

National College Health Risk Behavior Survey Summary
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Introduction

In the spring of 2008, the second administration of the National College Health Risk Behavior Survey was administered on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The survey asks participants about their lifestyle choices regarding fitness, nutrition, and stress. The data will be used to inform and help administrators assess current and future programs regarding these issues. The second administration will also contribute to the set of data already accumulated. This will also provide long-term trends and provide more areas for assessment.

Literature Review

The time spent in college brings challenges and expectations. Students are expected to have a smooth transition, make friends, and adjust to college life. Along with these adjustments students also undergo physiological adjustments as their nutritional habits change, their stress level increases, and the amount of time they spend doing physical activity changes. A recent study of activity levels of first year female students done by Randall (2007) indicates that while there were no changes in the amount of time doing physical activity, there was a significant decline in the amount of walking these women did throughout the course of their year and there was a significant increase in their weight. Another study done in 2006, by Rena Wing with the help of the Brown University Medical School, found that students are having a gradual gain of weight throughout their first two years of college as opposed to the typical “freshman 15.” From one of their studies, they discovered that students gain an average of 7.8 pounds during their freshman year and after the end of their second year males were 9.5 pounds heavier and females were 9.2 pounds heavier than when they entered college. Lastly, according to the American College Health Association (Chronicle, 2007) they estimate that three out of every 10 college students are overweight or obese. Additionally, the Center for Disease Control indicates that the number of 12 to 19 year olds who are overweight has increased from 5 percent to 17.4 percent. This number will greatly impact health services and health promotion programs on college campuses.

Additionally, student services personnel must create or adapt programs to meet the current student needs. In the study “Assessing the Relationship Between Campus Program, Student Self-Efficacy, Stress, and Substance Abuse” by DiRamino (2007), researchers report that using the measures of stress, substance abuse, self-efficacy are not always the best measures for assessing student life programming.

Findings and Conclusions

Overview and Population –

The purpose was to conduct a 2nd administration of an adapted National Collegiate Health Risk Behavior Survey on the UWSP campus. The survey asks about health and wellness behaviors such as fitness, nutrition, stress, and weight control. The respondents were a random sample

drawn from the UWSP student population and the subject size was 2000. The survey was a web-based survey and all responses were anonymous and confidential. The data was used to assess current student risks and provide student services administrators with appropriate data to develop programs and policies for the current student population. This survey was administered for the first time in 2006.

In total there were 550 respondents representing a response rate of 27.5%. A majority of respondents, 69.5%, fall into the traditional college age group of 18-21 years old. In total, 59.0% of the participants were female and 92.9% of total respondents were full-time students. Additionally, 90.5% of respondents were white and 91.3% were never married. With regard to living situations, 65.1% live with their roommate or friends. Those living in a residence hall comprised 39.3% of the population and 50.2% live in an off-campus house or apartment. Almost half (48.0%) of participants participate in student organization and 50.3% work 1-20 hours per week for pay. This information is provided so that one is able to gain perspective on the UWSP survey respondents.

Data -

The data revealed results for all three areas – exercise, nutrition, and stress. Each section has been broken up to highlight trends in the data.

Exercise –

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that adults aged 18-65 do moderately intense cardio exercises for 30 minutes a day, five days a week or do vigorously intense cardio for 20 minutes a day, three days a week (<http://acsm.org>). The survey participants were asked how many times in the past 7 days they participated in activities that made them sweat and breathe hard. Only 32.6% of UWSP students participated in these types of activities three to five times a week and more surprisingly 51.1% participated in these activities zero to two days a week. A total of 21.3% responded that they did not participate in any of these types of activities in the previous seven days.

Students were also asked if they walked or bicycled for at least 30 minutes in the last seven days. In the last three to five days category, 31.5% of respondents participated in walking or biking for at least 30 minutes. A large number (30.4%) responded that they did not walk or bike for at least 30 minutes in the last week. This is not surprising as the literature suggests that there are significant decreases in college students walking habits throughout the course of their first year that can have dramatic effects on their health (Randall).

The ACSM recommends doing eight to 10 strength training exercises with eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise twice a week. Survey participants were asked how many days in the last seven did they participate in strengthening of their muscles. 52.3% stated that they did this activity in the past two to seven days. Only 38.0% stated that they did not do any strength exercises in the last week.

With regard to stretching and flexibility exercises, the ACSM recommends that these activities should be performed a minimum of two to three times per week. Again, survey participants were asked how often they participated in this activity in the past seven days. Falling within the

ACSM recommended range were 26% of respondents. Almost one third (31.5%) of participants stated that they did not participate in stretching or flexibility exercises in the last seven days.

