FOOD INSECURITY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

Spring 2018
This report has been produced for internal use only. Research for the report was conducted in the course Sociology in Action (SOC 493/593) in spring semester 2018. If you have any questions about the report you may direct them to the course instructor, Dr. Carol Glasser, at carolglasser@mnmu.edu.

Do not reproduce or publish any content from this report without prior permission from Dr. Glasser.
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the College of Education, the Kessel Peace Institute, and the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Minnesota State University, Mankato for developing programming about food insecurity on campus this semester and for encouraging this study as a part of this programming. We are also grateful to the Department of Sociology and Corrections for supporting classes that allow for project-based and service learning opportunities. Conducting this study has been a valuable experience for all of us.

We would especially like to thank Tina England from Second Harvest Heartland and Karen Anderson, Director of Community Engagement at Minnesota State University, Mankato, for their valuable input and support.

Most importantly, we would like to thank all the students at Minnesota State University, Mankato who took the time to complete our survey and participate in interviews with us. We hope this study inspires the university to better support you and your needs. Hunger should not be a part of the college experience.
“I can’t focus in class when my stomach won’t quit growling. So I drink a lot a water and chew it before I swallow it. I trick my brain to think that I’m eating.”

– A Minnesota State Mankato Student
FOOD INSECURITY
AMONG UNDERGRADUATES AT MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Being hungry should not be a part of the college experience. However, the reality is that many students experience difficulties affording and accessing regular and nutritious meals. This study explores the prevalence of food insecurity at Minnesota State University, Mankato and provides a set of recommendations to offer potential solutions to reduce food insecurity among the student population.

Food Insecurity Defined

Food insecurity (FI) is generally defined as a lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable food (Dubick, Mathews, and Cady 2016). Hunger is a term that is often used interchangeably with the term food insecurity. However, hunger, is defined as the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a recurrent or involuntary lack of food (Poverty and Race Research Action Council 2018). Hunger is not included in the definition of FI, though it is recognized as an individual-level physiological condition that may result from FI (USDA 2016).
Method of Study

Survey: An anonymous self-administered online survey was emailed to a representative sample of undergraduate students, taking classes full-time, on-campus in the spring 2018 semester.

Interviews: Survey respondents were asked if they were willing to be contacted to schedule a follow-up interview. Willing respondents were contacted for a follow-up, in-depth interview.

Autoethnography: A collective autoethnographic analysis was conducted to better understand the role of transportation in food insecurity.

Resource Assessment: The data from this research measured the current level of need and knowledge of resources available to students. An assessment was conducted to determine how available resources meet these needs and to make productive suggestions for how Minnesota State Mankato can help meet reduce FI among undergraduate students.

Who is experiencing Food Insecurity

Minnesota State Mankato students are experiencing levels of food insecurity higher than the national average. Sixty-four percent of students at Minnesota State Mankato experience some level of food insecurity. Black, African American, and Asian American students are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity. This includes both domestic and international students.
**FINANCIAL BURDENS**

Students have many financial burdens. Many students have to work to balance school, housing, and food expenses, and often they have to choose between food and other expenses. Students’ financial burdens include loans and credit card debt, both of which are often used as a main source of purchasing food.

21% of students with credit card debt owe $20,000 or more

14% of students with loans have taken out $40,000 or more

37% of students who work, work 20 hours or more per week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FI Level</th>
<th>Moderate FI</th>
<th>High FI</th>
<th>Very high FI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who chose between school and food expenses</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who chose between school and housing expenses</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LIMITATIONS ON TIME LEAD TO:**

Not eating as healthy as wanted
Relying on convenience foods
Skipping meals or a whole day of meals

**STRATEGIES TO AVOID HUNGER INCLUDE:**

Sleeping through hunger pains
Drinking beverages instead of eating
Attending campus events with free food

**LACK OF ACCESS & AWARENESS**

While Minnesota State Mankato does have numerous resources to accommodate students, there is a lack of awareness about food insecurity and resources for food insecure students.

- **Only two** FI students surveyed reported utilizing Campus Cupboard
- Students identified a **lack of culturally appropriate foods** on campus, at local grocery stores, and Campus Cupboard as a barrier
- 62% of FI students **did not know where to go** to find out about campus resources
- 53% of FI students **did not feel they had someone they could trust** on campus for help finding resources
- Students **fear being attached to the negative stigmas** that come with being food insecure and utilizing services
Recommendations

Minnesota State Mankato students are experiencing high levels of food insecurity. FI is associated with housing instability, increased stress, and not performing well academically. Understanding students’ struggles and strategies provides insight into areas where Minnesota State Mankato can improve their services and help students maintain consistent access to healthy food. Improvement can come by providing more **access, awareness, and availability** to services. Some strategies and recommendations for the university to better serve students include:

**Immediate Actions**
- Promotional materials/pamphlets
- Meal sharing options/dining dollar donations
- Skills training in FYEX 100
- Access to dietician for all students
- Leveraging community partnerships

**Future Actions**
- Campus supported food pantry
- Centralized office of student resources
- Dedicated bus line to grocery store

---

**Contributing Authors**

Free Briggs  
Cole Denisen  
Kelsey L. Cawiezell  
Bridget M Drummer  
Latavia M. Ford  
Carol L. Glasser  
Evan Gresk  
Nicholas S. Kuempel

McKenzie J. Lindberg  
Kristin N. Mossman  
Samuel P. Orinstien  
Dominique J. Revis  
Brenna J. Rice  
Jessica L. Ungs  
Annabelle G. Vang  
Tina Vang

---

**References**


Dubick, James, Brandon Mathews, and Clare Cady. 2016. “Hunger on Campus: The 1253 Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students.” College and University Food Bank 1254 Alliance. 1255  
1256 Retrieved March1, 2018

Full report available online at  
https://tinyurl.com/MSUFIStudy2018
FOOD INSECURITY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

Spring 2018

Report contributors:

Archibald “Free” Briggs
Cole Denisen
Kelsey L. Cawiezell
Bridget M Drummer
Latavia M. Ford
Carol L. Glasser
Evan Gresk
Nicholas S. Kuempel
McKenzie J. Lindberg
Kristin N. Mossman
Samuel P. Orinstien
Dominique J. Revis
Brenna J. Rice
Jessica L. Ungs
Annabelle G. Vang
Tina Vang
LIST OF FIGURES
Figure 1...11
Prevalence of food insecurity among students at Minnesota State Mankato
Figure 2...13
Percent within Each Race/Ethnic Category Experiencing Food Insecurity
Figure 3...14
Percent of food insecure students, within each food insecurity level, who have had to make choices between buying food and paying for other expenses
Figure 4...16
Percentage of students reporting the following experiences of housing instability in the past year

LIST OF TABLES
Table 1...10
Demographic characteristics of study sample compared to university population
Table 2...12
Indicators of food insecurity
Table 3...32
Students’ two primary sources of getting food in the past month
Table 4...35
Benchmark Schools
Table 5...38
Summary of recommendations
INTRODUCTION

Being hungry should not be a part of the college experience. However, for many college students it is. The population of college students has recently gained national attention for their unique experience with food insecurity (FI), which is defined as lack of access to quality nutritious and affordable food. Minnesota State Mankato is not immune from this issue. In fact, as this study highlights, Minnesota State Mankato students suffer from food insecurity at rates higher than the national average. We explore the link between FI and housing instability (HI), and their effects on students’ education and other aspects of their lives.

The current study utilizes multimethod data collection. Through the use of 260 surveys, 15 in-depth interviews, and a collaborative autoethnography, we assess the prevalence and severity of FI on Minnesota State Mankato students in the spring semester of 2018. This study focuses on a non-urban population and utilizes a representative random sample of students, adding to the existing literature on this topic. We also conduct a resource assessment to address the needs indicated by students in the surveys and interviews and provide a set of future recommendations that Minnesota State Mankato can take in light of our findings.
BACKGROUND

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity (FI) is generally defined as a lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable food (Dubick, Mathews, and Cady 2016). Hunger is a term that is often used interchangeably with the term food insecurity. Hunger is defined as the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a recurrent or involuntary lack of food (Poverty and Race Research Action Council 2018). Hunger is not included in the definition of FI, though it is recognized as an individual-level physiological condition that may result from FI (USDA 2016).

Current figures from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) identifies that 15.6 million (12.3%) households were food insecure at some point of the year in 2016 (Dubick, Mathews, and Cady 2016; USDA 2017). Despite the availability of supplemental resources provided by the government, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), this number has remained relatively unchanged since 2015 (USDA 2017).

Food insecurity impacts people of every age, gender, race, and level of education. However, some socioeconomic factors are associated with increased risk of food insecurity. Those living in areas following a natural disaster or other crisis (World Food Programme 2018), racial and ethnic minorities (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2015; USDA 2017), the elderly (Nord and Kattner 2006) and children (USDA 2017) are more likely to experience food insecurity.

Food Insecurity on College Campuses

College students experience FI at a rate that is estimated to be four times higher than the national average (Dubick, Mathews, and Cady 2016). Studies of college student populations are reporting food insecurity prevalence ranging from 14 percent to 59 percent (Bruening et al. 2016; Calvez et al. 2016; Chapparro, Zaghloul, Holck, and Dobbs 2009; Crutchfield et al. 2016; Gaines, Robb, Knol, and Sickler 2014; Martinez et al. 2016; Morris, Smith, Davis, and Null 2016; Patton-Lopez, Lopez-Cevallos, Cancel-Tirado, and Vazquez 2014; Silva et al. 2015). Rurally located college campuses seem especially prone
to FI, as a study of a rural college in Oregon reported a prevalence of 59 percent (Patton-Lopez et al. 2014), compared with 21 percent (Chapparro et al. 2009), 24 percent (Crutchfield et al. 2016), and 37 percent in urban locations (Bruening et al. 2016). Additionally, Bruening et al. (2016) reported that students living in campus dorms and students on meal plans were still at risk for FI, despite increased access to campus services.

As previously noted minorities experience FI rates significantly higher than the national average (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2015). Little information is available on the post-secondary institutions primarily serving these groups, although the available research indicates that FI can have a significant impact on the self-esteem and relationship dynamics of female students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) (Lin et al. 2013). Other studies find African American, black and Hispanic students were more likely than Asian or white students to be food insecure (Maroto et al. 2015; Martinez, Maynard and Ritchie 2016; Morris et al. 2016). Among the studies that accounted for race and ethnicity, African-American and black students were identified as the most at risk for FI (Bruening et al. 2016; Martinez et al. 2016; Maroto et al. 2015).

The academic literature regarding FI on college campuses is generally accepting of the USDA’s definition of FI, however, there are additional aspects to consider. While hunger is not included in the USDA’s definition, the negative psychological and physiological effects that FI may induce should also be considered when developing a holistic approach to the issue (Silva et al. 2015). Dubick, Mathews, and Cady (2016) provide a simplistic definition of FI as a lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable food. While this is a start, other researchers have noted that the quality of procured food is just as relevant as the quantity (Silva et al. 2015). Another relevant consideration is the recognition of the importance of acquiring food in socially acceptable ways (Gaines, Robb, Knol, and Sickler 2014; Maroto, Snelling, and Linck 2015). All of these issues should be considered when assessing FI on college campus.

**Housing Instability on College Campus**

The issue of housing stability must also be addressed when assessing FI on college campuses as research has found that a significant number of students struggling with FI
also encounter a lack of fixed, affordable housing options (Dubick, Mathews, and Cady 2016; Tsui et al. 2011). As rent prices continue to rise and the number of affordable housing options located around campuses dwindle, students are at an increased risk for experiencing some form of housing instability (HI). Much like FI, HI has numerous definitions in use. Tsui et al. (2011) has adjusted the federal definition of HI to be more applicable to the student experience, defining housing instability as one or more of the following: difficulty paying rent due to rate increases and lack of funds, eviction, safety concerns, forcible ejection, difficulty in locating available shelter, removal from shelter, and foreclosure.

The transient nature of the homeless makes accurate estimations of housing instability and homelessness difficult to come by. Point-in-time estimates from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) indicated that over 553,742 people are homeless during any given night (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2017). While homelessness has fallen nationally since 2010, homelessness among college students appears to be on the rise (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al. 2015). On the 2012-2013 FAFSA, over 58,000 students reported encountering some form of HI (National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth 2014). Three separate studies conducted at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, California State University-Long Beach, and City University of New York (CUNY) returned ranges of prevalence from 5.4 percent to 41 percent (Tsui et al. 2011; Silva et al. 2015; Crutchfield et al. 2016). Additionally, women (47.5%) were more likely to experience housing related issues than males (36.5%), and students raising children (60.2%) were significantly more likely to experience HI than those without children (39.7%) (Tsui et al. 2011). The presence of an outside financial support system also seemed to play a large role in determining housing security. Students who worked more than 20 hours a week, and who financially supported themselves were more likely to experience HI than those who did not work and relied on family support (Tsui et al. 2011).

While the effects of HI on academics has not been as thoroughly explored, the literature that is available is deeply concerning. Students struggling with HI are thirteen
times more likely to have failed courses and eleven times more likely to have withdrawn from study (Silva et al. 2015).

Negative Impacts of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity has been linked with several adverse academic and health effects. Students encountering both FI and HI commonly report difficulty attending class and lower perceived performance on academic related tasks (Joo, Durband, and Grable 2008; Silva et al. 2015). Studies also indicate that students experiencing FI are more likely to have lower GPAs (Maroto et al. 2016; Martinez et al. 2016). Student persistence rates were also negatively affected, as those encountering FI and HI were found to be at a greater risk of suspending their education, reducing course load, or not completing their degree program (Joo et al. 2008; Martinez et al. 2016; Silva et al. 2015).

Previous literature has also shown links between FI and mental health outcomes. College students experiencing FI have been shown to be more likely to have depression and anxiety (Goldrick-Rab 2015; Silva et al. 2015; Bruening et al. 2016; Freudenburg 2011) and suicidal thoughts have been positively correlated with low levels of food security (Goldrick-Rab 2015). Additionally, a survey of students at the University of Boston, Massachusetts found a link between FI and likelihood of drug addiction and psychiatric hospitalization (Silva et al. 2015.) The stress associated with being food insecure is likely to be related to a wide variety of other mental health outcomes.

