Published on *University of Colorado* (https://www.cu.edu)

CU I&E Submission: Student Hunger and Homelessness Initiatives [1]

Summary

Preliminary research at the Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus suggests that nearly 10 percent of their students experience homelessness at least once while in school. The team determined to help students overcome the barriers of housing and basic needs insecurity through a variety of initiatives designed to alleviate hunger and homelessness on campus. These include: marketing campaigns, home-share programs, a campus kitchen project, and a student lounge.

Submission Highlights

Team Information



Pictured Above:

- Dr. Tony Robinson, Chair, Department of Political Science
- Coby Wikselaar, Research Assistant/Harding Fellow for Student Homelessness and Hunger Initiatives
- Kelly Stritzinger, Program Assistant I

- University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

Description

The Political Science Department recognizes that housing and basic needs insecurity impact student success, retention, and well-being. Dr. Tony Robinson and Coby Wikselaar lead recent initiatives resulting in greater efficiency by promoting student retention, and improving customer service by better supporting students overcoming barriers to academic success.

Coby Wikselaar, our Harding Fellow for Student Homelessness and Hunger Initiatives, identifies services, conducts research, and engages in advocacy to alleviate hunger and homelessness on campus. Coby organized the 2018 Auraria Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Day in November. She is currently piloting a home-share program on campus to connect home providers and home seekers and enhance affordable housing options for students, as well as a Campus Kitchen Project that rescues would-be wasted food and transforms it into free-healthy meals for the campus community.

Our new Civic Engagement and Housing Justice Living and Learning Community serves first-year students interested in housing justice, homelessness, and social equity. It creates opportunities for students to center their lived experiences and advocate for positive social change and student empowerment.

Lastly, we operate a Student Lounge which includes couches to rest on, a computer and printer, coffee, small library, and food/supply pantry available to all Political Science students.

How does this benefit the University?

According to a survey conducted by Temple University and the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, 36 percent of college students say they are food insecure. Preliminary research at CU Denver in Spring 2017 suggests nearly ten percent of CU Denver students have experienced homelessness at least once while in school.

Our initiatives creatively address basic needs insecurity and reduce their negative impact on student success, retention, and well-being. Our Harding Fellow publishes newsletters and identifies current models and projects in the US that address these issues, helping CU Denver take leadership in the community. The LLC encourages students to engage relevant issues and promote positive social change while practicing facilitation, decision-making, and communication skills among diverse peers. Lastly, the student lounge provides much needed resources for students directly facing food insecurity or homelessness, increasing their capacity to focus on personal well-being, academic success, graduation, and workforce readiness.

Implementation/Future Plans

These three initiatives were implemented primarily by Dr. Tony Robinson and Coby Wikselaar over the past two academic years and continue to grow as best-practices are identified and our knowledge base increases. In the future we hope to hire a full time director to advance these initiatives, continue our support of a student fellow like Coby, and to support ongoing research, teaching, and student services related to hunger and homelessness.

Specifically, Coby's home-share project will expand our impact in the near future, and we plan on dedicating resources to promotional material, vetting home-providers and home-seekers, and continued case management of the project. The Wisconsin HOPE lab serves as a model for what we might eventually implement at CU Denver: https://hope4college.com/ [2]

File Attachment

Source URL:https://www.cu.edu/controller/i-e-awards/past-submissions/cu-ie-submission-student-hunger-and-homelessness-initiatives

Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/controller/i-e-awards/past-submissions/cu-ie-submission-student-hunger-and-homelessness-initiatives [2] https://hope4college.com/