



Resolution to Structurally Address Disordered Eating Patterns in the Rice Community

Introduced by
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Whereas, food is a vital part of college life. Not only does it provide us with sustenance and fuel, many social events through residential colleges, student organizations, and RPC events, are centered around food.

Whereas, research and past literature highlight the prevalence of disordered behaviors among college students. Research links these food attitudes to greater freedom, social and academic stress, and an overall change in the environment that comes with enrolling in college.

Whereas, a vast majority of freshmen live on campus ~98%, and 75% of the total undergraduate population lives on campus. In order to live on campus, Rice students must enroll in a 20 swipe-a-week unlimited meal plan.

Whereas, 52% of respondents in a sample of 279 undergrads stated they feel food-related anxiety in the dining hall. 55% of these respondents dealt with and/or currently deal with disordered eating habits. 58% of those 55% state that their struggles with food got worse after coming to Rice.¹

¹ See attached appendix for data from the survey on *Experiences with Food-Related Issues on Campus*, Figures 1a, 1b, and 1c

Whereas, 72% of these students state that they believe server hours have a negative impact on their relationship with food. 28% of students attribute it partially to the 20 swipe meal plan.²

Whereas, intuitive eating is a technique that is proven to help repair students' relationships with food.³ However, with the current server hours and options, along with the 20 swipe plan, this intervention is hard to do without severe financial cost.⁴

Whereas, peer institutions have much more flexible meal plans with more optionality. At Vanderbilt, students can redeem meal swipes at on-campus cafes,⁵ At Swarthmore, dinner ends at 8, and there are a variety of meal plan options and facilities. There are also several food options available outside of dining hall hours that are covered by the meal plans.⁶ Because of the pandemic, Dartmouth students in 2020 were required to get a similar-to-Rice meal plan, and students with underlying food issues found it triggering and uncomfortable.⁷ In normal conditions, Dartmouth offers more flexible options.⁸

Whereas, 63.5% of students who struggled or currently struggle reached out to the Wellbeing Center, and only 22% of students found this help to be adequate.⁹

Whereas, from the website and background research, there is no therapist or counselor who is publicly a Certified Eating Disorders Specialist in the Wellbeing Center.¹⁰

Resolved, That Rice Housing and Dining should encourage intuitive eating by providing food outside of server hours (handheld fruit, non-perishables). It should be available in residential college kitchens or provided by members of the A-Team or a specific college government representative. An OC representative can manage an OC pantry.

Resolved, that Rice Housing and Dining should encourage and provide students with underlying food-related issues to look into more flexible meal plan options.

Resolved, that Rice Wellbeing and Counseling should work in conjunction with Housing and Dining to support students who struggle with these issues. Wellbeing should also hire a specialist and provide more support for students who struggle with disordered eating behaviors, including

² Figure 1d

³ Barrada, J. R., Cativiela, B., van Strien, T., & Cebolla, A. (2020). Intuitive eating: A novel eating style? Evidence from a Spanish sample. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 36(1), 19–31. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759/a000482>

⁴ *Experiences with Food-Related Issues on Campus*

⁵ <https://campusdining.vanderbilt.edu/meal-plan-2021-2022/>

⁶ <https://www.swarthmore.edu/dining-services/dining-locations-hours>

⁷ Feuerstein, Arielle. "Dining at Dartmouth with Disordered Eating." *The Dartmouth*. 18 Nov. 2020. Accessed 27 Nov. 2021. <https://www.thedartmouth.com/article/2020/11/feuerstein-disordered-eating>

⁸ <https://dining.dartmouth.edu/dining-plans/dining-plan-options>

⁹ Figures 2a and 2b

¹⁰ "Meet our staff." *Rice University Wellbeing and Counseling Center*. Accessed 26 Nov 2021. <https://wellbeing.rice.edu/counseling-center/counseling-staff>

but not limited to a psychologist specialized in disordered eating, in addition to a dietician specialized in disordered eating.

