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Food Insecurity Among College Students: Perception of College Administrators

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Food Insecurity Among College Students:

Perception of College Administrators

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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

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Abstract

While food insecurity among college students has existed for decades, only in recent years has the focus on the impact of food insecurity on student success emerged. However, most of the research has been quantitative, conducted at public two-year and four-year colleges and focused on predictors, prevalence, and impact of food insecurity among college students. Although prior student-based research has been beneficial to understand the problem, there is inconsistency in how institutions and higher education professionals address this issue with their students.

A transcendental phenomenological single case study design was used in this study to explore the lived experience of college administrators who support food-insecure students at a private university. Using qualitative data gathered from 10 college administrators through surveys and semi-structured interviews, this study investigated the participants' perceptions of their roles in support of food-insecure students. The institutional website was also examined to determine the institutional response to food-insecure students and to corroborate interview data.

Using institutional logics perspective as a framework for analysis, this study explored how college administrators perceive their role and motivations for supporting food-insecure students. A significant finding of this study was that neither institutional culture nor professional norms directly informed college administrators of any responsibility or process for supporting food-insecure students. The participants were motivated to support food-insecure students because of their personal values.

Keywords: food insecurity, college students, college administrators, support, private institution

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Finally, to the real MVPs. I am grateful to my participants for your honest, generous, and rich responses, which fueled the findings of my study. You are really the definition of caring, compassionate college administrators, and your students are blessed to have you in their lives.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Doherty Williams Ojo. *Omo Oloro a feyinti. Abiyamo ododo.* Daddy, I could not be here without your countless unceasing sacrifices for your children and your unending love of mommy. You always said our education was our inheritance and you ensured that we all had the very best you could afford. O daddy *mi*, how I wish you were here to see this day. But I know you are rejoicing.

I also dedicate this work to my darling wonderful mother. Elizabeth Ojo, J.P. Mommy, where will I be today but for your fervent prayers. You always believed in me even when I thought I could not go on. You are my inspiration to do better, to pray, to serve and to NEVER GIVE UP. My jewel of inestimable wealth. My Gold! *Iya ni wura mi. Ti mi ko le fowo ra*. Words are not enough to appreciate you, my sweet mother.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory postulates that basic physiological needs like food, water, and sleep must be met before higher order needs for safety, belonging, esteem, and actualization are met. Accordingly, "If all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply nonexistent or be pushed into the background" (Maslow, 1943, p.373). Inability to acquire these basic needs renders higher order needs irrelevant, as the basic needs will be the focus of an individual's existence (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015).

Food is a basic need that is essential for human survival and wellbeing (Maslow, 1943). When low-income households cannot meet their basic needs, including housing, food, health, heating, and transportation, they are most likely to sacrifice food (Nord et al., 2005). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defined food insecurity as a household's inconsistent access to nutritionally adequate and safe food due to lack of financial resources, which can result in physiological sensations of hunger in extreme cases (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020). As of 2021, the USDA categorized household-level food security along a continuum including *high food security, marginal food security, low food security* to *very low food insecurity* (See Figure 1). Households with high food security have consistent and constant access to adequate and desired food. Households with marginal food security experience anxiety about food quantity but maintain access to food. For households with low food security, there is no reduction in quantity of food, but there is reduction in quality, variety, or desired food. At the extreme is households with very low food security who experience interruption in eating patterns resulting from reduction in food quantity or lack of access to food supply (El Zein et al., 2019). For this study,

low food security and very low food security were considered food insecurity following the

USDA categorization of food insecurity.

Figure 1

Food Security Category

Household had access to quantity, quality and desired food — High Food Security

Household had anxiety about quantity, quality and desired food with no reduction in access — Marginal Food Security

Household had reduction in quality and desired food with no reduction in quantity — Low Food Security

One or more household member had disruption in food intake during the year — Very Low Food Security

Source: Adapted from the USDA Economic Research Service

In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the USDA estimated that 10.5% of American

households experienced food insecurity during the year, a decline from 2018 food insecurity

estimates of 11.8% (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020). Food insecurity is a social and economic

condition. The lower the unemployment rate when more individuals are actively employed, the

lower the rate of food insecurity. Food insecurity's prevalence is impacted by household-level

and state-level factors. On the household level, employment status, number of people in the

household, and income impact food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen, 2019). On the state level, the

prevalence of food insecurity is impacted by state minimum wage, housing costs, unemployment insurance access, and state nutrition assistance programs (SNAP),which is a federally funded program administered by states (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020). Of households with children, 2.4 million (6.5% of American households) also experienced episodes of food insecurity in 2019, which is a decline from the 2.9 million food insecure households with children in 2018 (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020). The decline in food insecurity during this period can be attributed to an improving national employment rate (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020). In 2019, the U.S. unemployment rate fell to 3.7%, the lowest it had been in 50 years (Edwards & Smith, 2020). However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate rose to 8.1% in 2020 (Smith et al., 2021), and emerging data suggest that the past improvements in food insecurity have eroded. According to Feeding America, food pantries have seen a 55% increase in utilization, and an estimated 50 million people have gone hungry because of the COVID-19 pandemic (USDA 2020 Food Insecurity Report |Feeding America, 2020).

While the prevalence of food insecurity varies by state or household-level characteristics, certain subgroups had food insecurity rates higher than the national average. Food insecurity rates for Black, non-Hispanic households (19.8%); Hispanic households (16.2%); and households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold (26.5%) were higher than the national food insecurity rate of 10%. These subgroups are more vulnerable to food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2022).

To alleviate food insecurity, the United States has established food assistance programs (Frisvold, 2015). In 1946 the federal government permanently instituted the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to provide low-cost or no-cost lunch for K–12 students (Frisvold, 2015). Through this program, the federal government disbursed cash to states based on per capita

income, and the state governments distributed the funds to counties and towns. Schools had to

opt in to participate in the NSLP, but they were mandated to follow the dietary requirements of

the program in exchange for cash and goods (Hinrichs, 2010). The Child Nutrition Act of 1966

established the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to provide free breakfast in schools that serve

lower income populations (Frisvold, 2015). Research has suggested that food assistance

programs for school-age children promote cognitive achievement, as school-age children

perform significantly better academically when they are well nourished (Frisvold, 2015; Glewwe

et al., 2001). Food assistance programs provide about 31 million meals daily to vulnerable

populations and serve as a safety net for providing needed nourishment (USDA 2020 Food

Insecurity Report |Feeding America, 2020).

Background of the Problem: College Students' Food Insecurity

Many college students share similar characteristics with subgroups of the population that

are more prone to food insecurity. According to Pew Research, non-White students enrolled by

the 2015-2016 academic year had increased to 47% from 29% in 1976, the Hispanic or Latino

college student population increased to 19% by the 2015-2016 academic year from 9% in 1976

and Black or African American students increased among the student population to 16% by the

2015-2016 academic year from 13% in 1976 (Mitchell, 2020). Also, in the same period, the

enrollment of college students in poverty increased to 31% from 21% (Fry & Cilluffo, 2019). Of

the students from the lowest quintile of socioeconomic status, 42% pursue a 2-year degree, while

32% pursue a 4-year program (El Zein et al., 2019; Fry & Cilluffo, 2019; USDA ERS-Key

Statistics & Graphics, n.d.).

Previously underrepresented groups (first-generation students, low-socioeconomic status,

single parents) now account for about 25% of the college-going population (Broton & Goldrick-

Rab, 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a, 2015b). While college access has increased for previously underrepresented student populations, the support systems that these students have utilized in the K–12 education sector end abruptly after high school (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). In the K–12 educational sector, there are significant support systems for the students' educational success. Basic needs support includes access to school-issued textbooks, and in some cases school supplies, and school bus for transportation to school. Physical, and psychological needs are met by school nurses and/or social workers; food insecurity is alleviated by free or reduced breakfast and lunch in school (Broton et al., 2018; Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

Unfortunately, students who were recipients of the government-funded food assistance programs in the K–12 pipeline find themselves without that support when they enroll in college, as they are no longer eligible and must utilize other resources (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Multiple researchers have indicated that about 21% to 59% college students experience food insecurity (Cuite et al., 2020; Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Gaines et al., 2014; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Hege et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2011; Meza et al., 2018; Morris et al., 2016; Stebleton et al., 2020; Waity et al., 2020). While the rates of food insecurity among college students vary depending on location of study, participant population, and research methodology, these reported rates of food insecurity among college students are higher than among the reported national U.S. population rate of 12% food insecurity, reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2017 (Freudenberg et al., 2019).

Problem Statement

Much of student development literature has focused on cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial aspects of student development with the presumption that students' basic needs are

met; hence, identity formation and cognitive transition to adulthood can be addressed (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015). However, food insecurity has been identified as an issue affecting students' wellbeing thereby threatening student development. Higher education professionals have a responsibility to advocate and provide resources for students dealing with food insecurity (Stebleton et al., 2020). College administrators need to address how food insecurity impacts the wellbeing of the increasingly diverse student population as higher needs of cognitive transition can only be met when basic needs have been met (Stebleton et al., 2020).

Recent research has indicated that food insecurity among college students is a growing college student crisis (Alexander et al., 2020; Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Fernandez et al., 2019; Hege et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2011; Laska et al., 2020). While food insecurity among college students has existed for decades, only in recent years has the focus on the impact of food insecurity on student success emerged. Research has shown that food-insecure students struggle academically, report poorer health, and have lower GPAs in comparison to their food-secure peers (Hege et al., 2021).

Despite research affirming that food insecurity is a significant issue for many college students, there is inconsistency in how institutions and higher education professionals address this issue with their students. The resources or services available to support food-insecure students may vary across different institution types depending on the type of student population they serve, and the role of the college administrators depends on the institutional support and culture (Blumenstyk, 2019; Bruening et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Although some colleges have started to respond to the basic needs of their students, there has been limited research on the role that college administrators' perceptions play in the food insecurity alleviation strategy.

Institutional response to food insecurity depends on the actions of college administrators who act as agents of the institution, and the policies and programs that these administrators implement have an impact on student support (Broton et al., 2020). Although institutions can have basic-needs alleviation policies, the student-facing college administrators can operate in both institutional and individual spheres. Their perceptions of why students are in need categorize the students as "deserving" or "undeserving" of help (Applebaum, 2001). The students who are deserving of help are students who are in need due to circumstances beyond their control. An example of a student deserving help could be a student whose parent died suddenly. On the other hand, a student whose poor grade resulted in the loss of scholarship can fall under the category of a student undeserving of help. The circumstances were not unpredicted. The perception of a student-facing college administrator about the deservingness of students in need influences how they will help deserving students or how they will put policies in place to protect the institution from undeserving students (Broton et al., 2020). Hence, there is a need to explore how college administrators identify and work with students needing support with basic needs.

Purpose Statement

This study explored how administrators at higher education institutions respond to the basic needs of their students. This study explored how college administrators, as agents of higher education institutions, perceive food insecurity among college students and how their perceptions influence the institutional support that they provide or recommend for the students who are dealing with food insecurity. This study specifically explored the perceptions of college administrators at a private higher education institution.

The following research questions guided this study.

1. How do college administrators at a private higher education institution define and describe food insecurity on campus?

2. What do college administrators at a private higher education institution view as their responsibility for supporting students experiencing food insecurity?

3. What professional and institutional norms guide strategies, if any, that college administrators at a private higher education institution utilize to support students experiencing food insecurity on their campus?

Significance of the Study

While there has been increased research in food insecurity, the majority of the research conducted at public 2-year and 4-year colleges has been quantitative and has focused on predictors and prevalence of food insecurity among college students (Brescia & Cuite, 2019; Keefe et al. 2021). Students at private institutions have been assumed to be too rich to be food insecure, but a study by Keefe et al. showed that the rates of food insecurity at a private school are like the rates at public schools given the increased college enrollment of students from very diverse financial backgrounds across all institution types.

Although prior student-based research has been beneficial to understand the problem, there has been scarce research about the administrators who work to alleviate food insecurity among college students. This study is significant as it will add to the growing body of literature on food insecurity among college students, specifically from the perspective of those individuals who are most likely to intervene and support these students. Although institutions of higher education have increasingly been investing in retention and persistence services, programs, and resources to support students towards graduation, basic-need inadequacy like food insecurity can be a significant barrier to student success (Broton et al., 2020; Dubick et. al, 2016; Millea et al.,

2018). As higher education institutions respond to student food insecurity with a mission towards student success, it is important to understand the perceptions of the college administrators who are assigned to student-facing roles of food insecurity alleviation. Results of this qualitative study may help higher education institutions put structures and policies in place so employees can align individual actions to achieve institutional goals of supporting students' basic needs.

Most financial aid awards and donor-funded scholarships are geared towards tuition; however, food insecurity can be a barrier to student success (Kienzl et al., 2020; Millea et al., 2018). The results of this study can have implications for donors who can contribute financially to support food insecure students. These donors can donate funds to private institutions specifically to help them build up food insecurity support resources, as private institutions do not have access to government funding for food insecurity support.

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter introduced the study. The prevalence and impact of food insecurity were discussed. Research questions that guided this study were presented. Chapter 2 will provide a review of research on predictors of college students' food insecurity, impact of food insecurity on student experience and success, and strategies that colleges utilize to alleviate student food insecurity. Chapter 2 will conclude by discussing the specific roles and offices of college administrators whose roles include basic need alleviation of food insecurity among college students. Chapter 3 will provide a clear outline of my research design and methodology, including the study participants and the instruments used for data collection. Chapter 4 will highlight the salient findings of my study. Chapter 5 will provide a conclusion to my study, implications, and recommendations for practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will present a review of existing literature about food insecurity among college students. The intention of this literature review is to synthesize literature on predictors of college students' food insecurity and the impact of food insecurity on student experience and success. In addition, there will be a review of strategies that colleges utilize to alleviate student food insecurity. The specific roles and offices at higher educational institutions that are most significant in addressing food insecurity among college students will also be discussed. This chapter will conclude with the theoretical framework that will guide the study.

Predictors of College Students' Food Insecurity

While the food insecurity rate among the general U.S. population in 2019 was reported to be 10.5%, growing evidence from multiple studies has found that over 21% of college students experience food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Waity et al., 2020). An abundance of research on this student crisis has found risk factors that include increased enrollment by students of lower socioeconomic status (SES) due to increased access policies, increasing cost of college expenses, and financial aid policies that are increasingly shifting from need-based to merit-based aid (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Bruening et al., 2017; Chaparro et al., 2009; Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020; Dubick et. al, 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Waity et al., 2020). The percentage of students from households at or below 130% of the federal poverty line increased from 28% in 1996 to 39% in 2016 (Freudenberg et al., 2019). Colleges are more expensive, as cost of tuition doubled between 1989 and 2016, but need-based financial aid has not kept up with the increased tuition and cost of living (El Zein et al., 2019; Freudenberg et al., 2019).

Although research has shown that insufficient financial resources is the most significant predictor of food insecurity, there are other significant factors, like race and living arrangements, that are useful for understanding trends of high food insecurity rates among college students (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Chaparro et al., 2009; Mirabitur et al., 2016). In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic also emerged as a predictor of food insecurity. The following sections on financial resources, COVID-19, race, and college residence further explore factors contributing to food insecurity among college students.

Financial Resources

Income is a predictor of food insecurity. Alaimo's (2005) conceptual model of food security includes limited financial resources as a risk factor for food insecurity. An abundance of research has also found that, consistent with national data, students with limited financial resources were more likely to experience food insecurity (Chaparro et al., 2009; Cuite et al., 2018; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2011; Morris et al., 2016). Students with household incomes less than $20,000 were two times more likely to report food insecurity versus students with household incomes of $50,000 or more (Freudenberg et al., 2019). A study conducted at Rutgers University found limited financial resources to be significantly related to food insecurity among undergraduates. Undergraduate students who are financially independent are 1.40 times more likely to be food insecure than undergraduate students who are not financially independent (Cuite et al., 2018; Gaines et al., 2014).

Pell Grant recipients are usually undergraduate students with exceptional financial need (Federal Pell Grants | Federal Student Aid, n.d.). In a 2018 study, researchers found that undergraduate students who receive a Pell Grant are 1.39 times more likely to be food insecure than undergraduate students who are not Pell grant recipients (Cuite et al., 2018). A sign of

limited financial resources is getting a loan to pay for college. According to Morris et al. (2016), students who borrow money to attend college have higher rates of food insecurity compared to students who do not borrow money toward their education. The increasing cost of tuition and associated college fees, increased enrollment of students of lower SES, and reduced need-based aid has resulted in more students taking out loans. Students with limited financial resources for college expenses will likely not have enough funds for basic needs like food (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Morris et al., 2016).

COVID-19

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, the rate of food insecurity among college students was higher than the national rate of food insecurity. In addition, college students shared characteristics with households that were prone to food insecurity. However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic increased food insecurity among college students. (Owens et al., 2020).

In addition to the staggering loss of life, there were state, national, and international mandates to stay home. Non-essential businesses were shut, and movements were restricted to reduce the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, this exacerbated the risks of food insecurity in a population that was already vulnerable, as a lot of college students supplement their income by working in the service industry like restaurants, and these were deemed non-essential (The Hope Center, 2021). These students lost their income (Owens et al., 2020). In addition, some students who were not on the spectrum of food insecurity lost their parents to the virus, and some parents also lost their jobs (Kochhar, n.d.).The study by Owens et al. (2020) found that change in accommodation status and or loss of employment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic were strong predictors of new or worsening food insecurity in college students.

Although COVID-19 caused a lot of changes for the food security of students, not all students became more food insecure. There is research that shows that COVID-19 reduced rates of food insecurity among some college students. These were students who returned to food secure homes and were able to have their needs met (Davitt et al., 2021). In addition, some students who were American citizens got funds distributed via the CARES Act that alleviated the financial burdens caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (U.S. Government Accountability Office, n.d., p. 19).

Race & Ethnicity

While financial resource inadequacy is a significant predictor of food insecurity, certain racial demographic groups are at an increased risk for food insecurity due to broader inequities of financial resource availability. National data have shown that 19.1% of Black households and 15.6% of non-white Hispanic households experienced food insecurity compared to 7.9% of White households (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020). It is not surprising, then, that students from the demographic groups with higher prevalence of food insecurity also tend to be food insecure in college as evidenced by multiple studies. City University of New York students who identify as Black were 1.5 times more likely than White students to experience food insecurity (Freudenberg et al., 2011). Findings of higher rates of food insecurity among Black and Hispanic students compared to White students were similar in other studies (Bruening et al., 2017; Chaparro et al., 2009; Dubick et al., 2016; Maroto et al., 2015). A study conducted at Rutgers University found race to be significantly related to food insecurity among undergraduate students. Students who identify as Black or African American were 1.76 times and Hispanic students were 1.77 times more likely to be food insecure compared to White students (Cuite et al., 2018). Students of lower SES who identify as Black and Hispanic have been found to be disproportionately food

insecure in comparison to White students (Dubick et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2016). While White students are more likely to be food secure, Black and Hispanic students are more likely to be food insecure (Morris et al., 2016). Studies have shown that race has been associated with food insecurity in both the national population and among the college student population.

