The Affordability Task Force: Making Campus Change Happen Through Data and Advocacy

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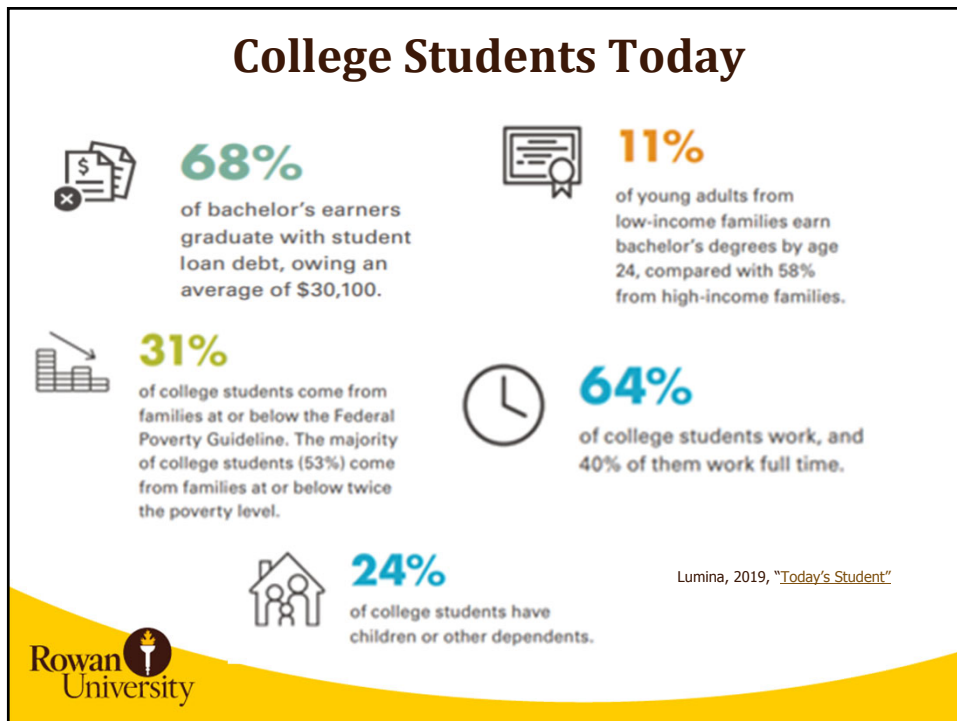
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Agenda

- Affordability of higher education & student loan debt
- The role of the institution
- Rowan University: Affordability Task Force
  - Data collection in multiple areas
  - Campus advocacy process
- New initiatives campus-wide
- Bring the conversation to your campus

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College Students Today

68% of bachelor's earners graduate with student loan debt, owing an average of $30,100.

11% of young adults from low-income families earn bachelor's degrees by age 24, compared with 58% from high-income families.

31% of college students come from families at or below the Federal Poverty Guideline. The majority of college students (53%) come from families at or below twice the poverty level.

64% of college students work, and 40% of them work full time.

24% of college students have children or other dependents.

Lumina, 2019, "Today's Student"

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Campus Affordability Issues

- College affordability – major determinant of student retention and completion
- What is the true cost of attendance?
  - Tuition and fees – 40% at Rowan University
- What are the policies, practices, and procedures that have an impact on affordability?

  Can we change them?
- How to raise awareness?

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Brief Context of Rowan University

- Public research institution in southern NJ - 19,500 students
- Rapid expansion: enrollment, research, diversity, & more
- Four strategic mission pillars:
  - Quality
  - Access
  - Affordability
  - Economic Engine
- Mascot is the "Prof"
- Student Success Infrastructure

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"Beyond Financial Aid": Lumina Foundation
Institutional self-assessment and guide
to support low-income students

5 **strategies to increase the success of low income students**

1. Know your low income students
2. Review internal processes and organize support
3. Build internal and external partnerships
4. Optimize students' use of services
5. Create a culture of support

BEYOND FINANCIAL AID

How colleges can strengthen the financial stability of low-income students and improve student outcomes

