



The Hunger Consortium: Doing Good by Doing Honors. An Academic and Community Engagement Feeder for Capstone Projects

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The Honors Distinction



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Earning an Honors Fellows distinction at Texas A&M requires a University Honors student to 1) earn at least 30 points through classes and experiences, 2) participate in Honors programming, and 3) conduct a year-long scholarly project under the mentorship of a faculty member or other expert as a junior or senior.

The Capstone project should blend the student's major, career goals, and interests into one integrated project.

Honors Capstones—a great idea, but...



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Texas A&M is a public, R1 flagship institution with over 50,000 undergraduates, 130 degree plans, over 1000 student organizations, and 3,750 faculty.

Capstone programs can focus on research, teaching, service learning, leadership, or performance.

The richness of these options leave many students floundering to find what they can do and who they can do it with.

What issues do students have?



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1. Too many choices can lead to paralysis.
2. Narrowly self-defined capstone interests.
3. No one in their department does what they are interested in.
4. They are involved in something they love, but it wouldn't fit.



Capstones require preparation



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1. Deciding what you want to do.
2. Acquiring intellectual background in the topic.
3. Learning applicable skills and training.
4. Finding a willing mentor.

Realistically, a student needs to prepare at least one semester prior to starting a Capstone project, if not a year or more.

Undergraduate Research is the easiest



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UGR is well established: we have lots of ways to learn what research is, how to find opportunities, and what to expect.



And yet students still struggle.

How can we help?



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Find ways to get students to think beyond disciplinary or department borders.

What are students passionate about? What can be approached from almost any angle or perspective?

Solution: create established programs around issues students feel passionate about that give students the ability to learn, connect, and bring their knowledge to bear—easy to “plug in” students, faculty, and staff.



Food Insecurity on College Campuses

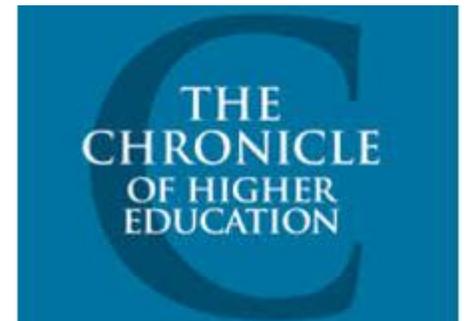


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Food insecurity (FI): limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate or safe foods, or the ability to acquire such food in a socially acceptable manner.

A longstanding national problem at all types of institutions (data from surveys done by individual institutions and national surveys by the Wisconsin HOPE Center).

Recent articles and news stories in the Chronicle of Higher Education, NPR, and the New York Times, among others.



National student data on FI



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HOPE Center 2017 survey of students at 35 four year institutions (almost entirely public) with over 20,000 responses.



- **36% of students** at 4 year institutions were FI in the previous month.
- **25% skipped meals** or cut the size of their meals.
- Rates are higher among first generation, low income, or under-represented students (Black or Hispanic versus White or Asian)
- University of California and Cal-State systems found **FI rates of 42%**
- **Less than half** of university students have not been food- or housing-insecure in the last year.
- **49% or more of students expecting C, D, or F grades** have very low or low food security compared to 40% or less of food secure students
 - Those numbers rise to **60% or more** for marginal, low, or very low food security.