College Campus Residence

College students' campus resident status has been associated with food insecurity. College student residence options are varied. Approximately 14% of undergraduate students in the United States reside in university-owned buildings, 32% students reside with family or friends, and about 54% reside with roommates and other living arrangements that are not university owned or operated (Silva et al., 2017). Studies have shown that students residing with family were less likely than students living independently to experience food insecurity (Gallegos et al., 2014; Hughes et al., 2011). A study by Hughes et al. (2011) found that 82% of students living alone and 70% of students with a roommate experienced food insecurity. Cuite et al. (2018) also found in their study that nonresident undergraduate students who did not reside with family (46.1%) were more likely than resident undergraduate students (29.4%) to be food insecure. These findings indicated that students who live off campus with parents or guardians may have had assistance with food cost, preparation, and emotional support (Morris et al., 2016). The study by Chaparro et al. (2009) indicated that students living with parents or guardians are spending less on housing costs than college students who live independent of parents or guardians and hence are less likely to be food insecure. For students who are already dealing with insufficient financial resources, having to pay for accommodations in addition to other living expenses could leave even less resources for procurement of food; hence, college residence status is an important factor of food insecurity among college students.

Impact of Food Insecurity on Student Experiences and Success

Food insecurity can pose a risk to the success of food insecure students, as this emerging crisis can have damaging impacts on academic pursuits. Food-insecure students reported difficulty focusing due to stress related to hunger caused by limited financial resources (Meza et al., 2018). Some students experiencing food insecurity are not able to fully participate in college because of insufficient energy or time for student engagement. Academic performance can be negatively impacted, and the student faces a real danger of college dropout (Mukigi & Brown, 2018). The following section will review the impact of food insecurity on college students.

Engagement

Food insecurity is important not only because of its prevalence but also because it affects students' experiences in college. Access to higher education was expanded to serve more students from lower SES through the multiple reauthorizations of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Collier et al., 2019), but institutions of higher education have been slow to understand and respond to the needs of these students, especially basic needs (Collier et al., 2019). The institutions' inabilities to address these needs can result in incongruence where students do not feel a sense of fit with the institutions they attend (Collier et al., 2019). Studies have shown that a student's academic and social integration in the college environment can significantly affect retention and persistence outcomes (Tinto, 2016). According to Tinto (1975), a student's inability to integrate socially into the college system can increase the probability of dropout due to low commitment to the college. So, while access to higher education has increased through time, the resources that these institutions offer to their students have not increased at an equal rate, leading to a lack of commitment and engagement with students. Without adequate resources, students are not properly integrated into their institution's academic and social climate, and this often affects

retention and persistence outcomes. The issue of food insecurity only exacerbates the inequities of student engagement, as food-insecure students have reported difficulties developing social relationships due to avoidance of social gatherings that involve food, thus missing out on important college experiences (Meza et al., 2018). The missed opportunity for engagement also robs food-insecure students of opportunities to acquire social or cultural capital, which is a desired outcome of a college education.

Multiple studies have indicated that positive academic outcomes for students depend on the student experiences of interaction with faculty and peers, as well as collaborative learning utilizing study groups and library resources (Soria & Stebleton, 2012; Trowler, 2010). However, students experiencing food insecurity may be less able to socially interact with peers due to lack of energy for physical activities, financial constraints to purchase food and/or drinks during social outings, and limited time to socialize, as many students have to work more than 20 hours a week in addition to school work just to make ends meet (Henry, 2017). Unfortunately, students who worked more than 20 hours per week reported significantly less interaction with faculty and less nonacademic interaction with peers than students who did not work and students who worked 20 hours or less each week (Lundberg, 2004). Engagement with peers and faculty can be essential for student success, but students who are impacted by food insecurity may not be able to fully engage for success.

Academic Performance

In addition to impacting student engagement on campus, food insecurity is linked to academic performance. A study by Patton-Lopez et al. (2014) at a mid-size Oregon college found that 59% of students in the past year experienced episodes of food insecurity, and these students reported poor academic achievement due to food insecurity. Food insecurity was

associated with lower grade point averages (GPAs), particularly among the undergraduate population. This finding mirrors results from a study by McArthur et al. (2018), indicating that food-insecure students report lower GPAs compared to food-secure students with a negative impact on academic achievement. In 2020, another team of researchers conducting a study to investigate the prevalence and impacts of food insecurity at a medium-sized, 4-year, public institution in the southeastern United States found that students who are food insecure were more likely to struggle academically, reporting poor academic performance, low class attendance, and distracted attention in class (Waity et al., 2020). Students facing food insecurity at a large public California university discussed inability to focus in the classroom due to hunger (Meza et al., 2018). A study by Hege et al. (2021) that examined prevalence of basic-needs insecurity and student success implications at a land-grant institution found that food-insecure students reported difficulty concentrating on their studies and lower GPAs. According to Dubick et al. (2016), students experiencing food insecurity due to poverty report inability to purchase required textbooks, miss class, and some must drop classes, and some drop out of college completely. The impact of food insecurity on students' academics could be a barrier to students' college success (Phillips et al., 2018; Regan, 2020).

College Degree Completion

The poor academic performance of college students experiencing food insecurity can result in students taking a break from school or dropping out in extreme episodes of food insecurity (Dubick et al., 2016). Food insecurity can impact a student's ability to complete at a time when attainment of a college degree has been shown empirically to correlate with economic upward mobility, especially for low-SES students (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Urahn et al., 2012). Attainment of a college degree has been shown to correlate to long-term better earnings.

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In 2018, the average income of 25- to 36-year-olds with a bachelor's degree was 57% higher than the income of those in the same age group with a high school diploma (Hussar et al., 2020). The employment rate in 2019 was higher for college graduates than high school graduates. The employment rate for 25- to 34-year-olds with a college degree was 87% compared to 74% for those with a high school diploma (Hussar et al., 2020).

Assessing College Student Food Insecurity

The prevalence and impact of food insecurity among college students have been shown to be a barrier to student engagement, academic success, and college completion (Dubick et al., 2016; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Patton-Lopez et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2018; Regan, 2020; Soria & Stebleton, 2012; Trowler, 2010). However, food insecurity measurement methods for college students are not consistent (Ellison et al., 2021; Nikolaus et al., 2019; Nikolaus et al., 2020). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides a national estimate of food insecurity among U.S. households by administering the 18-item Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) through the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS; Ellison et al., 2021; Nikolaus et al., 2019; Nikolaus et al., 2019). Some studies that measure the prevalence of food insecurity among college students have made some common adaptations to the HFSSM (Ellison et al., 2021). Most studies use the 10-item Adult Food Security Survey Module (AFSSM) or six-item abbreviated Food Security Survey Module (FSSM) rather than the 18-item HFSSM. The difference between the 18 HFSSM and the 10-item AFSSM is that the 18-item HFSSM asks about children in the household. If there are no children present and a person is given the 18-item HFSSM, it is scored the same as the 10-item AFSSM. Some of the inconsistencies include the time of the year that surveys are administered and the food insecurity question time frame, which can be 30 days, 3 months, or 1 year. Hence,

generalizations of these differences are difficult, and the prevalence of food insecurity can be misunderstood. While institutions can attempt to put alleviation measures in place for college students, the inconsistency of the data being collected fails to paint a clear picture of food insecurity among college students, creating challenges to implementing those measures (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

Strategies That Colleges Use to Alleviate Student Food Insecurity

Despite the differences in assessment methods of food insecurity among college students, many institutions of higher education have instituted various strategies to alleviate this student crisis, as food insecurity can be a significant barrier to student success (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Ellison et al., 2021; Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Some of these strategies address access to food directly, and some strategies address finances. The strategies that institutions utilize to alleviate food insecurity are dependent on the funding source and the leadership styles of the college administrators (Hagedorn-Hatfield et al., 2022).

Strategies that Address Access to Food

Some of the strategies that colleges utilize to address food insecurity can include establishing an on-campus food pantry or referring students to an off-campus food pantry; some create food donation programs, and some use campus farms' produce to directly address hunger on campus.

Campus Food Pantry. In response to the growing acknowledgement of the food insecurity crisis among college students, there is a wave of college campuses creating food pantries. Food pantries have been established by various higher education institutions (including urban and rural, public and private, 4-year institutions, and community colleges) to alleviate food insecurity among students (Bruening et al., 2017). Some colleges have started food pantries on

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campus while some, due to institutional reasons, partner with off-campus food pantries and act as referrals to the service. Students in need can get food items and sometimes toiletries donated by community members. Michigan State University partnered with the Oregon State University Food Pantry to establish the College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA), which advises and supports campus food pantries. CUFBA now has over 800 member institutions, a significant increase from the initial 15 colleges registered in 2012 and has merged with Swipe Out Hunger, another organization that supports food-insecure college students.

In the first national survey examining the relationship between resources (financial and physical) and programmatic decisions of campus food pantries, the researchers from the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice and CUFBA, the membership organization for campus pantries, yielded information from 217 pantries in 40 states (Goldrick-Rab, 2018). This study provided the most comprehensive picture to date of how colleges and universities are implementing food pantries (Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Furthermore, this study examined the correlation between institutional resources and decisions about programming (Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Survey respondents reported that they had dedicated pantry space on campus, but while some of these pantries were run by paid staff, 92% of the survey respondents have pantries, which are mostly run by volunteers composed of staff, students, and faculty (Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Campus pantry awareness on campuses was reported to be limited due to informal advertisement of services. Only 5% of the survey respondents required proof of financial need by students to access the food pantry. The most significant barrier to the utilization of food pantry use by college students is the potential lack of anonymity and stigma associated with needing emergency food assistance (Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Phillips et al., 2018). The study found that the

most significant problem experienced by the food pantry administrators is the inability to estimate budgets, as they mostly rely on donations.

Meal Donation. Another food-insecurity alleviation strategy is the donation of meal swipes or declining-debit-card-like component of meal plans. Students who have purchased a meal plan can donate part of their meals or flexible dollars associated with their meal plans to a common fund that can be accessed by students who demonstrate need. Swipe Out Hunger is a notable organization that has spearheaded this movement with partnership with schools. Swipe Out Hunger has since merged with CUFBA, and the network has expanded to about 1,000 institutions, which include the over 800 institutions served by CUFBA. An advantage of this food-insecurity alleviation strategy is that it offers anonymity to recipients of the donated meals. However, this strategy is also dependent on donations, and there might be pushback from meal vendors who budget for unused meals in their operational budget (Blumenstyk, 2019). The success of this solution is dependent on collaboration of committed students, dining director (campus-based or external vendor), and university administrators committed to student basic-need provision. The profit margin for dining system budgets is developed with the assumption that students will not deplete their meal plans' allotted meals or flex dollars associated with the meal plans.

While there could be resistance from food service vendors, as profit margins will shrink with donations of unused meals (Blumenstyk, 2019), student groups on multiple campuses have successfully engaged in activism to force this issue. In November of 2017, students at Spelman and Morehouse Colleges in Atlanta were successful in persuading college administration and the food service vendor, Aramark, to permit donations of meal-plan swipes of up to 14,000 meals annually to students experiencing food insecurity ("Spelman and Morehouse Students Reach

Agreement to Call Off Hunger Strike," 2017). Student groups at the University of Kentucky also embarked on a hunger strike to demand that the university act after a 2017 Basic Needs survey of students showed that 43% of survey participants were food insecure (Blumenstyk, 2019). The protest resulted in the university response of The ONE cafe subsidized by university and campus food provider Aramark to provide full lunches at the cost of $1.00 (Blumenstyk, 2019). Some colleges have developed apps that identify campus meetings with leftover refreshments and alert students to pick up food after events, or some have established a central location where leftover refreshments or meals are brought after events, and the students are alerted to pick up food (Freudenberg et al., 2019).

Campus Farm. Some higher education institutions have implemented campus gardens that serve as a local and sustainable source of nutrition to students experiencing food insecurity. This resource, however, can only be utilized in favorable gardening seasons. The Community Table Project is a campus farm at the University of California, Davis that addresses campus food insecurity by supplying farm produce at no charge to the university food pantry (Klanmiko, 2018). Kingsborough Community College in New York began a food pantry in 2012, providing nonperishable items for students in need (Nargi, 2016). However, it now also offers items from a campus farm after recognizing a need for fresh produce (Nargi, 2016). The New York farm is sustained with assistance from students in the culinary arts program (Nargi, 2016). At the New Brunswick campus of Rutgers, a state university in New Jersey, students who visit the on-campus food pantry receive fresh food vouchers, which are redeemable at the New Brunswick community farmer's market. Rutgers-New Brunswick also operates a student farm with funding from the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and private university donors. This

student farm provides the food pantry with fresh produce for food-insecure students during harvest season (Cuite et al., 2020).

With many colleges offering agriculture, culinary arts, or nutrition curricula, a campus farm is an opportunity to provide experiential learning for students while serving those who are food insecure (Nargi, 2016). This is a resource that has both educational benefits and basic-need support for the food-insecure student.

Strategies that Address Student Financial Need

Some colleges utilize strategies that address the students' resource inadequacy, which is a root cause of food insecurity. Some of the solutions can be taking advantage of government assistance and providing information about eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to students. Some also have resources to distribute grocery store gift cards and to disburse emergency loans, vouchers, or grants.

Government Assistance. Although part-time college students might be ineligible for SNAP, they can qualify if they work a minimum 20 hours weekly, have a dependent under the age of 6, or receive other public assistance. The National Conference of State Legislatures cited a study conducted by Cady et al. (2016) showing almost 50% of college students report food insecurity and demanded that states take steps to align SNAP with financial aid eligibility and to allow college enrollment to be the employment eligibility criteria. The federal government acknowledged the food-insecurity crisis in college with a recommendation to Food and Nutrition Service to update their website with improved student eligibility information by also disseminating available state SNAP agencies benefit information for eligible students.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 57% of students who were eligible for SNAP benefits did not access this benefit due to the restrictions and barriers of application. In response to the

COVID-19 pandemic, Congress passed the COVID-19 relief bill that temporarily removed the strict work and income eligibility for student access to SNAP benefits. The passage of this bill is critical to students who have increased food insecurity. While this change opens access to students in need, the changes that occurred on the federal level will revert 30 days after the COVID-19 public health emergency is lifted (Burnside, 2020). The most positive changes for students with SNAP benefits came in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is necessary for this change to continue, not reverse, as the end of the pandemic nears. Although the pandemic can be eradicated, the issue of food insecurity cannot be eradicated without significant change at the federal and state levels.

Multiple states' lawmakers are proposing bills that would provide colleges with financial and administrative assistance for helping food-insecure students. Both the states of California and New Jersey were early adopters of the Hunger Free Campus Bills, which established hunger free grants. Public institutions of higher education can apply for these grants to assist more students to enroll for SNAP benefits and ensure that these benefits can be used to buy food on campus. Some of the provisions also include establishment of a Campus Hunger Task Force, establishment of at least one physical on-campus food pantry, or access to stigma-free location to receive food. These bills provide incentives for campuses to ensure that at least one staff member is designated to help students enroll in SNAP through their state legislature (Freudenberg et al., 2019; "Hunger Free Campus Bill - Student Basic Needs Policies," n.d.). By 2022, variations of a hunger free bill have been passed in Washington, Illinois, Minnesota, Hawaii, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut ("Hunger Free Campus Bill - Student Basic Needs Policies," n.d.; Laska et al., 2021). Other states including, Oregon, New Mexico, Michigan, Indiana, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Florida, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Virginia, and New York have also

introduced Hunger Free Bills in their state legislature (Hunger Free Campus Bill | Student Basic Needs Policies, n.d.). Both the federal and state governments have an extensive array of programs that have been put in place to support food insecure college students. A significant barrier to accessing these programs is the lack of communication with the students. Higher education institutions should do more to promote these programs to students (Freudenberg et al., 2019; Laska et al., 2020; Laska et al., 2021).

Emergency Aid. Research has identified the cost associated with college as a significant barrier to persistence towards a degree. Students may experience an unexpected financial crisis that can be so severe they have to either take a break from school or drop out. College administrators, in anticipation of such needs, operate emergency aid programs (Kruger et al., 2016). Emergency aid programs are designed to support persistence by addressing immediate and basic student needs such as food insecurity or other financial crises (Dachelet & Goldrick-Rab, 2015; Kruger et al., 2016). According to Kruger et al. (2016), various aid programs can include:

- campus vouchers (cover on-campus bookstore or meal expense with no distribution barriers)
- completion scholarships (cover outstanding student balances)
- emergency loans (alleviate hardship due to timing of students' financial aid disbursement)
- restricted grants (awarded with restrictions to students dealing with unexpected hardship)
- unrestricted grants (awarded without restrictions to students who experience unexpected hardship)

Although student affairs and financial aid administrators are the two types of administrators most involved in managing the delivery of emergency aid, other university stakeholders like faculty who have frequent contact with students are also involved (Kruger et al., 2016). College faculty–student interaction is daily. Student contact with faculty is constant, and research has even shown that student contact with faculty outside of the classroom helps with retention. Emergency aid fund run by faculty can be a timely safety net for a student who is struggling (Cady et al., n.d.). The FAST fund is an example of faculty-run emergency aid for students. In contrast to college financial aid with rules and restrictions, the faculty emergency aid can be administered with minimal paperwork and aid delivered in a couple of days to a struggling student. These funds demonstrate to the students that faculty cares. The FAST fund program was started in 2016 by Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab from book royalties and other fundraising. Professors who apply for the fund get money that they pass on to students dealing with financial emergencies (Cady et al., n.d.).

COVID- 19 impacted students dealing with food insecurity in several ways. For some students, their needs increased as they lost jobs during the pandemic. Additional impacts were felt due to COVID-19 protocols. Some institutions that had food pantries had to change their access to the space. Donations also had to be quarantined for specific days, which led to a delay in distribution to students (Hagedorn-Hatfield et al., 2022).

Who Is Providing Services to Support Food-Insecure Students?

Food insecurity has been identified as an emerging crisis among the college student population. There has been extensive research about food insecurity prevalence, predictors, and institutional response to this emerging crisis (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Bruening et al., 2017; Chaparro et al., 2009; Cuite et al., 2018; Henry, 2017; Maroto et al., 2015; Morris et al.,

2016; Patton-López et al., 2014; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). However, there is a paucity of literature about the university departments responsible for the alleviation programming and in particular the higher education professionals who support students in need. With an increase in enrollment of historically underrepresented student populations (students of color, low-income, and first-generation students), higher education professionals must work to address the needs of these vulnerable populations (Stebleton et al., 2020).

The college administrators who work with students in alleviation of food insecurity as a component of basic-needs insecurity are usually the institutional employees in student-facing roles. Some of these are financial aid administrators, student services administrators, or the registrar and admissions staff. In addition, although not part of their job functions, faculty members can refer students in need to services.

