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Food and housing challenges: (Re)framing exclusion in higher education

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Abstract

Food and housing challenges in higher education are increasingly apparent on a global scale, and South Africa is no exception (see, for example, Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Gallegos, Ramsey, & Ong, 2014; Munro, Quayle, Simpson, & Barnsley, 2013). The rising cost of living coupled with consistent fee increases, has meant that students are struggling to access basic necessities such as food and shelter. The recent and ongoing #FeesMustFall movement has, among other things, signalled that large numbers of students are experiencing material hardships, and are unable or unwilling to continue to pay the high cost of attending higher education institutions. This paper provides a review of food and housing challenges within the South African context, before arguing that exclusion from higher education, based on material hardship should be interrogated, given that much of the literature on exclusion in higher education has been based on interrogation of academic barriers and challenges with respect to epistemological access. This discussion will serve as the basis for a critical examination of the assumptions and core features of selected institutional responses to food and housing challenges in higher education in South Africa.

The recent #FeesMustFall movement, which prompted student protests across South Africa, has brought into the limelight varied issues relating to student activism, curriculum transformation, class and race (Badat, 2016). It has also brought attention to issues concerning inclusion and exclusion, and the financial/material barriers (which include issues of food and housing) confronted by students when pursuing a higher education. The widespread protests ultimately compelled the national government and universities to put in place a moratorium on fee increases in 2016. While student activists have made some gains in keeping the cost of higher education down in 2017 (at least for those who are under-resourced), debates with respect to how higher education should be financed and who should be financing it continue to take place at a national level and within institutions of higher education. Thus, concerns with respect to financing higher education require taking into

consideration not only fees, but the actual cost of studying, which must necessarily factor in food and housing costs.

The high levels of inequality within South Africa and the highly unequal education system that was inherited from the apartheid government have prompted the need to implement practices that promote redress and equity (Anderson, 2016; Christie, 2008; Rugunanan, 2014). In particular, instituting practices that make higher education available for under-resourced students, has been a concern for the Department of Higher Education and Training, given the department's comment that "everything possible must be done to progressively introduce free education for the poor in South African universities"(2013, p.39) Providing free education, would entail not only eliminating fees, but also making available resources, free of cost, that are necessary to complete a university degree (such as books, housing and a living allowance), and therefore free education constitutes an ambitious endeavour. Fee-free education on the other hand, would only constitute the elimination of fees, but would require students to fund their own study supplies and pay for their living expenses.

A genuinely inclusive higher education system would allow opportunities for access, participation and success for students irrespective of their socio-economic status or available monetary resources (cf. UNESCO, 1994). In engaging with participation, inclusivity and exclusion in higher education, Nunan, George and McCausland have noted that "an education system can reproduce existing economic power structures by excluding those who cannot afford to attend. . .it can reproduce non-representational forms of power to advantage the already advantaged (2000, p.64). Accordingly, this paper is foremost concerned with framing and interrogating exclusion in higher education by examining the role that material resources (or lack thereof) play, in particular food and housing. For the purposes of this paper exclusion refers to experiencing compromised access to meaningful learning and engagement at the university that allows for fruitful experiences, academic success and timely graduation.

First, I provide a review of the literature on food and housing challenges within the South African context. I then argue that exclusion based on material hardship should be interrogated, given that much of the literature on exclusion in higher education has been based on interrogation of academic barriers and challenges with respect to epistemological access. Lastly, I

provide a critical examination of the core features of selected institutional responses to food and housing challenges in higher education in South Africa.

Food and housing challenges in South African higher education

While food and housing are essential resources for academic success, they are often overlooked and assumed to be resources that higher education students will automatically be able to access. In other words, it is presumed that students who are able to gain entry into higher education institutions, which have been traditionally reserved for the elite, will as a matter of course, have food and housing resources available to them. Food, in particular, has been viewed as playing an essential role in early childhood education. It has been well documented that malnutrition and undernutrition have ramifications for stunting, and poor cognitive and educational performance for children (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo, 2001; Grantham-McGregor, Cheung & Cueto *et al.,* 2007). However, less is known about the food acquisition struggles of higher education students and the ramifications of this.

