

## Nutritional Status of Food Insecure Students, UWC

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**Abstract :** Background: Disparities in food security exist between communities and households across the country, reflecting continuing social and economic inequalities. The purpose of this study was to investigate the presence of food insecurity amongst UWC students. Method: Cross-sectional study recruited 200 students via email and cellphone from an ICS generated list of randomly selected students aged 18-25. Data collection took place during the first two weeks of term 3. Individual appointments were made with consenting participants and conducted in English by trained BSc Dietetics students. Data was analysed using SPSS. The hunger scale used by Stats SA (October 2010) was used. Dietary intake was assessed using a single 24hr recall. Results: Sixty-three percent of the students reported that they do experience some food insecurity whilst 14.5% reported to go hungry due to inadequate access to food. Coping mechanisms during periods of food insecurity include: Asking a friend, neighbour, family member (40%); Borrow (15%); Steal (none); Casual jobs (12%). Anthropometric status of students did not differ statistically significantly by food security status. A statistically significantly greater proportion of Xhosa speaking students reported inadequate money for food. Students residing in residences off campus appear to be least food secure in terms of money available and limiting food intake, whilst those residing at home are less food insecure. Similar proportions of students who receive bursaries or whose parents are paying reported going hungry whilst those who supports themselves never goes hungry. Mean nutrient intake during the previous 24 hours of students who reported inadequate resources to buy food, who eat less due to inadequate resources and who goes hungry only differed statistically significantly for Vitamin B (go hungry) and for fibre (money shortage). In general the nutrient intake is lower for those who reported to eat less and go hungry except for added sugar, vitamin A and folate (go hungry), and energy, fibre, iron, riboflavin and folate (eat less). For students who reported to have inadequate money to buy food, the mean nutrient intake was higher except for calcium and thiamin. The mean body mass index of this group of students was also higher even though the difference was not statistically significant. Conclusion: Hunger is present on campus however a single 24hr recall did not confirm statistically significant lower nutrient intakes for students who reported different levels of food insecurity.

**Keywords :** anthropometry, dietary intake, nutritional status, students

**Conference Title :** ICFSN 2016 : International Conference on Food Security and Nutrition

**Conference Location :** Istanbul, Türkiye

**Conference Dates :** January 25-26, 2016