Financial aid administrators are responsible for the award and disbursement of student aid, which can be in the form of grants, loans, and on-campus student employment. The financial aid administrator works to identify available funds, verify fund recipients' eligibility, and help students file aid applications. They also oversee federal work study grants that provide campus offices with student workers. These administrators are also responsible for compliance with federal, state, and local regulations regarding fund allocation. They are critical in the retention of students who would otherwise not be able to afford college. Financial aid administrators can help students who are dealing with food insecurity due to financial resource inadequacy by identifying additional sources of financial help.

Phillips et al. (2018) identified and described the pivotal role of divisions of student affairs in addressing food insecurity among college students. According to Phillips et al., "College campuses are key access points for improving the food security of vulnerable students"

(p. 17). Phillips et al. also recommend that student characteristics should be considered by higher education administrators when designing and implementing programs to alleviate food insecurity among college students. Student affairs administrators are chief caretakers of the whole student who understand the evolving needs of the new diverse student population and use this information to create effective student affairs practices (Kinzie, 2015). One of the critical values of the student affairs professionals is the value of care (Long, 2012). Student affairs professionals must care about the well-being of the students they serve, and they must advocate for the needs of students, especially those needs that if unmet, could be a barrier to success. Student affairs professionals must also educate upper management university administration on the needs of special populations of students to change policies or procedures that remedy disadvantages or unfair circumstances (Long, 2012). Integration of emerging student needs awareness into practice makes student affairs professionals effective caretakers of the whole student (Kinzie, 2015).

Some institutions of higher education are beginning to link academic service to basic needs referrals (Phillips et al., 2018). Early in 2020 before the WHO declared the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) partnered with The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University to conduct a survey on institutional awareness about prevalence of students' basic-needs insecurity and institutional response to these needs. The results of the survey of 469 AACRAO member institutions indicate that although institutions were underestimating the prevalence, there is a growing awareness of the connection between students' basic-needs insecurity and students' inability to persist to graduation (Kienzl et al., n.d.).

Gap in Literature

According to Kevin Kruger, the president of NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education), in 2020, higher education institutions looking to close the persistent attainment gaps and increase degree completion rates for all students must address the fact that food insecurity is a significant barrier to student success. There is a surfeit of quantitative literature about food insecurity prevalence and impact on college students, and colleges and universities are employing a wide range of solutions to alleviate the impact of food insecurity. There is, however, a lack of qualitative research in this area especially since we have not heard about the experiences of college administrator who support food-insecure students. The roles of higher education administrators who work with serving the needs of these students must be appraised. There is a lack of research on the challenges faced by the college administrators providing those services to support food-insecure students (Stebleton et al., 2020).

Even though there is limited research on the specific roles that college administrators play in responding to food insecurity more generally, seeing their role in implementing services after assessing the needs of students can help explain how they assess and respond to food insecurity on campuses and how this may vary by position and institutional type, size, and location.

In considering the literature regarding prevalence and predictors of food insecurity among college students, various alleviation strategies have been studied. However, a significant gap exists in the literature about the college administrators who identify the food insecurity need among college students and the student-facing administrators who act as agents of the institution to alleviate this identified need. College administrators as agents of educational institutions operate within institutional, individual, and professional spheres.

Theoretical Framework

      To better understand the experiences of college administrators, it would be helpful to utilize an institutional logics perspective to frame their perception of students' food insecurity and how they perceive their role in support of food-insecure students. According to Thornton and Ocasio (2008), institutional logics is defined as "socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (p. 101). This framework is appropriate for this study because it considers the college administrators' cognition of self in awareness of food insecurity among college students, perception of institutional and professional role, and self-evaluations of ability to support food-insecure college students. Although institutions can have basic-need alleviation policies, the implementation of institutional response to food insecurity depends on the actions of student-facing college administrators in their role as agents of the institution. These college administrators, as agents of the institution, operate in individual, institutional, and professional spheres, and their perceptions about students in need can influence the acknowledgement of student food insecurity recognition and supports offered (Broton et al., 2020). The institutional logics perspective suggests that the values of individuals, institutional culture, and professional norms combine and can lead to actions taken to support food-insecure students (Thornton et al., 2012).

      Institutional logics perspective was originally presented by Friedland and Alford (1991) as a critique of organizational and neo institutional theory. Institutional logics perspective differs from neo-institutional theory in its focus. The institutional logics perspective considers the duality of institutional material and symbolic aspects. The material aspects of institutions are the

institutional structures and practices, while the institutional symbolic aspect refers to ideation and meaning (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 10). The neo-institutional theory is that organizational behavior is guided by social rules and scripts (Broton et al., 2020).

Institutional logics perspective framework is useful for analyzing interrelationships between institutions and individuals as agents of institutions (Thornton et al., 2012). Institutional logics perspectives suggest that an individual's actions are shaped by individual preferences and interests within an institutional context (Glaser et al., 2016). Research indicates that individuals operate in an organization based on their personal perspectives and beliefs, institutional norms, and professional norms. The institutional logics perspective provides a framework to understand actions taken by institutional actors and the context within which they make sense of their actions (Glynn, 2013)

According to Broton et al. (2020), individuals' interpretation of information and situation responses are influenced by the multiplicity of their institutional spheres. The 2020 study by Broton et al. found that higher education professionals' responses to student needs depends on how they perceive the origin of hardship. The higher education professionals who express a systemic logic, implement strategies to help students as they perceive origin of hardship is out of student control but believe the institution must support students to succeed. Higher education professionals who express a quiescent logic view student need as an individual issue. While they want to help, they do not believe that it is the responsibility of an institution. Finally higher education professionals who express a cautious logic respond to student needs by implementing strategies that erect barriers to support access, as they view students in need with suspicion. The perceptions of policy and decision makers about people in need influence the recognition and help offered (Broton et al., 2020).

College administrators as agents of their educational institutions are influenced by their personal values, organizational identities, and professional norms. The college administrators that are in student-facing roles have an impact in student experiences and are critical in alleviation of student basic needs. It is important to understand how their personal values, organizational identities, and professional norms influence their response to students in need (Broton et al., 2020).

Summary

There is a growing awareness of the crisis of food insecurity among college students, with many studies concluding that this population experiences food insecurity at levels higher than the national average (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Gaines et al., 2014; Nikolaus et al., 2020). Multiple studies have found that 21% to 59% of college students experience food insecurity (Cuite et al., 2018; Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Gaines et al., 2014; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Hege et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2011; Meza et al., 2018; Morris et al., 2016; Stebleton et al., 2020; Waity et al., 2020). Studies have also identified similarities in food-insecurity predictors found in general and college student populations that include race and resource inadequacy. College students, in addition, are burdened with the burgeoning cost of tuition and prohibitive cost of books. Students who identify as Black and Hispanic are more likely than White students to be food insecure (Bruening et al., 2017; Cuite et al., 2018; Dubick et. al 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Maroto et al., 2015). In addition, students who are financially independent, live alone, or live with roommates are more likely to be food insecure (Cuite et.al., 2018; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2011). Research has also found that food insecurity can be a barrier to student

engagement, academic success, and college completion (Dubick et al., 2016; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Patton-Lopez et al., 2014; Regan, 2020).

Higher education institutions have initiated several food-insecurity alleviation strategies that include establishment of food pantries, meal donations, campus farms, and emergency funds to help students in need. In addition, federal and state legislation has expanded the eligibility of SNAP benefits to college students, while some states have introduced or enacted hunger free campus bills in support of college students experiencing food insecurity (Blumenstyk, 2019; Dachelet & Goldrick-Rab, 2015; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Klanmiko, 2018; Kruger et al., 2016; Laska et al., 2020; Laska et al., 2021; Nargi, 2016; Phillips et al., 2018).

There is, however, a paucity of information about how college administrators come to the decision to alleviate food insecurity on campus. There is a lack of literature about challenges faced and factors that inform food-insecurity alleviation strategy. Extensive research has found that students' welfare and livelihood is critical to student success (Schuh et al., 2016). Exploring the college administrators' views on their role in alleviation of food insecurity among college students and how they navigate supporting students in need will enhance our understanding of their value in supporting students from a first-person point of view, as the service provided is directly pertinent as a factor to student support success.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As discussed, extensive research has revealed that there is a growing crisis of food insecurity among college students. The rates of food insecurity have been found to vary from about 21% to 59% of undergraduate students depending on the institution type, timing, and method of research instrument (Broton et al., 2020). Although some institutions of higher education have started to respond to this problem, there is a gap in research, centering on how campus administrators identify and support food-insecure students. There also exists a gap in our knowledge of campus administrators' experiences in working with food-insecure college students.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to discern college administrators' perceptions of their roles in support of food-insecure students and the differences of perception and behavior by personal values, organizational identities, and professional norms. College administrators as agents of their educational institutions are influenced by their personal values, organizational identities, and professional norms (Broton et al., 2020; Thornton et al., 2012). The college administrators who are in student-facing roles have an impact on student experiences and are critical in alleviation of student basic needs like food insecurity. This study employed an institutional logics perspective to understand college administrators' perceptions of students' food insecurity and how they perceived their role in student support (Thornton et al., 2012). It is important to understand how college administrators' personal values, organizational identities, and professional norms influenced their responses to students in need. This study looked specifically at how college administrators, as agents of higher education institutions, perceive food insecurity among college students and how their perceptions guide the food-insecurity alleviation strategies they may implement.

The following research questions guided this study.

1. How do college administrators at a private higher education institution define and describe food insecurity on campus?

2. What do college administrators at a private higher education institution view as their responsibility for supporting students experiencing food insecurity?

3. What personal, professional, and institutional norms guide strategies, if any, that college administrators at a private higher education institution utilize to support students experiencing food insecurity on their campus?

In this chapter, I first discuss the methodology and research design. Then, I discuss the study site rationale, followed by study participant selection and recruitment procedure. I also describe the data collection and data analysis plan, followed with a discussion about my positionality statement. I then conclude with a discussion of the study limitations and trustworthiness.

Methodological Approach

A qualitative approach is used for "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The purpose of this study is to discern college administrators' perception of their roles in alleviation of food insecurity among college students; the ways, if any, that college administrators support alleviation of food insecurity, and the differences in food insecurity alleviation by perception. A qualitative approach was the appropriate choice for this study, as it allows the capacity for in-depth revelation of people's experiences and detailed phenomena experienced by study participants (Patton, 2002). Qualitative inquiry offers the researcher the chance to collect data at the site where participants experience the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). Research data

were collected by talking to the college administrators in student-facing roles who have experienced interactions with students experiencing food insecurity. A key characteristic of qualitative inquiry is researchers' focus on participant meaning. The data from this qualitative study were categorized in patterns and themes based on information collected.

This qualitative study utilized purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2014). Purposeful sampling allows for participants to be deliberately selected for study because they have experienced phenomena of interest (Patton, 2002). Data for this study were collected from interviews with college administrators, and the researcher was a key study instrument (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative investigation about administrators' perceptions of food insecurity could capture the nuances of how administrators perceive food insecurity and how they perceive their role or the institution's role in support of the students who are impacted by food insecurity. The results of this study can help higher education stakeholders understand how college administrators perceive food insecurity, their roles in support of food-insecure students, and how their perceptions align with institutional goals (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design

This study utilized a transcendental phenomenological single case study design to understand the experiences and perceptions of college administrators who support food-insecure college students at one institution. A case study approach is a choice of what to study within a bounded system of time and space (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2014), "Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (p. 14). Realities of people's experience is the original research data (Groenewald, 2004). According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological approach is best suited

for research questions that seek to understand participants' experiences of a phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon is food insecurity among college students. I utilized the phenomenological case study approach, as it is an appropriate fit to the research questions regarding the perceptions of college administrators at a specific higher education institution about their roles in food-insecurity alleviation and how their individual values, institutional policies, and professional norms shaped their experiences.

Case study design involves an in-depth analysis of a system or unit defined by specific boundaries with a focus on description of the unit under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Inquiry into the nature of what, how, and why questions and the phenomenon of interest guided the direction of research. College administrators' experiences and perceptions of their role in supporting food-insecure college students at a specific college is the bounded phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2014). A phenomenological case study approach is most applicable to this research because it seeks to focus on a specific phenomenon, college administrators supporting food-insecure students, within a specific location and time of data collection with questions aimed to explore and understand the essence of that experience (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

The purpose of a phenomenological qualitative study is to use experiences of participants to present a phenomenon, which in this study is the perceptions of college administrators of food insecurity among college students, and their role in providing resources to alleviate the negative impact of food insecurity (Moustakas, 1994). My unit of analysis was different college administrators. Since experiences are unique to individuals, the data I collected from semi-structured in-depth interviews with college administrators were useful in "unpacking" the

experiences of participants with regard to the essence to food-insecurity alleviation (Creswell, 2014).

I used transcendental phenomenology case study research design for this study because I was seeking an in-depth understanding of college administrators' perceptions of food insecurity and how these perceptions influenced their role in food-insecurity alleviation among college students in a specific institution bounded by time and space. This transcendental phenomenological approach is focused on attaining objectivity (Moustakas, 1994). According to Giorgi (1979, as cited in Moustakas), the essence of phenomenological research is description, and the researcher's goal is to accurately describe the phenomenon from perspectives of participants (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenological research involves a thorough description of experiences that provides a reflective structural analysis as a basis for the depiction of the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenological research is useful to explore experiences and perceptions of the researched phenomenon, leading to development of knowledge based on these experiences and perceptions. Transcendental phenomenology was chosen as the appropriate methodology for this research, as I am interested in understanding the meaning of the experiences of college administrators as they support food-insecure college students and how individual values, institutional policies, and professional norms shape perceptions about their role in food-insecurity alleviation. This study took a transcendental phenomenological case study approach to understand college administrators' perceptions of food insecurity and their role in alleviation among college students within a specific private higher education institution.

Bounding this study within a specific private higher education institution was useful to establish timeframe of study, selection of specific participants, management of data collection,

and analysis (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Utilizing a case study method with the combination of descriptive phenomenological approach enabled my understanding of the "essence" of the college administrator's experience with support of food-insecure students within a specific location.

Site of Study

The study site is a 4-year, not-for-profit, private religiously affiliated institution in the Northeast region of the United States. This study was conducted at Northeast University (pseudonym; NEU, hereafter). NEU is a moderately selective 4-year, private not-for-profit institution that is in a Northeast suburb enrolling about 77% of its applicants. NEU has a Carnegie Classification of Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity. According to data published by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), NEU has a total student enrollment of about 9,881students, with about 6,207 undergraduate students enrolled in Fall of 2021 (IPEDS, 2021). NEU offers bachelor's through doctoral degrees. The Fall 2021 retention rate, which is percentage of undergraduate students who first enrolled in Fall 2020 and returned in Fall 2021, was 83%. Enrollment by gender is approximately even, with 54% identifying as women and 46% identifying as men. From the total enrollment of undergraduate students in Fall 2021, 50% of the student body identified as White, 11% as Asian, 21% as Hispanic/Latino, 9% as Black or African American, 2% as non-resident alien, 4% as two or more races or unknown, and 3% as Race/Ethnicity unknown. Most undergraduate students were under 24 years of age (98%). The in-state residents were 65%, out of state students 33%, foreign students 1%, and unknown residency 1% (IPEDS, 2021).

My choice of study site was influenced by research questions seeking information about college administrators' perceptions about food insecurity among college students and their

perceptions of the institutional support for these students. NEU has a generous financial aid package for enrolled students. About 98% of the enrolled undergraduate students receive financial aid. The average annual cost of $63,002 is reduced to $28,903 after aid. *U.S. News & World Report*'s 2021 America's Best Colleges guide has ranked NEU as a top performer for social mobility. In addition, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* ranked NEU's mobility rate among the top 25 of all nationwide private universities in the upward financial mobility of its students. The mobility rate is the percentage of all students in a birth cohort at a particular college whose household income was in the bottom 20% and whose individual earnings reached the top 20%. The study was based on wage and income information derived from anonymous tax records and financial-aid records (Retrieved from institution's website, fall 2021). This institutional choice was appropriate for my study, as research has shown that students with limited financial resources were more likely to experience food insecurity (Broton et al., 2018; Cuite et al., 2018; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Hughes et al., 2011). Although NEU is a private institution, it has a track record of helping students at the bottom 20% for household income achieve financial mobility. Most of the research on college student food insecurity has been conducted at public institutions that have government funding, and there is a severe lack of research on food insecurity at private institutions. Hence NEU, a private institution, is an appropriate site because there is a gap in literature about food insecurity at private universities as there is an assumption about the financial capabilities of students enrolled in private institutions (Allen & Alleman, 2019).

Research has shown that the most common institutional response to food insecurity on campus is the creation of an on-campus food pantry or partnership for meal donations. Of the 3,982 degree-granting institutions of higher education as of the 2019-2020 school year in the

U.S., only about 20% have food pantries on campus, and only about 7% have meal donation programs (Carrasco, 2021). NEU is like most institutions of higher education as there is no on-campus food pantry and meal donation program. NEU has a dedicated website with information about basic needs and support resources that include information about resources for food security, housing security, and financial security. The website also includes resources for mental, physical, spiritual wellness, and crisis resolution. The institutional response for NEU food-insecure students is external referrals to local food pantries and charities.

NEU is similar to most private institutions as there are a variety of student services and administrative offices with a high touch point of providing student support (Allen & Alleman, 2019). At NEU, the admissions staff provide information through their outreach before a student arrives about financial aid, dining options, and other support services. Through new student orientation, which is facilitated by engagement department, administrators meet with students to talk about academic planning and any possible concerns that may impede their performance to ensure they are connected to appropriate resources right from the start of their academic journey. The financial aid staff work with eligible students to assign scholarships or grants to reduce financial bills. Additional departments at NEU with frequent student interactions are:

- Academic Resource Center provides skill building workshops and academic coaching for students.
- Academic Support for Student Athletes provides the Division I athletes with additional academic resources tailored to the athletes' busy schedule.
- The Career Center at NEU offers career preparation programming for students.
- The counseling department provides year-round counseling including crisis intervention to students.

- Health services provide healthcare to students.

- Housing is charged with the provision of a safe and inclusive residential experience for resident students.

- The engagement department introduces new students to campus traditions through various activities and is also in charge of planning new student orientation.

- Educational Opportunity Fund program at NEU provides educational support and financial assistance to eligible in-state students from disadvantaged backgrounds who exhibit academic promise.

However, despite these resources, NEU and similar private institutions of higher education does not have dedicated staff or resources internally to address food insecurity amongst students (Allen & Alleman, 2019). Due to the lack of designated on-campus support resources for food insecurity like food pantries, meal donation programs or college farms, which are like those institutions seen in the literature, NEU was an appropriate location to investigate further, as this institution provided some data that could be like the experiences that we would find out at comparable institutions (Blumenstyk, 2019; Cuite et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Phillips et al., 2018). NEU has an institutional culture of high touch points with undergraduate students throughout a student's time at the institution. With this institutional culture of consistent outreach to students, NEU was an appropriate site for this phenomenological case study to answer research questions about personal values, institutional and professional norms of college administrators' experiences with the support of food-insecure undergraduate students.

