COMM 3210 | Spring 2026 | Christy Sims

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A FAIR SHOT

The Real Cost of College

Task Force Report on Economic Inequality for College Students

1 in 3	48%	$38,270
college students face food insecurity	of college students face housing insecurity	avg. annual cost of college per student per year

Spring 2026

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Part 1: Task Force Charge

This task force group was focused on developing communication strategies and messaging designs in regards to economic inequality among college students, with an emphasis on how this issue is understood and handled by campus and policy decision makers. Instead of treating financial struggles of college students as an individual responsibility, this report frames economic inequality as a larger systemic issue shaped by institutional structures and a rising cost of living.

The goal of this report is to create clear and actionable messaging that reveals the true, full cost of college and makes the issue more widespread within higher education conversations. This campaign is also designed to influence how powerful figures in education, including university administrators and policymakers, see student financial struggles and their role in addressing them.

Using fixed communication theories to help with message design, this report presents a set of strategies across media, interpersonal, and organizational contexts. These messages aim to increase awareness, challenge stigma around financial trouble, and bring forward perspectives that are often overlooked.

Part 2: Current Landscape of the Issue

Issue Background and Roots

For centuries, college has been marketed as the path to a better life, a way for anyone who is willing to work hard to move up in the world. But for millions of students today, that promise feels completely out of reach. The cost of going to college has gone up at a much higher rate than wages, and the available financial aid has not kept up. The problem is not just tuition. It also includes rent, groceries, healthcare, and transportation (Jaimes, 2026). These everyday costs have become too much for many low and middle income students to handle.

According to the College Board (Hu et al., 2025), the average total cost of attending a public four-year college for in-state students reached $30,990 in 2025 to 2026, and private nonprofit schools averaged $65,470 per year. The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs (Temple, 2025) found that about 59 percent of college students dealt with at least one form of basic needs insecurity, meaning they struggled to afford food or housing, in the past year. That number jumps to 73 percent when you add in mental health care, childcare, transportation, and internet access. This is not a rare situation. It is the unfortunate reality for the majority of college students in the United States.

The roots of this problem can be linked back to decisions made by governments and schools over many decades. After the 2008 financial crisis, many states cut the money they gave to public colleges and universities. To make up for the lost funding, schools raised tuition. Between 2014 and 2024, average in-state tuition at public four-year colleges went up by about 27 percent (Mitchell, 2016). At the same time, rent in many college towns has skyrocketed. In Boulder, Colorado, rents have gone up more than 40 percent since 2020 alone, pushing students out of housing near campus.

History and Key Moments of the Issue

The student financial crisis we are experiencing today did not happen overnight. Here is a look at some of the key moments that led up to our current state of education.

1965	The Higher Education Act is signed into law. It creates the first major federal student aid programs, including low-interest loans and need-based grants for students. Source: University of Wyoming, "Higher Education Act of 1965." uwyo.edu/stateauth/higher-ed-act.html
1972 to 1973	The Pell Grant program is created through reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, providing need-based grants that students do not need to repay. Source: Congress.gov, "Federal Pell Grant Program: Primer." congress.gov/crs-product/R45418
1980s	States begin cutting funding to public colleges. Tuition at public schools rises significantly as schools try to make up for lost state support. Source: College Board, Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2025. research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing
2008 to 2010	The financial crisis causes huge state budget cuts to higher education. Tuition spikes nationwide as public institutions try to fill the funding gap left by states. Source: College Board, Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2025. research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing
2010 to 2011	Federal Pell Grant spending hits its highest point ever at $51.3 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars. National student loan debt passes one trillion dollars for the first time. Source: College Board, Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2025 (Figure SA-5).
2012	The College and University Food Bank Alliance is founded with 15 member schools, showing growing awareness of hunger and food insecurity on college campuses across the country. Source: College and University Food Bank Alliance. cufba.org
2020 to 2022	COVID-19 makes housing and food insecurity much worse for students. Emergency federal aid through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund helps for a short time. Source: Hope Center, 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report, Temple University, Feb. 2025. hope.temple.edu
2023	The first nationally representative government data on student food insecurity is released. It shows that 4.3 million undergraduates do not have enough food and 1.5 million experience homelessness while enrolled. Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, NCES, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20), 2023.
2024 to 2025	The Hope Center reports that 59 percent of students deal with basic needs insecurity related to food or housing. Average tuition at private nonprofit four-year schools reaches $45,000 per year. Source: Hope Center, 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report, Feb. 2025; College Board, Trends in College Pricing 2025.

