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**Title:** Wellness Factors On Campus

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**Keywords:** Wellness, Health, Nutrition, Residence Hall Wellness Competition, Residence, University Housing, Dining halls

**Abstract:** My research questions consisted of the various categories of wellness. I described in detail the difference between nutrition and overall wellness. The factors that contribute to wellness include: physical wellness, mental wellness and all the sub-groups of each. The paper asks, What is the University of Illinois been doing to change students wellness? What are the dorms doing to improve wellness? I answer these questions in depth with interviews and artifact analysis. The Residence Hall Wellness Competition is a new competition that was set up to promote wellness in the public university housing which deals with many types of recordings related to wellness such as, step counter, fruit and vegetable intake, and financial spending. Also, I examined the changes that the university dining halls are doing to promote wellness such as the new nutritionist online and the newly presented nutritional facts on the sneeze guards.

**Initial Exercises:** For the first fieldwork, I decided to look at the university housing website for the dining and catering options. This site is looked at daily by the residence to check the daily menus. Since this is one of the most visited sites for the students who live in the university dorms, I think it is very important to explore and discuss how the housing presents the nutrition on campus in regards to their meals. A link on this page that I really want to focus on is the "Eat Smart" page. On this site you can choose which dorm you are eating at, the daily menus and choose what you ate or plan to eat for each date. When finished selecting your meals it will take you to the nutritional facts of your meal. I feel this is very helpful tool that not too many students know about and take advantage of. Tracking your food intake is proven to actually make you eat more nutritious, which I will go into more detail about in further artifacts. I feel everyone should be using this part of the website by using this part of the site. Next, I want to focus on their mission statement of the site, " We offer a choice of dining plans with various degrees of flexibility, so think about how much and how often you eat and choose from

there." I feel the way the cafeterias are set up you actually eat more because of the buffet style. Again, I plan on going into more detail with this when talking to the nutritionist but I feel this statement needed to be addressed on this site.

I choose this site because of the daily use by students and the fact that many don't even know about the "Eat Smart" link and tracking your own meals. This is an exigent part of the nutrition on campus and I feel this source will support many ideas I further address in my paper.

For my second fieldwork, I decided to use an article I found on Ebsco that supports the ideologies of the freshman 15. This article like many others says that the freshman weight gain is due to many factors that your body is not used to yet. First and most importantly is the buffet style eating. College is the first time you actually get to choose how much you eat and what is on your plate day to day, just as stated in the article, "eating in the all-you-can-eat dining halls, encourages a supersize-it mentality." I find this to be very true and I feel that this is the leading cause of freshman weight gain. Students see new foods, generally foods that are not offered at home in such large amounts. So why shouldn't they dig in? Freshmen usually eat almost twice what they normally eat in a buffet style cafeteria. This is a huge problem that many schools are changing to prevent this nation wide obesity to spread. Next, the article presents the problem of late night snacking saying that because students are studying late maybe even all night they tend to eat the most available food for energy. Typically these foods are processed, and contain high amounts of sugars and salts. These are two of the leading factors of the freshmen weight gain and stopping this problem is going to be a war of knowledge.

This article is a true fit into my paper by supporting the freshmen fifteen and the idea that the gain is usually due to the buffet cafeterias. I plan to use many quotes and ideas that are presented in this article. It will fit right in with the paper supporting my thesis with the research that has been presented in this article.

For my fieldwork three I decided to get an article that relates to the Residence Wellness Competition since that is now my focal point. The competition deals with tracking your fruit and vegetable intake, your daily steps, weekly workout habits and your weekly expenditures. I found an article on Yahoo that relates hand and hand to these nutritional guidelines. The article is called "100 Smartest Diet Tips Ever" which includes

tips from tracking your weekly intakes to exercising habits. A lot of these tips have the same idea that the competition is trying to get across.