Overall physical health is also correlated with FI (Knol et al. 2017). Students in New York who reported their health as being less than “good” were one-and-a-half times more likely to also report being food insecure (Freudenburg 2011; Patton-Lopez et al. 2014). Effects in international students are more profound due to diet changes and FI. A collection of focus groups found that diet changes and FI are correlated with increased blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as weight gain in international students (Alakaam et al. 2015).
CURRENT STUDY

The goal of this study is to assess the prevalence and severity of food insecurity (FI) among Minnesota State Mankato undergraduate students. We do this so that we may identify and address gaps in support and offer potential solutions and interventions university leadership and other community stakeholders may implement to address this issue.

Current literature addressing FI among college students is skewed towards state-funded institutions, as most peer-reviewed studies addressing this issue have been conducted with students attending mid-sized or large public, urban campuses. This trend continues with the non-peer-reviewed literature as well, as most studies are done on public institutions located in predominantly urban areas. Similar to Bruening et al.’s (2016) findings, we found the majority of these studies employed convenience sampling methods to recruit students. Of those that utilized random sampling, the most common method was through email invitations sent to set number of randomized individuals attending the institutions.

Our study fills the gap in this literature by focusing on a non-urban population and utilizes a representative random sample of students. We also employ a combination of survey and interview techniques to have a more detailed and nuanced understanding for FI among students. There are two methodological components to this study—an online self-administered survey and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Institutional Review Board approval of this study is available in Appendix A. We also conducted a resource assessment to address the state of resources available to meet the needs students in the survey and interview portions of this study identified.

Measuring FI

Food insecurity was measured in both the survey and interview portions of the study. Of the various measures used to study FI, the most common is the short and long form of the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) provided through the USDA (e.g. Calvez et al. 2016; Gaines et al. 2014; Kashuba 2017; Knol et al. 2017; Maguire, O’Neil,
and Aberson 2016; Maroto, Snelling, and Link 2015; Martinez et al. 2017; Mirabitur et al. 2016; Morris et al. 2016; Patton-Lopez et al. 2014). We utilized a portion of the HFSSM—the September 2012 version of the 10-item U.S. Adult Food Security Scale, edited for a 30-day reference period and self-administration. A thirty-day reference period was used, rather than a one-year reference period, to assess FI while in school.

The 10-item U.S. Adult Food Security Scale is ideal for several reasons. First, it has been used consistently by the USDA since 1995 and is regularly vetted and updated to ensure that it is a valid and reliable measure of FI. Second, it is widely used in similar research, allowing for accurate comparisons between our institution and others. The 10-item U.S. Food Insecurity module begins with three basic statements about respondents’ eating behaviors and access to food in the past 30 days: “I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more”; “The food that I bought just didn’t last and I didn’t have money to get more”; and “I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.” If a respondent answered that any of these questions was “often” or “sometimes true” it indicates at least a moderate level of FI and they continued on to the complete the remainder of the module, all other respondents were identified as “food secure” and did not complete the remaining seven questions. Based on the number of questions in the module to which a respondent indicates was often or sometimes true they receive a score of 0-10. A score of 0 represents no FI, 1-2 indicates moderate FI, 3-5 is a high level and, 6-10 is very high. For the majority of our analysis we examine those in the high and very high categories of FI together, since both groups are in need of the most immediate attention from the university.

**Surveys**

An anonymous online self-administered survey was used to measure FI, housing instability, eating and spending habits, and to collect self-reported demographic information from respondents. Our study parameters were of undergraduate students at Minnesota State Mankato, enrolled in the spring 2018 semester, taking 12 or more credits, at least three of which were not online. This sample population reflects students who are most likely residential full-time students.
In spring 2018 a total of 9,526 students met these criteria. Minnesota State Mankato’s Office of Research and Sponsored Programs granted permission to contact a random sample of 2,100 students who fit these criteria. In total, 2,101 students were invited via an email invitation to participate. A total of 304 students responded to the survey. The survey response rate was 14.5 percent. A number of responses were incomplete and so were removed from the final sample. The final survey sample consisted of 260 students. Surveys were administered in late February to early March 2018 to avoid measuring food behaviors while on winter vacation, when students might experience non-typical eating situations such as holiday dinners.

In addition to FI measures, there were questions about housing instability, eating habits, finances, use of meal plans and campus resources and demographic information. The full survey is available in Appendix B.

**Interviews**

The last question of the survey asked respondents if they were willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Willing respondents were asked to provide an email address for follow-up contact and were later contacted for an interview. A total of 118 respondents indicated a willingness to participate in a follow up interview, but only 105 provided an email address. These respondents were contacted via email and invited to participate in an interview, resulting in 15 interviews. Since the survey was anonymous, interview respondents’ answers to the survey was not known so each interviewee completed the 10-item U.S. Adult Food Security Scale again. Administration of the FI scale was followed by an open-ended interview. The full interview schedule is available in Appendix C.

**Collaborative Autoethnography**

Transportation has been shown to be a major barrier to food access. This finding was repeated in our interviews as well. To better understand the issues surrounding a lack of transportation and food access, nine researchers took the bus to stores in Mankato for their groceries. All students memoed and analyzed their experiences to produce a
collaborative ethnographic analysis of the experience of relying on the bus system to
grocery shop.

**Resource Assessment**
The survey and interview data were able to measure the current level of need and
knowledge of resources available for food insecure students. To be able to make productive
suggestions for how Minnesota State Mankato can help to meet these needs a resource
assessment was conducted. The resource assessment examined what resources are
currently available to students as well investigating how other institutions have been able
to help food insecure students. The needs assessment includes: background research on
effective interventions and programs; interviews with people implementing and
administering programs in benchmark institutions; an assessment of Minnesota State
Mankato’s current has strengths; and areas for growth to support food insecure students.

**Additional Study Elements**
In addition to the research several additional items were developed to assist with creating
support for food insecure students at Minnesota State Mankato. These include:

- **Recommendations:** A set of recommendations for how the university should
  move forward to reduce FI at Minnesota State University, Mankato. (See the
  “Recommendations” section of report)

- **Advertising campaign:** A poster campaign to help educated students about and
  remove the stigma surrounding FI (Appendix D)

- **Pamphlets:** Pamphlets identify current resources on campus and educational
  materials for students about FI (Appendix E)

- **Resource lists:** A list and description of resources in the greater Mankato area
  (Appendix F)

- **Resource Map:** An interactive online map of resources in the greater Mankato
  area (Appendix G)
SURVEY RESULTS

Study Sample

A total of 260 students completed the survey. These respondents are similar to the general student population on most factors that are related to FI (Table 1). The study sample was evenly dispersed across academic year with 18 percent freshmen, 25 percent sophomores, 28 percent juniors and 27 percent seniors. Ninety-eight percent of respondents identified themselves as full-time students. Though the student population is almost evenly split across genders, our sample has a higher representation of females (71%) than males (28%). This gender difference is expected since women tend to have a higher response rate to surveys (Sax et al. 2003). This gender difference is not expected to impact the data since past research has not found differences in vulnerability to FI by gender and there was no significant relationship between gender and level of FI found in our sample.

Most respondents identified as white (70%) which is similar to the general student population (71%). Four percent of both the student and respondent population identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Our sample does have an overrepresentation of Asian American students (11%) and black or African American students (10%) compared to the student population (4% and 5% respectively). Unlike the race/ethnic data maintained by

| Table 1. Demographic characteristics of study sample compared to university population |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
|                                | STUDY SAMPLE  | MINNESOTA STATE MANKATO |
| **RACE/ ETHNICITY**            |               |                  |
| Asian American                 | 11%           | 4%               |
| Black/ African American        | 10%           | 5%               |
| Hispanic/ Latinx               | 4%            | 4%               |
| White                          | 70%           | 71%              |
| Nonresident Alien              | N/A           | 11%              |
| Other                          | 6%            | 4%               |
| **ACADEMIC YEAR**              |               |                  |
| Freshman                       | 18%           | 21%              |
| Sophomore                      | 25%           | 24%              |
| Junior                         | 28%           | 24%              |
| Senior                         | 27%           | 30%              |
| Other                          | 2%            | 2%               |
| **GENDER**                     |               |                  |
| Female                         | 71%           | 51%              |
| Male                           | 28%           | 49%              |
| **TOTAL**                      | N=252         | N=9,526          |
Minnesota State Mankato, our survey did not ask about citizenship and visa status. Since we did not ask this question, these students are not separated from the racial/ethnic categories they self-identify with. This is likely why there are higher numbers in our sample of student who identify as black or African American, Asian or “Other.” For that reason, when interpreting our results and the impact of race/ethnicity on FI, we must acknowledge that issues of racial inequality and inequalities due to citizenship and visa status are likely conflated.

**Food Insecurity**

Students at Minnesota State Mankato are experiencing levels of FI higher than the national average and higher than has been found at most other universities in similar studies. Forty percent of students surveyed are experiencing high or very high levels of FI and 24 percent are experiencing moderate levels of FI. Only 36 percent of students surveyed are actually food secure (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Prevalence of food insecurity among students at Minnesota State Mankato**

- No food insecurity: 36%
- Moderate food insecurity: 24%
- High food insecurity: 18%
- Very high food insecurity: 22%
To measure FI the USDA’s 10 Item U.S. Adult Insecurity Module was used. The module begins with three basic statements about respondents’ eating behaviors and access to food in the past thirty days: “I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more”; “The food that I bought just didn’t last and I didn’t have money to get more”; and “I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.” If a respondent answered that any of these was often or sometimes true indicates at least a moderate level of FI. Sixty-four percent of students in the survey answered that at least one of these statements was often or sometimes true (Table 2).

Other indicators of FI experienced by a quarter or more of the students in the month surveyed included needing to reduce the size of meals (30%), eating less than they should (28%), and choosing not to eat when hungry because there was not enough money for food (25%) (Table 2). Though experienced by a smaller percentage of students it is important to note that some students also experienced weight loss (9%) and skipping meals for an entire day (8%) due to an inability to afford food.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Indicators of food insecurity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the last 30 days, did any of the following happen because there wasn’t enough money for food?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food didn’t last and could not afford to buy more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried whether food would run out before there was money to buy more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut the size of meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ate less than you thought you should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t eat even though you were hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not eat for a whole day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who is experiencing Food Insecurity

We examined the relationship between FI and other student characteristics using a chi square test of significance. There was no statistically significant relationship between characteristics such as gender or year in school, indicating that FI cuts across men and women in all years of school. There was, however, a strong significant relationship between race and the likelihood of experiencing FI, \( \chi^2(8)=16.187, p=.040 \), with students who identify as black/ African American and Asian American experiencing higher levels of FI. Asian Americans had the highest rate of FI, with 82 percent experiencing moderate to very high
levels of FI. Among students who identify as black or African American 76 percent experienced FI. Similarly, 77 percent of Hispanic and Latinx respondents had a moderate to high rate of FI. However, the number of respondents who identified as Hispanic or Latinx was small (N=9), so the levels of FI for this group must be interpreted carefully. Fifty three percent of students in the race category of “other”, which includes students who did not want to answer the question and students who identify as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or some other category, were experiencing FI. White students, while still exhibiting a high level of FI, had a lower rate (59%) than other racial-ethnic groups (Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Category</th>
<th>No FI</th>
<th>Moderate FI</th>
<th>High/very high FI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/ Latinx</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Impact of Food Insecurity**

Food insecure students were asked if, during their time as a college student, hunger caused them to do any of the following: miss a class, miss a study session, miss a club meeting, opt not to join an extracurricular activity, drop a class, or not perform as well academically as they otherwise would have. Among those who experienced FI, 39 percent did not perform as well academically as they otherwise would have, 20 percent missed a class, 16 percent opted not to join an extracurricular activity, 14 percent missed a study session, ten percent missed a club meeting, and three percent dropped a class.
Food insecure students were asked if they have ever had to make a choice between paying for food and paying for housing expenses such as bills or rent. A chi square test of significance found that there was a significant relationship between the level of FI and the need to make choices between housing expenses and buying food, $\chi^2(2)=38.912$, $p<.000$, such that students with high levels of FI were significantly more likely to have to make these choices. Among those who experienced moderate FI, 21 percent had to make the choice between housing expenses and buying food compared to 49 percent experiencing high FI, and 81 percent of those experiencing very high FI.

Food insecure students also asked if they have ever had to make a choice between paying for food or paying for school expenses such as tuition and books (see Figure 3). A chi square test of significance found that there was a significant relationship between the level of FI and the need to make choices between school expenses and buying food, $\chi^2(2)=22.240$, $p<.000$, such that students with higher levels of FI were significantly more likely to have to make these choices (Figure 3). Among those who experienced moderate FI, 21 percent had to make the choice between school expenses and buying food compared to 43 percent experiencing high FI and 60 percent of those experiencing very high FI.

**Figure 3. Percent of food insecure students, within each food insecurity level, who have had to make choices between buying food and paying for other expenses**
Food insecure respondents were asked in an open-ended question to explain if they think hunger has impacted their education. Their responses communicate that they feel their education has been affected in a number of ways. In addition to the direct impact on their coursework and grades, they identified the emotional and mental toll of hunger and also suggested some mechanisms by which they cope.

Discussing the direct impact hunger has, respondents noted that concentration in class and studying are challenging when distracted by hunger. Others indicating they have to forgo class or studying because of the strain hunger creates, as highlighted by these comments by respondents: “[M]y need for money for food leads me to pick up extra shifts instead of doing the studying I desperately need” and “I ended up skipping a class just because of how loud my stomach was growling.”

Respondents indicated symptoms such as feeling weak, nauseous, “sluggish,” and feeling a “negative shift in mood or energy” due to hunger. Their responses note feelings and thoughts associated with anxiousness, as highlighted by these comments: “It’s the anxiety of not knowing if you’ll be able to afford next week's grocery bill,” “I am always nervous I’m not rationing enough and will run out of money or run out of food,” and “It’s embarrassing when your stomach is growling in class.”