Lumina

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- Completed Lumina Foundation's Beyond Financial Aid Self-Assessment

- Working group of Rowan students, faculty, staff, and administrators
- Study Rowan's affordability-related services, programs, and policies
- Implement strategies to support affordability; raising awareness of existing resources and creating new ones.
- Deliverables & sustainability
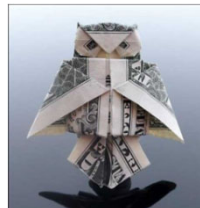
- Data-driven decisions on steps to drive down the cost of college

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Subcommittees of the Affordability Task Force

Academic Subcommittee
- Review of the BFA Self-Assessment, student data, textbook issues, course requirements, Financial Wellness course

Communication Planning Subcommittee
- Visual guide for navigating services, Financial Literacy Month, Rowan resources webpage

Critical Services Subcommittee
- Food and housing insecurity, transportation, health care, child care, alternate payment options, emergency funding sources

Communication Planning

Academic

Critical Services
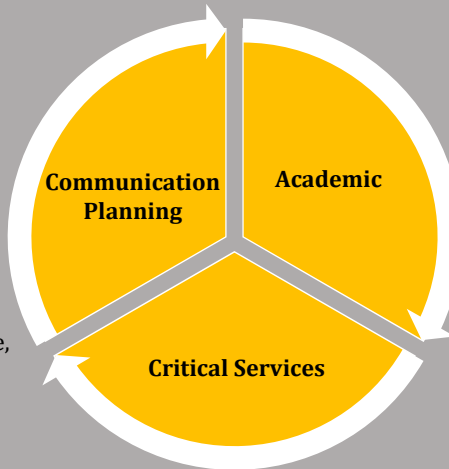
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Data Driven:

Surveyed students to better understand their affordability issues and financial well–being

18 questions:
housing, food insecurity, course materials, employment status, etc.

Email invitation to 6,167 students
498 respondents/8%

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Fast Facts & Findings

○ 34% of Rowan students are low-income as defined by Pell eligibility

○ 15-20% indicated significant food insecurity

○ 76% indicated financial barriers as an obstacle to success at Rowan

○ 62% indicated cost was "very" or "most" important in housing selection

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○ 63% are "very" or "extremely" concerned about having the resources to complete college.

○ 37% did not purchase all required course material, with 85% citing "cost" as a reason

Instagram: Rowan University

○ 64% are working, of which 41% are working 21-40+ hours/week

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COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

Four-Year MYTH
Make college more affordable.

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COST OF EACH ADDITIONAL YEAR

$22,826 in cost of attendance

+$45,327 in lost wages

$68,153 total for each student seeking bachelor's degree

Complete College America, 2014

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Academic Subcommittee

| Textbook Alternative Program (TAP) | Financial Wellness Course |

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Textbook Alternative Program (TAP)

- Student Survey (spring 2016)
  - 37% of participants indicated not purchasing all of their course materials
- Analysis of textbook costs of 50 randomly-selected first-year students (fall 2016)
- Surveyed all faculty (spring 2017)
  - Textbooks important for success (95%)
  - Concern over costs

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Textbook Alternative Program (TAP)

- TAP - Program for faculty interested in redesigning their course materials
- Offered five $2,000 grants in 2018
- Projected to save students over $116,000 in first year
- Second year of program underway
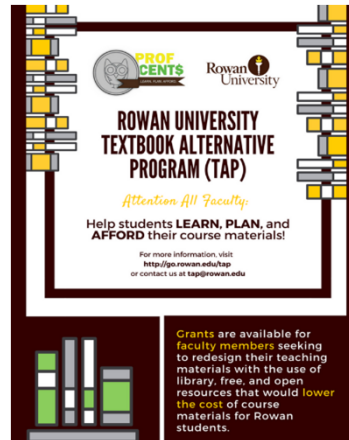
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Financial Wellness Course