Resolved, that there should be O-Week programming that addresses this issue, as a lot of students develop these behaviors at the beginning of college. 74% of respondents agreed that first-year programming is vital, and 62% of respondents were affected by the notion of the “freshman 15” during their first year at Rice. ¹¹

¹¹ Figures 1e and 1f

Appendix:

Figure 1a.

Do you experience food-related anxiety in the dining hall?

279 responses

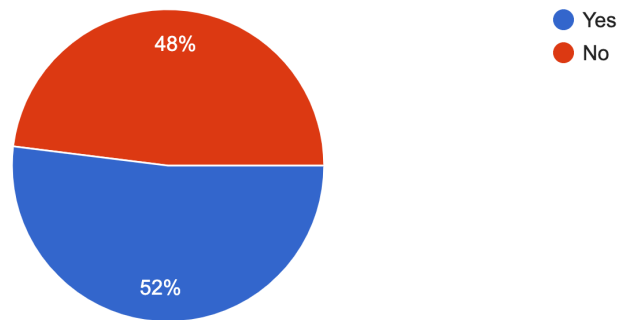


Figure 1b.

Have you experienced disordered eating behaviors at any point of your young adulthood?

279 responses

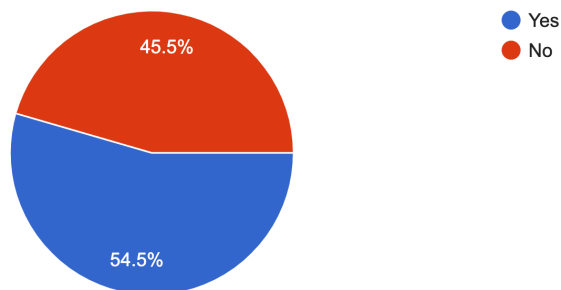


Figure 1c.

If yes, have these issues gotten worse since coming to Rice (skip if not applicable)

160 responses

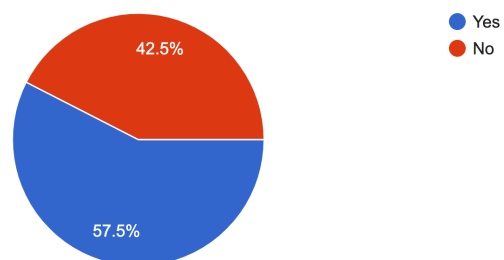


Figure 1d.

If you have experienced food-based issues / disordered eating please check off things that you believe have made these issues worse