Students also suggested some of the mechanisms by which they cope with hunger. Some chose to sleep rather than eat and others substituted food with a beverage. The strategy to use beverages to substitute for food is highlighted by a student who wrote, "I drink a lot of water and chew it before I swallow it to trick my brain to think I'm eating." Another strategy indicated by respondents was choosing whether or not to be involved in extracurricular activities, for example: “I joined a club because they offered free pizza at meetings...so at least I had a meal that night” and “I cannot participate in campus activities...because they cost money, and I need money for food”.

Indicative from these comments, students communicated a variety of impacts of FI that they deal with while attempting to further their education. Minnesota State Mankato students identified FI as an issue that interferes with their schooling, health and well-being. The also noted mechanisms by which they cope with hunger, although these mechanisms may interfere with their class schedule, due dates and exam dates.
Housing and Food Insecurity

Minnesota State Mankato students are having difficulties with both housing instability (HI) and FI. Students were asked twelve questions related to housing instability in the past year. Fifty four percent of respondents experienced some form of HI in the past year. When high FI was reported, housing issues were also high and there is a significant correlation between having one or more issue with HI and being food insecure, $\chi^2(2)=62.884$, $p<.000$. Of those who were housing insecure within the last year, 60 percent also reported FI within the last 30 days.

Within our study, 74 percent of the students lived off campus. Among those living off campus, 33 percent have had difficulties in the past year paying rent or mortgage. Eleven percent of those students didn’t pay full amount of bills such as gas or electric, seven percent moved two times or more and one respondent was even thrown out of the house by someone else. None of the respondents stayed in a shelter, though two percent didn’t know for at least one night where they were going to sleep (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of students reporting the following experiences of housing instability in the past year

- Borrowed money from friends or family to help pay bills: 37%
- Difficulty paying rent or mortgage: 33%
- Didn’t pay full amount of gas, oil, or electricity bills: 11%
- Didn’t pay full amount of rent or mortgage: 7%
- Moved 2 or more times: 7%
- Left your living situation because you felt unsafe: 5%
- Didn’t have a home: 2%
- Didn’t know where you were going to sleep at night: 2%
- Stayed in abandoned building/car/ other non-regular housing: 1%
- Evicted from home: 1%
- Thrown out of the house because of financial problems: 1%
- Stayed in a shelter: 0%
Access to Food

Respondents were asked what their two primary sources of getting food were. A majority of students (75%) who were surveyed at Minnesota State University Mankato indicated that grocery stores are their primary source to get most of their food. Almost half of students (49%) indicated opting to eat out or eating premade meals from stores or restaurants. Students also reported their use of other options such as their campus meal plan (30%) as well as their parents or guardians (19%) for obtaining the majority of their food. Sixty percent of our sample indicated that their parents had purchased or sent them food at least one time in the last semester. Only a small percent of students (4%) indicated their use of either food pantries or food shelves as primary source for getting food.

Respondents were asked whether or not they were currently enrolled in a campus meal plan. Only 30 percent of Minnesota State University students indicated their current use of a campus meal plan was a primary source of food. Notably, being on a meal plan does not prevent FI. Over half of those who are currently enrolled in school meal plans (52%) reported moderate to high level of FI. Though meal plans do not prevent FI, it is important to note that it can help buffer against FI. Those without a meal plan, were three times more likely to be food insecure. Chi square test showed a significant relationship between FI and use of meal plans, $\chi^2(2)=7.376$, $p=.025$, indicating meal plans alleviate some of the burden of FI. One reason that students on meal plans are more likely to be food secure may have a lot to do with other factors, such as having financial support and stability in general, rather than the meal plan itself. Of those not currently on a meal plan, the most common reason indicated was that the cost was too high (67%) and of those who are on a meal plan 55 percent indicated that their family helps pay at least some of the cost of meal plan.

Financial Burdens

Respondents were asked to report whether they were employed or unemployed, as well as the typical number of hours worked per week. Almost three-fourths of students are employed, and 37% of these students work 20 hours or more per week. There was no significant relationship found between employment and FI for Minnesota State Mankato
students. The lack of relationship here highlights that FI happens to students who are employed and students who are unemployed alike.

Minnesota State Mankato students rely on a variety of financial support. Financial strategies for our students may be accompanied by a substantial amount of debt. About one third (32%) of students in our sample indicated current credit card debt. Notably, according to the interviews conducted in the study, students are often using credit cards as a strategy to pay for food. Of those with the knowledge of their current credit card debt, 27 percent reported having less than $4,999 while 28 percent indicated that they have $20,000 or more in credit card debt. Out of the students in our survey about half (48%) indicated that they have loans. Of those with student loans, 11 percent have less than $5,000 dollars in loans, while 40 percent are taking out 20,000 dollars or more in loans.

Discussion

In accordance with previous findings, FI has been shown to reap a variety of negative impacts. Students at Minnesota State University indicated FI had a multitude of possible negative influence on their education, including not performing as well as they could have. Negative effects on students’ education ranged from missing a class, study session or club meeting to opting not to join extracurricular activities to dropping a class(es). Chi square tests indicated significant relationships between having to choose between housing or school and tuition related expenses and buying food. Campus meal plans were found to alleviate some of the possible burdens associated with FI, although a portion of those currently enrolled in a campus meal plan experienced some level of FI. Lastly, there was no significant relationship found between employment status and FI. The lack or relationship is evidence that FI is a possibility for students regardless of whether they are employed or not.

Food insecurity is a serious issue for college students as it has a magnitude of effects on their daily lives. As the interview findings of this study will also highlight, students are suffering from FI, but can also identify ways that the university can help them.
INTERVIEW RESULTS

To gain a better understanding of food insecurity among students, we conducted 15 semi-structured interviews ranging from 10 to 35 minutes in length. Participants were recruited from the original survey. Survey participants were asked if they were willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. In total, of the 260 individuals with valid survey responses, 105 indicated they were willing to be contacted for an interview and left contact information. All of those participants were contacted and 15 agreed to follow-up interviews. Interviewers were conducted in two parts. The first part was a survey interview of the USDA measures of FI to assess the level of FI of each participant. The second part of the interview was semi structured and open ended. Interviews were transcribed and coded for various themes that impact access to food.

Within our interview population, 13 percent of respondents reported very high FI, 20 percent reported high FI, and 20 percent reported moderate FI. Forty seven percent of our interview population indicated they were experiencing no FI. Compared to our survey results, those with the lowest levels of FI are overrepresented here. This may be due to the stigma of discussing these issues among those who are food insecure.

Common themes identified by the interview team included challenges and benefits of living on campus as well as off campus, time constraints, and management of finances when purchasing food and eating healthy food. Respondents also shared with interviewers a number of strategies that help to avoid FI such as meal prepping and suggestions for campus to provide resources for students at risk of facing FI. Overall, the majority of respondents were food secure, primarily due to student loans and various forms of family support.

Challenges for students living on campus

Students living on campus reported experiencing a lack of access to desirable foods, as well as a poor selection of places to dine on campus. These issues had a greater impact on students that come from culturally diverse backgrounds. Challenges of cooking in the dorms were also a barrier for students living on campus.
Students living at a distance from the dining center are less likely to utilize their meal plan. Students living in dorms who are further from the dining hall, as well as off-campus apartments through the university (e.g. Stadium Heights) found it harder to fit in meals around the hours of the dining hall.

Students who are within a reasonable distance of the dining center that have specific diet restrictions such as being vegan, gluten-free, or vegetarian are not given viable options within the dining center. One respondent, Taylor (FI score 6), reported:

“...[E]ven on our campus the food...is not healthy. My friends who are on meal plans... don't have a healthy option other than a basic salad. They don't have enough choices. Some of my friends who are lactose intolerant, or they are on dietary restrictions, their choices [are] even lower. Option in [the] dining building mainly comprises [sic] of fries and pizza or pasta type of thing. Sometimes, [a] salad bar is there but it's like that's the only choice to have healthier option. Other than salad you cannot find healthy option...If you look at the food services in the CSU it's like other than salad you can't find anything healthy.”

Being vegan can be much more of a struggle, as Jess (FI score 0) highlights:

“[T]he dining hall, their foods and vegetables...sometimes they just sit out then they get really flimsy and gross and you don’t really want to eat them...[T]hey’re sometimes rotten or people have found bugs and plastic stuff in them and we have told the dining hall...multiple times and they don’t really do anything so when you see the vegetables in the salad bar sometimes you are kinda like, ‘ewww.’”

A number of students who had meal plans mentioned the lack of fruits and vegetables readily available to them in the dining hall. Students noted that the dining hall was always lacking in variety and/or quality of fresh produce, aside from the salad bar which had mixed reviews.

Students also had trouble fitting trips into the dining hall within their schedule. One respondent stated that they “haven’t gotten to eat there since last year” due to their schedule. Some of these students reported going to the student union for meals instead. Some students mentioned that they preferred going to the cafeteria, despite the options being unhealthy. Additionally, the dorm kitchens are minimally equipped, and many dorm-sized fridges are not big enough to fit an adequate amount of fresh food. Students reported that the dining hall, as well as other campus eateries, are comprised of mostly unhealthy food, with operating hours that conflict with other obligations.
Challenges and benefits of living off campus

Ten of the 15 Respondents interviewed lived off campus. These students were more likely to be food insecure than those who lived in dorms. Living off campus can result in challenges impacting access to food. Among these challenges are managing credit card debt and bills as well as barriers in transportation.

For the majority of students who lived off campus, they typically needed roommates to be able to afford rent. Many respondents who lived off campus reported that having roommates can come with benefits and drawbacks. Respondents who had more than two roommates were impacted by more negative effects and were more likely to report lower levels of food security than those who reported having one or two roommates.

Having roommates impacted various aspects of respondents’ food situation such as access to community living space, storage and preparation of food, finances, and schedules. Roommates also provided benefits in some instances, such as sharing food with roommates and/or shared finances for food. This shared financial responsibility illustrates both positive and negative outcomes by Jordan (FI score 5) who has six other roommates:

“Well we have a money jar, a grocery jar, so we try to put in change throughout the day or we do like a $5 start for each of us and then whatever total we have at the end of that week we used...Sometimes it works out but some weeks it doesn’t because some weeks will have only like two of us that are able to pitch in for groceries but then we get frustrated because our roommates are using all the groceries but they’re not helping pitch in. It’s frustrating.”

This respondent was unique in the sense that they shared all of their food as a house. Most other respondents were independent from their roommates in terms of obtaining food.

Transportation for those living off campus is a necessity in most cases. Most respondents who lived off campus had at some point prior been on a meal plan but they moved away from them. With the convenience of campus dining removed, transportation is then required to access food in groceries. The majority of food stores in the area surrounding campus are fast food restaurants which do not provide these students a source of healthy dining options. A lack of transportation can also lead to many struggles in access to food due to schedule challenges, acquiring a ride, and moving the groceries. Anna
(FI score 0) elaborated on how her college experience would be different if she did not have a car:

“Then I have to eat on campus. I would definitely not able to afford going out to eat every day. If I did I have to, that would be extremely unhealthy to eat that way.”

Importantly, even students who had a meal plan that they relied on for the majority of their food noted that they don’t eat as healthy as they would like to.

**Time Constraints**

Nine of the 15 respondents brought up time as a factor in the ability of students to make healthy food choices, or to even eat at all. Notably, even food secure students discussed the role of time on making ideal food choices.

Time was a constraint due to class schedules and study habits. Also, many interview respondents were particularly short on time because of the financial need to work part- or full-time while also attending school full-time. This meant for some students that they could not eat as healthy as they wanted to because of a lack of time to cook and a need to rely on convenience foods that they could quickly grab and eat on the run. As Tiffany (FI score 0) described:

“It’s more of a time constraint figuring food. Like, maintaining the balance between school and work trying to get time to actually get something that’s actually healthy versus something that’s quick and kind of healthy.”

The need to choose less healthy foods because of a lack of time was mentioned by both food secure and insecure students, a number of whom stated that they wished there were more healthy food options of higher quality on campus.

In the worst cases, the combined constraints of time and finances meant that students skipped entire meals or even an entire day of meals. The difficult balance between money, time, and eating is also highlighted by Jordan (FI score 5), who experienced a high level of FI and sometimes had to go a full day without eating. He explained:

“...[Y]ou look in your bank account and like I only have this much but I still have this bill to pay and it’s like okay I’ll just skip [eating] today.”
Financial Strategies

Resources students use to purchase food include financial aid, loans, credit cards, and financial support from parents or relatives. Different strategies are used by both food secure and insecure respondents. The most frequent strategy among interviewees was credit cards and financial aid and loans. Credit cards were often used to purchase groceries. Financial aid and loans were mainly used to pay for rent, gas, and additional expenses. Interview respondents also mentioned financial support from parents or relatives; some stated they receive assistance from their parents while others did not mainly because they live far from their parents, or they did not want to worry their parents. Josh (FI score 3) describes:

“Usually my mom visits me with my siblings and if she notices that I don’t have a lot of food she’ll go buy my groceries and restock it. Or if I tell her I need that she’ll buy it for me. Unless I make it apparent I don’t think she thinks about it as much. Like ‘hey I need this,’ ‘hey I need that,’ because I don’t want her to worry at the same time.”

Sixty percent of the students interviewed mentioned the use of credit cards to help purchase groceries when there is not enough money to purchase foods. Credit cards are heavily relied on and the most convenient payment for students. It is a beneficial source of support for students but it also comes with disadvantages according to Josh, who explains the worry of paying off the expenses from the credit card:

“Yea, right now I don’t have to pay for the interest on my tuition but I will have to next year pick that up. But yea, I think every time I get a paycheck I worry about if the next one will be able to cover rent and food. Like my expenses to my credit card and anything that comes up. It all just flies around my head and I’m like okay what is my priority here, I need groceries and what else do I have room for.”

Avoiding Food Insecurity

Students reported using a variety of mechanisms for avoiding hunger. Nine out of the 15 respondents reported going to campus events for food. These included things like weekly meetings in the dorms, extracurricular club meetings, and cultural events. Twenty percent of respondents said they have gone to cultural campus events for a free meal. These included events such as American Indian Night and African Night. Some of these
students lived on campus and mentioned campus events like this as a way to supplement their meal plans:

“...[T]here’s events like African Night and they always have food there so if I didn’t want to eat in the dining hall I’d go to an event like that. Or Mexican Night …or Latino Night I think, and you know that sort of thing.” (Matt, FI score 3)

Students who live on campus appear to have better access to strategies of getting free food. Respondents who lives on campus brought up weekly floor meetings called WOWs (What’s on Wednesday) as a way of getting food in addition to campus events that everyone is welcome to attend. Megan (FI score 0) elaborates on these strategies

“Well, there’s like this American Indian night that my teacher invited us to and they had an entire meal of rice and chicken…and it was really good. And we have WOWs that serve snacks and stuff so I’ve gotten food there before.”