- Help students to understand, manage, and plan for their college years and beyond
- Available to all students
- 2 credit course
- OERs and more to create content

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Communication Planning Subcommittee

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Affordability Task Force 2019 Preview

IN THIS ISSUE

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Textbook Alternative Program

The SHOP

National Financial Literacy Month
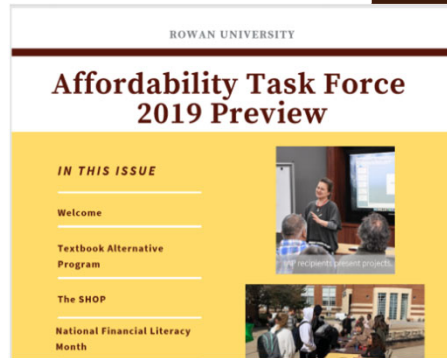
- Rowan University Resource Website
- Student Open Forum
- Faculty and Staff Open Forums

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Overall vision: Communication Planning

- Distribute information and bolster presence of the Affordability Task
  - Host information sessions
  - Engage students through workshops
  - Provide digital resources for improved accessibility
  - Work with on-campus departments and organizations to promote activities
  - Design and execute events surrounding National Financial Literacy Month

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The ProfCent$ Brand & Site

- Developed in January 2018 to replace earlier "University Resources" label
- Website originally designed in 2015 https://sites.rowan.edu/student-success/profcents/index.html
- Housed within Student Success Programs

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Guides for faculty

How to help your students afford classes and college life

We all want to help our students achieve a Rowan University degree. One of the most common barriers to success is student ability to afford tuition and the college experience. Here are some helpful ways that we can all help students graduate and minimize debt.

Textbook costs:
On average, students spend an additional $250 out of pocket for textbooks each semester. Here are five things you can do to help reduce these costs.

1. Order textbooks as early as possible from the bookstore. The earlier you request books, the more opportunity Barnes & Noble has to order used books from the national stockpile or buy books available to rent.
2. Put books on reserve in the library. Copies of course textbooks can be placed on reserve for a semester at the Campbell Library for students to use within the building. Some common texts, such as stylebooks, may already be available.
3. Consider going book-less. Supplementing your course with digital readings may help reduce the number of books students need to purchase. The library subscribes to over 350 databases of articles, images, data, and maps that can link from your Blackboard or Canvas courseware.
4. Email students before the start of class to advise them on what books are recommended or required. This provides students time to order from discount online sellers before the start of the semester.
5. Work with other professors to use books for more than one course. Some departments may be able to use a single textbook for multiple classes, thus reducing student costs over a longer period.
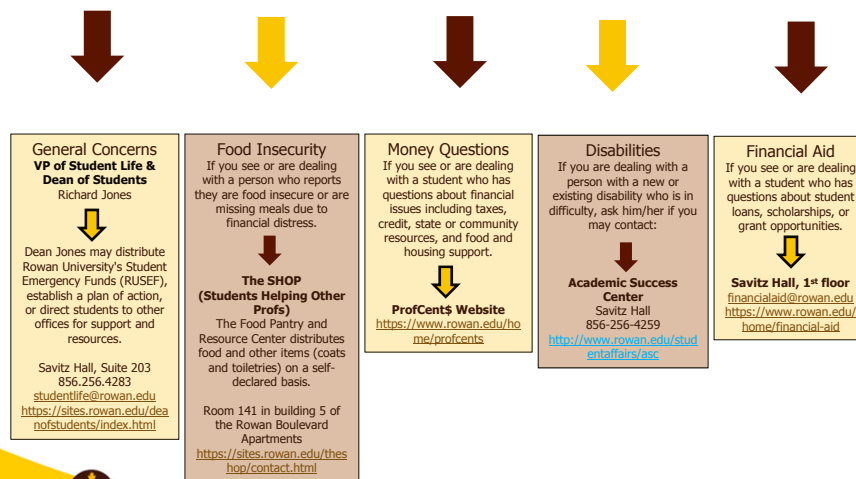
Other ideas:
1. Get to know student resources on and off campus. The "ProfCent$" (https://www.rowan.edu/home/profcents) website can direct faculty and students to a variety of affordability related resources ranging from academic services and financial assistance to computer lab locations, free tax help, and cost-saving transportation alternatives.
2. Encourage students to apply for scholarships and financial aid. Email your students information on upcoming relevant scholarships in your field to help reduce tuition costs.
3. Reach out to students who are struggling. Encourage your students to seek help through tutoring, academic coaching, or speaking with advisors regarding strategies for success or evaluating withdrawal options.
4. Alert students of minimum grade requirements to avoid confusion at the end of the semester. Passing grades differ between classes, so reminding students about the minimum requirements may prevent students from paying for courses more than once.
5. Use RSN Starfish to alert students and advisers of poor grades. This will help prevent students from failing and paying for the same course twice.