Food challenges

Food challenges are prevalent at higher education institutions across South Africa, with nutrition and hunger issues being faced at all universities across the country (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). While food concerns within higher education have been under-researched, we know that students are more likely to experience hunger toward the end of a term, when they have depleted their funds (Munro *et al.*, 2013). This is particularly concerning given that students write examinations at the end of the term, and this is a time of year when students perhaps most need to have access to food in order to perform well. Students who lack sufficient food may suffer in silence, due to the stigma associated with experiencing a lack of food (Gwacela, 2014). We also know that students who experience food acquisition challenges consume poor diets that lack nutritious food. This is due to more affordable foods having high energy density and a low nutrient density (Kassier & Veldman, 2013). For, example, fruits and vegetables have more nutrients and fewer calories, but tend to be more expensive, than for example, bread (Kassier & Veldman, 2013). Given that this is the case, food

insecure students could be more obese than their food secure counterparts, as a result of consuming less expensive food that is high in energy density, but low in nutrient density (cf. Wilde & Peterman, 2006).

Food insecurity, which for the purposes of this paper refers to experiencing compromised access to sufficient food generally or to healthy, nutritious, safe, culturally and religiously appropriate food, specifically, varies across higher education institutions. For example, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus, approximately 20% of a sample of students was found to be vulnerable to food insecurity (Munro *et al*., 2013). At this same campus, over 60% of students who receive financial aid reported experiencing food insecurity (Kassier & Veldman, 2013). At the University of the Witwatersrand approximately 7% of a sample of participants reported being moderately or severely food insecure (Landman, Marinda, Rudolph, & Kroll, 2014). This may appear to be a relatively low percentage, when compared to the University of the Free State, where 60% of a sample of students reported experiencing food insecurity and hunger, while 26% reported experiencing food insecurity but did not report hunger (Van den Berg & Raubenheimer, 2015). These figures suggest that food insecurity exists at several campuses across the country, however, data on food insecurity for all South African higher education institutions is not available and this signals that more research is necessary to fully examine the severity of food insecurity within higher education.

The food challenges reported by university students vary, with some students reporting depleting their funds (due to them having paltry budgets in the first place) and thus resulting in them being forced to go without food. Others report challenges acquiring food on campus due to campus food being expensive; such students report seeking food outside of the university. This in turn has implications for the amount of time students spend on campus and their involvement in university life. Still others do not report food challenges, but display awareness that some of their peers experience these challenges. This suggests that food challenges on university campuses could be a systemic problem that is either experienced first-hand by some or that is widely known about by those who do not themselves experience these challenges (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015).

Food acquisition challenges on university campuses have also brought to light the ways in which inequalities are reproduced by students when they engage in discussions about food. Students who struggle to acquire sufficient and

sufficiently nutritious food, discuss their food troubles as shared and systemic concerns. In contrast to this, students who take for granted the material resources necessary to purchase food, discuss food consumption as a matter of individual choice (Dominguez-Whitehead & Whitehead, 2014). It thus becomes relevant to ask how students with vastly different resources and orientations to food can engage with each other within higher education settings, especially given that breaking bread with others is a significant site for socially engaging with others (Ochs & Shohet, 2006) and that in post-apartheid South Africa concerns have been raised with respect to a lack of socialising and integration among students from different backgrounds (Pattman, 2007).

It is necessary to acknowledge that a lack of access to food can negatively impact students in a variety of ways. Students who lack funds to meet basic needs (including food) are at greater risk of negative outcomes including dropping out (Letseka and Maile, 2008), academic under-performance (Jama, Mapesela & Beylefeld, 2008; Kassier & Veldman, 2013), and decreased ability to socialise with their peers (Firfirey & Carolissen, 2010). It is therefore not possible to expect students who are severely under-resourced to perform well academically and socially within institutions of higher education.

