



Food Insecurity and Depression Among San Diego County College Students

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Background

- Food insecurity is defined as the social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate (healthy) food and can be influenced by various factors such as income, employment, race/ethnicity, and disability
- Food insecure students have a 253% higher risk of depression compared to food secure students
- Limited studies have examined the relationship between food insecurity and depression among college students

Objective

To determine if an association exists between being food insecure (exposure) and experiencing depression (outcome) among college students in San Diego County.



Methods

Cross-sectional anonymous online survey conducted across San Diego College students via google forms (n=69)

- Our survey was distributed through various platforms: social media (UCSD Reddit, Instagram, etc.)
- All participants provided informed consent food insecurity status was measured by questions from the US Adult Food Security Model and depression status was measured by questions from the PHQ-9
- Pearson correlation coefficient conducted through SPSS was utilized to measure the strength of the association between exposure and outcome

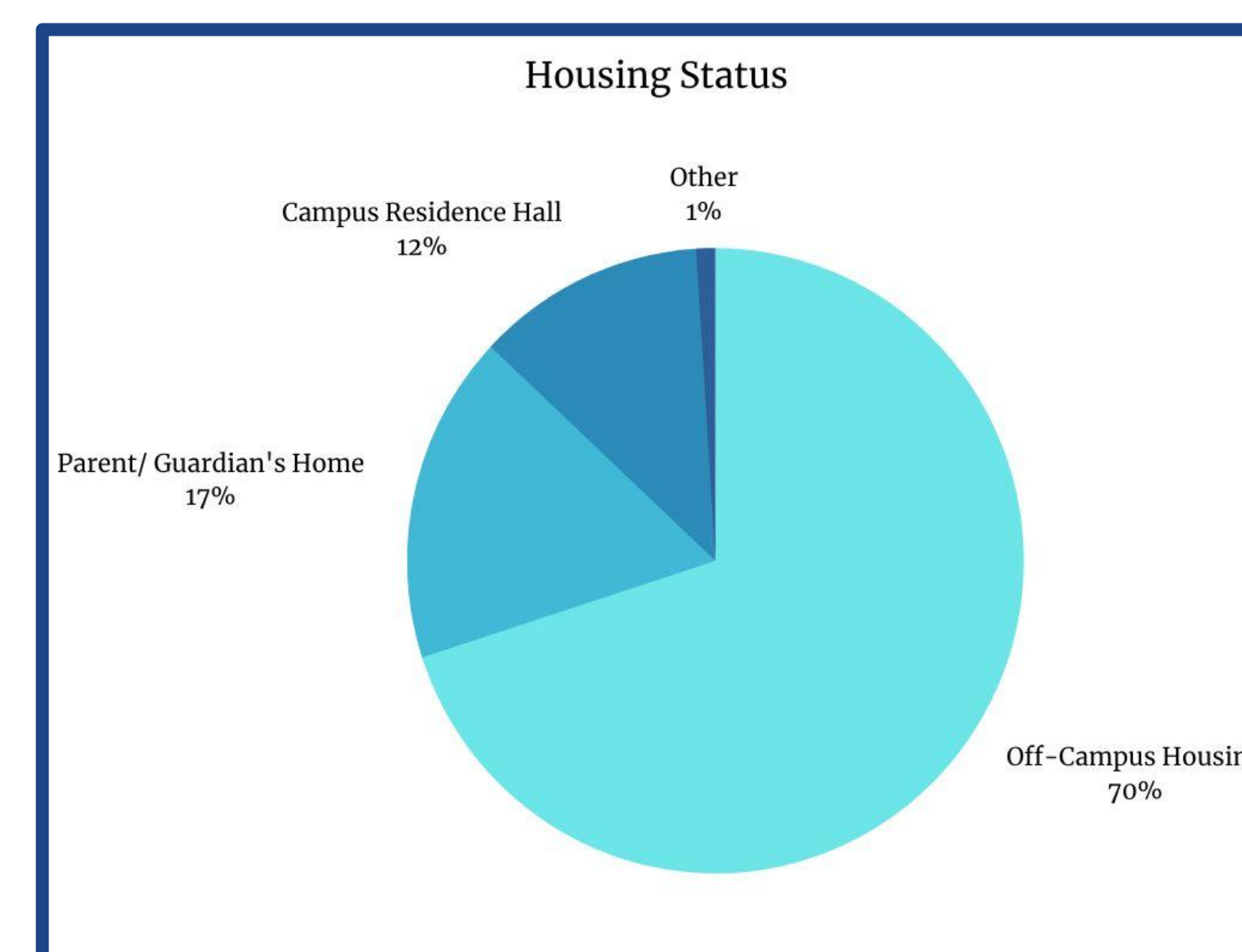
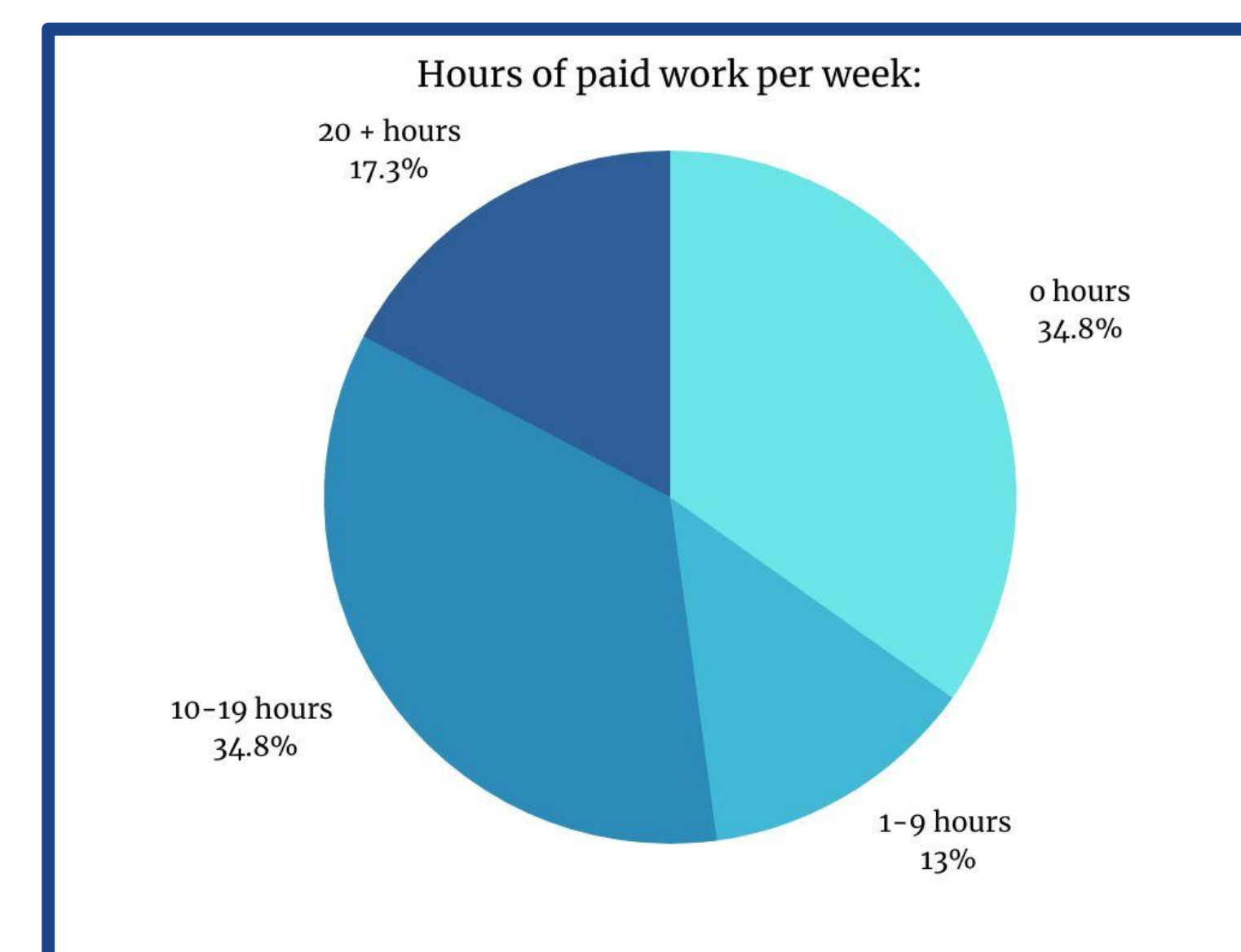
Results

Sample Characteristics:
N = 69

23.2% **Male**, 76.8% **Female**

Race and Ethnicity:

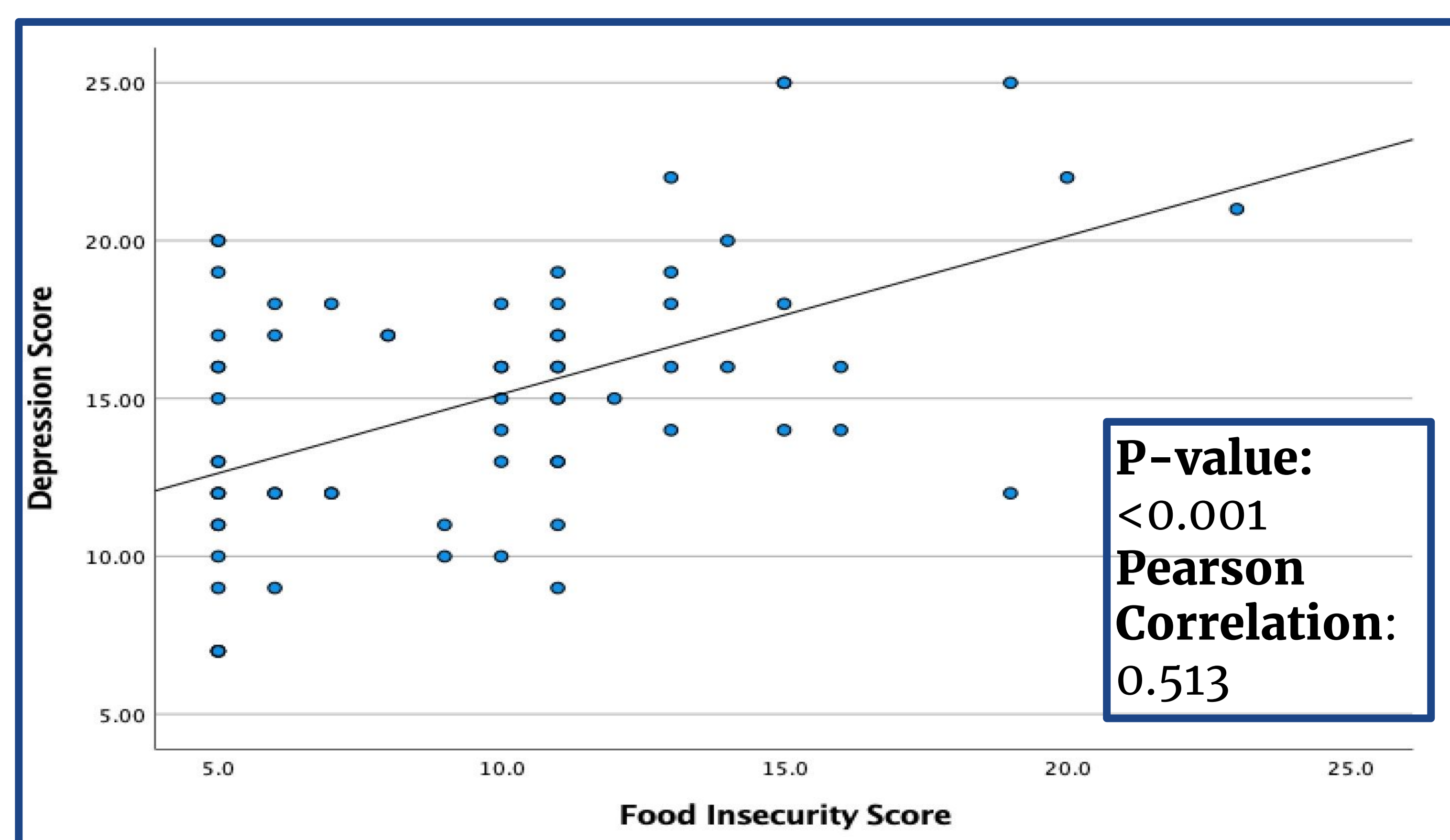
- 40.6% Latino/Hispanic
- 33.3% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 15.9% White
- 8.7% Biracial or Multiracial



College Campus:

- 85.5% UCSD
- 5.8% SDSU
- 4.3% CSUSM
- 2.9% Miramar College
- 1.4% USD

Correlation between Food Insecurity and Depression



• **Food Insecurity Score** = 9.63 (4.37) -> **Min: 5 Max: 25**

• **Depression Score** = 14.95 (4.27) -> **Min: 5 Max: 25**

- There is a **moderately positive correlation** between food insecurity scores and depression scores per our pearson correlation (r = 0.513)

Conclusions

- The more food insecure a student is the more likely they will experience depression
- Striving to maintain a high GPA, poor sleep due to academic distress, and lack of support to apply for food assistance programs like SNAP are why depression remains high among food insecure students
- The findings suggest the need of a more collaborative approach amongst public and mental health professionals to endorse more mental health resources at/near on-campus food pantries



Policy Implications

- Additional funding is needed to support programs like The Swipe Out Hunger initiative
- This should be implemented to empower students to live healthy and happy lives and ensure just opportunities for accessing nutritional and mental health resources near and around campus perimeters
- Campuses should inform students about locations that provide mental health resources and weekly on-campus events that provide affordable or free options to access food



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank UC San Diego, HWSPH Faculty, the teaching staff for FMPH 194 + 193, and friends for the support and participation of our research study