as the three core "institutional pillars." Scott defined institutions as "cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior" (Scott, 1995, p. 33). Each of these three pillars provides a different method of establishing and maintaining organizational legitimacy. The cognitive pillar involves rational decisions about how to act in a specific context. The normative pillar is driven by social norms and values. Finally, the regulative pillar is concerned with specific rules, sanctions, and legislation. When applying an institutional theory lens to the provision of basic needs services in higher education, it becomes clear that the provision of services may be affected by a variety of different cognitive, normative, and regulative pressures from the external environment.

Cognitive Pillar. From a cognitive perspective, for example, the fact that so many colleges and universities have started to provide basic needs services may convince other colleges to follow suit, either to avoid standing out for failing to provide a service now expected of colleges and universities (what Scott (1995) describes as a rationale based on orthodoxy), or to cultivate the image of being an organization that offers the same services as other institutions perceived to be influential and successful (what Scott (1995) describes as a rationale based on status processes). Scott (1995) also suggests that part of the logic through which critical mass leads to imitation is the attempt to manage uncertainty by adopting practices already widely in use. Given that it is only relatively recently that basic needs have started being discussed as part of higher education's role, many higher education institutions have likely been uncertain about how to approach the tasks of providing services to directly address students' basic needs.

Historical accounts of the growth of the student affairs field offer an example of how status-based justifications may have played a role in increasing the prevalence of student services. Lloyd-Jones (1954) attributed the initial increase in the specialization of student services to the fact that half of all college students at that time were attending large universities where it made sense to divide student personnel work into discrete functions. After large universities had adopted this approach, Lloyd-Jones (1954, p. 4) reasoned that smaller colleges then did the same because “the prestige and glorification” attached to “the very fact of ‘bigness’” of the large universities would have suggested that their approach “must be right and best.” By the 1950s the work had expanded to such an extent that specialized student services had become an expected role for higher education. Stressing this point, Lloyd-Jones noted, “Every book and article about personnel work that has been analyzed has implicit in it the idea that... student personnel work is a collection of expert services which every self-respecting educational institution should offer to its students” (Lloyd-Jones, 1954, p. 7).

However, it is unclear what exactly the tipping point is when the number of colleges providing services has reached a critical mass capable of influencing other colleges to adopt basic needs services. Additionally, the direction of status processes is unclear and may vary based on institutional sector. For example, the prevalence of basic needs services at community colleges and broad-access four-year universities may not affect more selective institutions that view themselves as serving a different, more affluent, student population, or may even deter more selective institutions from offering services.

Another type of cognitive argument for offering basic needs services could be that they represent a logical extension of the historical role of student affairs in attending to “the total growth and development of the student” (Omer & Shepard, 1954). This kind of reasoning can be

seen in the expansion of student personnel work from vocational counseling and employment placement to the much broader suite of services previously described that comprise the current student affairs field. Summarizing the rationale for this transition, Lloyd-Jones (1954) noted that it was impossible to provide vocational guidance without recognizing the extent to which students' knowledge, skills, and interests were influenced by a variety of socioemotional factors that had to be addressed in order to successfully engage students in career planning. The president of Montgomery College in Maryland recently made a similar case, stating, "We have to be particularly aware of what our students present to us... when they come to us in our classrooms and organizations... Students will not thrive and learn from an organization that ignores the complexities of intersections" (Smith, 2018). On the other hand, there are likely to be those who view basic needs services as definitively beyond the boundaries of colleges' responsibility. For example, Reed (2019) recently raised this issue in an editorial for *Inside Higher Ed* in which he discussed resistance to addressing basic needs from colleagues who argued that doing so amounted to "mission creep" and maintained that the college should prioritize teaching while allowing external social service agencies to address basic needs.

Normative Pillar. Normative motivations for providing basic needs services are likely to be tied to perceptions of students as either the "deserving" or the "undeserving" poor (Katz 1989). Tracing the historical trajectory of the relationship between public perceptions of poverty and public policy approaches to poverty alleviation, Katz (1989) identifies the emergence of capitalism and democracy in the early 1800s as a major turning point in the history of social welfare. Prior to that time, poverty was so widespread that it was accepted as virtually inevitable. Poverty wasn't shameful, it was a fact of life. Social welfare policies were driven by practical considerations resulting from limited resources. Without the ability to support everyone,

communities reserved assistance for permanent residents and for the truly needy (those not deemed “able-bodied”) (Katz, 1989). These distinctions, however, proved impossible to maintain. And as the rapid growth of capitalism gave rise to what would become an enduring myth concerning universal opportunity for economic prosperity, attitudes toward poverty began to change. Rather than “the natural result of misfortune,” poverty became “the willful result of indolence and vice” (Katz, 1989, p. 14). This redefinition of poverty as a moral issue, and the corresponding separation of individuals into the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor, has had a lasting impact on U.S. culture.

In terms of implications for the provision of basic needs services on college campuses, it is possible that both perceptions of poverty will have an influence. On one hand, the decision to pursue a college degree is likely to be associated with self-determination and the hopes of ultimately obtaining a higher paying job – characteristics linked to conceptualizations of the deserving poor. Media coverage addressing issues of hunger and homelessness in higher education is advancing this perception by highlighting cases of hard-working, dedicated students struggling to beat the odds (Field 2017b; Watanabe, 2018). Colleges adopting this perspective thus may offer services out of a sense that it is the morally correct thing to do. At the same time, however, normative influences could also provide a disincentive for providing basic needs services. One of the leading advocates for the expansion of social basic needs services on college campuses, Sara Goldrick-Rab, believes that there are still those in higher education who “view adults as personally responsible for their own poverty,” and attribute homelessness to “moral failure” (Field, 2017a).

Beyond conceptions of the deserving and undeserving poor, new social norms may also be creating pressure on colleges and universities to increase college access and success for low-

income students. For example, an alliance of selective colleges and universities supported by funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the American Talent Initiative, came together with the mission of starting a public campaign to raise awareness about the importance of increasing higher education access at selective institutions for lower-income students. The alliance set a goal of collectively recruiting and graduating an additional 50,000 lower-income students at institutions with a six-year completion rate of at least 70% by 2025. Beginning with 30 institutions in 2016, the alliance had grown by 2020 to include 130 colleges and universities (Kurzweil et al., 2021). These institutions may well find that opening their doors to more low-income students will necessitate new conversations about how best to serve these students, particularly in relation to basic needs. Additionally, the fact that the alliance is being led by some of the most elite colleges and universities in the country may start making it more difficult for other selective colleges that primarily serve higher-income students to view providing basic needs services as the purview of community colleges or other broad-access colleges or to express concerns that providing basic needs services would run counter to the norms and expectations attached to the image of elite institutions.

Further strengthening the momentum behind this push to redefine norms regarding higher education's role in supporting low-income students is increasingly vocal activism from students themselves. A growing number of high-profile student protests at both broad-access public universities and elite private colleges suggests that students' views are causing colleges to reevaluate their responsibility in addressing basic needs. For example, when students at Howard University held a nine-day protest related to a number of grievances, one of their demands, which the university ultimately agreed to meet, was the creation of a food pantry (Bird, 2018). In the spring of 2019, over 300 students at the University of Kentucky participated to varying

degrees in a six-day hunger strike that ultimately led to the president of the university agreeing to hire a staff member dedicated to coordinating basic needs services, and to reallocate two existing emergency grant funds to create a “one-stop” shop responsible for helping students address issues of food and housing insecurity (Blackford, 2019; Patel, 2019a). At the same time, students at an elite private liberal arts college, Sarah Lawrence College, generated national attention when they occupied a campus building and issued an extensive list of demands related to the needs of low-income students. While the demand that garnered the most attention, and the most pushback, called for free laundry detergent, the demands also included access to housing over winter break when dorms are typically closed, and free meals when campus dining services are closed. As a whole, the demands raise much broader questions about what constitutes a basic need and how far the role of higher education in addressing those needs extends (Patel, 2019b).

In addition to protests at individual institutions, a national student organization, the Student Basic Needs Coalition, is advocating for change at the college, state, and federal levels to increase financial support for students experiencing basic needs insecurity. Originally founded in 2019 by a group of students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville to address food insecurity, the organization currently includes five chapters across seven states and has expanded its mission to focus on a comprehensive range of basic needs (Student Basic Needs Coalition, n.d.).

Regulative Pillar. Given the location of the study sample in New York, New York State legislation requiring public colleges and universities to provide a food pantry or access to comparable food services creates a unique opportunity to examine the effects of regulative structures on the provision of basic needs services (Governor’s Press Office, 2018). According to a press release prepared by the State University of New York (SUNY) system following

Governor Cuomo’s announcement of the proposal for the “No Student Goes Hungry” program during his 2018 State of the State address, approximately half of New York’s public colleges and universities (including both SUNY and City University of New York (CUNY) institutions) had a food pantry in place at the time of the announcement (The State University of New York, 2017). Eight months later, in late August 2018, the Governor’s Press Office (2018) reported that nearly 90% of CUNY and SUNY institutions either provided a food pantry or offered similar access to food through external partnerships. In September 2019, the State University of New York (SUNY) Food Insecurity Task Force reported that all of the CUNY and SUNY institutions were complying with the requirement, with 78% of institutions doing so through on-campus services and 22% through off-campus services (Graham, 2019). While the state requirement clearly seems to have had an impact, there are still a number of ways in which colleges may have reacted to it. For the public colleges that already had a food pantry or similar services in place, the state mandate may have served to legitimate the provision of existing services, incentivizing continued investment, or perhaps even motivating increased investment. Colleges that did not have services in place prior to the mandate, on the other hand, could have responded either by making a genuine effort to comply or by adopting an approach of “ceremonial conformity” – doing the bare minimum to create the appearance of complying without significantly altering organizational functioning (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Finally, other higher education policies as well as funder interests that are not directly related to basic needs services may still function as regulative incentives that affect the provision of basic needs services. For example, the completion agenda being promoted by federal and state policymakers as well as foundations and advocacy organizations such as Complete College America (<https://completercollege.org/>) could pressure colleges into providing basic needs

services in the hopes that doing so will improve retention and completion rates (Humphreys, 2012; Lumina Foundation, 2022). There are some indications that colleges may be starting to view basic needs services as a means of responding to the completion agenda. In reporting on Skyline College's decision to obtain additional funding sources to continue a program designed to help students access public benefits after the initial grant for the program ended, Field (2016a) suggests that pressure to improve outcomes may have been a significant motivation: "For Skyline, it could mean another student who graduates or transfers at a time when colleges are facing intense pressure from policy makers and the public to improve their outcomes for low-income students."

Furthermore, some of the initiatives related to the completion agenda, such as performance funding laws that allocate state funding for higher education institutions based on completion rates, have significant financial consequences for institutions (Dougherty et al., 2016; Humphreys, 2012). As of 2020, 41 states (including New York) had some version of performance-based funding laws in place and four more were considering enacting policies (Ortagus et al., 2020). Although initially designed as a bonus, more recent performance funding policies have been designed to make varying portions of base-level state funding contingent upon student outcomes. Based on extensive research in three states, Dougherty et al. (2016) found that the pressure placed on colleges by these policies can have negative unintended consequences, such as increasing admission standards to exclude less advantaged students and lowering academic standards to increase passing rates.

These negative unintended consequences make it clear that colleges are reacting to the performance funding policies in multiple different ways to try and increase completion rates. Because the policies do not specify how institutions should go about trying to improve

completion rates, even colleges dedicated to supporting positive student success practices have multiple completion strategies from which to choose (Humphreys, 2012). Thus, it could be that colleges will decide to prioritize services and reforms that have a stronger evidence base than do basic needs services.

Apart from performance-based funding laws, the overall level of state funding and support for higher education may also serve as an indirect regulative influence on the provision of basic needs services. Declines in state funding are placing pressure on colleges to increase student retention and completion as a financial strategy for retaining more tuition dollars (Dimeo, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2019). If providing basic needs services is indeed perceived as an effective strategy for improving retention and completion rates, then colleges might view them as having the potential to provide a sound return on investment. Alternatively, if funding is too limited, colleges may be unable to invest in additional student services. Reducing student services is one of the primary strategies colleges and universities adopt to compensate for state funding cuts (Mitchell et al., 2019).

Another indirect source of regulative influence on the provision of basic needs services might be seen in greater pressure from the federal government to promote transparency in college outcomes. For example, the College Scorecard (<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>), launched in 2013, was designed to make it easier for students to compare college costs and value in terms of completion rates, employment outcomes, and average amounts of student loan debt (Duncan, 2013). Reflecting the ongoing push for transparency, multiple updates and enhancements have been made to the College Scorecard over the past several years (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). Colleges concerned that their rankings might compare

unfavorably to those of other similar institutions could potentially be motivated to provide basic needs services if, again, they are considered an effective strategy for improving completion rates.

3.2 Understanding Internal Organizational Dynamics: Congruence Model of Organizational Analysis

Recognizing the varying types of demands placed on colleges by the external environment and analyzing the different ways in which colleges are responding to those demands in order to maintain their organizational legitimacy lays a critical foundation for understanding how basic needs services are becoming integrated into colleges' internal organizational functioning. Depending on whether cognitive, normative, or regulative forces are more influential, as well as the degree to which a college interprets those forces as requiring a symbolic versus an authentic response, a college might situate basic needs services very differently within its organizational structure. For example, colleges might adopt very different approaches to basic needs services in terms of location within the organizational hierarchy, funding, oversight, staffing, and allocation of physical space depending on whether they are responding to regulative pressure coming from an external audience of policymakers or to normative pressure generated by internal advocacy from their own students.

A key concept for thinking about the relationship between formal organizational structures and the tasks of an organization is the idea of tight versus loose coupling. The idea of coupling highlights the importance of examining how closely linked formal organizational structures (e.g., official organizational hierarchy in terms of roles, titles and management structures) are with the core tasks of an organization, the technology available to conduct those tasks, and how people operate within organizational structures to carry out the tasks of the organization in practice (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Weick, 1976).

While the concept of tight versus loose coupling offers a way of assessing the relationship between discrete elements of an organization, Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model of organizational analysis offers a detailed framework for analyzing how the linkages between different components of an organization contribute to overall organizational functioning. The model is based upon the premise that an organization's effectiveness in producing its desired outcomes depends upon close alignment between inputs (physical and human resources, environmental demands, organizational history and mission) and the technical core of the organization (individual staff members, formal organizational structures, informal organizational culture, and tasks). This framework suggested several lines of inquiry related to how basic needs services are being integrated into the organizational functioning of colleges.

To understand inputs, it is important to consider the human resources for staffing basic needs services, physical resources such as the campus location and office space, financial resources, and perceptions of how a college's history and mission might affect its approach to basic needs services. Additionally, the students for whom the services are intended represent a crucial input, making it critical to examine issues such as whether the college was aware of how many students could benefit from services. To understand the technical core of the organization, it is essential to develop a full picture of the tasks associated with basic needs services, and the motivations driving the individuals providing and overseeing them. In addition, it was crucial to map out where basic needs services fit within the formal organizational structure by locating services within the college's departmental and staffing structures. Finally, it was important to ask participants about their perceptions of the goals, functions, and intended outcomes of basic needs services to gain insight into the informal organizational cultures surrounding basic needs services.

Ultimately, the goal of the analysis was to a) assess the extent to which tasks and structures aligned with perceived needs and environmental pressures, and b) the degree to which the location of basic needs services within the technical core of the organization can be perceived as either supporting or hindering the achievement of intended outcomes.

3.3 Sensemaking

The concept of sensemaking serves as a valuable lens for understanding how stakeholders within an organization individually and collectively make meaning of external environmental influences as well as internal organizational dynamics. Weick (1993, p. 635) describes sensemaking as “an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs.” It is the process by which we interpret the world around us and rationalize our actions. Acts of interpretation are informed not only by an individual’s own self-concept, but also, within an organization, by impressions of the organization’s image or identity. Importantly, Weick (1993; 1995) also stresses that sensemaking is an innately social process that involves the active creation of feedback loops which are continually negotiated based on perceptions of and reactions to others’ beliefs and actions. As people act upon the meanings they have made, those actions themselves become events to be interpreted as part of an ongoing sensemaking process. Finally, because attention and capacity for reasoning must necessarily be limited, individuals routinely look for cues from others as to what constitutes an important area of focus (Weick, 1995).

Building upon the work of Weick and others, Coburn (2005) illustrated how the concept of sensemaking can be used to enrich our understanding of program implementation and adoption in education. In studying the implementation of reading instruction policies at two urban elementary schools in California, Coburn found that principals’ own beliefs about reading

instruction filtered their reaction to and interpretation of policy changes and ultimately shaped how the policies were enacted in the classroom. Principals' prior beliefs about effective reading instruction practices influenced their receptiveness to the new policies, which in turn shaped the kinds of information about the policies they made available to teachers, how they conveyed that information, and the kinds of opportunities for professional development provided for teachers. These differences then affected how teachers interpreted the policies and adapted them for use in their classrooms.

Based on these findings, Coburn (2005) defined sensemaking as a three-part process beginning with selective attention to environmental cues. According to Coburn, individuals first select the information on which they choose to focus based on their own prior knowledge, the social context and normal patterns of behavior within the organization, and how they personally will be affected by the reform. This selection processes necessarily results in privileging some types of information over others. Once the information has been selectively focused on, individuals interpret it, and, finally, act based on the interpretations they have made.

As Coburn's analysis demonstrates, the translation of messages from the broad policy environment into individual and collective behavior within an organization involves multiple layers of sensemaking. Thus, pairing sensemaking with institutional theory and the congruence model of organizational analysis contributed to the development of a robust framework for gaining new insight into the provision of basic needs services from an organizational standpoint. Sensemaking served as an overarching framework for considering the external environmental pressures (Scott's cognitive, normative, and regulative pillars) affecting how colleges approach basic needs, as well as for identifying internal influences that can be considered key institutional inputs according to the congruence model (e.g., awareness of students' basic needs, relationship

of basic needs services to the institution's mission). Analysis of these external and internal dynamics then provided important context for describing the technical core shaping the design and delivery of basic needs services on college campuses.

Although other theoretical perspectives could have been applied to this study, sensemaking has the benefit of accounting for the relationship between individual and organizational perspectives and combining an analysis of external environmental forces and internal organizational dynamics into a single framework. In contrast, an approach such as Kingdon's (2011) analysis of the three streams driving policy development (definitions of problems, development of solutions, and availability of political opportunities) could offer high-level insight into the current political environment surrounding basic needs services in higher education and into colleges' responses, but it would lack the depth of a complementary focus into internal organizational dynamics.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter brought together three theoretical approaches – institutional theory, the congruence model of organizational functioning, and sensemaking – to develop a framework for analyzing the factors influencing how colleges and universities are making meaning of environmental pressures to address students' basic needs and integrating basic needs services into organizational functioning. The following chapter describes the study's research methodology.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

To explore how higher education institutions are addressing issues such as hunger and homelessness among college students, I initially intended to conduct qualitative comparative case studies of five colleges. Due to complications resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to abandon this approach in the early stages of the data collection process and switch to individual interviews across a larger number of institutions. However, the original rationale for using a case study approach was influential in shaping the development of the study design and thus remains relevant for understanding the trajectory of how the research methodology evolved.

In this chapter, I review the initial case study design and the transition to individual interviews, including the institutional and participant samples and the data collected. Following the descriptions of the initial and revised study designs, I address the data management and data analysis procedures used in the study.

4.1 Initial Case Study Design

Case study research is defined as

...a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (Creswell, 2007, p. 73)

Comparing multiple cases highlights different perspectives on a central issue, making the method particularly well suited for examining areas about which not much is yet known (Creswell, 2007). Although the K-12 education sector has a long history of providing services to address students' basic needs, from the federal free breakfast and lunch programs to the community

school movement, higher education has only become actively involved in this area relatively recently, making the topic well suited to comparative case study research (Arteaga & Heflin, 2014; Dryfoos, 2000; Frisvold, 2015; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2016).

Sample

Institutions. One of the most important aspects of designing case study research is selecting appropriate cases (Creswell, 2007). In order to obtain meaningful data from a small number of cases, it is crucial to adopt a purposive sampling strategy guided by clear boundaries (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Site selection in a comparative case study should be guided by a purposeful maximal sampling strategy with the goal of identifying cases that highlight variations providing critical insight into the central research questions (Creswell, 2007). Given the nature of my research questions, I divided the case selection process into three main stages: defining the geographic boundaries of the study, determining which institutional characteristics provide the most relevant grounds for comparing organizational functioning, and identifying which institutions within the geographic boundaries of the study provide basic needs services.

I initially decided to limit the geographic boundaries of my study to the five boroughs of New York City to control to the extent possible for variations in the external environment related to factors such as urbanicity and the availability of external social services in the local community. Additionally, the large number of colleges and universities in New York City across all sectors of higher education represent a diverse set of institutions, providing ample opportunities for making meaningful comparisons.

Several recent comparative case studies in higher education have explored variation in students' experiences by contrasting elite private universities with public universities. For example, Mullen (2010) studied the impact of cultural capital, class, and gender on students'

college experience through case studies of Yale University and Southern Connecticut State University, both of which are located in New Haven, CT. In a similar study of cultural capital and class, Stuber (2011) examined campus life at an elite liberal arts college and a public flagship university. Finally, Binder and Wood (2013) explored the experiences of politically conservative students on liberal college campuses by comparing two different types of universities (an elite university on the East Coast and a public university system in the West) both known for having strong liberal reputations. Across all three studies, selectivity in admissions and the public / private divide emerge as key factors for understanding how institutional differences shape students' experiences.

Furthermore, selectivity and public versus private institutional types are likely to be primary indicators of differences in organizational functioning that drive differences in other institutional factors, such as student demographics and completion rates. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that focusing on these factors will provide the greatest insight into differences in how institutions view their role in supporting students' basic needs. Additionally, given the active involvement of many community colleges in addressing students' basic needs, I also believed it was crucial to compare two- and four-year institutions (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2014).

I used the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) College Navigator system (<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>) to create a list of public and private, two- and four-year institutions in New York City and assess selectivity in terms of acceptance rate. I excluded for-profit colleges and colleges with a specialty focus (e.g., nursing, fashion, theatre, interior design).

In addition to selecting cases that highlight important cross-site variations, site selection

in a comparative case study should also be guided by the goal of identifying cases that are best representative of the issue being studied (here, basic needs services) (Creswell, 2007). Toward that end, it was important to obtain a general sense of which colleges in New York City provide services for basic needs and what types of services the colleges offer. For the sake of comparison, I also wanted to identify colleges with little to no engagement in basic needs services to understand disincentives and barriers to service provision. Given that one of the main areas of focus for the study was understanding how colleges come to provide basic needs services, including a college that has either intentionally opted not to provide services, or that simply has not considered providing services, could provide critical context regarding the disincentives and barriers to service provision that may exist.

Since websites are designed as public statements to convey information, and “college websites in particular are an important tool in conveying key program information to students” (Van Noy et al., 2016), I reviewed the websites of 31 colleges and universities in New York City to identify which colleges provide basic needs services. Given that my objective in doing so was to develop an overview of existing basic needs services for case selection purposes, I primarily focused on identifying services rather than attempting to evaluate the quality and accuracy of website information, although researchers have done so for other types of college services (Schudde et al., 2018). Following the strategy employed by Ippolito (2018), I used two methods for identifying services: 1) clicking through homepage menu options with a focus on relevant areas such as student services, student supports, etc., and 2) entering key search terms (e.g., emergency grant, food pantry, homelessness, low-income). I recorded the results of the website analysis in Excel.

Using the criteria discussed above: 1) geographic focus on New York City, 2) variation

across sectors of higher education, and 3) emphasis on institutions with existing basic needs services but with the inclusion of a site with limited engagement in basic needs for comparison, I initially planned to recruit five sites within New York City, including four sites with established basic needs services – a community college, a public four-year college, a private four-year college, and a highly selective private four-year institution – and a fifth site with limited basic needs services.

I began institutional recruitment for the study in summer 2019, prioritizing those institutions identified as having a clear commitment to basic needs services (either in terms of length of service operation or number of services) through my website review. Additionally, I began reaching out in random order to the nine institutions (all of which were private four-year institutions) that did not provide any evidence of offering basic needs services on their websites. For the institutions with basic needs services, I initially reached out to the primary contact or contacts in the department(s) responsible for delivering the basic needs services identified in the website analysis. For the institutions not offering services, I began by contacting someone in a student services department, such as advising.

Between late August to mid-November 2019, seven institutions declined to participate, including one highly selective private four-year university, one private four-year college, one public four-year college, two community colleges, and two additional private four-year colleges not offering basic needs services. Due to the challenges of procuring institutional support for the study and the high number of colleges declining to participate, I expanded the geographic boundaries for site selection to include nearby counties accessible to New York City by commuter train. Between mid-October 2019 and early May 2020, I was able to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study from five institutions, including a highly

selective four-year university, a community college, a public four-year college, a private four-year college with established basic needs services, and a private four-year college with limited basic needs services. Four of the institutions were located within New York City and the fifth was located in a nearby county.

Participants. In order to understand as many different perspectives as possible regarding the role of higher education in addressing students' basic needs, I originally intended to include four types of participants at each primary case study college: administrators, staff members providing basic needs services, faculty members and other student services staff, and students. I originally intended to recruit 10 to 12 administrators, faculty, and staff as well as 5 to 7 students from each of the five case study sites. These target numbers would have resulted in a total sample of approximately 75 to 95 participants.

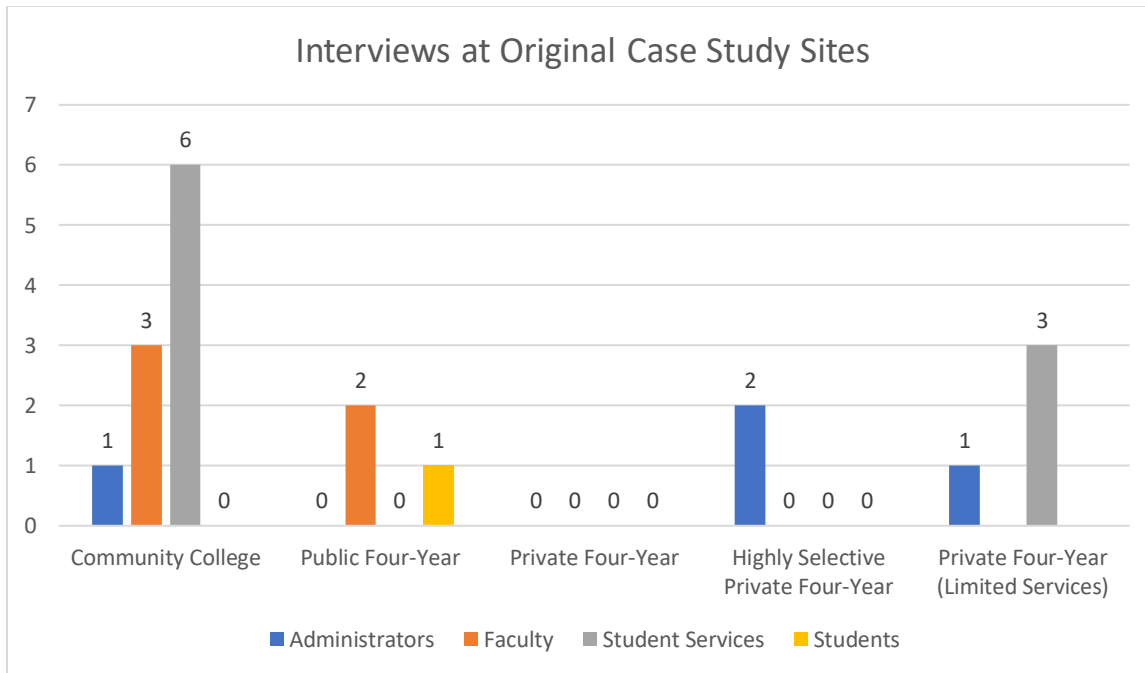
I developed a preliminary list of potential participants by reviewing websites of the participating colleges to identify the departmental affiliation and titles of individuals whom I believed it would be most important to include in the study based on their role in providing or overseeing both student services generally and basic needs services specifically. At four of the sites, I then worked with a primary contact to refine the list of potential participants and identify other participants who may have been involved with or supportive of basic needs services even if basic needs services were not a direct part of their role (e.g., faculty members actively promoting awareness of available services in their classes). At the fifth site, I was unable to identify a primary contact willing to serve as a site liaison, relying on my best judgment to create a preliminary contact list, with the intention of adopting a snowballing approach by asking interviewees to recommend additional participants. I contacted all potential participants over

email using a message approved by the IRB at Teachers College as well as the participant’s own institution.

However, because the timing of the institutional IRB approvals either shortly preceded or coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to complete the target number of interviews at four of the sites, and unable to begin interviews at the fifth. As outlined in the figure below, I conducted 19 interviews with four sites, including two at the highly selective four-year university, three at the public four-year college, 10 at the community college, and four at the private four-year university with limited basic needs services.

Figure 1

Interviews at Original Case Study Sites by Site and Participant Role



Data Collection

Interview data. I asked individuals to participate in a single semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Sixteen of the 19 interviews were conducted in-person, on site at the participating colleges whereas three were conducted virtually in the wake of the

pandemic. Interviews were audio recorded, and I also took extensive notes during each interview.

Interview questions pertaining to perceptions of the higher education environment regarding basic needs services and to interpretations of the college's motivation for providing services were similar across participant roles, to examine whether different stakeholders' position within the college influences the ways in which they make sense of why the college is providing services. Other questions, particularly those related to the integration of basic needs services in organizational functioning, were specific to each participant's role within their institution.

Questions for administrators were targeted to those most directly involved in overseeing student support services (e.g. Vice President of Student Success or Student Services), and focused on their role in setting strategic priorities for the institution, making funding decisions, and structuring the organizational hierarchy. Questions for staff members providing basic needs services addressed topics such as the perceived level of student need on campus, number of students served, capacity, communication about services to the student body, data on service use, and coordination with other departments on campus.

Unique questions for other student services staff (e.g. advisors, counselors) and faculty members considered how participants in these roles know if students with whom they work are struggling to meet basic needs, how they learn about available services, and how they inform students about available services or make referrals. For example, sparked by the advocacy of Sarah Goldrick-Rab, the president and founder of the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, a growing number of faculty around the country have begun adding information to their syllabi about how to access support for food and housing (Berman, 2017).

Finally, I was originally interested in talking both to students who are and who are not using basic needs services about their knowledge of the services available on their campus, as well as their perceptions about how service offerings (or lack thereof) might compare to the kinds of services available on other campuses. Students who have used services can provide insight into their experience with using basic needs services, while those who have not used services may be able to provide insight into the kinds of issues preventing students from using services (e.g., lack of knowledge, eligibility criteria, preference for using services off campus, etc.) Additionally, I intended to ask both students who have and have not used services their opinions about what kind of role they believe higher education institutions should assume in providing for basic needs and why. Given growing student activism around basic needs services, including students' perspectives could have provided valuable insight into the degree to which available services are aligned with students' needs and beliefs about the role of higher education in providing these services.

For the site with limited basic needs services, I intended to include a similar mix of administrators, faculty members, student services staff, and students. For administrators, faculty, and staff, questions would address similar topics as those for colleges offering services, but with an emphasis on understanding the kinds of factors that could potentially motivate the college to begin providing basic needs services, as well as barriers or disincentives that might make it challenging to provide services. For students, questions would have focused on awareness of current dialogues related to basic needs services in higher education and opinions about higher education's role in providing services, as well as what kinds of services they would like to have available on their own campus. See Appendix A for the original case study interview protocols.

Supplemental data. To supplement the interview data, I originally intend to conduct campus observations and collect public college documents. In addition to observing the physical spaces where services related to basic needs services are provided (e.g., food pantries, centers, Single Stop offices), I planned to spend some time simply observing the campus itself, paying particular attention to where and how services for basic needs were advertised (e.g., flyers, campus newsletters, etc.). Whenever possible to do so unobtrusively and without creating privacy concerns, I also intended to document the flow of individuals into and out of offices where services were delivered.

4.2 Revised Study Design

Given the unprecedented challenges confronting colleges and universities during the COVID-19 pandemic, it became unfeasible to continue data collection using the original case study design. Like most higher education institutions across the United States, the case study sites with which I had been working moved to virtual instruction in March 2020. Prior to that time, between late November 2019 and early March 2020, I had conducted in-person interviews at three sites. After the move to virtual instruction in March 2020, two of those sites requested that I discontinue interviews, and I did not have a clear way to continue recruitment at the third site, which was the site where I was unable to identify a site liaison despite having IRB approval for the study from the institution. My primary contact at the fourth site developed a contact list of potential participants to recruit for virtual interviews, but between April and June, 2020 I was only able to recruit three participants. Finally, my primary contact at the fifth site, where I had not yet begun recruitment, indicated that college personnel were overwhelmed, and in May of 2020 asked that I not pursue the study.