210 responses

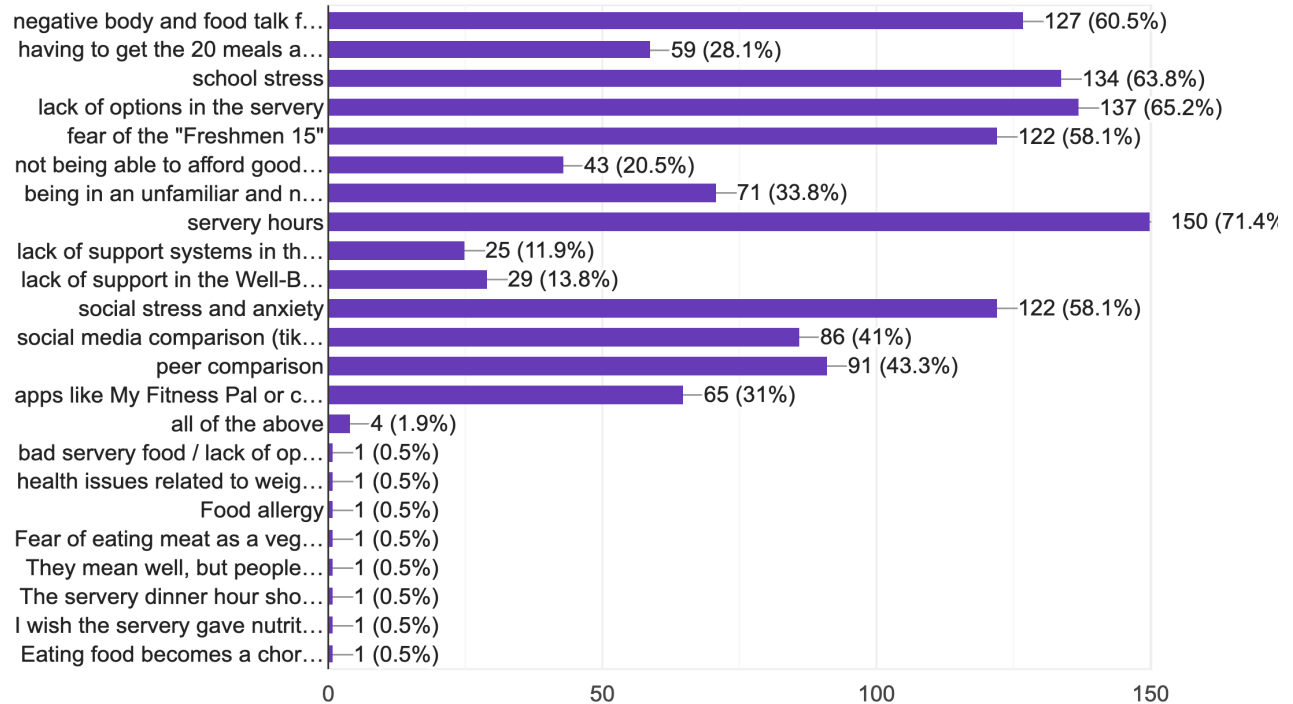


Figure 1e.

Do you think it would be beneficial in having O-Week or first year programming that addresses these issues?

279 responses

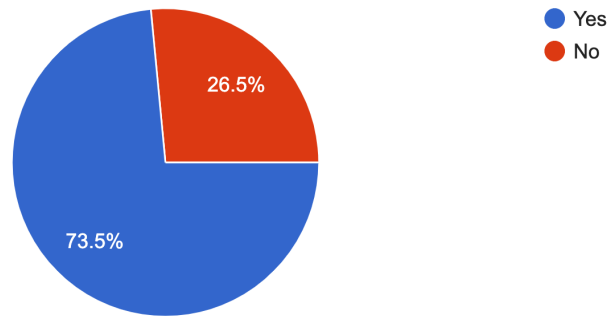


Figure 1f.

Were you / are you affected at all by the notion and fear of gaining the "Freshmen 15"

279 responses

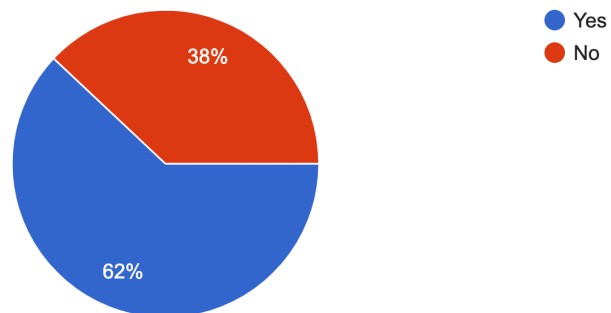


Figure 2a.

Have you reached out for support from the Rice Well-Being and Counseling Center? (skip if not applicable)

159 responses

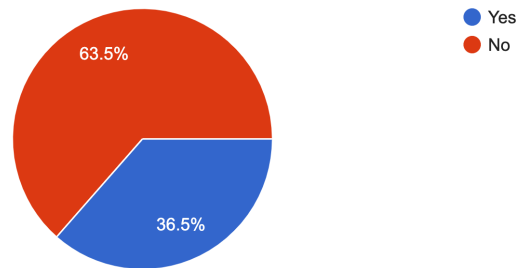


Figure 2b.

Did you find this support adequate or helpful (skip if not applicable)

67 responses