Whether students lived on or off campus, they still reported going to campus events for free food. Students living on campus sometimes utilize the weekly floor meetings for free food and also have more accessibility to other events taking place across campus.

Students suggested that the campus could do better at helping students eat healthy. A third of respondents indicated explicitly that there are specific things that the university can do to make FI less of an issue on campus. The most common recommendation was for the university to distribute various resources to students. Among these would be information on how to register for food assistance if necessary and also information on how to cook and eat healthy on a budget. Hanna was experiencing very high levels of FI (FI score 6) and gives their opinion on suggestions for the university:

“Yeah, it'd be nice to have a class [about] low cost food, healthy food to make and ... quick recipes and stuff like that”.

Students noted that for a lot of them, this is the first time living on their own and they would benefit from information on cooking tips and how to eat healthy. Respondents also noted that information on formal help should be widely distributed. Mike wasn’t experiencing any FI but noted that resources should be more accessible:
“It would definitely be helpful to have a list for everything in a community that they can use also have all the information that they can be eligible for and how to actually apply for it.”

Students’ indication of food insecurity did not impact the desire to have resources on how to cook and eat healthy on a budget widely spread across campus.

Discussion

Although the majority of our respondents were food secure, they highlighted a variety of issues related to FI as well as mechanisms they use to avoid FI. Common issues faced by respondents included not having enough time to cook healthy meals between work and school schedules and relying on loans and credit cards to be able to eat. Issues with living on campus included being limited to meal times due to the hours of the dining hall as well as a lack of options and quality in fresh fruits and vegetable.

Students used various strategies to avoid FI. Going to campus events such as dorm meetings or cultural events often gave students access to a free meal. Other students suggested that the university could help students avoid FI by distributing information to students on how to eat healthy and cook on a budget.

Understanding students’ struggles and strategies provides insight into areas where Minnesota State Mankato can improve services and help students maintain consistent access to healthy food, as will be highlighted in the following “Recommendations” section.
COLLABORATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY RESULTS

Transportation was a barrier to food access that was identified during interviews with students. It was also reiterated by interviews with university staff and community members working on this issue. Notably, they identified that this is a particular concern for international students, who typically don’t have transportation and often don’t have access to culturally appropriate foods on-campus.

To better understand the impact a lack of transportation can have on food access, we conducted a collaborative autoethnography among nine student-researchers. A typical period toward the end of spring semester was selected. Within a 10-day period, once they ran out of food at home, student researchers obtained their groceries using the bus. Nine researchers took trips on the bus to various grocery stores in the community including Cub Foods (both uptown and downtown locations), Walmart, Echo Food Shelf, and Aldi.

Their experience overall was difficult. Getting groceries on the bus takes preparation time, sacrifice, and time commitment. When grocery shopping they had to make decisions on if something was important enough to buy based on lack of space to carry. Heavy items were taken off the list as well as anything that could possibly spill. Dropping these items could cause an embarrassing episode as well as be a waste of money. Contemplation on if an item should go in their cart or not was always lingering in the back of their minds and anxiety fell over many of them checking to see if their bus was almost there.

Our findings indicate that the most notable hurdle to grocery shopping without transportation is time—from the waiting for the bus, being on the bus, walking from the bus to the store, and waiting for the bus again. It can take hours to shop. This was compounded by the fact that shopping trips had to be small and students could not get an entire week’s meals in one trip.

Due to time, grocery shopping can actually be unfeasible in many cases, or the choice between school work, jobs, and accessing affordable food must be made. This is highlighted most starkly by the fact that of the 15 student researchers, five opted to take a reduction in their grade rather than participate in this autoethnography because they did
not feel they could balance the time it would take. One such researcher noted they would have had to miss either work or class at least once in that 10-day period to shop. Instead they relied on shift meals at the restaurant where they worked as their main source of food during this time.

Another aspect of time that was a barrier was the bus schedule. The bus that provided access to most of the stores ran only once per hour, which meant that students had to shop very quickly or risk waiting for an additional hour for the next bus. Another issue with the bus is that it does not stop at all stores; it only stopped at Walmart. There is no bus directly to Echo Food Shelf, where students can get free food, Aldi, the store mentioned by students in our interviews as being the most affordable place to access healthy food, or Cub, where students can access more culturally specific foods. As one researcher highlights in their notes:

“As an Asian American, the biggest hurdle I always encounter is not having the right ingredients to make Asian cuisine because the ingredients aren’t sold at my local grocery store.”

Researchers found themselves avoiding some stores because of distance. One researcher took the bus to the downtown area and walked from there to get to Echo Food Shelf; by the time they arrived they did not actually have time to shop and get their groceries home before their next obligation. Uptown, from the Walmart stop, researchers found themselves jay-walking to get to the Cub Foods in time, or speed walking to get to Aldi and back. The lack of stops limits the accessibility of stores to many students who do not have the physical ability to walk long distances or who do not feel safe walking alone. The bus schedule also limits the times of day that students can shop as many don’t run in the evening when students are more likely to have free time.

The other key limitations to not having transportation for food included a limit on the number of items that can be purchased due to lack of space, hands, and storage on the bus as well as limits on the types of foods that can be purchased. Researchers had to forego buying larger, more affordably priced items in bulk as they did not have room to carry these things; they avoided purchasing eggs and foods in glass containers that might break, as well as bread that might get squished. They also avoided heavy food as most had to walk some distances with their food. One researcher describes why they avoided cold foods:
“I had to remind myself that I was going to have to take these on the bus. I only got a few cold things because I knew I was going to be on the bus for a while and I was going to also have to walk home.”

Some researchers utilized a backpack for their shopping trip to more easily transport their purchases. They found this brought attention to them and they felt as if they were being watched for shoplifting while they shopped. Those who used shopping bags limited the amount and weight of items as they worried that their bags would break.

On average it took students two hours to make it to their destination and back home. This can be difficult when many have other obligations such as school and work. A time commitment like this may cause students to choose priorities other than food. Also, when they do choose to get groceries this can put a strain on assignments and sleep. In general, students who take the bus to get groceries are facing more obstacles to avoid food insecurity.
RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

This resource assessment identifies specific resources available to students and determines ways to increase resource access, help provide additional context, and assess the ways that other, similar institutions have been dealing with the issue of FI. To better understand FI and the context in which it occurs, the following occurred:

- The body of academic literature was reviewed to identify specific programs being used at other institutions to help better address student needs
- Researchers connected with representatives from local community organizations and various subject matter experts
- Key university staff members were consulted to assess current services and identify gaps in on-campus support programs
- Thirteen benchmark institutions were contacted and/or their programs examined.
- Site visits were made to the local food shelves
- A total of 13 interviews were conducted with people working across the aforementioned institutions

Current campus resources

Minnesota State Mankato currently has several important resources that are available to students experiencing FI. We find that these programs are important and need continued support. However, these resources are currently underutilized due to their lack of accessibility. Making them more accessible to students will increase their efficacy in helping to reduce the problem of FI among students.

Campus Cupboard Campus food pantries represent one of the most common and fastest growing ways campuses attempt to address FI. The number of food pantries in US colleges and universities has grown from ten in 2009 to over 350 today (Dubick, Mathews, and Cady 2016). Their flexibility and relatively minimal space requirements make pantries easy to establish, and their location near campus increases accessibility to students without
reliable transportation. Additionally, on-campus pantries help normalize FI and increase awareness of the issue (Fry 2018; Twill, Bergdahl, and Fensler 2016). This reduces associated stigma while encouraging students to utilize the resource as it is more likely to be seen as a university provided service.

The Campus Cupboard reports serving hundreds of Minnesota State University, Mankato students a semester (Anderson 2018). Located in Crossroads Church near the Performing Arts Center, the food pantry is easily accessible to many, and it offers a wide variety of food stuffs for food insecure students. In addition to free bread, the pantry regularly stocks rice, beans, canned goods, meat, and other miscellaneous items such as toiletries (Crossroads Campus Ministries 2018). Students are required to show a school ID to utilize services and are allowed one grocery bag of items on a weekly basis. While only open one day a week for select hours, students can call ahead and schedule an appointment if they are unable to make it during opening hours (Anderson 2018; Crossroads Ministry 2018).

**Emergency Grant Funding** In 2017, Minnesota State Mankato partnered with the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation to provide students with additional funding through the Dash Grant Program. A total $400,000 was jointly allocated for funding to be used over a two-year period (Nelson 2018). Grant funding came with several stipulations from the Great Lakes Corporation. In addition to requiring Minnesota State Mankato to contribute 10 percent during the first year of the grant and 15 percent during the second year, grants are capped at $1,000 per student (Great Lakes 2017; Nelson 2018). Additionally, grants are single use meaning that a student may apply for and receive a grant of up to $1,000 only once (Nelson 2018). Any additional financial need would need to be met through alternative sources.

Since the initial grant offering in Fall of 2017, students have submitted 165 applications requesting $253,246 in total funding (Nelson 2018). Of those applications, 148 students were awarded an amount of $142,427 in financial assistance with an average grant amount of $939 per applicant (Nelson 2018). Notably, this is very close to the $1,000 cap per student. Housing related expenses accounted for the highest amount paid out to
approved grant applicants at over $60,000, making up over half (50%) of the total amount disbursed to date (Nelson 2018). Additionally, students seeking either food or housing assistance made up nearly 70 percent of all submitted grant requests (Nelson 2018).

**Counseling Center** The stress and anxiety experienced by a student who is struggling with finding adequate nutrition and stable housing has been linked to several adverse mental health outcomes (Goldrick-Rob et al. 2015; Hudd et al. 2000; Joo et al. 2008; Leppink et al. 2016; Lin et al. 2013; Pan et al. 2012). The Counseling Center provides short-term interventions for students struggling with a variety of mental health issues related to FI. The center maintains six full-time psychologists specialized in university mental health (Counseling Center 2018; Sommers 2018). In addition to 10 free one-on-one counseling sessions an academic year, the center offers unlimited group counseling sessions revolving around a number of topics including anxiety management, self-esteem building, and goal setting (MNSU 2018c). However, waitlists may prevent some students from access to individual counseling. Once a student has used their free sessions, center staff can refer them to low-cost off-campus options for continued support.

**Additional campus resources** In addition to the Emergency Grant, Campus Pantry, and Counseling Center, Minnesota State Mankato has several other on-campus resources that financially insecure students can utilize. The campus Dental Clinic and Health services provides discounted health services for students, which can help alleviate some of the financial burden related to basic health care. The Career Development Center and MavJobs network can also provide students with links to both on and off campus employment opportunities.

**Strengths of Campus Resources**

The strengths of Minnesota State Mankato lie in the ability and desire to accommodate students’ needs regardless of race, gender, or ethnic background. Some signature programs include Oasis, the LGBT Center, Women’s Center, and various diversity organizations run through the Department of Institutional Diversity (MNSU 2018b). Our
faculty and administration are dedicated to students’ success and wellbeing, and many go out of their way to support students who are struggling.

Services at Minnesota State University offer a safe and supportive environment for students to seek assistance and have also emphasized the importance of recognizing and addressing the needs of international, minority and low-income students. Campus faculty, administration and involved students encourage utilization of these resources (Anderson 2018; Hesser 2018; Sommers 2018). These services also rely on volunteering and have opportunities for positions to gain experience which are often willingly fulfilled. Students are also able to remain confidential when receiving services because of their objective to be flexible, protect students’ dignity and make them feel comfortable.

Areas of Improvement

While the Campus Cupboard does represent an excellent resource, there are several drawbacks and obstacles which may hinder a student’s ability to utilize its services. Located off-campus in the basement of a non-university building, many students are unaware of the pantry’s existence (Anderson 2018). This was highlighted by the findings of this study.

Out of the 260 respondents to the survey, 10 total students indicated that they had used a food shelf or food pantry in the last 30 days to supplement their diet (Table 3). This is despite the fact that over 64 percent of the study population indicated that they encountered some level of FI. Further emphasizing this, only two indicated that they used Campus Cupboard as a food resource in the last 30 days (Table 3). This means that students are seeking assistance elsewhere or are not receiving support at all, highlighting that the Campus Cupboard is underutilized.

The in-person interviews conducted further highlight Campus Cupboard’s underutilization as a food resource and suggest it is in part due to a general lack of

![Table 3: Students’ two primary sources of getting food in the past month](image-url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus meal plan</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Out/ Premade Meals from stores or restaurants</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s)/ Guardians(s)</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food pantry of food shelf</strong></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
awareness of the available emergency resources like the pantry. One student expressed concern over the absence of campus support to increase awareness of Campus Cupboard and other resources saying:

“...I am sure that most of my friends probably don’t know about it. But it’s not advertised or popularized among college students. I have been a peer mentor before, so I knew the resources that are available to us. But most [students] won’t know what they are and where they are” (Taylor, FI Score 6).

International students also have a difficult time utilizing Campus Cupboard’s resources, as they may be unfamiliar with culturally-specific foods. One international student mentioned being off-put by the lack of options available at the pantry. Regarding their first visit to the Cupboard, they said:

“It was weird at first because it was my very first time doing it but there was a lot of variety, but variety in things that I know I can't really cook because it's more like Americanized food and stuff and [I] couldn't really pick out as much as I wanted to” (Jordan, FI Score 5).

In general, food insecure students at Minnesota State Mankato are not only unaware of the Campus Cupboard but are unsure in general where to turn for help finding resources.

Feedback from administrators at similarly run pantries located at other institutions cite affiliation with a religious organization as an additional obstacle (Fry 2018). Minnesota State Mankato students may be reluctant to utilize services provided by a faith-based organization, even when membership to the ministry is not required. Campus Cupboard’s location in the basement also presents a challenge to differently-abled individuals who require ADA-compliant accommodations (Anderson 2018).

