Food Insecurity
Among Students at Rutgers-New Brunswick

Cara L. Cuite, Ph.D.
Department of Human Ecology, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Rutgers Against Hunger

Steph Brescia, Ph.D.
School of Graduate Studies
April 23, 2020
Presenters

Cara Cuite, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department Human Ecology
Steph Brescia, Ph.D., School of Graduate Studies
Jennifer Wiseman, M.S., M.S.N., APN-C, Family Nurse Practitioner, Student Health
Cathryn Heath, M.D., Director of Student Health
Kerri Willson, Ed.M., Director of Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships
Anne Newman, Ph.D., Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs
Marina Vineis, M.S., R.D.N., Nutritional Sciences Graduate Program
What is food insecurity?

What are we doing at RU-NB?

Screen & Intervene program

What is the future of food insecurity at RU-NB?
What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

Food Insecurity Occurs Along a Spectrum

- Worry about food supply
- Poorly balanced meals
- Skipping meals
- Not eating for an entire day

LESS SEVERE — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — MORE SEVERE

- Food ran out
- Cutting size of meals
- Weight loss
2019 Survey Administration
• Total of 227 institutions, mostly community colleges
• Overall response rate 8%

Four-Year Institutions
• 56 Colleges & Universities (85% Public)
• 48,618 respondents

Four-Year Institution Findings
• 33% of students were Food Insecure in the past 30 days
Survey of Food Insecurity Among Rutgers-NB Students

2016

- Cara Cuite, Ph.D., Department of Human Ecology and Rutgers Cooperative Extension
- Stephanie Brescia, Ed.M., Graduate School of Education
- Victoria Gregorio, Ph.D., Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning
- Dayna Weintraub, Ph.D., Student Affairs Research and Assessment
- Kerri Willson, Ed.M., Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships

2019

- Cara Cuite, Ph.D., Department of Human Ecology and Rutgers Cooperative Extension
- Stephanie Brescia, Ph.D., School of Graduate Studies
- La Reina Bates, Ph.D., Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning
- Dayna Weintraub, Ph.D., Student Affairs Research and Assessment
- Kerri Willson, Ed.M., Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships
- Mark Walzer, Ed.M., Higher Education Program
Survey Methodology-2016

Administration

- November 22 - December 19, 2016

Response

- 19% response rate
- 8,393 students completed

Representativeness

- The sample is representative of the population with some known minor or small differences

Prevalence of Food Insecurity at Rutgers-NB 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduate Students (n = 6,823)</th>
<th>Graduate Students (n = 1,570)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Living arrangements and food insecurity

- Undergraduates who **live off campus** are more likely to be food insecure than those who live on campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living</th>
<th>Food insecurity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Off campus</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meal plans and food insecurity

• Undergraduates **without a meal plan** are significantly more likely to be food insecure than those with a meal plan

• 45.8% vs. 29.4%

Food insecurity is associated with GPA

Use of Food Resources

SNAP
• 2.2% of students have SNAP

Pantry Use
• 1.6% use RSFP*
• 5.4% use off campus pantries

Campus Dining Halls
• 25.1% take food for later
• 19.0% stay for multiple meals

Campus Events
• 23% attend events for free food
Lived Experience of Food Insecure Students

• Perceived lack of awareness of food insecurity on campus
• View food insecurity as a private, personal problem
• Importance of peer support networks
• Hesitant to seek assistance due to issues of stigma & shame

I don't think the majority of the population is aware of how much it is and issue because it's not something that's displayed. It's something that people are ashamed of. It's something that people doesn't want anyone to know. That's just a personal situation is like, okay, this is my situation, this is my reality.

N.B., findings are based on qualitative interviews conducted after the survey.
Institutional Response to Student Food Insecurity
2016-Present
RUTGERS STUDENT FOOD PANTRY
• Opened in 2016
• 3,118 total visits
• 804 unique visitors as of Fall 2019

DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE
• Referrals to/from Rutgers Student Food Pantry
• Provide emergency funds
  • Meal plans
  • Grocery store gift cards
  • Rides to grocery store
• SNAP enrollment assistance
RUSA to pass resolution for Meal Swipes for Charity

September 12, 2014 1:37am | By Cassandra Brighman
RUSA to pass resolution for Meal Swipes for Charity

September 17, 2018 | 12:00 AM | By Kristin Wrightman

Photo by: Kristin Wrightman | The Daily Targum

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MARKET BUCKS
for fresh fruits and vegetables • not redeemable for cash
paso frutas y verduras frescas: no se puede cambiar por efectivo
RUSA to pass resolution for Meal Swipes for Charity

The Student Farm at Rutgers University
October 29 at 12:10 PM

Making our weekly delivery to @rufoodpantry! If you are a Rutgers student in need of nutrient-dense food, we drop off fresh veg from the farm every Tuesday.

