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Food Insecurity Among College Students

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Food Insecurity Among College Students

Alison Hige GVSU SN

Background

- The United States government estimates 50.1 million individuals live with food insecurity, which represents one of the highest levels ever at 14.9% of Americans struggling to obtain food resources.
- The definition of food insecurity includes experiences of decreased caloric intake and quality of nutrition, lack of diversity in the diet, interrupted eating patterns, and hunger.

Objective

- To understand the scope of food insecurity as an issue in higher education.
- To write a resolution to present at the National Student Nurses Association's annual convention.

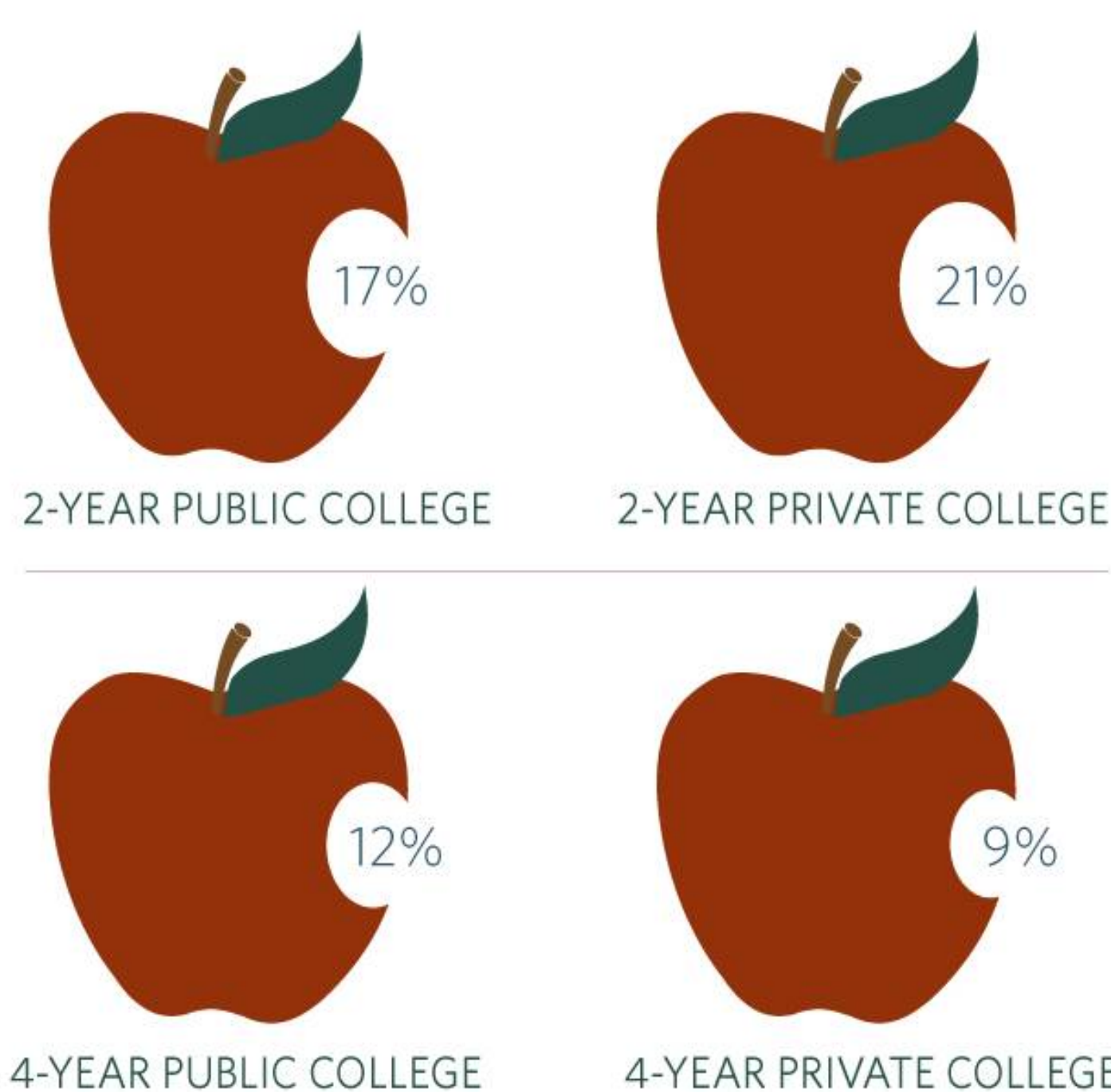
Literature Review

- Key words included "food insecurity", "college", "college students", "university", and "higher education"
- Reviewed articles between 2013 to 2018
- 26 articles included in final review
- 9 articles used to write resolution

FOOD INSECURITY in higher ed

The Urban Institute study "Assessing Food Insecurity On Campus" found that students at four-year colleges are less likely to be food insecure than students at two-year colleges.

Here are the percentages of post-secondary students who were food insecure between 2011 and 2015, by type of institution.*



The impact of food insecurity in higher education.

Literature Review Findings

- Research studies report food insecurity affects 14-59% of students at some point during their college career, which is higher than the rate among the general population.
- Food insecurity increases the risk of poor physical health outcomes, such as hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and diabetes.
- Students with food insecurity reported higher rates of mental health illness, including depression, severe anxiety, eating disorders, and suicidal ideations.
- Students suffering from food insecurity have limited dietary quality and poor nutrition. The food insecure student's diet is high in carbohydrates and fat, and low in protein and fiber.
- Food insecure students are more likely to have declining grades and drop classes compared to students that have adequate food security.
- Food insecure college students struggle to share information about their nutritional needs with peers in order to avoid judgment due to the stigma surrounding the "starving college student" stereotype.
- College students should be considered a high-priority population because patterns that develop in early adulthood can continue into later adulthood.

Conclusions

- Food insecurity proves to be a major issue among the college student population.
- Increased awareness is needed to combat this problem.
- Further research should be completed on how to reduce food insecurity among college students.



GVSU's food resource, Replenish, offers two locations for students to utilize on campus.

Nursing Implications

- More research needs to be completed specifically addressing nursing interventions related to food insecurity among college students.
- Screening tools to identify food insecure students, specifically at on-campus health centers/clinics.
- Referral to appropriate resources.

Resolution

- This topic was written as a resolution to present at the National Student Nurses' Association's annual convention (April 2019) for approval and awareness to impact change.

Implementation of the Topic

- GVSU's Student Nurses' Association (SNA) has supported the topic of food insecurity by partnering to add a second Replenish location, GVSU's food resource, to the downtown health campus.
- SNA has increased awareness of Replenish through advertising and hosting food drives.

*Data refers to "percentage of adults identified as food insecure in the past 12 months." Percentages represent a 5-year average between 2011-2015. Source: Assessing Food Insecurity on Campus report, released Aug 1, 2017. Data from Current Population Survey (CPS). See the report for more details.