

## Food Security & Habits Assessment

### Brief description of program / project:

During fall 2013 the Center for Student Wellness and Master of Nutrition student Alice Ma conducted an assessment examining food insecurity and nutrition habits among University of Utah college students.

### Who was asked to complete the survey:

A convenience sample of 226 University of Utah students was surveyed during the fall of 2013. Students were recruited to take the survey from events such as Plazafest, the Wellness Fair, and various tabling at the Marriott Library and the Union building.

**Respondents:** There were 226 survey respondents total. Participants who were under the age of 18 were eliminated from the final data report, giving a final sample size of N=220.

### Administration Type:

- iTouch

### Summary of Key Findings:

#### Demographics

- Gender: 53% Female, 45% Male, 2% other self-identified gender
- Class standing: 22% Freshmen, 15% Sophomore, 23% Junior, 20% Senior, 20% Graduate
- Race: 22% Asian, 4% Black/African American, 13% Latino, 3% Middle Eastern, 3% Native American/American Indian, 59% White/Caucasian, 3% Other or self-identified race
- Age: 42% 18-20 yrs, 25% 21-24 yrs, 22% 25-30 yrs, 8% 31-39 yrs, 3% 40+ yrs
- Living Situation: 32% on campus, 3% fraternity/sorority housing, 27% off-campus alone/with roommates, 26% off-campus with parents, 12% off-campus with spouse/partner/children
- Sexual Orientation: 93% heterosexual, 6% bisexual, 3% gay, 2% queer, 1% lesbian

#### Food Security and Dietary Habits

- Food Security: Based on an adapted U.S. Household Food Security Survey **51% of respondents were categorized as having “very low food security” or “low food security” (17% “very low food security,” 34% “low food security”).** A significant, negative correlation was seen between food insecurity and income ( $p < .05$ ), as well as a positive association between food insecurity and financial stress ( $p < .01$ ).
- Gender and Food Security: Of those who were categorized as having “very low food security”, 43% were female, 3% intersex, and 57% were male, and 5% transgender. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option. **There was a significant ( $p < .5$ ) association between food insecurity and those who classified themselves as transgender.**

- Class Standing and Food Security: Of those who were categorized as having “very low food security”, 13.5% were freshmen, 11% sophomore, 35% junior, 32% senior, and 8% graduate students. **There was a significant ( $p<.5$ ) association between food insecurity and those with junior or graduate class standing.**
- Race and Food Security: Of those who were categorized as having “very low food security”, 14% identified as Asian, 8% as Black/African American, 8% as Latino, 5% as Middle Eastern, 8% as Native American/American Indian, and 57% as White/Caucasian. A total of 43% of those who were food insecure identified as non-white/Caucasian. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option. No significant associations were seen between food insecurity and race.
- Age and Food Security: Of those who were categorized as having “very low food security”, 30% were between the ages of 18-20 years old, 35% between 21-24 years old, 16% 25-30 years old, 13% 30-39 years old, and 5% 40+ years old. No significant association was seen between age and food security status.
- Living situation and Food Security: Of those who were categorized as having “very low food security”, 38% lived off-campus alone or with roommates, 22% lived on campus, 16% off-campus with spouse/partner/children, 16% off-campus with parents, and 8% in fraternity/sorority housing. **A significant positive association ( $p<.5$ ) was seen between those who lived off-campus alone or with roommates as well as those who lived in fraternity/sorority housing, and food insecurity.**
- Sexual orientation and Food Security: Of those who were categorized as having “very low food security”, 97% identified as heterosexual, 8% bisexual, 3% gay, 3% lesbian, and 3% queer. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option. Not significant associations were seen between food insecurity and sexual orientation.
- Dietary Habits: No significant relationships were seen between food security and dietary habits. However, **61% of the sample population consumed two or fewer servings of fruits and vegetables per day, with 5% meeting the recommended amount of 5+ servings per day. 45% consumed two or fewer servings of whole grains per day (recommended 3 oz. per day on 2000 kcal diet), and 14% consumed five or more servings. 43% ate prepackaged meals or meals outside the home at least four times a week. 82% reported convenience and time as a reason for eating prepackaged meals or meals outside the home. There was a significant, positive correlation between whole grain and fruit and vegetable intake ( $p<.01$ ).**

### Actions Taken:

The results of this assessment indicated that food insecurity may be an issue for University of Utah students, as 51% of respondents fell into some level of food insecurity. Based on this assessment, the Center for Student Wellness better recognizes the implication food insecurity may have on our students. As a result the Center for Student Wellness is now partnering with the Women’s Resource Center and

Campus Store to create the universities first-ever food pantry. Having access to quality, free food is a needed resource on this campus to empower students to focus on their academics rather than worrying about where their next meal may come from.

**Which department and/or program goals does this program / project align with?**

**Which Student Affairs goals does this program / project align with?**

- 1. Develop students as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the body, mind and spirit.
- 6. Utilize a coordinated assessment, evaluation and research approach to promote data driven decision-making.
- 8. Promote the effective use of best practices in Student Affairs departments, programs and services.

**Which Learning Domain(s) does this program / project align with?**

- Health & Wellness