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Basic Needs Housing Advocate Program

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Abstract

California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) students are severely impacted by high priced housing costs. This paper will demonstrate how imperative it is that Basic Needs implements a separate housing infrastructure to help support students with their housing needs during and upon graduation. CSUMB currently houses over 55% of their students and still many students have housing insecurities. To assess the micro-level housing insecurity problem; CSUMB students work with case managers to evaluate their needs. To assess the macro-level housing insecurity problem, a survey was distributed to random students throughout the campus. Of the 6,577 currently enrolled students; 60 students participated in the survey and over 65% indicated they were facing housing insecurity or will be facing homelessness upon graduation. This paper will provide a template of how implementing a housing advocacy program with the Basic Needs infrastructure will help minimize housing insecurities for CSUMB students and upcoming graduates.

Keywords: Housing, insecurities, students, graduate, high housing cost

Agency & Communities Served

CSUMB Basic Needs is a non-profit organization located at California State University, Monterey Bay, Seaside, California. Their mission is to, “support students to be successful by ensuring their basic needs are met through resources, access and advocacy” (Bay, n.d.). On average, the Basic Needs serves over 300 students per day with basic needs items, food, emergency funds, and housing resources. The Basic Needs staff include: Housing Advocate, Care Manager, CHHS and MSW interns, and student workers.

The mission of Basic Needs only highlights the bare surface of what happens behind the scenes of Basic Needs. The staff and students have established a rapport with students that is second to none. Basic Needs is an all-inclusive space where relationships, trust, and a community is built. Not only are students provided resources; they have access to acute on-site counseling, case management, and crisis resolution.

Problem Model Background and Literature Review Problem Statement

Instead of students making plans for college celebrations upon graduation; some graduate students are making a “homelessness plan” because they don't have secure housing when they leave student housing after graduation. The reason CSUMB college students are struggling to obtain secure and stable housing is due to high housing cost, rental or credit history, low wages, disability, or unemployment. As of 2023, the poverty guideline for one person is \$14,580. On average, a person living in Monterey County needs to earn an hourly salary to rent a house or apartment of: \$38.00 (1-bedroom), \$46.00 (two-bedroom), and have a median income of at least \$82,000. With limited resources, Basic Needs does not have the funding or resources to continue meeting the rising housing insecurity needs of our students, resulting in students being homeless.

This increases the risk of CSUMB college students or upcoming graduates not being unable to find safe and secure housing in Monterey County.

Contributing Factors

Extremely high priced housing costs in Monterey County and throughout California has caused a detrimental effect on college students and families across California. According to Svrliga, "Surging rental costs and greater demand for traditional campus life after the disruptions of the pandemic have students at some universities scrambling to find housing. At schools struggling with long wait lists for university housing, efforts to accommodate students have led to some unusual solution," (2022). Many families have to seek financial assistance, food, medical coverage, and housing assistance through government agencies that offer CalFresh benefits, Section 8 or subsidized housing programs, Affordable Healthcare Insurance (Medi-Cal), or the Women's, Infant, and Children (WIC) program just to obtain the basic necessities to survive.

A recent study showed that unemployment factors increase with graduate and post-graduates students. "In May 2023, about 4.2 percent of recent college graduates were unemployed in the United States. This was a significant decrease from September 2020, when the unemployment rate among recent college graduates was at nine percent," (Statista Research Department, 2023). When students are unable to have nutritious meals, adequate housing, medical care, or sustainable income; oftentimes, they have to sacrifice one option over the other.

Students with disabilities have an extremely hard time finding secure housing because they don't have the income to meet the requirements property management companies or landlords request. According to Lake (2021) "Disabled adults experience poverty at more than twice the rate of nondisabled adults; nearly half ages 25 to 61 who have lived in poverty for at

least one year have a disability...disabled women and...people of color are affected at disproportionate rates." Lake also emphasizes on the fact that "Disabled people also hold higher shares of medical debt, experience higher rates of food insecurity, and receive lower pay." These disparities are not just discouraging, they contribute to the discrimination factors that the disabled and low-income communities face on a daily basis.

Consequences

Increased Poverty & Homelessness

In 2022, a random sample community-wide effort survey was conducted throughout the Monterey and San Benito County areas. The results estimated that there were 132 families (97% sheltered and 3% unsheltered), 160 Veterans (47% sheltered, 53% unsheltered), 744 chronically homeless (35% sheltered, 65% unsheltered), and 180 children and youth (7% sheltered, and 93% unsheltered: Monterey County ONLY), (CHISPA, 2022). As indicated by this survey of these homeless populations, Monterey County's children and youth have an unsheltered rate of 93% (Reyes, 2023).