Participant Selection

This study utilized purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative phenomenological research to select participants who have experienced the phenomenon of interest to collect in-depth information about the essence of their experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposeful sampling was used in this study to select participants who provided in-depth information about their perceptions and experiences in supporting food-insecure college students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the phenomenon under investigation is a bounded single case study of college administrators' experiences of supporting food-insecure college students at NEU, sampling involved a deliberate selection of a unique sample of college administrators in student-facing roles who have supported food-insecure students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Creswell (2013), the ideal case study sample size should not exceed five participants to allow for in-depth identification and analysis of themes. However, this study had 10 participants. I stopped at 10 participants when I reached data saturation in the cross-section of college administrator participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The participant population was college administrators in student-facing positions who are employed full-time at the university during the study and have worked with at least one student experiencing food insecurity. These administrators are in positions where they have consistent student interactions. In assessing the timeline of an undergraduate student's academic journey at NEU, the administrators with consistent student interactions are likely to be from admissions, financial aid, bursar, registrar, and student services. At NEU, the admissions department has multiple events both virtual and in person where admitted students are welcomed to the university. Each admitted student has an admission counselor assigned, and the new students are strongly encouraged to attend admitted-student events. At these events, various university

departments are included in programming. The financial aid counselors meet with students to explain the financial packages and additional grant or scholarships that students are eligible for. The registrar office also has representation to ensure that the students are placed in appropriate classes for their majors. The student services division at NEU has different departments with consistent student interactions because the mission of student services at NEU is to support the whole student outside of the classroom. Also, under the division of student services, the counseling department does mental wellness check-in and programming with students.

Since the purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of the administrators on their roles in food-insecurity alleviation, participants had prior experiences supporting at least one student with food insecurity. Participants were recruited from various university departments like admissions, financial aid, bursar, registrar, and student services positions at NEU as these offices have frequent student interaction.

As college employees operate within various social spheres, this study investigated how personal values, organizational identity and professional norms influence college administrators in their response to college students' food insecurity. Understanding the experiences of college administrators across the various departments is important because they are the ones with consistent student interactions, and we want to see how they are supporting food-insecure students in the absence of on-campus designated support services.

My intention to recruit participants across different university departments was to consider nuances of college administrators' perceptions of roles across varying institutional role, length of employment in role, personal and institutional motivation, and institutional support. The intention beyond representing different administrator departments was also to consider nuances of administrator profession, age, and gender, which I got from my demographic survey.

This selection was based on my interest in looking at a variety of administrator characteristics and experiences and proved beneficial when analyzing my results.

Recruitment

Prior to soliciting participants for study, I secured approval from the NEU Institutional Review Board (IRB). To determine the purposeful sample for this study, I identified college administrators employed in student-facing roles like admissions, financial aid, bursar, registrar, student services, and various student support positions through the University website. I sent a solicitation email (Appendix B) that indicated IRB approval status and requested participation. This email explained the focus of my study to explore college administrator perceptions of their role in food-insecurity alleviation and listed criteria for participation. Interested participants were directed to contact me. When interested participants contacted me, I sent them an electronic consent form (Appendix B), which included audio and visual recording consent (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which they signed electronically. Once that was completed, participants were directed to complete the demographic survey (Appendix C), which was administered through Qualtrics.

Reminder e-mails were sent to all potential participants who did not complete the survey within 3 days of receiving the survey. I followed up with interested participants who completed the survey via email to schedule interviews.

Table 1

Participant Profile

Pseudonym	Ethnicity/Race	Gender	Highest level of education	Division	Years employed at NEU
Martin	White/Caucasian	Male	Doctorate	Academic Affairs	3 years
Mary	White/Caucasian	Female	Master's degree	Student Services	10 years
Efrain Feijoo	Hispanic/Latino	Male	4-year degree	IT	3 years
Sylmar	Black/African American	Female	Master's degree	Finance	15 years
Betty	White/Caucasian	Female	Master's degree	Mission and Ministry	18 years
John Smith	Hispanic/Latino	Male	Master's degree	Student Services	5 Years
E. Troutman	Black/African American	Female	Master's degree	Enrollment Services	16 years
Jane	Black/African American	Female	Some college	Student Services	6 years
Mr.	Black/African American	Male	Master's degree	Student Services	11 years
Mark	Black/African American	Male	Master's degree	Student Services	7 Years

In total, 10 college administrators participated in this study. They have all been employed at NEU for 3 to 18 years. Five participants are from the division of student services while the others are from the division of academic affairs, IT, finance, enrollment services, and mission and ministry. Five of the participants identified as female, and the remaining five identified as male. Seven of the participants have a master's degree, one participant has a doctoral degree, one participant has a 4-year degree, and one has some college experience but is working towards her degree.

The participants of this study were recruited over 5 months after some weeks of outreach and solicitation. Twelve college administrators expressed interest, but only 11 followed through with filling out the Qualtrics survey. One participant was dropped as he did not meet the criteria of experience working with a food-insecure student. There was a lack of demographic data regarding the administrators at NEU, and I could not determine if the 10 participants were a representative sample of college administrators at NEU. However, I found that the college administrator participants provided enough data to reach data saturation. The data collected via semi-structured interviews represented similar and redundant themes that I could use to answer my research questions. The interview data yielded information that extended previous research on food insecurity among college students, shedding light on the experiences of college administrators who work to assist these students.

Data Collection

According to Groenewald (2004), "A researcher applying phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched" (p. 5). To achieve this goal, research data for this study were collected via semi-structured interviews (Moustakas, 1994). A case study approach presents an in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell, 2013). This was achieved by collecting multiple forms of qualitative data, and in this study the data were demographic survey, semi-structured interviews, and document collection from the university website about institutional resources for food-insecure college students at NEU (Creswell, 2013).

I utilized Zoom, an electronic video conference tool, to conduct the interviews. This interview tool was convenient for the interviews as it allowed flexibility in reaching participants. In addition, the United States continues to grapple with the impacts of the mutating COVID-19

pandemic, and the virtual format of the interview protected both participants and researcher. Zoom platform was selected for this study because of the ease of use. Interview electronic invitations were generated by Zoom with a live link that participants clicked to join the meeting (Gray et al., 2020). Zoom's password protection feature was useful to ensure confidentiality of recorded data. Zoom also has the capability to record both audio and video simultaneously. The disadvantage of this tool, however, is the possibility of technical difficulties that can start at any time in the data collection process. The use of Zoom requires a steady internet connection, and so the quality of audio can be affected if either researcher or participant loses internet connectivity. As the researcher, I was prepared to use alternative tools like telephone to continue the interview if technical difficulties arose. Although Zoom allows both participants and researcher to hear and see each other, I was not able to use this platform to observe participants' physical space, body language, and emotional cues. These were valuable benefits of person-to-person interviews (Gray et al., 2020; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019).

Prior to starting the interview, I introduced my study goals and informed participants that the interview will be recorded. Participants were informed that they can discontinue participation at any time during the study. As phenomenology is concerned with describing the essence of participants' experiences with a phenomenon, interviews are appropriate for data collection. The primary method of data collection for my study was semi-structured in-depth interviews of about 45 to 60 minutes (Appendix D). The semi-structured interview format allowed for relative consistency with predetermined questions while allowing the conversation to still be flexible. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to collect experiential data about participants' perceptions about their role in the phenomenon of food-insecurity alleviation among college students. College administrators' perceptions about their role in the phenomenon of food-insecurity

alleviation among college students was the focus of the interview (Creswell, 2014). In addition, the semi-structured interview style allowed me to ask open-ended questions as follow-up to solicit nuances of role perception among the college administrators.

The semi-structured interview protocol included open-ended questions about participant definition and perception of food insecurity among college students, as well as their opinions on whether they believe that their role contributes to student success, and why. For this study, I solicited information about participants' experiences that may have contributed to participants' perceptions of their role in support of food-insecure students and behaviors that they currently enact. I asked participants open-ended questions in hopes of identifying the life experiences and influences that have shaped their personal views regarding food insecurity. I asked participants to describe personal experiences with food insecurity that could have had some relation to their own support behavior with food-insecure students. I asked about the specific kind of actions the participants feel are contributions to support food-insecure students and what influenced their choices. Specifically, I asked if there are departmental or institutional policies, practices, communications, or expectations related to their choice of support actions. I asked if there are professional policies or norms related to their choice of support actions. I also asked participants what, if anything, they felt inhibited their ability to support food-insecure students, what if anything, the participants felt are the benefits they perceive are related to their actions related to supporting food-insecure students, and to discuss their experiences with and attitudes toward other resources that support food-insecure students on NEU campus. Follow-up questions were used for further exploration or elaboration as the interviews evolved, and an invitation for any additional comments related to the topic concluded the interviews.

The Zoom interviews were recorded and then immediately transferred to a password-protected cloud-based storage (Otter) for transcription and security for security purposes. To further ensure security and privacy, participants' names were not used. They were referred to by the self-selected pseudonym on the demographic survey. All participant files were labeled by their pseudonym and interview date for added confidentiality. The cloud-based storage drive, which contained all documents and audio files collected during this study was only made accessible to myself and my dissertation mentor, and the data will remain intact for 3 years, the approximate amount of time determined by IRB. Participants were also offered the transcript of their interviews to check for accuracy.

Documents can be printed or electronic sources, which contain information obtained without intervention by a researcher (Bowen, 2009). Documents for this study were from the website of NEU. NEU has a web page with resource information for basic material needs, which includes referrals to off-campus resources for food and shelter. The website content was the document data for my study. According to Saldana (2011), text from a website can be qualitative document data, and the purpose of a document can be official. The website is NEU's official institutional response to college food insecurity. For this study the data from the webpage provided institutional background and context of NEU's response to food insecurity on campus. The institutional webpage was a listing of institutional resources (both external and internal) for students' basic needs, which included food security and other needs like housing, financial, and mental wellness. All resources for food-security support were all external resources. The webpage was not advertised, but a search for basic needs on the main institutional website navigates to the page.

Data Analysis

The main data collection instrument of a phenomenological study was interviews as first-person reports of life experiences. Meanings and essences of participants' experiences are understood through the descriptions collected during interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Analysis of collected qualitative data involves making sense of information. At the conclusion of each interview, while impressions were still fresh, I wrote my reflections about the interview, which included my feelings and observations of the process. I practiced epoche by reflecting on my background, biases, and presumptions about the perceptions of college administrators about food insecurity and noted how my presumptions can affect data analysis.

As aforementioned, I loaded recorded Zoom audio file to the Otter app for transcription. Each file was labeled with participant pseudonym and date. I reviewed and edited the transcripts from any transcription errors before sending them to the participants for review and to confirm interview data. Phenomenological reduction was practiced by re-reading interview transcripts multiple times to get a sense of the college administrators' perceptions of food insecurity and their roles in alleviation.

I loaded transcribed data to ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data management software, for coding and data analysis. I included the demographic data from the Qualtrics survey for each participant. I read through the transcript multiple times to get a sense of each participant's experience with the phenomenon of interest and related subjective experiences (namely, administrator role in support of food insecure students). I identified significant statements, including sentences or quotes that can provide information about the content and context of participants' experiences with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). These statements were grouped with participants' demographic data that was collected through

the survey. I took note of phrases that can denote codes. According to Creswell (2014), "Coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks... and writing a word representing the category" (p. 197).

The coding for this study was conducted in four rounds; first round, deductive coding; second round, inductive coding/open coding; third round, pattern coding and thematic analysis; fourth round, post-coding analysis (Saldaña, 2011).

First Round Coding - Deductive Coding

Deductive codes are codes that are most likely to appear in the collected data because they appear in prior research or a pre-established coding system (Saldaña, 2011). For this study, I utilized deductive codes based on prior literature and relevant themes from my framework (Saldaña, 2011). Some of the deductive codes included: "personal values," "institution culture," "deserving of help," and "connecting to resources."

Second Round Coding - Inductive Coding

I began inductive coding as the second round of coding after I had identified the deductive codes from prior literature and my theoretical framework. In this stage, I conducted inductive or open coding by generating codes based on what the data present about the essence of the lived experience of my participants. These inductive codes are codes that derive directly from the collected data (Saldaña, 2011). The open-coding stage also included identifying in vivo codes, or "verbatim codes" that are drawn from the participants' own language (Saldaña, 2011). Some of the inductive codes included "empathy" and "pay it forward." As these codes captured my participants' essence of their experience, they were symbolic, and I conducted multiple rounds of inductive coding.

Third Round Coding - Thematic Analysis/Pattern Coding.

In this third round, also known as the thematic analysis and pattern coding stage, I grouped and summarized segments of data from the first and second rounds into a smaller number of condensed categories, themes, and concepts (Saldaña, 2011). Connecting these codes and emerging themes generated a framework for study findings, and I used that to answer research questions.

Fourth Round Coding - Post-Coding Analysis.

The fourth round, which is also known as the post-coding analysis round, is the transitional, analytic process where I organized the data into a thorough narrative that I used to answer my research questions (Saldana, 2011). I summarized common phenomena experiences among college administrators and examined to see if there are differences by departments or job functions as the focus of this study was to examine college administrators' perceptions of food insecurity. I recorded themes, concepts, and ideas that emerged from the significant statements with a focus on describing, classifying, and interpreting personal values, organizational identities, and professional norms (Broton et al., 2020; Creswell, 2014). I prepared a written summary of the common experiences related to college administrators' experiences, role, activities, motivation, benefits, and referrals that may occur among the participants. ATLAS.ti was utilized for data analysis and presentation of results.

Document review is a secondary data source that provides background and confirms data collected from the interview of participants, which is the primary data source (Yin, 2014). Document analysis was utilized in addition to data from the semi-structured interviews and demographic survey. I analyzed the content of the webpage and organized information into categories related to the research questions. I applied codes used in the interview transcripts to

the contents of the document because document analysis is supplementary to the interview data (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis is an efficient research method as it requires data selection instead of data collection as the document for this study is in the public domain. This method is also unobtrusive as the presence of the researcher has no impact on data. However, document analysis can have the limitation of insufficient detail since the documents are not produced for research (Bowen, 2009). The available information from official documents was aligned to organizational policies or procedures.

Trustworthiness

I conducted a phenomenological case study about food insecurity in college. I am looking to understand the role that college administrators play in acknowledgement and alleviation of this continuing crisis that is often overlooked in higher education. Specific threats to the trustworthiness of my study are researcher bias and reactivity. According to Maxwell (2013), a researcher can utilize several steps to ensure trustworthiness. The methods used in this study include reflexivity, mentor feedback, member checking, and triangulation.

I practiced reflexivity throughout the study. As the researcher, I was open with my participants about my role as a college administrator who has supported food-insecure students. I was also conscious of my values and possible bias that I bring to the study during the data analysis, especially during the imaginative variation phase of analysis. I clarified my researcher bias by practicing reflexivity throughout my study. I recorded reflections in a continuous manner by writing reflective memos to record and unpack my feelings after interviews. I also recorded these memos during transcription of the recorded interviews. Additionally, I asked my mentor for continuous feedback, especially as I began to analyze my data. Another strategy I employed to ensure trustworthiness was member checking. Member checking is a technique of returning

data and interpretations back to participants to confirm the credibility of interview data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The college administrator participants were provided with the transcribed interview via email. I asked interested participants to verify contents and provide any clarification of points or my understanding of their response.

Positionality Statement

Growing up in Nigeria, I never imagined that hunger was a problem in America. We always thought it was the "land of plenty." Upon arrival in the United States, the church my family joined had a food pantry, and I was amazed that the land of plenty had people who did not have enough to eat. I grew up in a household where my parents always helped those who were less fortunate. Even when they experienced financial hardships, we were always assured of food. It was not a stretch for my family to be a part of various outreach ministries.

In my naiveté, though, I never imagined that food insecurity was a problem in college. I reflect on my time in college back in Nigeria. I was home every weekend, and I went back to school with food to last me for the week. In addition, I was given pocket money in case I needed to buy food. While some students did not have enough food at the end of the school year, I assumed they lived far from home, and I shared my food since I got to replenish every weekend. My interest in food insecurity as a topic evolved from a class assignment. At the midpoint in my doctoral program, I was introduced to various topics that were critical student issues in higher education. The topic I was assigned was food insecurity among college students. I had to research my assigned topic and present it to the class. I was struck by the data that I uncovered. I discovered that the rate of food insecurity among college students in America was higher than the national rate of food insecurity. I realized that I had witnessed this phenomenon. One of my roles as a college administrator is the administration of meal plans, and I have witnessed students

trying to sneak meals to their friends who could not afford food. I have also purchased meals on occasion for students when I find out that they run out of meals on their meal plans in the final weeks of semester when the university had semester block meal plans. The popular myth of "the hungry student" was real. I started to reflect and think about students who got free breakfast and lunch during their K–12 academic journey, and I wondered how they coped in college.

I recognize that I am approaching this study with an equity lens regarding food insecurity, and I realize that I am privileged as I never had to wonder where my next meal will come from. I recognize my values are important to this project. I believe, due to my own personal and professional experiences, that college administrators can be a resource for basic-need support for their students as contributions to student success. As a college administrator, I have been dismayed at the lack of affordable food options on my campus, and I have made complaints to business affairs to remedy that situation. I have had to purchase food for some students who have verbalized being hungry since I had no information about available campus resources. I also alert students to leftover food at the university events I go to.

At the beginning of each interview of my study, I disclosed my role as a college administrator. I explained that the purpose of the study was to explore and gain understanding about college administrators' perceptions of their role and the institution's role in student basic-need support. I believe this was important to gaining their trust so they would share freely their experiences and opinions.

I made a design decision to share my positionality and personal experiences as an administrator (Maxwell, 2013). I leveraged my experiences as a college administrator and shared some stories through the interview process about how I support college students to ensure that I could gain rich data from the participants to answer my research questions (Maxwell, 2013). I

wanted my participants to understand my role as the researcher, my perspective of this study, my college student support experiences in my college administrator career, and my understanding of this research to develop an ethical relationship with my participants (Maxwell, 2013). This design decision created a safe space for my participants, which was critical in creating meaningful research relationships with each participant.

Limitations

The findings of this qualitative phenomenological case study were limited to the participant's institution. This study was conducted at a religious-affiliated private not-for-profit institution, and the findings from a private institution might look different compared to public institutions that have access to government funding and support for food insecurity based on the hunger free college bills that have been enacted. In addition, there is a stigma surrounding food insecurity broadly and, in particular, at private institutions. This stigma is characterized by the perception that students at private institutions are less likely to be food insecure (Allen & Alleman, 2019). College administrators at public institutions that have more institutional resources could have a different support approach compared to college administrators at private institutions especially ones with no on-campus resources to support food-insecure students.

This study is also limited by recruitment bias, as I only invited college administrators in student-facing roles as participants in my purposeful sampling. I could be missing the perceptions of college administrators who are not in student-facing roles, although they might have experiences in student referrals or policy drafting about basic-needs support.

