

REGENT COLLEGE

**GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD:  
THE EXPERIENCE OF FOOD INSECURITY AMONG STUDENTS AT  
REGENT COLLEGE**

AN ESSAY SUBMITTED BY

ZELLA CHRISTENSON

TO THE

RCSA ACADEMIC SYMPOSIUM 2024

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

5 APRIL 2024

Word Count: 4711

## Introduction

As defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, food security is achieved when, “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”<sup>1</sup> Conversely, food insecurity (FI) is defined by the Government of Canada as “the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.”<sup>2</sup> Food insecurity is different from hunger—not all people who experience food insecurity would be defined as hungry. Instead, food insecurity captures a broad range of experiences that accounts for the physical and psychosocial consequences of financial constraints on a person’s diet, such as the chronic anxiety of running out of food and the reduced quality, quantity, or cultural acceptability of food consumed.<sup>3</sup>

The prevalence and experience of FI among post-secondary students has become in recent decades a growing area of research, both quantitative and qualitative. A confluence of challenges weighs heavily on university students that has led to consistently higher rates of FI among students than among the general population in both the US and Canada.<sup>4</sup> In the largest-to-date quantitative study of FI among Canadian university students—conducted by Meal Exchange

---

<sup>1</sup> “An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security” (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2008), <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/a1936e/a1936e00.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> “Household Food Insecurity in Canada: Overview.” (Government of Canada, 2020b), <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-nutrition-surveillance/health-nutrition-surveys/canadian-community-health-survey-cchs/household-food-insecurity-canada-overview.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Drew Silverthorn, “Hungry for Knowledge: Assessing the Prevalence of Student Food Insecurity on Five Canadian Campuses” (Toronto: Meal Exchange, 2016), 5–6, <http://mealexchange.com>; Mahitab Hanbazaza et al., “Food Insecurity among International Post-Secondary Students Studying on a Canadian Campus: A Qualitative Descriptive Study,” *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 51, no. 2 (2021): 41.

<sup>4</sup> Sara Kozicky, “Literature and Best Practices Review : Measuring Food Insecurity at the University of British Columbia,” Student Research Report (Vancouver, BC: UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Sustainability Program, February 2019), 2, <https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0386713>; Rebecca L. Hagedorn-Hatfield, Lanae B. Hood, and Adam Hege, “A Decade of College Student Hunger: What We Know and Where We Need to Go,” *Frontiers in Public Health* 10 (February 25, 2022): 2, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.837724>.

in 2016—researchers found that on average 39% of students across Canada experienced some degree of FI, with 30.7% experiencing moderate FI and 8.3% experiencing severe FI.<sup>5</sup> At the University of British Columbia (UBC)—which did not participate in the Meal Exchange study—a 2020 AMS student survey found similar results among their student body, reporting that, “More than two in five students (undergraduate & graduate) have been concerned about their ability to feed themselves in the past year...[and] 19% of both undergraduate and graduate respondents respectively report having monthly concerns about running out of food.”<sup>6</sup> Students at Regent College, an affiliate school of UBC, would have had the opportunity to participate in this AMS survey, so although these statistics cannot be directly used to determine the prevalence of FI at Regent College, they illuminate the probability that FI, to some degree, impacts Regent’s student body. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to better understand the phenomenon of food insecurity among post-secondary students within the specific context of full-time graduate students at Regent.

Exploration of this phenomenon among our student body is merited on many fronts. The multi-faceted consequences of FI are well documented among the literature, causing detriment to a population’s health and resilience physically, mentally, and socially. Among student populations, these factors compound to negatively impact students’ academic performance as well, with individuals who experience food insecurity having 42% lower odds of graduating.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Silverthorn, “Hungry for Knowledge: Assessing the Prevalence of Student Food Insecurity on Five Canadian Campuses,” 1.

