



Pennsylvania
Department of Education



Introducing PA EmpowerU

Pennsylvania Postsecondary Learners
Essential Supports for Success
October 21, 2025



Welcome & Warm-Up

The Power of PA EmpowerU

- Expertise across Keystone support areas
- Decades of collective expertise
- Diversity of students and staff experiences

Please answer in one-word replies in Chat:

What area of students' essential needs do you feel most equipped to support?



Word Cloud Generated from Attendees





Summary Agenda



Welcome & Introductions



Orient to PA EmpowerU Resources



Spotlight on Campus Leaders, Staff, and Students



Opportunities & Next Steps

Practitioners and Student Leaders

- **Leanne Lenz** Senior Associate
Director Student Care & Advocacy
Penn State University
- **Vicki Van Hise**, Assistant Vice
President for Holistic Support and
Engagement, ADA/504 Coordinator,
Deputy Title IX Coordinator for
Accessibility, Allied Health and
Nursing at HACC
- **Dr. Courtney Allen**, Director of
Community Standards & Student
Engagement, Deputy Title IX
Coordinator for Students at HACC
- **Ralph Godbolt** Executive Director of
the Office of Access and Success and
Director of Diversity, Retention and
Outreach, Commonwealth University
- **Hillary Saylor Schulze**, MPA Director
of Student Financial Services
Counseling, Alvernia University



- **Natalie Dao**, Master's in Public
Health with a concentration in
Health Management and Policy,
and a certificate in LGBTQ+
Health, Drexel University
- **Angela Cirelli**, 4+1 Public Health
Student in Health Policy &
Management, Minors in Spanish &
Social Justice, Mental Well-Being
Program Assistant, Temple
University
- **Alex Hazeley**, Legal Studies Major,
Criminal Justice/Business
Administration Minor, Blue Jay
Ambassador, Ubuntu Coordinator,
Elizabethtown College



Pennsylvania
Department of Education



Orientation to Resources

Context and navigation to access resources across
the Keystones for PA students' success

PA Student Basic Needs Survey 2023-25



Basic Needs Insecure: 49%

- Of survey respondents experiences at least one of the following: food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness

Food Insecure: 35%

- Of survey respondents experienced limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire such food in a socially acceptable manner in the prior 30 days

Housing Insecure: 35%

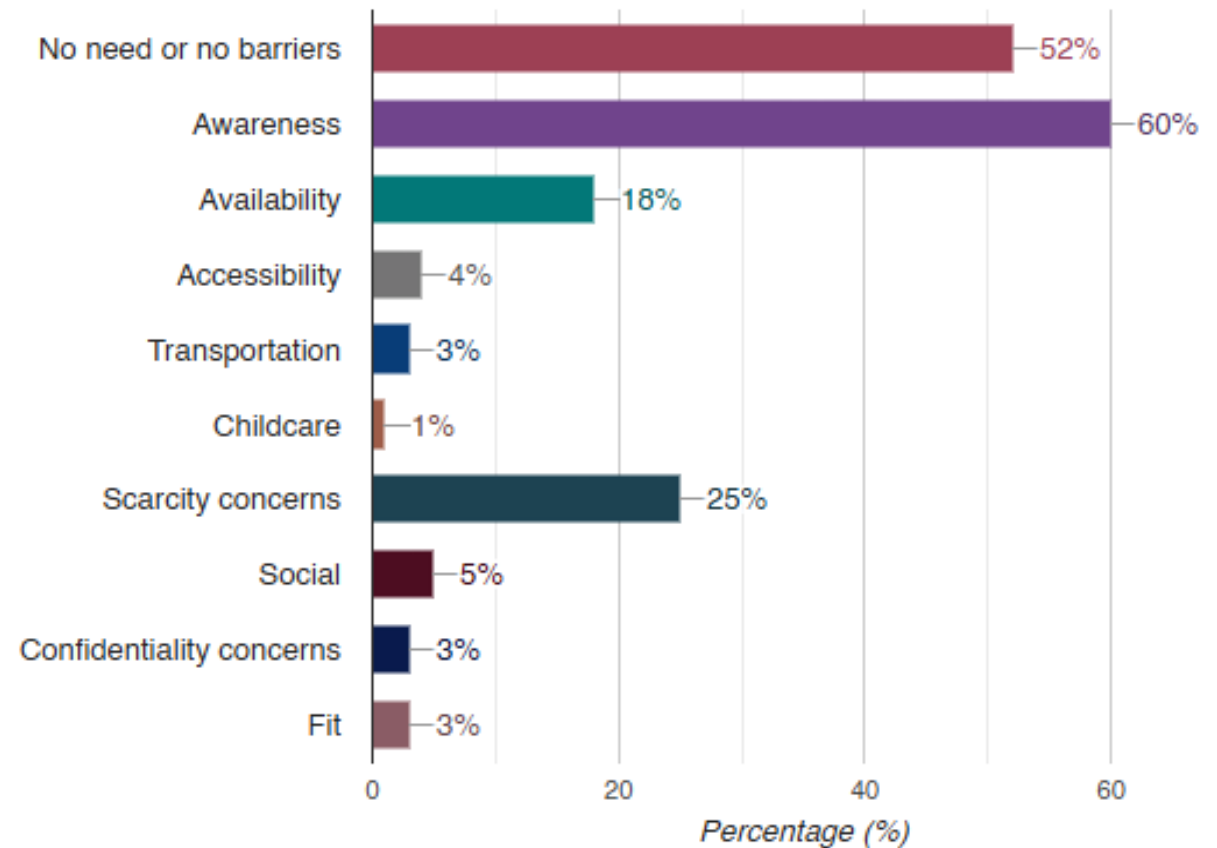
- Of survey respondents experienced one or more challenges that prevented them from having a safe, affordable, and consistent place to live in the previous year

Homelessness: 9%

- Of survey respondents did not have a fixed, regular, and adequate place to live at some point during the previous year



Barriers to Use of Campus Supports





PA EmpowerU

Resources for Pennsylvania Collegiate Basic Needs

[PA EmpowerU Resources for Institutions & Administrators →](#)



PA EmpowerU for Students

Basic Needs Resources for
students via keystones and
by institutional offerings.

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[Data and Reporting](#) >

[Resources](#) ✓

[Application and Technical
Assistance](#) >

[Diplomas and Transcripts](#)

[Education Acronyms](#)

[Family/Caregiver Resources](#)

Whether you're a freshman just beginning their post-secondary educational journey, an adult balancing family, work, and school, or you're looking for some additional resources to get you through the semester, your educational journey is unique. In recognition of this, PA EmpowerU is working to support all of Pennsylvania's learners by connecting them with the resources they need.