Nutrition –

Participants were asked multiple questions regarding food intake to better understand their choices and current diet. The food pyramid guide as determined by the United States Department of Agriculture was used as the benchmark for the data. The pyramid that is given by the Department of Agriculture based upon a persons activity level, gender, and age (<http://www.myparmid.gov>). Due to the variance between age, activity level, and gender there are no longer specific recommended servings for the general population, but rather they are based upon these factors. To determine the daily recommended requirements a profile was developed for both active and sedentary males and females aged 19 years. The age of 19 was selected because the largest respondent group to the survey was 19 years with a percentage of 20.5%. The table below summarizes the findings based upon the current food pyramid:

| | Male - sedentary | Male - active | Female - sedentary | Female - active | Serving Recommendation (1/2 cup = 1 serving) |
|-----------|------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|--|
| Fruit | 2 cups | 2.5 cups | 2 cups | 2 cups | 2-2.5 cups = 4-5 servings |
| Vegetable | 3.5 cups | 3.5 cups | 2.5 cups | 3 cups | 2.5 - 3.5 cups = 5-7 servings |

When looking at the survey data, the recommended servings calculated using the food pyramid profile was used to compare to the respondents answers. Students were asked how many times in the past seven days they consumed fruit, green salad, and vegetables. Only 29.7% of the respondents stated that they consumed fruit one or more times per day in the last seven days. An overwhelming majority (69.9%) reported consuming less than one fruit per day in the last seven days. With respect to green salads, only 8.6% stated that they ate green salads at least once per day in the last seven days and 90.9% ate green salads less than once per day. Lastly, 31.6% of respondents stated that they ate at least one or more vegetable per day and only 66.9% stated that they ate vegetables less than once per day. These findings are quite surprising as it is clearly indicated that the majority of UWSP students are not meeting the recommended allowances. Further inquiry into where they are consuming most of their meals might provide additional insight.

The survey also asked for information regarding students' intake of hamburger, hot dog, or sausages in the past seven days. Over one quarter of the population, 25.6%, did not consume hamburger, hot dog, or sausages in the past seven days. Additionally, a majority (53.5%) fell into the range of only consuming 1-3 times in the past seven days. Lastly, only 5.3% stated that they consumed these foods 1 time per day in the last seven days. These numbers are quite surprising given the convenience and ease of these items.

The survey asked for information regarding the consumption of French fries or potato chips in the last seven days. Again the numbers are contradictory to the stereotypical college student diet. Those that did not eat these foods in the past seven days was 22.5%. The majority of respondents (59.3%) fell into the 1-3 times in the past seven days range and only 3.3% consumed these items daily in the past seven days.

Dessert items and sugar intake were also examined in this survey. It was found that 13.6% of the respondents did not eat dessert items in the last seven days while those that consumed dessert 1-3 times in the last seven days were almost half of respondents (48.9%). Only 14.3% ate these items one or more time per day in the last seven days.

The sugar consumption that is assessed in the survey is specifically related to sugary items such as soda, candy, chocolate or sugared cereal. Regarding sugar, 3.1% stated that they did not consume sugar in the last seven days. Consuming the greatest amount of sugar, 31.3% of respondents did state that they consumed sugar once or more per day in the last seven days. The rest of the respondents fell within the range of 1-6 times in the last seven days.

Stress

Survey participants were asked about their stress levels, their causes of stress, and what they are doing to prevent and alleviate their stress. It is necessary to understand the causes of student stress so that university officials are able to target these areas and understand student needs. When asked about their stress levels, 45.1% of respondents stated that they were slightly overstressed and 38.5% stated that they had about the right amount of stress. This leaves a small segment of the population 16.4% that feel either very overstressed or very understressed.

Participants were also asked to rank a variety of stress sources and on what level this caused them stress in the past 30 days. They were given a scale of 1-7, with 1 being a “not at all a source of stress” and 7 being “significant source of stress”. Anything that was selected by participants as a score of 5 or higher was considered significant. Statistically, academics was selected as the number one source of stress for participants with a 60% indicating a score of 5 or more. Money was selected as the number two most common source of stress for participants and almost half (44%) indicated it as a source of stress giving it a rank of five or higher. Other sources of stress for participants, yielding rankings of five or higher included procrastination (30.9%), time management (26.7%), life direction and planning (23.5%), relationships with non-family members (22.5%), and work for pay (19.5%). It is interesting to note that the 4 of the 7 major stressors indicated by participants are centered on academics or academic related issues.

Additionally, participants were asked if they were trying to reduce their stress levels and if they utilized indicated methods. Almost half (49.5%) indicated that they were in fact trying to reduce their stress levels. Participants were asked about actions that they took to manage or reduce stress. They were given the following list and were asked to select the methods that they used. The list included nothing, talking to a professional, talking to a non-professional, relaxation techniques, personal organization, physical activities, alcohol or other drugs, and other. A percentage of students (40.5%) checked that they talked to a non-professional. About one quarter of the population (25.5%) stated that they utilized relaxation techniques, 55.5% stated that they used personal organization, 61.1% uses physical activities, and one-fifth, 22.9%, use alcohol or other drugs. What is notable about this data is that a majority of respondents are using methods other than alcohol or other drugs to manage their stress. This is especially important for UWSP administrators as alcohol and drug use is increasing both in its frequency in use and the amount of time that it is being used by students. (See Alcohol and Other Drug Survey links)

Participants were also asked what they did during the past thirty days to prevent stress. An overwhelming majority (62.4%) indicated that they were using personal organization techniques to help prevent stress and 63.5% indicated that they were using physical strategies to prevent stress. It is important to notice that a majority of UWSP students utilizing preventative methods to help reduce their stress.