Because I was unable to proceed with data collection at the original five sites, and

because it seemed unlikely that I would be able to identify additional colleges and universities with the capacity to serve as formal case study sites during the pandemic, I met with my dissertation proposal committee in July 2020 to discuss plans for revising the study design. Assuming that individuals would be able to provide consent for participation in a single interview more readily than institutions would be able to approve the study as a whole, I proposed conducting individual interviews with one or two key stakeholders per institution from a larger number of institutions. Given that I had not completed a full case study at any of the five original sites, this approach had the benefit of allowing me to combine data from the interviews I had already conducted with data from subsequent interviews. Interview questions remained the same, with the addition of a few questions pertaining to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the prevalence of basic needs insecurity among students, and their use of services. See Appendix B for the revised interview protocols.

The switch to individual interviews included several revisions to the original study. Rather than including a diverse set of administrators, faculty members, student services staff, and students to obtain a broad sense of basic needs services on campus, I targeted recruitment to the one or two individuals at each institution most likely to have a deep knowledge of basic needs services on campus. Because I only planned to speak to one or two individuals per institution and was not attempting to develop a comprehensive understanding of each institution, I dropped the supplemental data collection that I had been planning to do for the case studies. To balance the goal of reaching qualitative data saturation, at which point the inclusion of additional interviews ceases to contribute to new findings, (Guest et al., 2006) with the feasibility of undertaking a second extensive round of participant recruitment, I reduced the target for the total number of participants from 75 to 95 to 40 to 50, with the intention of conducting an additional 20 to 30

interviews with individuals from 15 to 25 institutions. To better focus on the primary research questions (e.g., understanding why higher education institutions adopt basic needs services and how services are integrated into institutions) with a smaller participant sample, I recruited individuals from colleges that appeared to have robust basic needs services, based on their websites and did not attempt to include individuals from institutions with limited services for comparison.

To reach the desired number of participants, I started by sending recruitment emails to individuals at the colleges and universities in New York City that I had not yet contacted and then expanded recruitment to individuals at colleges and universities across New York State. Due to the ongoing pandemic as well as the greater geographical distance, I made the decision to conduct all remaining interviews virtually rather than in person. In keeping with the original study design, I intentionally recruited individuals from across multiple sectors of higher education, including community colleges, public four-year colleges, private four-year institutions, and highly selective private four-year institutions. Thus, even though I was not able to develop descriptive case studies of institutions or conduct cross-case comparisons at the institutional level, I was able to examine trends and variations across higher education sectors by grouping individual interviews from multiple institutions within the same sector.

Finally, even though the expansion of recruitment efforts across New York State introduced greater variation in the external environment (e.g., mixture of urban and rural institutions), because all the institutions were still located in the same state, they were still responding to a similar policy environment. As mentioned, in 2018 New York became the first state to require that public colleges and universities provide food pantries or similar services and by September 2019 the percent of institutions doing so had increased from approximately 50% to

100% (Graham, 2019; The State University of New York, 2018). Other potential regulative influences include state funding laws. New York has performance funding policies in place for public two-year colleges (but not for four-year colleges) which include metrics related to outcomes for low-income / Pell-eligible students that could possibly be affected by the provision of basic needs services (Li, 2018). Around the time of the interviews, state funding for the New York Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) supporting low-income students had failed to keep pace with tuition increases for a number of years, since 2011, requiring colleges to cover the difference. As a result, the City University of New York (CUNY) and State University of New York (SUNY) systems were grappling with significant revenue shortfalls (\$74 million at CUNY and \$65 million at SUNY in 2019) that could have adversely impacted institutions' ability to provide basic needs services (PSC CUNY, 2019). Table 1 below summarizes the revisions to the study design.

Table 1

Summary of Revisions to Study Design

	Original Study Design	Revised Study Design
Approach	Institutional case studies, including interviews, observations, and document reviews	Individual interviews
Interview location	In-person, onsite at each case study institution	Virtual
Target number of interviews	75 to 95	40 to 50
Geographic location	New York City	New York State
Institutional characteristics	Variation in terms of selectivity and public versus private sector	Variation in terms of selectivity and public versus private sector

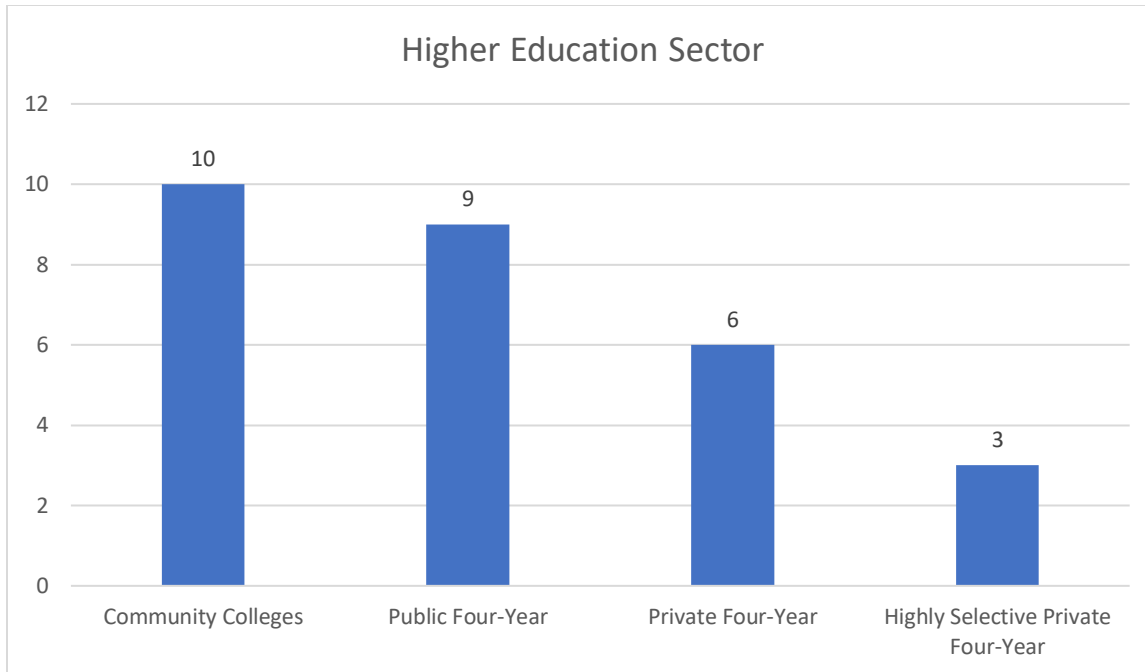
Basic needs services	Comparison of institutions with established services to an institution with limited services	Institutions with established services
Participants	Cross-section of administrators, faculty members, student services staff, and students within each case study institution	The one or two individuals most directly involved in basic needs services at each institution

Sample

Institutions. In addition to conducting interviews at four of the original colleges and universities intended to be case study sites, I conducted interviews with individuals from 24 more institutions, including nine community colleges, eight public four-year colleges, five private four-year institutions, and two highly selective private four-year institutions. In total, I spoke with individuals from 28 institutions. Figure 2 below illustrates the total number of institutions by sector.

Figure 2

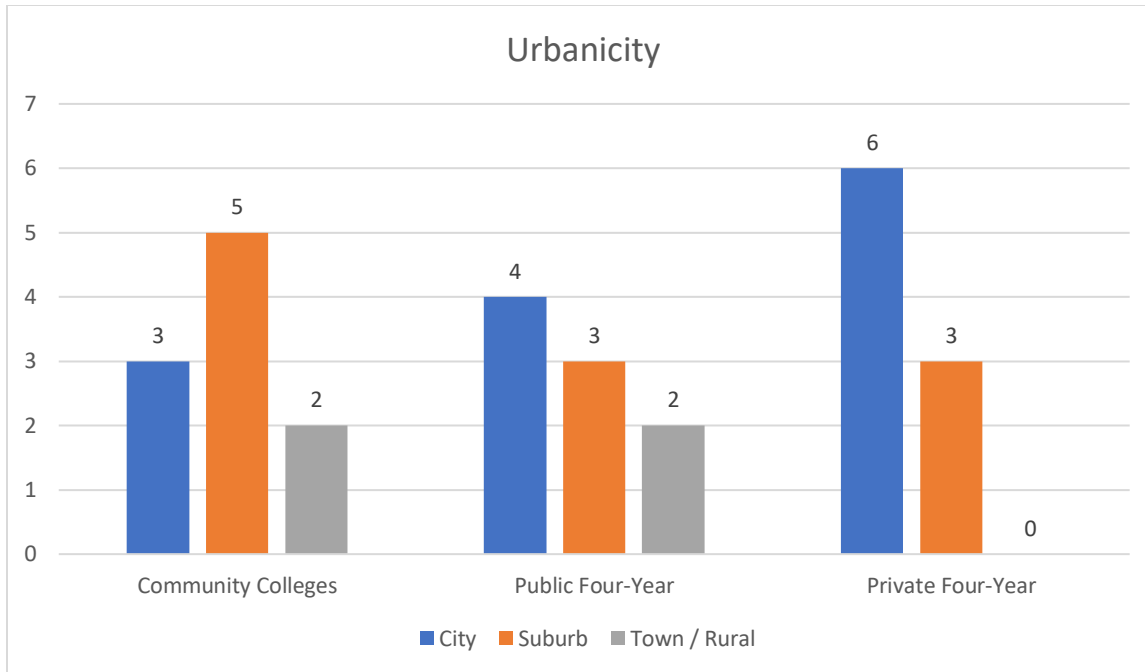
Total Number of Institutions by Higher Education Sector



According to classification by the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) (<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>), the participating institutions were located across a range of urban and rural settings, with slightly more of the community colleges located in suburban and small town / rural areas, and slightly more of the private four-year institutions located in cities. (See Figure 3.) For ease of comparison, I grouped the private four-year and highly selective private four-year institutions together into a single category.

Figure 3

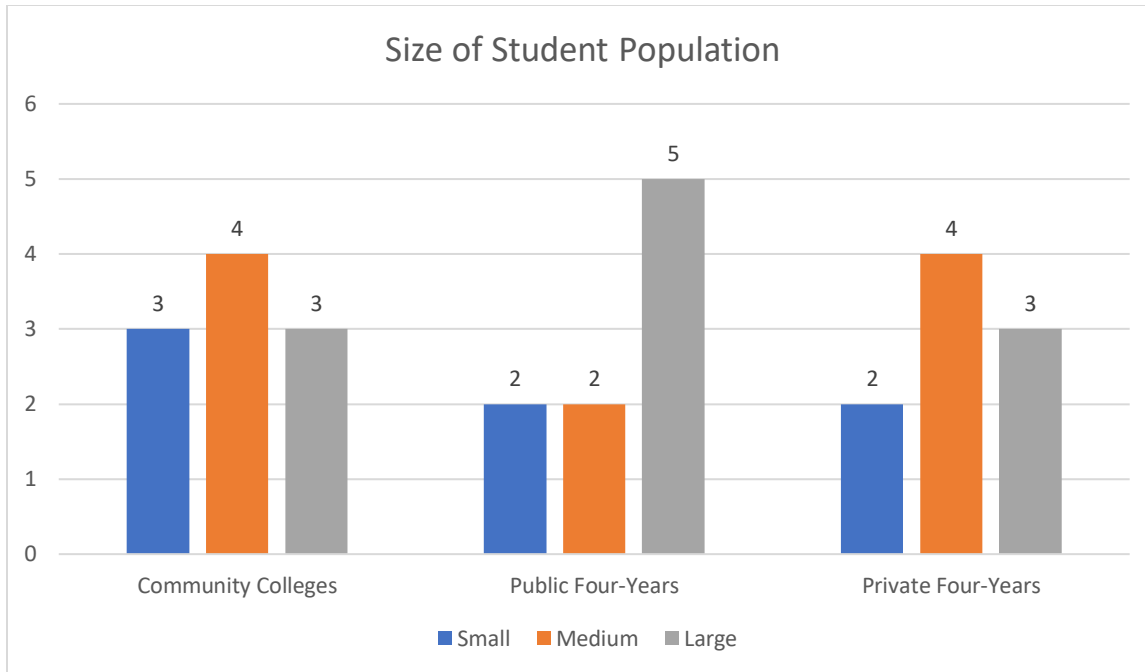
Institutional Setting by Higher Education Sector



Across all sectors, the institutions in the sample represented a mix of small, medium, and large institutions. Using IPEDS to classify the sites according to my own categorization of enrollment size (small = < 5,000; medium = 5,000 to 10,000; large = >10,000), the main difference by sector was that slightly more of the public four-year institutions were large. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4

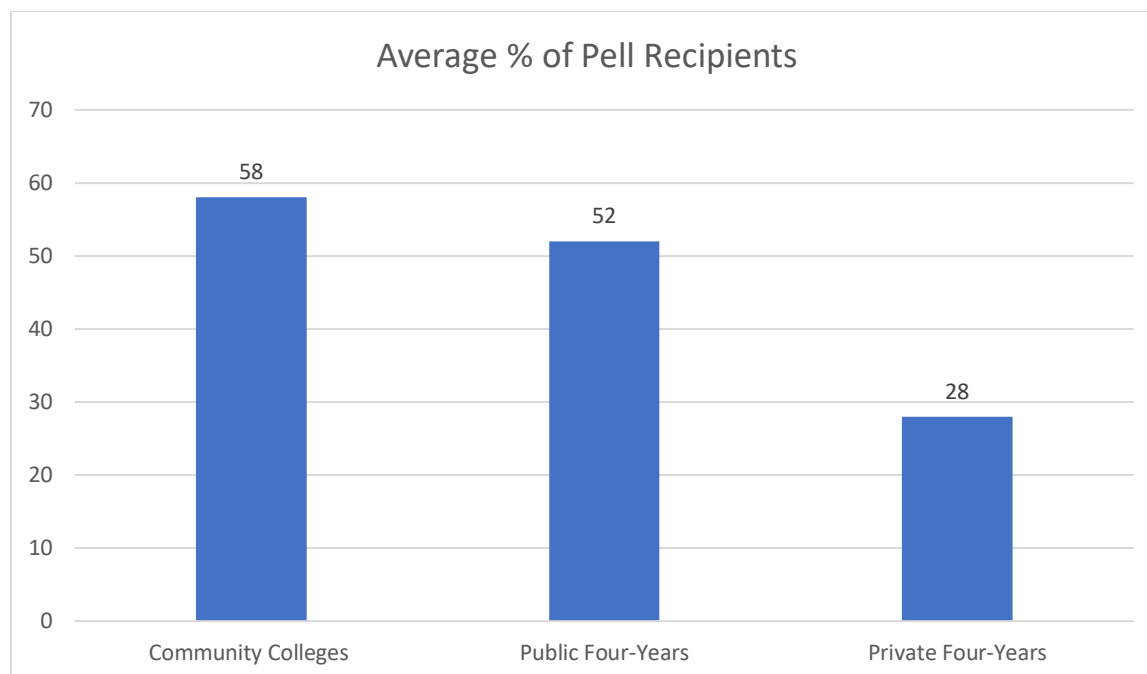
Size of Student Population by Higher Education Sector



Finally, looking at the percentage of Pell recipients according to IPEDS data for full-time beginning students during the 2019 – 2020 academic year, it appeared that the private four-year institutions enrolled fewer low-income students. The percent of Pell recipients ranged from 40% to 84% at community colleges, from 25% to 72% at public four-years, and from 15% to 73% at private four-years, with an average of 58% of community colleges, 52% at public four-years, and 28% at private four-years. (See Figure 5 below.)

Figure 5

Average Percentage of Pell Grant Recipients by Higher Education Sector



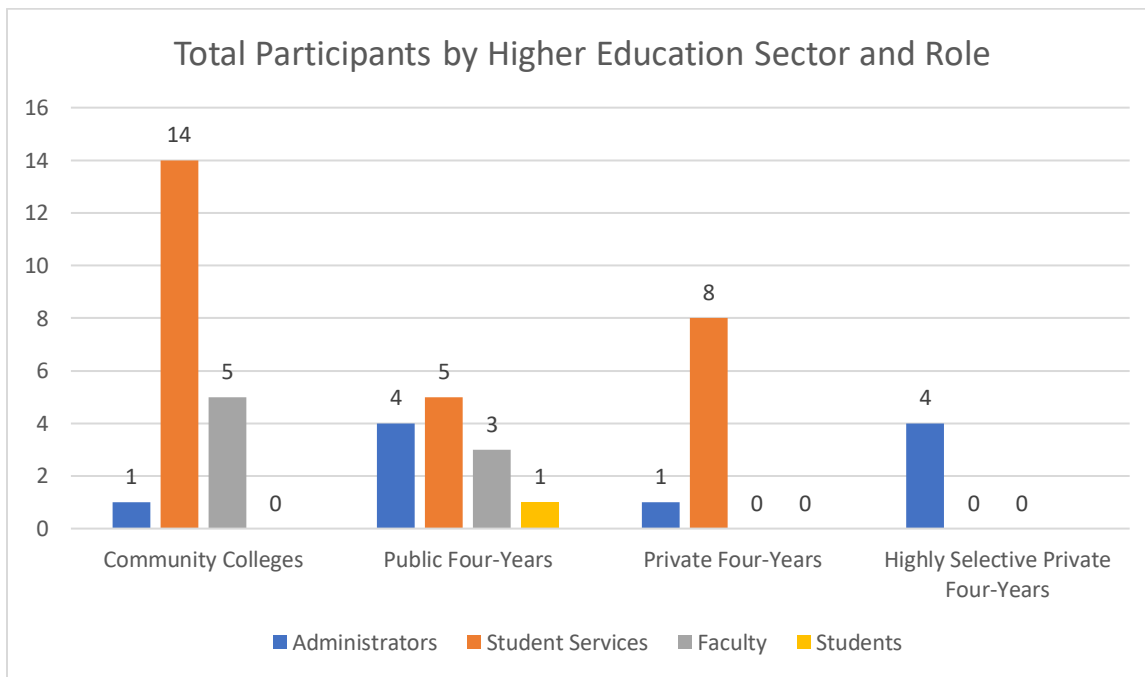
Participants. After adopting the revised study design, I conducted an additional 27 interviews between August and October of 2020, for a total of 46 interviews. The 27 additional interviews included ten with community college personnel, ten with personnel from public four-year colleges, five with personnel from private four-year institutions, and two with personnel from highly selective private four-year institutions. Among these 27 interviews, six were conducted with personnel in administrative positions (non-student facing positions including both leadership roles, e.g., Vice President, and non-leadership roles, e.g., staff member in the institutional advancement office), 18 were conducted with student services staff, and three were conducted with faculty members.

In total, including both the interviews with intended case study sites and the individual virtual interviews, I conducted 20 interviews at community colleges, 13 at public four-year colleges, nine at private four-year institutions, and four at highly selective private four-year institutions. The majority ($n = 27$, or 59%) of the interviews were conducted with student services staff members, while administrative personnel ($n = 10$) represented 22% of the sample

and faculty (n= 8) represented 17% of the sample. The administrative personnel and student services staff members represented a wide variety of departments, ranging from student affairs and student life to multicultural affairs, residence life, campus ministries, institutional advancement, financial aid services, mental health and counseling services, and campus dining. Figure 6 below illustrates the distribution of all 46 participants across higher education sectors by participant role.

Figure 6

Distribution of All Participants by Higher Education Sector and Role



4.3 Human Subjects and Data Management

The original study was approved as exempt by the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) in August 2019. I also submitted IRB applications to each of the five institutions originally intended to be case study sites and received IRB approvals from those institutions between October, 2019 and May, 2020. I received approval from the Teachers College IRB for the revised study design in late July of 2020.

All participants reviewed and signed a consent form. Individuals who participated in in-person interviews completed a paper copy of the consent form, whereas individuals who participated in virtual interviews completed an online version of the consent form in Qualtrics.

Interviews were audio-recorded with the participant’s consent. Three participants asked not to be recorded, and in those cases I took detailed notes during the interview. The audio files from all of the interviews that were recorded were sent to Rev.com and transcribed in October 2020. All audio files, notes, and transcripts were stored securely according to the data security procedures outlined in the IRB protocol.

4.4 Data Analysis

All interview transcripts as well as the notes for the three interviews that were not recorded were uploaded into Dedoose for analysis. Following the recommendation of Miles and Huberman (1994), documents were first coded using an *a priori* code list informed by the research questions, literature, and theoretical framework. As themes emerged during the coding process, I added a smaller number of interpretive codes to the code list, and retroactively applied them to documents that had already been coded. I read and coded each of the 46 documents line by line. Ultimately, I developed 99 codes, organized into five main categories or parent codes, with multiple sub-codes (child codes) nested underneath. See Table 2 below for sample codes.

Table 2

Sample Codes

Parent Codes	Sample Sub-Codes
Participant Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of role at the college • Length of time at the college
External Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External influences on approach to services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conform to external expectations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Popular media ○ Academic research ○ Evolution of student services as a field ○ State policy
Internal Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student demographics ● Awareness_prevalence of basic needs insecurity on campus ● Awareness_individual students in need on campus ● Relation to institutional mission
Organizational Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding_donations ● Funding_external ● Funding_internal ● Staffing_volunteers ● Staffing_faculty ● Staffing_students ● Location within organizational structure ● Physical space
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges from the external environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy mandates without financial or administrative support ○ Poverty as a systemic issue ● Challenges in the internal environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Institutional culture_superficially supportive of basic needs ○ Institutional culture_unsupportive of basic needs ● Challenges with organizational functioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding_initial ○ Funding_ongoing ○ Staffing_lack of dedicated staff members ○ Staffing_lack of individual staff capacity

In addition to coding, I used the “Descriptors” function in Dedoose to label documents according to the main characteristics that I used as a basis for comparisons: institutional type

(community college, public four-year, private four-year, and highly selective private four-year), and participant role (administrator, student services staff, faculty member, student). I also used the “Memos” function in Dedoose to record emerging trends as well as general reflections throughout the coding process.

4.5 Methodological Rigor

A robust body of literature has established multiple criteria by which the rigor of qualitative research can be evaluated (Cho & Trent, 2014; Creswell, 2007). Among these efforts, Lincoln and Guba’s adaptation of measures traditionally used to evaluate the rigor of quantitative research for qualitative research continues to stand out as a foundational model (Cho & Trent, 2014; Creswell, 2007). Throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes I took a variety of steps to adhere to the four principles Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Cho & Trent, 2014) outline: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

To establish the *credibility* of the study’s findings – the extent to which the findings faithfully reflect the data and participants’ viewpoints – I intentionally used the research questions to inform the development of the interview protocols and, as mentioned, based my initial code list on the interview questions, relevant literature, and the study’s theoretical framework. In doing so, I sought to ensure that my analysis would be driven by the purpose of the study rather than allowing my interpretation of the findings to reshape the purpose of the study (Howe & Eisenhardt, 1990).

Table 3

Alignment between Research Design and Data Analysis

Research Question	Theory	Sections of Interview Protocol	Parent Codes	Discussion of Findings
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Q1: Making sense of basic needs	Sensemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' basic needs in the higher education environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External environment • Internal environment 	Chapter 5: Making Sense of Basic Needs Insecurity
Q2a: Why provide basic needs services	Institutional theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation for service provision • Relation to institutional mission • Benefits and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External environment • Internal environment 	Chapter 5: Making Sense of Basic Needs Insecurity
Q4: Perceptions of basic needs services in relation to institutional mission	Sensemaking, institutional theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relation to institutional mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal environment 	Chapter 5: Making Sense of Basic Needs Insecurity
Q3: Integration of basic needs services into organizational functioning	Congruence model for organization analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic needs services on campus • Integration into organizational functioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant information • Organizational functioning 	Chapter 6: How Colleges are Providing for Students' Basic Needs
Q2b: Challenges to providing basic needs services	Congruence model for organization analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic needs services on campus • Benefits and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational functioning • Challenges 	Chapter 7: Challenges to the Provision of Basic Needs Services

To promote *transferability* and allow readers to assess the degree to which findings may apply to other contexts, for example, colleges and universities in other states, I sought to provide “thick descriptions” – detailed information about the institutional and participant samples as well as the context surrounding quotes from participants (Cho & Trent, 2014; Creswell, 2007). Akin to the quantitative concept of reliability, *dependability* in qualitative research refers to the extent

to which methods can be replicated. In qualitative research this involves maintaining complete and accurate records of the data collection process and of decisions made throughout the research design and data analysis processes (Cho & Trent, 2014; Creswell, 2007). Toward that end I prepared a detailed accounting of recruitment and data collection efforts explaining the rationale for switching from case studies to individual interviews and consulted with my dissertation proposal committee before changing the study design. Additionally, I obtained accurate transcripts from the audio-recorded interviews, undertook a rigorous coding process that involved creating, defining, and refining a comprehensive code list, and used memos to capture my thought processes and the identification of emerging themes.

Finally, *confirmability* requires interrogating and being forthright in disclosing the ways in which a researcher's personal experiences, opinions, and biases may shape participants' responses to the study as well as the researcher's interpretation of the findings (Cho & Trent, 2014; Creswell, 2007). Therefore, I believe it is important to acknowledge that although I sought to be objective while recruiting participants, conducting interviews, and analyzing the data (for example, by using a pre-established recruitment script, interview protocol, and codebook), my own positionality inevitably came into play. Perhaps one of the most significant influences on my professional career was the first full-time job I held after graduating from college, working as the children's services coordinator for a family homeless shelter. That experience motivated me to pursue a master's degree in social work policy and instilled a deep commitment to addressing poverty and inequality in ways that honor and improve the lives of those most directly impacted. While I did not share this background with participants, they nonetheless may have surmised that I am supportive of institutional and policy solutions dedicated to alleviating basic needs

insecurity and been less willing to reveal doubts or express criticisms of efforts in higher education to address basic needs.

4.6 Conclusion

The following three chapters present the study's main findings, which are based on themes identified through the analysis process described above. Generally speaking, codes related to the external and internal environment were used to develop the findings presented in Chapter 5, codes related to organizational functioning were used to develop the findings presented in Chapter 6, and codes related to challenges were used to develop the findings presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5: Making Sense of Basic Needs Insecurity

Before exploring *what* colleges are doing to address students' basic needs, it is first worth considering *why* colleges are providing basic needs services. The answer to that question involves understanding how individuals on college campuses make sense of basic needs insecurity in higher education. Sensemaking is the process of selectively noticing, interpreting, and acting upon environmental cues (Coburn, 2005; Weick, 1993). Adopting a sensemaking perspective highlights the ways in which college stakeholders' perceptions of issues such as the underlying causes and prevalence of basic needs insecurity inform their understanding of basic needs insecurity as a problem to be addressed.

Interview participants engaged in sensemaking at two interrelated levels, discussing basic needs insecurity as a national issue in the external environment and as an internal issue at their institutions. Externally, sensemaking for participants across institutional types was rooted in awareness of basic need insecurity as a widespread challenge tied to poverty and socioeconomic inequities, and recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic exponentially exacerbated these challenges. On their own campuses, participants made sense of needs insecurity through loose estimates of the prevalence of basic needs insecurity based on student demographics and survey data, and awareness of individual students experiencing basic needs insecurity. Together, these sensemaking processes suggest that participants viewed basic needs insecurity as a critical challenge facing the country as a whole, with direct implications both for higher education as a field and for their specific institutions.

In addition, participants were also aware of and affected by external dynamics placing pressure on colleges as institutions to respond to these challenges by providing services to alleviate basic needs insecurity. According to institutional theory, organizational legitimacy

depends on the extent to which an organization's core tasks conform to external expectations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995). External expectations shaping basic needs services included a perception that the field of higher education is evolving to incorporate basic needs services as an extension of existing core services; rapid increases in the number of colleges providing basic needs services; the normalization of basic needs services on college campuses through popular media, academic research, and national higher education organizations; and (for public institutions) state and/or university-system policies mandating or encouraging the provision of basic needs services.

Using sensemaking and institutional theory to examine basic needs services on college campuses provides insight into why basic needs services are starting to become adopted as a standard part of higher education and how environmental inputs are shaping the provision of basic needs services (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). However, analyzing participants' experiences from these perspectives also suggests that many unanswered questions remain regarding higher education professionals' beliefs about higher education's responsibility in addressing basic needs.

5.1 Awareness of Factors in the External Environment Driving Basic Needs

Insecurity

The issue of basic needs insecurity on college campuses was very much seen as a reflection of larger issues of poverty, economic precarity, and socioeconomic inequality facing the country as a whole – not just higher education. This was true amongst participants from community colleges, public four-year colleges, private four-year colleges, and highly selective private four-year colleges. Several participants specifically described college as a “microcosm”

of society. For example, a student affairs member from a private four-year university commented:

What I find interesting is so many people will question or say "How was it that [name of university], almost a \$50,000 a year school, has food insecurity? How do we have food insecurity here?" It always surprises me when they ask that because like one, we're a microcosm of the greater community. So if you're going to see it in the community, you're going to see it here.

Similarly, in speaking about students experiencing hunger and homelessness, a faculty member at a community college stated, "This is just a little slice of what's happening all over, whether you go to college or not." However, participants also recognized that the added challenge of paying for college while contending with the same factors driving basic needs security in the general population places students at an even greater risk of experiencing basic needs insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic was viewed not as changing these fundamental challenges, but as exacerbating underlying conditions and bringing new light and heightened attention to longstanding problems.

Factors Contributing to Basic Needs Insecurity Nationally

Participants were aware of a number of different factors driving basic needs insecurity nationally. Articulating a sentiment expressed by several others, a faculty member at a public four-year college identified rising costs, particularly the high cost of living, as a primary factor. "I think that the housing costs... I know it's happening nationally too. I think housing costs are eating up more and more of people's income." A student affairs member at a private four-year university elaborated further on the financial challenges caused by rising costs, noting that the

combination of rising costs in multiple “big ticket” areas, including housing, healthcare, childcare, and education, has outpaced wage growth and left many families struggling.

In addition to rising costs, participants were also clear that existing societal inequities and inequitable federal policies contribute to basic needs insecurity. Some participants discussed these inequities in general terms. For example, when asked about the causes of basic needs insecurity amongst college students, an administrator at a highly selective four-year university replied, “...there’s just a broader expansion of inequity, income inequity in the first place, that drives some of the fundamentals of this.” Others pointed to more specific policies, such as anti-immigration policies and the elimination of social safety nets, in particular inadequate funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Regarding SNAP, an administrator at a public-four college explained:

Honestly, you have to be making less than minimum wage. Like you can’t make minimum wage in [name of city], apply for SNAP, and actually get it. You have to be making less than... You can only work like 20 hours a week at less than minimum wage to apply for SNAP. But then at that point you’re probably starving. You’re probably on the borderline of starving yourself or your entire family.

Socioeconomic challenges and inequities such as these were viewed as creating conditions leaving significant portions of the population living in a state of economic precarity and struggling to make ends meet. Highlighting this point, a student affairs staff member at a community college noted that financial insecurity is common despite the fact that many people are working two jobs “just to make it.” A student affairs member at another community college commented, “I’ve read somewhere that a good number of people are one paycheck away from being homeless or having trouble paying their rent. I don’t think it’s any one population.” Finally,

an administrator at a public four-year university made a similar observation, reflecting, “I guess most Americans don't have saving accounts, most people live check to check.”

Factors Contributing to Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education

Study participants across all four types of higher education institutions made a direct connection between the factors contributing to basic needs insecurity nationally and an increased risk of basic needs insecurity among college students. They were keenly aware that rising costs, stagnating wages, growing inequality, and a weakened social safety net have reduced families’ ability to contribute to the cost of college, placing a larger financial burden on students and making it more challenging for students today to manage the cost of living and afford college than in the past. These issues were perceived as significant concerns both at higher-cost private four-year institutions and at lower-cost community colleges.

Comparing his own situation as a student to that of college students today, a student affairs staff member at a private four-year college concluded that it is no longer possible for students to work and pay their way through college.

If we look at the ratio of the cost of college 30 years ago to the base income of a working-class family, and whereas that gap was here [*holds hands close together indicating a small gap*] 30 years ago, the gap is now here [*holds hands farther apart indicating a much wider gap*], right? If we recognize that this, the working-class income has not gone up, but our [costs] have exponentially raised... It used to be that you could get a part-time job and pay your way through college. I did. I worked full-time during the day, and I went to school full-time at night, and I paid my way through college. You can't do that these days. That's just not an option.

As an administrator at a highly selective four-year university discussed, the gap between

costs and income means that not only are families and students struggling to pay for college, but also that students are increasingly vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity.

Then, I also think families are no longer able to help as much as they used to. So even if a student's coming from ... I've heard students who come from middle class families where parents shell out \$10,000 a year for tuition and basically everything else is on you, and then a student is left to try to figure out, well, where do I get money from for food if my financial aid only covers 14 meals a week. How do I reconcile that? I think society at large no longer is the college experience in a bubble. We're significantly impacted by high unemployment, high taxes, high rental communities. Then, the cost of food even has increased significantly.

In addition to the failure of wages to keep up with costs, a faculty member at a public four-year college pointed out that the proportion of costs covered by financial aid has likewise declined, adding to the risk of experiencing food and housing insecurity.