Mental



Financial Aid

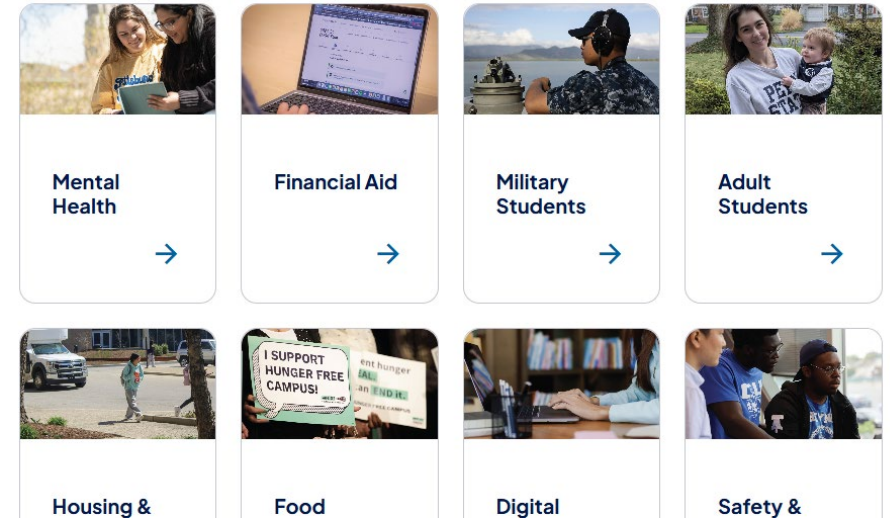


Military



Adult

PA EmpowerU Keystones for Students



PA EMPOWERU

Mental Health Resources

You are not alone, resources are available around the clock to connect you to someone who can help.

[Mental Health Resources for Institutional Leaders →](#)



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CRISIS TEXT LINE

THE
TREVOR
PROJECT

988 | SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

PA EmpowerU Student Resource Bank

Resources by School

College of Technology



Campus Name	Service Type	Link
Johnson College	Adult Student Needs	Johnson College Academic Advising Center
Johnson College	Adult Student Needs	Johnson College Academic Resource Center
Johnson College	Adult Student Needs	Johnson College Parenting Student Resources
Johnson College	Financial	Johnson College Career Services
Johnson College	Financial	Johnson College Financial Aid
Johnson College	Financial	Johnson College Scholarships
Johnson College	General	Johnson College Community Hub
Johnson College	Mental Health	Johnson College Counseling Services
Johnson College	Safety & Belonging	Johnson College Disability Services
Johnson College	Safety & Belonging	Johnson College Diversity and Inclusion
Johnson College	Safety & Belonging	Johnson College Veterans Student Services
Johnson College	Safety & Belonging	Johnson College Women in Industry
Johnson College	Digital Equity	Johnson College Help Desk

PA EMPOWERU

Resources for Institutions

EmpowerU Resources for Students →



PA EmpowerU for Institutional Leaders

A professional network for ongoing learning and sharing resources and best practices in support of PA students' essential needs.

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Diplomas and Transcripts

Education Acronyms

Family/Caregiver Resources

Policies Acts and Laws >

PDE Initiatives

PA EmpowerU

Career Ready PA

Family and Community Engagement Program (FACE)

Advancing Education Together Summit



Campaigns



Designations



Grants



- Mental Health →
- Financial Aid →
- Military Students →
- Adult Students →

PA EmpowerU Keystones For Institutional Leaders

	Mental Health
	Financial Aid
	Military Students
	Adult Students
	Housing & Transport
	Food Resources
	Digital Access
	Safety & Belongin



Mental Health Resources for Institutional Leaders

You are not alone, resources are available around the clock to connect you to someone who can help.

[Mental Health Resources for Students →](#)



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Policies Acts and Laws >

PDE Initiatives v

Thinking strategically about Mental Health

- What supports are already on your campus and how can you scale them?
- What does immediate, supportive care look like for a student or employee in crisis?
 - How can you decrease wait times to zero for those in immediate need?
- Are you a Jed Campus? If not, how can you become one?
- Do faculty list resources to the counseling center or mental health app on their syllabi?
- Are there positions on campus that could or should be created to support students' mental health such as a counselor-in-residence?

PA Cares Designation

[PA Cares](#) was established by Act 110 of 2018 recognizing that institutions of higher education should have a clear suicide prevention plan on campus with



PA EmpowerU Institutional Resource Programs



Campaigns



Designations



Grants



Pennsylvania Hunger-Free Campus Initiative

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Diplomas and Transcripts

Education Acronyms

Family/Caregiver Resources

Policies Acts and Laws >

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PA EmpowerU

CareerReadyPA

Over one-third of students know someone who dropped out of college due to food insecurity during the pandemic¹. Roughly 52% of students who faced food or housing insecurity in 2020 did not apply for support because they did not know how². Colleges and universities across the country are taking steps to address these issues so students can focus on their education instead of where to find their next meal.

The Office of the First Lady, Mrs. Lori Shapiro, fully endorses the PA Hunger-Free Campus Initiative, which began in 2022. In 2023–24, the work continues to build a coalition of colleges and universities focused on addressing hunger and other basic needs for their students; creating opportunities for connection among student hunger advocates; providing resources and strategies for campuses; and supporting opportunities to apply for grants related to addressing food insecurity.

Pennsylvania colleges and universities that are taking the steps to address student hunger are [invited to apply for the PA Hunger-Free Campus Designation Certification Form](#). Applications are now being accepted on a quarterly basis. The deadlines for submission are as follows:

- December 31, 2025

Institutions that achieve this designation will:

- Receive a certificate of recognition from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- Receive public recognition through placement on the *PA Hunger-Free Campus* website with a statement indicating that the campus is committed to supporting the health and well-being of students and is part of the collective effort to raise awareness and assistance for food insecurity.



[Register for PA FAFSA Go! |
Department of Education |
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

FAFSA Go! Unlock Dollars for PA Students

- Up to \$7,395 in Pell Grants
- Up to \$5,750 in PA State Grants
- PHEAA [Special Programs](#) such as Ready to Succeed and PA TIP
- Federal and State Work Study Dollars
- Many Scholarships and Institutional Aid Programs
- Federal Student Loans: Best Rates & Repayment Options



Parent Pathways Grant Program

Provides funding to institutions to directly support the persistence of parenting students in the form of tuition assistance, emergency funding, and wrap-around service supports.



GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- Inform stakeholders and state policymakers of the most significant barriers parenting students face to staying enrolled and completing their postsecondary education.
- Recommend state policy changes to support parenting students.
- Educate state policymakers and institutions on the need for collecting better data on parenting students and the challenges they face.
- For member schools to learn about and address the unique needs of parenting students and establish strategies to communicate the benefits and programs available to them at their institution and in the surrounding community.

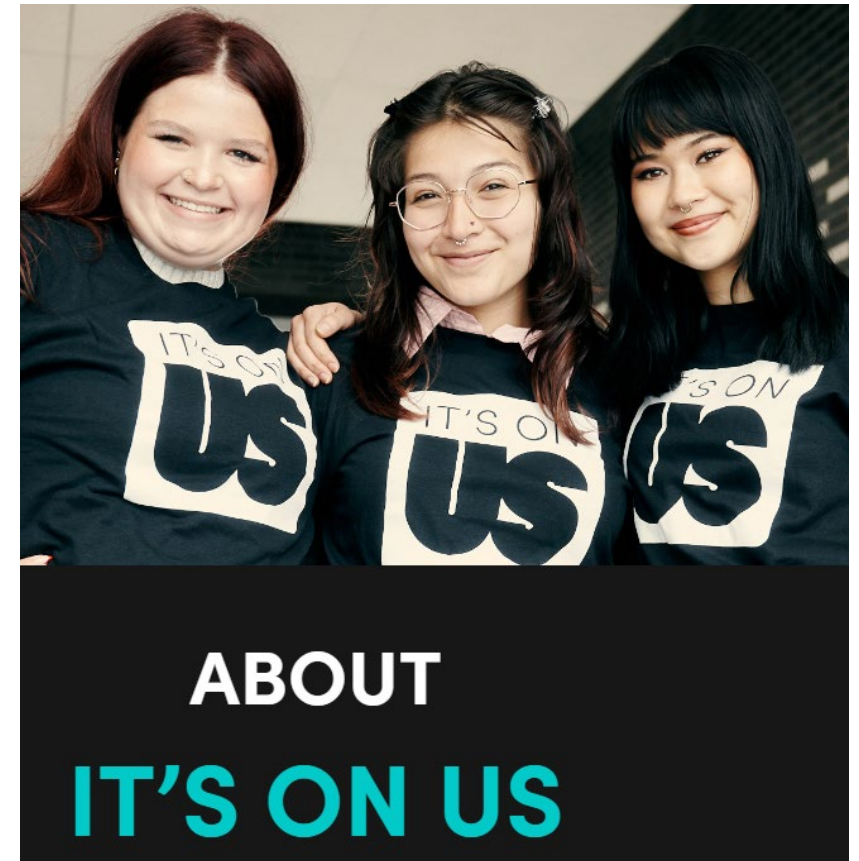
PA Hunger-Free Campus Initiative

- Coalition of colleges and universities focused on addressing hunger on their campuses
- Supportive network among student hunger advocates
- Resources and evidence-based strategies for campuses
- Competitive campus-based grant program related to addressing food insecurity via:
 - *Increased access to healthy food*
 - *Increased awareness of available resources*
 - *Partnerships to increase & improve food access*



It's On Us, PA

- A statewide campaign that invites all Pennsylvanians to protect students from sexual violence.
- Supported by Gov. Josh Shapiro and education leaders across the commonwealth, **including school superintendents and college presidents across 100 PA institutions.**
- Since 2016, **nearly \$8.7 million grants awarded for institutions to implement strategies** on their campuses to address the goals of Governor Shapiro's It's On Us PA campaign.





PA CARES Initiative

- Serves as designation under [Act 110 of 2018](#)
- Annual submission of mental health and suicide prevention plans certified by PA postsecondary institutions.
- Include evidence-backed criteria across prevention, intervention and postvention.
- Student & staff resources, exemplary plans, technical assistance, and connection to statewide and national networks.
- Posted on [PA CARES web page](#).

**Connect
Assess
Respond
Encourage
Support**

Making student mental health a priority

Certified
CARES
Campus



Pennsylvania
Department of Education
Certified CARES Campus



Pennsylvania
Department of Education



PA Campus Leaders Empowering PA Success

Spotlight on institutional leaders championing student support services across the Commonwealth



Featured Practitioners

Vicki Van Hise, Assistant Vice President for Holistic Support and Engagement, ADA/504 Coordinator, Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Accessibility, Allied Health and Nursing at HACC

Dr. Courtney Allen, Director of Community Standards & Student Engagement, Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students at HACC

Ralph Godbolt Executive Director of the Office of Access and Success and Director of Diversity, Retention and Outreach, Commonwealth University

Hillary Saylor Schulze, MPA Director of Student Financial Services Counseling, Alvernia University

Leanne Lenz Senior Associate Director Student Care & Advocacy Penn State University

CIRCLE OF CARING: WRAP AROUND APPROACH TO HOLISTIC SUPPORT AND CARE FOR STUDENTS

PA EmpowerU



SESSION GOALS

- Awareness: A clearer understanding of the systemic challenges students face with basic needs
- Collaboration: Insight into how multiple offices can work together effectively, and how your institutional Behavioral Intervention Team/ Care Team can be a tool of support to students

SESSION GOALS

- Practical Strategies: Examples of programs and interventions that can be replicated or adapted
- Student Impact: Recognition of how meeting basic needs leads to improved academic persistence, safety, student engagement, and retention

PURPOSE

- To share institutional challenges and highlight successful collaborative solutions across multiple student services offices/areas
 - Share the importance of creating/utilizing the BIT or CARE Team in your student support process at your institution will yield a huge change in how students are cared for and the overall approach to student support and care.

OUR WHY

- Interconnected basic needs matter in education
- Intentional and impactful support for student and institutions

ADDRESSING BASIC STUDENT NEEDS

- Fragmentation of Services
 - Students unsure where to go for help
 - Offices working in silos- Multiple campuses with One campus model
- Resource Limitations
 - Budgetary and staffing constraints
 - Growing demand for holistic student support

ADDRESSING BASIC STUDENT NEEDS

- Communication & Awareness
 - Students unaware of available services
 - Stigma in seeking support
- Diverse Student Populations
 - International student needs (visa, housing, food security, cultural adjustment)
 - Non-traditional students balancing work, family, and school
- Crisis Response vs. Prevention
 - Tendency to react to emergencies rather than create proactive systems

INTERCONNECTED SOLUTIONS & BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM INFUSION

- Our Behavioral Intervention Team has staff members from various offices/areas of the institution, which ensures there are different perspectives on how to support our students and then how to execute the necessary help for them.
- An effective Behavioral Intervention Team will assess the need of each student and identify which office(s) may need to be contacted or how to hand students off to other office(s)/area(s) when the time is needed for the next step in the support process.