- Distributed through
  - Visits at department meetings
  - New Faculty Orientation
  - Faculty Senate Updates
  - 2019 Preview Newsletter
  - Summer Retreats
  - Faculty Center

- Emphasizes *recognition* & *assistance*

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When a student tells you they have financial difficulties…

General Concerns
VP of Student Life & Dean of Students
Richard Jones

Dean Jones may distribute Rowan University's Student Emergency Funds (RUSEF), establish a plan of action, or direct students to other offices for support and resources.

Savitz Hall, Suite 203
856.256.4283
studentlife@rowan.edu
https://sites.rowan.edu/deanofstudents/index.html

Food Insecurity
If you see or are dealing with a person who reports they are food insecure or are missing meals due to financial distress.

The SHOP (Students Helping Other Profs)
The Food Pantry and Resource Center distributes food and other items (coats and toiletries) on a self-declared basis.

Room 141 in building 5 of the Rowan Boulevard Apartments
https://sites.rowan.edu/theshop/contact.html

Money Questions
If you see or are dealing with a student who has questions about financial issues including taxes, credit, state or community resources, and housing support.

ProfCent$ Website
https://www.rowan.edu/home/profcents

Disabilities
If you are dealing with a person with a new or existing disability who is in difficulty, ask him/her if you may contact:

Academic Success Center
Savitz Hall
856-256-4259
http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/asc

Financial Aid
If you see or are dealing with a student who has questions about student loans, scholarships, or grant opportunities.

Savitz Hall, 1st floor
financialaid@rowan.edu
https://www.rowan.edu/home/financial-aid

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National Financial Literacy Month

- Resource Fair
- Socratic Dialogue
- Daily/Weekly tips on social media accounts
- Themed Workshops
    (e.g. Extreme Couponing)

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Campus Partnerships

- Public Relations Student Society of America
- Student Government Association
- Writing Arts Department
- Faculty Center
- Commuter Student Association
- ProfTalks

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Critical Services Subcommittee

Fall 2016: Food Insecurity

✓ Awareness sessions to campus community, board of trustees, student groups, campus community

✓ 1000 signatures obtained by Student Government Association's campaign for a food pantry

✓ SGA allocated $30,000 of operating budget to start up the food pantry

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✓ Testified at the NJ Senate Health and Higher Education Committee on food insecurity on college campuses

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The SHOP
Students Helping Other Profs
On Campus Food Pantry & Resource Center
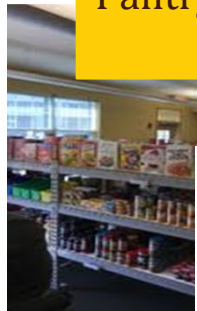
Opened March 2017
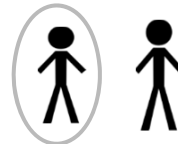
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Additional Research

- Student Hunger on Campus (SHOC)
- Online survey (November, 2017)
- All 14,000 University undergraduate students 18 or over
- 2055 (15%) responses

