

OPINION: “College students unable to pay for food is not a new phenomenon!”

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“Reading articles about college students who are unable to pay for food brings to mind the tribulations of one of my dearest deceased friends. Always protective of her privacy I shall honor her without disclosing her name.

As often happens between close and caring friends she shared the details of her college days at the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst, where she obtained her several degrees. She was from a Cape Verdean working class family whose mother died when she was ten years old, leaving her father to support his children on one income.

From age ten until she qualified to attend the university she worked, after school hours and during the summers, cleaning houses, cranberry bogging, tending to her younger siblings and dealing with racial bigotry.

Also from an early age she showed an incredible scholastic ability and obtained outstanding grades enabling an easy entry into the university.

Despite all adversity and lack of monetary assistance she made it through her four years, but not without difficulty

nourishing herself on weekends when her school dining card didn't cover meals. In order to eat on the weekends she would take extra boxes of cereal during the week to have something to tide her over until Monday mornings.

I now wonder how many students who can barely cover their tuition, housing and book expenses, are forced to find ways to nourish themselves sufficiently to pursue their studies and dreams.

My friend withstood so many obstacles but she ultimately, with advanced degrees and an abiding concern for struggling students, devoted her career to academia, accumulating honor, respect and most importantly appreciation from hundreds of students.

How many people who have the potential to contribute significantly to our society are denied access to higher education due to the outrageous cost of a college education? And even if the costs for their studies are covered through scholarships or loans, clearly food insecurity ultimately defeats their aspirations.”-Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.