<sup>6</sup> Georgia Yee et al., “2020 Academic Experience Survey Report” (Alma Mater Society, The University of British Columbia, 2020), 42, [https://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020\\_aes\\_v2.pdf](https://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020_aes_v2.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Hagedorn-Hatfield, Hood, and Hege, “A Decade of College Student Hunger,” 2; Meredith Bessey, Lesley Frank, and Patricia L. Williams, “Starving to Be a Student: The Experiences of Food Insecurity among Undergraduate Students in Nova Scotia, Canada,” *Canadian Food Studies / La Revue Canadienne Des Études Sur l’alimentation* 7, no. 1 (July 12, 2020): 107–25, <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v7i1.375>; Hanbazaza et al., “Food Insecurity among International Post-Secondary Students Studying on a Canadian Campus”; Nayantara Hattangadi et al., “Everybody I Know Is Always Hungry...But Nobody Asks Why’: University Students, Food Insecurity and Mental Health,” *Sustainability* 11, no. 6 (January 2019): 1571, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11061571>; Power et al., “I Don’t Want to

Given that the completion of higher education is a predictor of future socioeconomic outcomes<sup>8</sup> and that social disadvantages tend to accumulate over time,<sup>9</sup> understanding and mediating food insecurity among university students is a critical area of research; it promotes student success and wellbeing during and beyond their university years, which can have long-standing physical and socio-economic benefits among this population, contributing to the health of society as a whole.

Although research of FI among post-secondary students is growing, most studies to this point have focused on undergraduate students or have lumped undergraduate and graduate students together. Studies disagree as to whether the prevalence of FI is higher or lower among graduate students;<sup>10</sup> however, the literature agrees that different factors impact these two populations, so further research is needed to study these populations separately, with a particular need to better understand the experience of FI among graduate students.<sup>11</sup> A brief survey of studies that have focused on graduate students reveal that they tend to focus on the experience of students within a specific faculty.<sup>12</sup> This study, therefore, contributes two-fold to a gap in the

---

Say I'm Broke"; Silverthorn, "Hungry for Knowledge: Assessing the Prevalence of Student Food Insecurity on Five Canadian Campuses."

<sup>8</sup> Hattangadi et al., "Everybody I Know Is Always Hungry...But Nobody Asks Why," 8.

<sup>9</sup> Erica Reynolds et al., "Prevalence and Correlates of Food Insecurity among Students Attending a Small, Rural Canadian University," *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research* 79, no. 3 (September 2018): 125, <https://doi.org/10.3148/cjdpr-2018-004>.

<sup>10</sup> Kozicky, "Literature and Best Practices Review," 2; Jessica Soldavini, Maureen Berner, and Julia Da Silva, "Rates of and Characteristics Associated with Food Insecurity Differ among Undergraduate and Graduate Students at a Large Public University in the Southeast United States," *Preventive Medicine Reports* 14 (February 25, 2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2019.100836>.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah E Pember et al., "'It's (Just) Grad School': Effects of Normative Influence on the Healthy Eating Behavior & Intentions of Graduate Students," *The Health Educator* 51, no. 1 (2019); Bessey, Frank, and Williams, "Starving to Be a Student."

<sup>12</sup> G. Calco et al., "Addressing Food Insecurity Among Graduate-Level Health Professional Students," *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 2021 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo, 121, no. 9, Supplement (September 1, 2021): A77, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2021.06.201>; Karen Stanfar et al., "Exploring the Characteristics Associated With Food Insecurity Experienced by Graduate Students in a School of Health Professions," *Current Developments in Nutrition* 6, no. Suppl 1 (June 14, 2022): 176, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdn/nzac051.092>; Daniel J Mallinson, "Food Insecurity among Public Administration Graduate Students," *Teaching Public Administration* 39, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 67–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0144739420935964>.

growing research around FI among post-secondary students. It will add to the literature surrounding the unique experiences of FI among graduate students as well as consider the relatively unexplored but potentially unique experiences of students pursuing degrees in theology and ministry related professions.