INTERCONNECTED SOLUTIONS & BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM INFUSION

BIT Team

Lucy Laubenstein
Exec. Director of
Holistic Support &
Engagement

Dr. Tondelaya George
Associate Dean
School of Liberal Arts

Perry Pierich
Director of Fire
and EMS
Training

Dr. Courtney Allen
Director of
Community
Standards & Student
Engagement

Michael Davis
Exec. Director
Intercultural Affairs
and Outreach

Chris Fox
Director of Safety
& Security

Vicki Van Hise
AVP of Holistic
Support &
Engagement

Sasha Serfass
Admin Asst. for
Community
Standards

BIT Team

Fielding Vaughn
Assistant Dean of
Wellness, Athletics,
Retention and
Engagement

Cheyenne Shifflett
Coordinator,
Intercultural Affairs
& Student Leadership

- Monthly BIT Team Meetings
- Weekly Case Management Meetings

INTERCONNECTED SOLUTIONS & BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM INFUSION

- Student Access Services
 - Challenge: Students with disabilities facing barriers in academics and daily life
 - Solution: Coordinated support plans integrating academic accommodations, technology, and referrals to other services
- Community Standards
 - Challenge: Addressing behavioral concerns linked to unmet basic needs
 - Solution: Restorative approaches that connect students to support (CARE, counseling, housing referrals)

INTERCONNECTED SOLUTIONS & BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM INFUSION

- Public Safety
 - Challenge: Ensuring safety while addressing non-criminal student needs (homelessness, food insecurity, crisis)
 - Solution: Crisis intervention training, warm handoffs to CARE Center, and safety escorts
- CARE Center
 - Challenge: Overwhelming demand for food, housing, and mental health resources
 - Solution: Case management model, partnerships with local food banks and housing agencies, central referral hub

INTERCONNECTED SOLUTIONS & BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM INFUSION

- Student Involvement
 - Challenge: Students disconnected from campus community due to financial/work barriers
 - Solution: Engagement opportunities that build belonging and leadership, peer ambassadors trained to direct students to resources
- International Student Services
 - Challenge: Unique financial, housing, and cultural adjustment issues for international students
 - Solution: Cross-departmental partnerships to support legal compliance, housing stability, peer mentoring, and cultural integration

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Holistic Student Support Model
 - “No wrong door” approach
- Interdepartmental Collaboration
 - Regular cross-office meetings and case conferencing, BIT/Care Team meeting
- Proactive Outreach
 - Orientation sessions, workshops, and communication campaigns to reduce stigma

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Data-Informed Practices
 - Tracking usage, trends, and student outcomes to adjust support services
- Community Partnerships
 - Food banks, housing organizations, cultural groups, law enforcement, and nonprofits

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

- Student experiencing homelessness
 - What steps should you take to provide support?
- Student behavior concerns linked to stress
 - What steps should you take to provide support?

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

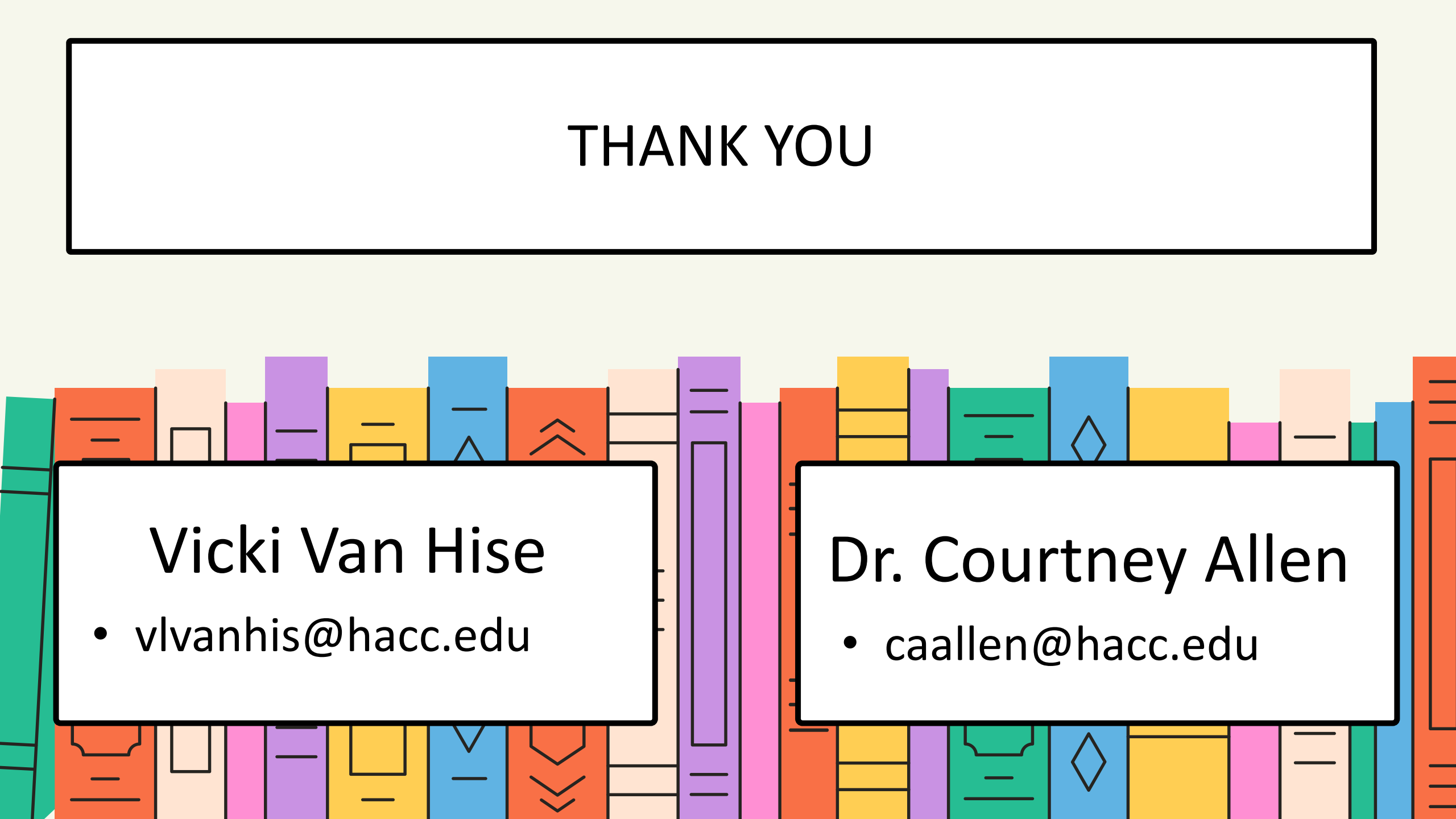
- Student experiencing homelessness
 - Referred by Public Safety → CARE Center case management → housing secured with external partner
- Student behavior concerns linked to stress
 - → Community Standards restorative process → Access Services & CARE referral → Student success maintained