Another limitation of this study is the small size. Recruitment for my purposeful sample was a small size limited only to the 10 college administrators who responded affirmatively to my study participation request and who were eligible to participate in study. These 10 college

administrators are not representative of all student-facing college administrators at NEU. These participants already have a more personal connection to food insecurity, and this study does not reflect the perceptions of college administrators with no personal connection to food insecurity.

As this study was limited to college administrators, I am missing the perceptions of different higher education stakeholders such as faculty who are in student-facing roles. Research has shown that faculty can be a source of student support (Allen & Alleman, 2019). This study does not reflect the perceptions of students who could be involved in student led efforts to combat food insecurity (Carrasco, 2021). In addition, this study is limited to only full-time college administrators; the perceptions of stakeholders like food service vendors are not reflected in this study.

This study is missing the perceptions of executive-level college administrators like presidents, vice presidents, and deans who are responsible for institutional policy drafting. The support and "buy-in" of executive-level college administrators has been effective in addressing food insecurity successfully in schools like Bunker Hill Community college (Goldrick-Rab, 2018).

The perceptions of college administrators about the "deservingness" of students can impact how students get support (Applebaum, 2001). All participants in this study indicated food-insecure students are "deserving" of support since they have all supported at least one food-insecure student. The perceptions of college administrators who have not supported food-insecure students, or the perceptions of administrators who believe support for food-insecure students is not a function of institutions of higher education, are not reflected in this study. The findings were limited by the stakeholder diversity among participants.

Chapter 4: Findings

Through this study, I set out to gain an understanding of college administrators' perceptions of their role in support of food-insecure students. The findings of this phenomenological study on college administrators' roles in support of food-insecure college students are presented in this chapter. College is a transformational journey, and most of the college student development literature has focused on cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial aspects of student development with the presumption that students' basic needs are met (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015). However, research has identified food insecurity among college students as an issue affecting students' wellbeing and threatening student development, and institutions have started to respond to this particular student need (Alexander et al., 2020; Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Hege et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2011; Laska et al., 2020). However, the institutional response to food insecurity depends on the actions of college administrators who act as agents of the institution. The policies and programs that these administrators implement have an impact on student support (Broton et al., 2020). What surfaced from the gathered data suggests important information relevant to our understanding of college administrators' roles in support of students dealing with food insecurity.

The following research questions guided this study.

1. How do college administrators at a private higher education institution define and describe food insecurity on campus?

2. What do college administrators at a private higher education institution view as their responsibility for supporting students experiencing food insecurity?

3. What personal, professional, and institutional norms guide strategies, if any, that college administrators at a private higher education institution utilize to support students experiencing food insecurity on their campus?

This chapter highlights the experiences of 10 college administrators employed at NEU who have had interactions with one or more food-insecure students. Their experiences yielded findings related to understanding how college administrators define food insecurity. These findings highlighted the perspective of the college administrators at an institution with no on-campus alleviation strategy for food-insecure students and how these college administrators view their responsibility to support food-insecure students. Finally, the motivations for why these college administrators support food-insecure students will be discussed.

College Administrator Definition and Description of Food Insecurity

Findings from the semi-structured interview of college administrator participants suggest a common theme with their definition and description of food insecurity. All the 10 college administrator participants defined and described food insecurity in various ways pertaining to lack of access to food. Although all referenced lack of access due to inadequate financial resources, the nuances of their descriptions included other reasons for lack of access. The data from this study show that food insecurity can be described by lack of access to food due to finances, inadequate physical access, inability to get the desired quality or quantity of food, and the unavailability of desired food choices.

Financial

This study found that lack of financial resources to acquire food was the principal description of food insecurity. Participants in this study identified food insecurity with insufficient financial resources as evidenced by how they describe or define food insecurity. E.

Troutman, for example, described food insecurity as inadequate financial resource: "simply the inability to be able to have the resources to buy just a general food that's needed within one's household." Like E. Troutman, other participants also referenced financial resources. For example, Sylmar stated, "It would mean that the students who may not have access, or they may not have the ability to purchase food or get access to food." When asked about her definition of food insecurity, Betty's response was, "I would define it as a person who was experiencing a lack of resources to obtain food to sustain a healthy lifestyle." Mark described food insecurity as a social economic challenge that renders an individual incapable of meeting the means to acquire food. Jane said specifically that food-insecure students just cannot afford food. As evident from the data, financial inadequacy is a primary cause of food insecurity.

COVID-19

While most participants had experiences with food-insecure students prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, some recognized the pandemic as a factor that contributed to food insecurity. In Betty's experience, the food-insecure student she had worked with was basic-needs insecure before COVID-19. Although with COVID-19, after the residence halls closed, she was rendered homeless as she had nowhere to go. COVID-19 exacerbated her needs. In Martin's experience, COVID-19 further impacted his students who were already struggling prior to the pandemic. The closure of the residence halls saw them back in abusive home situations where they both got kicked out of their homes. The pandemic also contributed to students losing employment as evidenced by Sylmar's narrative. She said, "We had about maybe 100 students working for the department. Now, since the pandemic, with limited budget and funds, we're now down to about 30 students working in the department." As the university closed, food service on campus was affected. International students were stuck as they could not use their meal plans. Their access to

food was limited. COVID-19 might not be the primary cause of food insecurity for these students, but it exacerbated existing needs.

Physical Access

This study found that in addition to finances, food insecurity was also described in terms of lack of physical access. Some participants included physical access to food as a possible barrier for students to be food secure. Efrain and Jane spoke about physical access to food. Efrain spoke about students who had no transport options to get to where they could purchase food. Jane shared the impact of location on food insecurity: "For example, one could be the area which they live in might be a food desert, where there's not quality food." It is significant that access to transportation also came up in the description of food insecurity. Mary extended her description to include lack of basic needs like transportation, she said,

> Because if you are food insecure, for whatever reason, you know, what does that mean for your transportation costs, right, you have access to funding to get here on a day when you don't need to be here to access food. Right. And so I think that it's so much more than just not having regular access to food.

A student with financial difficulties might miss school. This can trigger unwanted consequences and lead to delayed graduation or the student dropping out.

Desired Quality and Quantity

The findings of this study show that food insecurity can be described in context of lack of access to desired quantity and quality of food in addition to lack of financial resources and physical access. The narratives of two participants described food insecurity in terms of quantity and quality of food. For example, John Smith defined food insecurity as the inability to have the

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desired quantity of food. He said, "I would define food insecurity, as you know, students not being able to get three structured meals a day." Mr.'s definition was specific about both inadequate desired quantity and quality:

> Food insecurity is the inability to acquire a decent or healthy proportion of food or healthy style of food for at least two meals a day. For those who are only able to access a bag of chips, and a bottle of water a day, like that's not a healthy way to go about living, that's an unhealthy way to survive.

Students who are not able to assess the desired quality or quantity of food end up not getting the required nutrition, and there could be an adverse effect to focus on schoolwork.

Availability

Interestingly, only Efrain mentioned international students in his description of food insecurity. For international students who are in an unfamiliar area, while they might have financial resources, they might not be able to access desired food, as described by Efrain, "international students who may not always have access to readily available sources of food that meets their dietary or religious needs." Domestic students may also not have access to culturally appropriate foods.

This study also found that the participants with prior exposure or experiences extended the definition and description of food insecurity. Some of the participants had prior exposure to the topic or to someone else who was experiencing food insecurity. Some participants had prior personal experience of food insecurity. The robustness of how participants described food insecurity related to their level of prior experience. These participants had a depth and

elaboration in how they described food insecurity. Their conversations were more about description than definition.

Personal Experience With Food Insecurity

This study revealed that food-insecure students are also likely to experience other forms of basic-needs insecurity as narrated by participants with prior experience with food insecurity. Their experiences impacted the descriptions of food insecurity. The participants who had prior experience had more depth and more understanding to the complexities of food insecurity. They expanded their descriptions beyond lack of financial resources, as made evident by the narrative of Mary and Efrain who had experienced food insecurity growing up. Mary explained:

> I also think that it goes beyond food, right? I think, you know, if we think about our female students who need menstrual products, …., think of all the other things that you need, that cost money just to exist. You know, and some of them are really basic, you know, food, some hygiene things.

Both Mary and Efrain personally experienced food insecurity growing up, and the experience was reflected in their description of food insecurity. As young children they had both qualified for free lunch through elementary and high school. This is significant and ties to prior research, which has shown that students who were recipients of the free lunch program were more prone to food insecurity post-secondary when these benefits cease to exist. They both acknowledged that food insecurity can take various forms and extended their descriptions to lack of basic needs. Efrain said, "It takes various forms." He described his parents working long hours and yet having to skip meals after paying rent and bills but devising ways to hide the reality from him about their anxiety over when their next meal would be. He said, "But it's also a reality

when you realize that, oh, a tortilla with a bit of lemon and salt isn't a fun treat, it's a, this will hold you off, so you're not hungry. So you can go to sleep."

Mary, speaking from personal experience, extended her description to the family of food-insecure college students. She spoke about the guilt a student might feel if they are able to access food on campus. Mary's description of food insecurity also brought back memories of shame endured with free school lunch: "so the number of times that I would just skip lunch because I didn't want to deal with the shame of it all." Efrain's description of anxiety associated with food insecurity also corroborated the mental health impacts of food insecurity. According to Efrain, "Food insecurity to me would mean just not knowing when your next meal is going to be. And that is a very personal one for me." Efrain's account demonstrated how his experience extended beyond hunger and impacted his emotional and mental wellbeing.

Exposure to Food Insecurity

This study revealed exposure to food insecurity was through different incidences. Some of the exposure can be from course work or doing volunteer work. Participants who were exposed to the topic of food insecurity or who were exposed to people dealing with food insecurity also described food insecurity in depth depending on the level of exposure. This study revealed that all these participants also extended the description of food insecurity past food to basic needs that include accommodation, hygiene products, and supplies for school.

Betty and Mark got exposed to food insecurity in the course of previous work. Betty had previously taught at an inner-city school where the majority of the students were from families who lived below the poverty line and were food insecure. She learned how to identify and provide resources for students in need. Betty, with extensive exposure of 18 years, was the only participant who specifically included homelessness in her description. She said,

It runs the whole scope of a homeless student who has absolutely no family support, no safety net, and needs everything from food to clothing to hygiene items. It's not just food insecurity. I had a girl come and say that she had nothing. …she did not have any clothes that weren't falling apart. She didn't have a bra to wear. She didn't have hygiene products for when she got her period. And so it's really a lot of basic needs that the students are encountering.

Mark got exposed to food insecurity in the course of his work in the military. He was a leader in the military with soldiers reporting to him. As part of his supervisory role, he had to do welfare checks on his soldiers. He identified food-insecure family members of his soldiers and worked to provide resources. Most interesting was Martin's initial exposure to food insecurity. The normalization of food insecurity in a professor's syllabus enabled him to understand that food insecurity was a part of basic-needs insecurity. The inclusion of available institutional resources as part of this normalization gave him an eye opener to this issue he had no prior knowledge of. As he said: "I just never had thought that, you know, it was essentially saying, listen, we're here to help connect you to resources help you with the basic necessities, food, clothing, shelter.

Jane and John Smith both had a family history of working with charitable organizations that serve food to the needy. John Smith's description of food-insecure students included primarily commuter students who had no access to food on campus. He recognized that these students were eager to go to functions with free food on campus. Jane's prior experience serving in her church's soup kitchen gave her an insight into how to identify needs in students.

Summary of Research Question 1 Finding

Overall, these findings show that when college administrators have prior experience or exposure to food insecurity, they have a deeper understanding of how food security is present in students. They are quick to identify students in need. Efrain grew up in a household where his parents went without food to ensure he had something in his stomach. His prior experience enabled him to identify a student he noticed was skipping meals but who was always eager to get free food on campus. Jane's exposure to food insecurity via her charity work exposed her to the signs of students in need. She was able to identify a need of her student workers for sustenance during the workday.

All participants defined or described food insecurity by referencing lack of access to food due to inadequate financial resources. Some of the participants noted that COVID-19 exacerbated existing needs of food-insecure students. Some participants also attributed lack of food access to include lack of physical access and inability to procure desired quality or quantity of food. However, the participants with prior exposure or prior personal experience of food insecurity extended food insecurity to basic needs like personal hygiene products and family members of students. Their descriptions of food insecurity were nuanced by their level of exposure or experience with some descriptions extending to impacts including anxiety about food and remembered shame and guilt.

The Essence of College Administrators' Roles in Support of Food-Insecure Students

This phenomenological study revealed a common theme of responsibility from the experiences of the participants. The findings of this study show that different components go into what participants view as their responsibility as employees of the institution to food-insecure students and the support strategies implemented. The responsibilities include identification of

food-insecure students and response implementation. According to Efrain: "Number one, is to recognize that it's happening. And number two, give the students the tools they need to combat food insecurity." As these participants all defined food insecurity as lack of access to food, all the responses addressed the lack of access.

All 10 participants strongly agree or somewhat agree that higher education institutions are responsible for students' basic needs like food based on a series of survey questions that required semi-structured answers in degrees of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *strongly disagree*, to *somewhat disagree*. However, in an institution like NEU with no on-campus resources for food-insecure students, participants' views of their responsibility include identification of food-insecure students and provision of support, which can differ based on how participants define or describe food insecurity.

Identification of Food-Insecure Students

Participants were able to recognize food-insecure students by being exposed to the students via interactions and referrals. The level of exposure or experience played a part in how participants identified food insecure students that they interacted with. Participants who had consistent access and interactions with students were able to identify food-insecure students by observing their behavior patterns, while two of the participants have students referred to them for support.

Exposure and Experience

Nine of the 10 participants had no official role in basic-needs support. However, in an institution with no on-campus resource for food-insecure students, these participants responded to students in need. They mostly identified students via exposure to the students. Participants in

this study also identified students who were primarily student workers on work study and students in an institutional designated program for students with low SES. Three of the participants were familiar with the students and their experiences based on how their roles interacted with students. Mary, Mark, and Martin's roles as advisors/mentors allowed them to connect with students who felt comfortable enough to divulge their circumstances.

Prior Experience. Participants with prior personal experience identified students who show similar traits they had experienced in the past. Mary, who extended the definition of food insecurity to include basic needs and hygiene products, said, "Thinking about my personal experience with insecurities and also working with students, I think that you almost have to read between the lines of what they're saying." Efrain had parents who missed/skipped meals, and as a college student he dealt with food insecurity by always going to events with free food on campus. He was able to identify food-insecure students when he saw that pattern. He said,

> We often joke that food is the primary motivator for college students. And retrospect, that joke is born from reality. The reality being that food insecure need any free food that they can get. In this case, this student would come in and consistently take food to go. I knew he was food insecure because I knew that I did the same when I was a food insecure student.

Prior Exposure. Participants with prior exposure also identified patterns that alerted them to the food-security status of students. Jane with her exposure via charity work said of her student workers, "But I noticed the patterns of who ate, what type of food and how often in my office." John Smith had also been exposed to food insecurity by doing charity work with his family. His understanding of patterns alerted him to a student's food-security status. He said,

It goes back to when we were handing out meals. And one of the things that I noticed is when we were handing out meals, I was personally at the table giving meals to students. And the students said, hey, you know, Mr. Smith, is there any way, I can grab multiple boxes? And then right away, my red flags go up? Like what's going on with this student?

As noted earlier in this chapter, Martin had initial exposure that was supportive with his experiences with students that led to his definition of food insecurity. Having that reinforcement shaped what he viewed as his responsibility, because he saw that as an important component of his role and of his responsibilities as an academic advisor. Martin's first exposure to food insecurity was by reading about it in his graduate class. He said, "Oh, wow, I never thought that was that was something. Fast forward to when I'm in my job. And I actually encounter students that are dealing with these things."

For these participants, they drew on their past experience or exposure to see patterns that indicated the food-security status of the students.

Student Interaction. Participants with consistent student interactions can identify food-insecure students. Sylmar noticed which of their student workers did not take breaks for food and brought no lunch to work. They worked long hours and frequently went to activities when free food was available. In addition, Sylmar observed the same students always at the free coffee and tea offering in the office. She suspected they were food insecure. She said, "And every now and then we have food in the department, the same group of students who you would see take, just bring in drinks, or have small snacks all day would flock to the free food." She realized that the students were food insecure. For Mark, his role as adviser brought him to frequent interactions with his students. As an adviser and mentor, he had developed relationships where students can divulge personal problems including food insecurity with him.

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Referral

Referrals were also a way that participants got to identify students dealing with food insecurity. Two of the participants identified food insecure students via referral. Students were referred to E. Troutman, whose job function in enrollment services is in financial aid. She has had other university staff or faculty reach out to her asking for financial support on behalf of the students who have indicated financial need. Betty, in her role with campus ministry, is in a unique situation. She gets student referrals and she also identified students who talk to her on their spiritual journey. According to Betty, "I have worked with the Dean of Students Office and counseling services office, and they refer students here to me, in order to meet the needs of certain students."

Interestingly apart from the referrals and advisors, most of the students identified were student workers. This is significant as most student workers are work study and they need to demonstrate financial need to get the work study grant. According to literature, lack of financial resources is one of the predictors of food insecurity (Broton et al., 2020; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2011; Morris et al., 2016; Stebleton et al., 2020).

Hesitancy to Confirm Food Insecurity

Despite the support that participants provided for food-insecure students, there was hesitancy on the part of some participants to confirm their thoughts that students were food insecure. Mark, Mr. and John Smith (all male) who work with a population of students that were identified as low income were able to directly ask students to confirm their thoughts, and they responded with solutions. According to Efrain, "So knowing that, I tried to confirm first because the worst thing you can do in any situation is assume. For all you know that student is bringing food to roommates. Upon confirmation, the number one thing was to look at where they were

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at." Martin as an academic adviser invested time to know his students. The students were comfortable enough with him to divulge their circumstances. Betty and E. Troutman were the only female participants who confirmed basic needs directly, and they identified food-insecure students through referral. Sylmar highlighted her hesitancy in addressing issues with students:

> And so for me, I would never make mention of it, we would never have the discussion.
> But I would assume that you know, maybe sometimes the students, it's possible that they don't have access to food, or they don't have the means to purchase the food on-campus.

Although these participants were hesitant to confirm the food security status of students, they still offered support discreetly based on their suspicions.

Support Role of College Administrator

Although participants believe that higher education institutions are responsible for food-insecure students, as mentioned above, NEU has no on-campus resources for food-insecure students. None of the participants in this study were aware of any institutional resources or training. The only official response of the institution is a web page that acknowledges basic needs and provides information to off-campus resources for students in need. The food-insecurity support resource was a list of off-campus pantries where students can get food. Participants believe their responsibility after identification was support of food-insecure students. This support offered differed among participants due to inadequate systemic institutional structures. The support offered to students was geared toward addressing lack of resources. Some of the resources included provision of food, utilization of institutional connections to procure assistance, and financial help.

Resources Provided

Support offered to food-insecure students varied by who was providing support and what they perceived the student's needs to be. Some of the supports include provision of food, basic hygiene products, direct financial assistance, and referrals to home area assistance.