“64% of middle-class residents in the country are now living paycheck to paycheck. With a population of roughly 28,000 people in Monterey, that would mean somewhere in the neighborhood of 15,000 people are possibly one paycheck away from being unsheltered.”(Taylor, 2022). In addition, the average rent for a one bedroom apartment ranges from \$2,000 to \$3,000 per month which does not include all utilities. Further research indicates that it will cost a person nearly \$5,000 for move -in cost for a simple 1-bedroom apartment. (Taylor, 2022).

Increased Substance Abuse & Mental Illness

The University of California conducted a study that indicated “A staggering 82% of people experiencing homelessness said they had a mental health condition or substance use challenge in their lifetime. And 66% said they were currently experiencing mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, hallucinations, or trouble remembering things,” (Hart, 2023). Since California is the has the largest homeless population, these staggering numbers further emphasis that homelessness is more than a crisis, it is a pandemic,

To address these issues, Gov. Gavin Newsom and state health officials are collaboratively implementing initiatives to “expand treatment for mental health and addiction...building more residential treatment facilities...leading a new program ...known as CARE courts, to move people into court-ordered treatment...And...is seeking to add rent payments as a health care benefit available to low-income Californians on Medi-Cal,” (Hart, 2023).

Increased Crime Rates

Many people believe that homeless people are the reason crime has increased in their neighborhoods, but many people don't take into consideration that homeless people may be victims of crime. According to Vankin, “unsheltered persons are statistically more likely to be arrested than other people—with nine times as many saying they had spent at least one night in jail—they are also far more likely to be victims of crime, particularly violent crime,” (Vankin, 2022). According to a California Public Lab study from 2021, crimes within the homeless population showed that homeless populations were “murdered at 19 times the rate of the non-homeless population, and were 27 times more likely to be subjected to attempted murder—as well as 12 times more likely to be assaulted and nine times more likely to be sexually assaulted,” (Vankin, 2022).

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
High priced housing cost	College students are struggling to obtain secure and stable housing	Increased poverty and homelessness
Unemployment		Increased substance abuse and mental illness
Disability		Increased crime rates

Project Description

Title: Helping bridge the gap between unhoused college students and community leaders

Year One Objectives:

- Provide students with Emergency Housing Funds to help offset some of their housing costs.
- Provide resources and educational training for students to help them maintain and sustain housing for long-term post graduation.
- Establish partnerships with outside property management companies and agencies to assist students with unmet housing needs.

Basic Needs Housing works diligently to establish partnerships with outside agencies, property management companies, rental assistance programs, and other CSU's to help implement realistic housing opportunities for post graduate students to ensure they have secure and affordable housing. A survey was conducted to provide Basic Needs with an overall assessment of student housing needs. Once the survey is completed, Joanna Snawder-Manzo and the Basic Needs Care Team will make a determination if hiring a Housing Advocate is justified.

Project Justification

The Basic Need Housing Advocate(s) work solely on finding resources to help students secure housing. Housing Advocates assist students and their families with outreach, case

management, housing assistance, financial assistance, and other resources that will help the student find sustainable housing and income.

The Housing Advocate(s) work directly with students and their families with “housing related financial assistance and wrap-around supportive services, including, but not limited to: interim housing, rental assistance, housing navigation, case management, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, legal services, and credit repair,” (CDSS, n.d.). Housing Advocate(s) work to help students establish a secure future.

The Housing Advocate(s) work solely on finding resources and working collectively with outside agencies to help find and provide housing resources and stable housing for upcoming and college graduation from California State University Monterey Bay. The Housing Advocate(s) will work with internal and external agencies to reduce financial, social, and economic barriers that prevent college students from securing stable housing upon graduation. As well as bridging the gap between housing providers and students to further reduce discriminatory housing practices and policies, or biases that cause denied housing applications.

Benefits

The Basic Needs Housing Assessment provided current data to the CSUMB Basic Needs department with in-depth information regarding undergraduate and graduate students housing needs or insecurities. The information collected not only helped gather information on housing, but it also provided data on a variety of housing issues. In particular, what is the main source of housing insecurities? This assessment helps Basic Needs identify if the housing insecurities are increased on or off campus. Is it caused by lack of training, education, or lack of resources? The assessment helps Basic Needs justify hiring a Housing Advocate that solely works on finding resources, providing training, and financial literacy and assistance to students.