I think wage stagnation has also contributed too, and just wages not keeping up with the cost of living, right. And so I think that there's this big gap in that. I know that grants and financial aid have, I think, been declining over time... or not sort of keeping up with the cost of college. And so I think all of these things together are, creating these sorts of issues around food insecurity and housing insecurity... Yeah, I think students are being expected to make up more of their college tuition.

Although community colleges typically cost less than four-year institutions, they tend to serve students facing significant socioeconomic challenges, many of whom are also supporting themselves. For example, a student affairs member at one community college explained that understanding basic needs insecurity at the college involves recognizing that city in which the

college is located, and from which it draws many of its students, has one of the highest poverty rates in the state, with over 70% of residents identified as living in poverty. Several of the participants from community colleges observed that students are struggling to balance coursework with the need to work to pay for college and support themselves and their families. A student affairs member from a different community college than the one quoted above noted that most of their students have multiple jobs to try and make ends meet. “So our students work two or three jobs often. It's rare to find a student that doesn't have a job or even more than one job. Most of our students work two or three.” A student affairs member from a third community college talked about the fact that even traditional-age students straight out of high school are working to support themselves and their families.

But what I'm finding is that a lot of traditional age students are also coming out of high school, working a lot of hours, to substantiate some income, whether that's helping their parents, whether they're already living on their own. So they're supporting themselves. So I think a lot of personal circumstances contribute to these issues, whether it's they're coming from an unstable family, or just a family that may be large and their parents' income can't sustain everybody. So they're trying to help with that while also attending school.

Regardless of institutional type, figuring out how to factor the cost of college into budgets already stretched thin can be a primary driver of basic needs insecurity for students struggling to make ends meet. A student affairs staff member at a private four-year college described the variety of costs involved in attending college as “additional complicating factors” for students on a limited budget.

So I think the factors that are in play in the rest of the planet are still in play with our

students. But I think they have additional complicating factors. They have expenses that they might not have been able to anticipate with books and school supplies and emergencies that come up and... Right? The things that... Some families have 500 bucks in the bank. So if something comes up, you can cover that. Our students don't have that and don't have the credit where they can cover it with a credit card bill...

When students are on a limited budget and struggling to make ends meet, food can quickly become one of the things students attempt to do without. Based on his experience, a student affairs staff member at a residential community college with dorms and dining halls believed that most of the students using the college pantry were students living on campus who had only been able to afford the lowest cost meal plan.

...in my opinion, but it's an educated opinion, about 95% of the students who access the food pantry on our campus are residence hall students that are supplementing their meal plan. So we do not have an all-you-can-eat meal plan. Each student buys a certain number of those choices. But on the lower end of the choice spectrum, you could buy 12 meals a week. Now, I'm giving opinion here. I don't know of any healthy growing adolescents that can live on 12 meals a week. If we combine that with, as I've already said, prices that per meal plans are not cheap. My experience here, without having data to give you though, my experience is that most students just automatically sign up for the lowest amount of meals.

Participants also acknowledged that oftentimes colleges make it harder for students on limited budgets to plan financially by using confusing language and failing to be transparent about the full costs associated with attending. For example, an administrator at a highly selective

four-year university observed that many students don't understand that the university's definition of meeting full need does not include health insurance or meal plans.

So, I think students hear "full need" and hear this institution is going to cover all of my needs. They know I'm poor. They know my parents are poor. They know my parents don't have a lot of money. There's no savings. There's no emergency fund. They know all this because I filled out my financial aid application. They know everything. So when I get to the institution, how am I supposed to cover my student health insurance if you know I don't have any money. Or how am I supposed to cover a meal plan that's \$3,000? I don't know. But you know I don't have any money. So, I think that part of the language has been misconstrued between what the institution means when they say we'll meet full need.

An administrator from a public four-year university made a similar point about the state's free tuition program, commenting that students are often surprised to learn the program does not cover a variety of fees or things like books.

And so what that [free tuition program] did, it confused things a little bit from my perspective... But basically, it says you can go to college for free, which is not true. You have to meet criteria and then it doesn't account for everything, so some of my work with students is that they didn't know they had to buy that text online, that they didn't know there were certain fees that they had to pay...

As study participants observed, in the face of juggling so many financial challenges, all too often something has to give. A student affairs member from yet another a community college stressed that it is no longer "a cute thing to say" that "oh, college students eat ramen" because the

reality is that students are deciding “between eating or getting their books.” An administrator from a public four-year college underscored the difficulty of these choices, commenting:

So some of the students, they're making a choice. Do I pay my tuition? Do I eat? And it becomes a fine balance, and I think the challenge for students is, how long can you do that? How long can you afford to not pay a bill or to be food insecure and still go to college and then make your degree pay off and make it all worth it?

Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Participants felt strongly that dramatic increases in the number of people experiencing food and housing insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic brought new attention to longstanding inequities in basic needs. A student affairs member at a private four-year college commented that while the pandemic “opened up” conversations about food and housing insecurity, the fundamental causes are not new.

And I think that people... are really seeing the effect that COVID-19 has had... It has opened up the continuous conversation. And I dare say a little more eye-opening like, wow, I didn't realize that. These statistics are so alarming and so many people were affected. And the thing for us that have been doing this work for, I think a while it's not just COVID. This is like COVID has exacerbated and it has given way for that to happen.

Making a similar point about the underlying conditions exacerbated by the pandemic, a student affairs member at another private four-year college noted that it is the same students who were struggling before the pandemic who were most negatively impacted by it.

The pandemic, whatever it is that we were seeing before the pandemic, you can multiply that by 10. It is everybody who was having difficulty paying for food and books is going to be further at risk for not being able to pay for either at this point.

Highlighting the racial and ethnic inequities inherent in the pandemic's effects as well as the impacts on students, an administrator at a highly selective four-year university observed, "This pandemic is disproportionately impacting black and brown folks. It's impacting even students' ability to go to college regardless of their race and ethnicity."

Furthermore, the pandemic forced colleges to confront students' basic needs more directly than perhaps they had done in the past. For example, a student affairs member at a community college discussed how the need to close dorms during the pandemic forced the college to wrestle with the fact that many students depend on residence halls and dining services for housing and food.

And being at the pandemic, the area that the school is in, the outbreak is on the rise so we were unable to house students. So a lot of those students were worried about if they could either continue their education because they don't have a stable home. Living on campus was their stable home... So along with that, I've been hearing from other institutions that there are a lot of food insecurities, because again, if the halls are closed, there is no way to feed people. Because people use on-campus housing as not only housing, but a place to eat because of the meal plan that's attached to it.

In addition, the pandemic forced higher education institutions to redefine basic needs by underscoring the extent to which access to technology has become a basic need. As an administrator at private four-year university stated, closing campus libraries revealed that many students had no other access to computers and WiFi.

We know that some of you when the pandemic hit, basically did your work, depended on the library or computer labs to do your work because a lot of people just had a smartphone and when the pandemic hit, that's what they had to do their work from, a

smartphone, because they didn't have a tablet, a laptop or anything, or even that they didn't have WiFi at home...

5.2 Awareness of Basic Needs Insecurity in the Internal Institutional Environment

At the same time that participants were aware of the national scope of basic needs insecurity, they were also highly aware of basic needs insecurity as an internal issue directly impacting students on their campuses. Participants' awareness of basic needs insecurity on their campuses stemmed from three main sources: general knowledge of student demographics, survey data, and interactions with individual students experiencing food and housing insecurity. Despite acknowledging that demographic and survey data provide imprecise estimates of basic needs insecurity, participants nonetheless reported that these sources of information can play a critical role in making the case for providing basic needs services. Additionally, the impact of interactions with individual students suggests that numbers alone may not always be the primary motivation for providing basic needs services.

General Knowledge of Student Demographics

Participants were aware that students across all sectors of higher education struggle with basic needs insecurities. As a student affairs member at a community college noted, "Harvard, they have food insecurity there. They have housing insecurity. So, it's pervasive. It's not just a [name of public university system] thing. It's everywhere." However, participants from community colleges were the most likely to reference student demographics as an indicator of the prevalence of basic needs insecurities and as a rationale for offering basic needs services. For example, a student affairs member at a community college reported that knowledge of the large number of low-income students served by the college had prompted staff in her office to start

maintaining an informal pantry stocked with snacks well before the college opened its official pantry.

Prior to the pantry that opened here at [name of college], our office has always kind of maintained a pantry for our own students. Being that we serve students that are low income, first in their families to go to college, a lot of them come from areas or from families where resources are pretty limited. So, we've had kind of a pantry here for a while where students can just come and grab a snack if they needed it or, during the break, if they didn't know how they were going to get food, we might have some things that they can take home with them.

Another student affairs member at the same community college observed that, based on his perception, community colleges pay more attention to basic needs than four-year colleges and universities, because they tend to serve a greater percentage of students experiencing basic needs insecurity. "I think the reason the community colleges talk about it [basic needs] is, we have those populations. I think we have a bigger... our volume percentage-wise compared to the four-years, we're going to have a larger percentage of that." Similarly, a student affairs member from a different community college commented that it makes sense for community colleges to offer food pantries, given that they tend to serve more economically disadvantaged students.

So this [food pantry] is, in my opinion, just kind of a common good service that we can offer our students who tend to be a more disadvantaged population. So the benefit to the college I think in that regard would be it's providing a community service that's an important one for, again, disadvantaged student populations.

Participants from both public and private four-year institutions agreed that, given the demographics of the populations they serve, community colleges (and some public four-year

colleges) have had a greater awareness of students' basic needs for a longer time, and thus are often better equipped to provide services. Commenting on the quality of the food pantries and services for food insecurity at two nearby community colleges, a student affairs member at a public four-year college stated, "...in certain ways they are so much better when it comes down to social services. And I find the two-year schools often are better than the four-year schools." A student affairs member at a private four-year university suggested that because they generally serve students from lower economic backgrounds, both the two- and four-year public colleges in the city provide more effective support for basic needs than his own institution.

If we look at institutions or colleges [in the same city] that are more effectively serving those who have more economic basic needs, we would be looking at our public colleges... Their primary demographic are students who are ... I'm generalizing here ... but they come from a different economic background than the majority of our students.

Finally, an administrator from a highly selective four-year university speculated that community colleges have been addressing basic needs for a much longer time than institutions such as his own, which he felt was just beginning to recognize that students on campus experience food and housing insecurity.

I think maybe the community college space has been grappling with this for some time, but I think more four-year institutions, particularly those that are highly selective or Ivy League, or just coming to the realization that there are students on our campuses who are facing food insecurities, or dealing with homelessness, or just having trouble accessing basic needs. I think that's a newer part of the elite school conversation.

Survey Data

To get a sense of the scope of the challenge posed by basic needs insecurities on their

campuses, several participants reported that their institutions had taken part in surveys conducted at either the national, state, or university-system level. A smaller number of participants reported that their institutions had either adapted externally developed surveys for internal use or developed their own surveys.

When asked whether the college was doing anything to determine how many students might be experiencing basic needs insecurity, a community college faculty member who had served on the committee to start a food pantry on campus referenced two surveys that had been conducted at the college. One had been conducted by another faculty member within the same college and university system 9 years prior to the interview and one had been conducted by the Hope Center the previous year. According to the participant the surveys not only raised awareness of the “particularly high incidence” of food and housing insecurity among the college’s own students but also provided a basis of comparison for recognizing that “this all isn’t as exceptional as you think,” and connecting basic needs insecurity on campus to “a bunch of economic crises going on across America.”

An administrator at a public four-year college that is part of the college and university system discussed above, and that was included in the same two surveys, relied on the findings to make the case for offering a food pantry and emergency grants. Prior to the publication of the survey findings, the administrator noted that many of the college’s main donors were unaware of how many students were struggling with food and housing insecurity, commenting, “It was surprising in how surprised our donors were... To a person, the idea of students being homeless or students being hungry had never crossed their radar.”

An administrator at a private four-year university was similarly surprised when survey findings revealed significant levels of food and housing insecurity among students on campus.

After national conversations about basic needs prompted administrators to identify ways of learning more about their students, they realized that a national survey in which the university already participated, conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, had recently added questions about food and housing insecurity.

But we started to realize we have some data about this and so that, I think, tipped the tide when we were having conversations last spring of, "Well, how widespread is this? We don't hear a lot about this at [name of university]." And then we got the survey results back in with, "Wow, okay. This is a bigger, larger... Our numbers at [name of university] are in line with what we're seeing as national numbers." So it was kind of like you look at these national numbers and think, "I think it's lower at [name of university]," and then we got our own data and said, "Oh, no. We're about the same, okay."

Ultimately, these survey findings served as a key motivation for the university to begin offering a meal swipe program.

In contrast, a student affairs member at another private four-year university described a very different use of survey data. Originally, data about the total number of students on campus experiencing basic needs insecurity "wasn't something that we used to demonstrate that we had a need for the program [a food pantry]." Instead, they routinely tracked the number of students using the pantry, and conducted surveys of those students to "continue to prove that there's a need." More recently, however, they "wanted to have a little bit more broad base," and opted to add a campus-specific question about food insecurity to a national survey in which the university already participated, the National College Health Assessment. Although the number of students reporting experiencing food insecurity was relatively small, the student affairs member suggested that it was important to be able "to say something about food insecurity at [name of university]"

in general... not just about those folks that made their way to the pantry and actually utilize the pantry.”

Limitations to Survey and Demographic Data

Although the sources of demographic and survey data discussed above provide justification for providing basic needs services, participants also noted that they fail to provide a full picture of the state of basic needs insecurity on their campuses. One reason is that food, housing, and other forms of basic needs insecurity occur along a spectrum from temporary to chronic, and from moderate to severe. A faculty member at a public four-year college observed that this variation makes it difficult to quantify the extent of the problem.

So I think it's more widespread than we like to admit. Is it a quarter? Is it more than a quarter? I think along the spectrum is probably more than a quarter, but this is including, maybe having food at home but not having nutritious food or not having three meals a day worth of food.

A student affairs member at a private four-year college made a similar point, speculating that the prevalence of food insecurity is likely greater than they think given that some cases are consistent but others are more sporadic, making it harder to estimate total numbers.

I would say it's more prevalent than we think it is based on our numbers... And it's also hard to tell, right? So some students come because they're curious, we have some students who come once. We have some students who come twice. So I think our population that is consistently food-insecure is fairly small. I would anticipate under 500 students. Our population that is intermittently needing to use the service is much larger. So we will see at the beginning of this semester, for example, before student paychecks hit from student jobs, a much larger hit on the pantry than we do mid-semester. Same

thing toward the end of the year, right? As expenses start ramping up and money starts ramping down, we'll see more students coming in for occasional visits. So I think as colleges look at this, I think there are students who consistently need the service who are consistently food-insecure, and others who may need it sporadically.

Complicating matters further, some students experiencing basic needs insecurity will likely be unwilling to reveal their situation. A faculty member at a community college commented,

But if you help 15 kids a semester who disclose, you don't know about the other 15 kids who didn't disclose, and you don't know about the 30 kids in your colleague's class, and so on. And so it becomes difficult to get your arms around something that some students don't always like to talk about.

A student affairs member at a different community college reported that the college has chosen not to survey students about food and housing insecurity for much the same reason. "That's the hard part. We haven't gotten to a point like, "Oh, let's do a survey, and just survey the students," because I know we're not going to get answers back from that." The same student affairs member also observed that relying on general demographic information, such as qualification for the Pell grant, is imprecise and reflected that more accurate data would enable them to better target services.

...we started using some things, it's just like, "Well, how big is our Pell population at the school?" Because that at least gives us an idea. So, we know a third of our population receives Pell, so we have an idea that, we have a third in the demographic that's a low-income demographic. Ideally, out of that, there's probably a certain percentage. But, we haven't been able to figure out that percentage. That is the toughest part, because data

would help us focus on certain areas, if we knew one area was greater than the other, but we don't...

Individual Students

Given the difficulties of quantifying basic needs insecurity, the number of students experiencing basic needs insecurity was not always the most critical internal factor shaping institutions' response to basic needs. Participants across all four institutional types and occupying a range of positions – from advisors and counselors to faculty members and administrators – discussed how knowledge of individual students experiencing food and housing insecurity affected their understanding of the issues as well as how their institutions approach services for basic needs.

Often, confronting the reality of students experiencing food and housing insecurity prompted college staff to act, and served as the motivation for starting services such as food pantries. Describing a situation in which she had become aware of a student living out of his car in a campus parking lot, an administrator at a public four-year university said, “here’s something that’s in your face; you have to respond to it and have some resources.” Although the university does not offer direct support for housing, it does have a team responsible for assessing and responding to a variety of academic and non-academic needs, and capable of making referrals. As part of the team, the administrator was planning to seek the student out and ask if he would like information about available services.

A faculty member overseeing the pantry at another public four-year university related that the pantry had been started 13 or 14 years previously by a secretary who learned that a student worker in their department did not have enough money for food over the summer. Dining services were limited, the student was not earning much money, and she did not have access to

transportation to get to the more affordable grocery stores farther away from the college campus. After hearing about the student's situation, the secretary started buying extra food every time she went grocery shopping and leaving it on a bookshelf in her office for anyone who wanted to take. According to the participant, the pantry "grew from there."

A student affairs member at a community college shared a similar story about the origins of the college pantry, except that it was students who advocated for a food pantry after becoming aware of peers who were struggling with food insecurity.

So there were some students who was expressing that they had friends who were struggling to eat and had no way of getting food, but were embarrassed to ask for help. They went to the [student service center] on campus and they spoke with the coordinator, and he asked them what they think is a good suggestion for how to remedy that. And then they stated, "I know other schools are starting pantries. What would you think about starting one here?"

5.3 Pressure on Higher Education to Address Basic Needs

Apart from internal institutional dynamics, a variety of external forces are placing pressure on higher education as a field to provide services for basic needs. Like other institutions, colleges and universities maintain their legitimacy as institutions by conforming to external expectations regarding what their core functions are and how those functions should be carried out. Scott (1995) identified three primary mechanisms, or what he termed "pillars" through which those expectations operate: *cognitive* (rationale decision-making in response to existing circumstances), *normative* (adherence to social norms and values), and *regulative* (compliance with laws and sanctions). All three of these processes can be seen at work in shaping how colleges are responding to basic needs.

In terms of *cognitive* dynamics, awareness of the prevalence of basic needs services at other institutions appeared likely to be a factor in decisions to provide basic needs services. Participants observed that basic needs services have become so widespread they are starting to be perceived as a standard part of student services, and identified several arguments rationalizing this evolution. *Normative* pressures valuing basic needs services as a critical role for higher education were identified as pervasive in popular media, academic research, and professional organizations. Finally, compared to cognitive and normative mechanisms, *regulative* structures in the form of legislation and mandates seemed to have less bearing on the development of new basic needs services, but were nevertheless influential in establishing basic needs services as an expected role for higher education.

Cognitive

Isomorphism. As discussed above in the section on awareness of student demographics, participants across the sample believed that public colleges, particularly community colleges and to a lesser degree public four-year colleges, typically serve students with greater levels of basic needs insecurities than private institutions. Based on that awareness, participants surmised that community colleges and broad access public four-years were the first institutions to begin offering services for basic needs with regularity. Rather than restricting the conversation about basic needs insecurities to public institutions, however, the growing prevalence of basic needs services at public institutions appears to have motivated private institutions to examine the occurrence of basic needs insecurities among their own students more closely. As private institutions became increasingly aware that basic needs insecurities are not limited to students attending public colleges, they may have started adopting the types of basic needs services offered by public colleges as a strategy for supporting students in ways they were not

accustomed to doing. As more private institutions began offering basic needs services, it is likely that issues of status and a need to keep up with peer institutions became more influential.

Participants across all institutional types commented on the fact that basic needs services, in particular food pantries and emergency grants, have become commonplace on college campuses in the past few years, initially at community colleges and increasingly so even at elite four-year universities. Speaking to the prevalence of food pantries at community colleges, a faculty member at a community college stated that if someone had asked her a few years ago how many community colleges offer food pantries, she would have said “none.” Based on conversations with colleagues at other community colleges, however, she is now aware that significant numbers of community colleges are addressing food insecurity.

If you asked me a few years ago, I would have said none. I have no idea because it just wasn't the environment that I was in. Talking to other community colleges, like my colleagues at other community colleges, it feels like it's something that's much more prevalent there. So I definitely... Without knowing full statistics, I would feel confident to say that the community colleges do a pretty good job at trying to serve those needs.

A student affairs member at another community college attributed the design of the college's one stop center to similar services at other colleges, and noted that she believed the one stop model originated in community colleges: “I want to say when it first started, it was based off of what a few other schools were doing... I believe it started in community colleges...”

Reflecting on the growth of basic needs services across higher education, she also observed that more community colleges and four-year universities are considering the basic needs of their students and offering food pantries now than previously: “And I think now what schools are

doing as far as I know... they're looking at the needs now, they're looking at what can we do? And I know a lot of universities and community colleges have food pantries.”

An administrator at a private four-year university provided insight into the expansion of services to address food insecurity among private institutions by describing how reports of food insecurity at other colleges and universities prompted the university to examine the prevalence of food insecurity on their own campus, eventually leading to the university’s decision to develop a meal swipe program.

And so, we started to see reports about, in particular, food insecurity at other places and kind of started to say, "Well, that's not really an issue at [name of university], is it?" And then started saying, "Maybe it is, maybe we need to start asking more questions."

When asked which type of institutions influenced the university’s decision to begin addressing food insecurity, the administrator discussed a process of selectively paying attention to three types of peer institutions – those he termed “aspirant” institutions with higher rankings and greater prestige; local institutions, both public and private, in the same city; and ideologically comparable institutions with a similar religious affiliation. Ultimately the administrator felt that even though the issues likely differed somewhat across such a wide range of institutions, it was the fact so many of their peer institutions were addressing food insecurity that played a key role in motivating the university to do the same: “But I think it was really looking around at peer institutions and saying, ‘You're having this problem. I'm not sure we're having it the same that you are, but maybe we're having some of that too.’”

Several other participants also made comments suggesting that it was not just the activities of peer institutions influencing the development of basic needs services, but the growth of basic needs services across postsecondary education. For example, speaking about emergency

grants, an administrator at a highly selective four-year university offering emergency funds noted that the grants “have ballooned and blossomed like crazy.”

Well, first off I would say these sort of emergency funds have ballooned and blossomed like crazy. Well beyond even our immediate peer group. I think a lot of schools have them. And I don't want to say it's the norm in most schools these days, but it's quickly becoming a norm. If you don't have them, you're getting them...

A student affairs member from a public four-year university stated that she first realized emergency grants were becoming “a growing trend across the country” a few years ago: “I just really became aware of emergency funds as aid supplements probably... it was probably only three years ago that I realized that this was a very common thing across the country...”

Describing the growth of food pantries on college campuses in even more vivid terms, the same public four-year university student affairs member quoted above observed that food pantries “have really mushroomed across the United States.”

Evolution of the Field. Overall, the consensus amongst participants was that heightened awareness of basic needs insecurity and the growth of services to address students' basic needs are contributing to an evolution in the field of higher education. A faculty member from a community college who had been teaching for 24 years revealed that he “never would have even considered the need for a food pantry on campus” when he started teaching in 1996, but suggested that colleges continuously adapt and that the current focus on students' basic needs represents “the evolution of these types of situations.” This perceived evolution of the field also affected how participants interpreted their own roles. For example, reflecting on how his understanding of his role in financial aid has changed over time, a staff member at a community

college described undergoing a shift from focusing on managing students' bills to recognizing the financial challenges outside of college that may impact students' ability to succeed.

When I started in higher ed, our job was to help you pay your bill, and in essence, help you just go to school. But, I think it's evolved to now where... we need to look at all the pieces that a student needs to help make them successful, because we're past the point of just like, "Let's pay the balance." We have to understand that there's all these other pieces that could make you unsuccessful at college.

Rationalizing this evolution in student services, participants identified three main reasons why it makes sense for colleges to provide support for basic needs: alignment with institutional mission, need to increase enrollment and retention, and a perceived moral obligation.

Alignment with Institutional Mission. One way that participants from both private and public institutions connected basic needs services to their institution's mission was by portraying basic needs services as a means of carrying out a commitment to increasing access to higher education for underserved populations and promoting social mobility. For example, a student affairs staff member at a private four-year university discussed the "fit" between the university's emergency funds and meal swipe program and its founding as an institution to serve immigrants.

Well, certainly it fits in with our hope to help our students thrive, but it also fits in with the hope of providing education to students so that they can help improve their own life and their own circumstances. [Name of university] was founded as a school for immigrants back in 1841... I think the piece of that that is really important is being accessible [for] people who need higher education the most... We don't want to see our students have to drop out of school because of financial reasons or these emergencies that happen or not be able to come here.

An administrator from a highly selective private four-year institution and a student affairs member from a community college also made similar comments relating basic needs services to educational attainment and social mobility. The administrator from the highly selective private four-year noted, “a lot of people in higher ed... are here because we believe in education and students and helping that be a tool of social mobility... And so, it's [basic needs services] part of that.” The student affairs member from a community college stated,

It is the school's priority to improve graduation rates, in order to do so the school recognizes that the stressors of the students need to be addressed to prevent drop out. Our school is committed to helping as many students as we possibly can to meet their goals of getting a college degree. This we understand helps to elevate families out of poverty.

Another way that participants at public, but not private, institutions discussed the relationship between basic needs services and their college's institutional mission was in terms of having an obligation to serve the local community. A faculty member from a community college identified one of the benefits of providing basic needs services as being “a better community member” and “doing what our mission is supposed to be as a community college.” A student affairs member from another community college suggested that public institutions have a responsibility to respond to the needs of their communities that private institutions do not and depicted the college's food pantry as a way of responding to those needs.

For higher education, a public higher education where our mission is to serve [name of state] community and [name of state] tax payers responsibly, I absolutely believe it's important we help... and we need to be able to respond to their needs. ...if it were a private four-year, yeah, and your aim is to intellectually grow your student population, again, you might not have that same feeling of obligation, or at least I might not... But I don't know, I guess as a public

institution, I feel that it's a necessity, and I'm glad we have a food pantry now... Finally, an administrator at a public four-year college linked the college's motivation for offering a food pantry to its founding as a college with a mission of advancing social justice by serving the surrounding community, which is composed primarily of racially minoritized and low-income residents.

And so I feel like [name of college] was like, "We have to do more. We can't say that we are this activist college and for the people, serving the people, and not really assisting with how people can have access to quality food at the same time." So that's my rationale. That's what I think is what started it. Is that we wanted to be that school that fights inequality, that fights injustice, but also fights it in different ways.

Strategy for Increasing Enrollment and Retention. Other participants depicted the growth of basic needs services as a logical response to the need to increase student recruitment and retention. For example, a student affairs member from a private four-year university hypothesized that without the extra support of basic needs services financial challenges would deter students from attending.

...but I think we're seeing in the community the rising cost of goods, right? Inflation, people's earnings aren't always staying on pace with that, and then the rising cost of college. I think it's sort of this perfect storm for creating some of this need, and if we don't have these type of services, I think we're going to see more and more of our enrollment being impacted because we're not going to be able to attract those students because they just can't make it work. They can't make it work to be here.

Once students enrolled, participants saw having basic needs met as essential to the students' ability to engage in coursework and ultimately succeed and complete a degree.

Multiple people referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs to connect basic needs and academic success. For example, a student affairs staff member at a public four-year college commented, "But you think of the whole Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right? And so before you can get the students to even start thinking critically, their basic needs are some of the things that you have to think about." Similarly, a student affairs member at another public four-year college suggested that food pantries are becoming a standard part of student services because they are critical to students' success in the classroom.

I think institutions are more aware that because you're in college, and you have the privilege to be in college, it doesn't mean everything outside of a student's collegiate life is perfect. And that they may need help in other areas of their life. We're finding more and more students are applying for financial aid, or more and more students are behind on certain things... I think it's [food pantries] becoming another service on college campuses as easily as we're seeing wellness centers pop up, multicultural centers pop up, religious life centers is really another service that we can really help our students thrive. And they know that if they don't have a good meal then they're not going to be able to focus in class.

Speaking specifically about their own institution, a student affairs member at a community college indicated that promoting retention and completion was the primary motivation for establishing a one-stop center on campus addressing a variety of basic needs.

And really the main goal of the [name of one stop center] was to maintain that retention, so that students can graduate and they have those basic needs to succeed in school.

Without clothing, without food, without childcare, how can you go to school? How can you succeed? How can you study and all of those things?

However, although participants believed basic needs services will positively impact student outcomes, they did not necessarily need evidence of improved student outcomes to justify providing services, suggesting that even if increasing enrollment and retention provide rationales for offering services, those factors may not be primary motivations for doing so. When a financial aid administrator at one of the highly selective private four-year institutions was asked whether the university was collecting data to compare receipt of emergency grants to student outcomes, he replied that they were not. "I think that's an interesting part of being at a place like [name of university], a lot of times, it's like, well we're just here to help the need." When a student affairs member at a community college was asked whether he thought the college would continue providing basic needs services even if data indicated that there was no correlation between use of services and student outcomes, he responded that he thought they would.

I would say yeah, we would still be invested... Let's say it didn't change the percentages, I think we would, because I think especially the board and the president, and the way the administration is looking at it, that's one of their... objectives and goals. That's kind of their philosophy. They want to help those students. So, I think right now, those programs would stay in place. Which for me, is how I think community colleges should, because that's like I said, I think that's part of our role now.

While both participants expressed a belief that their institutions placed intrinsic value on supporting students' basic needs, their responses also revealed stark differences between institutional sectors. The participant from the highly selective institution explained the lack of emphasis on outcomes by alluding to the fact that the university could easily afford to help students with basic needs regardless of whether services improved outcomes, while the

participant from the community college attributed the lack of emphasis on outcomes to a philosophical commitment to helping students rooted in the institution's role as a community college.

Moral Obligation. Finally, some participants argued that recruiting and enrolling low-income students amounts to an obligation to ensure those students' needs are met. Stressing this point, a faculty member at a public four-year university who was overseeing a food pantry commented:

... we are actively recruiting students to our university understanding that affording college, for some of these students, is going to be a burden. And so if we are going to actively recruit these students, then it is our responsibility to make sure that they have a way of meeting their basic needs.

Focusing on the financial burden posed by the rising cost of college, a student affairs staff member at a private four-year college made a similar point:

If we continue to make the cost of going to college more and more expensive, we have also an obligation to make sure that we are looking at all of the different ways that that increased cost of college affects the people who have made that decision to come to our schools... If the cost of college keeps on going up, we have to look at all of the things that will fall off to the side because they can't afford to do it, right?

Normative

Participants discussed a variety of factors both within the field of higher education and in society more broadly that are contributing to new norms and values regarding basic needs insecurity among college students and the role of colleges and universities in addressing those needs. Key factors included the depiction of basic needs insecurity as a national concern in

popular media and higher education news outlets and a newfound emphasis on basic needs insecurity in academic research and amongst professional higher education organizations.

Highlighting the influential role of news media in raising awareness about basic needs insecurity, a student affairs member at a private four-year university talked about the part that the media has played in debunking stereotypes about college students subsisting on ramen noodles and elevating conversations about improving access to healthy food for college students.

So I think that that news media has also been very important to give a spotlight and a conversation around that. And I think in our initial conversation, this is nothing new. I think people in the 70's, it was cool to eat ramen and that's part of the rite of passage. But I think now in 2020, we've moved past, oh yeah, that's what all college students do. They eat ramen. And now it's like, no, they eat ramen because it's highly... It's not nutritious and it's super cheap. So that's sort of the conversation that let's de-stigmatize food insecurity, but also let's talk about ways that students can have healthy meals, have access to food.

At one highly selective four-year university, news articles not only raised awareness about food insecurity in higher education as a national issue, but also made the issue “much more real” by featuring the university’s own students. Two administrative staff members at the university described the articles as a “wake-up call” that motivated them to organize a small food pantry for students in their department.

There was a *New York Times* article about it, about students experiencing food insecurity... It featured a [name of participants’ university] student. So I think that really was like one of the first catalysts for us to start putting some energy into efforts in our own department. There was also a [name of local paper] news article about the issue

specifically at [name of participants' university] and just giving a little bit of insight into what the experience might be like for students who are experiencing food insecurity. So we were sort of motivated by that larger national conversation to do something about it in our own space.

While media sources were viewed as key influences for raising awareness and shifting mindsets about basic needs insecurity among college students, participants identified academic research as a primary source for understanding the scope of need at colleges and universities across the country and as validation for adopting basic needs services on college campuses. In particular, at least six participants referenced the Hope Center at Temple University founded by Sara Goldrick-Rab as a core resource. For example, a student affairs staff member at a community college referenced the Hope Center's work when pursuing funding for the campus food pantry.

I read a lot of materials from the Hope Center... It really helped us to have that information so that when it came time to look for funding to put this together, we could speak intelligently about it, about food insecurity, housing insecurity, and all of that. So, that was invaluable information, for sure.

Finally, professional organizations are also playing a significant role in normalizing supports for basic needs as a standard part of college services. Both well-established student affairs organizations such as the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and newer organizations dedicated specifically to food insecurity such as the College & University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA) appear to be raising the profile of college supports for basic needs and serving as key sources of information about how higher education institutions around the country are addressing basic needs.