Part 3: Communicative Concerns and Lenses

Key Stakeholder Groups and Their Communication Needs

Economic inequality among college students is not a problem that affects just one group of people. Many different subgroups have a role in either making the problem worse, or helping to solve it. Each group has different communication needs, and efficient messaging has to speak to all of them.

Stakeholder Group	Communication Needs and Role in the Issue
College Students Facing Financial Stress	Need to feel heard and supported. Messages should reduce shame, build community, and connect students to resources. Source: Hope Center, 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report, Feb. 2025. hope.temple.edu
Universities and Campus Administrations	Need data and evidence. Messages should show how student financial struggles connect to graduation rates, campus success, and school reputation. Source: Hope Center (79% of students who stopped out cited basic needs insecurity as a reason), Feb. 2025.
Government and Policymakers	Need to see clear proof of a system-wide problem. Messages should tie specific policy changes to real outcomes for real people. Source: Hope Center, 2023-2024 Survey; U.S. Dept. of Education, NPSAS:20, 2023.
Families of Students	Need to understand the full cost of college beyond just tuition. Messages should encourage families to advocate alongside their students. Source: College Board, Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2025. research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing
Employers Offering Jobs or Internships	Need to understand that financial stress affects how students perform. Messages should invite employers to be part of the solution. Source: Hope Center (basic needs insecurity linked to stopping out and reduced academic engagement), Feb. 2025.
Local Communities and Businesses	Need to see students as community members with shared stakes in the local economy. Messages should highlight how everyone benefits when students are supported. Source: Hope Center, 2023-2024 Survey; College Board, Trends in College Pricing 2025.

Core Communicative Problems

This section identifies four communication problems that make economic inequality among college students harder to talk about and harder to fix: the visibility problem, the framing problem, the coordination problem, and the silenced voices problem.

The Visibility Problem

The first issue is that most students who are struggling financially never talk about it. In the United States, is the strong cultural norm against discussing money, especially not having enough of it. Journalist Joe Pinsker found that Americans avoid money conversations because of deeply rooted values around self-sufficiency and success, which makes financial struggle feel like something to hide rather than something to address publicly (Pinsker, 2020). Because students stay quiet, schools underestimate the problem and feel no pressure to act.

Who is hurt: Low income and first generation students carry the heaviest financial burden but feel the most pressure to stay quiet about it.

Who benefits: University administrators and policymakers benefit from the silence because as long as the problem stays invisible, they face no pressure to change anything.

Context: Social media platforms like Instagram can either keep the silence going or break it, depending on how messages are framed and who they reach.

Source: Pinsker, J. (2018, March 27). Why Americans do not talk about money. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com

The Framing Problem

The second issue is how the problem gets talked about when it does come up. Student financial hardship is almost always framed as the student's own fault. The message is usually something like "you should have picked a cheaper school" or "you should have saved more." This individual blame framing shifts attention away from the real causes, like state funding cuts and rising housing costs, and puts all the responsibility on the student.

Research shows that when an issue is framed as a personal failure rather than a systemic problem, people are less likely to support policy solutions (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Who is hurt: Students are discouraged from asking for help or pushing for change when they believe the problem is their own fault.

Who benefits: Institutions and policymakers benefit because individual framing takes the pressure off of them to act.

Context: News coverage and political rhetoric both reinforce this framing by treating college costs as a personal lifestyle choice rather than a public policy issue.

Source: McCombs, M. E., and Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. Public Opinion Quarterly, 36(2), 176-187.

The Coordination Problem

The third issue is that the people who could solve this problem rarely communicate with each other in useful ways. Students, administrators, policymakers, local businesses, and community groups each know part of the story but operate in separate sectors. A message built for students rarely reaches administrators. A policy proposal aimed at lawmakers almost never includes student voices. There is no shared language connecting all these groups.

Who is hurt: Students, because their needs get lost in translation between institutions that never talk to each other.

Who benefits: Administrators and policymakers, because fragmented communication lets them claim they did not know the full picture.

Context: Institutional structures like separate communication channels and different vocabularies across sectors make coordination genuinely difficult without a deliberate effort to bridge those gaps (Pearce & Cronen, 1980).