With this designated position, the Housing Advocate program could help decrease homelessness and housing insecurities for CSUMB students and upcoming graduates so they have a guaranteed exit plan upon graduation; instead of them having a homeless plan.

Implementation Process

When addressing housing insecurities, Joanna Snawder-Manzo, Care Manager of Basic Needs discussed what protocols needed to be implemented in a Housing Advocate program with the CHHS Intern. The initial step would be to research funding through local, state, and federal grants. While concurrently researching grants and other financial support. A random sample housing assessment survey was distributed to CSUMB undergraduate and graduate students. The survey was prepared through Qualtrics which allowed students to take the survey by using a QR code on their cell phone. The survey was also shared with Collaborative Health Human Services (CHHS) students who were offered extra credit as an incentive to complete the survey by their Capstone Professor. The survey was also provided to random students on campus in the Dining Commons, Otter Express, OSU, Farmers Market, and Library. Several requests were made to the CSUMB housing department to no avail. The survey concluded on October 15, 2023 with 60 respondents. The findings of the survey reported the findings and recommendations to the case manager to further support the request for a Housing Advocate.

Meanwhile, Basic Needs will continue to establish relationships with outside agencies and other California State Universities (CSU's) in hopes to build partnerships that could possibly provide housing resources to help address student housing insecurities.

Task	Timeline	Parties Involved	Materials/Service Needed	Deliverables
Student Housing Needs/Insecurities Meeting	03/02/23	Mentor and CHHS Student	Reviewed prior reports and data on student housing insecurities to determine need.	Plan of action to prepare survey and draft email for research

Initial Introduction with CSUMB Housing	03/02/23	Mentor, CSUMB Housing Rep., and CHHS Student	Email sent by mentor to housing rep. to schedule a face-to-face meeting regarding the housing issue.	Email sent
First Meeting with CSUMB Housing Rep.	03/09/23	Mentor, CSUMB Housing Rep., and CHHS Student	Discussed current housing policy and how to find ways for both departments to work collectively with each other to meet student needs.	Plan, implementation, and distribution tasks.
Prepare draft survey #1	3/10/23 to 03/12/23	CHHS Student	Prepare Google form and questions for survey	Sent draft survey to mentor
Survey approved and sent distributed to CSUMB student	4/15/23 - Summer Break	Mentor, CHHS Student, and Basic Needs Marketing Team	Discovered survey was only done as an Instagram post on Basic Needs Instagram page.	23 student respondents to survey was collected
Collaboration Meeting with Mentor	09/01/23	Mentor, CHHS Student	Reassessed allocation process of survey	More research needed
Research	09/05/23	Mentor, CHHS Student, Basic Needs Marketing Team	Survey will be done via Qualtrics to have more detailed data collection and redistribute the survey by using a QR code to allow students easier access.	Upgrade survey type and distribute to larger student population
Prepare draft survey #2	09/06/23 - 09/08/23	CHHS Student CSUMB IT staff	Trained on Qualtrics and prepared new survey	Finalize survey sent to mentor for approval
Market Strategies Meeting for Survey	09/11/23	CHHS Student and Basic Needs Marketing Rep.	Worked collaboratively to design poster and implement QR code for distribution	Finalized poster for survey
<u>Distributed Survey #2 to CSUMB Students</u>	09/20/23 - 10/05/23	CHHS Student, Basic Needs staff,	Distributed survey to various students in multiple locations (CSUMB Housing, HUB,	33 additional respondents and deadline is still ongoing until

			Library, Farmers Market, in-person on-campus, Canvas, etc.	10/05/23
Outreach	09/18/23	Mentor, CHHS Student, MSW Intern, and SFSU Basic Needs Rep.	Discussion on Rapid-Rehousing and other resources SFSU uses to assist students.	Received referrals to other SFSU staff and UC's
<u>Zoom Meetings with other CSU's</u>	10/03/23 - 10/15-23	Pending Data	connecting with other CSU's to analyze, rapid-rehousing and other forms of emergency housing resources for students off-campus(hotel vouchers, etc.	
<u>Closed survey</u>	10/23/23	CHHS Intern	Qualtrics	
<u>Examined Survey Results</u>	11/07/23	Professor Navarro CHHS Intern	Qualtrics, Excel	
<u>Final Conclusion</u>	11/10/23	CHHS Intern	Google Doc, Excel	

Assessment Plan & Expected Outcomes

The Basic Needs Housing Insecurities Assessment was finalized on October 23, 2023. Upon review of the assessment results, the CHHS Intern will present the findings to the Basic Needs Care Manager, Joanna Snawder-Manzo and the Basic Needs Care Team. The data analyzed in the survey will provide the Basic Needs Care Team with a better understanding on what percentage of undergraduate students and graduate students are experiencing or facing homelessness or housing insecurity. The survey will provide demographic information, how many students identify as unhoused, and their expected graduation dates, age, ethnicity, and gender. The survey also asks if students need educational training with credit repair, rental application process, etc. Finally, Joanna Snawder-Manzo will present this information to the

Chancellor's office for approval to implement the Housing Advocacy Program and initiate the hiring process for the Housing Advocate and support staff under the infrastructure of the Basic Needs department.