For example, when asked where she learns about issues related to food and housing insecurity among college students, a student affairs member at a private four-year college cited workshops and online resources offered by the professional organization of which she is a part.

I'm a part of a professional organization, and there are workshops and sessions on how people in different parts of the country are creating food pantries, creating on-campus gardens and growing their own food, things like that... So I took copious notes from people who were either presenting or offering best practices during that session and also looked at some of the online stuff that was put out...

Similarly, a student affairs member at a public four-year college mentioned specifically seeking out conference sessions about food pantries through NASPA to learn about what other colleges are doing.

I'm a part of an organization, NASPA. And I went to a session because I knew I was starting this job here. And I knew that I was going to be overseeing the pantries. I went to a couple of their sessions about food pantries. And I heard what other institutions were doing there.

A student affairs member from another private four-year college referenced CUFBA as an invaluable resource for starting the food pantry on their campus.

...and then as we started doing this work, I started realizing there's kind of this whole field of people that are working in this, and one of the real early people that I got connected to or an organization that I got connected to was the College and University Food Bank Alliance. So now, I think they are almost 800 or 900 pantries strong... Getting involved with them was great because they were offering great resources, and being able to connect with other people that were doing this work, and ask questions.

Regulative

In contrast to the clear and compelling influence of cognitive and normative dynamics on how participants interpreted and made sense of external dynamics shaping college and university approaches to basic needs, regulative influences were more mixed. The primary regulative factor participants referenced was a state mandate requiring all public two- and four-year colleges to either provide a food pantry on campus or offer students in need other means of accessing healthy food. However, the majority of participants who discussed the state mandate noted that it essentially had no effect because their institution already offered a pantry. Only one participant indicated that the mandate had prompted their institution to start a pantry. Despite not having a direct impact, however, some participants viewed the initiative as a positive mechanism for raising awareness about the importance of addressing basic needs in higher education. At the same time, others were frustrated by a lack of guidance and technical support as well as an absence of direct institutional funding.

Participants at institutions that already had a pantry prior to the mandate were all largely in the same position described by a student affairs member at a community college when asked about the effect of the state mandate.

It was pretty vague. It was kind of like, "You need to have a food pantry that offers support and that has some hours of availability throughout the course of the week." It was very vague. It was general enough that we already met all the criteria.

Exemplifying the viewpoint of those who appreciated the state mandate even without being affected by it, a student affairs member at a community college commented that he valued the recognition of food pantries as an essential college service.

[Name of governor] a few years ago, I want to say demanded, that all colleges have a campus food pantry. And at that time he requested that each college sends his office or the agency he had tasked to oversee this, a summary of their status. And we had this lovely report because we had been doing it for 10 years... I love that he has deemed them necessary.

In contrast, however, others were more focused on practical support and more skeptical about the effectiveness of the mandate. An administrator from a public four-year university that already had a pantry in place prior to the mandate pointed out that without clear guidelines to define baseline services, and without financial support to do more, institutions could technically comply with the mandate by doing very little.

Yeah, we already had it [a food pantry] and I think that what's interesting about that was the mandate wasn't saying how to do it... I do recall people talking about the governor's mandate, because there wasn't any money attached to it. "Let's just do it." And so you might have some campuses that have like a couple of shelves somewhere and that's their pantry.

Even though not affected by the mandate, one administrator from a highly selective private four-year university still recognized that the mandate's lack of technical support and funding was likely to leave colleges scrambling to figure out how to manage and staff a pantry, seeing the mandate as another example of higher education being asked to "do more with less."

I feel like [name of governor] required all city schools to have food pantries on campuses. So, some institutions may say, "Yeah, it's great for us to have this food pantry on campus, but we don't have the resources to support this infrastructure." So, who are the student employees? Who's going to work in this space? How do we get this food delivered every

week? Who unloads the food? I think it was this mandate that was sort of ... It was good in spirit, but the practicality of the implementation I think left some folks a little unnerved by it... Because I think as a whole, higher education is dealing with hiring freezes. So, a lot of people are working overtime and triple time with limited funds, limited resources.

Finally, calling out the lack of funding even more bluntly, a faculty member overseeing a pantry (started prior to the mandate) at a public four-year university stated, "...it's all well and good to say that every university's got to have a food pantry, but if you're not going to provide any funding, then what are you doing?"

5.4 Implications for the Role of Higher Education

Analyses of internal institutional dynamics and external pressures reveal that the field of higher education is being faced with multiple reasons to provide basic needs services, but little guidance regarding how to go about doing so or how far the extent of its responsibility lies. Colleges and universities have long played a role in educating the “whole” student (Creamer, 1994), but understandings of the range of needs encompassed in that role have significantly expanded and are continuing to evolve. As a result, institutions are wrestling with where to “draw the line” and beginning to redefine expectations.

Expanding Definition of Basic Needs

Participants’ sense that colleges and universities have an obligation to expand services to meet the needs of the whole student can be linked to awareness of the broader social forces contributing to basic needs insecurity as well to awareness of individual students experiencing basic needs insecurity. Arguing that the role of higher education needs to change to incorporate a more holistic understanding of student support, a faculty member at a public four-year college

designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution cited the changing demographics of today's college students.

Yeah, I think the role of higher education needs to change I think. And especially as the demographic of our college population is changing. I've always sort of thought of education as beyond just providing courses to students and credentialing them and then having them on their way. I don't think any of that happens unless their basic needs are met... I would like to see us... thinking more holistically about students and sort of what does it mean to educate our students?

Reflecting on interactions with individual students, a student affairs member at a community college described feeling similarly about the importance of expanding traditional notions of the role of higher education to encompass basic needs.

Colleges are initially designed to provide education to students. But I can't help but think, if a student is sitting in front of me and I know the student is struggling, no matter what amount of services I give them, whether it's coaching, whether it's tutoring, they're not thinking about that right now. They're thinking about, hey, where am I going to sleep tonight? What am I going to eat tonight? So, I think that colleges definitely need to make sure that we're really serving the whole student, that we're not just serving that academic part of them.

On a practical level, greater attention to basic needs is leading to greater awareness of the range of needs involved in supporting the whole student. When asked what they defined as basic needs, participants' responses covered not only the widely recognized needs for food and housing, but also transportation, childcare, clothing, health insurance, medical and mental health

services, employment, the ability to balance work and family responsibilities, and technology. Even this list is incomplete, however.

For example, in addition to providing food, some pantries also provide household products and personal care items. A community college faculty member involved in managing a campus pantry explained that they made the transition from providing food to providing food and other “essential needs” after realizing that students struggling to afford food are likely to be struggling with other needs as well. Now, they attempt to offer everything you can find in a grocery store.

We used to say we're a food pantry. Now we say we're food and essential needs. Such things like, I had never thought about this until the day I was in [name of college pantry], feminine products. I had a guest come in, I'm getting out food, and she said, "Miss, do you have any,"... She asked specifically for tampons or pads... Then we noticed, we thought about things like Band-Aids, over-the-counter medicines... So now we've changed more to, not just food, but we try to get all, like anything that you would find in the supermarket. That's what we always say. What could you find in the supermarket? There's diapers... You need toilet paper, things of that nature. Yes, food is an issue, but all essential needs.

Furthermore, when asked if there were any additional services related to basic needs they would like to offer, the same faculty member readily identified several additional services, including laundry, legal services, cooking classes, and parenting classes.

Lack of Clarity Regarding the Extent of Higher Education's Responsibility

Confronted with heightened awareness of the complexities involved in addressing the challenge of basic needs insecurity and growing external pressures to provide basic needs

services, some colleges and universities, from highly selective four-year universities to community colleges, are beginning to question where the extent of their responsibility lies. When asked about the role of higher education in basic needs, an administrator at a public four-year university responded:

We want to provide quality education. We want to have open access, equal access. But I think that our role as a college campus is to do what we can to a point that has not been defined. So my guess is you're going to find every school defines it a certain way.

Discussing the difficulty of assisting students who are homeless, a student affairs member at a public four-year college was torn between recognizing that “we’re not a social service agency,” and acknowledging a responsibility to provide assistance.

So among our staff, in campus life, we were talking about like, where do we draw the line? How can we help them with this homelessness?... Like we're not a social services agency. We're higher ed... But I would say it's our responsibility and it needs to be something that higher ed addresses more specifically.

A student affairs member at a different public four-year college felt similarly torn, expressing frustration that the college was not doing enough to address housing and food insecurity but recognizing that even the supports the college feasibly can provide are not enough to solve the underlying problem of poverty.

I know a college cannot simply just like, "Hey, let's go buy an apartment building and put our students in there." I know it can't work like that. I'm very well aware... I guess I feel a little stuck because I don't know what they should be doing either... But I just don't think throwing 250 bucks at a student for some groceries is really going to take care of it, either.

Highlighting the tension involved in determining how far a college's responsibility lies, a faculty member at a community college expressed contradictory viewpoints regarding higher education's role in addressing basic needs. At one point the faculty member argued for doing as much as possible, "as much as we can help, we should be helping," while at another she wrestled with feeling conflicted about allocating scarce resources to a subset of the student population, "As an academic I see the value in it, as a business person I see the conflict with it as well, where we're offering services to some and not to others and how do we draw the line?"

Redefining Expectations about the Role of Higher Education

In response to pressures over how and where to draw the line of higher education's responsibility, some college stakeholders are starting to redefine expectations about what higher education can achieve and to point out the unique ways in which higher education can contribute from within the bounds of more traditional roles and responsibilities. Participants did not harbor any illusions that services like a food pantry will "solve" food insecurity, yet they valued these services as means of promoting "a culture of sharing," "creating "a community of care," and developing students' sense of "civic engagement, civility, and global consciousness." Making this point, a student affairs staff member from a private four-year university commented,

I don't think we're solving food insecurity by running a pantry. I think it's like a BandAid on a bullet wound, right? It's helpful but it's certainly not going to be the cure or the solve. I think what our initiative does is it creates a culture of sharing, so I'm hoping that we're building that culture of people wanting to care about one another...

Similarly, in discussing the benefits of offering basic needs services, a student affairs member from a community college stated, "I also think that it shows a level of care that we're not there just to take their tuition and leave them to their own devices. That we really do have a

community of care.” Finally, suggesting that the benefits of providing basic needs services extend beyond the direct recipients, a student affairs member from a community college connected basic needs services to the broader mission of education in promoting civic engagement.

Because if we're even thinking about a student perspective, that they might not be facing any of these insecurities, but to have the awareness that it's out there, it might engage them in wanting to be part of the political process in order to speak up for those who don't have it with that sort of like civic engagement, civility, and global consciousness is always one of the things that you'd hope a student is getting out of their college experience. And it's hard to measure that. And it's hard to make sure that that's happening. But I think that the role of higher education is to make people who are receiving their education think of those who need, and to think about a global society and to think about how they can help.

5.5 Conclusion

Overall, it is clear that a number of external and internal dynamics have heightened awareness of basic needs as an issue that both extends beyond higher education and that directly impacts institutions and individual students. Recognition of the complexity of the socioeconomic and political inequities driving basic needs insecurity is growing, awareness of the numbers of college students experiencing basic needs insecurity is increasing, and more and more college staff are confronting the reality of students' lived experiences with basic needs insecurity. Furthermore, it is clear that a variety of cognitive, normative, and regulative pressures are creating new societal expectations regarding higher education's role in addressing basic needs. Of these, a growing trend toward isomorphism in response to the increasing prevalence of basic

needs services, a perceived evolution of the field, alignment with institutional missions and values, and the normalization of basic needs services through the media, research, and academic organizations appear to be having the most impact, with less weight being given to the need to document positive impacts of services on student outcomes and to state mandates. All of these factors provide compelling rationales for colleges to adopt the role of addressing students' basic needs. What is less clear, however, is what adopting that role means in practice.

In exploring how higher education stakeholders are making sense of basic needs, this chapter has highlighted the extent to which colleges and universities are grappling with how to define that role in the face of challenges extending far beyond the field of higher education. The following chapter will consider how colleges and universities are responding to multifaceted external and internal demands by examining what types of basic needs services are being offered as well as how they are organized, staffed, and funded.

Chapter 6: How Colleges are Providing for Students' Basic Needs

According to Nadler and Tushman (1980), understanding what an organization does and how it functions involves understanding the interactions between four core components of the organization: tasks (the core “work” of the organization), individuals (the skills, knowledge, and interests that influence the behavior of the individuals who work in the organization), the formal organizational and staffing structure, and the informal organizational culture. This chapter explores each of those four areas in turn, with a focus on highlighting similarities and differences across functioning in different institutional types (community colleges, public four-year universities, private four-year universities, and highly selective private four-year universities) rather than on interactions within any one individual institution.

6.1 Tasks

Considering basic needs services as organizational “tasks,” it is readily apparent that the colleges in the study are engaging in a wide variety of tasks related to basic needs. Table 1 below lists the types of services identified through the interview data. All except two of the services listed (enhanced food pantries stocked with toiletries and common household supplies in addition to food and mobile food pantries – vans operated by local community food pantries that visit the college campus on a regular basis to distribute food) were previously identified in a review of New York City college websites conducted in spring 2019⁸ (Klempin, 2019). Three additional services (cafeteria vouchers, emergency loans, and food recovery services) were each only identified at a single institution through the website review, and one (meal swipes) had begun gaining prominence nationally at the time of the website review but was not identified as being

⁸ Twenty-two out of the 31 colleges included in the website review were providing at least one basic needs service.

offered at any of the New York City colleges. Notably then, the expansion of service types observed between 2019 – 2021 occurred almost exclusively in relation to services for addressing food insecurity, which constitute nearly half of the service types identified (6 out of 13) in 2021.

Table 4

Description of Basic Needs Services

Service	Definition	Identified in 2019
Cafeteria Vouchers	Funds from the college or college dining services provider for use at campus cafeterias	Limited (1 college)
Child care	Childcare center located on campus offering reduced rates and/or scholarships for students	Yes
Clothing Closet	Either free clothing (typically gently used) or loans of professional interview attire for specific occasions	Yes
Emergency Grant	Small grant (typically no more than \$500 - \$1,000) for unexpected, non-academic expenses	Yes
Emergency Loan	Short-term loans awarded at the beginning of the semester to cover expenses prior to the disbursement of students' financial aid awards	Limited (1 college)
Food Pantry	May or may not include perishable food and fresh produce in addition to non-perishable items	Yes
Food Pantry – Enhanced	In addition to food, pantry is stocked with toiletries and common household supplies	No
Mobile Food Pantry	Community food pantry brings a van on campus on a regular basis to distribute food	No
Food Recovery	Preventing food waste while addressing food insecurity by advertising the availability of leftover food after campus events or making leftover food available through the campus pantry	Limited (1 college)
Meal Swipes	Students donate unused portions of their meal plans	Yes, but not at NYC colleges
One Stop Center / Resource Coordinator	Staff member dedicated to addressing students' basic needs / central location in which multiple services related to basic needs are located, including services offered by local community organizations	Yes
Referrals / Partnerships	Lists of local community organizations and partners offering basic needs services made available to students	Yes
Transportation	Free access to local (city or county) public transportation (subway, bus)	Yes

Prevalence and Variation by Institutional Type

Examining the prevalence of service types reveals three trends: the most common services overall, variations in the prevalence of services by institutional type, and the types of basic needs colleges are unable to fully address. Based on interview data as well as a review of the participating college websites, table 2 below presents a comprehensive list of the prevalence of basic needs services by institutional type, including the percentage of institutions offering each service by institutional type (private four-year colleges and highly selective private four-year colleges are combined for the sake of comparison), and the total number of institutions offering each service.

Table 5

Prevalence of Types of Services by Institutional Type

	% of Community Colleges (N=10) Offering Service	% of Public Four-Year Colleges (N =9) Offering Service	% of Private Four-Year Colleges (N =9) Offering Service	Total Number of Institutions Offering Service (N = 28)
Emergency Grant	80%	78%	67%	21
Child care	90%	78%	11%	17
Food Pantry - Enhanced	70%	30%	55%	15
Clothing Closet	30%	44%	78%	14
Referrals / Partnerships	50%	67%	22%	13
Food Pantry ⁹	30%	67%	30%	12
Transportation	60%	67%	0%	12
Cafeteria Vouchers	30%	30%	22%	8
One Stop Center / Resource Coordinator	50%	22%	0%	7
Meal Swipes	0%	0%	67%	6
Food Recovery	0%	22%	30%	5
Mobile Food Pantry	0%	11%	22%	3
Emergency Loan	10%	0%	11%	2

Overall Prevalence. Even accounting for the fact that all the colleges except one¹⁰ were selected for inclusion in the study based on the provision of at least one basic needs service, the prevalence of food pantries is still notable. Including both regular pantries (which may or may not include perishable food and fresh produce in addition to non-perishable items) and enhanced pantries (offering toiletries and common household supplies in addition to food), 27 out of the 28 participating institutions offer a food pantry. The only other service that is nearly as widespread

⁹ The food pantry and enhanced food pantry categories are mutually exclusive; a pantry was either categorized as one or the other.

¹⁰ One college, a private four-year university, was originally selected as a comparison site based on the fact that it did not appear to offer basic needs services at the time of initial site selection. However, interviews revealed that the university had been providing a basic needs service for some time that was not widely publicized and that it was also planning to launch another service.

are emergency grants, offered at 21 institutions.

On-campus childcare facilities are also quite common among the interview sites, offered at 17 institutions. Interestingly, however, interview participants rarely discussed childcare in connection to other basic needs services on campus. Childcare was mentioned by interview participants at only four of the 17 institutions at which it is provided; childcare facilities at the remaining 13 institutions were identified through website reviews. One possible explanation is that childcare facilities tend to be operated somewhat independently of traditional student services and none of the interview participants were directly involved with childcare services.

Additionally, although on-campus childcare facilities typically offer scholarships for low-income students, childcare is often available to all students, and in some cases to faculty and community members as well. The universal aspect of childcare may have meant that interview participants were less likely to view it in the same way as supports for basic needs that are exclusively targeted to students experiencing significant financial hardships, such as food pantries and emergency grants.

Following childcare, the next most common services were clothing closets (offered at 14 of the 28 institutions), referrals to local community-based organizations or social service agencies (13 of the 28), and transportation (12 of the 28). The remaining services were less common, offered at between 2 to 8 institutions.

Variation by Institutional Type. On their own, however, these general trends mask important similarities and variations by institutional type. In addition to being the most common services overall, food pantries and emergency grants are relatively equally distributed across public and private colleges. Together, these trends suggest that food pantries and emergency grants are primary mechanisms for addressing basic needs insecurity in higher education. In

contrast, other services are offered primarily or exclusively at either public or private colleges, suggesting that different sectors of higher education are approaching basic needs differently. Data from a national survey of student affairs officers at over 500 institutions conducted by *Inside Higher Ed* in 2020 support several of these findings, including a greater prevalence of services for childcare and transportation at public institutions and a greater prevalence of meal plan services at private institutions (Jaschick & Lederman, 2020).

Basic Needs Services Found Equally at Public and Private Colleges. A significant majority of both public colleges (15 out of 19, or 79%) and private colleges (six out of nine, or 67%) provide emergency grants. All of the participating institutions except one, a private four-year institution, offer food pantries. One notable difference between pantries from different higher education sectors is the prevalence of enhanced pantries offering non-food items. Slightly over half of both public colleges and private colleges offering pantries provide toiletries and household goods in addition to food (10 out 19, or 53%, of pantries at public colleges and five out of the eight pantries at private colleges, or 62%). However, the prevalence of pantries offering items in addition to food among the public colleges is primarily driven by the community colleges, which represent seven out of the 10 public colleges doing so.

In addition to providing a wider range of items, food pantries at community colleges have also been operating longer, with half (five) started six or more years ago. In contrast, none of the eight pantries offered by the private colleges had been in place for more than five years.

Table 6

Number of Years Food Pantries Offered

Community Colleges (N=10)	Public Four-Year Colleges (N =9)	Private Four-Year Colleges (N =6; number of pantries = 5)	Highly Selective Private Four-Year Colleges (N=3)
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1 year or less	0	1	1	2
2 – 5 years	5	3	4	1
6 – 10 years	1	2	0	0
10+ years	4	1	0	0
Unknown	NA	2	NA	NA
Total	10	9	5	3

Basic Needs Services Found Predominantly at Public Colleges. Of the 17 institutions offering childcare, 16 are public colleges. Thus, while nearly all public colleges in the study offer childcare (16 out of 19), the reverse is true at private colleges, with only one of the nine doing so. Reflecting this trend, analysis by the *Institute for Women's Policy Research*, indicates the largest share of all student parents enrolled in higher education (42%) attend a community college, while 17% attend a public four-year college and 13% attend a private non-profit four-year college (Cruse et al., 2019). Referrals to local community-based organizations and social service agencies are also far more common at the public colleges. Eleven of the 13 institutions at which staff actively develop partnerships with local organizations and maintain lists of services for referrals are public colleges. In line with their mission of providing access to higher education for low-income, non-traditional students, community colleges have a long history of forming partnerships to meet the needs of a diverse student body (Bailey & Morest, 2004; Rendon, 2000). Thus, the prevalence of referrals and partnerships dedicated to basic needs services among community colleges could reflect an expansion of this role. Based on the percent of students receiving Pell grants,¹¹ the public four-year colleges included in the study serve a population of students similar to the community colleges in terms of financial need. On average, 52% of students (with a median of 49%) at the public-four colleges (n=9) and 58% of students (with a median of 57%) at the community colleges (n=10) received Pell grants during the 2019-2020

¹¹ Based on data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS) administered by the National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

academic year, compared to an average of 28% (with a median of 20%) among the private four-year institutions (n=9). Therefore, despite not having the same historical open-access mission as community colleges, the public four-year colleges may have been responding to the similarly high numbers of low-income students in developing partnerships and referrals.

Basic Needs Services Found Exclusively at Public Colleges. Two services were found exclusively at public colleges: comprehensive support for connecting students to sources of support for basic needs in the form of either a staff member dedicated to cases management and resource coordination or a “one stop” model in which multiple services related to basic needs are housed in a central location; and transportation benefits. While the community colleges were the primary institutions providing resource coordination, representing five of the seven colleges doing so, community colleges (six colleges) and public four-year colleges (six colleges) were equally likely to offer transportation benefits, with one key distinction in the type of benefit offered. The main contrast between types of transportation benefits was not related to differences between community colleges and public four-year colleges, however, but to geographic location. The urban institutions provide free subway passes as a means-tested benefit to individual students based on financial need while suburban and rural institutions negotiated with local bus companies to provide free service as a universal benefit for all students, and in some cases faculty and staff as well. Given the association with need and, by extension, poverty, means-tested benefits are often stigmatized while universal benefits come to be viewed as an entitlement (Katz, 1996). Differential perceptions of means-tested and universal benefits raises another critical issue – although transportation can be considered a basic need, it only becomes a part of the conversation about basic needs insecurity among college students in relation to poverty.

Basic Needs Services Found Predominantly at Private Colleges. Food recovery services perform the dual function of preventing food waste and promoting environmental sustainability while also tackling food insecurity by directing leftover food from campus events and college cafeterias to students who can use it. While relatively uncommon overall – food recovery services were identified at only five of the 28 institutions in the study – food recovery is proportionately more prevalent at private colleges (three out of nine) compared to public colleges (two out of 19).

Basic Needs Services Found Exclusively at Private Colleges. Meal swipe programs in which either students or campus dining services make donations to meal plans for students in need were the only type of service identified exclusively at private colleges. The concept of meal swipes began gaining traction after a group of students at the University of California Los Angeles founded Swipe Out Hunger in 2010¹². Since then, the organization has grown to include 130 colleges¹³. Most likely reflecting the fact that four-year institutions are more likely than two-year colleges to have residential students who rely on cafeteria meal plans, nearly all Swipe Out Hunger colleges are four-year institutions. The growing popularity of meal swipes as a means of addressing food insecurity can be seen in the study sample, with six of the nine private colleges offering a meal swipe program. Four of the colleges are members of Swipe Out Hunger and two developed their own programs independently.

Gaps in Basic Needs Services. Noticeably absent from the basic needs services being offered at the colleges participating in the study are services related to housing insecurity. Although participants from all four sectors of higher education were aware of students struggling with housing insecurity on their campuses, housing support of any kind was limited. None of the

¹² <https://www.swipehunger.org/aboutus/>

¹³ <https://www.swipehunger.org/ourwork/#campus-partners>

colleges included in the study were providing direct in-kind support for housing (e.g., emergency dorm room housing or assistance identifying and applying for affordable housing). The support for housing that did exist was restricted to indirect, temporary strategies, such as including unexpected housing expenses as an acceptable use of emergency grants funds.

Several participants at public residential colleges mentioned that they would like to be able to address housing more directly by reserving dorm rooms for use as temporary emergency housing. The primary mechanisms in place for addressing housing insecurity - referrals to local social service agencies and housing authorities and the use of emergency grant funds for rent and residence hall fees – provided more limited support, however. At several colleges the referral process simply consists of a list of organizations shared with students. And in addition to restricting the amount of money students can request, emergency grant funds also typically restrict the number of times students can request a grant, making them an insufficient source of support for students with significant long-term housing needs.

In contrast to the other colleges, the highly selective four-year institutions do not appear to be addressing housing either through referrals or through emergency funds. Instead, participants from two of the three highly selective four-year institutions noted that their universities account for students' housing needs by including housing costs for low-income students in financial aid packages and offering affordably priced student housing options. Nonetheless, participants from both universities acknowledged that even with these policies in place economically disadvantaged students may still struggle to manage the cost of housing.

Summary and Implications

All sectors of higher education are addressing students' basic needs. The prevalence of food pantries as well as the growing number of different types of services for addressing food

insecurity suggest that higher education as a whole is placing an emphasis on addressing basic needs through services to alleviate food insecurity. One reason may be simply that it is easier to provide food than it is to address other basic needs, such as housing. Provisions to alleviate food insecurity, at least in the immediate and short terms, can be obtained and distributed quickly through a variety of means – donations for food drives, food recovery after events, meal swipes, partnerships with local food banks. In contrast, housing insecurity may be more likely to reflect chronic poverty, making it much harder to address, particularly with limited resources.

Apart from this general trend, however, key distinctions in how different sectors of higher education are approaching services for basic needs are apparent. Most likely reflecting the needs of the populations they serve and their unique institutional motivations for offering services, basic needs services in the form of food pantries are more established at public colleges, particularly community colleges, in terms of both the variety of items provided and the length of time services have existed. Additionally, public institutions are making greater efforts to provide a comprehensive suite of social services through referrals and external partnerships as well as on-campus one stop centers. Private four-year colleges and highly selective private colleges, on the other hand, appear to be focusing more on addressing basic needs through existing residential services (cafeteria meal swipes, on-campus housing policies, and financial aid).

6.2 Individuals

The tasks an organization performs are necessarily dependent on the people who perform them. Thus, in addition to understanding what an organization does it is critical to understand who is doing them. In this case, understanding what motivates the individuals providing basic

needs services on college campuses reveals a great deal about how basic needs services in higher education operate.

Effects of Personal Dedication and Experience

Individuals who advocated to start food pantries and other related basic needs services on their campuses or who volunteered to assume responsibility for running these services typically had an acute awareness of challenges related to basic needs insecurity. A variety of sources contributed to participants' awareness, including personal experience, interactions with students experiencing basic needs insecurity, and current higher education research and literature on the topic. As a result, they tended to be deeply committed to their role in addressing students' basic needs. For example, an administrative staff member at a highly selective four-year university explained that she was motivated to start a pantry because she felt "very passionate" about food insecurity "just on a human level" after reading a local newspaper article about students on her campus experiencing food insecurity and having students in her department directly inform her that they were experiencing food insecurity. Expressing similar levels of awareness and commitment, a student affairs staff member at a community college who recommended that the college open a pantry and chaired the committee to establish it conducted extensive research to justify the need for a pantry, citing reports from the Hope Center. Further reflecting her dedication, she described basic needs insecurity as "a topic that's near and dear to my heart" and commented that, "overseeing the food pantry is the bright spot of my day."

Several interview participants disclosed that their interest in and passion for addressing students' basic needs stemmed from personally experiencing basic needs insecurity. Making this point, an administrative staff member at a public four-year college explained that she considered the food pantry "one of my passion projects" because her own experience applying for SNAP

benefits and struggling to make ends meet while working in a low-wage job and living in an expensive city had given her a deep appreciation of how easy it can be to fall into food insecurity and how challenging it can be to receive assistance. Underscoring the significance of personal experience as a motivation for involvement in basic needs services, another administrative staff member at a public four-year college commented, “Lots of people who do this work also at some point were homeless, or they were food insecure, or they were something.”

Beyond serving as a motivation for engagement in basic needs services, personal experience with basic needs insecurity can also equip individuals to be more informed service providers. A student affairs staff member at a public four-year college discussed how his own experience with housing insecurity as a college student had made him more knowledgeable about how to help students in similar situations.

And I did have major issues, and I just dropped out... I had major housing issues at the time. I had major health issues at the time. And I just didn't go. I know now how to work with someone who would be like me if they came in. I know what to do for them. I know how to keep them on campus. I know what services they would need. I know how to help them.

Effects of Personal Experience on Beliefs about the Role of Higher Education

In addition to contributing to motivations for involvement in basic needs services, personal experience with basic needs insecurity also influenced how individuals viewed the role of higher education in addressing basic needs. For instance, an administrative staff member at a public four-year college who was instrumental in starting the college’s pantry and involved in overseeing the distribution of emergency grants discussed how her family’s experience receiving public assistance while she was growing up shaped her understanding of the university’s role in

providing services: "...the idea that the college shouldn't be in this space didn't exist to me. That's exactly what we should be doing."

Upper-level administrators who draw upon personal experiences with basic needs insecurity to make decisions about their institution's involvement with basic needs services can shape the entire institutional culture surrounding basic needs at the college. One student affairs staff member at a public four-year college attributed the success of the college pantry to the fact that the president was vocal in his support and instrumental in procuring the initial funding to open the pantry due to his own experience with food insecurity as a college student. As a result of his leadership, additional key stakeholders supported the pantry as well: "And I think that because it came from the top down, a lot of our culture at [name of college] bought into it, a cabinet bought into it, and it was really... we had a tremendous amount of support."

Effects of Professional Background

Having a professional background in social services influenced individuals' commitment to and knowledge about basic needs services in much the same way that having personally experienced basic needs insecurity did. A student affairs staff member with a background in social work at a public four-year college felt very strongly about the importance of approaching students' basic needs through a social work lens: "And I'm a very big believer in social work. I love the field... I think you have to have people who focus on this kind of stuff." In part this belief stemmed from having observed that student affairs staff members in other departments, such as the health clinic, had little knowledge about how to support students experiencing food and housing insecurity. He credited his social work training with enabling him to develop long-term intervention plans and help students access local resources.

Even when an individual's role does not involve providing services for basic needs

directly, a background in social services may still affect how they interact with students. A faculty member at a public-four college reported that her training as a therapist both made her more accessible to students and better equipped her to make service referrals: "...the students see me as somebody that [they] can talk to. So I'm not a therapist, obviously, in my role I'm now in... but I am much more aware of how to refer students to resources and what that means."

Summary and Implications

Repeated references to addressing students' basic needs as a "passion project" highlight the role that individual motivation plays in developing basic needs services on college campuses. Individual motivation is significant for two reasons. First, it has practical implications for where services are located within the organizational structure – often services are housed in whatever department the individual who took the initiative to start them works. Second, when it is individual upper-level administrators who are motivated to advocate for basic needs services, their leadership can have an outsize influence on the institutional culture surrounding basic needs.

6.3 Formal Organization

Examining where tasks are located within an organization as well as how they are staffed and funded reveals a great deal about the extent to which a task is integrated within the organizational core. Given that food pantries were the most common type of basic needs service across the institutions represented in the study (offered by 26 of the 27 institutions) and the type of service about which participants tended to have the most information, this section of the analysis focuses exclusively on pantries.

Departmental Structure

The vast majority of pantries in the study (21 out of 27, or 78%) were housed within

student affairs (also commonly referred to as student life) departments, which typically oversee a wide range of campus services related to student well-being outside of the classroom. Among the pantries housed in student affairs departments, seven were operating as a standalone service within student affairs while the remaining 14 were operated by another office or service within student affairs, including student activities, health, wellness, and mental health, the office of the dean of students, multicultural affairs, campus ministry services, and residential life. Thus, even though the majority of pantries fall under student affairs, there is still a great deal of variation in where they are located within the organizational structure. Furthermore, even greater variability in departmental structures can be observed by considering the entire length of time pantries had been operating. Despite the relatively short history of many of the pantries, two of the community college pantries and three of the public four-year college pantries had already changed locations within the organizational structure at least once.