Entering this context, therefore, this phenomenological study asked the question: What is the experience of food insecurity among full-time graduate students at Regent College? This study analyzed five facets of this experience: What *priorities and preferences* do students consider as they buy and prepare food? What *obstacles* contribute to food insecurity for students (and their families)? What is the *impact* of food insecurity on students (and their families)? What *strategies* are used by students to overcome barriers associated with food insecurity? What *perspectives* help students make sense of their experience?

This project focused on the experiences of full-time, in-person Regent students who have lived in Vancouver for over a year. Beyond those parameters, however, this project welcomed different variables that could impact students' experiences, including a mix of domestic and international students and students who are single or married, with or without kids.

As a student at Regent College myself—who comes into this research with a deep love for my community and a personal interest to see students holistically flourishing during their graduate studies—I am aware that food insecurity among the student body is a relatively unspoken, but I believe needed, conversation. As such, this study hopes to broach the topic of food insecurity at Regent and to foster greater safety and openness within the student body to discuss honestly the financial challenges of being graduate students of theology in Vancouver.

### **Research Method**

A significant limitation to this study was the lack of any pre-existing quantitative data that gauges the prevalence of FI among the student body. Common strategies of other qualitative

studies of student FI were to either combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies or follow-up on a previous quantitative study among the student body so that there was some objective measure by which to label students as either “food secure” or “food insecure” within their sample. Regent does not have this kind of pre-existing data, and it was beyond the scope of this project to employ mixed qualitative and quantitative methodologies. As such, this project recognizes that it employs the term “food insecure” more imprecisely than would be standard among the literature on this topic. To address this limitation, this project conducted semi-structured interviews with five Regent students who have frequented the AMS food bank at some point in their Regent experience (defined as going more than once in a given term). Food-bank usage has been shown to be a coping mechanism among students who have experienced food insecurity,<sup>13</sup> so for the purpose of this study, in the absence of a more objective measure, it stood in as an indicator that a student is experiencing or has experienced food insecurity during their time at Regent.

The semi-structured interviews were 30-60 minutes in length and conducted in a private space at Regent, audio-recorded, and transcribed. Given the small, tight-knit nature of the Regent community, identifying characteristics of each participant were avoided in the final write-up. Once transcribed and de-identified, the data was coded and analyzed for themes. For such a small project, there was a surprising amount of consistency among certain themes that led the data to feel saturated even after five interviews, lending credibility to the results.

### **Data Analysis**

Although no two experiences of food insecurity were the same, several clear themes emerged that together tell the story of FI for many students. The analysis moves from students’

---

<sup>13</sup> Hagedorn-Hatfield, Hood, and Hege, “A Decade of College Student Hunger,” 3; Bessey, Frank, and Williams, “Starving to Be a Student,” 116.

baseline *priorities and preferences* under ideal circumstances to the common *obstacles* that challenge their ability to meet those needs and desires. We then analyze the *impact* of these challenges on student wellbeing, the *strategies* students employ to mitigate this impact, and the *perspectives* of students as they make sense of their experience.



*Overview of dominant themes*

### **What *priorities and preferences* do students consider as they buy and prepare food?**

#### *Nutrition and Health*

When discussing their food choices each week, four out of five interviewees alluded to nutrition or eating healthy as part of their consideration. In particular, students who were parents of young children had a concern for nutrition for their whole family.

#### *"Goodness"*

Students also indicated having a high value of food that tastes good. For international and minority Western students, the cultural familiarity of food was especially important, balancing in

their eating choices adapting to dominant Western foods while seeking out familiar ingredients to recreate food from their culture.

### *Community*

Finally, several students indicated that when they think about eating, they consider more than the physical aspect of food; food is also deeply integrated with community. Student C<sup>14</sup> captured this dynamic well: “When we have good food, we are so happy. So food...not only for body, but also emotion. And also food gives us a chance to connection and fellowship.”

Recognizing that students make food choices out of more than purely “practical” considerations is important context for understanding students’ experiences, especially as the following obstacles influence the degree to which students can eat according to their baseline priorities and preferences.