Housing challenges

Housing, similar to food, is a basic necessity and university students have traditionally been provided the opportunity to live on-campus in residence halls or in the university vicinity. Living in campus residence halls comes with the convenience of not having to endure a long commute and being able to access support staff who are tasked with helping students transition to living on their own (Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012). Adequate and well-developed student housing can also have a powerful influence on academic success and can contribute to a smooth transition to the university and enhanced learning (Blimling, 2015; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Schroeder & Mable, 1994; Zeller, 2005). However, housing challenges have been pervasive at institutions of higher education in South Africa. In 2010 only about 20% of enrolled students lived in residence halls, due to a shortage of on-campus housing (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Some of the largest universities, such as the University of the

Witwatersrand and the University of Johannesburg, only accommodate about 15% and 9% of their students, respectively (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). First year students are expected to transition to university life, but they have few opportunities to access university housing, with only about 5% of first year students being housed within university residence halls (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). These housing shortages continue to be apparent, but insufficient funding has made it difficult to generate additional much needed student housing (Nzimande, 2016).

Under-resourced students may not have sufficient funds to pay for on-campus housing, even if such housing becomes available to them (Machika & Johnson, 2015). Some students may be forced to commute between the university and their family homes, which could be situated far from the university (Jama, Mapesela, & Beylefeld, 2008). These housing challenges must necessarily take into consideration South Africa's previous apartheid regime, which dictated where people could reside. While segregation certainly existed before the Group Areas Act of 1950, this legislation brought about the racial restructuring and racial zoning of metropolitan areas (Mabin & Smit, 1997). In the process of this racial restructuring thousands of people were forcibly moved "on or beyond the urban periphery" in order to "tidy-up cities" and "control the movement of Africans" (Mabin & Smit, 1997, p.206). This resulted in the creation of different neighbourhoods with few available transportation routes between the periphery and the centre, reinforcing social exclusion, thus making it difficult and time consuming for those without a private vehicle to access the city centres (Czegledy, 2004; Murray, 2011), which is where many of South Africa's former White universities are located. Thus, gaining physical access to such universities for students whose families reside in the periphery, is time consuming and burdensome. Some students could endure round-trip commutes upwards of two hours and are required in some instances to take several different modes of public transportation. These transportation challenges have been known to compromise co-curricular involvement and academic outcomes (Wawrzynski, Heck, & Remley, 2012). Having sufficient funds for transportation may also present a problem, given that a lack of such funds could adversely impact attendance and academic performance (cf. Firfirey & Carolissen, 2010). Many students, however, do not attend universities in the same cities where their families reside. For these students, access to affordable on-campus or nearby housing is crucial. Students who are able to access on-campus or nearby housing, but who subsequently experience financial hardships may not be able to continue to

pay for accommodation. Staff members working in student affairs offices are all too familiar with students who find themselves sleeping in classrooms due to a lack of resources to pay for accommodation. Thus, long and burdensome commutes for students who cannot afford nearby accommodation and a lack of accommodation facilities all together for those who cannot afford to pay for accommodation, mean that these students are faced with wholly inadequate everyday living arrangements that could severely hamper academic success.

Those fortunate enough to access and retain university accommodation may be faced with a different set of problems. Given that many residence halls have made the shift to a self-catering model in an attempt to make higher education more affordable, it becomes relevant to examine kitchen facilities, or lack thereof. In some cases kitchens are available but lack essentials such as stoves. In other cases, kitchens are non-existent and students are required to cook meals in their own rooms and use ablution facilities to clean-up after their meals. Problems extend beyond suitable kitchen facilities and include broken toilets, over-flowing sewage, collapsing ceilings, exposed wires and over-crowded rooms (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011; Koen, Cele, & Libhaber, 2006). Indeed "the state of on-campus residence infrastructure and facilities at a number of universities is so inadequate that even the poorest students are being forced to find private off-campus accommodation" (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011, p.57). Substandard housing has in the past prompted student protests and in 2010 University of KwaZulu-Natal students engaged in demonstrations to demand adequate accommodation and an end to financial-based exclusions (Mottiar & Bond, 2011).

Academic staff members may assume that students have access to housing that is adequate, affordable and allows students to devote sufficient time for their studies. However, housing presents considerable challenges for students from under-resourced backgrounds who cannot afford on-campus housing, housing near the university vicinity, suitable and safe housing or any form of housing at all. Despite that on-campus housing plays a central role in the academic lives of students and creates more opportunities for student learning, involvement and engagement (Astin, 1999; Zhao & Kuh, 2004), housing challenges in South Africa have received little attention from higher education researchers. A lack of housing or a lack of suitable housing is not conducive to pursuing one's studies and these challenges should be taken into consideration when engaging with factors that contribute to exclusion.

