



# Equality is Not Enough: Advocating for Health Equity for First-generation Low-Income (FLI) Students at Stanford School of Medicine

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First Generation Low Income

## Community Partners

Stanford University Minority Medical Alliance (SUMMA) is a coalition of students that aims to increase diversity in the health professions to better care for underserved communities.

## Background & Need

FLI@SMS is a group of MD/PA students dedicated to advocating for the needs of first-generation low-income (FLI) students at Stanford School of Medicine (SOM). Our goal is to increase support and equity for FLI students in the medical field. The purpose of this survey is to assess the needs of FLI students at Stanford SOM and understand how financial stress affects their health.

## Methods

### Part I: Assessing Student Needs

A 20 question survey via Google forms was sent to students who are part of FLI@SMS mailing list (consists of 59 PA & MD students of all years)

### Part II: Qualitative Exploration of Student Perceptions of the Effects of Financial Stress

Because quantitative data often cannot fully capture experiences, we added a qualitative piece to this study & asked students how financial stress from being FLI affected their health.

## Outcomes

### Part I: Assessing Student Needs

Characteristic	Participants (N=48)	Food Insecurity	
Program (%)		Yes (%)	No (%)
MD	81.3%		
MSTP	4.2%		
MSPA	14.5%		
Year (%)		Yes (%)	No (%)
Year 1	47.9%		
Year 2	41.7%		
Year 3	10.4%		
		Away Rotation Concerns	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
		90.5	9.5
		Transportation Insecurity	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40.5% of students do not have access to a car to transport themselves to clerkships</li> <li>Of these students, 35.7% do not have the financial means to acquire a car</li> </ul>	
		Board Examination Prep Concerns	
		100% of students are concerned about financing study materials for board examinations	

### Part II: Exploring Student Perceptions of the Effects of Financial Stress

#### Limiting Competitive Edge

"In order to pay for food and transportation, I have to take on extra jobs like tutoring which is making me fall behind on my studying and research in comparison to classmates without these concerns."

"I would like to point out how not having reliable access to transportation even in preclinical years can be limiting for engaging in different opportunities"

"One of the orthopedic surgeons at Stanford is hosting a massive dissection event in another state, but I cannot attend because I do not have the funds for it. I feel my opportunities constantly being limited because of my financial situation."

#### Toll on Mental Health

"I suffer from anxiety due to trauma from living in extreme poverty as a child, and while I receive treatment for this, my financial anxiety, is making it increasingly difficult to carry out daily tasks and concentrate on studying. I am always worried about affording food, transportation, helping my family, etc."

"My clerkship tried their best to get me to a closer site [since I do not have a car but] they couldn't and told me that they had never had this issue with other students before. I know personally other students who have done the same and I felt isolated/ashamed to hear them say that."

"I am so concerned with paying for gas and travel which is why I try not to go anywhere so I do not have to use the car that much."

#### Toll on Physical Health

"I've found myself having to decrease the amount of food I purchase, and thus consume. In order to stick to our student budget, I've had to choose less healthier food options."

"Transportation during clerkships can be a big struggle... I took 2 buses and the train twice a day to get to a site during my first rotation and no longer had time to meal prep, exercise, and sleep"

"We often needed to get to work early/leave late, and taking public transport at those hours often felt unsafe."

"Accounting for extra travel time and side jobs eats into our schedules and takes away from being able to engage in good lifestyle habits (getting proper nutrition and rest)."

## Lessons Learned

- Data gathering is essential for advocacy efforts
- Successful FLI community health projects require ensuring that all aspects of the project are completed in partnership with the FLI community

## Future Directions

Collaborating with the medical school financial aid office and First Generation program to create support for FLI students including:

- A designated fund for away rotation costs and/or housing students with alumni hosts in the FLI network
- Transportation support for clerkships
- SOM food pantry
- Increased access to board preparation

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