A PATH FORWARD

- Strengthen resource visibility & reduce stigma
- Expand external partnerships for basic needs
- Invest in early-intervention strategies
- Continue institutional commitment to a student-ready institution

CLOSING

- Collaboration & Interconnected student needs are always present
- Student retention and success
- Keep building a culture of support, equity, access and belonging



THANK YOU

Vicki Van Hise

- vlvanhis@hacc.edu

Dr. Courtney Allen

- caallen@hacc.edu



Alvernia
University

SOLAR:

Support Opportunity Love
Access Resources

Hillary Saylor Schulze, MPA
Director Student Financial Services
Counseling



What it tells us based on Temple University's Hope Survey



The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs

<https://hope.temple.edu/research/hope-center-basic-needs-survey>





45%

of survey respondents from
Alvernia experienced
at least one of the following:
food insecurity
housing insecurity
homelessness

34%

of survey respondents from
Alvernia experienced
limited or uncertain availability of
nutritionally adequate and safe
food, or the ability to acquire such
food in a socially acceptable
manner in the prior 30 days.

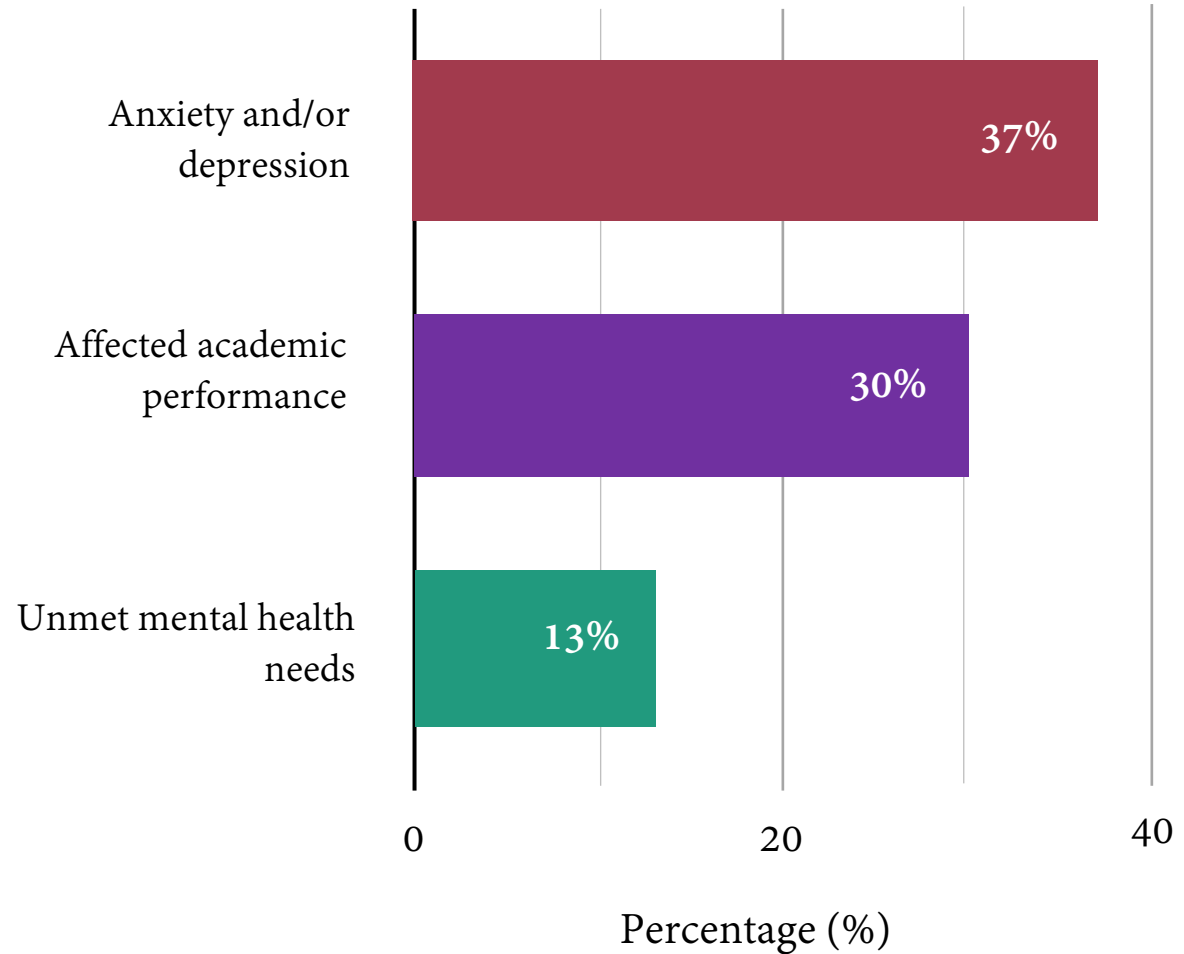
29%

of survey respondents from
Alvernia experienced
one or more challenges that
prevented them from having a safe,
affordable, and consistent place to
live in the previous year.