In terms of variation by institutional type, the most noticeable difference is among the three highly selective four-year institutions. Student affairs departments were responsible for all but three of the pantries offered by community colleges, public four-year colleges, and private four-year colleges. One community college pantry as well as one public four-year college had been established as independent 501c(3)s, and one pantry at a public four-year college was overseen by the college foundation. In contrast, none of the three pantries at the highly selective institutions were affiliated with student affairs, and none of the three were set up in the same way. One was overseen by an academic department, one by the university's dining services provider, and one by a student group.

Table 7

Departments Overseeing Food Pantries by Institutional Type

	Community Colleges (N = 10)	Public Four-Years (N = 9)	Private Four-Years (N = 6; number of pantries = 5)	Highly Selective Private (N = 3)	Total (N = 27)
Student affairs / Student life	4	2	1		7
* <i>Student activities</i>	3	1	1		5
* <i>Health and wellness / counseling</i>	2	1			3
* <i>Dean of students</i>		2			2
* <i>Multicultural affairs</i>			2		2
* <i>Campus ministry</i>		1			1
* <i>Residence life</i>			1		1
501c(3) College foundation	1	1			2
Academic department				1	1
Dining services				1	1
Student group				1	1
Total	10	9	5	3	27

Staffing

Similar trends in staffing were found across all institutional types. None of the colleges in the study had created paid staff positions dedicated solely to campus pantries. Individuals who had job responsibilities related to managing pantries were doing so in addition to their primary responsibilities. These included student affairs staff members as well as faculty members, administrative staff, and dining services staff. Importantly, none of the staff with at least some

degree of direct involvement in overseeing food pantries occupied senior level positions above that of an associate or assistant dean (e.g., Vice President or higher).

Reflecting the lack of dedicated paid staff members, the majority of pantries (15 out of 27, or 55%) relied on volunteers, including faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community members to carry out the essential tasks of running pantries and keeping them stocked. In addition to relying on volunteers for day-to-day operations, personnel from multiple departments across colleges campuses were often involved in supporting pantries in other capacities. For example, participants mentioned examples of campus security providing students access to pantries outside of regular working hours, college foundation staff assisting with managing funds, applying for grants, and running campaigns for donations, and dining services staff negotiating access to food suppliers willing to provide food at low rates.

Table 8

Food Pantry Staffing by Institutional Type

	Community Colleges (N = 10)	Public Four-Years (N = 9)	Private Four-Years (N = 6; number of pantries = 5)	Highly Selective Private (N = 3)	<i>Total</i>
Volunteers only (faculty, staff, administrators, students, community members)	3	1		2	6
Student affairs staff + volunteers	2	2	1		5
Student affairs staff + paid student worker + volunteers			1		1

One stop center staff + volunteers	1				<i>1</i>
Administrative staff + volunteers		1			<i>1</i>
External volunteer (civil service)			1		<i>1</i>
Student affairs staff	2	2	1		<i>5</i>
Student affairs staff + paid student workers	1	3	1		<i>5</i>
One stop center staff	1				<i>1</i>
Dining services staff				1	<i>1</i>
Total	10	9	5	3	27

As a result of limited staffing and dependence on volunteers with limited time, those responsible for managing pantries were often stretched thin. Highlighting these staffing challenges, a student affairs staff member from a public four-year university noted that the food pantry coordinator was essentially “doing two jobs” and described the number of both student and staff volunteers necessary to run the pantry as “a small army.”

Currently, one of our staff in the dean of students office is the coordinator of the food pantry, and she supervises two graduate assistants and then a small army of undergraduate volunteers. Over the summer, the students weren't around, so we had a small army of staff members who volunteered to stock the shelves, pick up donations, go to the grocery store when we lacked certain key nutritious items that weren't coming in via donation... So she's responsible for all of that in addition to being the coordinator of parent and family programs, so right now, it's almost like she's doing two jobs because the food pantry has been so busy recently.

A student affairs staff member at a community college who had been tasked with overseeing the campus pantry in addition to his role directing student activities admitted that although he would like to enhance the pantry's services, he was struggling to find time to do more than keep food on the shelves.

Part of it, in all honesty, is that I do struggle to find the time that would be required to do that, if I can be honest about it. I've gotten to the point where I'm like, "Okay, make sure that the inventory's checked, it's stocked, we have procedures in place," but I have not been able to really enhance it the way that I would like to...

Although he had ideas about how to improve the pantry, he felt unable to act on them without additional staff. As a mid-level manager without the authority to make hiring decisions, however, there was little he could do to change the staffing situation.

I'm a little envious of some of the programs that they have coming out of the other campuses, because they've got some institutional support. We haven't got anyone like that, where they've gotten relief time to work on it... If we had somebody that was dedicated to work on it part-time... Even 12 hours a week so we could focus on programming for the pantry... coordinate a volunteer schedule, create awareness campaigns, connect more of the community, look at different things that, again, that would make the pantry dynamic, that would be cool. I think that would enhance it a little bit.

Funding

The college pantries included in the study rely on financial and in-kind support from multiple sources. All of the pantries for which funding information was available from the study interviews (23 out of the 27 pantries) depend on monetary and in-kind (food, personal care items,

household supplies) donations from faculty, staff, students, and local businesses. The majority of pantries also receive grant funding from external foundations and non-profit organizations and partner with local food banks that provide food at a very low cost and may also donate food. A smaller percentage of the pantries (6 out of 23, or 24%) receive financial support from the college foundation, typically in the form of foundation campaigns that earmark donations from alumni and other supporters for the pantries. Finally, a few pantries (4 out of 23 or 17%) receive operational funding from their institution for supply costs. (The funding considered here does not include funding for paid student workers noted in the previous section on staffing.)

Table 9

Funding Sources by Institutional Type

	Community Colleges (funding information for 9 out of 10 pantries)	Public Four-Years (funding information for 8 out of 9 pantries)	Private Four-Years (funding information for 5 out of 5 pantries)	Highly Selective Four-Years (funding information for 1 out 3 pantries)	Totals
Donations	9	8	5	1	23
Food bank	6	6	3	0	15
Grants	6	4	4	0	14
College foundation	3	2	1	0	6
College funding	1	1	1	1	4

While all of the pantries for which funding information was available relied on donations to some extent, only two, a pantry at a private four-year college and a pantry at a public four-year college, appeared to depend entirely on donations. A student affairs staff member managing a food pantry that had initially relied solely on donations before partnering with a local food bank explained that it was difficult to keep the pantry stocked with donations:

Prior to our partnership with [food bank], we did have some trouble sometimes maintaining stock, because we relied so heavily on student and faculty contributions.

That previously was an issue. Now it is not because now we can make a phone call and go pick up food.

Not surprisingly then, the vast majority of pantries (21 out of the 23 included here) are combining multiple sources of support to make ends meet, often quite creatively. For example, in addition to applying for grants, partnering with the local food bank, and asking for donations from faculty, staff, and students, a student affairs staff member overseeing the pantry at one of the community colleges set up boxes all over campus to collect bottles and cans and returns them to a local grocery store for the deposit money. Other creative fundraising strategies included a food drive competition at a private four-year college in which academic departments vied to collect the most pounds of food, and resourceful donations requests, such as asking local businesses to donate reusable bags for students to use at the pantry.

In general, funding strategies were similar across institutional types, with the lack of institutional funding for pantries being striking. Among the few institutions that did receive institutional funding, funding was limited. For example, a student affairs staff member responsible for managing the campus pantry at a public four-year college noted that the majority of food they were able to provide came from in-kind donations despite the fact that the office account had some funds available with which to purchase food. Similarly, an interview participant managing the pantry at a highly selective four-year university reported that although they were able to access department funds for purchasing food, they primarily relied upon donations because the amount from the departmental budget “wasn't too much of a departure from our coffee and little snack pantry that we already kind of had.”

Even at a private four-year college that had provided an operational budget for the pantry in addition to including the pantry in the institution's strategic plan, the student affairs staff member directing the department in which the pantry was housed stated that they made a deliberate effort to limit the amount of operational funds used for the pantry in order to make the pantry sustainable. "We've worked really hard to keep that operational budget down and to build awareness and to work with partners in university advancement, in corporate and private sponsorship, and in-kind donations." As a result of this multi-pronged fundraising strategy, the pantry had only used a small amount of institutional funds since opening three and a half years ago.

Summary and Implications

The trend towards affiliating food pantries with student affairs suggests that by and large basic needs services are viewed as non-academic student supports. Apart from this general consensus, however, the variation in departmental structures and staffing models even within student affairs highlights a lack of standardization in how higher education as a field is integrating basic needs services with traditional student services. In addition to a lack of structural standardization in service integration, few, if any, of the colleges and universities included in the study had made substantial financial investments in basic needs services in terms of staff salaries and resources for operating costs. Overall, these findings indicate that basic needs services had yet to become fully integrated into the organizational core of the institutions included in the study.

6.4 Informal Organization

Just as important to organizational functioning as formal staffing and funding structures are the aspects of the informal organization – "implicit and unwritten" processes and

relationships - that influence how an organization operates (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 45).

According to Nadler and Tushman, one of the key determinants of informal organization functioning is leadership. More specifically, they argue it is the behavior of leaders, what they do and say, that affects the informal organization. Indeed, the effects of leadership dynamics on both the general institutional culture surrounding support for campus pantries and the extent of human and financial resources provided for pantries were apparent across all four types of higher education institutions included in the study.

Supportive

At institutions in which the informal organization was supportive of the food pantry, interview participants attributed support for the pantry to having a student-focused culture and credited upper-level administrators with making the connection between the pantry and a broader institutional commitment to student success. After discussing how crucial support from the president was in procuring initial funding to start the pantry, a student affairs staff member at a public four-year college talked about the role that leaders play in creating a student-focused culture, commenting, “[Name of college] has a good community. They really are so supportive of the students. And I really think that’s because it’s modeled from the top down.” A student affairs staff member from a community college spoke similarly about the importance of leadership for fostering a culture supportive of students’ basic needs:

The leadership, that’s the good part about the college is that they’re very much supporting. Some changes are harder than others, because [they are] cultural, but these things are understood. And I don’t think any, I would be challenged to find a member of our college community that would say, ‘Well, why do we have pantry for our community?’

In some cases, a change in leadership had to occur before pantries received enough support to get off the ground. For example, in describing how the university pantry was started, an administrative staff member at a highly selective four-year university stated that a change in leadership was first necessary to create a culture in which students' basic needs were viewed as integral to institutional goals.

...for us at least, it was, I think, a change in leadership. You need folks at the table who understand... and recognize that by meeting students' basic needs it's contributing to our goal to help students feel a sense of belonging... By meeting this need, this contributes to larger institutional goals... It signifies to our students that, yes, we do want all students to be successful...

Unsupportive

In contrast, participants at institutions in which the informal organization was unsupportive described an institutional culture in which leaders were unwilling to acknowledge food insecurity as a challenge for students and were opposed to accepting institutional responsibility for providing services to address food insecurity. Participants from only a few institutions – two public four-year colleges and two private four-year colleges – reported currently experiencing what could be considered overtly unsupportive informal organizational cultures. (Participants from an additional four institutions – two community colleges, a private four-year college, and a highly-selective four-year university – reported past experiences with unsupportive cultures but noted that leadership changes had contributed to the development of more supportive cultures.)

Even though only a small number of participants were actively struggling with an unsupportive informal organizational culture, those that were discussed significant negative

consequences. For example, the food pantry at one of the public four-year colleges is overseen by an administrative office rather than by the student affairs department responsible for the majority of student services because the student affairs staff did not believe the college should offer a pantry. In explaining how the pantry came to be housed in her office, a staff member from the administrative department involved in managing the pantry alluded to tensions between the two departments and suggested that the student affairs department's unwillingness to acknowledge the problem of food insecurity was creating unnecessary silos between student services.

We thought it belonged to student affairs, and we thought it would work if we helped fund and staff it, that we would share it. And our student affairs department was adamantly opposed to it. They said it was impossible to run a food pantry on campus, so we couldn't have one... to this day I actually believe it belongs in student affairs, but they don't want the pantry... Until we get them to admit it's an issue, even after seeing surveys, even after I know they talked with students... Until they know that it belongs in student affairs as part of the students' overall engagement, we'll keep it in our office.

At a private four-year college with an unsupportive informal organizational culture, the student affairs staff member who started the college pantry attributed an unwillingness to recognize food insecurity on campus to the perception that students who could afford to attend the college were unlikely to be financially insecure.

So we consider ourselves to be a different kind of breed, and that kind of permeates through the way we look at our students and thinking it's like, 'Oh, those issues that people are having out there, we probably don't have them...' We are a private institution

so it's pretty expensive to come to school here. So the mindset is that, well, if they're here, they're probably not within this category...

Consequently, the staff member was managing the pantry entirely through donations, without any financial support from the college. A student affairs staff member operating the pantry at the other private four-year institution with an unsupportive culture discussed being in a similar situation in which a lack of support from leadership translated into a lack of financial resources. In this case, the staff member felt like merely opening the pantry had been "a battle" due to leadership's belief that offering a food pantry was outside the institution's purview. Recounting initial conversations about starting a pantry, she recalled a senior administrator telling her, "We're not in the business of opening pantries." Although she was ultimately able to proceed with opening the pantry, the pantry does not receive financial support from the college, a fact which the staff member interprets as an indication of ongoing resistance.

I don't see the institutional support. And it's of concern. It really, really is of concern. We don't have any money in our budget... I think that this is something that, it should be woven into the fabric of the institution. So the challenge is, how to get the institution to honor that. To acknowledge that in the same way that we have counseling services, in the same way that we have whatever services we provide, then this too is a service that is essential to the retention of our students...

Superficially Supportive

Finally, underscoring the extent to which intangible aspects of the informal organization can have concrete impacts, several participants pointed to a disconnect between senior leaders' words and actions as creating what amounted to a superficially supportive culture around food

pantries – one in which verbal support for pantries was not matched by practical support in terms of human and financial resources.

The two clearest examples of this type of informal organizational culture were from a community college and a public four-year college. When the two faculty members managing the pantry at the community college initially began approaching people about opening a pantry, they found that, “while everyone was supportive, they didn’t want to get their hands involved.” After encountering “a lot of red tape and politics,” they were finally given a space for the pantry, but no additional resources. The lack of practical and financial support was particularly frustrating given that leadership acknowledged the importance of offering a pantry. “So the Board of Trustees and the president said, ‘Oh, that’s a great idea. We definitely need it. We’ll give you the space.’ And that’s all they would do.”

The pantry at the public four-year college with a superficially supportive college was also overseen by a faculty member who expressed similar frustration with senior leaders’ unwillingness to follow through on verbal accolades with practical support, particularly for staffing the pantry: “It’s really frustrating that there’s been a lot of institutional celebration of what we do and not a lot of support.” Apart from assistance from student volunteers, the faculty member primarily managed the pantry herself and was at the point of feeling overwhelmed, admitting, “I really need more help.”

Summary and Implications

While it is clear that college leaders have an influential role to play in establishing norms regarding the provision of basic needs services on college campuses, it is also seems clear that it is the translation of individual beliefs and institutional norms into financial resources that has the largest impact on the provision of basic needs services. Although few participants specifically

called out a discrepancy between verbal support and financial support, the limited institutional support uncovered in the preceding analysis of pantry funding sources suggests that the gap between culture and resources may be even larger than it appears here.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of what can be thought of as the core organizational functions comprising basic needs services in higher education: the primary tasks or types of services that are being offered, the motivations driving the people providing services, the location of services within organizational structures as well as staffing structures and funding sources, and the informal organizational cultures that shape how institutions approach basic needs services.

Overall, this information suggests that while colleges are adopting a wide range of services related to basic needs, they are generally concentrating efforts to address basic needs on food and emergency aid, with a few key differences between institutional types. The people most closely involved in providing basic needs services are often motivated by deep personal commitments but are typically managing basic needs services (in particular food pantries) with little institutional support in terms of funding and human resources. Across institutions, limited institutional support in combination with a lack of standardization in organizational structures indicates that basic needs services are still operating on the fringe of student services in many cases. At the same time, however, the number of dedicated individuals and supportive institutional cultures suggests that opinions about the role of higher education in addressing students' basic needs are shifting.

According to Nadler and Tushman (1980), one of the most essential determinants of organizational effectiveness is the degree to which there is congruence, or alignment, between

various aspects of organizational functioning and between the organization and its environment. The following chapter will draw upon the descriptions of core organizational functions described here as well as on analyses of the environmental demands facing higher education described in previous chapters to assess the opportunities and challenges facing basic needs services in terms of the degree to which different components of organizational functioning are aligned to support the same goals.

Chapter 7: Challenges to the Provision of Basic Needs Services

Having examined each of the core components involved in delivering basic needs services (the nature of the services themselves, the motivations of the people providing services, the position of services within formal organizational structures, and informal organizational cultures) in the previous chapter, the current chapter considers the key challenges involved in offering basic needs services on college campuses. In their model for assessing organizational functioning, Nadler and Tushman (1980) contend that organizational effectiveness depends more on the interactions *between* core components than it does on any one individual component. They analyze the interaction between components in terms of “congruence,” defined as “the degree to which the needs, demands, goals, objectives, and/or structures of one component are consistent with the needs, demands, goals, objectives, and/or structures of another component” (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 45). According to this model, the root of organizational challenges lies in a lack of congruence, or what Nadler and Tushman also refer to as “fit” between organizational components. To a large extent, the challenges identified by study participants bear out this claim, with the most intractable challenges appearing to be those that involved significant disconnects between organizational components.

7.1 Congruent Challenges

The challenges participants felt equipped to address were those involving resources and strategies which they had the ability to access and the authority to enact within the context of their current roles and responsibilities. In other words, the tasks involved in addressing these challenges aligned to at least some degree with the needs, skills, and capacities of the individuals implementing them. While not necessarily able to solve these challenges, the alignment between individuals and tasks provided participants a greater degree of agency in mitigating them. Two

issues met these criteria: concerns that the perceived stigma attached to experiencing basic needs insecurity and accessing basic needs services may prevent students from seeking out services, and concerns that a lack of awareness about the existence of services may serve as a barrier to use. Importantly, however, alignment between individuals and separate tasks does not tell the full story. A comprehensive examination of different strategies used to achieve similar goals reveals conflicting approaches to reducing stigma that underscore the difficulties of providing basic needs services.

Breaking Down Stigma: Individual-Task Alignment

Concerns about stigma as a barrier to service use were widespread across all institutional types, mentioned by participants from 24 of the 28 institutions (86%) included in the study – all except two community colleges, one public four-year, and one private four-year. Discussions about stigma covered both the experience of basic needs insecurity and the process of accessing and using basic needs services.

Noting that food insecurity is difficult to talk about, a faculty member at a community college identified stigma as a primary barrier to seeking help.

And I think there's also, probably, at least among some people, an element that something's been stigmatized here. It's hard to admit that I can't afford food and it's probably even more so, if I can't afford food for me and other people in my family.

A student affairs staff member at a public four-year university speculated that stigma was preventing students from visiting the university pantry after comparing the results from a campus survey of food insecurity to the number of students using the pantry. The number of students reporting experiencing food insecurity in the survey was far greater than the number using the pantry, prompting the staff member to reflect: “I think some of that was the stigma, they were

like, ‘Oh, I’m going to see other students that know that I need.’” Similarly, when asked about the extent of food insecurity at the college, an administrative staff member at a public four-year college commented that she suspected food insecurity was a much larger problem than they were aware of due to a fear of stigma preventing students from using the pantry. “Personally, I think it’s [food insecurity] actually a big issue. But I think because it’s a stigma, because going to a food pantry looks like, ‘You could be poor,’ it’s not something that is I guess talked about.” Making a similar point, an administrative staff member at a highly selective four-year university alluded to the fact that stigma may be particularly acute for economically disadvantaged students at elite institutions who face pressure to fit in with more affluent peers: “I think even from the student population there was this fear of being seen as someone who goes to the pantry. So I’m trying to come across as someone who’s just as equal as my peers.”

The concerns participants raised about stigma are certainly not unique to higher education, reflecting broader sociocultural realities tied to the experience of financial insecurity and poverty in the United States. In that respect, stigma is not a challenge that college staff members providing basic needs services can eliminate. Nonetheless, participants identified a variety of strategies they are using to combat the negative effects of stigma, including normalizing basic needs insecurity and help-seeking, designing processes to promote dignity, creating a welcoming environment, and protecting the confidentiality of students who use basic needs services. Importantly, these efforts involved strategies participants could implement through their current roles.

Normalizing Basic Needs Insecurity and Help-Seeking. Participants were actively attempting to normalize the experience of basic needs insecurity for students in multiple ways, ranging from informal verbal communication to formal college procedures. Recognizing the

powerful role that verbal communication can play in reducing stigma, an administrative staff member at a public four-year college discussed the importance of normalizing food insecurity by telling students it can happen to anyone. She intentionally organized events, such as cooking demonstrations using ingredients from the pantry, as a way of creating informal opportunities to convey this message.

So that's one of the reasons why we do the [cooking demonstrations] as well is to talk more to the fact that it's [food insecurity] not a stigma. Like it can happen to anybody at any time. And on top of that you can be in a well-off career and job, and be making 50, 60, or even 70K a year and still because of housing and everything else that comes with different tax brackets still face food insecurity.

A faculty member at a community college used statistics from national and statewide research to inform her students about how common food insecurity is on college campuses and let them know they are not alone.

I said to my students, "So you think it's only you, but look around the classroom. One third of you." And like, I don't know, the number was, there were 30 students, right. "Ten of you are facing food insecurity, so you're not alone in your fight. Don't be embarrassed." Because you try to erase that stigma that people feel is associated with using a pantry.

In addition to normalizing the experience of basic needs insecurity, participants also discussed the significance of normalizing the act of help-seeking. For example, a student affairs staff member at a community college discussed the importance of using basic needs services on campus as an opportunity to convey the critical message that "it's okay to ask for help."

It's like, 'Why would you keep anything to yourself? Go get help...' And I like to think

that things like normalizing the food pantry, normalizing the services of the [one stop center]. Yes, come have somebody help you with your taxes. You know what I mean? Yes, come grab food. Yes, it's made it like, why not? Why wouldn't you?... People need help. It's okay to ask for help.

A student affairs staff member at another community college normalized help-seeking by proactively informing new students about a range of services - financial aid, emergency grants, resources for veterans, the college clothing closet and food pantry - in order to frame them from the start as resources to promote student success available to everyone. "It's more about student success if it's presented immediately, because then they don't feel on an island if they're facing something challenging, if they get kicked out of their apartment or their car breaks down or anything."

To the extent possible within their given roles, participants were equally as attentive to framing written communications and shaping college procedures in ways that normalized basic needs insecurity. For example, a student affairs staff member at a private four-year college noted that the college's counseling services and health services had added a question about food insecurity to their intake surveys as a way of acknowledging and normalizing the experience as well as of identifying students in need in order to make referrals to the college food pantry.

They're [counseling services] now adding it to their pre-mental health screener. Are you food insecure? Just like they would, have you been a victim of sexual assault in the health services office. It's now also part of the health screening. So it's just normalizing it and making sure that everyone I think is on the same page.

An administrator at a public four-year college talked about a similar effort to portray basic needs as an essential component of overall health and wellness by creating brochures

listing the college's food pantry and emergency grant alongside not only services directly tied to physical health, such as the health clinic, but also those related to general wellbeing, such as athletics and recreational activities.

Yeah, so we put together a brochure that's called free services at name of college]. And so in there is the food pantry, the emergency grant. But we also talk about the health clinic. We talk about athletics and recreation. We talk about personal counseling, all these things that we get for free. And it's like by the way, the food pantry is also free. And so we kind of try to patch it all together under this health and wellness umbrella.

Designing Processes to Promote Dignity. Beyond addressing the stigma associated with the experience of basic needs insecurity and the act of help-seeking, participants also intentionally sought to destigmatize the process of using basic needs services, particularly highly visible services such as food pantries and clothing closets. Toward that end, participants were attentive to making the experience of using services as similar to regular shopping experiences as possible. To do so they emphasized both choice - allowing students to select the items they wanted - and quality - providing high quality items they themselves would purchase.

Explaining the rationale behind the procedures guiding use of the pantry, a student affairs staff member at a private four-year university described the autonomy of choice as a core strategy for preserving dignity and reducing any stigma associated with using the pantry.

We wanted it to be need blind, we wanted it to preserve dignity, we did not want people to have a stigma affiliated with accessing the service. We wanted to create a culture of sharing and we wanted to have people have autonomy in selecting the items that would be most beneficial to them, so we left the shopping style pantry as opposed to get a box or a bag that's been packed for you without really any input from you.

Using very similar language to link dignity and choice, a faculty member at a community college who started a campus pantry along with a colleague stated that they were both adamant about allowing students to select the items they want: “[Pantry director] has been adamant since the beginning that we can't make the choice of food. Let people have the dignity. Let them pick what they want to make for dinner that night. And I agree with her 100%.”

Other participants emphasized that they deliberately designed the processes for using the pantry to be as similar to going grocery shopping as possible. For example, in discussing what the experience of using the pantry is like for students, a student affairs staff member at a public four-year college noted, “They come in and they take what they need and they leave... We really want them to have [an experience] like they would be grocery shopping.” The same was true even in situations when funding constraints or funder requirements necessitated implementing other restrictions, such as limiting the number of items students could take at a time. A student affairs staff member at a community college highlighted the pantry’s grocery store set up, complete with shopping carts, as a key feature of their approach to providing services, despite needing to limit the number of items students can take.

And one of the really neat things that has been implemented is a shopping model. It's set up like a grocery store. So based on your family size, you can have... I can take four things from this area, five things from that area. You actually go up and down the aisles with your shopping cart and you pick from there, rather than having someone pre-pack a bag for you and give it to you.

In addition to choice, participants stressed the quality of items being provided as critical to preserving dignity. To “reframe” and “refresh” the college clothing closet after taking over responsibility for managing it, a student affairs staff member at a community college began

seeking out donations of new clothes and renamed the clothing closet a “boutique” to reflect the kinds of items being offered.

And almost always I get donations with tags on, brand new stuff. It's not thrift, it's not secondhand... And what I heard prior years prior to me adopting it, it did sort of become like there's just a whole lot of weird sized khaki pants in that room. It wasn't taken care of, it wasn't elevated and that's why I even turned it into calling it a boutique instead of, it was called the clothes closet before. Now the clothes closet doesn't sound elevated. It doesn't sound like a service that students can be proud about.

Explaining why she felt it was important to make these changes, the staff member commented, “...it’s all of those stigma things. It’s the stigma of need.”

The same reasoning motivated a student affairs staff member at a private four-year university to abandon the traditional food drives that were primarily yielding old and unwanted items and instead implement a “wishlist” system asking for donations of specific new food items.

...we have a wishlist and we ask for cases. Right? Cases of tomato sauce... So that we can have a lot of similar objects because we found that food drives just don't work, at least for me. There's a lot of random objects. There's food that has expired... and just stuff that they don't want... Besides being food insecure, I think that one also needs to be treated with dignity, really and so it's changing the psychology of the people that donate as well. So I have persuaded my colleagues that want to have food drives, "So, if you want to have a food drive, why don't you all make a date and go to Costco, go to wherever or donate \$5 and somebody with a car will get stuff from the wishlist that we have, bottles of vinegar, grapeseed oil, whatever and then donate it to us." That's the kind of food drive we want.

Creating a Welcoming Environment. Another way in which participants sought to destigmatize the experience of accessing and using basic needs services was by arranging the physical spaces in which services were located to create a welcoming environment. With the aim of making services like food pantries, clothing closets, and resources centers places that students *want* to visit, participants were attentive to everything from how the surrounding space and offices were being used, to decorative details such as paint, wall hangings, and flowers, to seating arrangements, and even background music. For example, a student affairs staff member at a community college appreciated the fact that the college located the food pantry and the clothing closet next to the student veterans' lounge because the colocation of services fostered a sense of "community support:" "So all three spots right there give, it becomes a community support and it's also a quick resource like students know that that's kind of the wing that you go to." To make the pantry and the clothing closet even more welcoming, she repainted, set up seating to create "common areas for congregation," and hung positive messages on the walls.

Overall, it was clear that participants felt like even small touches can make a big difference. A student affairs staff member overseeing a pantry at a public four-year college tries "to make it fun" by displaying recipes next to items in the pantry. "We try to make it fun and put, like if we have an abundance of chickpeas or spaghetti sauce, we make recipes and place the recipe cards by the items in the pantry." A student affairs member at another public four-year college uses music to create a welcoming environment: "We were very intentional about playing music in the background, in the food pantry of having a vibe where the students were there and just meeting them. So they don't feel embarrassed about using it." Finally, whenever the pantry at a private four-year university is open, the student affairs staff member running it sets up a table displaying fresh produce and flowers, "just to make everything attractive."

Although these efforts may seem inconsequential, a student at a public four-year college stressed that having a student-friendly space is a crucial component of access to services. She noted that one of the primary ways she and other students learn about college services is by hanging out in a lounge her academic department set aside for use both as an office for a student-run club and as a resource center stocked with flyers and information about available services and supports on campus, including resources related to basic needs such as emergency grant funds. Based on her experience, she observed that providing information in a space where everyone is welcomed and where students can talk to other students was critical for reaching students who otherwise may not feel comfortable asking for help. She was concerned that students in other departments who were unaware of the club and the center and who lacked access to similar spaces might be too intimidated to take advantage of resources on campus.

So, that I feel like it's what also prevents students from really accessing and knowing what's really going on at [college]... if they don't have a place where they feel welcome or they feel like they belong, then they're intimidated, I would feel of reaching out or maybe perhaps feel embarrassed reaching out for those resources.

Protecting Confidentiality. The final strategy participants discussed as a tactic for reducing the stigma associated with basic needs insecurity was protecting the confidentiality of students using basic needs services. Participants sought to protect student confidentiality in two main ways - by keeping data on use of food pantries anonymous, and by locating pantries in private spaces allowing students to be seen by as few people as possible when entering and exiting.

One private residential four-year university developed a creative solution to maintaining the confidentiality of students applying for a cafeteria meal voucher program. Staff members in

the campus ministry department will review and approve applications for the vouchers, and then inform dining services that a predetermined number of meals should be added to the meal plan for the student's ID number, without any reference to the student's name. Students receiving the vouchers then purchase meals in the cafeteria using the funds linked to their student ID in the same way as any other student. Explaining the rationale for this approach, an administrative staff member from dining services commented, "Also, students want to keep a lot of this private. They don't want people to know. That just adds to the stress that they're going through."

Although some pantry donors required certain kinds of documentation regarding use of pantries, the college personnel managing pantries tried to limit the amount of personally identifiable information collected when possible. For example, a student affairs staff member at a public four-year college noted that while they ask students using the pantry to show their ID, they don't record students' names.

They would have the student who comes in, we'll have to show their ID so we know that they are a student. But we don't take down any names or any ID numbers. We want to keep it as stigma free as possible.

Similarly, a faculty member who started a pantry at a community college reported that they track the number of students using the pantry, but do not collect students' names or ask them to explain their situation despite the fact that the community food bank from which they obtain food typically recommends collecting individual-level data on use of the pantry.

We had been keeping records basically, like not records of the kids themselves, which is what Food Bank usually recommends. Because we really didn't want anybody to feel like they had to tell us their life story in order to get stuff.

In addition to protecting confidentiality by enabling students to use food pantries without providing their name, participants were also attentive to the amount of privacy afforded by the physical spaces in which pantries were located. An administrator at a public four-year college mentioned that confidentiality was a key consideration in identifying a location for the pantry and the primary reason they chose an office near an elevator.

One of the things that we had to consider when it was in an office by itself, it was intentionally put there for confidentiality reasons, because a student could just get into the elevator. And the elevator literally let out right there at the food pantry. They could get back in, so nobody would know.

Two administrative staff members who started a pantry at a highly-selective private four-year university noted that they selected a space near an elevator for the same reason. “So it's a space where students can just get off the elevator and grab what they want or need and they get back on the elevator and go down the stairs and not be seen by anybody.” Elaborating on their rationale for selecting that location, one of the staff members discussed the importance of anonymity as a determining factor in students’ decisions to access the pantry.

...what we were hearing from students is that anonymity is sacred and is a priority. And people that can't maintain their anonymity might not use the [pantry] resources. So we just wanted to make it as available to as many people as possible to make the biggest impact.

Increasing Awareness of Basic Needs Services: Individual-Task Alignment

The other main challenge that participants could address using available resources and strategies compatible with their role was a perceived lack of student awareness about basic needs services. Although not quite as prevalent as concerns about stigma, lack of awareness was still

mentioned by participants from just over half (15, or 53%) of the institutions included in the study with a relatively even distribution across all four institution types, including participants from 5 out of 10 community colleges, 5 out of 9 public four-year colleges, 3 out of 6 private four-year colleges, and 2 out of 3 highly selective four-year institutions. Underscoring the challenge of awareness, when asked about the biggest barriers to addressing students' basic needs, a student affairs staff member from a public four-year university replied, "Lack of knowledge. Lack of the students' knowledge that we exist and what we have to offer." A student affairs member at a community college had virtually the same response: "That's part of the trickiest thing that we actually have to deal with is awareness. We'll find students are in the fourth semester here leaving like, 'I didn't know we had a food pantry.'" Overall, participants attributed lack of awareness about basic needs services to two general causes: limited engagement with the institution on the part of students, and limited opportunities for college staff to actively connect with the student body.

