Characterizing Food Insecurity at a Northeast Land-grant University

Alana Ruth Davidson
University of New Hampshire, Durham, arq236@wildcats.unh.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholars.unh.edu/honors
Part of the Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition Commons, and the Other Nutrition Commons

Recommended Citation
Davidson, Alana Ruth, "Characterizing Food Insecurity at a Northeast Land-grant University" (2017). Honors Theses and Capstones. 327.
http://scholars.unh.edu/honors/327

This Senior Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses and Capstones by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.
Characterizing Food Insecurity at a Northeast Land-grant University

Abstract
In 2015, 15.8 million U.S. households were food insecure. While nationally food insecurity is assessed at the household and childhood level, university students are not explicitly monitored. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of food insecurity at a northeast land grant university and characterize the contributing factors. A pilot study (n=211) was conducted in fall 2014 among a general nutrition class and found that 12.4% of students were food insecure, with another 5.7% reported marginal food security. A larger, university wide survey among graduate and undergraduate students was conducted in fall 2015 (n=943) and found that 25% of students were food insecure and 9.6% had marginal food security. Students who reported receiving financial aid or identified as a first generation student were more likely to be food insecure (OR 1.84, p=0.007; OR 1.73, p=0.006, respectively). In-person interviews (n=5) found that very low food secure students were frequently eating 1-2 meals a day and were unable to afford fresh produce despite the desire to include in their diet. However, students reported that if things “got worse” they could ask their parents for help. Collectively this work expands our understanding of food insecurity on a university campus.

Keywords
college, food insecurity, higher education

Subject Categories
Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition | Other Nutrition

This senior honors thesis is available at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository: http://scholars.unh.edu/honors/327
Characterizing Food Insecurity at a Northeast Land-grant University

Alana R. Davidson and Jesse S. Morrell
Department of Molecular, Cellular, and Biomedical Sciences
University of New Hampshire

In 2015, 15.8 million U.S. households were food insecure. While nationally food insecurity is assessed at the household and childhood level, university students are not explicitly monitored. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of food insecurity at a northeast land grant university and characterize the contributing factors. A pilot study (n=211) was conducted in fall 2014 among a general nutrition class and found that 12.4% of students were food insecure, with another 5.7% reported marginal food security. A larger, university wide survey among graduate and undergraduate students was conducted in fall 2015 (n=943) and found that 25% of students were food insecure and 9.6% had marginal food security. Students who reported receiving financial aid or identified as a first generation student were more likely to be food insecure (OR 1.84, p=0.007; OR 1.73, p=0.006, respectively). In-person interviews (n=5) found that very low food secure students were frequently eating 1-2 meals a day and were unable to afford fresh produce despite the desire to include in their diet. However, students reported that if things “got worse” they could ask their parents for help. Collectively this work expands our understanding of food insecurity on a university campus.