

## Access to Healthy Opportunities for College Students with Disabilities: A Mixed Methods Study

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Individuals with disabilities are the most unrecognized health disparate population that requires explicit inclusion in public health programs and initiatives (Kran et al., 2015). Education is one of the major institutional upstream social determinants of health that contributes to the health disparities of disenfranchised groups (Hong, 2015). While the success of legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has led to increases in graduation rates from high school, those rates do not translate to college students with disabilities (SWD) with a graduation rate of only 38% (Neman et al., 2011). Social conditions within higher education often ignore and exclude SWD in discussions focused on basic needs which leads to the poor outcomes.

The **goal** of this study is to conduct a needs assessment of college students with disabilities in the CSU system using both qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (surveys) methods. The **central hypothesis** driving this study is that by completing a needs assessment to comprehensively understand the basic needs (e.g., food security, housing, college life participation, perceived wellness, and barriers and facilitators) of students with disabilities, strategies to improve resources and supports can be developed. This mixed methods study examines how students with disabilities perceive their access to and struggles with having their basic needs met—specifically focusing on food security, housing and perceived wellness. This study aims to explore these questions:

Question 1: How do students with disabilities describe their physical and mental health status when attending college?

Question 2: What barriers and facilitators do students with disabilities face when accessing services that provide or support basic need within the college setting?

Question 3: Do students with disabilities feel that having or not having basic needs met affects their academic trajectory?

This study will develop and implement a needs assessment of college SWD in the CSU system-specifically focusing on food security, housing, college life participation, and perceived wellness and examine if these experiences affect their academic trajectory.

Josephine Blagrove, Ph.D., CSU, Chico

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Kerri A. Vanderbom, Ph.D.