The issue of not having enough time to access affordable food or prepare food was found in the interviews conducted in the study to be a factor for Minnesota State Mankato students. The limited hours of operation for the Campus Cupboard pose an obstacle to students. Between work hours, study, and class attendance, students already have a demanding schedule, and it may be difficult to utilize the pantry during operating hours. Those encountering FI may also deal with low self-esteem and social stigma (Anderson 2018; England 2018; Silva et al. 2015). The simple act of using a food pantry can already be a daunting task for a food insecure student. Providing students the option to call
helps alleviate some issues of access, however, students who are already reluctant to access the pantry during regular operating hours may be even less inclined to call ahead.

The Emergency Grant offers access to additional resources for financially insecure students, however, its reach is limited. In addition to institutional requirements, students must meet strict guidelines for eligibility. Grant funds are only available for those able to file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), meaning that students attending the institution under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and international students are unable to qualify for the grant (Nelson 2018). Graduate students are similarly exempt from being able to utilize the fund (Great Lakes 2017; Nelson 2018). Grant applicants must also have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $7,000 or less and be enrolled during the semester they are seeking funds (Great Lakes 2017).

**Community Resources**

There are over 50 community organizations and services that can help address student needs. Nonprofit and government supported organizations like the Echo Food Shelf and the Reach Drop-in Center work together to provide access to adequate shelter, food, health services, and transportation. While we want to recognize their usefulness in addressing students’ needs, these are not long-term solutions for students encountering FI or housing instability. Their locations spread across the Greater Mankato area, making access a challenge for students seeking to utilize their services. Additionally, these resources are not maintained by the university and there is no guarantee that students will have consistent access to these resources. (See Appendix F for a full list of organizations).

**Peer & Aspirant Institutions**

To help contextualize study findings and the services available for food insecure students, we reached out to several identified peer and aspirant institutions. These peer schools – institutions that resemble Minnesota State Mankato in demographic characteristics, amount of funding, and geographical location – provided a benchmark from which to compare available resources. Aspirant institutions served as models for future action and demonstrated how Minnesota State Mankato could address FI with additional
resources. Additionally, we reached out to institutions in the immediate vicinity to get a better idea of what the community at large is seeing. A full list of contacted colleges is available in Table 4.

Of the 13 institutions we contacted, six - UWLX, UM-TC, UALR, UT-Dallas, NCSU, and MCTC - offered on-campus, institutionally supported pantries (Leighton 2018; Kincannon 2018; NCSU 2018; UT-Dallas 2018; UWLX 2018; Vue 2018). Four – UNI, UM-TC, Spelman, and Morehouse - have created special committees to help address the needs of food insecure students on their campuses (Fry 2018; Leighton 2018; Spelman 2018). UNI, St. Cloud State, SCC, Bethany, and Gustavus currently rely on community resources to address their student needs, but community members, faculty and students at UNI are currently pushing for an on-campus pantry (England 2018; Fry 2018; St. Cloud State University 2018; Utterback 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Cloud State University</td>
<td>St. Cloud, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin, La Crosse (UWLX)</td>
<td>La Crosse, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Northern Iowa (UNI)</td>
<td>Cedar Falls, IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (UM-TC)</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central College (SCC)</td>
<td>Mankato, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany Lutheran College</td>
<td>Mankato, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustavus College</td>
<td>St. Peter, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Arkansas, Little Rock (UALR)</td>
<td>Little Rock, AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Texas, Dallas (UT-Dallas)</td>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina State University (NCSU)</td>
<td>Raleigh, NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minn. Community and Technical College (MCTC)</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morehouse College</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelman College</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exemplar programs** Out of the 13 benchmark institutions identified, there were a few that stood out in the amount of dedicated resources towards combating FI among their student body. These have been designated as exemplar programs and can serve as models for future initiatives on Minnesota State Mankato’s campus.

**Central Location** Several institutions offer a central office staffed by two service specialists where students encountering FI and HI can seek help. Minneapolis Community and Technical College’s (MCTC) center provides an on-campus food pantry, one free lunch
weekly, and emergency transportation through connections with local resources (Vue 2018). Additionally, the center provides mental health services and SNAP enrollment assistance monthly (MCTC 2018; Vue 2018). The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (UM-TC) and University of Wisconsin, La Crosse (UWLX) also feature a centrally-located on campus pantry (Leighton 2018; UWLX 2018). In addition to hiring a .75 FTE Program Manager to manage the pantry and food security initiatives, UM-TC has also partnered with SNAP advocates from a local community organization to increase awareness and program enrollments among its students (Leighton 2018).

UWLX’s food pantry is located in the Student Union and students are prequalified by advocates who also help connect other students to community resources (UWLX 2018). Access to the pantry is given by swiping a student ID and is available as long as the Student Union is open (UWLX 2018). This allows students to visit the pantry during off-hours to help avoid uncomfortable social situations and stigma.

**Campus Gardens** Campus gardens have also been used as a method to increase awareness and supplement campus pantries. The ability to offer fresh produce has been a challenge to both campus and community pantries (Anderson 2018; Esqueda 2018; Kincannon 2018). The University of Arkansas, Little Rock (UALR) campus garden project started in 2012 as a collaborative partnership between the UALR Sustainability Committee, Anthropology Department, the Central Arkansas New Agrarian Society (CANAS), and University District neighborhood. A partnership with Americore helped secure a grant for a full-time garden manager, and volunteers are responsible for the weeding and care (Kincannon 2018). In addition to fresh produce, the garden also donates honey to the school pantry and local food shelves.

**Unused Dining Dollar/ Meal Donations** To promote action by the institution, students from Spelman and Moorhouse Colleges, two of Georgia’s premier HBCUs, went on a hunger strike. Students wanted the ability to share unused Swipes (dinning meals) with other hungry students on campus and draw attention the issue of FI on their campus (Spelman 2018). Administration responded by providing 2,000 meals, and up to 7,000 meals during
the second semester, to current Spelman students who live off campus and who have a need for a meal (Spelman 2018). In addition, any current Spelman student living off campus who has a need for a meal can obtain a complimentary meal ticket from the Office of the Dean of Students to use in the dining hall (Spelman 2018).

**Awareness programs** Awareness, or lack-thereof, of available resources has been a common theme in the conversations with community organizations, benchmark interviews, and interviews with Minnesota State Mankato students. Many institutions have started awareness programs to help educate their students on available resources. MCTC’s resource center staff visit classrooms regularly to talk with students, and MCTC, UALR, and UM-TC have created large social media presences to help create awareness of food initiatives, donation drives, and provide service announcements (Kincannon 2018; Leighton 2018; Vue 2018).
RECOMMENDATIONS

After identifying the needs of Minnesota State University Mankato students through the survey, interviews and assessment of current resources, we have identified three key aspects to consider when addressing FI include access, awareness, and availability. Our following suggestions are organized by actions that can be completed immediately, within the next year (future actions), and within the next 5 years (reach goals). Table 5 provides a summary of our recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Summary of recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immediate Actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietician for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage existing community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partnerships: Second Harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional materials &amp; pamphlets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meal sharing and dining dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill training in FYEX 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future Actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated bus to grocery store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralized office of student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources, with staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus supported food pantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reach Goals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion of Campus Kitchen &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Cupboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community garden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immediate actions

*Promotional material/ pamphlet* There are several steps that can be immediately taken to increase awareness, access, and availability of current resources for food insecure students. Several students during the interviews noted the lack of a pamphlet or designated office where they could go to learn about the resources available on-campus and around the community. The creation of a small pamphlet with the contact information for local community resources could be distributed to multiple offices to help students locate help. Additionally, we have created a Google map of known community resource including brief descriptions and contact information of available services.
(https://tinyurl.com/MSUMankatoResourceMap). This map can be linked to on individual department websites and included on flyers or posters. Google maps also allows students to plan bus routes to the locations, addressing the need for increased access.

**Meal sharing option/ Dining Dollar donation** Potentially thousands of dining dollars are left on student accounts at the end of every academic year. For many students, these dollars would simply go to waste. As Spelman and Morehouse Colleges demonstrated, those unused dollars could be translated into thousands of meals for those in most need (Spelman 2018). With the ability to share dining dollars or donate dollars to peers, students can take an active role in helping address FI on-campus, increasing access and instilling a sense of shared community.

**Skill training in FYEX 100** Nutritional awareness, meal planning, and budgeting are important life skills that can help students navigate difficult financial events. Combined with the known academic impacts that financial and nutritional health have on academics, we believe such skills would greatly benefit the students enrolled in the first-year experience course: FYEX 100. Additionally, while some students do have access to a campus dietitian, few are aware of their existence or how to reach them. A joint effort between the Student Health Services and FYEX 100 course instructors can help increase awareness of the dietitian as a resource, and help students become more comfortable with seeking out the dietitian’s services.

**Access to campus dietician** All students should have access to a university-supported dietician on campus. Currently, only students with a meal plan have access to a dietician. This dietician is supported and employed by Sodexo, the company the campus utilizes for food services. Students not on meal plans are more likely to experience food insecurity and are in most need of a dietician but are unable to utilize this resource. The service should be open to all students, whether arranged through the partnership the university has with Sodexo, or by hiring a university-funded nutritionist.
**Group counseling** While not directly related to the issue of FI, we recognize that mental health outcomes, academics, and food security are intimately linked. Providing and promoting group counseling for individuals encountering FI and HI can help alleviate the alienation, self-doubt, and feelings of failure that many food insecure students experience (Sommers 2018). Group counseling can help normalize FI as a student issue, encouraging students to seek additional help when needed.

**Leverage community partnerships: Second Harvest** Second Harvest Heartland is one of Minnesota’s largest hunger-relief organizations and food banks. Based in the Twin Cities, Second Harvest utilizes outreach specialists to assist those in need of access to healthy and sufficient amounts of food through support for community partners and resource education efforts (England 2018; Second Harvest 2018). In addition to supporting over 530,000 food insecure individuals and 1,000 food pantries, Second Harvest also engages in outreach efforts to inform and educate people about funded federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) assistance (Second Harvest 2018).

During the course of this study, one of our researchers was able to reach out to Tina England, a SNAP Outreach Specialist for Second Harvest, and arrange for graduate assistants (GA) in the Counseling and Student Personnel program to be trained as SNAP advocates. As many GAs take on roles as paraprofessionals in direct contact positions, this is an efficient way to help identify and serve food insecure students. A similar training program can be instituted for other departments, maximizing awareness, availability, and access for minimal cost.

**Future actions**

**Campus supported food pantry** The Campus Cupboard has helped many students secure sufficient and nutritional foodstuffs. However, its location, lack of institutional support, lack of variety, and limited hours of operation present significant obstacles for students seeking to utilize it as a resource. Creating a centrally located, campus supported food pantry can greatly improve access for students seeking a supplement to their dietary needs. Many of
Minnesota State Mankato’s peer institutions already have on-campus pantries, and there are several models of how such services can be started and run.

**Centralized office for student resources** Many of the campus administrators and benchmark institutions contacted as part of this study recommended the establishment of a single point of contact for students seeking assistance (Anderson 2018; England 2018; Fry 2018; Hesser 2018; Leighton 2018; Sommers 2018; Utterback 2018; Vue 2018). This was further reinforced by our interviews with students. Having a staff person in such a position would provide a go-between, connecting students with community resources, acting as an advocate for food insecure students, and continuously assessing the state of FI on Minnesota State Mankato’s campus.

A common theme among the students interviewed for the study was they did not know where to go to seek help. All food insecure students were asked how much they agreed with each of the following statements: “I know where to go on the University campus if I have questions about resources to help me when I cannot afford food” and “I have someone on campus I can trust who I can talk to for help when I cannot afford food.” Over half of surveyed students indicated that they did not know where to go (62%) or who to contact (53%) on campus if they were having difficulties. Establishing a single point of contact where students can go when encountering a food or housing crisis will help establish accountability and effectively leverage campus and community resources. Such an office can include the Campus Kitchen project, a campus pantry, and assist in providing directed resources where they are most needed. Additionally, having an individual(s) who students can recognize as an advocate will help alleviate the stigma associated with help-seeking (Fry 2018; Vue 2018).

**Bus line** Access to transportation can exasperate FI issues for students. Of the current bus routes available, there is only route which puts student in direct vicinity to carry out their grocery shopping needs: the Stomper Express. The Stomper Express bus service is a special dedicated bus route from the campus out to the River Hills Mall, Walmart, and other retail outlets miles from the campus (MNSU 2018a). Students who depend on this route
are faced with challenges that limit their ability to comfortably and safely complete their grocery shopping. As the line offers no storage space, students are limited to only what they can carry. Additionally, students who miss the scheduled pick up times while shopping are forced to keep their perishable grocery items out of proper temperature for extended periods of time. Access to grocery retailers that offer foods that cater to religious and cultural needs is also hindered for those relying on available public transportation.

The addition of an express bus line to the local grocery stores could greatly improve food access for students. Such a line could be operated twice a week or more, as needed, and could require prior sign-up similar to the Mankato Heartland Express (Katoinfo.com 2018). The current Stomper Express is operated as a joint-venture by the City of Mankato and Minnesota State University, Mankato, so the groundwork for such a venture is already in existence (MNSU 2018a).

**Reach goals**

*Campus Kitchen/ Community Kitchen* The Campus Kitchen has been an excellent way to build community bonds, establish a sense of stewardship among student volunteers, and create awareness of hunger and FI. However, the current effectiveness of the outreach program is limited by space and resources. Since the demolition of its previous location, Campus Kitchen has needed to rent space from a local community organization in order to continue functioning (Anderson 2018). The lack of a permanent location and a dedicated vehicle for food pickup has put significant strain on the program’s limited resources and hindered its ability to address FI and build community bonds (Anderson 2018). Establishing a permanent location with a working kitchen, a dedicated vehicle for transporting donated foodstuffs and prepared meals, and refrigeration space to store food would help increase the program’s effectiveness.

