

5-3-2020

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Recommended Citation

Flores, Oriana and Olson, Kelly, "Establish Training and Resource Initiatives for Northern Illinois University's Displaced Students" (2020). *Honors Capstones*. 489.
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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Establish Training and Resource Initiatives for Northern Illinois University's
Displaced Students

A Capstone Submitted to the

University Honors Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With Honors

Department Of

Family and Consumer Sciences

By

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DeKalb, Illinois

Spring 2020

Establish Training and Resource Initiatives for Northern Illinois University's Displaced Students
Senior Capstone
Friday, May 1, 2020

By Oriana Flores and Kelly Olson

When I attended the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Annual Conference in March 2019, I sat in on a presentation that changed the way I viewed student support services. The presentation was on homeless students on college campuses and the need for integrated services. I then asked myself how I can support NIU's displaced and food insecure students on our campus. I was fortunate enough to have my mentor, Renique Kersh connect me to Kelly Wesener-Michael who then introduced and connected me to Kelly Olson. We both agreed that defining homelessness and developing a literature review guide was our first step to develop best practices for Northern Illinois University.

Aim

- To define homelessness and displacement on college campuses
- To develop initiatives to create a program that includes response protocols for Northern Illinois University's displaced student population and food insecurity
- To use the initiatives in the Center for Student Assistance, which is an emerging office within Student Affairs at Northern Illinois University

Purpose

- To research what other universities and institutions are doing for their displaced students and how they are supportive
- To develop program initiatives and best practices for NIU to follow
- To establish training for faculty and staff on the issue of homelessness and to create a resource list for displaced students in DeKalb County
- To create protocols for students experiencing displacement and the necessary steps for best practices to impact the functionality of the Center for Student Assistance

Research Methods

- Developing a literature review guide and bench marking several institutions and their case management for displaced students and food insecurity services

Results, from the Training and Resource Initiatives

- Developed a professional development training PowerPoint for faculty and staff to discuss and review the literature on homelessness , displacement, and food insecurity on college campuses
- Completed a beta training with the College of Health and Human Sciences Academic Advising office
- Researched what other universities and institutions are doing for their displaced students and how they are supportive
- Created program initiatives and best practices for NIU
- Created a resource list for displaced students in DeKalb County
- Reviewed protocols for students experiencing displacement and identified the necessary steps for best practices to impact functionality of the Center for Student Assistance

Discussion

Literature shows that displaced children go hungry more than twice the rate of other children and are twice as likely to repeat a grade (Berkowitz, 2002). Food and displacement can undermine academic success (El Zein et al., 2018). Research has also shown that students experiencing these insecurities show reports of poor-physical health, depression, and higher stress (Bruening et al., 2018). Rates of basic needs are higher for students who are marginalized, including African-Americans, students identifying as LGBTQ, and students who are independent from their parents (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019). Developing program initiatives for NIU students' experiencing these barriers will assist in their needs. Being displaced can affect a student's health, well-being, and academic success (United States Interagency, 2018). By creating a

resource list in DeKalb County, this can aid students' needs. Post-secondary education is crucial for ending the cycle of homelessness and improving the overall health and stability of the students' (School House Connection, 2019). Best practices and training for faculty and staff will assist in intervention.

Conclusions

The outcome of this research and the following literature review training guide will be included in NIU's Center for Student Assistance as training and evidence of how displacement and food insecurity affects student success on college campuses. It will be used to create protocols for students experiencing displacement and food insecurity. Protocols are essential in taking the necessary steps to establish best practices and positively impact the functionality of the Center for Student Assistance.

Synopsis

The literature has shown that students experiencing basic needs insecurity such as food and housing, can affect their well-being, health, and academic success. Food insecurity along with housing insecurity are basic needs for students. Food insecurity can best be described as not "having sufficient food, experiencing hunger as a result of running out of food (and being unable to afford more), and anxiety about inquiring food" (Hallet et al., 2018). Some factors that contribute to food insecurity are poverty, high housing and utility costs, unemployment, medical and health care costs, and transportation costs (Bruening et al., 2016). Northern Illinois University has our wonderful Huskie Food Pantry that allows our students to gather food supplies for free.

Homelessness and the student experience tend to be invisible to policymakers and practitioners (Hallett et al., 2015). This is why it is critical that we inform Northern Illinois University's faculty and staff on homelessness and the student experience as well as food insecurity. For our research purposes, we defined displacement as an applicable term to homeless children and youth. It is when an "individual lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (Ringer, 2015). There are multiple educational risks associated with homelessness, such as, poor attendance, frequent mobility, traumatic stress, and acute medical conditions (Stronge, 2000). Students who experience housing insecurity often see post-secondary education as a source of hope for their future and stability. There is a great need for integrated services on college campuses such as developing ways to assist with housing, food, clothing, and counseling services. What that looks like for NIU is being created in our Center for Student Assistance and having multiple point-people that students can contact for information and support. This would mean that a student would not need to repeat and disclose their situation every time they meet a new person on campus.

Strategies for Creating and Sustaining Campus-Based Programs

- Academic advising
 - Going through a training of literature review of informing what homeless / displacement / food insecurity looks like and the impact it has on students
 - Developing a resource list of current housing and food banks / pantries around the DeKalb County
- Emergency aid
- Food bank / pantry
 - Huskie Food Pantry
- Emergency housing
 - Temporary or emergency housing options
- 1:1 Case Management Advising

- Develop an individualized plan of action and provide appropriate resources and referrals for basic needs and academic / mental support
- Single point of contact
- Coordinate basic needs referrals for students

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