Concerns about students' engagement with the institution often had to do with commuter students. As a faculty member at a community college explained, commuter students tend to spend less time on campus and thus have fewer opportunities to learn about and take advantage of college resources than students who live in dorms on campus. "Again, they're commuters mostly they're coming, taking a class and they're leaving so it's hard to get that full collegiate experience, but I think they're missing out on so many resources." A student affairs member responsible for overseeing the pantry at a private four-year college was surprised when results from a survey about students' experiences using the pantry revealed that most of the students using the pantry were residential students living in the college dorms. The overrepresentation of

residential students among pantry users raised concerns that communication strategies were less effective in reaching commuter students.

We noticed that the majority of them were residential students. That's not the population that we were intending to target. So how do we build our programs and our communication for commuter students, which is the majority of our population?

Participants concerned about limited opportunities for connecting with students cited a lack of mandatory processes for informing students about available resources and a general tendency among higher education institutions to place the onus on students to seek out resources. Speaking to the difficulty of reaching students without mandatory processes, a faculty member at a community college commented that even though they have an accepted students day, many students don't attend because it is not mandatory and as a result end up "lost" when they start classes. "And it's not that we're not offering to have those experiences, but because it's not mandatory, I think a lot gets... a lot falls through the cracks." A student affairs member at another community college made the same point, discussing the difficulty of providing information to new students without a mandatory orientation.

It's [orientation] highly recommended, because it's not a mandate yet... But if a student didn't show up, there are no holds put on their records. There was really no teeth to that.

So it was a little bit of a challenge to get this information in front of students.

In addition to a lack of mandatory processes, general patterns of institutional communication came up as a barrier to raising awareness about basic needs services. An administrative staff member who helped start a pantry at a highly selective four-year university observed that the university's tendency to operate in silos across departments made it difficult to

develop a coordinated communication and outreach strategy, thereby placing the onus on students to seek out resources.

I think the onus is also on students a lot of the time to seek out these resources. So like, I'm not even just talking about [name of university], but I have cousins who are at other universities around the country and they are often totally unaware of like what mental health resources are available to them, whether or not there's some similar courtesy meals program that they can have access to. I think a big part of our effort has also been to just put this information out there... it's just really like these schools are in silos. ... I just think that a lot of these programs are great and the problem seems to be getting the information out there.

To address both the challenge of limited student engagement and that of limited opportunities for connecting with students, participants engaged in multiple forms of formal and informal outreach. Communication and outreach strategies were discussed by participants from the vast majority of institutions (79%) included in the study (22 out of 28 total, including 7 out of the 10 community colleges, 9 out of the 9 public four-year colleges, 5 out of the 6 private four year colleges, and 1 out of the 3 highly selective four-year institutions). In general, the strategies participants described fell into three main categories: advertising through multiple media (e.g. websites, social media platforms, emails, flyers, TV screens in campus buildings), verbal communication (e.g. word of mouth / one-on-one conversations, informal presentations), and incorporation into institutional procedures, activities, and events (e.g. enrollment procedures, student and faculty orientations, collaboration with student groups). Further highlighting the importance of organizational congruence, the participants best able to maximize these strategies were those who described working within informal organizational cultures that were highly

supportive of basic needs services, in addition to having agency and resources to implement communication strategies through their current roles.

Advertising through Multiple Media. Advertising through multiple forms of both electronic and physical media was by far the most frequently cited strategy for raising awareness about basic needs services, mentioned by participants from all but two of the institutions (one community college and one public four-year college) for which information about communication strategies is available in the interview data. Flyers and posters were the primary forms of physical media participants used, while social media, e-mail, and websites were the primary forms of electronic media.

It is reasonable to assume that the ubiquity of these forms of advertising as a communication strategy reflects their ease of implementation in that they are most likely able to be carried out at low cost, without extensive requirements for approval, and without high degrees of technical skills. On the other hand, given that these are relatively passive forms of communication, it is also likely that they fail to reach all students, creating a need for additional forms of outreach.

Verbal Communication. One of the ways participants attempted to increase awareness about basic needs services through more active engagement with students was direct verbal communication. Although not as common as advertising, verbal communication was still identified as an important outreach strategy by participants from over half of the institutions (54%) for which information about communication is available (12 out of 22 institutions, including 6 of the 7 community colleges, 4 of the 9 public four-year colleges, and 2 of the private four-year colleges). For example, when asked about communication strategies, a student affairs staff member at a community college where the pantry is staffed by faculty and staff volunteers

identified “human engagement with faculty or the staff” as the primary mechanism through which students learn about the pantry.

...faculty are pretty engaged with this as well. I can see some faculty recommending it to students directly, and then I could also see some faculty going straight to the student resource navigator and referring them for the student resource navigator to reach out instead of approaching the student directly about it... but usually the human engagement with the faculty or the staff is the biggest way.

A faculty member at the same community college stated that she takes her students on a tour of the campus to familiarize them with college resources, including the pantry, and that many of her colleagues encourage students to learn about the pantry by visiting and speaking to the people managing it.

And we will walk over, "Here's the dining hall. Here's The Pantry," because it's right next door to it. "Here's the bookstore. Here's financial aid." A lot of my other 003 faculty do a scavenger hunt and have them not just go, but go in and talk to someone and have someone sign off that you... Like, "If you needed food, where would you go? And during what hours?"

Faculty and staff were not the only ones talking to students about basic needs services; participants also reported that students play a valuable role in informing other students.

Highlighting the importance of peer communication, a student affairs member at a private four-year university commented, “I think it's a lot of word of mouth. We do ask people how they find out about us [the food pantry] and we often will hear it's from a peer.” To capitalize on students’ ability to influence their peers, an administrator from a community college shared that they

intentionally encourage members of student government “to talk peer-to-peer” not only to inform other students about the pantry but also to reduce the stigma of using it.

Incorporation into College Procedures, Events, and Activities. While the verbal communication strategies described above were largely informal, a few participants (from three community colleges and three public four-year colleges) were able to obtain support for more structured and formalized opportunities to raise awareness about basic needs resources. For example, at the beginning of each academic year a student affairs member at a private four-year university conducts a “speaking tour” involving presentations at multiple events to ensure new students hear about the university food pantry.

Every year, obviously you get an incoming class of freshman students so you have to keep marketing and raising awareness. I was on a pretty robust kind of dog and pony show or speaking tour kind of thing. Anybody that would want me to come and talk, I would come talk, so generally at orientation, I would talk to international students, I would talk to first year students, I would have a presence in orientation leader training, RA training, the [name of training] which was for the international students... staff council which is our governance group for all staff, you name it.

A student affairs member at a community college who worked in enrollment and admissions leveraged her position to ensure that students receive information about basic needs services as part of the enrollment process.

So now that I'm in enrollment as well, it's more structured. I've put the frame in front. All of our admissions counselors have it in their process of sort of the checklist of what I go through with you during your registration appointments. The students acknowledge that they know about these services, they get a contact sheet. And it's on their portal and

everything now, so it's much more front facing and much more right there for them. And that's everything from the food pantry, the hours.

Finally, an administrator at a different community college stated that they use the orientation for new faculty members to “really pound” the college’s emergency grant, food pantry, and availability of a case manager for assistance accessing local social services in order to encourage faculty to refer their students to those services.

Multi-Pronged Approach. As previously mentioned, practitioners often combined the three strategies discussed above - advertising through multiple media, verbal communication, and institutionalized opportunities - into a multi-pronged approach with the goal of reaching as many students as possible. In describing the three “main staple marketing” strategies used to promote the campus food pantry: presentations at new student orientation, college-wide emails, and digital signage on TV screens around campus, a student affairs member at a community college also hinted at why multiple forms of communication are needed. Only 40% - 50% of incoming students attend orientation, and the college-wide emails only reach students “if they're checking their college email.” In addition to the three main strategies, the staff member also continued to say that the college website has a page for the pantry and that he regularly interacts with student groups to promote the pantry. Different student groups raise money for the pantry, students occasionally set up a table on campus displaying items from the pantry, and the nutrition club even does cooking demonstrations about how to cook healthy meals using food from the pantry.

Additional Support from Leadership and Organizational Culture: Task-Informal Organization Alignment. Further supporting the importance of congruence between organizational components for effective functioning, there were some indications that high levels

of support from senior leaders and the overall institutional culture made it easier for the individuals involved in managing basic needs services to raise awareness about them. Whereas the outreach strategies described above primarily involved alignment between individuals and tasks, the added support of alignment between institutional cultures, individuals, and tasks appeared to be beneficial. The best example of the added benefits of alignment with institutional culture came from a public four-year college.

When asked how students find out about the pantry and emergency grants, the student affairs member managing these services listed standard strategies for advertising such as the college website, flyers, posters, and social media, but also identified the ability to influence faculty as a key part of outreach. “We do direct [outreach to students], but then we also reach the faculty to get to the students.” Whereas at other institutions reaching the faculty might simply mean giving a brief presentation at faculty orientation, the staff involved in basic needs services at this college had a much greater degree of access to faculty. The staff member managing the pantry gives the provost language about the pantry for faculty to include on their syllabi, emails department chairs information about the pantry to share with faculty, and has the authority to add information about the pantry to all students’ Blackboard accounts.

When asked how faculty respond and if they actually include the suggested language about the pantry on their syllabi, the staff member described faculty participation as extremely positive and attributed their engagement to a caring culture and supportive leadership.

Additionally, she noted that her role would be “much harder” without those forms of support.

I’ve seen a lot of faculty place it [language about the pantry] there [on course syllabi].

[Name of college] has a good community. They really are so supportive of the students.

And I really think that's because it's modeled from the top down. So, the culture is there. I think if it wasn't, it would probably be much harder for me.

Illustrating one way in which support for the pantry is communicated from the top, the president of the college makes a point of mentioning the availability of the pantry in regular briefings to the college community.

Summary

The concept of organizational congruence serves as a useful mechanism for analyzing the challenges involved in providing basic needs services and identifying those most likely to prevent basic needs services from becoming fully established on college campuses. Overall, the alignment between individuals and the tasks of reducing stigma and increasing awareness across all institutional types suggests that these are challenges which, even if they cannot be entirely eliminated, are unlikely to significantly impede the delivery of basic needs services.

At the same time, however, viewing single strategies for reducing stigma and increasing awareness in isolation masks larger tensions that become apparent when looking across strategies and across types of basic needs services. For example, the rationale behind locating food pantries in a space that limits visibility and allows students a degree of privacy when entering and exiting (reducing stigma by protecting students' confidentiality) directly conflicts with the rationale behind locating pantries in well-trafficked areas near other student services (reducing stigma by creating a welcoming environment). Additionally, efforts to reduce stigma and protect students' confidentiality by maintaining anonymous records directly conflict with the growing trend to provide individualized case management services with wraparound support and follow up through one stop centers and resource coordinators. As noted in the previous chapter, 37% of the public colleges included in the study (seven out of 19) offer this type of service. Ultimately then,

a broader contextualization of congruent challenges highlights the fact that even the challenges which individuals have some ability to address involve a great deal of complexity. Furthermore, contradictory approaches indicate that the field of higher education has yet to develop standardized practices for basic needs services.

7.2 Incongruent Challenges

As described in the previous chapter, institutional structures (the formal organization) related to basic needs services included few dedicated staff members and relied heavily on volunteers and donations, as a result of which the individuals managing basic needs services (in particular food pantries) often felt overwhelmed. As the previous chapter also highlighted, although unsupportive institutional cultures (the informal organization) were not an issue at the majority of institutions included in the study, the institutions that did have unsupportive cultures presented major roadblocks for the individuals committed to providing basic needs services. Reexamining these issues in light of organizational congruence requires asking the questions posed by Nadler and Tushman (1980, p. 45) “Are organizational arrangements adequate to meet the demands of the task?,” “Does the informal organization structure facilitate task performance or not?” In the same way that taking a comprehensive view of congruent challenges revealed larger complexities than when considering individual challenges and tasks in isolation, examining the incongruent challenges as a whole also reveals larger barriers to the provision of basic needs services. In particular, the combination of staffing and funding challenges together point to larger supply and demand issues which suggest that the basic needs services the colleges were able to provide have a limited capacity to address students’ needs.

Insufficient Institutional Support for Staffing: Task-Organization Misalignment

The pressure placed on individuals providing basic needs services with little staffing

support was apparent. Participants from across all four institutional types discussed concerns about their capacity to provide services and expressed a need for more staff members. These concerns primarily pertained to food pantries, but also included resource coordinator / case management roles and a meal swipe program. Altogether, staffing concerns were mentioned by participants from 17 of the 27 institutions offering pantries (63%), including eight of the 10 community colleges, four of the nine public four-year colleges, four of the five private four-year colleges, and one of the three highly selective private four-year colleges. In addition, staffing concerns related to case management were discussed by participants from one community college and one public four-year college, and one participant from a private four-year university mentioned staffing concerns for the meal swipe program.

In describing the staffing situation for basic needs services, participants alluded to multiple ways in which the organizational structure of their institution failed to adequately support the task of providing basic needs services, constraining the reach and scope of services. Practical implications of insufficient staffing included the need to limit or reduce pantry hours and an inability to carry out important but nonessential tasks such as collecting data to link pantry use to student outcomes and providing comprehensive follow-up and case management. Furthermore, in addition to creating a misalignment between the organization and the task of providing basic needs services, insufficient staffing also led to misalignment between the organization and the individuals managing basic needs services, resulting in staff burnout.

Limited Hours. Participants from at least three community colleges and one private four-year university mentioned that staffing constraints limited the number of hours pantries were able to operate, raising the possibility that more students could be served with greater staff support. A student affairs staff member at one community college in which the pantry was run

exclusively by volunteers specifically noted that the reliance on volunteers limited the pantry hours, particularly given the difficulty of finding time to add volunteering on top of primary job responsibilities.

I know the pantry has limited hours, because the institution has not possibly recognized or allocated a budget for someone to run it full-time. That might be something on my wishlist. It's run by volunteers at this point, when it is open part-time, it's run by volunteers. If the institution is really committed to it, it must go beyond just the space... They do calls, they send emails, just like, "We're looking for volunteers." It's just hard because we're tied up. I think that our leadership is still open to allowing us to volunteer, but it's always give or take.

Additionally, although participants did not always directly attribute hours of operation to staffing availability, several other pantries across all institutional types had limited hours. At the extreme end, some pantries were only available by appointment while others were only open one or two days a week for a few hours at a time – one was just open for an hour twice a month.

Lack of Capacity for Tasks Beyond Basic Operations. In addition to impacting basic pantry operations, interviews suggested that insufficient staffing prevents those primarily responsible for managing pantries from undertaking other tasks that could offer critical insight into the role of food pantries on college campuses and provide greater support for students. For example, a faculty member who helped start a food pantry on a community college campus noted that although they would like to collect data to connect use of the pantry to student outcomes, they are unable to do so. “We've been trying to work on that [collecting student outcome data] but as volunteers it's hard to. What we do track is number of guests and number of people we serve.” A student affairs staff member at a private four-year university commented that although

she is aware some of the students using the pantry are also struggling with housing insecurity she does not have the capacity to provide any additional supports on top of her primary responsibilities and the responsibility for running the pantry, a task she manages with minimal assistance from another staff member and two student volunteers.

I know that some of our students are also housing insecure, but the thing is this, the call that I just finished was from the Dean's office asking me if I would consider doing something, taking on a role for them for the year and I'm basically an office of one. Right? We do the food pantry, we do everything. Taking on the issue of housing insecurity, I think that that is a longer-term vision, but not for the time being.

Staff Burnout: Individual-Organization Misalignment. Insufficient staffing does not just affect the availability and comprehensiveness of services, it also affects the individuals providing the services. According to Nadler and Tushman (1980, p. 45), the question to ask when considering the alignment between individuals and the organization is, “How are individual needs met by the organizational arrangements?” Without adequate staff support, participants struggled to manage the tension caused by feeling unable to keep up with the demands of their role in providing basic needs services but also unable to give up that role due to the deep commitment to the work described in the overview of individual motivations for engaging with basic needs services included in the previous chapter. A student affairs staff member at a public four-year college serving as a resource coordinator for basic needs services felt as though he could not take time off, knowing that no one else would be able to assist students in his absence. Furthermore, highlighting both the tenuous position of basic needs services within the college and the stress placed on the individuals providing basic needs services, he was concerned that if he quit the college would not hire a replacement.

I almost feel like I can't move on because I feel like it wouldn't be ethical. I have so many different students I work with and everything. And I literally feel guilty taking off at times if I want to or something, because it's just like I don't have any backup. And it's detrimental to me as a worker, but it's also detrimental to students and everything, too. I know, and it's even been confirmed for me, that if, let's say, I left, they wouldn't replace me.

Expressing a similar level of stress, a faculty member at another public four-year college who had volunteered to take over the college pantry thinking it would only require a small percentage of her time ended up feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility but simultaneously unable to give it up without being confident that someone else would be able to replace her.

This is supposed to be a very small part of my job. It's like a service to the university sort of under teaching. Most faculty have to kind of balance that out with some service and some research. In my position, I don't do research. So, it's like, "Do your teaching, focus on that, and then also do some service to supplement that," but this has turned into a huge percentage of what I do. And I don't really have time for it... I'm also at a turning point in terms of I just can't do it anymore... I had support from my dean to give it away and I had support from my chair to give it away, but I'm not going to just drop it. I need to hand it to someone.

Limited Institutional Funding: Task-Organization Misalignment

Much like staffing, institutional funding represents another aspect of the formal organization that was failing to adequately support the task of providing basic needs services on college campuses. As detailed in the previous chapter, all the food pantries for which funding information was available rely to some extent on donations and the majority also depend on

grants and external partnerships, with few receiving institutional funding. Consequently, stable funding was a common concern. Participants from the majority of colleges included in the study (16 out of 28, or 57%) discussed the difficulties of attempting to identify and piece together various sources of financial support to start and maintain pantries. Although less information was available about funding for other types of basic needs services, the information that is available suggests that other services relying on donations and grants, such as some emergency grant and meal swipe programs, may experience the same challenges. Concerns were similar across community colleges as well as public and private four-year institutions, mentioned by participants at six out of the 10 community colleges, six out of the nine public four-year colleges, and four out of the six private four-year institutions. Highly selective four-year universities being the only type of institution at which funding did not emerge as a barrier to providing services.

Lack of stable funding sources negatively impacted the provision of basic needs services in several ways, redirecting time and resources to focus on the constant need for fundraising, preventing some services from being adopted altogether, and limiting the types and quantities of items offered through food pantries as well as the number of students able to be served.

Constant Need for Fundraising. Donations are an inherently unstable source of funding. After the pantry at a public four-year college lost a relatively regular source of student donations when the fraternity that had adopted the pantry as a “pet project” was banned from campus due to hazing activities, the faculty member overseeing it became dependent on donations from staff and alumni. Hinting at the difficulties of managing a budget without consistent funding, the faculty member reported that she is attempting to foster a more consistent donation system by encouraging other faculty and staff to contribute to the pantry through small automatic payroll deductions.

But the big thing that I push for fundraising is the recurring payroll deductions. The way that I see it, if we can get anyone on campus who can afford it to give \$2.00 a paycheck, that's really... That adds up and helps us plan our budget more consistently....

An administrator at another public four-year college expressed a similar desire to promote more routine giving, observing that she would like to find a way of incorporating donations to the pantry as part of annual events. "I would love for it to be attached to something traditional like, every faculty holiday party, you have to bring a canned good." Summing up the challenge of unstable funding, she commented, "I think that's the struggle is how do you keep this alive and you're still asking money from somewhere."

Speaking even more directly to the challenge of constant fundraising, when asked about the biggest barriers to providing basic needs services, a faculty member at a community college replied,

Money, resources. Grants have become so important. Grants and knowing what's out there. We have a whole person on this campus who's just in charge of grants and helping us find grants. I mean, the fact that that's his entire job shows you that.

Inability to Implement Services. A lack of stable funding also meant that there were some things participants simply could not do. For example, a student affairs staff member at a public four-year college that already had a number of basic needs services in place, including a food pantry, a clothing closet, an emergency grant, and free subway cards, felt strongly that the college should add a one stop center to help students access social services such as legal assistance, housing assistance, and assistance applying for public benefits. In contrast to what she was able to do managing the food pantry on top of her primary job responsibilities, she believed students would benefit tremendously from the support of staff members dedicated to basic needs

services: “I am not a food pantry coordinator. I have a different job title. This is just part of my portfolio, but like single-stop, this is their expertise.” However, she recognized that the cost of hiring dedicated staff was prohibitive. Speaking specifically about staffing costs, she stated, “The problem there was that single stop is expensive. And so we cannot afford it.”

Need to Limit Quantity and Type of Food Pantry Offerings. With only a few exceptions, the food pantries included in the study limited the quantity of food students can take by restricting the amount of food per visit, the number of visits per week / month, or both. Restrictions on the amount of food ranged from limits on the number of items (e.g., 10 items per visit), to point limits (all items in the pantry are assigned a point value and then a maximum number of points is set per visit based on household size), to more general limits (e.g., the amount of food that fits in a single grocery bag). In many cases, limitations on the amount of food were imposed by the community food banks supplying the college pantries and informed by nutrition guidelines regarding dietary needs for individuals and households. Limitations on the number of visits varied widely, from once per month, to once every two weeks, once a week, and once every three days. Although participants often described these limitations as part of the process of accessing food pantries without connecting the limitations to funding constraints, it is reasonable to assume finances were a driving factor. For example, the webpage for a pantry at one of the public four-year colleges included in the study notes that pantry offerings, which are supplied by a local community food bank, depend on “availability and current finances.”

In addition to imposing limitations on the quantity of food available to students, funding constraints also limited the type of food pantries offered. Although there is a growing trend to enhance food pantries by offering personal care supplies, household items, and perishable food in addition to standard non-perishable food items, the majority of pantries included in the study

were not providing perishable food. As reported in the previous chapter, just over half of the 27 pantries included in the study (15, or 55%) qualified as enhanced pantries. Of those, however, only nine (three community colleges, three public four-year colleges, two private four-year colleges, and one highly selective private four-year) consistently offered perishable food and one public four-year college had recently received a grant with which to purchase refrigerators. A primary reason more pantries did not include perishable food is likely the cost of refrigerators and freezers. When asked if there were any other services she would like to be able to provide, a student affairs staff member at a community college responded that she would love to be able to offer perishable food through the pantry, but the college could not afford the cost of refrigeration and of re-locating the pantry to a larger space able to accommodate refrigeration.

I mean, I would love to, refrigeration would be amazing. But that would be a tax on the college, because then you'd have to think about the maintenance of it, and how much it would cost. And that would be a different space. We'd have to reallocate and look at a different space.

Limitations on the Number of Students Able to Be Served. Perhaps the starkest examples of limitations on the number of students able to be served due to funding can be seen in emergency grant programs, where it was clear that demand outpaced the availability of funds. A participant from a community college and from a public four-year college both described needing to develop application systems to screen out students. The participant from the public four-year college explained that the application is used to assess where the needs are greatest because funds for the emergency grant, which is supported by faculty and staff donations, are limited.

It's impossible not to read the applications because we have limited money for the student

microgrants. So we had to ask students to write like, why should we give this money to you? So we would figure out which was the best. I mean, you had a limited part. That was the only way we could do it.

When asked if there were any additional services related to basic needs that she would like the college to provide, the participant from the community college replied that rather than adding new services, she hoped the college would be able to expand the services it currently provides. In particular she noted that “we have to be careful how we allocate the money” for the emergency grant, needing to limit both the amount of money disbursed to individual students and the reasons students can apply. She believed more funding would “allow them to change the criteria and help more students.”

Barriers Tied to Institutional Culture: Task-Informal Organization Misalignment

In considering whether the informal organization structure facilitates task performance (Nadler & Tushman, 1980), the previous chapter illustrated that institutional cultures which are either superficially supportive or unsupportive of basic needs services negatively impact service provision and delivery. Challenges tied to institutional culture (superficially supportive cultures as well as previously and currently unsupportive cultures) were identified at less than half of the institutions (11 out of 28, or 39%), but were found across all institutional types. Furthermore, the prevalence of cultural challenges appeared to increase with the selectivity of the institution, mentioned by participants from two of the 10 community colleges (20%), four of the nine public four-year colleges (44%), three of the six private four-year colleges (50%), and two of the three highly selective private four-year institutions (67%).

Revisiting cultural challenges from the perspective of organizational congruence highlights the extent to which misalignment between the informal organization and the task of

providing basic needs services prevents basic needs services from becoming fully integrated into the core of college operations. In some cases, cultural barriers stemming from college leaders' resistance to basic needs services effectively stalled the development of new services, particularly food pantries. Additionally, institutions with superficially supportive or unsupportive cultures were unlikely to provide adequate resources for staffing and funding basic needs services.

Stalled Development of New Services. At the private four-year university discussed in the previous chapter where a student affairs member attempting to start a food pantry was told by the provost, "We're not in the business of opening pantries," five years elapsed from the time of that conversation until the provost's departure created an opportunity for the staff member to move ahead with plans for the pantry. According to the staff member, even though the provost was supportive of addressing issues related to social justice and systemic racism, "food insecurity fell into a domain that he just couldn't grasp."

At another private four-year college, the student affairs staff member currently overseeing the college food pantry initially began having conversations about how to address food insecurity on campus in 2013. She, along with members of the financial aid department and several deans, formed a committee to explore different ways the college could support students struggling with basic needs after hearing from students that they were going hungry. Given what she described as a "challenging" political atmosphere on campus at that time, however, all the committee was able to do was compile a list of pantries in the local community to share with students. Elaborating on the political atmosphere, she explained that upper-level administration feared acknowledging students were experiencing food insecurity would harm the college's

image by creating a perception that the college itself might be causing food insecurity through high tuition rates.

I would say when we started this in 2013, we had that campus culture where there was no way the president and the executive board were going to let us say our students can't eat because the perception would be, they can't eat because we're too expensive. Right? So that was not going to happen then.

It was not until 2017, after significant turnover in senior leadership roles brought about a major culture shift, that the committee was able to partner with a local food bank to start bringing a mobile food pantry to campus once a month, and not until 2018 that they were able to establish a permanent food pantry on campus.

Unwillingness to Provide Resources for Existing Services. Without the backing of a supportive institutional culture, disconnects between the institutional culture and the task of providing basic needs services continue to impede service delivery even for established services, primarily by failing to provide financial resources. In colleges with superficially supportive and unsupportive cultures, the institutional culture essentially creates justifications for not funding and supporting basic needs services.

As the student affairs staff member from the private four-year university where it took five years and the departure of a provost to launch a pantry explained, financial resources serve as a telling indicator of an institution's priorities. While the provost's departure may have made the launch of the pantry possible, the staff member interpreted the university's ongoing lack of financial support for the pantry as a sign that cultural barriers remain. When asked about hopes for the future of the pantry, she replied, "A space where it becomes an integral part of the

university, because I think that right now, we're still in the periphery. Right? So that with the resources, that means that it becomes more institutional, in very many ways.”

A student affairs staff member at a public four-year college serving as a resource coordinator for basic needs services made the connection between institutional culture and budget priorities even more explicit, specifically attributing the college’s refusal to hire additional staff members in social service positions to institutional culture. When asked why he thought there was resistance to hiring more staff members, he responded, “So, what they tell me at face value is budget. But then I also have it on very good authority that's not true. So it's really more of a matter of where they want to allocate the budget.” His own interactions with leadership had made it very clear to him that there were senior leaders who were unwilling to recognize that the college’s students were struggling with hunger and homelessness and thus had little interest in allocating funds for basic needs services.

No one believed me at first, which was kind of hilarious. They didn't believe that there were students that were facing homelessness, they didn't believe ... That especially was a big thing. So I had a very high up administrator within the college who said to me, "I don't think there's homeless students here." And I'm like, "There absolutely are homeless students here." He's like, "Then why are they in school?"

Summary

Using the perspective of organizational congruence (Nadler & Tushman, 1980), three main challenges emerged involving disconnects between the task of providing basic needs services and formal and informal organizational components of colleges: insufficient institutional support for staffing, limited institutional funding, and institutional cultural barriers. Unlike the challenges of reducing stigma and increasing student awareness of basic needs services, these

were challenges over which the individuals providing basic needs services had very little control. Consequently, these were also the challenges that appeared to have the most direct negative impacts on the provision of basic needs services. When considered together, the negative impacts of staffing and funding challenges – limited hours, a constant need for fundraising, limitations on quantities and types of food provided in pantries, limitations on number of students served - only become clearer. Basic needs services have a limited capacity to meet students’ needs. In addition, these types of challenges can effectively relegate basic needs services to the “periphery” of the college, as one student affairs member at a private four-year university previously quoted mentioned. Similar trends in staffing, funding, and institutional cultural challenges occurred across institutional types with two noticeable exceptions - the three highly selective four-year institutions did not report any funding challenges, and barriers related to institutional culture appeared to become increasingly common as the selectivity of the institution increased.

7.3 New Directions for Basic Needs Services on College Campuses

In light of the challenges involved in providing direct services for basic needs on college campuses, study findings suggest there is a need to reimagine the future of basic needs services. Participants discussed a variety of strategies that could become new directions for higher education. These strategies fell into two broad categories: integrating basic needs services into organizational functioning in ways that better align with existing organizational structures and addressing basic needs insecurity in ways that do not rely on colleges to provide direct services. Although some of the approaches described below were only mentioned by a few participants, these topics suggest that college stakeholders are actively considering and developing strategies

to more firmly establish a role for higher education in addressing basic needs that is both meaningful and sustainable.

Integrating Basic Needs Services in Ways that Align with Organizational Structures

Participants identified two different types of strategies for addressing basic needs in ways that build on higher education's core capacities and align with existing organizational structures: incorporating basic needs services into coursework, and reimagining financial aid services to increase the transparency of college costs, add more coverage for basic needs, and assist students with financial planning.

Incorporation into Academic Coursework. Incorporation of basic needs services into coursework was not common, but two participants mentioned interesting examples that could point to new directions for the field that might more firmly embed the basic needs services that colleges are able to provide into the core of organizational functioning. A student affairs member overseeing the pantry at a private four-year college had partnered with several faculty to design assignments using data on usage of the pantry.

The other thing that we're starting to do, is utilize the pantry with students for research purposes and education purposes. So we've had a number of faculty who partnered with us on assignments for students in their classes, on presentations that their students have done based on the research they've done. So we're trying to help our students, even those who don't need the services of the pantry, use the pantry to further their own knowledge and the knowledge that we can share with others. So I think that's one of the ways that we're going beyond just feeding people.

A public four-year college started offering courses on food security in which the students taking the course intern at the college's food pantry while learning about sustainable food

systems. A student affairs member at the college viewed the courses as an important means both of raising awareness about the issue of food security and of connecting students who may need the pantry to available resources.

We have a food security course. We have a couple of them actually that are taught on our campus. And those students are really hands-on getting internships at the food pantry and learning more the sustainability network and things like that. We really are trying to make sure that students are aware that this is a problem. But also let them know other resources that we have.

Reimagining Financial Aid Services. Participants across all institutional types recommended ways for financial aid services to play a larger role in supporting students' basic needs. At two of the three highly selective private four-year universities, participants discussed the fact that even though their institutions include housing and meal plans in financial aid packages for high need students, it is critical for staff to clearly communicate what is and is not covered by financial aid in order for students to manage their budgets. For example, an administrator at one highly selective four-year university suggested that the university has a responsibility "to be more explicit and more up front" about costs, particularly for students from low-income families who "aren't as familiar with the college lingo."

I recognize that this is going to make financial aid's job much harder. But, I think we need to be really explicit and say, "This is what we're providing for you..." Our financial aid covers the cost of a meal plan that provides 14 meals per week. Most people eat three times a day seven days a week, so that's 21 meals. If financial aid is only paying for 14 meals but we know people like to eat 21, we need to explicitly say, "This is 14 meals per week. You're responsible for the rest..."

Transparency regarding college costs is not simply an issue pertaining to highly selective institutions, however. As mentioned in chapter 5, even well-intentioned policies such as free tuition at public institutions can misguide students.

In addition to increasing transparency about college costs, a few participants also talked about finding ways for using existing financial aid policies to provide more coverage for basic needs. An administrator from a private four-year university noted that one of the first things the university does for students experiencing financial hardship is to attempt to find additional funds through financial aid.

...let's try to work with students on an individual case-by-case basis. Is there something we can do through financial aid? Can we have students appeal for more financial aid?

Are there resources that they can get through financial aid?

A handful of elite, highly selective private four-year universities have institutionalized uses of financial aid for non-academic needs. For example, Harvard University, Colby College, Williams College, and Smith College offer students whose family income falls below a set threshold grants intended for things like winter coats and dorm room furnishings as part of their financial aid package (Jaschick, 2022). Although it is likely that the colleges and universities able to offer additional financial aid for basic needs will continue to be primarily wealthier elite institutions, a student affairs member at a public four-year college in which nearly three-quarters of students receive Pell grants expressed a hope that the college would be able to include funding for meal plans through financial aid.

