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Food Insecurity Among N.I.U. College Students

Northern Illinois University

Honors Capstone

ART 490

Hannah Schaumberg

Abstract

Many people with certain privileges never notice them, because they are so fixated on the hasty generalizations of what is seen on the surface rather than the interior aspects. For many students, understanding and recognizing privileges is the main concept to understanding their surroundings. The concept of reflecting on their interactions and knowledge of food insecurity will be curasol among communities. By researching the concepts of food insecurities among NIU students, we can bring awareness of the topic within society. The focus is to understand which intersectional groups are affected by food insecurity and to bring awareness of the subject to NIU college students. This was created to see how well individuals are aware of food insecurity and access to resources demonstrates the need for discussion of the topic. Research shows that the majority of N.I.U students had experienced food insecurity as a child growing up and some students are currently food insecure. The study demonstrates other factors in students' knowledge of resources and causes of food insecurity.

Introduction

This research is an honors capstone project based on food insecurity among NIU college students. Throughout this project, research has been done to study food insecurity, food sustainability, and quality foods. Interviews were conducted with NIU students and the Huskie Food Pantry. In addition, a survey about food insecurity specifically geared towards students' personal experiences, awareness and causes of food insecurity. This was an art based research that was conducted to create three visual artwork to convey the research study and topic for viewers to interpret and analyze.

Art Based Research

In this art based research project, I have created three different pieces of work using printmaking methods. The first two pieces are based on the research I have collected about food insecurity. According to USDA, the definition of food insecurity is the lack of consistent access to high quality foods for an active and healthy life (Jensen et al., 2021). I continued to research more about the differences between high and low qualities of foods that students may consume through their school years. By researching I have created relief woodcut art pieces that demonstrate the differences between high and low quality foods. By interviewing students and the husky food pantry, I was able to collect data to conclude reasons why students are food insecure and the resources provided for students with food insecurity.

High Quality Foods

High quality foods are more expensive, which affects students' choices of what foods needed to consume throughout the day. The foods consisted of meat, fresh veggies, and fresh fruits. This is demonstrated in the first art piece of high quality foods in a net grocery bag. These foods are part of students' effort in focusing in class, mental and physical health throughout the

day. Many college students can not afford high quality foods because of financial issues with tuition, medical and housing bills.

Low Quality Foods

Low quality foods are considered to be less expensive with less nutrition. These foods are more processed in mass production companies that include chemically generated food perseverance. Low quality foods consisted of high fatty, sugar, and carbohydrates intakes. During the interviews with students, many have expressed that they have no other option than to buy low quality foods due to financial reasons. Students will go to fast food chains such as McDonalds to get quick and cheap foods before attending classes. These foods are not sufficient in students' daily health because consuming low quality foods affects their energy and focus in classes.

Huskie Food Pantry

The final art piece is based on an interview with the Huskie Food Pantry, students, and survey by the students. The reason for this piece was to bring awareness to the resource students can access on campus. The interview with students indicated that the majority only know about the pantry by word of mouth from peers. The survey results show similar numbers of students who are unsure of where to access free foods and those who are aware of the resources on campus. By creating an etching plate as an advertisement for the Huskie Food Pantry, I am providing resources for students that are in need of free food. The artwork demonstrates the fresh foods the pantry provides with the lavender, blueberry, and mint plants. It reads how many students utilize the pantry every week.

Conclusion

In conclusion, food insecurity among N.I.U college students is prevalent due to financial issues and economic increase. Students are aware of the resources on campus, but a similar

number of students are unsure where to access resources. The three artwork demonstrates the research with two woodblock prints of high versus low quality foods and an etching plate to advertise for the pantry. This research can be conducted on a larger scale outside of NIU by researching food insecurity from other colleges.

Reference

Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M., Hales, L., & Gregory, C. (2021). *Definitions of Food Security*. USDA ERS - Definitions of Food Security. Retrieved April 9, 2022, from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-food-security/>