Food. The most common support was procurement of food. Participants alerted students to events on campus with food. Some of the participants order food directly for food-insecure students as evidenced by the narrative of Sylmar and Jane. Sylmar mentioned that on noticing the pattern of her student worker, she would order food and ensure that the student had enough to eat for a couple of meals. Jane's support also included the provision of food in her office for students. She went from having snacks to updating the available food in her office to include food that would provide sustenance after she noticed the pattern of what students took. She said, "I just added more robust choices to the food that I have available, and it's available for everyone. So that way, anyone who is in need doesn't feel singled out." Both Sylmar and Jane provided food in a discreet manner without shaming the students who needed support.

Financial Aid. Insufficient financial means is the most common reason for food insecurity. When students fall behind on their school bills, they reach out to the financial aid office. E. Troutman, who works with enrollment services, counsels students on the real cost of living prior to their starting at NEU. However, in her role she gets a lot of referrals from professors or from the office of counseling. Her response is systemic as she looks up any available loans and sometimes, she gets access to grant funds from endowments so students can complete college. In the past she had access to the emergency fund from which she disburses funds as needed to students.

COVID-19 Relief Funding. Some of the participants were able to provide support to food-insecure students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both Efrain and E. Troutman indicated that some students were able to weather the impacts of COVID. Efrain thought that COVID was a net positive for American students as they were beneficiaries of funding from the Cares Act. He expressed concern that the international students were badly impacted as they were not entitled to the same funding, and they could not work since colleges were closed or go back to their home countries as the borders were closed. E. Troutman gave a more detailed explanation as she works for financial aid and had an insight in how the funds from the Cares Act were distributed to the students. All Pell-eligible students were awarded funds from the first round of the Cares Act. She also corroborated that international students were not recipients of this fund. John Smith started to provide boxed lunches to the low-income student population he works with when the dining hall closed. Some of his students approached him to get extra boxes as they had no access to food for dinner. While participants did not indicate that COVID-19 was the primary cause of food insecurity, they recognized that the pandemic might have aggravated existing needs, and they worked to secure resources of support to the impacted students.

Other Resources. Betty has been a needed resource for students whose need extended past food to include basic needs, which can encompass personal hygiene products. In her role in the office of missions, she gets to interact with students on their spiritual journey. This level of interaction puts the students at ease to seek help. She also gets referrals from dean of students office and counseling services office. Her support included shopping for student needs as evidenced by her narrative. "So sometimes I shop for students I shopped about two weeks ago for a student and she wanted to pick up her things, after hours, to remain anonymous." Her exposure to food insecurity sees her extending student support past food procurement to mental

health impacts as evidenced by her narrative. "I begged them to go to counseling. Because by the time they get here, they're so desperate and hungry, that I can't even imagine the emotional toll that that they take and how that affects them academically." In her role, Betty sees the support of the whole student as a responsibility, and she works to meet different needs.

Referral to External Resources

In other situations, food-insecure students are not able to get to campus, or their needs can be met closer to their homes, especially if family is also food insecure. Participants work with their external and internal resources to ensure that students' needs are met. For Mary, in her interaction with a commuter food-insecure student, she reached out the food pantries closer to the student's zip code to get assistance. Mr. recounted hearing about a student's need indirectly. He met with the student to confirm the issue, and he worked with campus partners to provide housing and a meal plan to the student. Betty in the past has also worked with institutional connections to assist a homeless student who was in danger of being kicked out of housing.

In the absence of institutional on-campus resources at NEU, college administrator participants have sometimes resorted to referrals to off-campus resources to support food-insecure students.

Summary of Research Question 2 Finding

This study revealed a common theme of responsibility among participants. While they believe that higher education institutions are responsible to support food-insecure students, they have no training or knowledge of institutional resources at NEU. They, however, view their responsibility to food-insecure students as identifying and providing support.

Participants in this study perceived that the essence of their role was recognition of students' food insecurity challenge and provision of support. Participants with prior exposure or

experience identified food-insecure students by noticing patterns of behavior. Some participants

identified food-insecure students via referrals, and some identified that their student workers

were food insecure through their interaction. The support these participants provided was mostly

the provision of food as all participants reference lack of access to food as a factor for food

insecurity. Participants also supported food-insecure students by providing access to additional

financial aid. However, participants with prior exposure or experience provided support that

extended past food. They supported students by providing hygiene products or clothing and

helped students access external resources close to their homes. The support that they provided

depended on how they defined food insecurity.

College Administrator Motivation for Support of Food-Insecure Students

This study has examined how college administrators at NEU define and describe food

insecurity. Although all participants believe that higher educational institutions are responsible

for the basic needs of students, these participants have described a sense of responsibility to

food-insecure students that they support in various ways particularly as NEU has no on-campus

support for food-insecure students. Research Question 3 is focused on what informs the

responsibility and strategies for support through the lens of institutional logics perspective.

Institutional logics perspectives suggest that an individual's actions are shaped by

individual preferences and interests within an institutional context (Glaser et al., 2016). This

framework is useful for analyzing interrelationships between institutions and individuals as

agents of institutions (Thornton et al., 2012). As college administrators are agents of NEU, it is

important to understand how organizational culture, professional norms, and their personal

values influence how and why they respond to food-insecure students in an institution with no

on-campus resource. College administrators at NEU operate in individual, institutional, and professional spheres. The institutional logics perspective is a valuable lens to examine how institutional culture, professional norms, and the personal values of college administrators combine and lead to actions taken to support food-insecure students at NEU (Thornton et al., 2012).

Institutional Culture

Food insecurity is a growing crisis among college students, and institutions have started to both acknowledge and address on campus. The official response of NEU to food insecurity was posted on an institutional webpage that addresses other basic-needs insecurity. Document review of the institutional webpage as a secondary data source provided institutional background and confirmed data collected from the semi-structured interview of the college administrators. The webpage acknowledges food insecurity among other basic needs and had a listing of off-campus referrals for students dealing with basic-needs insecurity. However, most of the participants had no idea of the existence of the webpage and hence no knowledge of any institutional acknowledgement of food insecurity. The following themes emerged from the data collected from participants about the institutional norms: (1) lack of institutional acknowledgement and process, (2) lack of leadership, (3) lack of institutional care, and (4) lack of training.

Lack of Institutional Acknowledgement and Process. When participants in this study were asked about NEU's commitment to support food- insecure students, most of them had no idea about the institution's policy or process. Participants in this study had no idea of institutional acknowledgment of food insecurity. They also did not have any information about resources for food-insecure students as evidenced by the following narratives. Yet they had no

knowledge of institutional resources. When asked about institutional resources for food-insecure students, Sylmar, an alumna of NEU responded, "I'm not aware. I don't want to say doesn't exist. But I'm not aware that it exists." The lack of participant awareness of resources was evident in Mark's answer. He said, "I don't know if they addressed those issues yet." John Smith's narrative highlights the invisibility of institutional resources. He said,

> So the only knowledge that I have and I found this out a couple of months ago is that NEU partners with a food pantry outside of campus in order for students that have food insecurities, to access food, but that's the extent that I know I don't know the name. I don't know anything else besides that it's not widely publicized.

Mary's response to the same question elicited her perception of institutional priorities at NEU. She said,

> We (NEU) just redid our strategic plan. And there was nothing about meeting basic needs of our students? Our strategic plan focused on retention, revenue, and moving the university forward.... Nowhere does it say we're going to help you (student) meet your basic needs to be a human being or we're going to educate you as a full person, I don't even think we use the word full person, quite frankly.

Martin said, "And they're not really budgeting for it, because I don't think they they've acknowledged that it's a problem. Even though they do have the resources I do 100% believe that they're there, they have this money." Martin's response about NEU's institutional acknowledgement alludes to institutional priorities. He said, "But I don't think it's even on the radar at the institution where they're really curious about this issue." Mr. is also an alumnus of NEU. His response points to institutional disinterest. He said, "It has to start with a desire, like to identify a problem. And I'm not sure that that desire is there at this institution." Mark also

corroborated with similar views. Mark believed that NEU's inadequate acknowledgement of food insecurity is an attempt to obdurate reality. He said:

> What I have learned is that this institution would like to use their meal plan to say that they don't have food insecurities. But the reality of it is, is that not everybody uses the meal plan, and not everybody can afford that meal plan.

Participant data showed that the college administrators at NEU had no institutional process to follow when they identified a food-insecure student. From the perspective of participants, NEU also exhibits a lack of process as evidenced by the following narratives of Martin and Efrain. Martin said, "I can say one more thing about that. So it was I found out informally, there was no formal process." Efrain has a unique perception, but as an alumnus and a present employee at NEU. He said,

> I can't say that I'm aware of any particular resources, I was never made aware of them even when I was a student. And still, even now, on the flip side working at this institution, I'm not aware of there being any specific targeted, hey, if you need food, this is what you can do. For sponsors or resources.

According to the college administrator participants at NEU, they have no institutional playbook to use when they identify food insecure students because of the institution's inadequate acknowledgement and process for helping food-insecure students.

Perceived Lack of Care. Institutions that do not adequately acknowledge a situation and have solutions may demonstrate the perception of a lack of concern about the situation. The participants describe a lack of institutional level of care for food-insecure students. Betty, whose role represents the institution by bringing students on volunteer opportunities to serve the less privileged in neighboring areas of NEU said:

But no, I don't think that we as an institution can be so outward looking and just, you know, say we're doing programs outside of the university and addressing the needs in our community. Again, when some of us inside the gates of the university are suffering.

Martin was quite caustic about the lack of institutional care despite NEU's religious affiliation. He said, "I mean, ethically speaking, I think it is the institution's duty and mission to help those that are unfortunate to help those who don't have enough especially religious affiliated institution. And they're not doing it, they do not care."

In contrast, one participant believes that there is an institutional culture of care. Efrain is an alumnus of NEU, and he remembered how various people assisted him when he was a student. He feels that NEU has a culture of care as most employees go above and beyond their job responsibilities to care for students. He believes that the institution is capable of response to student needs as evidenced by NEU's attention to mental health resources. However, NEU has been lacking in acknowledgement of food insecurity and lacking in resources for alleviation and training for staff to recognize students in need. He said,

And full transparency, we might already be doing food insecure students, and I'm just not aware of it. In that case, what we would need to improve on is the marketing aspect of it. Because having worked with students from different class years and student workers if they haven't heard about it, then that's an issue.

The findings from this study show a perception that there is a lack of care in institutional response to food insecurity. The participants perceived that NEU's inadequate acknowledgment and lack of support process for food-insecure students led to an appearance of lack of institutional care for students who are struggling with food insecurity.

Perceived Lack of Leadership. The perception of institutional lack of care reflects institutional priorities. Two of the participants believed that there is a lack of leadership at the NEU. Martin had to go looking for help for a student, but he said he was rebuffed by institutional leaders. He said, "I think that first off, I do think the institution that I work for has the resources. I think leadership is lacking. I don't think they have a competent person in that role to help students." Mark acknowledged the lack of institutional leadership concerning support for food-insecure students. He referenced a lack of empathy from leadership to food-insecure students. He feels that leadership at NEU is lacking, and the lack of response is connected to college administrators not able to "walk in student shoes." According to him, while most in leadership are White, the food-insecure students tend to mostly be Black, and the leaders are not able to comprehend the struggles of these students.

These participants in this study perceive that leadership at NEU demonstrates their lack of care for food-insecure students. College administrators are not aware of institutional resources as there is no institutional process for support despite the webpage that lists off-campus resources. The leadership at NEU is perceived by participants to be ineffective in support of food-insecure students.

Lack of Training. Organizational leaders determine required training based on their vision of organizational priorities. The participants in this study perceive that equipping employees with tools to help food-insecure students is not a priority at NEU. While NEU has invested in training employees to help students dealing with mental health, sexual assault, and even discrimination, none of the college administrators in this study had received training on how to identify and support food- insecure students.

Mary expressed a desire for some structure in response.

You know. I think that some kind of training for looking for those types of needs is

important. And I don't know that that's something that we do very well all the time. You

know, we talk to students, we ask students how they're doing. But we don't always

necessarily help staff figure out how to read between the lines of what that student is

saying.

Narratives from Betty, Mr., and Martin corroborated the lack of institutional training. Betty said,

"And on various levels, I think that faculty and staff have no idea what to do if someone suggests

that they are food insecure." Mr. expressed his thoughts about not knowing resources. He said,

At NEU, I don't believe there is a standard operating procedure for this situation.

If there is and I'm unaware of it, then that's, like, it's a problem that I am unaware of it for

me personally. And then it's a problem that it's not reinforced, so that I'm aware of it

consistently. But there was no real standard operating procedure.

Martin had no idea how to get help for his student. He said, "No one tells you that your students

are going to be facing all sorts of challenges and this is where to go if students need help. There

was no at the job training." This lack of institutional training and resource information is a

problem as there are uneven responses to students since administrators have no template of how

to respond as agents of the institution.

Although the college administrators in this study supported food-insecure students, some

participants reflected there was no institutional acknowledgement, process, or culture to inform

their strategies to help these students.

Professional Norms

Financial inadequacy is a major cause of food insecurity in college students. All the

participants in this study defined or described food insecurity in terms of finances, but not all

participants had financial solutions for food-insecure students. E. Troutman has an official role with professional responsibilities that support food-insecure students. As an enrollment division administrator, she has financial aid responsibilities. She mostly identifies food-insecure students through referrals. E. Troutman has to follow certain professional norms and government regulations. These include providing incoming students with pre-enrollment real cost of college information, workshop for FAFSA, and disbursement of available funds in forms of scholarship or grants.

In her professional role, E. Troutman looks for additional aid for students, and she also started to do precollege financial counseling so students can avoid getting in financial distress. In addition, she started a financial literacy educational program for students and their families. Although not Betty's area of responsibility, she confirmed that her vice president has been working with the executive cabinet to ensure that all incoming students get precollege real cost of attendance. E. Troutman, as part of professional norms, is in charge of disbursement of emergency funds at NEU. These disbursements have a process, and the same process was modified to disburse funds that NEU got for COVID relief to students.

John Smith and Mr., in their professional roles, work with financially disadvantaged students. As part of their role, they were comfortable meeting with students to confirm their food-security status and work to provide resources for their food-insecure students. In their professional roles, they have been able to assist food-insecure students with access to food. John Smith orders extra food when running programs so his students get to take the food home for dinner. In Mr.'s role, when he identified a food-insecure student, he confirmed extent of basic insecurities and reached out to his campus partners to help provide resources to the student.

When asked about professional norms for student support, all other participants responded that it was not a part of their official responsibilities as evidenced by their narratives. Martin's response was explicit,

> If you look at my job description, I mean, it says nothing about it about doing anything of that nature. So I do think the job role is very narrow, but you can talk to any advisor besides me. And they wll probably tell you, they do about a million different things that is not in the job description, just because it's not clear who does.

Betty's answer to the same question was similar. "This is not what I was hired to do." Mary's job involved a lot of policy and data assessment. Basic-needs support was not a job function. Mary said, "My day to day is really much more administrative base, a lot of policy, a lot of data, a lot of assessing."

Only three of the participants perceived that they had professional norms or obligations to support food-insecure students. This support was shown in provision of financial assistance and also provision of access to food. There was no uniformity in resources provided. The only participant with mandatory professional norm was E. Troutman addressing these needs with government guidelines.

Personal Values

Neither institutional culture nor professional norms directly inform college administrators of any responsibility towards food-insecure students. However, the participants in this study who supported food-insecure students referenced the feeling of responsibility because of their personal values. Those personal values were impactful in helping to motivate college administrators to do something to support students. Participants described feelings of empathy as motivation for support of the food-insecure students as evidenced from narratives from Mary. Mary, with prior experience and attention to student success, said, "So much as I don't want to

hear about some poor kids being hungry, right? Because if they're hungry, you know, studies show us that someone who's hungry is not going to do well in the classroom." Martin the academic advisor is a relationship builder. His job expectations were to meet with about 300 students in the semester and just give them their PINs for registration. However, he said "No, that's not who I am. I need to know them because they're more than their PIN." As an academic advisor, Martin was concerned about all the things his students needed to succeed.

Empathy. Martin's personality as a relationship builder allowed him to be empathetic to the plights of his students. As an academic advisor, he said "When you work with students, there's so much care and consideration you have for them and respect that you have an admiration and you really want to like see them succeed, and you want to see them live out their dreams." Sylmar credited her nurturing personality as a reason why she helps. As a first born of four and mother, she said, "You always just are drawn to feeding people or being nurturing to people I should say not necessarily feeding but being there, cheering, being accommodating, being there being supportive. And so that instinct always kicks in for me." These participants' personalities help them feel empathy and want to help food-insecure students.

"Pay It Forward." Participants who had experienced hardship in the past and gotten help are committed to being a source of support as evidenced from the narratives of Mary and Mark. Mary is a first-generation student who went to college and had no idea of what she needed to be successful. She comes from a place of care in her support of food-insecure students. She said, "You know, I think understanding my own experience of having lack of basics, I can definitely help because I can be really empathetic to another person who has been in a place where I have been." Although Mark did not experience food insecurity growing up, he remembered a time in his past when he had other struggles and got help. He said, "When I was

down and out and at my lowest, one or two good individuals reached out and pulled me out of that big dark hole that I was in and the best thing I could ever do was just pay it forward." Mark's experience instilled in him a need to be a good person, and he was emphatic about helping the next person be a success.

Going Beyond Job Description. The support of food-insecure students is not the specific job description of any of the participants, although three participants had professional roles that led to support of food- insecure students. Most of the participants went beyond their job descriptions. Mary's narrative was like the other participants' narratives. Mary said, "However we can, I can support a student and helping to solve that problem. I'm going to do anything that I can, right. And I don't necessarily know if that's like my responsibility." These participants did not look to their job descriptions; they saw a student need and they responded.

Personal Leadership. Leadership is seeing what needs to be done and getting to it. Participants displayed a sense of leadership that motivated them to help food-insecure students. They decided to do their part in addressing a problem. Mark said,

> You know, and just having that understanding and leading from that way, and when, a student comes in, or if that conversation comes up on a table I lead with my core values. My core values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. And that was ingrained in me from a young 18-year-old joining United States Army.

Betty's sense of leadership made her exclaim, "We brought these young adults to our campus, and we must respond to support them to succeed!"

Belief System. Belief system was also identified as motivation for why college administrators at NEU help food-insecure students. Betty referenced her religious belief and also the religious leaning of NEU. She said,

> That more and more, I'm trying to bring to light at a higher level at the institution, what the needs are, and what we as a religious affiliated University need to do to, to even consider ourselves Christian. You know, not just highlighting the work that we do outside of our university, but really taking care of those among us who are suffering. I just feel like my role is to make sure that others know about the needs and really help these students.

For Jane and John Smith, their families have a practice of charity work, and they have also grown to take those lessons with them. They were raised with a service-mind belief system.