But they say the best thing to do is to build in a meal plan or build in something like this into students' financial aid that... It's not just going to school and it's not just books. If we

could afford [to add] this into their financial aid packages, that would be the ideal situation.

Finally, multiple participants pointed to a need for to provide more financial counseling for students. As a faculty member from a public four-year college stressed, most people receive little financial literacy training.

I think a lot of us, in general, we don't get any information. There's no financial literacy classes that are built into K-12 curriculum, right? We also don't get a lot of education about financial aid, and what it means, and how it works, and how to navigate it in an intelligent way in the long-term.

A student services staff member working in financial aid at a community college observed that having discussions with students about financial management issues, particularly financially independent adult students trying to balance work while paying their way through college, has become an important part of his job.

But then, sometimes we end up having discussions... especially if we have students that are coming back to school. That's where they're working but then they might have to cut hours. So, we have some students that might have to borrow loans, and then we're trying to talk to them about, is that in their best interest? Or at the same time, they might need to do that, so that way they can actually go to school, and feel like they have the capital, and actually afford all the other expenses.

Addressing Basic Needs Insecurity in Ways that do not Rely on Colleges for Direct Services

Participants identified several ways in which partnerships and policy could play a larger role in supporting students' basic needs. As noted in Chapter 6, referral systems and partnerships were common among the colleges and universities included in the sample, discussed by

participants at 50% of the community colleges, 67% of the public four-year institutions, and 22% of the private four-year institutions. Although these partnerships and referral systems are not necessarily new, they provide insight into ways of thinking about how to scale and systematize support for students' basic needs at institutions with little capacity to provide services directly. In addition to fostering relationships with both non-profit and private sectors, participants also advocated for expansion to federal policies, including SNAP, free and reduced cost meal programs, and Pell grants, as a means of looking beyond colleges and universities to better meet students' needs.

Off-Campus Referral Networks. Participants across all four institutional types had developed systems for connecting students to off-campus resources, either by compiling lists of service providers or making individual referrals. For example, a student affairs staff member overseeing the food pantry at a public four-year college regularly referred students whose needs exceeded the pantry's limit of one bag of food per visit to other food pantries in the community and provided information about applying for public benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Because sometimes too, if they're needing additional support that our institution can't provide, we definitely outsource them to other resources in the community where there are food pantries at certain churches or community centers. As well as informing them about local state and national programs like SNAP. Things like that that may help them and their family as well.

In an effort to support students experiencing food insecurity, including those who may be uncomfortable asking for help directly, two administrative staff members who started a small

food pantry at a highly selective four-year university created a list of resources available at the university as well as in the surrounding community and posted it on the university website.

We have tried to put things in place so that there are directions we can point those students to, if they do come forward. And for the people that don't feel comfortable self-identifying, we want to have resources available to them that don't require them to come to someone directly. So we have a website where we list all of the resources that we know of at [name of university] and in the immediate area.

For similar reasons, a student affairs member at a private four-year college created an expansive list of local services and posted it on the webpage for the college food pantry: "... if you go to our [name of college food pantry] page, we've compiled so many resources that will connect students to things in their communities, whether it's an immigration lawyer, a soup kitchen, a barber."

Finally, an important part of basic needs support at one community college involved a unique partnership with the local United Way. Using a code identifying them as a student at the college, students can make free, confidential calls that connect them to a specialist able to make referrals for resources based on their zip code. A student affairs member at the college noted that students can call from their own phones, but often choose to do so with a staff member at the college's one stop center.

On-Campus Partnerships with Non-Profits and Social Service Agencies. Participants were actively engaged in external partnerships to provide basic needs services on their campuses and also hoped to find ways of developing new partnerships to expand service offerings. Underscoring the importance of partnerships, a student affairs member who served as the college chaplain and oversaw the food pantry at a public four-year college discussed the critical role that

both area churches and the local food bank had played in establishing the pantry. City and county food banks typically require that new pantries have been operating successfully for six months before donating food to ensure pantries have a broad base of support.

It takes six months before you can become part of the food bank. So you need six months of community support to run a food pantry. And because of my unique standing in the community, I could go to the churches and say, "I need you to support this." And what I would say to food pantries that were just starting, "Most churches are not going to proselytize. They're just willing to help, so just reach out..."

According to a student affairs member who was involved with the one stop center at a community college and oversaw the college food pantry, the ability to bring in different partners is a crucial component of support services because it provides students access to individuals who are experts in areas in which college staff will never be as knowledgeable. In response to hearing from students about their needs, the college had developed an extensive array of community partnerships. Local social service providers for everything from health insurance to tax preparation, mental health, childcare, SNAP, housing assistance for victims of domestic violence, and LGBTQ support regularly visit the college's one stop center where they have designated tables as well as an office for private conversations.

Not all colleges had such robust partnerships in place as the two institutions above, however. An administrator from a private four-year university with comparatively limited basic needs services - emergency grants and a meal swipe program - indicated that the university would likely need to begin developing new partnerships if it wanted to address the level of student need it was seeing.

I don't think the need's going to go away and the need's going to become more prevalent

and more well known, and so I think we may hit a crossroads of, okay, there's only so much a college and university can do, how do we partner more effectively with city agencies and different things like that?

Sponsorship from Private Sector Partners. With funding being a major barrier to the provision of basic needs services, some college participants had started trying to identify opportunities for seeking out financial support from the private sector. A student affairs member at a private four-year college reported that the college had been able to obtain three refrigerators and three freezers from a beverage company with which the college has a contract. Similarly, a student affairs member at a public four-year college suggested that she would like to see the college negotiate its contract with the food service company managing the college cafeteria to include a certain number of free meals for students experiencing food insecurity.

Policy. Participants were highly aware that basic needs insecurity among college students reflects larger socioeconomic inequalities, and thus believed that federal policy should play a larger role in addressing it. Emphasizing the need for federal support to address food insecurity, a student affairs staff member from a public four-year college stated, “This has to become a federal issue... I don't think that we necessarily have to have, we may not have to all have a pantry on campus, but it needs to be addressed at a higher level.”

In particular, participants identified the expansion of existing policies such as SNAP, free and reduced cost meal programs for K-12 students, and Pell grants as key areas for intervention. Arguing that the increased need for a college degree today as compared to previous generations justifies greater federal support for higher education, an administrator from a private four-year university advocated for adopting a version of the K-12 free lunch program on college campuses and increasing Pell grants or other forms of financial aid.

... you think too on the K through 12 level that the free lunch program, is that something that's going to need to be implemented someplace? ...I think looking at federal support for higher ed in general, so things like increasing Pell grants and increasing aid... I do think the necessity of a college degree has shifted from a generation or two ago... Folks are moving in the direction that a college degree is important, whether that's a two-year or a four-year degree, and so colleges can't support that on their own, and so what other support for, whether that's through federal financial aid or different things and how do we do that?

An administrator from a highly selective four-year university was also supportive of extending free and reduced-cost meal programs to higher education, making the case that it is unrealistic to expect students who received that support in elementary school through high school to no longer need it in college.

Well, one thing I think is interesting is that when students are in elementary school, middle school, high school, they have access to federal funds to provide support for reduced meal plans or no-cost meal plans... I think this idea that once students go to college they no longer need this support I think is a little irresponsible in my opinion.

Finally, a student affairs member from a private four-year college expressed a hope that increased attention to food insecurity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic would serve as an opportunity to reevaluate financial aid and SNAP policies in higher education and motivate colleges to advocate for federal change.

I think since COVID, I think there's been a lot of awareness about child hunger and hunger in K through 12. But I think that that has also opened the possibility to continue to analyze what our financial aid policies are... or federally what our SNAP policies have

been. How can colleges use their platform, I think, better to advocate nationally and for federal change?

7.4 Conclusion

Building on the previous chapter's description of the core organizational functions comprising basic needs services in higher education, this chapter has examined the challenges involved in providing basic needs services on college campuses by comparing the ways in which individuals, formal organizational structures, and informal organizational culture worked together to either support or hinder the task of providing basic needs services. Analyzing the areas of disconnect in which different core components failed to support the same goals highlighted the types of challenges that may prevent basic needs services from being fully adopted and integrated into the infrastructure of higher education institutions.

While participants identified the stigma associated with basic needs insecurity and the difficulties of ensuring students are aware of available services as significant concerns that are likely preventing some students from using basic needs services, ultimately these challenges are not likely to prevent basic needs services from operating as core college services. Individuals were able to reduce stigma by normalizing basic needs insecurity and help-seeking, designing processes to promote dignity, creating welcoming environments, and protecting confidentiality. They were able to increase awareness of services through advertising, verbal communication, and incorporation of basic needs services into college procedures, events, and activities. Additionally, on college campuses in which the institutional culture is supportive of basic needs services, senior leaders made deliberate efforts to promote awareness and use of services.

In contrast, challenges involving a conflict between the demands of providing basic needs services and the formal organization and informal organization were far more detrimental to the

functioning of basic needs services. Without sufficient staffing support, individuals managing basic needs services were forced to limit hours of operation and restrict their own involvement to only the most essential tasks. Insufficient staffing also led to further disconnects between the organization and individuals, contributing to burnout amongst staff who were overwhelmed but committed to providing basic needs services. A lack of institutional funding created a constant need for fundraising, made it impossible to implement some services and enhance others, and limited the number of students able to be served. Finally, barriers stemming from the institutional culture not only delayed the development of some services but also served as the driving factor behind the unwillingness of some institutions to provide funding for existing basic needs services.

Apart from two exceptions - an absence of funding challenges at the three highly selective four-year institutions, and the increasing prevalence of barriers tied to institutional culture among more selective institutions - challenges were similar across all institutional types. The fact that the most selective institutions were both the least likely to report funding challenges and the most likely to report challenges with institutional culture, however, indicates that they were not immune from the kinds of incongruent challenges that had the greatest negative impact on basic needs services. Thus, all four types of institutions were wrestling with challenges preventing basic needs services from being fully supported on college campuses, highlighting a need to look for new means of integrating services and increasing the role of external partnerships and policy in supporting students' basic needs.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Higher education has long been viewed as a key driver of economic mobility and a path out of poverty (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Fischer, 2019; Reeves, 2014). In reality, higher education's effects on economic mobility are far more nuanced. A select group of mid-tier institutions both enroll significant numbers of low-income students and substantially increase upward mobility, but the elite institutions that have the largest impact on upward mobility enroll very few low-income students (Chetty, 2017). Nonetheless, the fact remains that higher education has historically played a critical role in addressing poverty. Up until recently, however, that role has been indirect. Colleges promote economic mobility by offering students the opportunity to earn a degree that increases their likelihood of obtaining higher-paying jobs, leading to improved economic outcomes. Findings from this study, however, suggest that colleges and universities are now expected to play a far more direct role in addressing poverty, by providing services to support students' basic needs.

8.1 Summary of Findings and Implications for Policy and Practice

Chapter 5 used sensemaking (Coburn, 2005; Weick, 1993) and institutional theory (Scott, 1995) to answer my questions about how colleges are making sense of the issues surrounding basic needs insecurity, why colleges are providing basic needs services, and to what degree the provision of basic needs services is interpreted as related to a college's mission. Suggesting the emergence of an isomorphic trend towards adopting basic needs services as a means of keeping pace with the field and maintaining institutional legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), the sheer number of colleges across all sectors of higher education offering services such as food pantries and emergency grants has created a perception that addressing basic needs is becoming a standard component of student services. Supporting the adoption of this role, multiple

compelling rationales to justify the provision of basic needs services, including alignment with institutional mission, potential to serve as a strategy for increasing enrollment and retention, and a responsibility to support the low-income students whom colleges intentionally recruit. In addition, popular media, academic research, and professional organizations and conferences are all drawing attention to the issue of basic needs insecurity among college students and normalizing the provision of basic needs services. Furthermore, state mandates, in particular regarding food insecurity, are institutionalizing expectations for both public *and* private colleges and universities to assume an active role in meeting students' basic needs. Finally, based on knowledge of the demographics of the students they serve, survey data, and interactions with individuals, colleges themselves are highly aware of basic needs insecurity as a challenge directly affecting their own students. However, I found that although external pressures and internal dynamics are conveying the message that colleges *should* provide basic needs services, they offer little guidance over *how* to do so.

In response to heightened awareness of basic needs and pressures from the external environment, colleges are providing a wide array of basic needs services. To answer my questions regarding the integration of basic needs services into organizational functioning, Chapter 6 applied Nadler and Tushman's (1980) conceptualization of organizational congruence in relation to four core components of organizational functioning: individuals, tasks, formal organizational structure, and informal organizational culture. In exploring the tasks involved in providing services as well as how services are staffed, funded, and supported within the organizational culture, I found that oftentimes basic needs services are operating on the periphery of the organization. A primary indication of the lack of integration into the technical core of institutions was the limited availability of internal funding and a reliance on external funding and

donations. As a result of limited funding, the majority of services such as food pantries were staffed by individuals who had taken on the role in addition to their primary job responsibilities.

To answer the research question regarding factors that may make it difficult for colleges to provide basic needs services, Chapter 7 analyzed challenges to providing basic needs services in terms of the degree of alignment between the four core components of organizational functioning. In this chapter, I found that the most significant barriers were those created by misalignment between the tasks required to provide basic needs services and the formal organizational structure (e.g., insufficient staffing, limited institutional funding) and between tasks and the informal organizational culture (e.g., superficially supportive and unsupportive cultures).

Overall, study findings point to several key takeaways suggesting that fundamental tensions are complicating a direct role for higher education in addressing students' basic needs.

- *Lack of clarity over the extent of higher education's responsibility.* Basic needs insecurity is a complex issue that is hard to quantify, and occurs across a frequency spectrum ranging from temporary to chronic. Reflecting the impacts of socioeconomic inequities and poverty, basic needs insecurity often involves multiple interconnected needs, as apparent in the expansion of campus food pantry offerings from non-perishable food to virtually everything available in a grocery store, as well as in the growing variety of services colleges provide (e.g., access to showers, laundry, and overnight parking as temporary solutions to housing insecurity). These ambiguities make it difficult to clarify where a college's responsibility begins and ends.
- *Recognition that higher education cannot solve the problem of basic needs insecurity on its own.* Colleges and universities may have control over some issues contributing to

temporary causes of basic needs insecurity, for example, communication of college costs, but far less so over the socioeconomic and political factors contributing to chronic poverty. Awareness of the deeper underlying causes of basic needs insecurity is forcing colleges and universities to wrestle with defining a role in addressing challenges that extend far beyond the traditional boundaries of higher education.

- *Limited integration of basic needs services into institutional infrastructures.* The inability of higher education on its own to solve the problem of basic needs insecurity is highlighted by the loose integration of basic needs services into core organizational functioning and the misalignment between the tasks required to provide basic needs services and formal organizational structures. One of the study's most surprising findings was the frequency with which campus food pantries rely on a single individual going to herculean lengths to cobble together multiple sources of financial support while overseeing the basic operations of purchasing food, stocking shelves, and keeping the food up to date – all in addition to their primary campus role and responsibilities. A qualitative study of the challenges involved in offering campus food pantries conducted with representatives from 16 colleges in Michigan supported this finding, reporting that infrastructure and resources emerged as a central challenge (Price et al., 2019).

A primary implication of these findings is the need for a comprehensive set of policies and practices to address basic needs insecurity in higher education that involve a range of actors, including, for example, federal and state governments, nonprofit organizations, foundations, and the private sector in addition to colleges and universities. A number of sociologists and education researchers have made the case that education on its own cannot alleviate poverty and compensate for the effects of pre-existing inequities. Downey (2020) argues that what is needed

to reduce educational achievement gaps is not additional school reform, but a contextual approach to educational policy that addresses inequalities in students' lives outside of school. Guhin and Klett (2022) suggest that by implicitly centering schools as the solution to inequality, research on social stratification and education neglects deeper examinations of how to address the root causes of inequality. Finally, Anyon (2005) posits that it will be impossible to achieve education justice without connecting advocacy for educational reforms to campaigns for economic justice in employment, housing, and tax policies.

For the most part, the basic needs services that colleges provide offer temporary support but not long-term solutions. Food pantries are a prime example. The analysis in Chapter 6 of the prevalence of different types of basic needs services across the institutions in the sample revealed that food pantries were the most common, offered by 27 of the 28 institutions. In many ways, the prevalence of food pantries on college campuses mirrors national strategies for addressing poverty. Based on two years of ethnographic research conducted at a food pantry in New York City, Dickinson (2020, p.3) concludes that the reliance of the U.S. safety net on food assistance in the form of SNAP benefits and food pantries functions to “manage growing poverty and insecurity” rather than to “alter the political and economic realities that create these conditions in the first place.” In essence, she argues “we are feeding” the crisis of poverty and inequality as a means of avoiding the far more challenging work of solving it. Similarly, I found that the discourse on basic needs in higher education is narrowly focusing on what colleges and universities can and should do to manage basic needs insecurity among their students, with limited attention to the role or responsibility of other sectors, and limited connections to broader policy and practice strategies for addressing the causes of basic needs insecurity.

8.2 Limitations

Although these findings tell a consistent story, it is important that they be interpreted within the context of the study's limitations. One critical area that the study did not address directly is the role of racism and classism in shaping support for and the delivery of basic needs services on college campuses. As the literature review in Chapter 2 highlights, race and income are highly correlated with experiencing food and housing insecurity, both among the general population and among the student population. Over the past two years, protests and unrest over the killing of George Floyd (Kolodner, 2020) as well as attacks on the study of critical race theory (Anderson & Svrluga, 2022) have underscored that higher education is not immune from the divisiveness surrounding race and class in the United States as a whole. For these reasons, there is a pressing need to examine basic needs services in higher education from the perspective of race and class. However, I was unable to address these issues explicitly or systematically. Given that many of the participants with whom I spoke were directly involved in providing services, it may have been difficult for them to recognize and reflect on how their own biases may have been impacting basic needs services. Because the majority of participants were in mid-level positions, they also may have been hesitant to critique how senior leaders approached issues of race and class. Finally, because the majority of individuals with whom I spoke were likely to have been the people most supportive of basic needs services on their campuses by virtue of their involvement in providing services, I was unlikely to reach individuals with more negative views affected by racism and classism.

From a research design perspective, the necessity of transitioning from a case study approach to individual interviews following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created several challenges. Given the focus on examining basic needs services from an institutional

perspective, the study was originally designed to compare the provision of basic needs services across four different types of institutions – a community college, a public four-year college, a private four-year college, and a highly selective private four-year college. As an additional layer of comparison, the original design also included a fifth institution that was not actively involved with basic needs services. To provide a comprehensive picture of each institution and capture a variety of perspectives, each case study would have included 15 to 19 in-person interviews with a range of stakeholders (administrators, student services staff, faculty members, and students) as well as campus observations and the collection of non-sensitive documents, such as organizational charts, funding proposals, and budgets.

Between November, 2019 and the beginning of March, 2020, I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from four institutions willing to serve as case study sites and conducted 16 interviews in person at three of the institutions (10 at one site, four at another, and two at the third). After colleges were forced to move abruptly to online instruction in March 2020, I was able to conduct three additional interviews virtually with participants from the fourth site. However, it rapidly became apparent that neither that institution nor the others with which I had been working would be able to continue supporting the extensive engagement required for case study research, and that it would be unreasonable to ask additional colleges to participate at the institutional level.

To reduce the research burden on colleges and participants, and to make it feasible to continue the study, I received IRB approval from Teachers College to switch to virtual individual interviews. Using the approach described in Chapter 4 on the study's methodology, I conducted an additional 27 interviews with participants from 24 institutions. Altogether, including the in-person and virtual interviews, I conducted 46 interviews with participants from 10 community

colleges, nine public four-year colleges, six private four-year colleges, and three highly selective private four-year colleges.

While this sample still allowed for some comparisons across institutional types, it did not allow for the in-depth exploration of institutions that case studies would have provided and limited the implications able to be drawn from the conceptual framework. Although the original theoretical framework pairing sensemaking with institutional theory and the congruence model of organizational functioning still provided extremely useful concepts for organizing and analyzing the data, with only one or two interviews from most institutions, it was not possible to link individual sensemaking to wider organizational sensemaking. A comprehensive picture of what it might mean to consider how an institution as a whole engages in collective sensemaking related to basic needs would have required the inclusion of additional perspectives from key stakeholders who were largely absent from the study, e.g., students and faculty members. At the same time, while the revised research design broadened the reach of the institutional sample by increasing the number of each type of institution included in the study, the numbers are still small enough to limit generalizability.

Lastly, the timing of data collection in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic calls for additional caveats. Interview data straddle a tremendous gulf. A substantial number of my interviews (16) were conducted before the pandemic had made major inroads in the United States, whereas the majority (30) were conducted during its height (August to October, 2020). Not only were the latter interviews conducted during a time when many colleges and college students were struggling, but also during heightened attention to multiple forms of basic needs insecurities and inequities in who experiences them. The research questions and the interview

questions remained the same, with the addition of a few questions about the effects of the pandemic, but the world had fundamentally changed.

It also felt very much like the world was in flux. Participants were unsure whether to expect increases in demands for basic needs services due to increased need, or decreases due to declines in enrollment among the students most likely to be at risk of basic needs insecurity. Longer-term patterns were even bigger question marks. Despite these uncertainties though, in some sense the core issues had not changed; they had merely become exacerbated, as discussed in Chapter 5. For these reasons, I chose not to analyze or report on the pre- and post-COVID data separately and decided to interweave mentions of the pandemic where appropriate rather than dedicate a standalone chapter or chapter section to it.

There is certainly a need to study the effects of the pandemic on higher education's provision of basic needs services. However, writing now in the early months of 2022, much has continued to change since my final interviews in the summer of 2020. It is clear to me that the study data are tied to a time when it was not yet possible to answer those questions. Thus, the study has ended up existing in a kind of limbo, directly affected by the pandemic but unable to fully capture how.

8.3 New Directions for Research

Both the study's key findings and its limitations bring to light several new directions for research on basic needs services in higher education. First, it is important to acknowledge that many unanswered questions remain regarding how colleges and universities are undertaking the role of providing basic needs services, what the best methods for studying this role are, and how services are impacting student outcomes.

Additionally, recognizing that higher education cannot solve the crisis of basic needs

insecurity on its own, more research is needed to understand the role that other sectors and policy can play. How can colleges and universities build and scale effective partnerships with government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private companies to complement the work they are already doing to support students' basic needs? How do strategies for partnership building differ in urban versus rural areas? What types of federal and state policies are most effective in incentivizing and enabling colleges to provide services for basic needs?

At the same time, more research is needed to understand how higher education can maximize the reach of the college-based services and supports it is able to provide. What types of services make the most difference to students, and which are most cost effective to provide? What role can key college stakeholders beyond student affairs staff, in particular faculty members and financial aid staff, play in supporting students' basic needs? How can higher education institutions leverage basic needs services in conjunction with increased financial education, helping students create sustainable financial plans for managing the cost of college?

Addressing Unanswered Questions

At a foundational level, as far as I am aware the field still lacks a comprehensive knowledge of how many colleges and universities are providing basic needs services and what types of services they are providing. While the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice has established a national survey for assessing students' needs (<https://hope4college.com/realcollege-survey/#intro>), a comparable survey does not exist at the institutional level to assess services for basic needs. Pockets of information exist for discrete services based on participation in national initiatives, such as Swipe out Hunger and Single Stop, but far more institutions are likely to have developed their own services independently. Additionally, I do not know of any rigorous studies that have compared basic needs services

across sectors of higher education (e.g., public versus private institutions, two-year versus four-year institutions. My review of the services offered by the institutions in the study sample (see Chapter 6), however, revealed that the prevalence of different types of basic needs services may vary across different sectors of higher education. Thus, I believe a landscape analysis of basic needs services that includes multiple sectors of higher education could be extremely informative.

Despite the utility of such an analysis, however, conducting a comprehensive national survey would likely be challenging. Reflecting the wide range of services that relate to basic needs – from food pantries to cafeteria meal vouchers, emergency aid, public benefits assistance, childcare, and more – the departments overseeing basic needs services are diffuse. Furthermore, findings from this study suggest that even the same type of service is likely to be operated by different departments at different institutions. Consequently, not only is it unlikely that a single individual would be able to complete a comprehensive survey of basic needs services at any one institution, but it is also likely that identifying the individuals best equipped to respond to such a survey across institutions would be extremely time consuming.

As an alternative to a comprehensive landscape analysis of basic needs services, I believe there would also be value to conducting a targeted landscape analysis of a specific type of service. For example, findings from this study suggest that there is still much to be learned about food pantries. The types of food and non-food items offered at campus pantries are expanding rapidly; pantry procedures – from where pantries are located, to intake requirements, operating hours, the number of visits allowed per semester and the number of items allowed per visit, and data reported all vary widely; and relatively little is known about costs, funding strategies, and staffing structures.

Finally, as reported in the literature review in Chapter 2, relatively few studies have

attempted to connect use of services to student outcomes. However, although experimental studies such as randomized controlled trials represent a gap in the literature, they also raise questions about the selection of treatment and control groups and about how best to support students not being given access to basic needs services. In addition, there may be positive benefits of receiving basic needs services that it would be difficult if not impossible to capture in a quantitative analysis of student outcomes, suggesting a need for qualitative studies to understand student perspectives on the impact of services.

Understanding the Potential of Partnerships and Policy

College partnerships for basic needs are growing. For example, the National League of Cities launched the *Cities Addressing the Basic Needs of Postsecondary Students* initiative in 2019 and has since collaborated with 22 municipal teams across three cohorts. The initiative promotes partnerships among municipalities, colleges and universities, employers, and other organizations to alleviate basic needs insecurities for college students (National League of Cities, n.d). Increasing attention is also being paid to basic needs partnerships in the higher education press, particularly to partnerships for housing. In addition to the housing partnerships mentioned in Chapter 1, a recent *Inside Higher Ed* article covered work Trinity Church in Manhattan is doing to provide housing for City University of New York (CUNY) students experiencing homelessness. The church gave a planning grant to a nonprofit supportive housing organization, the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, to pilot a program that would provide housing and support services for up to 50 CUNY students, with the intention of evaluating and replicating the model. The church also gave a grant directly to the Borough of Manhattan Community College to develop housing for up to 50 students (Weissman, 2022). In 2019, San Jose State University in California received media attention for a novel partnership between the university, a local

nonprofit, the mayor's office in San Jose, and Airbnb to provide temporary housing for students experiencing homelessness (DeRuy, 2019).

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, partnerships and referrals were relatively common among the colleges and universities in the sample, and participants were actively using referrals and developing partnerships to overcome the challenges of direct service provision and expand support for students. However, the degree of partners' involvement varied tremendously, ranging from formal agreements with contractual obligations (e.g., a local nonprofit agreed to serve as a 501(c)(3) sponsor for one of the public four-year colleges in the sample, to enable the college to receive donations from the community food bank) to informal and passive referral systems (e.g., college stakeholders involved with basic needs services compiling lists of local resources, nonprofit organizations, and other social service providers for students). Furthermore, even the formal partnerships were not necessarily stable. In many cases, partnerships depended on relationships developed by a single individual at the college, leaving the state of the partnership uncertain in the event of the individual's departure from the institution.

From an institutional perspective, many questions about building and maintaining effective partnerships for basic needs remain. What kinds of incentives exist for other sectors to partner with postsecondary institutions to support students' basic needs, and how might those incentives differ by sector (e.g., government agencies, nonprofit organizations, religious institutions, private companies)? What kind of staffing is required on the part of colleges and universities to establish partnerships and sustain them over time? An evaluation of the partnership between Tacoma Community College and the Tacoma Housing Authority found that significant staff resources were required, and that college staff needed skills beyond those of typical student affairs positions (Goldrick-Rab, et al., 2021).

Beyond understanding partnership formation, it will be important to understand the scale and robustness of the services partnerships can offer. How many students are being reached through partnerships? How much support are they able to provide? Finally, given the differing availability of community services in rural versus urban areas, and the inability of this study to fully explore the effects of location and setting on basic needs services, there is a need to examine the opportunities for college basic needs partnerships in rural areas.

At the policy level, developments such as expanded student eligibility for SNAP benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2022), the distribution of funds to colleges and universities designated for student aid as part of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) (U.S. Department of Education, 2022), and the growing number of state legislatures that have passed and introduced “hunger-free” campus bills (Swipe Out Hunger, n.d.b) present critical opportunities to study how federal and state policy can be used to shape the role of colleges and universities in addressing students’ basic needs and support them in doing so.

In this study, participants’ general dismissiveness of the New York state mandate for public colleges and universities to provide a food pantry or access to similar services (see Chapter 5) was somewhat surprising in light of the fact that approximately half of the public institutions in the state only began offering services after the requirement was introduced, suggesting that the mandate was a significant inducement (Graham, 2019). Participants’ perspectives could indicate that the specific requirements of the mandate were weak and that institutions without existing pantry services engaged in minimal efforts to comply, or they could reflect a sampling issue and underrepresentation of participants from institutions that implemented services due to the mandate.

The unanswered policy questions from this study as well as the current policy environment regarding basic needs point to several new directions for research. What types of services are colleges and universities implementing in response to recent federal and state legislation and how do those services vary by institutional sector? How many students are being reached by services implemented in response to federal and state policies? How are colleges and universities designing or interpreting eligibility criteria for services implemented in response to federal and state policies, and how do variations in eligibility criteria impact the number of students served? How are colleges and universities funding services implemented in response to federal and state policies over the short- and long-term? What types of policies (mandates, financial incentives, informational guidelines) are most effective in shaping college practices?

Maximizing the Potential of College-Based Services

In addition to suggesting a need to explore the potential for partnerships and policy to play a larger role in addressing students' basic needs, the dissertation findings also point to a need for more research to understand how to maximize the potential of college-based services. For example, given how many forms of support have emerged for addressing food insecurity (e.g., non-perishable and perishable food pantries, meal swipes, cafeteria vouchers, grocery store gift cards, food recovery from campus events), I believe it will be important to gain a better understanding of which types of services make the most difference to students. Evaluations of two different types of food security programs conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, one of meal vouchers for the college cafeteria (Broton et al., 2020), and one of a food scholarship enabling students to pick up free food from a local food pantry (Goldrick-Rab, Hernandez, et al., 2020), had very different results. Uptake of the vouchers was high and was associated with an increase in the number of credits attempted and completed

(Broton et al., 2020), whereas uptake of the food scholarship was low, due to a number of challenges participants identified, including transportation to the food pantry markets and the timing of the markets, and consequently did not influence students' academic outcomes (Goldrick-Rab, Hernandez, et al., 2020). To learn more about which college-based services make the most difference to students, it would be critical to hear from students directly about their preferences, either through surveys, interviews, or focus groups. Additionally, as another means of helping colleges determine how best to allocate scarce resources, cost studies comparing the resources needed for different types of similar services could be conducted.

A different strategy for maximizing the potential of college-based basic needs services might be examining how to develop structured and systematic ways of involving individuals beyond student affairs staff, in particular faculty and financial aid staff, in supporting students' basic needs. Doing so would require more research to understand how best to incorporate support for basic needs into faculty and staff responsibilities without creating undue burdens.

Because faculty typically have the most contact with students and may be the first to become aware if a student is struggling with basic needs (Hallett et al., 2019), it is particularly important to understand what increased support for basic needs may mean for the role of faculty. A limitation of the dissertation was the absence of more faculty voices from the data, but a growing body of literature from research and practice concerning the role of faculty in addressing students' basic needs provides a useful foundation from which to consider directions for new research.

Discussions about faculty engagement in students' basic needs tend to position faculty members as information brokers who play an indirect role in meeting students' basic needs by making referrals to available resources. Largely due to the advocacy efforts of Sara Goldrick-

Rab, there is growing interest in asking faculty to use their course syllabi as a means of encouraging students to reach out to their professors if they are struggling with basic needs insecurities, and of informing students about available resources (Berman, 2017). In addition, there are calls for training and professional development opportunities to help faculty recognize signs of basic needs insecurity such as housing insecurity and homelessness, and respond with appropriate referrals (Hallett et al., 2019).

Based on the limited information available, faculty opinions about these trends appear to be mixed. Some faculty view supporting students' basic needs not only as crucial for student success but also as the right thing to do and as a way of demonstrating caring (Berman, 2017; Supiano, 2018). However, faculty typically do not have a background in counseling or social services and may not feel comfortable talking to students about basic needs, whether related to food, housing, or other issues (Hallett et al., 2019). They may be concerned that they are being asked to take on a role for which they are ill-equipped, or feel that identifying and responding to basic needs issues falls beyond the scope of their job responsibilities (Berman, 2017; Supiano, 2018).