Source: Pearce, W. B., and Cronen, V. E. (1980). Communication, action, and meaning: The creation of social realities. Praeger.

The Silenced Voices Problem

The fourth issue is that the students most harmed by financial inequality are the least heard in public conversations about it. Low income students, first generation students, students of color, and parenting students are regularly mentioned in policy documents and campus reports, but they almost never get to speak for themselves in those spaces. Their experiences are used as data points rather than treated as expertise.

Who is hurt: These students directly, because decisions get made about their lives without their input or perspective.

Who benefits: Institutions benefit because keeping their own voices central feels neutral and objective, while student voices get labeled as too personal or anecdotal.

Context: As Fraser explains, marginalized groups are systematically excluded from dominant public conversations, which is exactly why creating a space for them to speak is a political act, not just a communication strategy (Fraser, 1992).

Source: Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), Habermas and the public sphere (pp. 109-142). MIT Press.

Part 4: Effective Public Messaging Examples

The following section contains all five of the messaging examples designed by the task force. They are organized by communication context: interpersonal and mass media. Each message is grounded in a specific communication theory that shaped our design decisions. Together, these messages reach different audiences through different channels, but they all push toward the same goal: making the real cost of college visible, urgent, and impossible to ignore.

Interpersonal Context

Interpersonal communication focuses on how individuals communicate with one or a multiple people at a time. These messages are designed to help individuals navigate tough personal conversations, ask for help, or start important discussions with people they know.

Media Context

The media context includes messages designed for wide public audiences through specific channels. Media messages were built for Instagram, a platform chosen because it reaches college-aged audiences, supports visual storytelling, and allows for both broad reach and personal community building.

Lens: Face-Negotiation Theory

Designed by Dylan McKee | Intended Audience: Senators, members of Congress, and educational policymakers.

Face-Negotiation Theory, developed by communication scholar Stella Ting-Toomey, is about how people manage the way others see them during conversations. Everyone has a "face," which means their public image or social reputation. Two key ideas in this theory are the ascribed face, which is how other people see you, and the avowed face, which is the image you want to project. When these two do not match, people feel uncomfortable and may avoid conversations that could expose the gap (Ting-Toomey, 1988).

We chose this theory because talking about money is a huge taboo in America. As journalist Joe Pinsker reported in The Atlantic, most Americans avoid discussing personal finances because of

deeply rooted cultural values around success and self-sufficiency. When students struggle financially, they often feel that admitting it would damage how people see them. They worry about being viewed as irresponsible or incapable (Pinsker, 2020). This fear of losing face keeps students silent, which lets schools and policymakers off the hook.

The theory has seven main assumptions: that face is universal, that face is a complicated idea, that culture shapes how we manage face, that people have different preferences for protecting face, that power differences affect facework, that many factors shape how we handle face, and that intercultural skills help people manage face better across different groups. These ideas helped us understand why economic inequality is so hard to talk about, and why a message that protects students' dignity is essential.

Design and Development Process

The image below shows two students in a campus common area. One student is quietly dealing with financial stress while trying not to let anyone see it. The other student has no idea what her peer is going through. Annotations on the image label these two dynamics using Face-Negotiation Theory terms, making the invisible visible in a way that feels real and relatable.



Figure 1: Face-Negotiation Theory diagram. Two students in a campus setting show self-face threat (hiding financial struggle) and positive-face need (projecting confidence). The central diagram connects Face-Negotiation Theory to intercultural communication and conflict management. Designed by Dylan McKee.

This image was designed for use in campus presentations, classroom syllabi, and peer educator training. The tone is calm and observational rather than accusatory. The goal is to give students and educators a shared language for the invisible pressure people feel around money conversations, and to start making it okay to name that pressure out loud.

Lens: Coordinated Management of Meaning

Designed by Kendall Sorkin | Intended Audience: Senators, members of Congress, and educational policymakers

Coordinated Management of Meaning, developed by W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen, says that people build shared reality through communication. Meaning does not live inside a single person's head. It gets created between people through their conversations, relationships, and shared cultural scripts. CMM explains meaning through a layered system that includes context, goals, relationships, situations, speech acts, and personal values. The key emphasis is on coordination: people use communication to build a shared, logical understanding of the world together (Pearce & Cronen, 1980).

