

**Perspectives on Student Hunger and Poverty:
What We Know and What Students Believe.**

Dr. Richard Glotzer, Interim Director School of Nutrition and Dietetics, and Professor Social Work
Dr. Pei-Yang Lui, Associate Professor, School of Nutrition and Dietetics
Ms. Kathy Schupp, Associate Professor of Practice and Director, Center for Nutrition
Dr. Jennifer Warren, Associate Professor of Practice, School of Nutrition and Dietetics
The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio 44325-6102

Abstract

An under-explored area of student poverty concerns student body perception of hunger among fellow students. Data on admissions, persistence, and college completion, especially at public institutions, vary widely. Academic outcomes are linked to family SES and structure, means of support, and educational objectives, as well as gender and race/ethnicity. Participants in this preliminary inquiry were students volunteering to anonymously read and evaluate case studies. Student earned course points for participation in this IRB exempt study. Four hypothetical case-studies of student hunger and poverty were outlined. The cases incrementally varied the factors students experienced and their responses in counteracting their situation. Our evaluative instrument was a five point empathy scale. Case studies were evaluated on four dimensions; 1) general empathy; 2) student efforts at redress; 3) student responsibility, and 4) institutional responsibility. Preliminary findings suggest little difference between genders in empathy ratings. There were slightly more feelings of empathy for women than men, and less empathy when behaviors contributed to hunger and poverty. Our sample of 94 students suggests there is base-line of general empathy for students experiencing hunger and poverty. Future data collection (spring, 2019) will more sharply delineate conditions in case studies. Recruiting more evenly matched gender samples is also important. Data begin to suggest conditions under which students might contribute to an institutional "hunger/poverty" fund as a fee, participate in voluntary hunger/poverty alleviating activities, or alert potential providers about instances of student poverty.