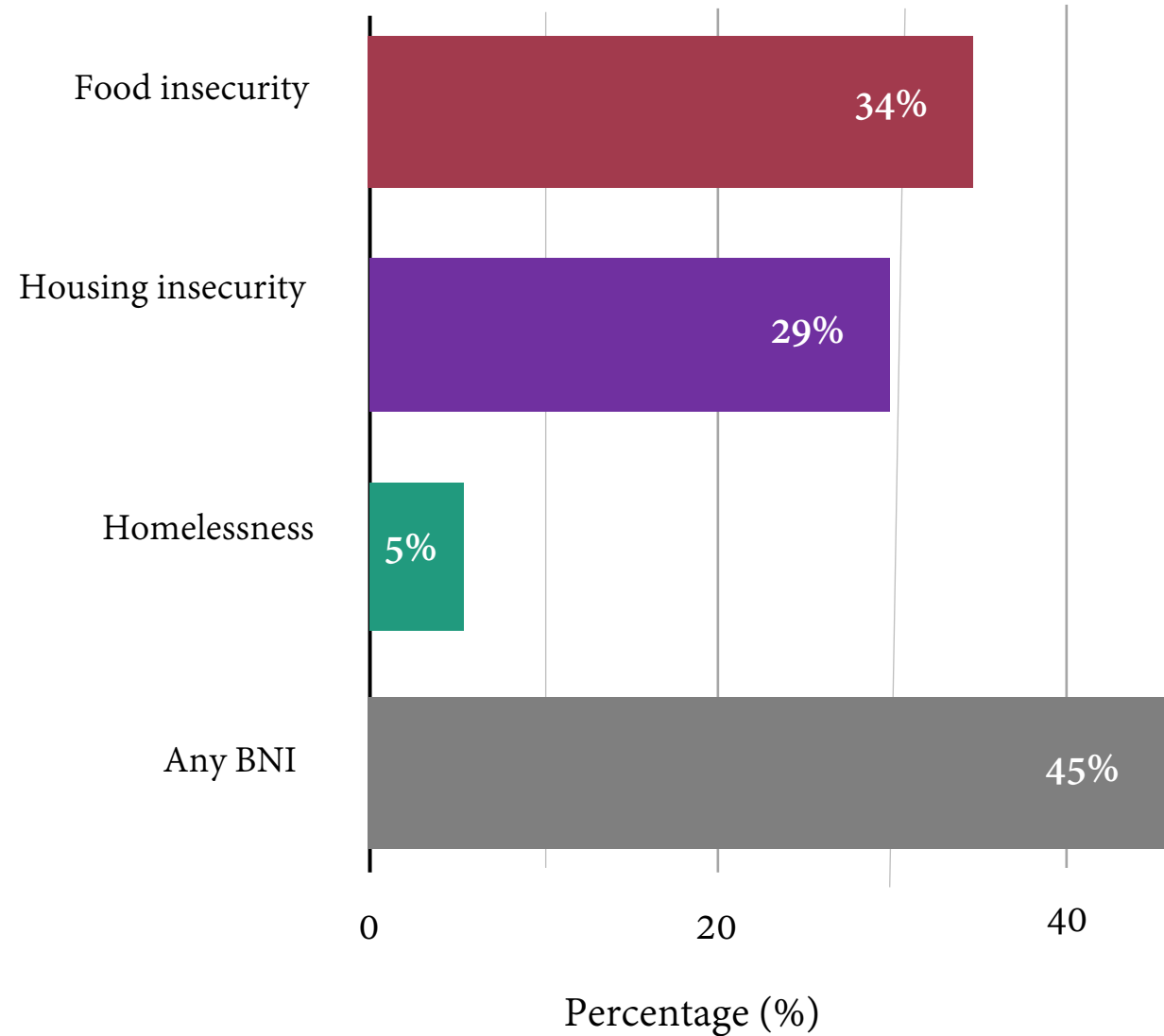
5%

of survey respondents
from Alvernia
did not have a fixed, regular, and
adequate place to live at some
point during the previous year.

Mental Health Challenges

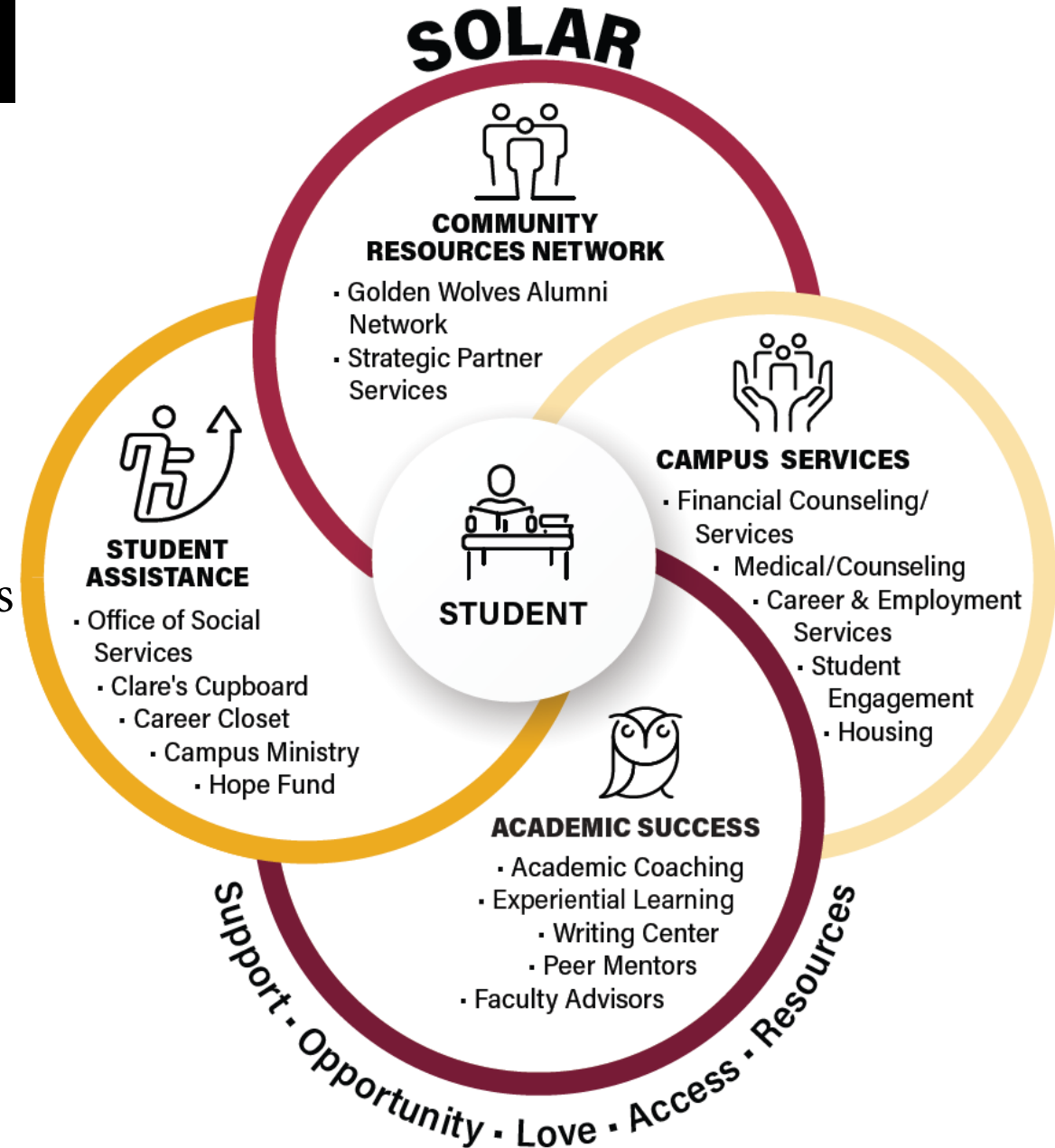


Basic Need Insecurity





- 1) Hired Director of Social Services
- 2) Set up solar@alvernia.edu email & Set up www.Alvernia.edu/solar & internal myAlvernia page
- 3) Created university-wide learning & training plans
- 4) Continued to promote the Alvernia University Hope Fun
- 5) Continued to evolve campus-based food pantries & career closet