We chose CMM for this message because financial inequality in education is not just an economic problem. It is a problem of how higher education is understood and framed by society. CMM allows us to design a message that reframes college as a shared public responsibility rather than an individual burden. Instead of saying "figure it out yourself," the message says "we build this together." The intended audience is lawmakers and education officials because they are the ones whose communication choices, in the form of policies and funding decisions, literally co-create the conditions students live in.

CMM shaped the design by pushing us to use action-oriented language. Words like "Promote Equity" and "Empower Lives" go beyond sharing information. They position the audience as active co-authors of a better social outcome. This directly applies CMM's core idea that communication is not just how we describe the world, it is how we build it.

Design and Development Process

The message is an advocacy flyer called "Higher Education Opportunity for All." It was designed for distribution to elected officials, university administrators, and attendees at campus town halls. It highlights four clear categories: Invest in Potential, Strengthen Our Future, Promote Equity, and Empower Lives. Each one frames policymaker decisions not as a budget debate, but as a choice about what kind of society we want to build together.



Figure 2: "Higher Education Opportunity for All" advocacy flyer using Coordinated Management of Meaning. Navy and gold color palette signals authority and trust to a policy audience. Four action pillars frame policymaker decisions as shared co-creation of a more equitable society. Designed by Kendall Sorkin.

The color choices, navy blue and gold, are intentional and meaningful. They are a sign of authority, credibility, and seriousness, which is exactly what a policymaker audience responds to. A casual or colorful design would undermine the message before it is even read. The four pillars use specific: Invest, Strengthen, Promote, and Empower. This word choice is a direct CMM move. They place the reader in a position to take action, not observe from the outside. Instead of describing a problem to the audience, the message asks the audience to co-create a solution. The photo of four smiling, diverse students standing in front of a college campus does two things at

once. It shows who benefits from the policy decisions being asked for, and it creates an emotional connection that statistics alone do not. Policymakers are more likely to act when it becomes personal as they can picture real people being affected. The Capitol building icon in the bottom section directly signals that this is a message that requires federal support. It tells the reader immediately that this is their issue to act on. The delivery method, a printed flyer rather than a social media post, was chosen because policymakers and university administrators may respond better to professional printed materials in formal settings like town halls and board meetings. The bottom banner, "Support Policies That Financially Support College Students," closes the message with the clearest possible call to action, leaving no questions regarding what the audience is being asked to do.

Lens: Agenda-Setting Theory

Designed by Sasha Isaacman | Intended Audience: Senators, members of Congress, and educational policymakers

Agenda-Setting Theory, created by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, says that media doesn't tell people exactly what to think, but it does influence what they think about. When certain issues are shown again and again, and framed in specific ways, people start to see those issues as more important. A second level of this theory looks at not just which issues get attention, but also on how it's talked about and which details are emphasized (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

We chose this theory because economic inequality among college students suffers from an attention problem. It's usually seen as a personal struggle instead of a larger campus wide or system wide issue. Agenda-Setting Theory helps us change that. By making the issue more visible and connecting it to clear examples like rising housing costs, student debt, and food insecurity on college campuses, we can push policymakers to see this as a serious and urgent problem that needs action. We chose Instagram because repeated posts, shares, and public engagement help keep the issue visible and create pressure for larger institutional and policy change.

Design and Development Process

The message is a high-contrast Instagram infographic. The title "It's Not Just Tuition" immediately expands how most people think about the cost of college. Instead of only focusing on tuition, it highlights the bigger financial pressures students face every day. Three statistics support the message: tuition is up 31 percent in the last 10 years, Boulder rent is up 40 percent since 2020, and 1 in 4 students face food insecurity (Freudenberg et al., 2019). These numbers are specific and local, which makes them feel real and close to home.

The central statement, "This Is Not Just a Personal Problem. It Is a Campus-Wide Problem," is an example of second level agenda setting. It tells viewers not just that the problem exists, but how they should understand it: as a larger structural problem, not an individual failure. This framing is especially important for policymakers because it pushes the issue beyond personal responsibility and toward policy action. The hashtag #AFairShot connects this post to the larger campaign and helps build repeated visibility and public attention over time.