Why exclusion based on material hardship should be interrogated

A lack of food and housing may be contributing to poor academic performance, the inability to meaningfully participate in campus life and attrition. In other words, food and housing challenges can manifest themselves as exclusionary forces that make it extremely difficult for students to gain access to meaningful learning and engagement at the university that allows for fruitful experiences, academic success and timely graduation. It has been argued that not having access to food in particular, could be a reason why more than half of higher education students in South Africa never graduate (Van den Berg & Raubenheimer, 2015) and that hunger in higher education leads to high drop-out rates (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Despite that food and housing challenges can prevent students from fully participating and achieving academic success at the university, they continue to be under-researched and overlooked by the body of literature on exclusion in higher education.

The emergence and growth of South Africa's national financial aid schemes could explain, at least in part, why exclusion based on material hardship has been under-researched. In line with strategies to redress past inequalities in higher education, in 1994, R20 million was allocated (by the Minister of Education) to assist under-resourced students in financing their higher education pursuits, and the amount of national funding for under-resourced students increased to R300 million in 1996 (Moja & Hayward, 2005). The funding scheme which grew rapidly in the early to mid-1990s came to be known as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in 1999. NSFAS funding continued to increase and by 2004 over R900 million was made available to students who qualified. It is noteworthy that NSFAS was developed with the specific aim of helping "students from poverty-stricken backgrounds" attain a higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011, p.26). In other words, at a national level, strategies were implemented to provide higher education opportunities to the neediest and most under-resourced students. Given the consistent increases in NSFAS funding, there may have been a pervasive assumption that sufficient measures were in place that addressed the material needs of the neediest students and that such students were therefore granted the resources necessary for meaningful learning and engagement in order to complete a degree.

Despite that NSFAS funding increased rapidly, as early as 1998 there were signs that NSFAS was being funded at inadequate levels and that the amount of funds disbursed to individual students were not sufficient to cover the actual cost of attending higher education (Bunting, 2006). It was becoming apparent that the amount of NSFAS funding was insufficient to fund the increasing number of students enrolling in higher education. Insufficient NSFAS awards contributed to widespread financial exclusions that first emerged in 1998, and continue to be apparent, as a result of many students being unable to settle their university debts (Bunting, 2006; Koen *et al*., 2006). NSFAS funding has also been compromised my maladministration. NSFAS recipients across different institutions have reported receiving their living allowance late, with some students only receiving this allowance at the end of a term (Jones, Coetzee, Bailey & Wickham, 2008). Concerns have also been raised with respect to under-resourced students who have been termed the missing middle, as they are not eligible for NSFAS funding or private loans (Badat, 2016). Since 1994, financial aid has become available to many under-resourced students, but we have also seen student numbers double, block grants decline in real terms, state funding as a proportion of university budgets decrease and tuition fees increase exponentially (Badat, 2016; Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008). Indeed, years before the #FeesMustFall movement came about, higher education researchers expressed concern about fees increasing at a higher rate than NSFAS funding, and proposed a redistributive fee model that would make higher education more affordable for the poor while ensuring that the wealthy paid their fair share (Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008).

At the time of writing, the NSFAS budget for the 2017 academic year was R15 billion and in order to help offset the cost of fee increases, students with a family household income of up to R600 000 per year qualified to receive subsidy funding to cover the gap between the 2015 fees and the increased 2017 fees at their institution (for fee increments up to 8%) (South African Government, 2016). In the face of the #FeesMustFall protests, universities have continued to implement fee increases for the 2017 academic year, but it is apparent that the government has put in place strategies, which essentially mean that all NSFAS students and missing middle students will not experience a fee increase in 2017 (South African Government, 2016). On the other hand, inefficiencies continue to be apparent, with students who have applied for NSFAS funding complaining that their applications are being processed late, thus preventing them from enrolling. Additionally, some students who have been admitted to universities, complain that they have been

advised to study at technical and vocational education and training colleges, due to a shortage of funding for university students (Nicolson, 2017).