Alvernia's Progress

PA Hunger Free Campus Grant implementation 25-26

Aramark Partnership – GET Mobile App for Swipe out Hunger meal share program

Temporary/Emergency Housing Policy

PA Digital Connectivity Technology Program (DCTP) Grant Recipient 120 Laptops awarded

New Student Programming - Connections Day, Orientation & SEARCH classes

Professional Development Training – JED & Poverty Presentation

Visions Federal Credit Union & Tompkins Community Bank partnerships

Clare's Cupboard Food Pantry – Cub Pantries

Commuter support/resources

Career Closet & Relationship with Community Aid



Student Case Management through

✓TAG

✓Maxient (Community Standards)

✓Penn Medicine

✓Student Care Request Form (new for 25-26)

The purpose of the Thoughtful Assessment Group (TAG) is consistent with Alvernia's SOLAR initiative to provide another level of support to Alvernia students by taking a proactive approach in offering personalized interventions, behavior strategies, and resources to meet the students' needs holistically. TAG is composed of various student-facing offices and is led by the Director of Social Services

Alvernia’s TAG is aiming to mirror NABITA data categories to remain consistent for reporting, grant support, and community awareness

TAG Referrals	2024-2025
Multiple Reasons	57%
Mental Health	16%
Academic	7%
Personal Circumstances / Basic Need	19%
Not Recorded	1%

NABITA Referrals	2024
General Emotional/Mental Health	73.3%
Academic/Financial/Basic Need	9.5%
Suicidality	7.3%
Behavioral Misconduct	5.7%
Threatening Behavior	3.2%

<https://www.nabita.org/>



Mental
Health



Financial Aid



Military
Students



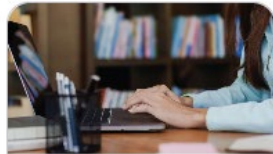
Adult
Students



Housing &
Transport



Food
Resources



Digital
Access



Safety &
Belonging



TAG promotes SOLAR's culture of care by providing students with access and resources. SOLAR helps students with PA Empower's keystones by giving access and breaking down barriers to achieve academic success.



Create valid,
reliable, &
dependable data
sets (Surveys)



Grow Social
Services Team



Personal Finance
1-credit course

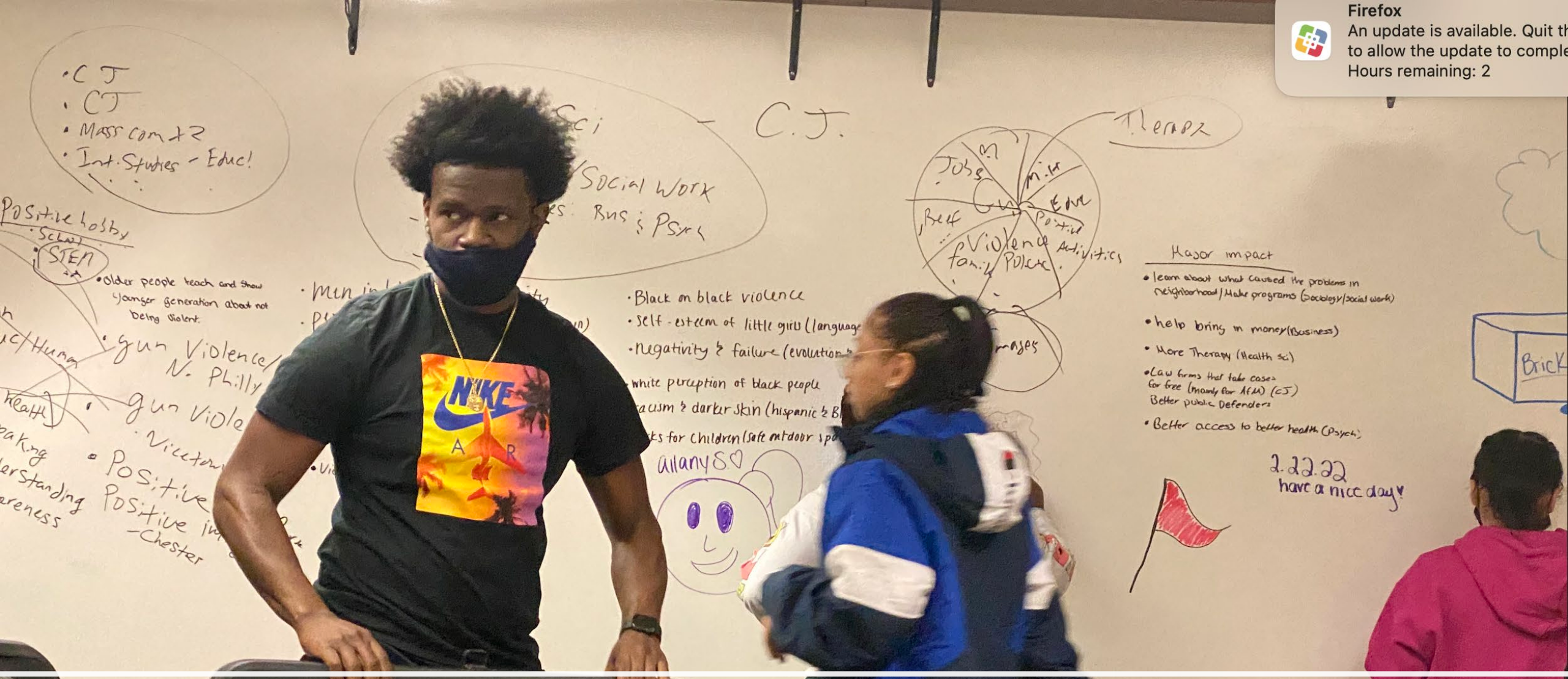


Training TAG in
NABITA process



Alvernia
University

Thank you!