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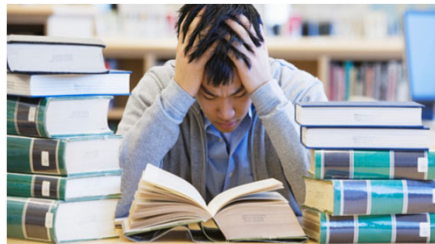
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SHOC Survey Key Findings

1. About *one in two* (48%) Rowan undergraduate students experiences **food insecurity**

1. About ***three in ten*** (31%) undergraduate students face **"very low" food security**

1. Almost *one in ten* students reported that they *"did not eat for a whole day"* because money was short, some several times over the last 30 days

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Services Provided

-Non-perishable food, personal care items, school supplies, feminine hygiene products, clothing
-Resources
-One on One meeting

THE shop
EST. 2017

✓ **Design:** Grocery-style shopping model

✓ **Food Supply:** 1 week per visit

✓ **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables**

✓ **Nutritional tip inserts** placed in every bag.

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Instagram: Rowan University

Partnerships, Fundraising & "Food"raising

o New Student Orientation
o Stuff the Bus
o Student Government Association
o Personal donations
o Gourmet Dining
o Financial Donations $27,000+
o Alumni Association Finals Dinner
o Student Center Donation Station

o People for People – Coats
o Church donations
o Local bread company
o ShopRite Food Store
o Culinary Ventures – snack vendor
o Walgreens
o Thy Kingdom Crumb

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The SHOP Data Tracking

✓ Google Doc Intake Form-
    ✓ Anonymous
    ✓ Services desired (food, clothing, resources)
    ✓ Frequency of visits
    ✓ Survey students experience
✓ Banner System-Admission type
✓ Financial Aid -Income level /household size

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The SHOP Activity March 2017 - March 2019
2158 visits; 706 unique students

"Hungry."

"I'm homeless and need food for the summer."

"I could not afford a meal plan, I dropped it after my freshman year. **I have been eating once a day.**"

"Due to financial hardship, I **downgraded my meal plan** down to 7 meals per week. When it runs out, **The SHOP** provides and saves me money and **prevents me from starving.**"

"**I was hungry and tired of not being able to eat as much as I should.**"

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The SHOP Data
March 2017- March 2019

Top reasons students visit The SHOP:
- Ran out of food/hungry
- Can't afford food; not enough money to eat
- Meal Plan: can't afford/ downgraded/ran out of swipes/do not have one

Type of need:
- **68% Short Term (2-4 days)**
- 17% Between Meals (snacks, 1-2 days)
- 15% Long Term (5 -7 days)

Residence Type:
- 60% live on campus
- 27% live off campus without parents
- 10% live off campus with parents
- 2% other
- 1% homeless

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Next Steps:
Future Food Insecurity Initiatives

#HungerActionMonth

http://feedwashington.org/blog/

✓**Meal Swipe Donations**
✓**Unused catered donations**
✓**Continuously Seek Support/Allies**
✓**Refrigeration & Refrigeration stations-Commuters**

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Engaging the whole campus

- Inclusive Affordability Task Force
- Inform constituencies & enable participation:
  - Student Government Association
  - Senior administration
  - Faculty & staff
  - Board of Trustees
- Collect and share the data and the story
- Tie to the mission of the institution
- Address scalability & sustainability

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Questions?

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Thank you!

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Helpful Links

Complete College America: https://completecollege.org/
Complete College America, *The Four Year Myth* https://completecollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/4-Year-Myth.pdf

Lumina Foundation, *Beyond Financial Aid*:
https://www.luminafoundation.org/resources/beyond-financial-aid
Lumina Foundation, *Today's Student*:
https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/today-s-student.pdf

Rowan's ProfCent$: https://sites.rowan.edu/student-success/profcents/index.html
Rowan's Textbook Alternative Program: https://sites.rowan.edu/student-success/tap/index.html
Rowan's Food Pantry and Resource Center, The SHOP:
https://sites.rowan.edu/theshop/

College & University Food Bank Alliance: https://sites.temple.edu/cufba/
The Hope Center for College, Community, & Justice: https://hope4college.com/

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