TAMU student data on FI

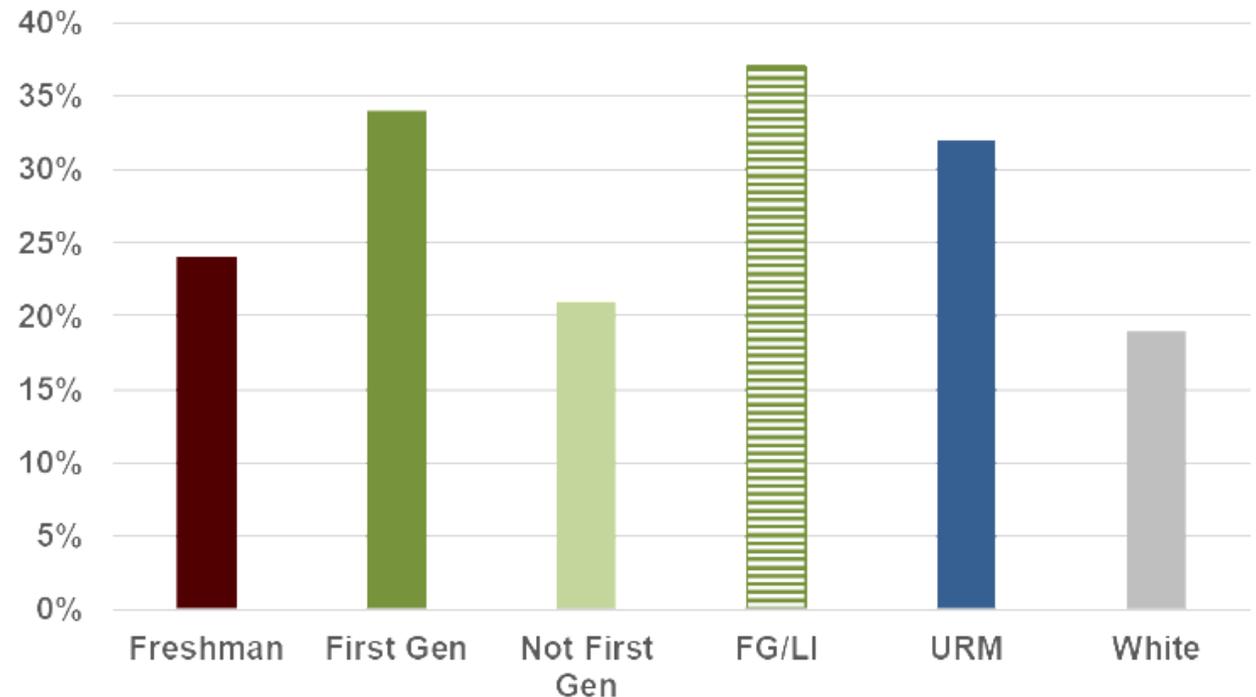


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Texas A&M 2017 survey with over 3000 freshmen responses two weeks into the fall semester (incoming class of 9,670 full-time freshmen).

Who is already skipping meals because there isn't enough money for food?

- 24% of all freshmen
- 34% of first generation students
- 21% of non-first gen students
- 37% of low income first generation students
- 32 % of URM (Black, Latino, multiracial) students
- 19% of white students



The relationship between FI and student success



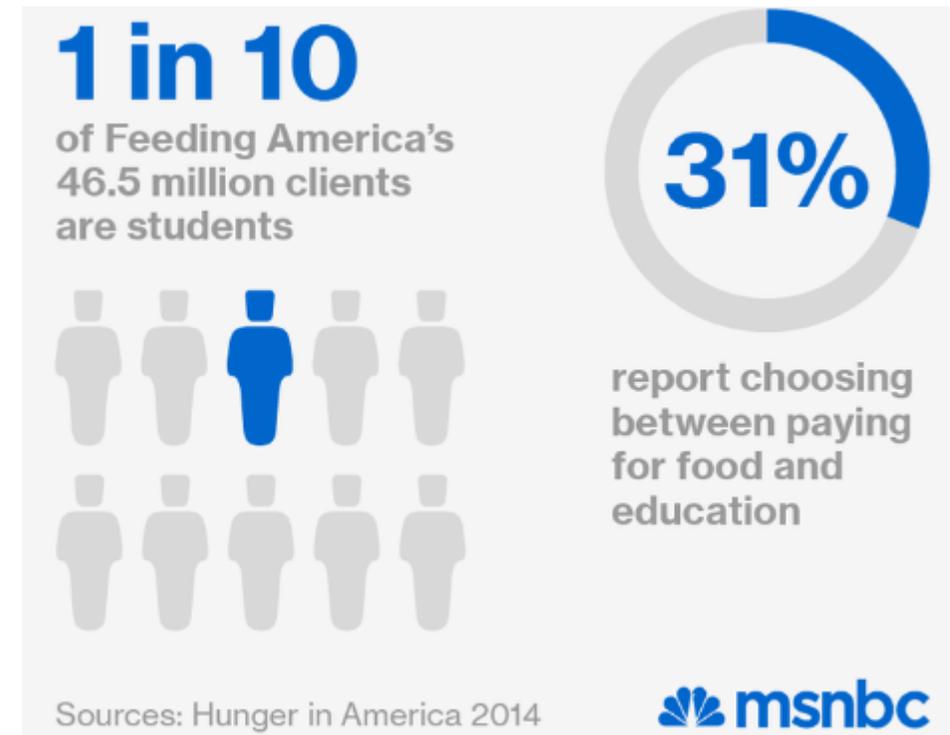
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FI correlates nationally with lower grades, retention, and graduation rates.

FI is higher among FG, FG/LI, and URM students.

Texas A&M has an achievement gap for grades, retention, and graduation rates between white students and FG, FG/LI, and URM students.

The college-age population of Texas will increasingly be Latino, FG, and LI.



Will addressing FI improve grades and student success now and in the future?

Local or global?



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While helping our own students would be great, hunger and food insecurity is a much bigger problem.

Many people and groups at Texas A&M already have a focus on food insecurity at the regional, state, national, and international level.