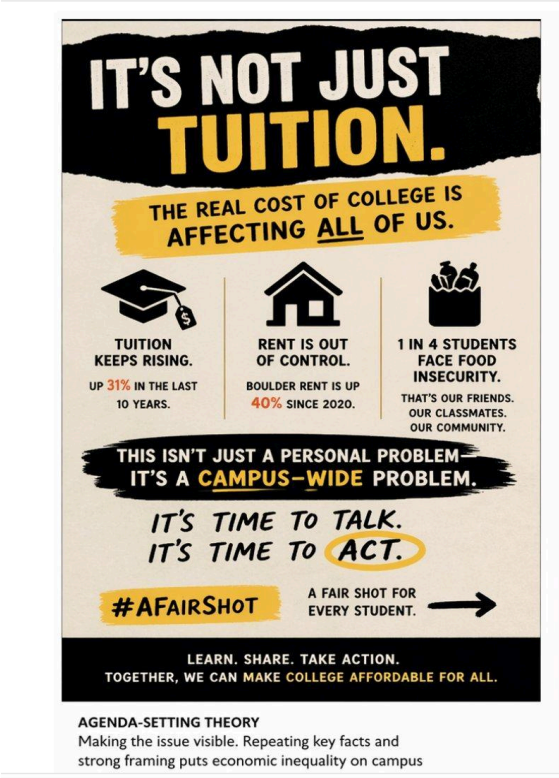


Figure 3a: "It's Not Just Tuition" Instagram infographic using Agenda-Setting Theory. Bold statistics and strong framing make economic inequality feel like a campus-wide urgency rather than a personal issue. Designed by Sasha Isaacman.

The black, gold, and cream colors create a sense of urgency while also feeling connected to campus life. Bold typography makes each stat readable on a phone screen. The contrast helps the message stand out quickly while scrolling. The call to action at the bottom, "Learn. Share. Take Action. Together, We Can Make College Affordable for All," encourages people to move beyond just noticing the issue. It asks viewers to help spread the message and support larger change. For policymakers, this also reinforces that students aren't asking for sympathy, but for real attention and action on a problem that affects the entire campus community.

Lens: Co-Cultural Theory

Designed by Sasha Isaacman | Intended Audience: Senators, members of Congress, and educational policymakers

Co-Cultural Theory, developed by Mark Orbe, explains how people from underrepresented or less powerful groups learn to communicate in spaces that weren't built for them. Co-cultural groups are groups that don't share the same power, privilege, or social norms as the dominant culture (Orbe, 1996). Because of this, they often have to use different communication strategies to be heard. These strategies can include trying to fit in, finding a middle ground, or keeping to their own community, depending on what the group needs and what feels safe.

We chose this theory because students who struggle financially often become a co-cultural group within higher education. Their experiences are often overlooked, misunderstood, or ignored by the larger campus culture. The "What You Don't See" message brings those voices to the center and challenges the assumptions that keep them hidden. The goal is to reach the broader campus community, including the people who are doing okay financially, and ask them to stop assuming everyone shares their experience.

Design and Development Process

The headline "What You Don't See" positions the viewer as someone who is missing important information. It does not blame them, but it does challenge them to look again. The subheadline,

"Every Student Has a Story. Not All of Them Look the Same," builds on that by making the invisibility of struggle feel like a real and solvable problem.

Three anonymous first-person quotes fill the poster: "I work two jobs just to stay here. Most people don't see that part. They just assume everyone can afford this school." "It's exhausting trying to keep up." "I just wish people understood what it's actually like." These quotes enact co-cultural theory by giving a platform to voices that are normally kept out of public conversations. The silhouette of a student with a backpack is intentionally generic so that any student could see themselves in it.