*Community Garden* Establishing an on-campus garden can help supplement pantry stores and provide students much needed produce. While the benefits are numerous, the resources are better directed elsewhere at this time. Community gardens require daily maintenance, ample space, and financial investment to produce the amount of food needed
to be a reliable resource (Anderson 2018; Kincannon 2018). Additionally, refrigeration space and a preparation area would be needed to store and prepare foodstuffs for consumption. While Campus Kitchen staff have the necessary tools and staff, they currently lack the equipment to effectively store fresh produce, and their preparation space is currently being rented from another organization (Anderson 2018). Due to these obstacles, resources are best directed elsewhere until a more permanent location for Campus Kitchen can be found.

Additional Considerations – Housing Instability

In our study, 60 percent of students who reported some form of housing instability experienced high or very high levels of FI. The Mankato area has a few shelters in place for students experiencing these housing issues. The Theresa House and Welcome Inn, both located on Broad Street, provide emergency housing and transitional housing for homeless and near-homeless individuals and families. Between the two shelters, they can hold up to 30 individuals. The Salvation Army also provides both emergency housing for men and transitional housing for families (Salvation Army 2018). Additionally, Minnesota Valley Action Counsel (MVAC) helps service housing unstable Blue Earth county residents. While they do not keep any statistics specifically on homelessness among college students, MVAC does help hundreds of individuals in Mankato a year find safe and secure housing (Hengy-Gretz 2017). Screened households encountering homelessness are prioritized by need and placed on a list. When partner agencies have openings, referrals are pulled from the list based on vulnerability, length of homelessness and other agency criteria (Hengy-Gretz 2017). These resources can temporarily serve the needs of housing insecure students until they can find a more permanent solution. Minnesota State Mankato can work in the future to address the role of HI in the lives of students and identify resources to address this important issue.

Discussion

While the current campus resources may have been effective in the past, the rate of growth and prevalence of FI on Minnesota State Mankato’s campus has outstripped their
ability to address student need. Coupled with lack of awareness, Minnesota State Mankato students are seeking help elsewhere, taxing community resources, or are not seeking help at all. Local community organizations offer multiple services to help address students’ needs, however, these are not long-term solutions for students encountering FI or HI. Additionally, these resources are not maintained by the university and there is no guarantee that students will continue to have reliable access. University resources need to be better directed to help boost student awareness of resources, increase access, and expand on availability. Unless the suggested steps are taken, Minnesota State Mankato students will continue to suffer from food insecurity and their needs will go unaddressed.
REFERENCES


Anderson, Karen. 2018. Personal Interview April 10 2018


Calvez, Kelsey, Caroline Miller, Lauren Thomas, Delma Vazquez, Jayme Walenta. 2016. “The University as a Site of Food Insecurity: Evaluating the Foodscape of Texas A & M University’s Main Campus.” The Southwestern Geographer, 19: 1-14


Esqueda, Deisy. 2018. Personal Interview April 4 2018


England, Tina. 2018. Personal Interview February 27 2018

Freudenberg, Nicholas, Luis Manzo, Hollie Jones, Amy Kwan, Emma Tsui, and Monica Gagnon. 2011. “Food Insecurity at CUNY: Results from a Survey of CUNY Undergraduate Students.” City University of New York School of Public Health at Hunger College. https://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-
Fry, John. 2018. Personal Interview March 23 2018


Hesser, Margaret. 2018. Personal Interview April 16 2018


Kincannon, Sam. 2018. Personal Interview April 4 2018
Leighton Rebecca. 2018. Personal Interview March 27, 2018


Mirabitur, Erica, Karen E. Peterson, Colleen Rathz, Stacey Matlen, and Nicole Kasper. 2016. "Predictors of College Student Food Security and Fruit and Vegetable Intake Differ by Housing Type". Journal of American College Health, 64(7): 555-564.


Utterback Dan. 2018. Personal Interview April 9 2018


APPENDIX

A: IRB approval ...51
B: Survey...52
C: Interview schedule...63
D: Ad campaign posters...67
E: Pamphlets...76
F: Resource lists...78
G: Resource map...86
H: Opinion Article, The Reporter...87
February 26, 2018
Dear Carol Glasser, PhD:


Your IRB Proposal has been approved as of February 26, 2018. On behalf of the Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB, we wish you success with your study. Remember that you must seek approval for any changes in your study, its design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study (see https://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/revision.html). Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research-related injury or other harmful outcome, you are required to report them to the Associate Vice-President of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies immediately.

When you complete your data collection or should you discontinue your study, you must submit a Closure request (see https://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/closure.html). All documents related to this research must be stored for a minimum of three years following the date on your Closure request. Please include your IRBNet ID number with any correspondence with the IRB.

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for maintaining signed consent forms in a secure location at MSU for 3 years following the submission of a Closure request. If the PI leaves MSU before the end of the 3-year timeline, he/she is responsible for following "Consent Form Maintenance" procedures posted online (see http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/storingconsentforms.pdf).

Sincerely,

Mary Hadley, Ph.D. IRB Coordinator
Jeffrey Buchanan, PhD Julie Carlson, Ed.D. IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB’s records.
Food Access Among College Students

You are requested to participate in research supervised by Dr. Carol Glasser on college students' eating habits and expenses. This survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. The goal of this survey is to understand college students' eating behaviors and how their finances impact buying food and meals, and you will be asked to answer questions about these topics. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Dr. Glasser at (507) 389-1345 or carol.glasser@mnsu.edu.

Participation is voluntary. You have the option not to respond to any of the questions. You may stop taking the survey at any time by closing your web browser. The decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at (507) 389-1242.

Responses will be anonymous. However, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

You will be asked questions about your eating habits and finances. Discussing these topics may cause some people discomfort.

There are no direct benefits for participating. Society might benefit by the increased understanding of college students’ access to food, eating behaviors, and expenses.

Submitting the completed survey will indicate your informed consent to participate and indicate your assurance that you are at least 18 years of age.

Please print a copy of this page for your future reference.

MSU IRBNet ID# 1188780
Date of MSU IRB approval: 2/26/2018
[Items in brackets and italics did not appear in the final survey. They are notes for skip patterns to indicate how skip patterns were programmed into the survey when administered using Qualtrics]

[EATING HABITS—ASK EVERYONE]

Eating Habits
Following are some general questions about eating habits and preferences. Please answer each question to the best of your ability by choosing the most appropriate answer.

Q1 For the following questions, think about your eating over the past 7 days.

In the past week, how often did you do each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1 day</th>
<th>2 to 3 days</th>
<th>4 to 6 days</th>
<th>Every day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat breakfast</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat fast food</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat meals you prepared at home</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat a meal on campus</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2 Thinking back over the past week, how many servings of vegetables did you usually eat on what you would consider to be a typical day? A serving is ½ cup of cooked vegetables or 1 cup raw.

- None
- 1 serving
- 2-3 servings
- 4-5 servings
- 6 or more

Q3 Thinking back over the past week, how many servings of fruit did you usually eat on what you would consider to be a typical day? A serving is ½ cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice or a medium piece of fruit.

- None
- 1 serving
- 2-3 servings
- 4-5 servings
- 6 or more

Q4 Now think about the past two weeks. In the past two weeks, how many times have you had four or five alcoholic drinks in a row?

- Not at all
- 1 day
- 2 days
- 3 days
- 4 days
- 5 or more days
Now we are going to ask you to think about your eating over a longer time period. For the following questions, please think about your eating in the last 30 days.

Q5 Following are several statements that people have made about their food situation. For each statement, please indicate whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for you in the last 30 days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Often true</th>
<th>Sometimes true</th>
<th>Never true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The food that I bought just didn’t last, and I didn’t have money to get more</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[IF answered OFTEN or SOMETIMES TRUE to any of the above questions, continue to next question. IF answered NEVER to all three of the above measures, SKIP to BUYING FOOD Section]

Q6 In the last 30 days, did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

[IF YES:]
Q6a1 In the last 30 days, about how many days did that happen? ________

Q7 In the last 30 days, did you ever eat less than you thought you should because there wasn’t enough money for food?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Q8 In the last 30 days, were you ever hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Q9 In the last 30 days, did you lose weight because there wasn’t enough money for food?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure
[IF YES to ANY of the above 4 questions (#s 6, 7, 8 or 9):]

Q10 In the last 30 days, did you ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

[IF YES:]
Q10a In the last 30 days, about how many days did that happen? __________

Q11 Thinking about your time as a college student, has hunger caused you to do any of the following? (Check all that apply)

[randomize response order]

☐ Miss a class
☐ Miss a study session
☐ Miss a club meeting
☐ Opt not to join an extra-curricular activity
☐ Drop a class
☐ Not perform as well academically as you otherwise could have
☐ None of the above

Q12 Please explain briefly if you feel hunger has impacted your education. [open ended]

Q13 How much do you agree with the following statement: “I know where to go on the University campus if I have questions about resources to help me when I cannot afford food.”

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree or disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly Disagree

Q14 How much do you agree with the following statement: “I have someone on campus I trust who I can talk to for help when I cannot afford food.”

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree or disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

Q15 Thinking about your time as a college student, have you ever had to choose between paying for food or paying for school related expenses such as tuition or books?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

Q16 Thinking about your time as a college student, have you ever had to choose between paying for food or paying for housing expenses such as bills or rent?

☐ Yes
Buying Food
Now we have some general questions about where you tend to eat and buy your food.

[*] Q17 Are you currently enrolled in a school meal plan?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unsure

[IF YES]

   Q18 Which meal plan are you currently in?
      □ Maverick Anytime Plan
      □ Maverick 14 Plan
      □ Maverick 160 Plan
      □ Maverick Dining Dollar Plan
      □ Unsure

   Q19 Who paid for your meal plan this semester? (Check all that apply).
      □ Yourself
      □ Parents or other family/friends
      □ Financial aid or scholarship package
      □ Unsure
      □ Other: __________________

[IF NO]

   Q20 For which of the following reasons did you choose not to be on a meal plan? Check all that apply.
      [randomize question order]
      □ I don’t like the food that is offered
      □ I prefer to prepare/cook my own food
      □ Eating on campus is not convenient for me
      □ The food on campus is not healthy
      □ The hours of dining services are not convenient
      □ The cost is too high
      □ Financial aid didn’t cover meal plans
      □ The food available does not accommodate my dietary preferences/restrictions
      □ Other: __________________

[*] Q21 Have you been enrolled in a school meal plan in the past?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unsure
[IF Respondent has currently or ever been on a meal plan: (answered YES to either of the above two questions with an *)]:

Q22 Have you ever run out of points or money on your meal plan before the end of the term?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unsure

Q23 How often in a typical semester do your parent(s)/guardian(s) typically purchase or send food for you?
   □ Never
   □ Once per semester
   □ 2 to 3 times per semester
   □ Monthly
   □ Weekly
   □ Unsure

Following are some questions about where you get your groceries and meals. For the following questions, think about your groceries and meals in the past 30 days.

Q24 In the past 30 days, what was your primary sources of getting most of your food? Choose up to two responses to indicate your two main sources of meals and/or groceries.
   □ Grocery store
   □ Campus meal plan
   □ Eating out/ eating premade meals from stores or restaurants
   □ Parent(s)/guardian(s)
   □ Food pantry or food shelf
   □ Other:__________

Q25 In the past 30 days, did you receive any financial help from family or friends in order to help purchase meals or groceries?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unsure

Q26 In the past 30 days, have you used any of the following to assist in getting meals or groceries? Check all that apply
   □ SNAP (food stamps)
   □ MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program)
   □ MFAP (Minnesota Food Assistance Program)
   □ A food pantry or food shelf
   □ None of the above

[IF A FOOD PANTRY OR FOOD SHELF] In the last 30 days, which of the following food pantries or food shelves did you use?
   □ Campus Kitchen
   □ Campus Pantry
   □ ECHO Food Shelf
   □ A food pantry/shelf at a local church
   □ Other:______________

Q27 If you use other types of resources or strategies to assist you in getting food or meals, please briefly explain what they are. Some examples might include attending events that have free food, visiting friends/family when they cook, shoplifting, sharing food with roommates, etc.
School Expenses
Following are some questions about your finances and how you pay for tuition and school related expenses.

Q28) Which of the following financial sources have you used, now or in the past, to pay for your college tuition and supplies such as student fees and books? Check all that apply.

☐ Government grants/ scholarships
☐ University grants/scholarships
☐ Private scholarships
☐ Government loans
☐ Private loans
☐ Credit card
☐ Family and/or friends
☐ Work-study job(s)/ on-campus employment
☐ Employment outside of the university
☐ Military benefits/ scholarships
☐ Veteran’s benefits
☐ Other: ____________________
☐ None of the above

[IF YES to loans:]
Q 29 About how much in student loans have you taken out to date?

☐ I don’t have any loans
☐ Less than $4,999
☐ $5,000-$9,999
☐ $10,000-$14,999
☐ $15,000-$19,999
☐ $20,000-$24,999
☐ $25,000-$29,999
☐ $30,000-$39,999
☐ $40,000-$49,999
☐ $50,000 or more
☐ Unsure

Q30 How much credit card debt do you currently have?

☐ I don’t have any credit card debt
☐ Less than $499
☐ $500-$999
☐ $1,000-$1,499
☐ $1,500-$1,999
☐ $2,000-$2,499
☐ $2,500-$2,999
☐ $3,000-$3,999
☐ $4,000-$4,999
☐ $5,000 or more
☐ Unsure

Q31 Are you currently employed?
☐ Yes
☐ No

[If YES]
Q32 Thinking about the last 30 days, on average, how many hours do you work in a typical week? 
*Please include all paid jobs you have, including work study on campus.*
☐ Less than 10 hours
☐ 10-19 hours
☐ 20-29 hours
☐ 30-39 hours
☐ 40 hours or more

Q33 In the past 30 days, have you financially helped to support anyone else, such as a family member or significant other?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

[IF YES]:
Q34 In the past 30 days, have you had any people in your life you rely on your for their financial well-being?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

[IF YES]:
Q35 In the past 30 days, who has depended on you for their financial well-being?
*Check all that apply.*
☐ Roommate
☐ Parent(s)/guardian
☐ Your children/children of your significant other
☐ Boyfriend/Girlfriend/significant other
☐ Spouse
☐ Other

**Your Household**

Now we have some questions about your housing and household. For the following questions please think about your housing situation in the past 12 months.