### **What *obstacles* contribute to food insecurity for students (and their families)?**

#### *Finances*

Finances were a dominant theme for four out of five interviews and was typically listed as the primary obstacle students face. Students commented on their financial situation from two sides: their *low income* as students and the *high price* of groceries/other living expenses in Vancouver. Several students used the word “precarious” to describe how they felt about their financial situation at any given moment, with the occasional spike where things get really tight. Student A illustrates this kind of spike when describing a period where their financial situation became very unstable:

All the money that I had went for tuition. And then saving for rent...I didn't have much money at that time, and so I was making use of the food bank at UBC a lot. Eating the food from [the restaurant where I work] a lot...But I remember there was definitely one

---

<sup>14</sup> Student C is a married, international student with two young children at home.



or two weeks I had no money at all in my bank account. So I was just eating what I had, you know? And it was freaky. Like, scary.

This anecdote reveals that on top of paying for the cost of food, which all interviewees commented was very high, the financial situation of students is tied to paying for tuition and rent.

### *Transportation*

All interviewees highlighted what a difference transportation makes to being able to access affordable, quality food. If students don't have a car, and especially if they don't live within walking distance of a grocery store, getting groceries was described as both time consuming and inefficient. Student C described what it was like to get groceries when their family first moved to Vancouver:

After we arrived at Vancouver...there was no grocery store around the house, and we don't have a car...It was very challenging to get food. I think it takes, you know, six hours to go out and bring back.

### *Busy Schedules*

Another common obstacle, highlighted in four out of five interviews, were students' busy schedules, impacting both the time students had to dedicate toward food shopping and preparation as well as their physical and emotional energy levels. Student D<sup>15</sup> described often feeling emotionally drained as a hindrance to preparing food at home, even when food was available:

When [my spouse and I] are both tired, we both hit that...energy level of: How do I plan this? What do I cook? Do I have energy to clean up? Do I have energy to tackle this? Even though we love cooking and have a well-stocked kitchen and the techniques, it's still more of a challenge than I'd like it to be.

### *Transition to Vancouver*

---

<sup>15</sup> Student D is a married, majority Western student with no kids

On top of these obstacles, a pattern also emerged where students frequently had to go through some period of transition and “trial and error” upon arriving in Vancouver to establish new eating patterns and discover where to find affordable and—especially in the case of the international students—culturally appropriate food. Student A described the process of getting to know new, unfamiliar foods during the transition to Canada:

Finding the places were not a problem, but what kinds of things should I eat here? Because it's different...I remember eating vegetables that I didn't like and...relearning a lot of things that I like. I remember for my first months too, whenever I would meal prep it would just be rice and ground beef because I didn't know what to cook.

However, several students noted how, with time, they did find rhythms and food that worked for their budget and dietary needs, like Student B who commented, “it's been a struggle to figure out [buying affordable groceries]. But we've generally gotten into a routine. We've sort of figured out what works, and what's manageable financially and otherwise.”

Altogether, the interviews revealed that a network of obstacles—primarily finances, transportation, and busy schedules—challenges students’ abilities to acquire and prepare good food for themselves and their families. Limited finances motivated most students to work part time and prepare food at home, which contributed to the busyness of their schedules. Grocery shopping was slow and inefficient without adequate transportation, again adding time and energy pressure on students’ already busy lives, but buying a car wasn’t always financially viable. The interviews especially highlighted the vulnerability of students’ food security in their transition to Vancouver as they navigate new circumstances and learn a new food system.

### **What is the *impact* of food insecurity on students (and their families)?**

#### *Dietary shifts*

The physical impact of FI was primarily seen in students making dietary shifts to accommodate available resources. Student C noted the dietary shifts in their family’s eating to

accommodate cheaper ingredients: instead of chicken, they buy more beans; instead of fresh fish, they buy canned tuna; instead of rice native to their home country, they buy a cheaper variety of rice. While international students were more ambivalent about needing to change their diets, commenting on missing food from home, majority Western students had neutral if not positive attitudes about having their options limited by what ingredients are available from the food bank or other free resources on campus. Student E, a minority Western student, bridged these perspectives, preferring favorite dishes from their culture while also commenting,

I think [using ingredients from the food bank] kind of tests my skill in knowing my ingredients and how I can manipulate them to create something different. I think there's something satisfying about making a satisfactory or a good meal out of semi-limited ingredients.