Summary of Research Question 3 Finding

Utilizing the framework of institutional logics perspective, participant data showed that college administrators in this study perceived that NEU demonstrated a lack of leadership as evidenced by institutional priorities. These participants narrated lack of training and their belief of lack of institutional care as evidenced by lack of institutional acknowledgement in institutional strategy statements. According to these participants, NEU had no institutional norms for support of food-insecure students.

Although all the participants in this study defined or described food insecurity in terms of finance, most of the participants had no professional role of financial support. Participant data showed only one participant had access to institutional funding to support students in her role, and two other participants had professional roles working with a population of students with low

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income and had access to institutional support resources. Only three of the ten participants had any professional role of support.

In the absence of institutional or professional norms, participants in this study narrated their motivation for student support. This included empathy that led them to go beyond job description, a desire to "pay forward" and their personal belief systems.

Overall, the findings of this study show participants were primarily motivated to support food-insecure students because of their personal values. Some of the values were developed because of personal experiences or prior exposure. These participants perceived a lack of concern or leadership to support students, and they stepped in the gap to offer support to food-insecure students at an institution with no on-campus resource for support.

Summary

The analysis for this study was guided by the institutional logic's perspective lens, which establishes that institutional culture, professional norms, and the personal values of college administrators combine and dictate strategies taken to support and serve food-insecure students at NEU (Thornton et al., 2012). My literature review showed that food insecurity in college students can be caused by different factors. In addition, there is an inconsistency in how college administrators address this student issue. This study set to find how college administrators define food insecurity and how their definition impacts how they support food-insecure students. This study found out that college administrators define food insecurity at different depths based on prior exposure or experience. The findings of this study also show that the depth of definition impacts how they address food insecurity with students. Participants who had prior experience, or prior exposure, were more inclined to identify signs of food insecurity in students and rapidly work to find resources to support food-insecure students because they had that personal connection.

The motivation of college administrators for helping food-insecure students at NEU was examined from the lens of institutional logics perspective. These participants, as agents of NEU, are contractually obligated to carry out actions that support the stated priorities of the organization. However, in the phenomenon of supporting food-insecure students, NEU has not been explicit in acknowledging food insecurity as a priority. Although the institution had a webpage listing resources, all the resources were external. This institution also did not publicize these resources to either students or employees. And thus, I can conclude that support of food-insecure students was not a priority at this institution. The institutional culture at NEU had no impact on the motivations of college administrators to support food insecure students.

Professionally, of the 10 participants, only one participant had job responsibilities that responded to support food-insecure students. Due to the professional norms of the financial aid office, E. Troutman had a professional obligation to assist financially. The financial aid allocated to food-insecure students in the form of additional scholarships, grants, or even from the University emergency fund was useful to the students who were referred to this office. In addition, two participants with job responsibilities for working with the financially disadvantaged student population were comfortable to identify and confirm food-insecurity status of students. Although not explicitly a job function, these two participants were able to leverage institutional resources to support food-insecure students.

Of the three spheres of institutional logics perspective, this study finds that personal values are the most important motivation for participants. Participants in this study had no institutional training or mandate to help food-insecure students. They also did not have professional roles with responsibilities to support food-insecure students. However, all the participants in this study developed their own strategies for support based on their personal values. This finding is also significant as NEU has no on-campus resource for students.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study contributes to an understanding of the roles of college administrators in support of food-insecure students at a private institution with no on-campus resources. This chapter provides a summary of the purpose, the problem of the study, the research questions, and the theoretical framework that guided the study. This chapter will also discuss how the findings of this study compare to current literature and will conclude with a discussion of the implications of this research on how college administrators can support food-insecure college students and recommendations for future research. Additionally, this chapter will provide recommendations for future research, practice, and policy implementation.

Overview of the Study

Food is part of basic physiological needs that must be met before higher order needs. The inability to acquire basic needs renders higher order needs irrelevant, as the basic needs will be the focus of an individual's existence (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015; Maslow, 1943). This study defines college student food insecurity as the economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food that is needed for an active healthy life (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020).

In 2021, the USDA estimated that 10.2% of American households experienced food insecurity during the year (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, n.d.). However, certain subgroups had food-insecurity rates higher than the national average. The food-insecurity rates for Black, non-Hispanic households (19.8%); Hispanic households (16.2%); and households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold (26.5%) were higher than the national food- insecurity rate of 10.2%. These subgroups seem to be more vulnerable to food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2022).

Problem

There has been increased access to higher education by previously underrepresented students (Black students, Hispanic students, and students from the lowest quintile of socioeconomic status). Many of these college students share similar characteristics with subgroups of the population that are more prone to food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2022). While some of these students had basic needs like free or reduced lunch support through their elementary to secondary education, these supports end after high school (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Students are most likely to sacrifice food in order to meet other needs like housing, food, health, and transportation (Nord et al., 2005).

Recent research has indicated that over 21% of college students experience food insecurity (Cuite et al., 2018; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Hege et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2011; Meza et al., 2018; Stebleton et al., 2020; Waity et al., 2020). For some students, food insecurity is a condition caused by their enrollment in college due to tuition and education-related cost. Although the rates of food insecurity among college students vary depending on location of study, participant population, and research methodology, these reported rates of food insecurity among college students are higher than among the reported national U.S. population rate of 10.2% food insecurity (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, n.d.).

This study is significant as there is scant information about food insecurity in private institutions of higher education. Most of the research on food insecurity among college students has been conducted in public 2-year and 4-year colleges. Although higher education institutions have started to address student food insecurity, there is a paucity of information about the institutional employees who support food-insecure students. As institutional response to food

insecurity depends on the actions of college administrators who act as agents of the institution, this study was conducted through the lens of institutional logics perspective (Broton et al., 2020; Thornton et al., 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Institutional logics perspective was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Institutional logics is defined as "socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 101). The institutional logics perspective suggests that the values of individuals, institutional culture, and professional norms combine and can lead to actions taken to support food-insecure students (Thornton et al., 2012). College administrators act as agents of the institution, and they operate in individual, institutional, and professional spheres. The actions that they take to support food-insecure students depend on their perceptions about students in need, and this influences their acknowledgement of student food insecurity and supports offered (Broton et al., 2020). The study by Broton et al. (2020) found that college administrators responded in multiple ways to food-insecure students. Some will use all resources at their disposal to support students as they are perceived as deserving of help; some will feel overwhelmed by the students' needs and do nothing, and some will act in suspicion of students deemed underserving and impose barriers to resource access.

Purpose

This paper examined how college administrators perceive their roles in support of food-insecure college students at a private educational institution. Discovering a deeper understanding

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of college administrators' perceptions of their roles in support of food-insecure students advances our understanding of college administrators as the drivers of student success.

This study illustrates college administrator perceptions, support, and motivation to support food-insecure students and is guided by these research questions:

4. How do college administrators at a private higher education institution define and describe food insecurity on campus?

5. What do college administrators at a private higher education institution view as their responsibility for supporting students experiencing food insecurity?

6. What personal, professional, and institutional norms guide strategies, if any, that college administrators at a private higher education institution utilize to support students experiencing food insecurity on their campus?

Discussion of Findings

The following sections highlight the findings of this study and how these findings contribute to the literature on food insecurity among college students. This study explored the perception of college administrators about food insecurity among college students. The findings of this study will be compared with prior research about food insecurity in higher educational institutions. Most of the existing literature has been quantitative and has looked at food insecurity based on the experiences of students in public higher education institutions. Prior studies have not explored the experiences of college administrators in their support of food-insecure students, especially in a private institution of higher education with no on-campus resources for food-insecure students. Therefore, the findings of this study provide an understanding of what motivates the college administrators to support food-insecure students.

One of the things that my study found significant was the influence of prior experience and exposure on how college administrators defined and described food insecurity.

College Administrator Definition and Description of Food Insecurity

The first research question in this study sought to understand how college administrators at a private higher education institution define and describe food insecurity. Participants in this study shared their definitions and descriptions of food insecurity among college students. It was important to get the narratives about how participants define or describe food insecurity to understand how and why they support food-insecure students.

Based on the findings of this study, college administrators define food insecurity primarily as lack of access to food due to inadequate financial resources. This finding aligns with prior studies that cite lack of financial resources as a predictor of food insecurity both in national population and the college student population (Alaimo, 2005; Coleman-Jensen et al., 2022; Dubick et. al, 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Waity et al., 2020). Consistent with prior literature, this study found that although food insecurity due to inadequate financial resources existed before the COVID-19 pandemic that started in the spring of 2020, COVID-19 exacerbated food insecurity among students. They saw an increased student need for support as students lost their jobs and some lost family members who supported them financially. Some parents also lost their jobs or had reduced income (The Hope Center, 2021; Kochhar, 2020; Owens et al., 2020). Some participants' definitions also referenced availability of desired food, quality, or quantity, which is consistent with how the USDA categorizes low food security and very low food security (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, n.d.).

However, significantly, this study found that college administrators with prior exposure or prior experience of food insecurity extended the definition of food insecurity to encompass basic needs that include access to transportation and even female hygiene products. The understanding by college administrators of the pervasive nature of food insecurity informs how the college administrators identify food-insecure students. This awareness informs their support response. Some of the responses included provision of food and referral to resources.

The participants' memories of guilt, shame, and anxiety corroborate research that shows that food-insecure students are prone to mental health challenges (Coffino et al., 2021; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Reeder et al., 2020). This study found that most of the participants were hesitant to confirm the food-security status of students. They instead provided help discreetly to avoid shaming the students. It is worthy to note from this study that the participants who directly confirmed the food-security status of students were the college administrators whose job functions were already working with a population of students who were low income and the administrators who had students directly referred to them. This created an environment that removed the awkwardness of direct confirmation. A significant finding of this study is how the prior experience and exposure of participants influenced how they defined or described food insecurity. This finding aligns with studies that identify how prior trauma of basic-needs insecurity can inform response to students dealing with food insecurity (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2018).

The Essence of College Administrators' Roles in Support of Food-Insecure Students

The second research question in this study sought to understand what college administrators at a private higher education institution view as their responsibility for supporting students experiencing food insecurity.

Prior studies about food insecurity have identified how higher education institutions respond to the food-insecurity needs of students. Most of these studies have been conducted at public institutions. Institutional response has included strategies that address access to food or access to finance. The access to food has included campus food pantry, meal donation programs, or campus farms (Bruening et al., 2017; Cady et al., 2016; Cuite et al., 2020; Freudenberg et al., 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). The strategies that address financial need include assistance to access government aid (Freudenberg et al., 2019; Laska et al., 2020; Laska et al., 2021) or university emergency fund crises (Dachelet & Goldrick-Rab, 2015; Kruger et al., 2016). However, there is a gap in the experiences of college administrators that support food-insecure students, and particularly there is a gap in literature about food insecurity at private institutions. The findings of this study add to literature to fill the gap in literature especially about the experiences of college administrators that support food-insecure students at a private institution with no on-campus food-insecurity alleviation resource.

Participants in this study indicated that there was no basic needs assessment carried out at NEU, and hence there are no data about the prevalence of food insecurity on campus. However, these college administrators perceive that there is a high number of food-insecure students on the campus. All the college administrators also mentioned that the students they supported were Black or Hispanic. This finding aligned with national data that show 19.1% of Black households and 15.6% of non-White Hispanic households experienced food insecurity compared to 7.9% of White households (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2020). This finding also aligned with prior research that racial minority college students have a higher rate of food insecurity compared with White college students (Bruening et al., 2017; Chaparro et al., 2009; Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Maroto et al., 2015).

This study finds that in the absence of institutional guidelines or on-campus resources for food-insecure students, participants felt a sense of responsibility to support food-insecure students. They used their personal and professional networks to procure help for the food-insecure students. This aligns with a study by Broton et al. (2020) who found that higher education professionals' responses to support students were based on their assumptions about the circumstances of students' problems.

Participants perceived their responsibility was to identify and support food-insecure students. The way participants defined food insecurity influenced how they identify or support food-insecure students. Participants identified food-insecure students via consistent interactions and referrals. Participants with prior experience or exposure identified patterns of student behavior that alerted them to the food-security status of students. However, due to remembered shame, there was hesitancy to confirm students' food-insecurity status. Participants' definitions of food insecurity also influenced the types of student support they provided. Most of participants provided support that addressed access to food by providing food, but participants with prior experience or exposure recognized that students' needs extended past food insecurity and thus provided resources to support the other needs. A significant finding of this study is that identification and support of food-insecure students is impacted by how participants define food insecurity.

College Administrators' Motivation for Support of Food-Insecure Students.

The third research question in this study sought to understand what motivates college administrators at a private higher education institution to support food-insecure students. The participants in this study shared their motivation for support of food-insecure students at NEU through their narratives. This study has examined how participants at NEU define food insecurity

and what these participants view as their responsibility to support food-insecure students in a private institution with no on-campus support resources. As NEU had no institutional acknowledgment of food insecurity and hence no institutional process for identifying and supporting food-insecure students, these participants had no best practice procedures to follow. Although they believed the institution was responsible for students' basic needs, in the absence of institutional policy and recommended procedures, these participants responded despite perceived lack of institutional leadership. The motivation for the participants' support response was examined through the lens of institutional logics perspective. This framework suggests that the actions an individual takes within an organization are a combination of institutional culture, personal values, and professional norms (Thornton et al., 2012).

The official response of NEU to food insecurity was posted on a webpage that acknowledges food insecurity among other basic needs and had a listing of off-campus referrals for students dealing with basic-needs insecurity. However, the participants in this study had no knowledge of the webpage despite multiple years of employment that range from 3 to 18 years. According to the participants, NEU demonstrated a lack of process, leadership, and institutional care for food-insecure students. Hence there were no institutional norms for support of food-insecure students. Only three of the 10 participants perceived they had a professional role for support of food-insecure students. Of the three, only one participant had a professional norm to support food-insecure students, and the other two worked with a population of students who are financially disadvantaged.

A significant finding of this study is that neither institutional culture nor professional norms directly informed college administrators of any responsibility or process for supporting food-insecure students. The participants were motivated to support food-insecure students

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because of their personal values. All the participants developed various strategies to support food-insecure students based on their personal values. This aligns with a study by Broton et al. (2020) who found that college administrators who believe that students are deserving of help will do all they can to support students in need. A significant finding also is that the participants with prior experience or exposure to food insecurity realize that food insecurity extends past food; hence, the support they offered also extended past provision of food to include provision of personal hygiene products and referrals to counseling. This finding aligns with a study by (Glaser et al., 2016) that suggests that the actions individuals take are determined by the logic they associate to experiences they are exposed to.

According to the participants, they had no institutional mandate to support food-insecure students. They also had no professional roles with responsibilities to support food-insecure students, but they each developed strategies to support food-insecure students. Participant data indicated that personal values are the most important motivation for participants that support food-insecure students. This finding is also significant as NEU has no on-campus resource for students. However, these findings can be significantly different if a study was conducted at an institution that had advertised on-campus resources for food-insecure students and mandated training to identify students and provide referrals for support.

Recommendations for Practice

The participants of this study responded to my request for student-facing college administrators who have supported food-insecure students at NEU. They informed me that they chose to participate because they care about their students. They recognize that food insecurity is a problem that exists in this private institution, but they felt that the institutional leaders did not care about the prevalence of this problem on the campus. They felt that leadership at NEU was

not concerned about the struggles of poor students in a private institution, and they were glad to see somebody focusing on this problem. They also wanted to support this needed research and know the difficulties a researcher faces trying to gather useful data. These college administrators offered their honest, generous, and rich responses, which fueled the findings of my study.

Logically, they represent to me the kind of college administrators who care about their students and might well be templates for what the ideal college administrator in private institutions can do to enhance student support. The college administrators in this study firmly believe they have a role in student success, and they offer a variety of resources to intentionally support food-insecure students. It is with this logic that I lean on their practices and suggestions to make the following recommendations for practice for institutional leaders who care about students' support.

Assessment

This study found that with perceived lack of institutional acknowledgment of student food insecurity, there was no information about the prevalence of food insecurity at NEU. Some of the participants felt that there was a general feeling that students at a private institution could not be food insecure. This finding aligns with quantitative study done by Keefe et al. (2021). As the institutional leaders at NEU have no idea of how prevalent food insecurity is among the students, there can be no institutional desire to support food-insecure students.

With the increased enrollment of previously underrepresented students across all higher education institutions including private institutions like NEU, I recommend that institutions conduct basic needs assessment on their campuses to get an understanding of the prevalence of these needs at their institutions (Keefe et al., 2021). These assessment results will then inform institutional response targeted specifically to the unique needs of their food-insecure students.

Financial

Institutions are aware of financial data of incoming students. This information is used to assign scholarships or grants. For example, a student must be in a certain financial status to be awarded work study benefits. Students who qualified and relied on national free or reduced price lunch program during elementary and secondary school no longer have that support when they enroll in higher education institutions (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Research shows that elementary to secondary school students who got free lunch performed better in class (Frisvold, 2015; Glewwe et al., 2001). I recommend that incoming students who qualified for work study benefits should have a meal benefit attached as well that guarantees a certain number of free meals per semester. An example of a successful program was at the Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, where a hunger team distributes meal vouchers to food-insecure students who request assistance. There was an increase in number of students who persisted to graduation due to the program (Goldrick-Rab, 2018).

Research has shown that some students do not qualify for work study grants due to the calculation of their expected family contribution without consideration for family expenses (Allen & Alleman, 2019). The cost of college could sometimes thrust students who were previously food secure into food insecurity (Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Some of these students become food insecure after college enrollment due to the cost of college attendance and most are forced to take out loans after enrollment to survive (Allen & Alleman, 2019; Broton et al., 2022). I recommend that institutions should have frequent campaigns targeted at informing students of available resources. Amarillo College in Texas has a successful program that proactively engages with students and uses comprehensive case management services program to identify benefits for basic-needs insecure students (Goldrick-Rab, 2018).

Establishment and Communication of On-Campus Resources for Food-Insecure Students

The institutional response of NEU to food insecurity was referrals to off-campus resources. The location of this resource constitutes another barrier to access for food-insecure students who must go off campus to access resources. I propose that NEU and other institutions of higher education provide some on-campus resources that students can easily access (Broton et al., 2022). Some on-campus resources can include food pantries. Food pantries can be funded by donations from local food banks or by designating a portion of student fees for funding food pantries (Broton et al., 2022). Other on-campus solutions are meal sharing programs or apps that alert students to food from campus events (Hagedorn-Hatfield et al., 2022). These programs can be funded by fundraising campaigns targeted at donors for the relief of food insecurity (Broton et al., 2022). Some important determinant of donor giving is awareness of needs, values, and solicitation. Campaigns targeted at donors that highlight the needs of food-insecure students can result in positive donations that can support institutional programs of support (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Ko et al., 2013). In addition working with campus food vendors to have reduced price meals can reduce food wastage and help students in need of affordable food on campus (Adamovic et al., 2020).

