

# **FOOD INSECURITY: ESTIMATING NEED, STAKEHOLDER INTEREST, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE INTERVENTIONS ON CAMPUS**

MM Henniger<sup>1</sup>, SB Sisson<sup>1</sup>, MS Wetherill<sup>1,2,3</sup>, LA Hoffman<sup>1</sup>, C Macedo<sup>4</sup>, and B Williams<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, OKC, OK

<sup>2</sup>Department of Health Promotion Sciences, Hudson College of Public Health University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Tulsa, OK

<sup>3</sup>Department of Family and Community Medicine, OU-TU School of Community Medicine, College of Medicine, Tulsa, OK

<sup>4</sup>Hunger Free Oklahoma, Tulsa, OK

**Background:** Food insecurity affects college students at higher rates than the US general population. Little is known about how food insecurity rates differ across academic health campus stakeholders, including students, staff, and faculty. Food insecurity is associated with adverse academic performance and health outcomes, and on-campus food assistance programs are a growing trend.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to examine rate of food insecurity among stakeholders at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (OUHSC) and identify favorable solutions.

**Methods:** This cross-sectional study used an electronic survey through REDCap that was distributed to all students, staff, and faculty (estimated n=9,263) currently attending or working at both OUHSC campuses (Oklahoma City and Tulsa). Food insecurity was measured using the USDA 18-Item Household Food Security Survey. Additional questions gathered interest in different on-campus food assistance programs, perceived barriers for pantry use, demographics, and university role. Frequencies and chi-squared analyses to explore associations between food insecurity and role were calculated in SPSS.

**Results:** Among Oklahoma City campus respondents (n=1,171), 11.8% were from the College of Allied Health, and 23.7% reported food insecurity in the past 12 months. Staff (32.3%) and students (19.7%) experienced significantly higher rates of food insecurity compared to faculty (1.8%). Those reporting food insecurity were most interested in a farmers' market or stand (57.6%) or monthly boxes of fresh food (57.2%) as potential campus assistance programs; fewer desired food pantries (45.0%). Common perceived barriers specific to food pantry use were "feeling like other people need the food more" (61.2%) and "embarrassment" (51.8%).

**Discussions/Conclusions:** One in three university staff and one in five students experience food insecurity at OUHSC, which is higher than the national average, yet slightly lower than rates observed at 2-year and 4-year universities. University leadership should explore viability of fresh fruit and vegetable assistance programs, while working to minimize stigma associated with food assistance use.

**Relevance to Allied Health:** These findings show that food insecurity impacts students, staff, and faculty across OUHSC, including the College of Allied Health. This research can be utilized to spread awareness of food insecurity among allied health professionals and to inform establishment of appropriate interventions to lessen the impacts of food insecurity across all disciplines.