[Image of a market sign: MARKET BUCKS]

[Image of a vegetable stand with various produce]
RUSA to pass resolution for Meal Swipes for Charity

September 17, 2019 12:00 AM  By Demetra Brightman

The Student Farm at Rutgers University
October 29 at 12:10 PM

Making our weekly delivery to @rufoodpantry! If you are a Rutgers student and need of nutrient-dense food, we drop off fresh veg from the farm every Tuesday.

FREE FOOD ALERT

Join us for lunch this week at the College Ave Community Cafe (100 College Ave- enter on Mine Street). Free lunch for students served 11:30-2pm.

FOOD TODAY... pizza donated by Panico's, coffee, tea, eggs, pancakes, sausage, salad...

Rutgers Student Food Pantry
November 11 at 11:28 AM

FREE LUNCH FOR STUDENTS
MONDAY-FRIDAY @ 11:30-2:00PM

Student Community Center
100 College Ave
Rutgers University
New Brunswick/campus (Enter off Mine Street)

MARKET BUCKS
for fresh fruits and vegetables • not redeemable for cash • para frutas y verduras frescas • no se puede cambiar por efectivo

国内市场
农贸市场

Market locations and hours: nbcfarmersmarket.com
Para horas de aberturas del mercado: nbcfarmersmarket.com
Leadership Response

- Rutgers University Task Force on Student Aid
  Board of Trustees provided $2 million in aid in 2018

- RU-NB Chancellor’s Task Force on Student Essential Needs
  NB-wide interdisciplinary committee created in 2019
Food Insecurity
Screen & Intervene at Rutgers Student Health
Fl Screen & Intervene: Rutgers Student Health Referral Project Team

• Melodee Lasky, M.D.
• Cathryn Heath, M.D.
• Diane Heimlich, APN-C
• Jennifer Wiseman, MS, MSN, APN-C
• Glenn Davis

Rutgers Student Health

• Dayna Weintraub, Ph.D.
• Kerri Willson, Ed.M.
• Anne Newman, Ph.D.

Rutgers Student Affairs

• Cara Cuite, Ph.D.
• Steph Brescia, Ph.D.
• Marina Vineis, M.S., R.D.N.

Research Team
Rutgers Student Health Process

Student completes Personal Health History questionnaire online, with FI screener.

Go to appointment at Student Health (health centers and CAPS), practitioner will read screener.

If FI, given referral postcard to Rutgers Student Food Pantry and DOS Office.
Rutgers Student Health Process

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Rutgers University-New Brunswick

FOOD RESOURCES

Rutgers Student

Patient Name

Prescription for:

**Rutgers Student Food Pantry**, 39 Union Street
(848)932-5500 Monday–Friday 9:00am–4:00pm
Students are welcome to visit the pantry anytime during operating hours.

**Dean of Students**, 88 College Ave
(848)932-2300 Monday–Friday 8:30am–5:00pm
Please call to schedule an appointment to meet with a representative from the Dean’s Office.

Scan to take a virtual tour of the Rutgers Student Food Pantry!
We used a multi-method approach and studied multiple outcomes during the 2018-19 academic year.

Only some are discussed here.
How many students that visit RSH are food insecure?

**METHOD:**
- RSH shared PHH findings with us.
- Thanks Glenn Davis from RSH!

Student completes Personal Health History questionnaire online, with FI screener
How many students that visit RSH are food insecure?

**METHOD:**
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  - Thanks Glenn Davis from RSH!

**FINDINGS:**
Lower food insecurity rate than in the school-wide sample—9.7%
- Different population
- Different measurement tool/# of questions
- Different time of year
- Different setting/lowered sense of anonymity
How many students that were referred used food resources?

**METHOD:**
- Used existing data from RSH, DOS and RSFP.
  - Issues:
    - FI status changed if students completed PHH multiple times.
    - Data entry issues made it hard to track some students.

If FI, given referral postcard to Rutgers Student Food Pantry and DOS Office
How many students that were referred used food resources?

METHOD:
• Used existing data from RSH, DOS and RSFP.
  • Issues:
    • FI status changed if students completed PHH multiple times.
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FINDINGS:
• Food pantry:
  • ~10% of FI students used pantry during study year
• Dean of students:
  • ~20% of FI students used DOS during study year
Numbers may change slightly, but regardless, we know we helped to get some students into the pantry/DOS, and that that there are more students we can reach.
Why don't food insecure students use resources?

