

# Understanding Food Insecurity in a College Student Population



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
AND LIFE SCIENCES

A. Conrad, PhD, RDN, LDN; T. Tolar-Peterson, EdD, MS, RDN; A. J. Gardner, PhD, MS, CHES; T. Wei, PhD; M. W. Evans, PhD, MCHES



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
DEPARTMENT OF FOOD SCIENCE,  
NUTRITION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

## Background

The prevalence of food insecurity on college campuses has been found to be higher than reported in U.S. households. Despite the prevalence and negative health and academic consequences associated with food insecurity in college students, barriers exist in food access resource utilization.

## Study Objective

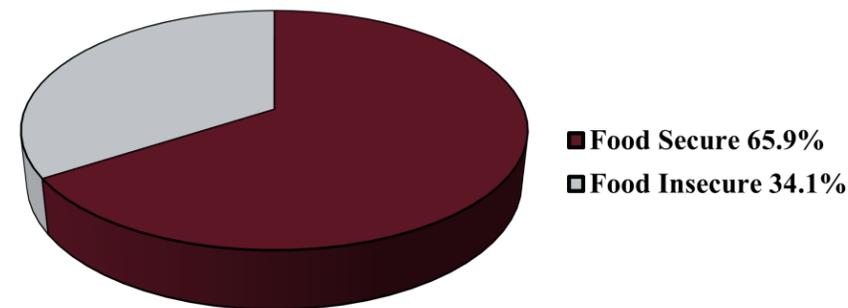
The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of food insecurity at Mississippi State University and explore college students' perceptions of food access resources and resource utilization.

## Research Methods

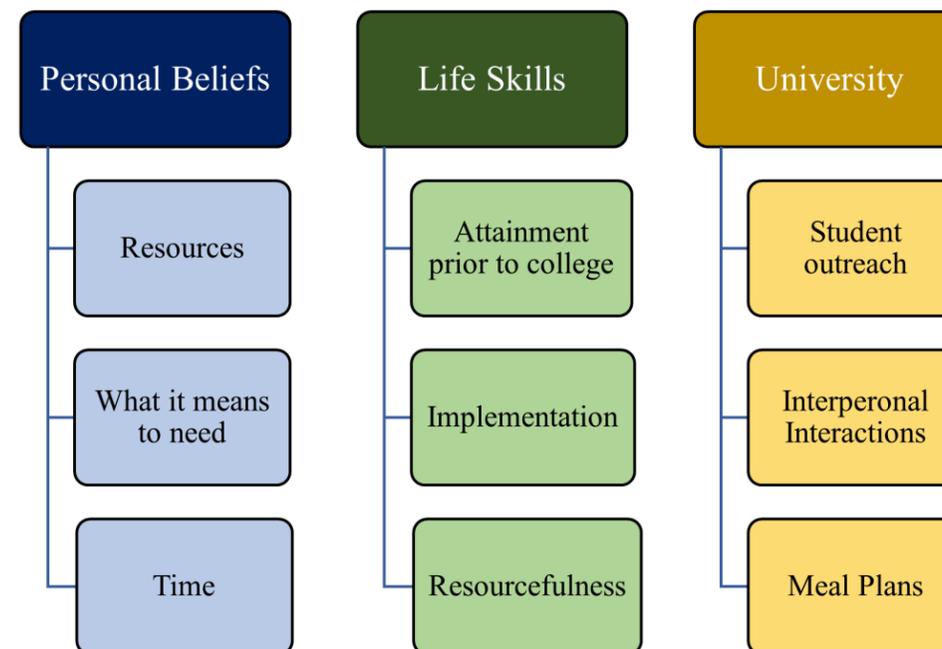
A mixed methods design was used to first gather quantitative data from an online survey to assess the prevalence, demographics, and food insecurity status from undergraduate students at Mississippi State University by utilizing the USDA's Household Food Security Survey Module 6-item short form and SPSS 27. The 1157 survey respondents then provided the recruitment pool for qualitative data collection, which was obtained via focus groups and open-ended questionnaires. NVivo 12 was used for coding and thematic analysis to examine undergraduate college student perspectives of food insecurity and food access resources.

## Results

**Food Insecurity Rate**  
Mississippi State University  
N = 1157



## Influencers of Food Insecurity Status



## Implications for Practice



Establish interpersonal connection between students and those that can connect them to resources.



Normalize utilization of food access resources.



Expand meal plan availability



Offer life skills courses for credit

## Conclusion

Student perceptions of what it means to need food access resources and the motives behind those providing the resources influence utilization of beneficial programs. The value of a resource is interconnected with the value a student places on their time, and other demands on their time. A student's perception of a resource is also influenced by the manner in which they learn about the resource and the relationship they have with the person sharing the information.

## Contact Information

Amanda Conrad, PhD, RDN  
agc8@msstate.edu