Given that basic needs insecurities are unlikely to decrease and that the push to increase faculty engagement is likely to grow, the field will need to continue wrestling with these tensions moving forward. First, more research is needed to understand faculty perceptions of changing expectations regarding their support for students' basic needs. Do faculty members feel that support for basic needs should be part of their job responsibilities? Are they equipped to take on this new role? Do they have the time and capacity to do so? How do perceptions of this new role vary among faculty working at different institutional types (public / private, two-year / four-year, research-driven / teaching-driven), and in different positions (contingent appointment / tenure

track)? Second, it will be important to examine institutional structures and processes related to faculty support for students' basic needs at different types of higher education institutions. Is this role recognized as a formal job responsibility? Does it affect considerations for promotion and tenure?

In addition to faculty members, financial aid staff are another central group of college stakeholders who could potentially play a significant role in supporting students' basic needs. As far as I am aware, little work has been done to explore their role in addressing basic needs. The need to provide more financial education for students emerged as a key finding in Chapter 7. An intriguing avenue for new intervention research could be the development of an enhanced financial counseling initiative that combines basic financial literacy, specific guidance on budgeting for the cost of college, and access to basic needs services provided both on campus and through partners. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and dramatic college enrollment declines, particularly among low-income men and men of color (Geary, 2022), it is even more important to understand what role financial education and basic needs services may be able to play in enabling the most vulnerable students to manage the cost of college and pursue a postsecondary education.

The development of an enhanced financial counseling initiative would have to take multiple considerations into account. Like faculty members, many financial aid staff are unlikely to have experience discussing basic needs with students or knowledge of basic needs services and thus may have varying levels of comfort engaging in this type of financial counseling. Additionally, preliminary surveys, interviews, and / or focus groups may need to be undertaken to understand how students would receive such an intervention, and how an intervention may need to be tailored to reach different groups of students. Study participants identified the stigma

around basic needs insecurity as a challenge in Chapter 7, and previous research has also found that men experiencing housing insecurity were less likely to ask for help and to use available services (Wood et al., 2016).

8.4 Conclusion

When it comes to addressing students' basic needs, colleges and universities are in a bind. As a student affairs member at a private four-year university discussed, colleges and universities are caught between needing "to play a critical role" in addressing basic needs and needing acknowledgement that "it can't be all on us."

I think colleges and universities need to play a critical role and be involved in that discourse, and in addressing whatever some of these inequities are that are contributing to basic needs not being met. But I don't think it's just the university's role, universities and colleges are just part of a larger ecological system, right? It can't be all on us. But sometimes there is expectations or beliefs that we have the absolute or full responsibility for ensuring the basic needs are met. But again, we're not isolated institutions, right? We don't exist in a vacuum. It's much larger than that.

In describing their institution's involvement with basic needs services, study participants highlighted the gravity of the issue of basic needs insecurity among college students and the importance of directly providing for students' needs, but also revealed the organizational complexities of doing so and the limitations of higher education's ability to alleviate the problem. These challenges suggest a need for new research and reimagining of higher ed's role – issues into which I hope this dissertation has provided some insight.

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Appendix A

Case Study Interview Protocols

Administrator Interview Protocol

Introduction

1. Please tell me about your role at the college. What is your job title? What are your primary responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in this role? How long have you been at the institution?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

3. In recent years attention to hunger and homelessness, or issues that might be termed “basic needs,” on college campuses has been growing. How would you define students’ basic needs? Would you include anything else in addition to food and housing?
4. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
5. What are your primary sources of information about these issues, or in what contexts have you heard about them?
6. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
7. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
8. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

9. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
10. Does the college do anything to identify how many students on campus might be struggling to meet basic needs? If so, how is it going about doing so (e.g., as part of the application to the college, intake questionnaire, standalone survey)? What kinds of basic needs does the college ask students about?
11. Please describe any services the college provides to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing).

Motivation for Service Provision

12. What is your understanding of how it happened that the college originally came to provide basic needs services? What do you think is the rationale for continuing to provide services?
13. Which colleges do you consider to be your peer institutions? How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among your peer institutions (in terms of private / public sector and selectivity)?

14. How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among institutions in other sectors of higher education?
15. Higher education seems to be under a lot of pressure currently – from policymakers, in the media. What kind of national or more local political and economic pressures would you say are facing your college?
16. Is the college tracking utilization of basic needs services in any way?
17. Is the college keeping track of the number and kinds of students who are using the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
18. Is the college looking at what happens academically, or psychologically, or in other ways to the students who use the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
19. If the college were to find that providing basic needs services does not affect student outcomes, do you think that the college would still feel it is important to provide services? Why?
20. What do you think the general public expects of institutions like your college in terms of providing for students' basic needs? Of institutions in other sectors of the higher education field?
21. Even if students were able to access services and support for meeting basic needs elsewhere off campus, do you still think it would be important for the college to provide services? Why?
22. What would you say represents a moral imperative on campus - that is, something that everyone would recognize as a circumstance that demands action? To what extent do you think the provision of basic needs services is viewed as a moral imperative on campus?
23. Are you aware of any federal, state, or local laws that may have affected the college's decision to provide basic needs services?
24. Does providing basic needs services affect funding for your institution, either from the state, your college or university system (if applicable), or other sources? If yes, how?

Integration into Organizational Functioning

25. How long have each of the basic needs services you mentioned been offered at the college?
26. How are the services funded? How much of the funding comes from external versus internal sources? Have funding sources remained constant over time? How does the campus decide how much to spend?
27. How are the services staffed? Has the staffing structure remained the same over time?
28. Is the current funding and staffing structure sustainable over the long term? If not, is the college considering pursuing additional funding or hiring new staff in order to be able to continue providing services?
29. Where do the services fit in the organizational hierarchy? In what department(s) are they located? Who is ultimately responsible for oversight of the services? What is the rationale for this approach?
30. If basic needs services are not all located in the same department, are there any other types of administrative coordination that occur?

31. Where are the services physically located on campus? What kind of space do they have? Did the college make any financial investments or receive any financial support to develop those spaces?

Benefits and Challenges

32. Are there any services related to basic needs that the college would like to provide but is not currently able to offer? If so, what is preventing the college from being able to offer those services?
33. What are the most challenging aspects of providing basic needs services?
34. Are there any barriers or challenges that will make continuing to provide services difficult?
35. What are the main benefits for the college as an institution of providing basic needs services?

Relation to Institutional Mission

36. How would you describe the institutional mission and the strategic priorities of the college? What is your perception of how the college's mission and strategic priorities influence the work of the college?
37. How does the provision of basic needs services relate to the institutional mission and/or strategic priorities of the college? Does the provision of basic needs services fit within the mission and/or strategic priorities, or does it fall outside of them?
38. Does (or did) the provision of basic needs services warrant a reevaluation of the institution's mission and/or strategic priorities?

Conclusion

39. How do you envision the future of basic needs services at the college?
40. Where do you see higher education as a field headed in terms of providing basic needs services? Are there any services not currently being discussed as part of the basic needs conversation that you think should be (e.g., health care, mental health services)?
41. Is there anything else related to the provision of basic needs services, either specifically at the college or more broadly within the field of higher education, we haven't covered that you think it is important for me to know?

Interview Protocol for Staff Members Providing Basic Needs Services

Introduction

1. Please tell me about your role at the college. What is your job title? What are your primary responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in this role? How long have you been at the institution?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

3. In recent years attention to hunger and homelessness, or issues that might be termed "basic needs," on college campuses has been growing. How would you define

- students' basic needs? Would you include anything else in addition to food and housing?
4. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
 5. What are your primary sources of information about these issues, or in what contexts have you heard about them?
 6. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
 7. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
 8. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

9. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
10. Does the college do anything to identify how many students on campus might be struggling to meet basic needs? If so, how is it going about doing so (e.g., as part of the application to the college, intake questionnaire, standalone survey)? What kinds of basic needs does the college ask students about?
11. Please describe any services the college provides to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing).

Motivation for Service Provision

12. What is your understanding of how the college originally came to provide basic needs services? What do you think is the rationale for continuing to provide services?
13. Which colleges do you consider to be your peer institutions? How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among your peer institutions (in terms of private / public sector and selectivity)?
14. How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among institutions in other sectors of higher education?
15. Higher education seems to be under a lot of pressure currently – from policymakers, in the media. What kind of national or more local political and economic pressures would you say are facing your college?
16. Do you know if the college is tracking utilization of basic needs services in any way?
17. Is the college keeping track of the number and kinds of students who are using the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
18. Is the college looking at what happens academically, or psychologically, or in other ways to the students who use the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
19. If the college were to find that providing basic needs services does not affect student outcomes, do you think that the college would still feel it is important to provide services?
20. What do you think the general public expects of institutions like your college in terms of providing for students' basic needs? Of institutions in other sectors of the higher education field?

21. Even if students were able to access services and support for meeting basic needs elsewhere off campus, do you still think it would be important for the college to provide services? Why?
22. What would you say represents a moral imperative on campus - that is, something that everyone would recognize as a circumstance that demands action? To what extent do you think the provision of basic needs services is viewed as a moral imperative on campus?
23. Are you aware of any federal, state, or local laws that may have affected the college's decision to provide basic needs services?
24. Does providing basic needs services affect funding for your institution, either from the state, your college or university system (if applicable), or other sources? If yes, how?

Integration into Organizational Functioning

25. What proportion of students on campus would you estimate are struggling with issues related to hunger, homelessness, and/or the inability to meet other basic needs?
26. How many students do you work with during a typical semester?
27. Do you feel like you are able to serve all students who are struggling with food insecurity? With housing insecurity? With other basic needs?
28. How is information about services communicated to students, or where do you think students normally find out about services? Do you think all students who could benefit from services are aware of them?
29. Are there any eligibility requirements in place related to students' use of each of the basic needs services you mentioned? Can you walk me through the process of what happens when a student shows up for the first time?
30. What kind of data about students' use of services do you track?
31. Have you noticed any patterns in students' use of services? For example, do students typically only use services once or twice, or do the same students tend to use services repeatedly? Are there any particular points in the semester when students are more likely to use services? How do patterns in service use vary based on the type of basic needs service (e.g., a food pantry versus housing assistance)?
32. What do students who use basic needs services on campus do when classes are not in session (e.g., between semesters, over the summer)? Do you know if they seek out similar services off campus?
33. In what ways are basic needs services connected to other academic and non-academic student supports on campus (e.g., advising, counseling, tutoring, programs for special populations such as veterans)? To faculty members? Are there any official referral procedures?

Benefits and Challenges

34. Are there any services related to basic needs that you would like to provide but are not currently able to offer? If so, what is preventing you from being able to offer those services?
35. What are the most challenging aspects of providing basic needs services?
36. Are there any barriers or challenges that will make continuing to provide services difficult?

37. What are the main benefits for the college as an institution of providing basic needs services?

Relation to Institutional Mission

38. How would you describe the institutional mission and the strategic priorities of the college? What is your perception of how the college's mission and strategic priorities influence the work of the college?
39. How does the provision of basic needs services relate to the institutional mission and/or strategic priorities of the college? Does the provision of basic needs services fit within the mission and/or strategic priorities, or does it fall outside of them?
40. Does (or did) the provision of basic needs services warrant a reevaluation of the institution's mission and/or strategic priorities?

Conclusion

41. What do you see as the future of basic needs services at the college?
42. Where do you see higher education as a field headed in terms of providing basic needs services? Are there any services not currently being discussed as part of the basic needs conversation that you think should be (e.g., health care, mental health services)?
43. Is there anything else related to the provision of basic needs services, either specifically at the college or more broadly within the field of higher education, we haven't covered that you think it is important for me to know?

Interview Protocol for Faculty Members and Other Student Services Staff

Introduction

1. Please tell me about your role at the college. What is your job title? What are your primary responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in this role? How long have you been at the institution?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

3. In recent years attention to hunger and homelessness, or issues that might be termed "basic needs," on college campuses has been growing. How would you define students' basic needs? Would you include anything else in addition to food and housing?
4. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
5. What are your primary sources of information about these issues, or in what contexts have you heard about them?
6. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
7. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
8. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

9. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
10. Does the college do anything to identify how many students on campus might be struggling to meet basic needs? If so, how is it going about doing so (e.g., as part of the application to the college, intake questionnaire, standalone survey)? What kinds of basic needs does the college ask students about?
11. Please describe any services the college provides to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing).

Motivation for Service Provision

12. What is your understanding of how it happened that the college originally came to provide basic needs services? What do you think is the rationale for continuing to provide services?
13. Which colleges do you consider to be your peer institutions? How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among your peer institutions (in terms of private / public sector and selectivity)?
14. How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among institutions in other sectors of higher education?
15. Higher education seems to be under a lot of pressure currently – from policymakers, in the media. What kind of national or more local political and economic pressures would you say are facing your college?
16. Do you know if the college is tracking utilization of basic needs services in any way?
17. Is the college keeping track of the number and kinds of students who are using the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
18. Is the college looking at what happens academically, or psychologically, or in other ways to the students who use the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
19. If the college were to find that providing basic needs services does not affect student outcomes, do you think that the college would still feel it is important to provide services? Why?
20. What do you think the general public expects of institutions like your college in terms of providing for students' basic needs? Of institutions in other sectors of the higher education field?
21. Even if students were able to access services and support for meeting basic needs elsewhere off campus, do you still think it would be important for the college to provide services? Why?
22. What would you say represents a moral imperative on campus - that is, something that everyone would recognize as a circumstance that demands action? To what extent do you think the provision of basic needs services is viewed as a moral imperative on campus?
23. Are you aware of any federal, state, or local laws that may have affected the college's decision to provide basic needs services?

24. Does providing basic needs services affect funding for your institution, either from the state, your college or university system (if applicable), or other sources? If yes, how?

Integration into Organizational Functioning

25. What proportion of students on campus would you estimate are struggling with issues related to hunger, homelessness, and/or the inability to meet other basic needs?
26. Would you know if any of the students in your classes or with whom you work were struggling with issues related to hunger, homelessness, and/or the inability to meet other basic needs? How?
27. How do you learn about services available on campus to assist students who are struggling to meet basic needs?
28. Do you give students any information about basic needs services on campus? If so, what do you give them? If not, why not?
29. Are there any procedures in place for you to refer students to basic needs services?

Benefits and Challenges

30. Are there any services related to basic needs that the college would like to provide but is not currently able to offer? If so, what is preventing the college from being able to offer those services?
31. What are the most challenging aspects of providing basic needs services?
32. Are there any barriers or challenges that will make continuing to provide services difficult?
33. What are the main benefits for the college as an institution of providing basic needs services?

Relation to Institutional Mission

34. How would you describe the institutional mission and the strategic priorities of the college? What is your perception of how the college's mission and strategic priorities influence the work of the college?
35. How does the provision of basic needs services relate to the institutional mission and/or strategic priorities of the college? Does the provision of basic needs services fit within the mission and/or strategic priorities, or does it fall outside of them?
36. Does (or did) the provision of basic needs services warrant a reevaluation of the institution's mission and/or strategic priorities?

Conclusion

37. What do you see as the future of basic needs services at the college?
38. Where do you see higher education as a field headed in terms of providing basic needs services? Are there any services not currently being discussed as part of the basic needs conversation that you think should be (e.g. health care, mental health services)?
39. Is there anything else related to the provision of basic needs services, either specifically at the college or more broadly within the field of higher education, we haven't covered that you think it is important for me to know?

Student Interview Protocol

Introduction

1. Please tell me about yourself as a student. What is your major / program of study? How far along are you? How long have you been at the college?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

2. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
3. What are your primary sources of information about this issue, or in what contexts have you heard about it?
4. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
5. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
6. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

7. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
8. Are you aware of any services the college provides to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing)? Can you tell me about them?
9. How do you think these services might compare to the types of services available on other college campuses?

Motivation for Service Provision

10. Why do you think the college decided to provide basic needs services?

Integration into Organizational Functioning

11. How did you learn about the basic needs services available on campus? Where? When was this?
12. Have you ever received a referral for any of the basic needs services from a faculty member, advisor, or other staff member at the college?
13. Have you ever used any of the services you described? If so, tell me about your first visit. How did you end up going to use the services? What happened when you got to the office? Did you have to apply? How helpful were the services? How easy were they to access? How frequently do you use them?
14. If not, why not? Do you know if you are eligible for services?
15. How widely are services used by students on campus? Do the offices seem busy?
16. Do you think all of the students on campus who could benefit from the services are able to use them?

Benefits and Challenges

17. Do you think there are any benefits to having basic needs services located on-campus, as opposed to going elsewhere in the city? Why?
18. Have you encountered any problems or issues using the basic needs services on campus?

Relation to Institutional Mission

19. In your opinion, do you think the provision of basic needs services should be part of the college's mission? Why or why not?

Conclusion

20. Are there any other services related to basic needs that the college currently does not provide, but that you think it should?
21. Do you have any recommendations for the college related to basic needs services?

Interview Protocol for Site not Providing Basic Needs Services

Introduction

1. Please tell me about your role at the college. What is your job title? What are your primary responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in this role? How long have you been at the institution?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

3. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
4. What are your primary sources of information about this issue, or in what contexts have you heard about it?
5. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
6. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
7. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

8. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
9. Does the college do anything to identify how many students on campus might be struggling to meet basic needs? If so, how is it going about doing so (e.g., as part of the application to the college, intake questionnaire, standalone survey)? What kinds of basic needs does the college ask students about?
10. Do you think there is a need for the college to provide services to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing)?
11. Has the college ever considered providing services or is it planning to do so? Do you think it would consider providing services in the future?

Motivation for Service Provision

12. Higher education seems to be under a lot of pressure currently – from policymakers, in the media. What kind of national or more local political and economic pressures would you say are facing your college?
13. What kinds of factors might motivate or provide an incentive for the college to provide basic needs services (e.g., research demonstrating a positive impact on student outcomes, availability of government or foundation funding, increasing numbers of institutions locally and nationally providing services, federal or state legislation)?

Barriers to Service Provision

14. What kinds of barriers or disincentives do you think might make providing basic needs services challenging?
15. How much do you think it might cost to do this well at your institution?

Relation to Institutional Mission

16. How would you describe the institutional mission and the strategic priorities of the college? What is your perception of how the college's mission and strategic priorities influence the work of the college?
17. How does the provision of basic needs services relate to the institutional mission and/or strategic priorities of the college? Would the provision of basic needs services fit within the mission and/or strategic priorities, or does it fall outside of them?
18. Would the provision of basic needs services warrant a reevaluation of the institution's mission and/or strategic priorities?

Conclusion

19. Where do you see higher education as a field headed in terms of providing basic needs services?
20. Is there anything else related to the provision of basic needs services, either specifically at the college or more broadly within the field of higher education, we haven't covered that you think it is important for me to know?

Interview Protocol for Students at Site Not Providing Services

Introduction

1. Please tell me about yourself as a student. What is your major / program of study? How far along are you? How long have you been at the college?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

2. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
3. What are your primary sources of information about this issue, or in what contexts have you heard about it?
4. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
5. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?

6. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

7. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
8. Are you aware of any services on your campus to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing)?
9. Are you aware of any services on other college campuses to assist students struggling to meet basic needs?
10. Do you think there is a need for services on your campus to assist students struggling to meet basic needs?

Motivation for Service Provision

11. What do you think might encourage your college to provide basic needs services?

Benefits and Challenges

12. Do you think there are any benefits to having basic needs services located on-campus, as opposed to going elsewhere in the city? Why?
13. What do you think might make it difficult or challenging for your campus to provide basic needs services?

Relation to Institutional Mission

14. In your opinion, do you think the provision of basic needs services should be part of the college's mission? Why or why not?

Conclusion

15. Are there any other services related to basic needs that the college currently does not provide, but that you think it should?
16. Do you have any recommendations for the college related to basic needs services?

Appendix B

Interview Protocols for Revised Study Design

Administrator Interview Protocol

Introduction

1. Please tell me about your role at the college. What is your job title? What are your primary responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in this role? How long have you been at the institution?

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

3. How did the college respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? At what point did the campus close and the college transition to operating remotely?
4. What plans has the college made for the fall semester? Has fall enrollment been affected by the pandemic?
5. What's your overall sense of how the college has been able to manage during this difficult time?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

6. In recent years attention to hunger and homelessness, or issues that might be termed "basic needs," on college campuses has been growing. How would you define students' basic needs? Would you include anything else in addition to food and housing?
7. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
8. What are your primary sources of information about these issues, or in what contexts have you heard about them?
9. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
10. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
11. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?
12. In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the national conversation about students' basic needs?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

13. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
14. Does the college do anything to identify how many students on campus might be struggling to meet basic needs? If so, how is it going about doing so (e.g., as part of the application to the college, intake questionnaire, standalone survey)? What kinds of basic needs does the college ask students about?

15. Please describe any services the college provides to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing).

Motivation for Service Provision

16. What is your understanding of how it happened that the college originally came to provide basic needs services? What do you think is the rationale for continuing to provide services?
17. Which colleges do you consider to be your peer institutions? How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among your peer institutions (in terms of private / public sector and selectivity)?
18. How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among institutions in other sectors of higher education?
19. Higher education seems to be under a lot of pressure currently – from policymakers, in the media. What kind of national or more local political and economic pressures would you say are facing your college?
20. Is the college tracking utilization of basic needs services in any way?
21. Is the college keeping track of the number and kinds of students who are using the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
22. Is the college looking at what happens academically, or psychologically, or in other ways to the students who use the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
23. If the college were to find that providing basic needs services does not affect student outcomes, do you think that the college would still feel it is important to provide services? Why?
24. What do you think the general public expects of institutions like your college in terms of providing for students' basic needs? Of institutions in other sectors of the higher education field?
25. Even if students were able to access services and support for meeting basic needs elsewhere off campus, do you still think it would be important for the college to provide services? Why?
26. What would you say represents a moral imperative on campus - that is, something that everyone would recognize as a circumstance that demands action? To what extent do you think the provision of basic needs services is viewed as a moral imperative on campus?
27. Are you aware of any federal, state, or local laws that may have affected the college's decision to provide basic needs services?
28. Does providing basic needs services affect funding for your institution, either from the state, your college or university system (if applicable), or other sources? If yes, how?

Integration into Organizational Functioning

29. How long have each of the basic needs services you mentioned been offered at the college?
30. How are the services funded? How much of the funding comes from external versus internal sources? Have funding sources remained constant over time? How does the campus decide how much to spend?

31. How are the services staffed? Has the staffing structure remained the same over time?
32. Is the current funding and staffing structure sustainable over the long term? If not, is the college considering pursuing additional funding or hiring new staff in order to be able to continue providing services?
33. Where do the services fit in the organizational hierarchy? In what department(s) are they located? Who is ultimately responsible for oversight of the services? What is the rationale for this approach?
34. If basic needs services are not all located in the same department, are there any other types of administrative coordination that occur?
35. Where are the services physically located on campus? What kind of space do they have? Did the college make any financial investments or receive any financial support to develop those spaces?

Benefits and Challenges

36. Are there any services related to basic needs that the college would like to provide but is not currently able to offer? If so, what is preventing the college from being able to offer those services?
37. What are the most challenging aspects of providing basic needs services?
38. Are there any barriers or challenges that will make continuing to provide services difficult?
39. What are the main benefits for the college as an institution of providing basic needs services?

Relation to Institutional Mission

40. How would you describe the institutional mission and the strategic priorities of the college? What is your perception of how the college's mission and strategic priorities influence the work of the college?
41. How does the provision of basic needs services relate to the institutional mission and/or strategic priorities of the college? Does the provision of basic needs services fit within the mission and/or strategic priorities, or does it fall outside of them?
42. Does (or did) the provision of basic needs services warrant a reevaluation of the institution's mission and/or strategic priorities?

Conclusion

43. How do you envision the future of basic needs services at the college?
44. Where do you see higher education as a field headed in terms of providing basic needs services? Are there any services not currently being discussed as part of the basic needs conversation that you think should be (e.g., health care, mental health services)?
45. Is there anything else related to the provision of basic needs services, either specifically at the college or more broadly within the field of higher education, we haven't covered that you think it is important for me to know?

Interview Protocol for Staff Members Providing Basic Needs Services

Introduction

1. Please tell me about your role at the college. What is your job title? What are your primary responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in this role? How long have you been at the institution?

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

3. How did the college respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? At what point did the campus close and the college transition to operating remotely?
4. What plans has the college made for the fall semester? Has fall enrollment been affected by the pandemic?
5. What's your overall sense of how the college has been able to manage during this difficult time?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

6. In recent years attention to hunger and homelessness, or issues that might be termed "basic needs," on college campuses has been growing. How would you define students' basic needs? Would you include anything else in addition to food and housing?
7. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
8. What are your primary sources of information about these issues, or in what contexts have you heard about them?
9. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
10. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
11. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?
12. In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the national conversation about students' basic needs?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

13. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
14. Does the college do anything to identify how many students on campus might be struggling to meet basic needs? If so, how is it going about doing so (e.g. as part of the application to the college, intake questionnaire, standalone survey)? What kinds of basic needs does the college ask students about?
15. Please describe any services the college provides to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing).

Motivation for Service Provision

16. What is your understanding of how the college originally came to provide basic needs services? What do you think is the rationale for continuing to provide services?

17. Which colleges do you consider to be your peer institutions? How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among your peer institutions (in terms of private / public sector and selectivity)?
18. How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among institutions in other sectors of higher education?
19. Higher education seems to be under a lot of pressure currently – from policymakers, in the media. What kind of national or more local political and economic pressures would you say are facing your college?
20. Do you know if the college is tracking utilization of basic needs services in any way?
21. Is the college keeping track of the number and kinds of students who are using the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
22. Is the college looking at what happens academically, or psychologically, or in other ways to the students who use the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
23. If the college were to find that providing basic needs services does not affect student outcomes, do you think that the college would still feel it is important to provide services?
24. What do you think the general public expects of institutions like your college in terms of providing for students' basic needs? Of institutions in other sectors of the higher education field?
25. Even if students were able to access services and support for meeting basic needs elsewhere off campus, do you still think it would be important for the college to provide services? Why?
26. What would you say represents a moral imperative on campus - that is, something that everyone would recognize as a circumstance that demands action? To what extent do you think the provision of basic needs services is viewed as a moral imperative on campus?
27. Are you aware of any federal, state, or local laws that may have affected the college's decision to provide basic needs services?
28. Does providing basic needs services affect funding for your institution, either from the state, your college or university system (if applicable), or other sources? If yes, how?

Integration into Organizational Functioning

29. What proportion of students on campus would you estimate are struggling with issues related to hunger, homelessness, and/or the inability to meet other basic needs?
30. How many students do you work with during a typical semester?
31. Do you feel like you are able to serve all students who are struggling with food insecurity? With housing insecurity? With other basic needs?
32. How is information about services communicated to students, or where do you think students normally find out about services? Do you think all students who could benefit from services are aware of them?
33. Are there any eligibility requirements in place related to students' use of each of the basic needs services you mentioned? Can you walk me through the process of what happens when a student shows up for the first time?
34. What kind of data about students' use of services do you track?

35. Have you noticed any patterns in students' use of services? For example, do students typically only use services once or twice, or do the same students tend to use services repeatedly? Are there any particular points in the semester when students are more likely to use services? How do patterns in service use vary based on the type of basic needs service (e.g., a food pantry versus housing assistance)?
36. What do students who use basic needs services on campus do when classes are not in session (e.g., between semesters, over the summer)? Do you know if they seek out similar services off campus?
37. In what ways are basic needs services connected to other academic and non-academic student supports on campus (e.g., advising, counseling, tutoring, programs for special populations such as veterans)? To faculty members? Are there any official referral procedures?

Benefits and Challenges

38. Are there any services related to basic needs that you would like to provide but are not currently able to offer? If so, what is preventing you from being able to offer those services?
39. What are the most challenging aspects of providing basic needs services?
40. Are there any barriers or challenges that will make continuing to provide services difficult?
41. What are the main benefits for the college as an institution of providing basic needs services?

Relation to Institutional Mission

42. How would you describe the institutional mission and the strategic priorities of the college? What is your perception of how the college's mission and strategic priorities influence the work of the college?
43. How does the provision of basic needs services relate to the institutional mission and/or strategic priorities of the college? Does the provision of basic needs services fit within the mission and/or strategic priorities, or does it fall outside of them?
44. Does (or did) the provision of basic needs services warrant a reevaluation of the institution's mission and/or strategic priorities?

Conclusion

45. What do you see as the future of basic needs services at the college?
46. Where do you see higher education as a field headed in terms of providing basic needs services? Are there any services not currently being discussed as part of the basic needs conversation that you think should be (e.g., health care, mental health services)?
47. Is there anything else related to the provision of basic needs services, either specifically at the college or more broadly within the field of higher education, we haven't covered that you think it is important for me to know?

Interview Protocol for Faculty Members and Other Student Services Staff

Introduction

1. Please tell me about your role at the college. What is your job title? What are your primary responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in this role? How long have you been at the institution?

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

3. How did the college respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? At what point did the campus close and the college transition to operating remotely?
4. What plans has the college made for the fall semester? Has fall enrollment been affected by the pandemic?
5. What's your overall sense of how the college has been able to manage during this difficult time?

Students' Basic Needs in the Higher Education Environment

6. In recent years attention to hunger and homelessness, or issues that might be termed "basic needs," on college campuses has been growing. How would you define students' basic needs? Would you include anything else in addition to food and housing?
7. What have you heard, or what do you know about issues related to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
8. What are your primary sources of information about these issues, or in what contexts have you heard about them?
9. What factors do you think might be contributing to student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
10. What do you think are the most effective solutions for addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs in the United States?
11. What role do you think higher education as a field has to play in addressing student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs? Why do you think so?
12. In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the national conversation about students' basic needs?

Basic Needs Services on Campus

13. Is student hunger, homelessness, and inability to meet other basic needs a problem on your campus?
14. Does the college do anything to identify how many students on campus might be struggling to meet basic needs? If so, how is it going about doing so (e.g., as part of the application to the college, intake questionnaire, standalone survey)? What kinds of basic needs does the college ask students about?
15. Please describe any services the college provides to assist students struggling to meet basic needs (e.g., food pantries, emergency grants for unexpected non-college expenses, assistance accessing public benefits or affordable housing).

Motivation for Service Provision

16. What is your understanding of how it happened that the college originally came to provide basic needs services? What do you think is the rationale for continuing to provide services?

17. Which colleges do you consider to be your peer institutions? How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among your peer institutions (in terms of private / public sector and selectivity)?
18. How prevalent do you think basic needs services are among institutions in other sectors of higher education?
19. Higher education seems to be under a lot of pressure currently – from policymakers, in the media. What kind of national or more local political and economic pressures would you say are facing your college?
20. Do you know if the college is tracking utilization of basic needs services in any way?
21. Is the college keeping track of the number and kinds of students who are using the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
22. Is the college looking at what happens academically, or psychologically, or in other ways to the students who use the basic needs services? If so, what has it learned?
23. If the college were to find that providing basic needs services does not affect student outcomes, do you think that the college would still feel it is important to provide services? Why?
24. What do you think the general public expects of institutions like your college in terms of providing for students' basic needs? Of institutions in other sectors of the higher education field?
25. Even if students were able to access services and support for meeting basic needs elsewhere off campus, do you still think it would be important for the college to provide services? Why?
26. What would you say represents a moral imperative on campus - that is, something that everyone would recognize as a circumstance that demands action? To what extent do you think the provision of basic needs services is viewed as a moral imperative on campus?
27. Are you aware of any federal, state, or local laws that may have affected the college's decision to provide basic needs services?
28. Does providing basic needs services affect funding for your institution, either from the state, your college or university system (if applicable), or other sources? If yes, how?

Integration into Organizational Functioning

29. What proportion of students on campus would you estimate are struggling with issues related to hunger, homelessness, and/or the inability to meet other basic needs?
30. Would you know if any of the students in your classes or with whom you work were struggling with issues related to hunger, homelessness, and/or the inability to meet other basic needs? How?
31. How do you learn about services available on campus to assist students who are struggling to meet basic needs?
32. Do you give students any information about basic needs services on campus? If so, what do you give them? If not, why not?
33. Are there any procedures in place for you to refer students to basic needs services?

Benefits and Challenges

34. Are there any services related to basic needs that the college would like to provide but is not currently able to offer? If so, what is preventing the college from being able to offer those services?
35. What are the most challenging aspects of providing basic needs services?
36. Are there any barriers or challenges that will make continuing to provide services difficult?
37. What are the main benefits for the college as an institution of providing basic needs services?

Relation to Institutional Mission

38. How would you describe the institutional mission and the strategic priorities of the college? What is your perception of how the college's mission and strategic priorities influence the work of the college?
39. How does the provision of basic needs services relate to the institutional mission and/or strategic priorities of the college? Does the provision of basic needs services fit within the mission and/or strategic priorities, or does it fall outside of them?
40. Does (or did) the provision of basic needs services warrant a reevaluation of the institution's mission and/or strategic priorities?

Conclusion

41. What do you see as the future of basic needs services at the college?
42. Where do you see higher education as a field headed in terms of providing basic needs services? Are there any services not currently being discussed as part of the basic needs conversation that you think should be (e.g. health care, mental health services)?
43. Is there anything else related to the provision of basic needs services, either specifically at the college or more broadly within the field of higher education, we haven't covered that you think it is important for me to know?