So while students, depending in part on their cultural background, had different reactions to changed/limited ingredients, consistently students noted that their eating needed to be adapted upon living in Vancouver. While shifts in diet may not have been preferred, no students mentioned significant health consequences from poor or insufficient nutrition. As Student E reflected, “while we are not starving, I wouldn't say that we always have all the things that we'd like.”

### *Mental Health*

The consequences of FI were most felt in students' mental health, where all interviewees commented on some degree of stress or anxiety related to the provision and preparation of food. Student D noted that when trying to save on money by not eating out, even when there's no time to cook,

the energy level dips because of the lack of food. And then it turns into a crisis, an emotional health crisis or something. That's something I noticed in myself...It's like if I don't eat well, and regularly, my mental health will decrease and my sense of crisis will increase.

Student A, who went through a more acute spike of food insecurity described that experience:

When you're in debt, it's just so freakin' scary when you don't have that basic thing. Because the way you go through your day is different, and the problem is you don't know how long it's gonna last. Because you can make it through that one or two days, or three days, maybe a week. But the uncertainty of, "I don't know how long this is gonna last?" It's like a psychological threat.

Depending on a student/family's circumstances, the mental health effects of FI could be felt either as constant underlying stress or as an acute moment of crisis, but in either case, the negative impact of FI on mental health stood out as the most prominent theme among students' experiences.

### *Shame*

Related to mental health, but more in reference to the impact of FI on students' relationship to their community, two students also noted feelings of shame from utilizing free food resources. Student A shared that when their circumstances got very tight:

I think the only person I told was [one Regent friend also from my country]. Because I know [they] also go through this. But it took me a while. I didn't want to tell anyone because I was ashamed and scared. And I felt really isolated. Because for me, I never experienced [food insecurity] before. But then being here at this fancy theological school with people from all over the world, and then not having money to buy food, I felt like a failure, you know? And my mind went back to like, "Ugh if I tell anyone, people will just think of course the [person from my country] ...is starving" or something. And I couldn't get myself out of those stereotypes. And I just felt really uncomfortable letting people know that I was going through that.

These reflections reveal two layers at work, both the shame of not being able to buy food combined with the experience of being an international student. However, Western students also reflected on feeling shame about using the food bank.

Overall, the portrait that emerged indicates that food insecurity did not impact students in a negative way nutritionally, despite diets needing to adapt. The impact was felt most strongly, however, on students' mental health, at times expressing itself as shame over not being able to pay for groceries or utilizing the food bank, but more generally as stress or anxiety.

**What *strategies* are used by students to overcome barriers associated with food insecurity?**

*Covering Staples: Food Banks and Buying in Bulk*

For financial reasons, all students opted to prepare food at home rather than eating out. As such, a primary concern for students was ensuring that basic staples were on hand in their kitchens during the week. The two primary avenues for acquiring staples were through the food banks on campus and through buying in bulk. Student E estimated that by shopping at the food bank, their family saves \$150 to \$200 a month. By nature of this study's sample selection process, all interviewees currently utilize or have utilized the food banks on campus. The shared sentiment across all interviews was that these are very helpful resources for covering basic staples so that finances are freed up for other things.

The ability to buy in bulk was also helpful for covering kitchen staples but was directly tied to the question of transportation. Three students mentioned Costco being very helpful for purchasing high quality, affordable ingredients in bulk, but the ability to access this resource necessitated access to a car, as Costco is far and involves larger purchases than what can be carried by hand. Not all students had access to resources like Costco individually, but what made a big difference for one student was moving into a community house where some groceries are bought in bulk by roommates with a car.

In sum, having staples on hand, either from the food bank or bulk stores, enables students to save money by preparing meals at home and to save time meal prepping.