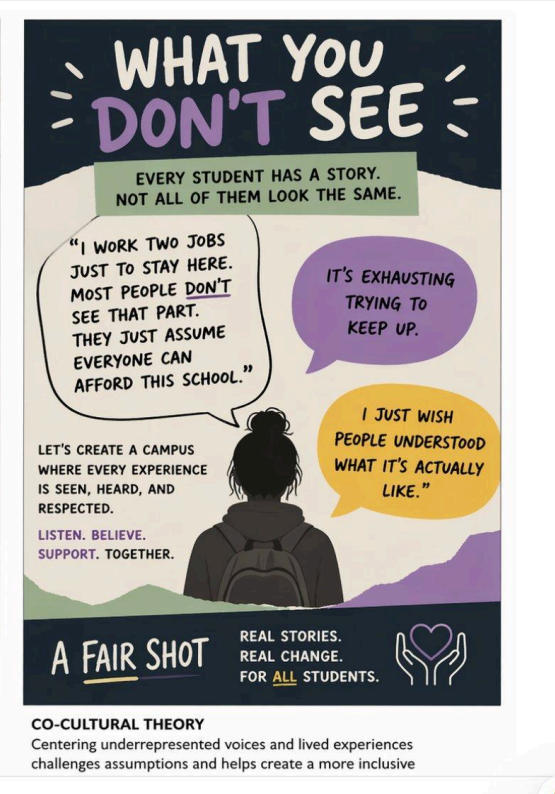


Figure 3b: "What You Don't See" poster using Co-Cultural Theory. Anonymous student quotes center voices that are usually left out of campus conversations. Designed by Sasha Isaacman.

The tagline at the bottom, "Listen. Believe. Support. Together," is a direct call to action for people who are not struggling. It does not ask for pity. It asks for awareness and engagement. The teal, purple, and gold color palette was chosen to feel warm and community-oriented rather than alarming or preachy. Both campaign graphics are shown together in Figure 3a and 3b above.

Lens: Counterpublic Sphere Theory

Designed by Trey Jara | Intended Audience: Senators, members of Congress, and educational policymakers

Counterpublic Sphere Theory comes from the work of Nancy Fraser and was expanded by Catherine Squires and Mark Orbe. The main idea is that marginalized groups are often shut out of the main public spaces where important decisions and conversations happen (Fraser, 1992). In response, these groups form their own spaces, called counterpublics, where they can develop their own understanding of their experiences, build community, and then push back into the larger public conversation (Orbe, 1996).

Squires and Orbe describe subaltern counterpublics as places where members of subordinated groups can create and share alternative viewpoints, which lets them form their own understanding of who they are and what they need. Fraser describes these spaces as serving two purposes at once: they are places for members to regroup and support each other, and they are launching pads for engaging with the larger public world. This theory fits our campaign perfectly because students dealing with financial hardship are rarely the ones leading the conversation about college costs at an institutional level. They are talked about, not talked with.

Our Instagram campaign functions as a counterpublic. The student quote, the anonymous submission option, and the comment section together create a space where students can share their real experiences and build a shared story. Rather than existing completely outside the mainstream conversation about college costs, the campaign engages with it while intentionally reframing financial struggle as a system failure, not a personal one.

Design and Development Process

The message is a sponsored Instagram post from the “Fair Shot” campaign account. The visual centers one powerful anonymous quote in large italic text against a dark navy background: "I skipped lunch three times this week so I could make rent." Below that, two statistics from the Hope Center make the individual story feel like part of a much bigger picture: 1 in 4 college

students experiences food insecurity, and 1.5 million face homelessness while enrolled (Temple, 2025).

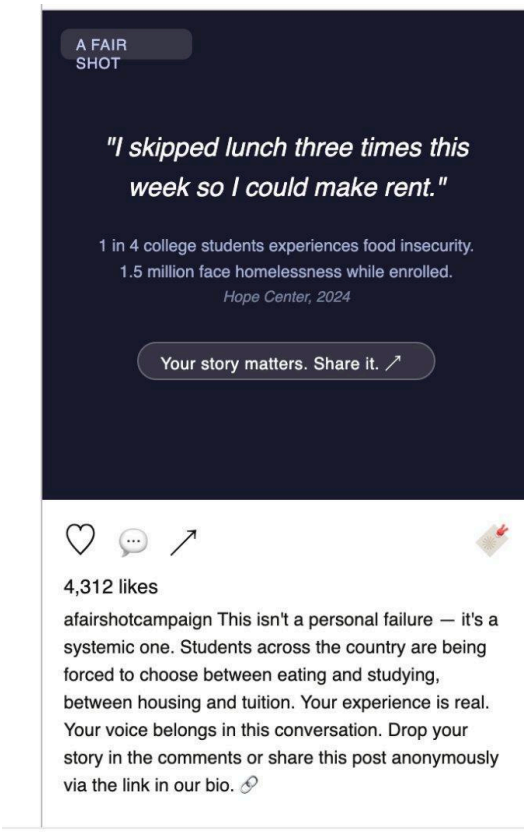


Figure 4: A Fair Shot Instagram post using Counterpublic Sphere Theory. An anonymous student quote centers a marginalized experience. Hope Center statistics ground the individual story in system-wide data. The anonymous submission option and comment section create a counterpublic space for shared storytelling. Designed by Trey Jara.