Project Results

Upon final review of the Basic Needs Housing Assessment, it was determined that over 65% of the respondents confirmed that they are facing housing insecurity or will be facing housing insecurity upon graduation. Figure 1 provides results based on age; according to these results 55% of students in the 18-24 age group are uncertain they will have secure housing upon graduation from CSUMB and 5 % have no plans for stable housing upon graduation.

Figure 1: Housing certainty by age group

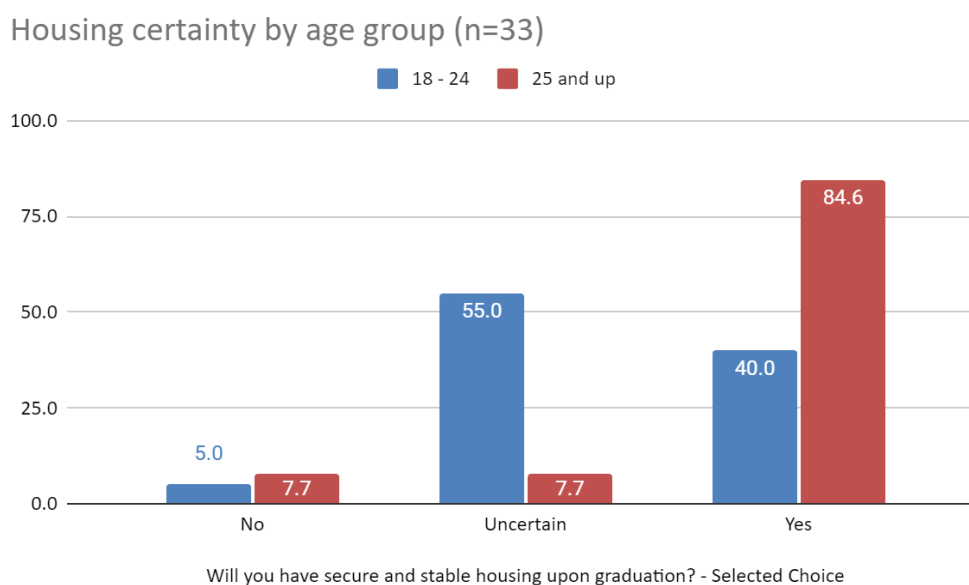
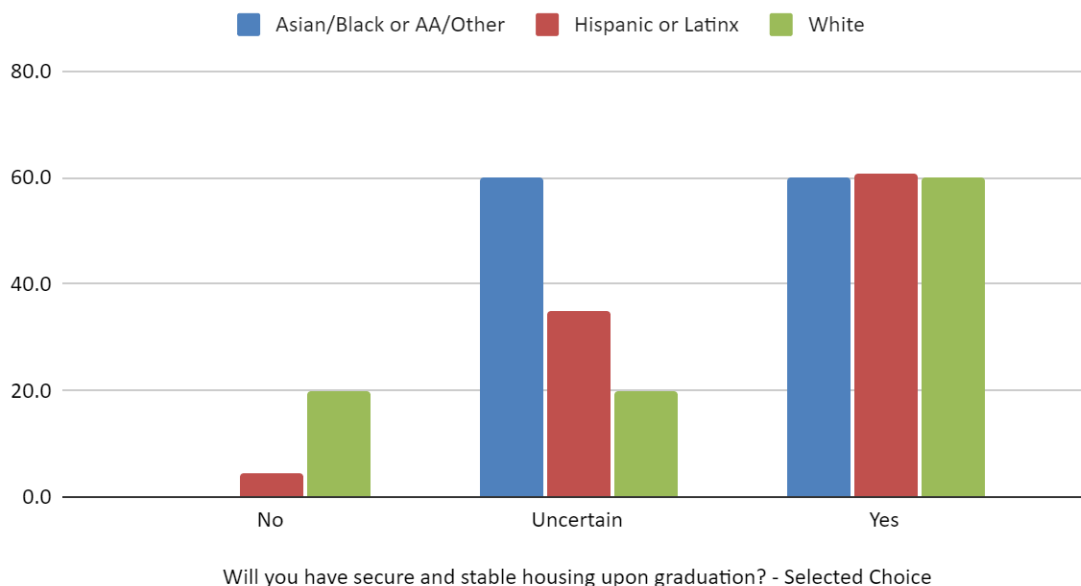


Figure 2 provides results based on ethnicity; and according to these results 60% (Asian, Black or AA/Other), 37% (Hispanic/Latinx), and 20% (White) college students are uncertain they will have secure housing upon graduation from CSUMB.