Texas A&M has unique resources



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- Public research 1 flagship campus
- Land-, sea-, and space-grant institution.
- Colleges of Agriculture and Medicine, Schools of Public Health and Public Policy
- Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture
- Ties to agriculture and food industries
- Culture of leadership, selfless service
- Fall 2017 Freshmen: 25% FG, 9% FG/LI, 13% FG Latino



The Hunger Consortium



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The Hunger Consortium connects faculty, staff, students, and local community members involved in research, food preparation, management, and education with each other and others who want to make a difference by addressing hunger and food insecurity.

Join the effort to end food insecurity at Texas A&M, the state, nation, and world.

- Coordinated by LAUNCH—website and working group
 - Research, service, and teaching/learning collaborations and offerings
 - Capstone projects in leadership, performance, research, service, and teaching.
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Programs associated with The Hunger Consortium



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- **Everybody Eats:** residential food growers
 - **12th Can:** student-run campus food pantry
 - **Swipe Out Hunger:** Donation of unused TAMU meal plan meals
 - **TAMU Urban Farm:** food production research, vertical tower gardens
 - **Hunger-Free Texas:** optimizing food pantry operations
 - **ReThink Hunger:** Central Texas Foodbank coordination
 - **Brazos Valley Food Bank:** community food bank
 - **Undergraduate Capstone Programs:** scholarship focused on leadership, performance, research, service, or teaching projects.
 - **First Year Eats:** educational impact and program management research, cooking skills, nutrition, and education
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Research highlighted by The Hunger Consortium



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- Food Diversity Innovation Program: religious and ethnic food
 - Collaborative ethnography
 - Freshman food insecurity
 - Foodscape of TAMU campus
 - SNAP and food insecurity
 - Disability and food insecurity
 - Coffee quality and supply
 - Food security and climate change
 - Cooperation between food, water, and energy players
 - Improved methods for organic farming
 - Monsoon prediction and food security
 - Environmental management and food systems
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Education opportunities highlighted by The Hunger Consortium



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Food Diversity Innovation
Certificate
Nutrition
Dietetics
Food Science and Technology
Human Geography
Public Health
Sociology

Public Policy
Industrial Distribution
Business
Biological and
Agricultural
Engineering
Poultry Science
Animal Science
Horticulture

Non-academic units collaborating in The Hunger Consortium



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Chartwells/dining services
Scholarships and Financial Aid
Student Assistance Services
Residence Life
Leadership and Service Center—Student Affairs
Agrilife/The Leach Gardens
Howdy Farm
Agrilife Research
Multicultural Services
The Texas A&M Foundation
Student Government
Constellation Learning Community

College and Unit Support/Involvement



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College of Agriculture and Life Science

College of Liberal Arts

College of Education

School of Innovation

School of Public Health

Agricultural Extension Service

LAUNCH / Honors office history



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2010-2015

Honors and Undergraduate Research: responsible for Honors, UGR, and National Fellowships.

2015-now

LAUNCH: Learning communities, Academic excellence, UGR, National fellowships, Capstone programs, and Honors.

Our laboratory: LAUNCH LCs



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LAUNCH Learning Communities engage about 1000 incoming freshmen each year

- 300 University Honors
- 600-700 freshmen in several academic scholarship LCs
 - Primarily FG/LI/URM
- Peer mentors, transition to college programming

The Constellation Living Learning Community: 234 freshmen, primarily FG/LI/URM in a single residence hall.

First Year Eats Spring 2019



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The subjects: Constellation Living Learning Community

The food and cooking skills:

- Mug Meal Mondays
- Crockpot Cuisine Cohorts

The education: Budget and grocery planning:
Student Life

The ingredients and supplies:

- Collaborations with Everybody Eats, TAMU Urban Gardens, Leach Teaching Gardens
- Industry partners: grocery chain HEB, egg producers Feathercrest Farms and Cal-Maine, printing and graphics Integ.



First Year Eats Faculty and Student groups



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The current research faculty:

- Poultry Science
- Sociology
- Public Health
- Education
- Nutrition

Funded by:

- An Innovations X grant from the School of Innovation
- Funds from LAUNCH

The Student Organizations involved:

- Constellation Peer Mentors
 - Poultry Science Club
 - TAMU Student Government
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Currently recruiting for Fall 2019

- Undergraduate Service Scholars Team
 - Mug Meals, Vertical Gardens, Everybody Eats
 - Undergraduate Research Scholars Team
 - Freshman Food Insecurity
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Mug Meal Mondays



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A Mug Meal Monday every week of Spring 2019 serving 25% of the Constellation Learning Community so far.

Cooking skills and social interaction = more community building.

Students attending Mug Meal Mondays have taught their roommates and friends how to cook mug meals.

All-day Mug Meal planned for finals week, sponsored by HEB (Texas grocery store chain).

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- Projects and Partnership
 - First Year Eats
 - Vertical Gardens
 - Dorm Room Grow Bags
 - High Impact and Connectivity
 - Ways to do good while doing Honors!
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“From Promise to Achievement for Everyone”

