Surfing Without Water: College Students Who Experience Homelessness

Date: November 23, 2021
Time: 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Place: Remote

Abstract
This study explores the educational experiences of homeless students from the Saint Louis Metropolitan area from two perspectives. 1. It will include college homeless students who were identified as unaccompanied youth in high school through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act reauthorized by the 'Every Student Succeeds' Act who were enrolled in college and whether educational supports were adequate to ensure graduation and 2. Assess supports that universities offer independent students via the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) and other services. Research has shown that youth experiencing homelessness have difficulties entering college, and with financial aid, remaining in college, and graduating from college (School House Connections, 2020). Difficulty accessing services and support coupled with prejudice, discrimination, and lack of knowledge can be detrimental to the homeless students’ academic performance (Svokos, 2015).

The purpose of this study is to investigate issues of higher education homelessness as experienced by independent college students identified as homeless in high school and attending college and explore the types of support universities offer via the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA). Multiple case study will highlight the experiences of college homeless students from (STL area zip code) the City of Saint Louis Metropolitan area, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as unaccompanied youth and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. The results from this study provide an understanding of the challenges that homeless independent students face while in pursuit of a postsecondary degree and the types of supports offered via their universities. This study seeks to offer strategies based on participant’s responses on how best to serve them. Our hope is to provide various resources, supports, and a universal network accessible to both universities and students experiencing higher education homelessness. Increasing awareness, leveraging resources, becoming knowledgeable, eliminating barriers, and putting the necessary supports to ensure seamless access for this specific population can be beneficial to students, instructors, educational liaisons, and other professionals in the field of education.