Y'all Taught Me How to College:" Supporting the Unique Needs of Marginalized Students

Best Practices

1. Low income urban and rural students are less likely to persist to graduation
2. Underrepresented minorities are less likely to be retained
3. 2nd to 3rd year retention rates is an underreported issue
4. Resource insecurity impacts the persistence rates of low-income students

1. Promotion of academic excellence from day one
2. Cohort based programming
3. Intrusive academic support
4. Co-curricular learning
5. Building Community



Retention numbers climb nearly 20% for Bloomsburg University Act 101 students

BLOOMSBURG — Students in Bloomsburg University's **Act 101 program** have seen increasingly strong retention numbers over the last several years. Since 2017, Act 101 students have increased their first to second year retention rates by nearly 20 percent (45 to 63.7 percent).

Center for Access and Success – Commonwealth University

- 2017 – 45% Retention Rate
- 2019 – 64% Retention Rate – held steady since then
- Traditional approach was not working
- Developed an academic, cultural and social support program
- Partner with faculty to connect in class learning to out of class experiences

Academic, Cultural and Social Support

Emerging Scholars Program

- The glue that holds everything together
 - Rap Session (small group discussion – notice the cultural connection)
 - Cohort Based
 - Study Hall
 - Tutoring
 - Reflective Writing and Journaling



Co-Curricular Learning and Community Engagement

- Out of the Classroom: Into the Community
 - Community engagement positively impacts retention
 - Low income URM students who are able to volunteer in neighborhoods similar to the ones they come from, positively impacts retention
 - Connection to in class learning
 - Building community
 - Fall-Philadelphia; Spring-Pittsburgh



Resource Insecurity

- Basic Needs Shoppe
- *Students who are hungry will not perform well academically
- Food and basic needs shoppe
- Clothing boutique
- Agency – Students shop for what they need
- Customers of the BNS are connected to the programs of the Center for Access and Success





Additional Programs/Initiatives

- Black Studies Minor
- K. Leroy Irvis Leadership Institute
- Strategic Partnerships with Schools and Non-Profits
- Intensive Work Study Opportunities

Ralph E. Godbolt
rgodbolt@commonwealthu.edu

Students, Staff, and Community: A Collaborative Model for Basic Needs

Penn State Student Care & Advocacy

Leanne Lenz, Senior Associate Director

lu100@psu.edu



Where We Started

- Hope Center data showed us that there was a problem
- Passionate staff, scattered resources
- Support and recommendations from administration
- What changed everything – students didn't just ask for help, *they built it.*



Student-Led, Administration-Supported, Community Connected

STUDENT	ADMINISTRATION	COMMUNITY
Student Government / Student Initiated Fee Board	Student Affairs	Local nonprofit organizations
The Lion's Pantry	Housing and Food Services	Faith-based programs that serve all
Food Recovery Network	Student Aid and Bursar	Swipe Out Hunger
Student Farm	Academic Advising	Local health providers
Students United Against Poverty	Basic Needs Collaborative	Centre County Council of Human Services



<https://www.foodrecovery.psu.edu/media/>



PennState
Student Affairs

Student Ideas need Institutional Partnership to Scale



	Emergency Financial Assistance	Donation of Excess Dining Dollars	On-Campus Food Pantry	Reduce Food Waste
Program:	Student Emergency Fund	Emergency Dining Dollars	The Lion's Pantry	Food Recovery Network
Purpose:	- Emergency grants for basic needs - Funds go directly to students, bypasses bursar bill.	- Provide students an opportunity to donate excess dining dollars to students with a need. - Provide timely on-campus meals	- Provide food pantry for students at University Park - Provide opportunity for students to lead efforts in food security	- Reduce dining hall food waste - Provide prepared meals to students and community members in need
Partners	2024 Class Gift - Student Aid - Bursar - Student Care & Advocacy (SA)	Student Body - Residential Dining (ABS) - Student Care & Advocacy (SA)	Lion's Pantry Student Organization - Student Affairs – Pantry Manager (SA)	Food Recovery Network Student Org - Sustainability and Food Systems (SA) - Residential dining (ABS) - Lion's Pantry - Local nonprofits

Making Referrals Easy

- Student Care and Advocacy
 - Single point of coordination
 - Simplified referral form
 - Tracking and follow-up
 - Process applies to any University student (Grad, Commonwealth Campus, World Campus)
- Multiple Entry Points
 - Faculty / Staff referrals
 - Peer-to-peer referrals
 - Self-referral
 - Community referral
 - Family referral
 - Drop-in
 - Email
 - Phone call

Basic Needs and Support

A form for Penn State students or someone completing on their behalf who are facing challenges accessing adequate food, stable housing, or other basic needs.

[Basic Needs Support Form](#)

Share a Concern

Whether academic concerns, health and wellness issues, or experiencing distress, our team can help. Get connected with resources for yourself or someone else.

[Complete the CARE Report Form](#)



PennState
Student Affairs

Important Takeaways

Start with student voices

Student advocates exist on your campus—they may just need a champion

Make referrals frictionless

Remove every possible barrier to connecting students to support

Build one strong partnership first

Let success create momentum - don't try to do everything at once (we're still going!)

When students lead, students engage

Peer connection reduces stigma and increases utilization



Student Leaders

- **Natalie Dao**, Master's in Public Health with a concentration in Health Management and Policy, and a certificate in LGBTQ+ Health, Drexel University
- **Angela Cirelli**, 4+1 Public Health Student in Health Policy & Management, Minors in Spanish & Social Justice, Mental Well-Being Program Assistant, Temple University
- **Alex Hazeley**, Legal Studies Major, Criminal Justice/Business Administration Minor, Blue Jay Ambassador, Ubuntu Coordinator, Elizabethtown College



Student Leaders

1. How have targeted support services affected your experience pursuing a postsecondary credential so far?

2. What is your #1 suggestion to improve student supports for success in the future?



Pennsylvania
Department of Education



Q&A

Engage with PA EmpowerU staff and student leaders



Pennsylvania
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Opportunities & Next Steps

Who, What, Where, and When to
connect for PA EmpowerU network

Learn More & Engage

Upcoming Network Webinars

- **Nov/Dec 2025: Money Talks** - Collaborative Programming to Meet Students Financial Goals
- **Late Jan 2026: Don't Eat The Students:** Wellness, Belonging, and Burnout Recovery for the People Who Serve Students
- **Feb 2026:** PA CARES guidance webinar
- **March 2026: Reimagining Possibility:** A Trauma-Informed, Student-Led Model for Healing, Learning, and Career Pathways



PA EmpowerU Convening

April 2026

Day-long, in-person, free to attend

Stay Tuned!



Join the **PA EmpowerU** Network



Join PA EmpowerU!



PA EmpowerU Staff: *Who to Call?*

Program or Keystone Focus	Contact info
PA EmpowerU Overall	RA-EDPAEMPOWERU@PA.GOV 717-783-6786
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Thank You

for joining us to
Empower Pennsylvania, together!