Employee Training

This study found that college administrators were hesitant to confirm food-security status of students and instead just provided discreet help. This support approach can perpetuate the stigma of food insecurity among students by offering clandestine support. The most important institutional response to food insecurity is the establishment of mandatory training with a focus on understanding and sensitivity best practice training surrounding food-insecure students. It is important to raise awareness and educate the college community about basic-needs insecurity and impacts on students' success. The college community should be trained to recognize the

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symptoms of food insecurity and to be knowledgeable about institution resources to support students (Goldrick-Rab, 2018). NEU already has mandatory employee training about other issues like harassment or mental health support where employees are trained in ways to approach and support students. These trainings utilize best practices procedures for identification and support of students in need. Research shows that the institutions that utilize these best practices training are more likely to affect positive change (Perry et al., 2010).

In addition, this study found that participants responded to support food-insecure students due to their personal values. As it is not possible to teach personal values, I recommend that institutions should mandate these trainings so there can be institutional norms for employers to support food-insecure students. Since the expectation that employees are in service to students, they need to know and understand the challenges that some of the students are facing. Every institution needs competent employees to implement institutional priorities. Mandatory institutional training is effective in teaching institutional goals and procedures for implementation (Dolan & Capell, 2015).

Although NEU has a web page list of resources, participants in this study including NEU alumni had no knowledge of this information. There was a disconnect between what the institution is communicating through the website and how the staff are being made aware of that information. It needs to be reinforced by repetition. Using only the website listing as a static source of information for resources is not an effective communication strategy, as this information needs to be reinforced and repeated in various media (Dawson, 2006).

NEU and other institutions should have a frequent communication campaign that informs employees and students of available resources. The employee training should include information about institutional resources for food-insecure students.

Acknowledgement on Syllabi

Based on data from this study, I recommend that faculty should be encouraged to include a basic-needs statement in their syllabi. Although Martin had no prior personal experience with food insecurity, he got exposed via the basic-needs statement on a class syllabus. This exposure made him sensitive to recognize and acknowledge students who were dealing with lack of basic needs in his work as an academic advisor. When instructors include a basic-needs statement on syllabi, students normalize food insecurity and feel more comfortable seeking help. It also allows them to acknowledge it in other people (Goldrick-Rab, 2017). Faculty should also be encouraged to list available institutional resources just as they list resources for disability support or mental health resources.

Establishment of Basic-Needs Comprehensive Resource Center

I recommend that colleges (private and public) should establish a comprehensive benefits resource center for students. This center should have services that provide information about government resources, help students screen for SNAP eligibility, and have a process to assist students in applying for public assistance centers (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021). An example of a successful resource center is the City University of New York's Healthy CUNY initiative that has on-campus centers where students are screened for federal benefits eligibility, which include food assistance programs (Adamovic et al., 2020). While some students come to college with financial needs that make them eligible for aid, for some students, the cost of college attendance is the reason they become food insecure. Hence, they are ineligible for most aid. However, the establishment of a basic-needs campus resource center sends a signal to students that the institution is aware of their needs and cares to support them. Higher education leaders can apply

for funding from Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) for planning and implementation of basic-needs centers (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021).

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored a specific qualitative view of student-facing college administrators and their roles in support of food-insecure students. A significant limitation of this study was that only participants who were already supporting students were recruited, and there is no view of participants who do not believe in the "deservingness" of students for food-insecurity support. A similar but more expansive qualitative study could be conducted with a broad section of institutional employees in both student-facing and non-student-facing roles (Applebaum, 2001). The perceptions of college administrators who are not in student-facing roles but who have interactions with students can be important.

Faculty are in a student-facing role, and they can be helpful to students for academic and nonacademic support especially due to constant student interaction (Goldrick-Rab, 2017, 2018). Students have been known to confide their basic-needs situation to faculty especially when grades are impacted. Research suggests that students have been retained at higher rates when faculty responded to their needs with kindness and resource referral (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2019). It is, therefore, important to get faculty perceptions as they are an important part of student success. Further studies should explore the perceptions of faculty.

I recommend further research that studies the motivations of executive-level administrators in drafting policies that address support for students who are basic-needs insecure. The approval and support of cabinet-level administrators can determine institutional programs that periodize support for basic-needs-insecure students (Goldrick-Rab, 2018).

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There is a paucity of food-insecurity research in private institutions. A similar study conducted at private institutions can be conducted to achieve generalizable findings along similar lines of inquiry. This could further inform our understanding of the role played by private institutions in support of food-insecure students (Allen & Alleman, 2019).

Students and student organizations have been instrumental in the success of food-insecurity support programs; hence, it is important to get their perceptions (Carrasco, 2021). The perceptions of students were missing in this study. I recommend more research that brings the perceptions of additional stakeholders like students.

Institutional logics perspective theoretical framework is mostly used in the study of organizational structures (Glaser et al., 2016; Thornton et al., 2012). Given that the use of institutional logics perspective theoretical framework is novel in academic institutions, it will be intriguing to utilize this framework to study other institutional student issues like disability support, student athletes' academic support, or mental health support of college students. This study has found that the use of institutional logics perspective theoretical framework has given us a better understanding of how administrators see a student issue and what they view as their responsibility. The use of institutional logics perspective theoretical framework can give researchers a better understanding of how college administrators support and address other challenging issues with students and why they may or may not intervene in student support.

Recommendations for Policy Implementation

SNAP is a federal program that provides low-income and food-insecure individuals with a monthly fixed amount. This program has complicated eligibility criteria for students; hence, students who could be eligible miss out on applying for the benefits (Ladkau & Ward, 2022). However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government granted temporary eligibility

exceptions, which include students' required 20-hour work week and expected family contribution (EFC) of $0. These exceptions are expected to end after the COVID-19 pandemic is declared over. Higher education leaders can collaborate with federal, state, and local authorities to advocate for that work requirements for SNAP eligibility should be permanently cancelled as research shows that the more hours students work impedes progress to graduation (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2022).

In addition, higher education leaders can work with state authorities to expand career and technical education program definitions, which will grant students a SNAP exception (Ladkau & Ward, 2022). SNAP restricts the purchase of prepared foods in favor of groceries. Students who qualify for SNAP benefits that spend majority of day on campus are not able to purchase food during their day as they lack access to kitchens during the school day. Higher education leaders can work with government authorities and campus food service vendors to allow the use of SNAP benefits to purchase prepared food on campus (Laska et al., 2021; The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, 2022). Some states (Arizona, California, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Rhode Island, and Virginia) have enacted legislation that established Restaurant Meals Program (RMP). The RMP program is a state-administered program that allows the use of SNAP benefits at certain certified restaurants by vulnerable SNAP benefit recipients who do not have access to store and prepare food, but most limit the eligibility to homeless, disabled, or elderly individuals (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, n.d.). New Jersey introduced a similar bill (NJ A2892) in February of 2020 to establish RMP. However, this bill has a provision for public or private institutions of higher education to apply to become an approved food vendor in the program (NJ A2892, 2020). I recommend that higher education

leaders advocate at the state level to support the passing of these bills and implementation of the modified policies.

Several states have also implemented the Hunger Free Campus legislation with funding that addresses food insecurity on campuses at public institutions of higher education (Ladkau & Ward, 2022). Private institutions should work with state authorities for a policy change to allow private institutions access funds for similar programs like how private elementary and secondary institutions can access funding to provide free or reduced fee breakfast and lunch.

Conclusion

College administrators' roles in support of food-insecure students is important. Investigating the perceptions, practices, and motivations of a small sample of college administrators has given some necessary attention regarding student support at a private institution that could contribute to successful student outcomes. The semi-structured interviews of the participants in this study have captured nuances in their perceptions, particularly how they perceive student support as part of their college administrator roles and how they enact student support behaviors in their interactions with students. Institutional norms that are lacking in acknowledgement and support of students are now better known through the views of college administrators.

Broadening higher education access to previously underrepresented students without the elementary and secondary support structures can impede persistence and completion of these student populations. According to the findings of this study, support of food-insecure college students can be achieved with institutional acknowledgement, provision of institutional resources, and training of college administration for sensitivity and best practices support of food- insecure students.

The results of this study may help address topics pertinent to college employees' roles in student support and challenge institutions to engage more fully in student support. This qualitative study informs institutional leaders and policymakers on how college administrators perceive their roles. It provides evidence of important supporting behaviors by college administrators and possible positive outcomes. With heightened awareness achieved through studies like this one and a supportive institutional culture, college administrators will be able to contribute even more significantly to student support to achieve student success that institutions want.

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Appendix A: IRB Letter from Seton Hall University

03/23/2022

Ibiyemi Adesanya

Seton Hall University

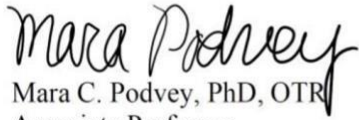Re: Study ID# 2022-293

Dear Ibiyemi,

The Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled "Food Insecurity among College Students: Perception of College Administrators" as resubmitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study's approval as exempt. Enclosed for your records are the stamped original Consent Form and recruitment flyer. You can make copies of these forms for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mara Podvey

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Phyllis Hansell

Phyllis Hansell, EdD, RN, DNAP, FAAN
Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Office of the Institutional Review Board
Presidents Hall · 400 South Orange Avenue · South Orange, New Jersey 07079 · Tel:
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W H A T   G R E A T   M I N D S   C A N   D O

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Dear _____,

I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation study entitled **Food Insecurity Among College Students: Perception of College Administrators.**

I am conducting this study as part of my work as a doctoral student in the Higher Education Leadership, Management, and Policy program at Seton Hall University. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of college administrators as they support food insecure college students. To achieve this purpose, college administrators who are in student-facing positions (roles where the college administrator has consistent interaction with students) and who have had at least one experience working with a food insecure student are eligible to participate in this study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Should you be interested, participation in this study will consist of completing a short demographic questionnaire and participating in a 45- to 60-minute interview. The interview will be conducted over Zoom between **March 1, 2022,** and **July 31, 2022**. I will ask you questions about your experiences of supporting food insecure students and how your personal values, institutional culture, and professional norms inform your support response. If you grant permission and depending on your preference, the interview will be recorded on Zoom.

If you have any questions or would like to participate, please contact me as soon as possible at Ibiyemi.adesanya@shu.edu. I will follow up by sending you an email with a link to an electronic informed consent form to complete and schedule you to take part in the interview. Information from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications and presentations that may result from this study. **All conversations will remain confidential.** Your name and institution of employment will not be used in publications or presentations. Pseudonyms and other identity-masking techniques will be used in all publications and presentations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will grant your consent to participate in this important study, which will lend a perspective and voice to the experiences of college administrators as they support food insecure students. These experiences will be useful to inform best practices to support food insecure students.

I look forward to the opportunity to hear your story.

Sincerely,
Ibiyemi Adesanya, Doctoral student
Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services
Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership, Management & Policy

Appendix C: Research Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Food Insecurity Among College Students: Perception of College Administrators

Principal Investigator: Ibiyemi Adesanya / Doctoral Student

Department Affiliation: Higher Education Leadership, Management and Policy, College of Education and Human Services

Sponsor: This research is supported by the Department of Higher Education Leadership, Management and Policy at Seton Hall University

Brief summary of this research study:

The following summary of this research study is to help you decide whether you want to participate in the study. You have the right to ask questions at any time. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of college administrators as they support food insecure college students. You will be asked to complete a brief demographic survey and participate in one video recorded, open-ended, semi-structured interview not to exceed 60 minutes. The primary risk of participation is a feeling of discomfort in sharing your experiences of supporting food insecure college students. The main benefit of participation is the opportunity to provide valuable information to further understand the experiences of college administrators in their support of food insecure students.

Purpose of the research study:

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a college administrator in a student-facing role that has been employed at a private higher education institution and has worked with at least one student experiencing food insecurity.

Your participation in this research study is expected to be for approximately 1 hour.

You will be one of at least 10 people who are expected to participate in this research study.

What you will be asked to do:

Your participation in this research study will include the completion of a brief demographic questionnaire and participation in one video recorded, semi-structured, open-ended interview that will not exceed 60 minutes. The questionnaire will be conducted through Qualtrics. The interviews will be conducted virtually through Zoom, which will be video recorded. Once all interview questions have been asked, you will be given the opportunity to add any additional responses that relate to the study, which may not have been covered by the questions asked. The interview will be video recorded for transcription. The transcription will be shared with you for your review, which will allow you to provide any clarification and approval.

Sample questions of the questionnaire:

● *Gender*

● *Race*

● *Highest degree earned*

Interview questions will focus on how participants make meaning of the perception of their roles about food insecurity among college students.

Your rights to participate, say no, or withdraw:
Participation in research is voluntary. You can decide whether to participate or not to participate. You can choose to participate in the research study now and then decide to leave the research at any time. Your choice will not be held against you.

The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include *missing study visits or non-compliance with the study procedures.*

Potential benefits:
There may be no direct benefit to you from this study. You may obtain personal satisfaction from knowing that you are participating in a project that contributes to new information.

Potential risks:
The risks associated with this study are minimal in nature. Your participation in this research may include a risk to privacy given that we are collecting data through audio/visual means. Sharing these
types of experiences can cause discomfort and hesitancy in sharing ideas.

Confidentiality and privacy:
Efforts will be made to limit the use or disclosure of your personal information. This information may include the research study documents or other source documents used for the purpose of conducting the study. These documents may include email contact from solicitation email. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that oversee research safety may inspect and copy your information. This includes the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board who oversees the safe and ethical conduct of research at this institution.

The demographic survey is being hosted by Qualtrics and involves a secure connection. Terms of service, addressing confidentiality, may be viewed at https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement. The interview will be hosted by Zoom and involves a secure connection. Terms of service, addressing confidentiality, may be viewed at https://explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy.html.

Upon receiving the results of your survey, any possible identifiers will be deleted by the investigator. You will be identified only by a unique pseudonym and date. Your email address, which may be used to contact you to schedule a study visit, will be stored separately from your survey data. All information will be kept on a password-protected computer only accessible by

the researcher. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used.

Data sharing:
De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance knowledge. We will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information we share. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee the anonymity of your personal data.

Cost and compensation:

You will not be responsible for any of the costs or expenses associated with your participation in this study. There is no payment for your time to participate in this study.

Conflict of interest disclosure:
The principal investigator and members of the study team have no financial conflicts of interest to report.

Contact information:
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research project, you can contact the principal investigator Ibiyemi Adesanya at Ibiyemi.adesanya@shu.edu, Dr. Michael Vega at michael.vega@shu.edu, or the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board ("IRB") at (973) 761-9334 or irb@shu.edu.

Optional Elements:
Video recordings will be performed as part of the research study. Please indicate your permission to participate in these activities by placing your initials next to each activity.

I agree   I disagree

_____   _____   The researcher may record my video interview. I understand this is done to help with data collection and analysis. The researcher will not share these recordings with anyone outside of the study team.

I hereby consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of participant	Date

Printed name of participant

_____   _____
Signature of person obtaining consent   Date

_____
Printed name of person obtaining consent

Appendix D: Demographic Information Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study titled "Food Insecurity Among College Students: Perception of College Administrators".

The focus of this study will be on your experiences supporting food insecure college students on your campus. Before we begin, please complete the following demographic questionnaire. Please remember that any information you share here that may indicate who you are, and where you work will be kept confidential.

For this study, food insecurity will be "defined as a student's inconsistent access to nutritionally adequate and safe food due to lack of financial resources which can result in physiological sensations of hunger in extreme cases"

1. Preferred Pseudonym
2. Gender: How do you identify?
   - Man
   - Non-binary
   - Woman
   - Prefer to self-describe
   - Prefer not to answer
3. What is your ethnicity/race?
   - White/ Caucasian
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - Black/African American
   - Native American/American Indian
   - Asian/Pacific Islander
   - Bi-racial and multiracial
   - Other
   - Prefer not to answer
4. Highest Level of education
   - High school diploma or equivalent degree
   - Associate degree
   - Bachelor's degree
   - Master's degree
   - Doctoral degree
5. What is your current employment status?
   - Full-time employment
   - Part-time employment
6. Division
7. How long have you been employed at this institution?
8. How long have you been employed in higher education?

9. Do you have any interaction with a student who has disclosed difficulty in accessing food?
    - Yes
    - No

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

(Reponses: Agree Strongly, Agree Somewhat, Disagree Somewhat, Disagree Strongly,

Not Sure)

- Students are responsible for their basic needs like food
- Colleges and universities as institutions are responsible for students' basic needs like food
- This campus has the resources to support food insecure students

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello _____.

Thanks for your willingness to participate in my research about your perceptions of college administrator role in support of food insecure students. This study will be the focus of my dissertation. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in Higher Education through Seton Hall University's College of Education and Human Services. Hopefully this study will be helpful to college administrators who are in student facing support roles, higher education institutions and other stakeholders. During our interview, I am going to ask you questions about your perceptions of and experiences with supporting food insecure students at Seton Hall University. Please take your time in responding to all questions and feel free to go beyond what I ask in any way that feels relevant to you. Please note also that you do not have to answer any question and you can stop this interview at any time.

Information that you provide for this study is considered confidential. For my research, your name will be the pseudonym you selected on your demographic survey and any other names of related persons will be changed. I will be audio-recording our interview so that I can give you my full attention during the interview and make sure that I capture every word of your responses to my questions, though I may take some notes. At the conclusion of our interview, you are welcome to ask me any questions you have about today's session or my research. Do you have any questions before we continue?

Introductory questions

Start off by telling me a bit about your experience working in higher education and how you came to work at this institution.

Specifically thinking about the role, you are currently in, tell me more about what you do and your experience working with students here.

Food insecurity broadly

Now that I've gotten to know a little bit about you and your role, I'd like to get into the main topic of this study, which is food insecurity.

To start off, tell me about how you define or describe food insecurity and how you came to develop this definition.

Prior to working here, what experiences, if any, did you have with food insecurity?

Food insecurity at campus

Now moving the conversation to your experiences at this institution specifically, what do you think food insecurity looks like on this campus amongst students?

Thinking about your role specifically, what do you view as your responsibility for working with students who are food insecure?

What resources are you aware of on campus for students experiencing food insecurity and how are students informed of them?

How do you feel that COVID-19 has impacted how student food insecurity looks on campus and how those in your role work with students?

Food insecurity specific experience

Thank you for sharing more about what food insecurity looks like on your campus generally, but now could you tell me more about your experiences working or interacting with students experiencing food insecurity while in your role.

Now I'd like you to think about one specific experience working with a food insecure student. Tell me about how you came to identify the student in need and what steps you took after. *(Probe for specific strategies, referral resources, and timeline of events)*

How did the student respond to your efforts and, if you know, what was the outcome?

Professional role and institutional context

Thank you for sharing more details about this specific experience. Thinking about the steps you took to work with this student, how did you come to develop this approach when working with food insecure students?

How do you think your approach compares to other individuals within your role? What about with campus administrators broadly?

What do you perceive is the institution's level of commitment to supporting food insecure students and how do they demonstrate that?

From your perspective, what, if anything, could the institution do to better support these students? What about to better support staff working with these students?

Thank you for sharing your experiences working with students experiencing food insecurity at this institution. Before we close, is there anything else that you feel it would be important for me to know about this topic?