Exclusion: moving toward examining both academic and material challenges

Given the aforementioned discussion, which brings attention to a dearth of higher education funding for under-resourced students, it becomes relevant to examine exclusion by taking into consideration material challenges in addition to continuing to examine challenges that are concerned with academic and epistemological barriers. Much of the literature that has examined exclusion and exclusionary forces within South African higher education has been concerned with barriers to academic and epistemological access (see, for example, Boughey, 2005; Ellery, 2011; Layton, 2015). This body of work has contributed to new knowledge that extends beyond providing physical access to higher education, and is concerned with access to the epistemology of the academy and the unspoken rules and conventions of engaging in academic work. As a result of this literature, some of the detriments and benefits of bridge and scholarship programmes, which seek to impart knowledge and academic skills to students who have been historically under-represented, have been examined (see, for example, Essack & Quayle, 2007; Liccardo, Botsis, & Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015; Mabokela, 2000). Additionally, the ways in which under-prepared students can be initiated into dominant academic discourses and practices have been investigated (see, for example, Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006; Steinberg & Slonimsky, 2004) and Eurocentric curricula have been called into question (Higgs, Higgs, & Venter, 2003; Nunan *et al*., 2000). Examining issues of exclusion by interrogating academic and epistemological access is necessary. Indeed, the literature on academic and epistemological access has made substantial contributions to better understanding some of the ways in which students are, or can be, excluded from higher education. With this in mind, I propose that a more complete interrogation of exclusion would continue to be concerned with academic and epistemological factors, and would additionally be concerned with interrogating material factors. In other words, the study of exclusion in higher education can be expanded to incorporate more than one lens, especially given that academic and material barriers may overlap; students confronting material challenges may also confront challenges relating to epistemological access.

Examining exclusion that stems from a lack of material resources requires taking into consideration logistical and methodological matters. For instance, the investigation of material resources would benefit from an approach that is concerned with students' access to food and housing at various stages of their higher education careers. This does not mean that examining material resources necessarily requires longitudinal research, but it does mean that material resources should not be investigated only upon entry into higher education. This is important given that students' circumstances are not static and can fluctuate according to changes in the livelihoods of their families, the regularity of NSFAS living allowance disbursements and other factors. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies would allow for a holistic examination of the food and housing challenges that students experience (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2016). Employing quantitative methodology can help us learn about the extent of the problem at national, regional or institutional levels, and employing qualitative methodology can reveal the ways in which students experience food and housing challenges, their coping mechanisms and any recurring patterns. Undertaking research that examines food and housing challenges is important for contributing to knowledge production, but it is also significant because it holds potential for engaging with policy makers and informing policy that could bring about positive changes for students struggling to access food and housing (Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

Institutional responses to food and housing challenges

In the absence of sufficient NSFAS funds and in light of decreased state funding for institutions of higher education (Badat, 2016), addressing food and housing challenges in higher education has proved to be exceptionally difficult. Indeed, universities are being called to respond to the material needs of under-resourced students in ways that promote integrity and respect. For example, in May 2016 the University of Witwatersrand's vice chancellor received a memorandum that called for ending hunger at the institution and instituting practices that treat under-resourced students with dignity, particularly when it comes to disseminating food (SAFSC & Inala, 2016). Given the pressure to respond to the material challenges faced by students, institutions across the country have been compelled to institute some measures to meet these challenges.

Food assistance programmes (such as those that provide already-made meals and food parcels) have been made available by many higher education institutions such as the Durban University of Technology, the University of the Free State, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Zululand, but such programmes and relief efforts often operate without earmarked funds. In order to keep these food programmes running, institutions resort to seeking funds or food from philanthropists and community members. In some cases, such as the University of the Free State, the leadership of the university launched a 'No Student Hungry' campaign in 2011 and in so doing actively sought donors from within and outside of the Free State. Other universities such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the University of the Witwatersrand have sought donations from administrative and academic staff members. Such donations can be deducted from a staff member's monthly salary. The ways in which universities have responded to food challenges, assumes that charity and the goodwill of others can adequately address the food challenges experienced by students. While institutions have engaged in pro-active efforts to raise needed funds, donations do not constitute guaranteed funds. This means that when donations are scarce or cease, programmes that provide food relief become compromised.