The caption reads: "This is not a personal failure. It is a systemic one. Students across the country are being forced to choose between eating and studying, between housing and tuition. Your experience is real. Your voice belongs in this conversation. Drop your story in the comments or share this post anonymously via the link in our bio."

The anonymous submission option is a key design choice rooted in counterpublic theory. It lets students participate without risking their social standing or feeling exposed. By asking students to share their stories, the campaign builds the counterpublic from the inside while generating real content that can spread into the wider public conversation, fulfilling Fraser's idea of the dual purpose of counterpublics.

Part 5: Implementation Guide

The “Fair Shot” campaign rolls out in three phases over a full semester. Each phase builds on the one before it, moving audiences from awareness to community to action. All materials follow Colorado state accessibility standards, including alt text for all images and high-contrast color choices throughout.

Guiding Principles

- Every message should connect to others using the #AFairShot hashtag, a campaign website, or QR codes so the campaign feels unified across channels.
- Release timing should align with campus moments that naturally raise financial stress, like tuition announcement dates, housing application deadlines, and the end of semester.
- Measure results at each phase: reach and impressions in Phase 1, story submissions and event attendance in Phase 2, and direct outreach responses and policy commitments in Phase 3.
- Keep the visual identity consistent across all messages. The navy, gold, and cream color palette and the “Fair Shot” name should appear everywhere so audiences recognize the campaign instantly.

Phase 1: Awareness (Weeks 1 to 4, Start of Semester)

Goal: Make the problem visible. Move the campus conversation from silence to acknowledgment.

- Post the Agenda-Setting Theory infographic "It's Not Just Tuition" on the campaign Instagram account and run it as a sponsored post targeted to CU Boulder students.
- Post the Co-Cultural Theory graphic "What You Don't See" at the same time as a companion piece that highlights student voices.
- Print physical versions of both posters and put them in high-traffic areas: dining halls, dorms, the student union, and library bulletin boards.

- Coordinate with the student newspaper and campus radio to run a short feature or announcement about the campaign launch.

Phase 2: Community Building (Weeks 5 to 8, Mid Semester)

Goal: Create a counterpublic. Build a community of shared experience and shared identity.

- Launch the Counterpublic Sphere Theory Instagram post "I Skipped Lunch Three Times This Week" and invite students to share their own stories anonymously through a link in the campaign bio.
- Host a campus listening session or tabling event where students can submit stories in person using a QR code.
- Partner with campus organizations including the food pantry, the financial aid office, and student government to expand reach and add credibility.
- Train peer educators using the Face-Negotiation Theory diagram to lead low-pressure conversations about financial stress in dorms and classrooms.

Phase 3: Advocacy and Action (Weeks 9 to 12, Late Semester)

Goal: Take the campaign energy to decision-makers. Turn community voices into real institutional and policy pressure.

- Distribute the CMM advocacy flyer "Higher Education Opportunity for All" to elected officials, university administrators, and attendees at campus town halls and board meetings.
- Run a letter-writing or email campaign to state legislators using student stories collected in Phase 2 as evidence.
- Present findings to university leadership using this task force report as supporting documentation.
- Release a campaign recap on social media that connects aggregate story data to a concrete call to action directed at the university.

Implementation Timeline

Phase	Timing	Key Messages and Channels
Phase 1: Awareness	Weeks 1 to 4	Agenda-Setting infographic and Co-Cultural poster on Instagram; physical posters on campus; student media outreach
Phase 2: Community	Weeks 5 to 8	Counterpublic Instagram post; anonymous story sharing platform; campus listening sessions; peer educator training using Face-Negotiation Theory diagram
Phase 3: Advocacy	Weeks 9 to 12	CMM advocacy flyer distributed to policymakers; letter-writing campaign to legislators; administration briefing using task force report; social media campaign data recap

Throughout all three phases, consistent branding is very important. Every message should contain the A Fair Shot name, the AFairShot hashtag, and the navy and gold color palette. The goal is not a single viral moment. It's a steady presence that makes economic inequality on campus impossible to ignore.

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