Please indicate if you have had any of the following experiences in the past 12 months, so between [current month, last year 2017] and now.

Q36 In the past year, have you had the following experiences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had difficulty paying rent or mortgage</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t pay full amount of rent or mortgage</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you pay full amount of gas, oil, or electricity bills?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowed money from friends or family to help pay bills</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved 2 or more times</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left your living situation because you felt unsafe</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was thrown out of the house by someone else in the household because of financial problems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was evicted from home</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed in a shelter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed in an abandoned building, an automobile, or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t know where you were going to sleep at night, even for one night</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t have a home</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q37** Which of the following best describes your current housing situation?
- [ ] I don’t currently have a regular place to live
- [ ] I live on-campus
- [ ] I live off-campus

**[IF living OFF CAMPUS]**

**Q38** Who do you currently live with? *Check all that apply*
- [ ] No one; I live alone
- [ ] Roommate(s)
- [ ] Parent(s)
- [ ] Spouse
- [ ] Boyfriend/girlfriend/significant other
- [ ] My children/my spouse or significant other’s children
- [ ] Other family

**Q39** Do you currently pay rent or mortgage in the place you live?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
Demographics
Following are some general questions about you. This information will remain completely confidential and your name will not be attached to these responses.

Q40 Please select the option that best describes your current enrollment at MSU Mankato:

- [ ] I am enrolled full-time as a student
- [ ] I am enrolled part-time as a student
- [ ] Other (please explain): __________

Q41 If you are currently enrolled full- or part-time at MSU Mankato, based on your credit hours, what is your current year in school?

- [ ] Freshman
- [ ] Sophomore
- [ ] Junior
- [ ] Senior
- [ ] Graduate Student
- [ ] Other/ unsure: ____________________________

Q42 What is your primary race or ethnicity?

- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native
- [ ] Asian
- [ ] Black or African American
- [ ] Latino or Hispanic
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- [ ] White or Caucasian
- [ ] Prefer not to answer
- [ ] Other (please specify):_____________________

Q43 What is your gender?

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Transgender
- [ ] Prefer not to answer
- [ ] Other

Q44 How old are you? ____________ years

[TAKE RESPONDENT OUT OF THIS SURVEY TO A NEW SURVEY]

Q45 Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. To further our understanding of food related behaviors and expenses among college students, the researchers would like to conduct interviews with college students. Could a researcher working on this study contact you in the future to request a follow-up interview with you?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

[IF NO—closing page]
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

[IF YES]
What is an email address that we can reach you at to set up a follow-up interview?
Please note, your survey is completely confidential. This email address will not be attached to your survey answers and the researcher who contacts you will not know your answers to this survey.

[CLOSING PAGE]
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Respondent ID # __________________________
Interviewer: __________________________________________
Date: __________________________
Start time: __________________________ End time: __________________________

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
[READ SCRIPT VERBATUM UNTIL OPEN ENDED INTERVIEW BEGINS]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

You previously took a survey about your eating habits, access to food, and school related expenses. Because that survey was anonymous, I have not seen your responses to those questions, so I may ask some questions that you already answered in that survey.

To start, I want to ask you some very specific questions. I will read the questions and the answer choices out loud and you can choose the best answer for each question. Ready?

I’m going to read you several statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for you in the last 30 days since last (date, one month ago).

1) The first statement is “I worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more.” Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for you in the last 12 months?
   - [ ] Often true
   - [ ] Sometimes true
   - [ ] Never true
   - [ ] DK or Refused

2) “The food that I bought just didn’t last, and I didn’t have money to get more.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last month?
   - [ ] Often true
   - [ ] Sometimes true
   - [ ] Never true
   - [ ] DK or Refused

3) “I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last month?
   - [ ] Often true
   - [ ] Sometimes true
   - [ ] Never true
   - [ ] DK or Refused
[IF answered OFTEN or SOMETIMES TRUE to any of the above questions, continue to question #4]

[IF answered NEVER to all three of the above measures, SKIP rest of questions on next page and begin OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE]

4) In the last 30 days, since (date, one month ago), did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?
   □ Yes (ask 4a)
   □ No (skip 4a)
   □ DK (skip 4a)

[If YES]
   4a) In the last 30 days, about how many days did that happen? __________

5) In the last 30 days, did you ever eat less than you thought you should because there wasn’t enough money for food?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ DK

6) In the last 30 days, were you ever hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ DK

7) In the last 30 days, did you lose weight because there wasn’t enough money for food?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ DK

[IF YES to ANY of the above 4 questions (#s 4, 5, 6 or 7):]

8) In the last 30 days, did you ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unsure

[IF YES:]
8a) In the last 30 days, about how many days did that happen?

[MOVE TO OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE]

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Thank you for your answers to those questions. For the rest of the interview I will ask you more general questions, and will not be providing answer choices. The interview will be more of a conversation from here on out. Remember you don’t have to answer anything you are not comfortable answering and can stop at any time.

[OPEN ENDED INTERVIEW BEGINS- NO NEED TO READ SCRIPT VERBATUM]

Follow-ups for food insecurity measures:

[For all questions in #1-3 where they responded OFTEN or SOMETIMES TRUE have follow-up:]

8) You said…
   1) ...That you worried whether my food would run out before you got money to buy more. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
   2) ...That the food you bought didn’t last.
   3) ...That you couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals
   Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

OR

[If NO to all of questions in #1-3]

9) You haven’t had trouble paying or getting food in the past month. Has this every been a problem for you in the past?
   Probes:
   Tell me a little bit about that
   Do you know of any student on campus that problems with paying for food?

[FOR ALL RESPONDENTS]

10. Has hunger ever been an issue for you or any of your friends here at MSU Mankato?
11. Where do you tend to get your meals?
Probe: Do you tend to eat in the dining hall, eat fast food, prepare and cook your own food, eat food your parents make for you?

12. Do you ever get food from food pantries or use food assistance programs like SNAP?
   
   [FYI: Food assistance programs in MN are SNAP MFIP and MFAP; Food shelves in Mankato include Campus Kitchen, Campus pantry, ECHO Food Shelf, shelves at local churches]

13. Do you ever use other strategies to get food for a low cost or for free?

   Probe: For example, do you ever attend events because there is food, choose places to eat that have value meals, visit family and friends when you know they are cooking?

14. How do you primarily pay for your food?

   Probe: Do you have a meal plan? Use your credit card? Does anyone help you with your grocery or food bills?

15. Do you feel you eat as healthy as you want to eat?

   Follow-up, if no: Do you think the cost of food or access to food on campus impacts your food choices?

16. What is your housing situation like?

   Follow-up, if applicable: Does it feel like a secure place to live? Do you ever worry about being able to pay for rent?

17. How do you primarily pay for your housing? Does anyone help you with your rent?

18. Some people note that paying for food, school and housing can be challenging to balance. Do you ever have trouble paying for these things?

   PROBE: How do you balance these expenses? Does anyone help you with these expenses? Do you ever have to choose between paying housing bills, school bills, and buying food?
Starving should NOT be a part of the "college experience"
Food Insecurity on Campus

Food insecure college students are more likely to have romantic issues.

59% of college students in the U.S. are food insecure.

Paying rent is a struggle for food insecure college students.

College students are 4x more likely to struggle with food insecurity than the general population.

College students with meal plans are just as likely to be food insecure.

College students who are food insecure are more likely to have lower grades.

A member of the Minnesota State system and an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity University. This document is available in alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the Department of Sociology and Corrections 507-389-1340 (V), 800-627-3539 or T11 (WRS/TTY).
FOOD INSECURITY IS A LACK OF RELIABLE ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES OF AFFORDABLE FOOD
Starving should NOT be part of the "college experience" but..

"I personally have been food insecure for the past couple of years. It's affected my schooling to the point where I withdrew completely for a semester. Food insecurity exacerbated my depression and anxiety. I prioritized my bills over food and often times couldn't pay the full bill, so rarely had extra money for food. I made peanut butter saltine cracker sandwiches as meals. That was the worst it's been for me on my own."

A story from a student at MSU

It can happen to anyone.

Food Insecurity on a College Campus
Starving should NOT be part of the "college experience" but..

**College students are 4x more likely to struggle with food insecurity than the general population.**

*Food Insecurity on a College Campus*

A member of the Minnesota State system and an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity University. This document is available in alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the Department of Sociology and Corrections 507-389-1345 (V), 800-627-3529 or 711 (MRS/TTY)
Starving should NOT be part of the "college experience" but..

**College Students are**

2.2 x

More likely to be food insecure if they do not have a car

Food Insecurity on a College Campus

A member of the Minnesota State system and an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity University. This document is available in alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the Department of Sociology and Corrections 507-389-1345 (V), 800-627-3529 or 711 (MRS/TTY)
Starving should NOT be part of the "college experience" but..

"Sometimes I look in my fridge and wonder how I am going to make it until I get paid again. I know I won’t be eating healthy when it comes to that."

A story from a student at NSU

It can happen to anyone.

Food Insecurity on a College Campus
Starving should NOT be part of the "college experience" but..

59%

OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE U.S. ARE FOOD INSECURE.

Food Insecurity on a College Campus

A member of the Minnesota State system and an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity University. This document is available in alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the Department of Sociology and Corrections 507-389-1345 (V), 800-627-3529 or 711 (MRS/TTY)
Starving should NOT be part of the "college experience" but..

College students on a meal plan are just as likely to be food insecure as those who are not on a meal plan.
Starving should NOT be part of the "college experience" but..

"Getting food consistently has become a "maybe" instead of "of course" since going to college. I work part time and am a full time student. But between rent, school, gas, and other bills, money for decent food becomes scarce between pay checks. And time is not available to cook healthy meals often."

A story from a student at MSU

It can happen to anyone.

Food Insecurity on a College Campus
FOOD INSECURITY
MYTH BUSTERS

Myth: Students are too lazy to work, go to school, and earn money for food.

Fact: Students encountering food insecurity and housing insecurity commonly report difficulty attending class and lower perceived performance on academic related tasks (Joo, Durband, & Grable, 2008; Silva et al., 2015).

Myth: Students have no problem paying for housing.

Fact: While homelessness has fallen nationally since 2010, homelessness among college students appears to be on the rise (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015).

Myth: College students spend their money on drugs and alcohol and not on food.

Fact: a survey of students at the University of Boston, Massachusetts found a link between food insecurity and likelihood drug addiction and psychiatric hospitalization (Silva et al., 2015.)

Myth: Change is not possible.

Fact:
It is.
## Community Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>NAME/ CONTACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH SERVICES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | Open Door Health Center  
309 Holly Ln., Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 388-2120 |
| | Blue Earth County Mental Health Center  
410 South 5th Street, Mankato, MN 56001  
24 hour On Call/Crisis Number: (507) 304-4319 |
| | Planned Parenthood  
201 N Victory Dr., Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 387-5581 |
| | Counseling Services of Southern MN  
226 N. Broad Street, Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 931-8040 |
| | Birthright of Mankato  
330 Stadium Road, Suite 201B, Mankato, MN 56001 1-800-550-4900 |
| SHELTER/ HOUSING ASST. |  |
| | Theresa House Shelter (Women and Children)  
423 S Broad St., Mankato, MN 56001,  
(507) 387-8189 |
| | Salvation Army Shelter (seasonal only  
November 1 to March 31)  
700 S. Riverfront Dr. Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 345-7840 |
| | Welcome Inn (Emergency/ Short-term/ Transitional)  
419 S. Broad Street, Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 387-4061 |
| | Public Housing Services  
Intergovernmental Center, 10 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 387-8600 |
| | Minnesota Valley Action Counsel  
706 North Victory Drive, Mankato, MN 56001 1-800-767-7139 |
| | Connections Ministry (Rotating Shelter Call (507) 341-9636,  
connectionsmin@gmail.com |
| | Committee Against Domestic Abuse (CADA)  
24 hour Crisis Line/Shelter: 507-625-7233  
or 507-625-3966 |
| | The Reach Drop-in Center (Up to Age 24)  
125 E Liberty St, Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 381-6670 |
| FOOD |  |
| | Echo Food shelf  
1014 South Front Street  
Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 345-7508 |
| | Food for All  
PACT Ministries  
1700 3rd Ave  
Mankato, MN 56001507-625-7228 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fare For All (Varies)</td>
<td>New Creation Outreach Church</td>
<td>1124 N River Drive, Mankato, MN 56003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army Food Shelf</td>
<td></td>
<td>700 S. Riverfront Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Earth County WIC</td>
<td></td>
<td>125 E Liberty St, Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 381-6670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army Noon Meal and Bread Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td>421 E. Hickory Street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FREE MEALS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hosanna Lutheran Church</td>
<td>105 Hosanna Dr, Mankato, MN 56001</td>
<td>Free community supper on Tues. at 5:00 pm. Contact 507-382-4646 for information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethlehem Lutheran Church</td>
<td>720 S 2nd St, Mankato, MN 56001</td>
<td>Free community supper on Weds. from 4:50-6:00 pm. Contact 507-388-2925 for information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ the King Lutheran Church</td>
<td>222 Pfau St, Mankato, MN 56001</td>
<td>Free community supper on Weds. from 5:00 - 5:50 pm. Contact 507-345-5056 for information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messiah Lutheran Church</td>
<td>1706 Lee Blvd, North Mankato, MN 56003</td>
<td>Free community supper on Weds. at 5:30 pm. Contact 507-387-5537 for information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Meals on Wheels/VINE</td>
<td>421 E. Hickory Street</td>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 387-1666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army Noon Meal and Bread Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td>700 S Riverfront Dr, Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 345-7840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EMPLOYMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Earth County Employment Services</td>
<td>421 E. Hickory Street, Suite 400, Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 386-5750</td>
<td>People Ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato WorkForce Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLOTHING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encore Thrift Store</td>
<td>311 N. Riverfront Drive, Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 386-0861</td>
<td>MVAC Thrift Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSPORTATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>OTHER SERVICES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopp's Thrift Store</td>
<td>Shoe Bus (New and gently used shoes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army Thrift Store</td>
<td>Follows Fare for All schedule</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1002 Belle Avenue, Mankato, MN 56001</td>
<td>VITA (Free tax preparation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(507) 387-4448</td>
<td>College of Business, Morris Hall 151</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRCI Thrift Store</td>
<td>Blue Earth County Human Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Thrift Store</td>
<td>410 S. Fifth St., Mankato, MN 56001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111 Sioux Road, Mankato, MN 56001</td>
<td>(507) 304-4222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(507) 388-3386 / (507) 386-5601</td>
<td>Second Harvest Heartland (SNAP Benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocacy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato Heartland Express</td>
<td>12 Civic Center Plaza, Ste. 3000,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 625-7433</td>
<td>Mankato, Mn 56001 (507) 387-5588</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato Land to Air Express</td>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 625-3977</td>
<td>105 Homestead Drive, Mankato, MN 56001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 625-7433</td>
<td>(507) 387-6664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINE Faith in Action</td>
<td>Blue Earth County Emergency Assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 387-1666</td>
<td>410 S. Fifth Street, Mankato, MN 56001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 387-1666</td>
<td>(507) 304-4335</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINE - People to Jobs</td>
<td>Second Harvest Heartland (SNAP Benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 385-8127</td>
<td>Advocacy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 385-8127</td>
<td>6325 Sandburg Rd., Suite 1700, Golden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 385-8127</td>
<td>Valley, MN 55427 (651) 209-7980</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankato, MN 56001 (507) 385-8127</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SELECT RESOURCES**

**COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

There are numerous community resources which serve and support MNSU students. Nonprofit and government supported organizations work together to provide access to adequate shelter, food, health services, and transportation. While useful, they are not long-term solutions for students encountering food insecurity or housing instability. Additionally, their locations
spread across the Greater Mankato area make access a challenge for students seeking to utilize their services.