*Community*

Another prominent theme that appeared across all interviews was the role of community in facilitating students' access to food and information about resources. In terms of shared resources, four out of five interviewees commented that they heard about the food banks on campus by word of mouth from other students or families. Student C expressed gratitude to the Regent friend who introduced their family to the Acadia food bank, saying, "He sent me the link

to apply for Acadia food bank, and I really appreciate him for it because I didn't know that we are able to access the Acadia food.” Before being able to acquire a car of their own, Student B expressed gratitude to the friends “that had cars and would often—I mean more than occasionally—let us borrow the car to go get more groceries.” Community provided an important link connecting students to resources for getting food.

Several interviews also commented on the value of sharing meals with other students or families. This value was two-fold, addressing students' need for food physically and financially, while also being a source of valuable connection with others. Student E and their spouse, for example, have a practice of having people over, where guests either bring ingredients to cook with or a small amount of cash to help split the cost of the meal. Two students also noted the return of soup groups to Regent as being valuable both practically and relationally.

Overall, reliable access to staples through the food bank or bulk grocery stores was an important factor to save students both time and money in food preparation, but this access was often enabled through relational networks of students and families sharing information and resources. Sharing meals was also seen as a valuable practice for nourishing community in both body and heart.

### **What *perspectives* help students make sense of their experience?**

Amid the physical, mental, and social implications of FI, it was interesting to observe how students reflected on their situation spiritually, revealing both a wrestling of faith and a posture of generosity that framed their attitude towards their circumstances.

Student A brought faith into their reflections without being prompted, saying that as circumstances improved from an acute period of food insecurity, “I can only think that as a Christian, God was there doing something, because I can't pinpoint, like, just this happened, you know?” At the same time, when things were challenging: “It was like, ‘I've either made the worst

decision ever, or you [addressing God] are going to help me get out of this'." Student B shared a similar testimony of how they draw on their relationship with God when they are anxious about providing for their family:

We're told time and time again in Scripture to depend on the super abundance of God's provision and grace. And so I reflect on that quite a bit as a foil to this anxiety and fear that I experience...And the fact is, it is a huge financial investment that we're making in this season. And we're aware of that. And it's something that we consciously have done. But there's a difference, I think, to breaking open your alabaster flask to anoint the body of Christ, versus being just sick about worrying whether you'll have enough money to buy groceries. Although that's always in tension, and it has to be sort of negotiated through prayer.

Student E commented, "it is interesting to think that we are not secure in an affluent sense of the word, or in a financially stable sense of the word, but we are also pretty positive about it," recognizing that "we know that we have been taken care of, in many ways, both by people and by God." That perspective moves their family to be generous towards others: "I mean, we've been provided for. So I think that we feel like we want to provide for other people. It's a sort of reciprocal thing." Several students mentioned similarly in their interviews stories of hosting and preparing food for others, even amid the pressures of food cost and busy schedules. Amid challenging circumstances, students demonstrated a high level of hopefulness, gratitude, and generosity that shaped how they reflected upon their experience.

### **In sum**

Drawing the data together, finances, transportation, busy schedules, and difficult transitions were the greatest obstacles students faced in being able to eat freely according to their priorities and preferences. Across our sample, access to staples was the primary facilitator of increased food security, but access was notably enhanced by relational networks of students and families who shared information, resources, and meals. While the impact of food insecurity markedly shaped student's dietary patterns and caused varying levels of emotional distress,

students tended to demonstrate a hopeful posture towards their circumstances, clinging to faith in God's provision while moving in generosity towards others.

## **Discussion**

Many of this paper's findings corroborate themes in other studies of post-secondary food insecurity. Finances and busy schedules feature prominently across the literature as the primary obstacles hindering student access to food.<sup>16</sup> Likewise studies consistently highlighted the consequences of FI on students' mental health, though most other studies also noted the consequences on physical health in ways that did not feature as prominently among our sample.<sup>17</sup> One of the most noteworthy findings of this study, however, was the emphasis on community for participants, both as a priority in how students want to eat as well as a facilitator of greater food security through shared information and resources. Though not unheard of in other studies,<sup>18</sup> the value of relational networks in mitigating the impact of FI tends to be a secondary emphasis, whereas this theme was forefronted in this study's data.