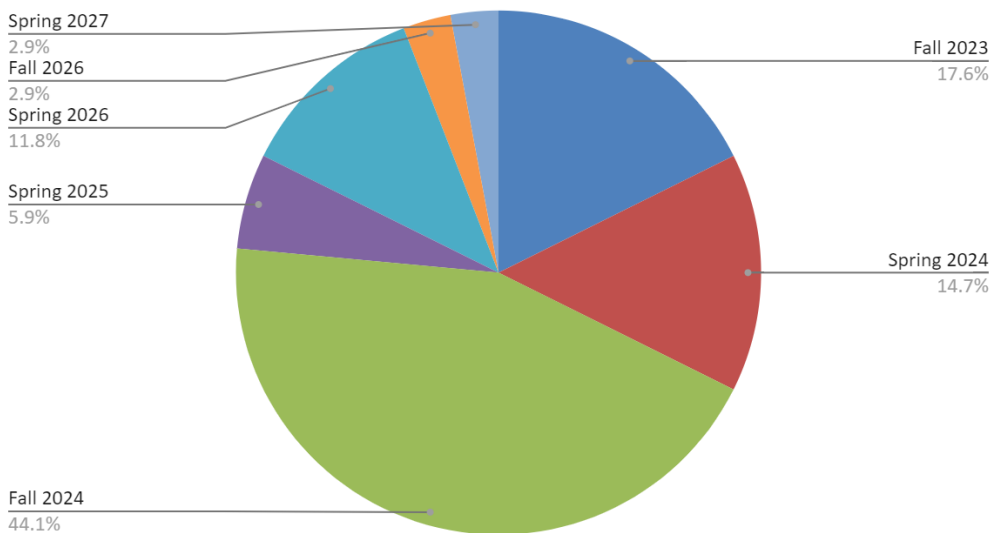
Figure 2: Housing uncertainty by race/ethnicity

Housing Uncertainty by Race/Ethnicity (n=33)



To emphasize the importance of implementing the Housing Advocate Program, figure 3 shows that CSUMB college students have less than 3 years to prepare and find secure housing before they face homelessness.

Respondent's expected graduation term (n=34)



Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, CSUMB undergraduate and graduate students' housing insecurities are far from over. The Basic Needs Housing Assessment only confirmed that it is apparent that there is a drastic need for a Housing Advocate program through Basic Needs because their department is designed and has the due diligence to make an impactful change in the right direction for students. However, if changes in bureaucracy, egos, and political barriers are not changed; students will need to get a degree in how to succeed in homelessness. This conclusion is based on how difficult it was to address housing insecurities within CSUMB's internal system. Due to bureaucratic barriers, the Housing Assessment was extremely difficult to distribute to students and personal ideologies limited how students were allowed access to the survey.

Although there were limitations on how students were reached to complete the survey, the survey itself was unbiased and avoided any leading questions, response or selection biases, loaded questions, or anything that would sway respondents' responses in favor or against the final outcome of the results. Unfortunately, a huge population of students that would have been a great contributing factor to the survey would have been students who are currently living on campus. Unfortunately, CSUMB housing department would and did not assist in the distribution of the survey. Therefore, a representative sample could not be used, so the results from the survey are based upon a convenient sample of 60 respondents.

CSUMB currently has over 6,500 students. The survey, based on a convenience sample of students revealed the disheartening result that over 65% of them will face housing insecurities upon graduation. An important recommendation that emerged from these results is that in order to fully address and understand housing insecurities of CSUMB undergraduate and graduate students, there must be an unbiased assessment of this crisis. Internal barriers must be

eliminated, and all students should have access to the Housing Insecurities Assessment. Students should not be living in their cars or tents, couch surfing, or making homeless plans upon graduation. They should be celebrating their accomplishments and being able to sleep in a warm bed at night. Students should have safe and secure housing upon and after graduation. Housing should be a right, not a need.

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