Given the difficulties that depending on donations presents, a model that moves beyond philanthropy to creating meaningful and sustainable collaboration with local businesses has been proposed (Gwacela, 2015). This type of model would rely heavily on community social responsibility practices (Gwacela, 2015). The importance of sustainable programmes and practices that treat students with dignity cannot be overstated when the goal is to serve the most under-resourced students. A lack of policy that informs or supports the implementation of sustainable food assistance within higher education has been noted as a challenge to meeting the food needs of under-resourced students (Sabi, 2015). Instituting policies at national or institutional levels could promote sustainable programmes and serve to secure reliable and earmarked funds.

With respect to housing challenges, despite that all universities and campuses across South Africa are experiencing a shortage of student housing (Nzimande, 2016), insufficient measures have been taken to address this problem. Some recent efforts that address housing challenges are however apparent. For example, in 2011 the Department of Higher Education and

Training released a comprehensive government document, the 'Report on the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Provision of Student Housing at South African Universities', which reported on housing related challenges at twenty two universities. The report outlined many short comings (including, but not limited to, infrastructure problems, a lack of resources and poor housing provision), but it also affirmed a commitment to improving student housing (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Specific recommendations included in the report call for implementing a minimum standards code for the accommodation and housing of students; the regulation of private accommodation accessed by students; sound, robust and efficient governance of student accommodation; investigating all complaints pertaining to corruption and maladministration; and increasing NSFAS funding for accommodation. More recently, in 2016, a Housing Symposium was hosted by the Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training. This symposium brought to light the particular housing shortages at TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) institutions. Scarce national funds for higher education coupled with the financial challenges posed by the moratorium on fees in 2016 mean that the Department of Higher Education and Training and individual institutions are not equipped to generate or acquire more student housing options. In light of this, it is proposed that the private sector will be instrumental in the goal of making 15,000 additional beds available across eleven institutions of higher education (Nzimande, 2016). While property developers and investors may have the capital to build housing for more students, concerns have been previously raised with respect to the provision of affordable rooms that are made available by the private sector in South Africa, since this sector may be more concerned with making profit and less concerned with generating safe and suitable accommodation (Poulsen, 2010).

Students who find themselves without accommodation or funds for accommodation struggle to acquire assistance from their institution. It is not uncommon for institutions to attempt to address these challenges as they emerge, without formal policies, procedures or earmarked funds for students in need. Given the lack of formal policies or structures in place, a student could be referred from office to office (for example, from a Housing Office, to a Financial Aid Office, to a Student Affairs Office) before receiving assistance (if assistance is ever received). Generally, institutional responses to student homelessness leave much to be desired as a result of both a lack of resources and a lack of institutionalised procedures.

Conclusion

It is increasingly relevant to take into consideration the current political and economic climate and its relevance for challenges facing higher education, such as a lack of access to food and housing for students (cf. Badat, 2016). Indeed, the neoliberal agenda which has been adopted by many Sub-Saharan African countries has placed an emphasis on university partnerships with business, user fees, privatisation of public goods and diversification of the higher education system (Brock-Utne, 2003). The ramifications of this have been that the cost of a university education has been transferred to private households, thus disproportionately benefitting social elites (Levidow, 2002). Given the significance of the broad socio-political and economic climate and its relevance for higher education, it is apposite for future research to be undertaken which considers the impact and the role of economic structures/resources, socio-cultural conditions, political circumstances and political will, when it comes to addressing food and housing challenges in higher education.

The material challenges experienced by students in higher education have come to light as a consequence of the #FeesMustFall movement and in light of an emerging body of literature on food acquisition struggles (see, for example, Munro *et al*., 2013; Van den Berg & Raubenheimer, 2015). Researchers are thus beginning to pay more attention to material challenges and students are demanding that their needs be met. In light of this, it has become relevant to interrogate exclusion that stems from a lack of access to food and housing, and to thus expand our view of what exclusion refers to and how it is experienced by students. Exclusion can no longer be only engaged with as relating to academic barriers and epistemological access. This paper has thus been concerned with (re)framing exclusion and with a critical examination of selected institutional responses to the food and housing challenges confronted by students. My examination of the features of selected institutional responses suggests that food and housing challenges are not being addressed in sustainable ways that provide long-term solutions and that policies and procedures to address these challenges are lacking. If we are concerned with making opportunities available for all students to succeed in higher education, including those who lack essential material resources, then improving institutional responses to these challenges is critical.

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