Student perspectives on their circumstances reveal that there may be theological underpinnings to this increased prominence of community. Even when students were drawn toward a scarcity mindset, they held to the conviction of a God who provides abundantly, thereby moving students to have a generally positive or hopeful outlook on their situation that fostered generosity and reciprocity between students, even with limited resources. To specifically Christian contexts such as seminaries and divinity schools, this finding suggests that effective solutions to FI must consider students' theologies about God's provision. Although institutional measures like food banks are helpful resources, there is great potential within the student body

---

<sup>16</sup> Hagedorn-Hatfield, Hood, and Hege, "A Decade of College Student Hunger," 2–3.

<sup>17</sup> Hagedorn-Hatfield, Hood, and Hege, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Bessey, Frank, and Williams, "Starving to Be a Student," 117.



itself to foster a culture of generosity and reciprocity that meaningfully addresses not only the physical needs of students, but, holistically, their social, emotional, and spiritual needs as well. This finding also suggests that future research on FI should consider students' underlying beliefs about where provision comes from, as this study shows how underlying beliefs impact the way students make sense of and respond to their circumstances.

Within the Regent community, one of the most important contributions of this study is to simply raise awareness that experiences of food insecurity are present within our student body. Continuing to raise awareness around the topic of FI within Regent can only strengthen the resilience of our community since strong relational networks, as this study shows, help mitigate the impact of food insecurity. Broaching this conversation also has the potential to reduce the stigma of struggling financially in grad school, facilitating greater openness to seek support and support others. Student A said it well: "Learning now that [food insecurity] is something much bigger than [just my experience], and that lots of students go through that...it's kind of a relief, you know? Like, I'm not the only one. I'm not a failure. I'm just a student!" The difficulty of students' transitions to Vancouver highlights especially the importance of Regent—institutionally and within the student body—caring for incoming students, such as equipping them during orientation with information about food resources on campus and in the city, as well as potentially helping students without cars get connected with peers who do so they can get bulk groceries at the beginning of term.

Although this study tells the story of real challenges experienced by Regent students, it equally tells the story of a faithful God who provides daily bread for his people. And often this daily bread comes through one another. Though many challenges that contribute to food insecurity reveal larger systemic issues in the food chain or the high-stress culture of the West, this study's findings reveal that there is hope to meaningfully increase the resilience of our

student body in the face of these pressures by addressing them communally, through simple acts of generosity and mutual support.

## Bibliography

- “An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security.” Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2008. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/a1936e/a1936e00.pdf>.
- “Household Food Insecurity in Canada: Overview.” Government of Canada, 2020b. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-nutrition-surveillance/health-nutrition-surveys/canadian-community-health-survey-cchs/household-food-insecurity-canada-overview.html>.
- Bessey, Meredith, Lesley Frank, and Patricia L. Williams. “Starving to Be a Student: The Experiences of Food Insecurity among Undergraduate Students in Nova Scotia, Canada.” *Canadian Food Studies / La Revue Canadienne Des Études Sur l'alimentation* 7, no. 1 (July 12, 2020): 107–25. <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v7i1.375>.
- Calco, G., M. Egan, N. Disher, D. Stadler, and J. Demunter. “Addressing Food Insecurity Among Graduate-Level Health Professional Students.” *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 2021 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo, 121, no. 9, Supplement (September 1, 2021): A77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2021.06.201>.
- Hagedorn-Hatfield, Rebecca L., Lanae B. Hood, and Adam Hege. “A Decade of College Student Hunger: What We Know and Where We Need to Go.” *Frontiers in Public Health* 10 (February 25, 2022): 837724. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.837724>.
- Hanbazaza, Mahitab, Geoff D. C. Ball, Maryam Kebbe, Anna P. Farmer, Noreen D. Willows, Arnaldo Perez, and Katerina Maximova. “Food Insecurity among International Post-Secondary Students Studying on a Canadian Campus: A Qualitative Descriptive Study.” *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 51, no. 2 (2021): 33–45.
- Hattangadi, Nayantara, Ellen Vogel, Linda J. Carroll, and Pierre Côté. “‘Everybody I Know Is Always Hungry...But Nobody Asks Why’: University Students, Food Insecurity and