**Echo Food Shelf**

Among those most frequented by MNSU students, the Echo Food Shelf provides supplemental nutrition and limited toiletries to those it serves. Echo food shelf began in 1981 when members of the community noticed an increase in the number of food insecure Mankato residents (Esqueda, 2018; Linehan, 2007). Individuals are allowed up to 12 visits per annum though most use the shelf as a supplement, visiting an average of 4 times per cycle (Esqueda, 2018). There are a few exceptions to the 12-visit allowance for those who have additional need, and those who are homeless.

Receiving an average of 1300 to 1500 pounds of food per month, the Echo food shelf is among the top 10 largest food shelves in the state (Esqueda, 2018). The service supports 65 families a day, distributing an average of 1.7 million pounds of food per year for the last three years to residents of Blue Earth county and North Mankato (Esqueda, 2018; Gotlieb, 2015). Items arrive from various local and regional donors, supplemented by purchases by staff members. Among the available items are fresh vegetables, fruit, eggs, bread, and frozen meats. The staff try to work with dietary restrictions when able and offer a limited delivery service for those unable to physically make it to the pantry (Esqueda, 2018; Gotlieb, 2015).

Despite its central location, transportation is a major obstacle for the people the shelf bservices. The shelf’s manager, Deisy Esqueda (2018), is very critical of the public transportation in the area, noting that many residents, including MNSU students, need to walk to make it to the shelf. Esqueda (2018) also noted that the shelf has struggled to keep up with growing demand for its services, including a significant increase in the number of MNSU students looking for help.

**Minnesota Valley Action Council**

Minnesota Valley Action Council, Inc. (MVAC) is a community action agency which provides resources for people in low-wage work to secure affordable housing, viable transportation, employment, and training. Established in 1965 to serve the Minnesota river valley, the organization supports thousands of Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin,
Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca and Watonwan county residents annually (MVAC, 2018). In 2017 alone, MVAC representatives responded to 72,988 calls and 35,384 visits in the nine counties (MVAC, 2018).

In addition to providing workforce development, MVAC paid over $678,000 in rental assistance, worked with over 371 individuals to reduce rental expenses, and assisted several others secure low-interest loans (MVAC, 2018). MVAC works with local contractors and servicers to weatherize and make improvements on existing homes so residents can remain safe and secure. The organization also provides utilities assistance, paying out over $3,600,000 in energy bills on behalf of utility customers in 2017 (MVAC, 2018). Individuals lacking reliable transportation may participate in MVAC’s Maintenance Education and Repair fund to receive assistance and education on basic vehicle maintenance or participate in the car lease initiative (MVAC, 2018).

While they do not keep any statistics specifically on homelessness among college students, MVAC does help hundreds of individuals in Mankato a year find safe and secure housing (Hengy-Gretz, 2017). MVAC talks to almost 1100 unduplicated households encountering a housing crisis annually, and organization representatives provide a triage type screening while sharing resource information with all of these households (Hengy-Gretz, 2017). Screened households encountering homelessness are prioritized by need and placed on a list. When partner agencies have openings, referrals are pulled from the list based on vulnerability, length of homelessness & other agency criteria (Hengy-Gretz, 2018).

MVAC relies on a number of preventative measures to help those encountering housing crisis alleviate financial pressure. Individuals making initial inquiries for housing assistance are given a list of general suggestions including increase income, decrease expenses, work with landlords to set-up payment arrangements, and get help from family and friends (MVAC, 2018). Kate Hengy-Gretz (2017), the MVAC homeless prevention services coordinator, estimates that 25% of the households who contact the organization for assistance live in housing that is not affordable based on their income.

**Partners for Affordable Housing (PAH)**

Partners for Affordable Housing (PAH) is a community action organization which helps Mankato residents find and keep safe and secure housing. In addition to operating two shelters,
the organization offers support through the use of licensed social workers, a transitional housing program for at-risk families, and a free shop stocked with housing necessities for program participants (PAH, 2018). The shop is stocked with a variety of community donated items including towels laundry, baskets, dishes, cookware, small appliances, sheet and bedding, and limited furniture items which help stabilize financially stressed families (PAH, 2018). The organization also accepts cash donations which go towards funding its shelters.

PAH is most well known for being the parent organization of two homeless shelters in Mankato: Teresa House and the Welcome Inn (PAH, 2018). Currently, the shelters house 11 families per night, with 41% of those served by the shelters are under the age of 18, and an average length of stay of 2 months (PAH, 2018). Services are typically directed towards families, rather than individuals, and those served by the shelters are provided with bedrooms, a shared kitchen and bathroom, and access to life skills courses and social workers to help reduce barriers to self-sufficiency (PAH, 2018).

Additional Community Support Services

While there are only a few highlighted here, there are over 50 community organizations and services that can help address student needs. The Salvation Army offers a seasonal shelter for those encountering homelessness and operate a thrift store where students can purchase needed home goods for reasonable cost (Salvation Army, 2018). Additionally, the organization offers free noon meal and bread distribution at their Riverfront location (Salvation Army, 2018).

Religious-Affiliated Organizations

There are a number of churches and religious organizations which offer services that can be beneficial to students having difficulty meeting basic needs. Hosanna Lutheran Church, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, and Messiah Lutheran Church all offer free community suppers on specific days during the week. While beneficial, free meals are typically offered during overlapping times on Wednesday evenings, limiting the impact of these services (Bethlehem, 2018; Christ the King, 2018; Hosanna, 2018; Messiah, 2018).

The Reach Youth Drop-In Center services Mankato youth up to the age of 24, providing access to meals and shelter. Specific services that can be beneficial for financially insecure
students include access to showers, toiletries, clothing vouchers, transportation assistance, grocery vouchers, and computer and Wi-Fi access (The Reach, 2018). The Reach also provides links to public housing services, access to emergency shelter, a crisis nursery program for students with children, workforce development tools, college preparation and financial aid application assistance, and nutrition and cooking assistance (The Reach, 2018).

Transportation

Students encountering transportation issues can seek assistance through several community organizations. As mentioned, the Reach offers transportation assistance and MVAC offers a car lease initiative for low-income individuals lacking in reliable transport (MVAC, 2018; The Reach, 218). In addition to these, VINE Faith in Action volunteers provide Makato residents free rides to shop at local retailers, go the doctor, attend appointments, and get to their jobs (VINE, 2108).

Mankato Heartland Express is a shared ride public transit program for Mankato and Blue Earth county residents. All rides are coordinated in advance to accommodate as many passengers as possible depending on pickup and drop-off locations (Katoinfo.com, 2018). Appointments must be made a day in advance, available pick up times are limited based on current routes, and prices range from $.75 to $3 depending on the destination (Katoinfo.com, 218).

The Land-to-Air Express offers an inexpensive and convenient way for students to travel to Minneapolis, Rochester and surrounding towns. Fares to Minneapolis start at $15 with a MavCard, with trips running twice daily service from MSU to Minneapolis (Hawthorne) and stops in LeSueur, Belle Plaine, Jordan and Shakopee (MNSU, 2018). The service also drops off at Terminal 1 and 2 at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport six times a day weekdays and three times on weekends (MNSU, 2018). The airport shuttle service usually costs $35, but students receive a discount reducing it to $30 each way (MNSU, 2018). Land-to-Air Express also offers shuttle services throughout Southern Minnesota, offering three daily rides to Rochester with stops at Mayo & airport, Owatonna, Albert Lea, Austin, Waseca and Dodge Center (MNSU, 2018). Fares for the Southern Minnesota shuttle run $15 per trip (MNSU, 218).

OTHER RESOURCES

84
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

VITA is available to students who qualify on campus to visit with an IRS certified tax consultant to receive support, answers to tax questions and additional information and professional advice. Qualifications include individual incomes of $35,000 or less, family incomes of $55,000 or less, and self-employed income of $55,000 or less. Assistance is available every Friday in the month of March from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. with the exception of March 9th. Accommodations for people with disabilities and language barriers are met.

The American Red Cross

The Southwestern Minnesota Red Cross chapter is part of a national humanitarian organization made possible largely through volunteering efforts and contributed donations and funding. American Red Cross is an institution planted firmly in communities serving citizens responding to emergencies such as health crises, environmental disasters and fires providing relief to those in need.

Blue Earth County Human Services

The Blue Earth County Emergency Assistance is a service offered through two types of programs. The Low-Income Stabilization Program (LISP) provides help to families with children or pregnant woman facing an outstanding emergency causing endangerment. The Emergency General Assistance (EGA) to both single adults and married couples without children facing an emergency situation like eviction and utility cut-offs

Shoe Bus

Shoe Bus offers new or lightly used low-cost shoes to students near campus. Proceeds from purchases go towards a hunger relief organization called Good-in-the-Hood. The service follows Fare-for-all, with the distribution point at New Creation World Outreach Church.
APPENDIX G: RESOURCE MAP

A map of community resources has been created using Google Maps so that students may identify key resources and plan their transportation, including using bus routes, to these places. Resources are grouped into the following categories:

→ Food, shelter/housing
→ Free/low cost meals
→ Campus resources
→ Health services
→ Transportation

The map can be located at: https://tinyurl.com/MSUMankatoResourceMap

When a specific resource on the map is selected, key information about the service and contact information is shown.

The map was created and is maintained by Cole Denisen. Please contact Cole for more information on the map: cole.denisen@mnsu.edu
OPINION: Starving should not be part of the college experience

Published on April 18, 2018
Attributed to: MSU Sociology in Action Student
Guest Writer
Written by Kelsey Cawiezell

I do not believe starving should be part of the college experience. Students shouldn’t be worried about where their next meal is coming from while sitting in class, or worried about how much money they will have leftover for food after paying their bills, but they are.

The problem of hunger is referred to as food insecurity in the academic literature. Food insecurity is defined as the lack of access to affordable, nutritious food. Even if you yourself have never dealt with food insecurity, you probably know someone who has (even if you don’t know it) because college students have been found to be four times more likely to experience food insecurity than the general population.

We are not immune from this problem at Minnesota State University, Mankato. In fact, the problem is even worse here than what studies have found at other schools. Here, a majority of students are experiencing food insecurity. In total, 64 percent of our student body is experiencing food insecurity and 40 percent of students surveyed are experiencing this problem at high or very high levels.

How do I know this? My Sociology in Action class has taken it upon themselves to conduct a study based on food insecure students on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus. We surveyed a random sample of the student body, conducted interviews with students, and have been researching and assessing what resources hungry students currently have available to them.

We found that the most prevalent problems among our students are many students are running out of food before there was money to buy more (48 percent), being unable to afford balanced meals (48 percent), worrying about food running out (39 percent), needing to reduce the size of meals (30 percent), eating less than they should (28 percent), and choosing not to eat when hungry (25 percent) because there was not enough money for food. Though experienced by a smaller percentage of students, some students also experienced weight loss (9 percent) and skipping meals for an entire day (9 percent) due to an inability to afford food.

As a student, I care about food insecurity because I have gone hungry, but I didn’t know the resources that were available to me. As a student body, we need to combat hunger by working with administration to find ways to support our students and making resources more available.
So why should you care about food insecurity on college campuses? Because you may be hungry, and if you haven’t experienced food insecurity first-hand, you may be sitting next to someone in one of your classes who has. Students are unable to put forth their full potential when hungry, and the fact that one-quarter of food insecure students on our campus feel that hunger has caused them to not perform as well academically than they otherwise would have speaks volumes about how big this issue really is. Our Sociology in Action class will be presenting our survey results on campus on Tuesday, May 1st at 6:30 p.m. in CSU 253 and all are encouraged to come.

We want students to know that they are not alone and that there are food resources on and off campus that are available to them. Here is a list of food resources available:

**On Campus:**
- Campus Cupboard
- Crossroads Ministries
  507-625-6779

**Off Campus:**
- Echo Food Shelf
  1014 S. Front St.
  Mankato, MN 56001
  507-345-7508
- Minnesota Food Asst.
  410 S. Fifth St.
  Mankato, MN 56001
  507-304-4335
- The Reach
  125 E. Liberty St.
  Mankato, MN 56001
  507-381-6670

- Lunch 4 $1
- Crossroads Ministries
  Friday 11am-1pm
- Salvation Army
  700 S. Riverfront Dr.
  Mankato, MN 56001
  507-345-7840
- Food for All
  Crossview Covenant
  200 Howard Dr. W
  Mankato, MN 56003
  507-387-5606
- Fare for All (varies)
  New Creation Outreach
  1124 N. River Dr.
  Mankato, MN 56003
  https://fareforall.org/find-a-site/