METHOD

• Dr. Cathryn Heath invited all students that screened positively for food insecurity to participate in an interview with Steph Brescia

• 8 Students that were not connected to campus food resources were interviewed
Student Interviews: Findings

**SCREENING PROCESS**
- Half of students reported they were not screened
- Overall reaction to the process was positive
- Clinician conversations about food insecurity are valuable

**REFERRAL CARD**
- Recommendation to add that you do not need to prove income to use the pantry
- Recommendation for electronic distribution
- Highlighting the food pantry was common

**BARRIERS TO PANTRY USE**
- Logistical difficulties
- Social stigma
- Not feeling "poor enough" to use resources
- Reserving resources for other students
- Not wanting to ask for help

**BARRIERS TO DEAN OF STUDENTS USE**
- Not understanding the role of the DOS office
- Not wanting to ask for help
- Thinking their situation is not severe enough or not wanting to explain the details
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## Student Interviews: Findings

### Screening Process
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- Overall reaction to the process was positive
- Clinician conversations about food insecurity are valuable

### Referral Card
- Recommendation to add that you do not need to prove income to use the pantry
- Recommendation for electronic distribution
- Highlighting the food pantry was common

### Barriers to Pantry Use
- Logistical difficulties
- Social stigma
- Not feeling "poor enough" to use resources
- Reserving resources for other students
- Not wanting to ask for help

### Barriers to Dean of Students Use
- Not understanding the role of the DOS office
- Not wanting to ask for help
- Thinking their situation is not severe enough or not wanting to explain the details
What did the RSH medical staff think of the program?

• Dr. Cathryn Heath invited all RSH staff to participate in an interview with Marina Vineis.
  • 18 participated
Medical Team Interviews: Themes & Subthemes

OVERALL PROGRAM IMPACT AND EFFICACY
- Time and ease
- Perceived value
- Reception of the program

TRAINING ADEQUACY
- Sufficient with room for improvements
- Newly hired employee training

THE FOOD INSECURITY SCREENER
- Perceived accuracy
- Potential bias
- Perceived language & cultural barriers
- Inability to review the PHH
- Recommended screener placement

THE FOOD INSECURITY REFERRAL CARD
- Availability
- Visibility
- Verbal referral preference
- Perceived student reactions
- Documentation

Slide courtesy of Marina Vineis, M.S., R.D.N.
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Slide courtesy of Marina Vineis, M.S., R.D.N.
Reflections on the RSH Food Insecurity Screen & Intervene Program
Conclusions & Recommendations

The program has succeeded in connecting some FI students to services. But there is room to improve.

We have discussed recommendations and potential improvements/changes to the program with RSH.
What’s new in 2019 survey?

• Includes measures of housing insecurity and homelessness.

• Stay tuned for our report!
Basic Needs Insecurity During COVID-19

- How have our students been affected by COVID-19?
- How has their level of basic needs insecurity changed as a result of COVID-19?
- How can Rutgers better support them now?
Acknowledgements

- Melodee Lasky, M.D.
- Cathryn Heath, M.D.
- Diane Heimlich, A.P.N.-C.
- Jennifer Wiseman, M.S., M.S.N., APN-C
- Glenn Davis
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- Kerri Willson, Ed.M.
- Marina Vineis, M.S., R.D.N.
- La Reina Bates, Ph.D.
- Robert Heffernan, Ph.D.
- Kelly Sokolowski
- Celine LaBelle
- Booker George, B.S.
- Lucas Marxen, M.S.
- Mike Abdallah
- Joe Rudawski
- Lenard Sarabia
- Pamela Harris
- Dayna Weintraub, Ph.D.
- Student Affairs Marketing & Communication

- RSH staff for implementing the program, especially those that participated in interviews
- Staff at DOS and RSFP for their cooperation with project
- All the students who participated, especially those who completed surveys or interviews
Thank you!

Questions?

All of the authors are here on WebEx.

Cara Cuite, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department Human Ecology
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Student Affairs Assessment

• How will you apply the information we’ve presented into your work?
• How can we help?
• What additional questions do you have about student food insecurity?
Resources

• Food Insecurity Among Students at RUNB (Full Report)
  • http://humeco.rutgers.edu/documents_pdf/RU_Student_Food_Insecurity_2018.pdf

• Understanding Coping Mechanisms
  • https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2194587X.2019.1669463

• Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice
  • https://hope4college.com/

• College and University Food Bank Alliance
  • cufba.org
How did students react to the screening process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disbelief</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Prevalence of Food Insecurity at Rutgers-New Brunswick-2016


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<th>Graduate Students % (n = 1,570)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Secure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High food security</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal food security</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Insecure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low food security</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low food security</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
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