- Mental Health.” *Sustainability* 11, no. 6 (January 2019): 1571.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su11061571>.
- Kozicky, Sara. “Literature and Best Practices Review : Measuring Food Insecurity at the University of British Columbia.” Student Research Report. Vancouver, BC: UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Sustainability Program, February 2019. <https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0386713>.
- Mallinson, Daniel J. “Food Insecurity among Public Administration Graduate Students.” *Teaching Public Administration* 39, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 67–83.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0144739420935964>.
- Nikolaus, Cassandra J., Brenna Ellison, and Sharon M. Nickols-Richardson. “College Students’ Interpretations of Food Security Questions: Results from Cognitive Interviews.” *BMC Public Health* 19 (October 11, 2019): 1282. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7629-9>.
- Nugent, Mary A. “Journeys To The Food Bank: Exploring The Experience Of Food Insecurity Among Postsecondary Students.” Master of Science, University of Lethbridge, 2011.
- Paez-Varas, Claudia, and Gail Hammond. “Food Insecurity on Campus: A Community-Engaged Case Study with Student-Led Families at the University of British Columbia.” *Canadian Food Studies / La Revue Canadienne Des Études Sur l’alimentation* 9, no. 3 (October 17, 2022): 103–23. <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v9i3.576>.
- Pember, Sarah E, Stuart L Usdan, Kelly W Guyotte, David A Birch, Jen Nickelson, and Adam P Knowlden. “‘It’s (Just) Grad School’: Effects of Normative Influence on the Healthy Eating Behavior & Intentions of Graduate Students.” *The Health Educator* 51, no. 1 (2019).
- Power, Elaine, Julie Dietrich, Zoe Walter, and Susan Belyea. “‘I Don’t Want to Say I’m Broke’: Student Experiences of Food Insecurity at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario,

- Canada.” *Canadian Food Studies / La Revue Canadienne Des Études Sur l’alimentation* 8, no. 1 (April 22, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v8i1.423>.
- Reid, Colleen, Lorraine Greaves, and Sandra Kirby. *Experience Research Social Change: Critical Methods, Third Edition*. 3rd edition. University of Toronto Press, 2017.
- Reynolds, Erica, Christine Johnson, Jennifer A. Jamieson, and Hannah Mawhinney. “Prevalence and Correlates of Food Insecurity among Students Attending a Small, Rural Canadian University.” *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research* 79, no. 3 (September 2018): 125–28. <https://doi.org/10.3148/cjdpr-2018-004>.
- Silverthorn, Drew. “Hungry for Knowledge: Assessing the Prevalence of Student Food Insecurity on Five Canadian Campuses.” Toronto: Meal Exchange, 2016. <http://mealexchange.com>.
- Soldavini, Jessica, Maureen Berner, and Julia Da Silva. “Rates of and Characteristics Associated with Food Insecurity Differ among Undergraduate and Graduate Students at a Large Public University in the Southeast United States.” *Preventive Medicine Reports* 14 (February 25, 2019): 100836. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2019.100836>.
- Stanfar, Karen, Deborah Cohen, Rebecca Brody, Riva Touger-Decker, and Joachim Sackey. “Exploring the Characteristics Associated With Food Insecurity Experienced by Graduate Students in a School of Health Professions.” *Current Developments in Nutrition* 6, no. Suppl 1 (June 14, 2022): 176. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdn/nzac051.092>.
- Yee, Georgia, Morgan Lorenz, Shivani Mehta, Andres Chloei, and Edward Hannah. “2020 Academic Experience Survey Report.” Alma Mater Society, The University of British Columbia, 2020. [https://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020\\_aes\\_v2.pdf](https://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020_aes_v2.pdf).