Tracking your intake can make you lose weight and eat healthier. We will find that out resulting the competition because they make you track your intake weekly. So we should be able to see the change from week one to week eight in the students diet. The next tip that stands out in this article is eat more fruits and vegetables. During the competition we had to track how many fruits and vegetables we ate daily so this must have given some idea about our diets to the competition heads. Fruits and vegetables slim down your appetite, they make you full faster than another foods so it helps you eat less. The last thing that truly relates to the competition is to workout regularly. Kids are encouraged to workout at least 3 times a week. Again this was something we needed to track in the competition.

These tips were made by the American Dietetic Association (ADA) making this a very reliable source for nutritional facts. I plan to use this article in my paper by relating what dieticians really say to do and what people are really doing. This will be easy to find out after my interview with the head of the Wellness Competition. She plans to give me all the statistics and the averages of what she has found in the competition. Also, I plan on asking the residence hall dietician if kids are asking her questions looking for diet tips to better their nutrition. This source will not play a huge role in my paper but it will support some of the information that I hope to get out of my interviews. Once I have completed that interview it will be very easy to tie the facts of this article into my paper making this source very helpful.

For my fourth fieldwork I decided to finally interview the head of the Residence Hall Wellness Competition, Melanie Pridemore. This is my most valuable sources because I am narrowing my subject down to the competition and its effects on the participants. Since one of the kids on my floor who I plan to interview participated in this competition he helped me set up the interview with Pridemore. Because she is very busy with going to grad school for teaching and working for university housing it was hard to find time that both of us were available. We decided to meet on Thursday at 4 to 430 because she had time in-between a meeting. This made the interview very difficult because I had so many questions to ask in such little time.

Narrowing my questions down, I really wanted to ask her

thoughts on the nutrition in the dorms and students diets around campus. Also, I wanted to know what the purpose of this competition was and why it was the first time it was ran for students. We emailed each other back and forth and she seemed very interested and supportive of my focus. We met at her office in Hopkins and she began telling me she had a bachelor's degree from University of Illinois in kinesiology and she was going to grad school for a teaching degree. We then went into the competition details and how they chose each category to record. They recorded steps, weekly exercise, intake of fruits and vegetables, weekly expenditures and the amount of programs each participant sat through each week. They were vary lenient on how they scored each of these activities and there was an overall 285 points per week possible which I will go into much detail in my paper. Next, we got into the participants and their main concerns. Pridemore said the students that participated were predominantly health and fit so it wasn't much of a change for most to earn points. For the participants that were not, Pridemore said it was a huge shock to them how they could go a meal without eating a fruit or vegetable. Pridemore said the 7 week long competition was the perfect amount, it was just enough to see if the kids were trying to change their lifestyles. This interview was very helpful and the information I obtained will easily assist me in writing this long paper. This is the most helpful source and I think this information will narrow down my topic and really bring everything together.

For my fifth fieldwork, I decided to interview a person that actually participated in the wellness competition. Jeremy Park is a freshman in the college of ACES, and his major is food science and human nutrition and desires to go to medical school in the future. Park is very interested in health which is why he participated in this competition. We did an email based interview on April 7th 2009.

Q: How do you think this competition was organized?

A: I think this competition was organized rather poorly. It was hard to find out when the meetings were and how to post each week. There were weeks when the site was not open to post your results.

Q: How would you describe wellness?

A: The overall balance of physical, emotional and social health. In order to be considered well you must cover all these categories.

Q: What do you think helped you in this competition?

A: I think tracking my fruit and vegetable intake each day. Its surprising that you can go a meal without eating a serving. This encouraged me to eat healthier and opened my eyes up to what poor choices the dining halls offer.

Q: Did you have trouble tracking anything?

A: No, everything was pretty self said and very basic.

Q: If there was a category that you could add to this competition what would it be?

A: I would add going to classes. Many students never go to class, I feel that is not a good representation of wellness.

**Question:** Recently what is the university doing to improve wellness?

**Answer:** I plan to go into this more with the Residence Hall Wellness Competition. In this competition I would like to explore the many categories that are represented.

These categories include: social, occupational, spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, environmental, financial, mental and medical wellness.

**Plan:** Research what wellness actually is and how each affects your body. I plan to interview the director of the Residence Hall Wellness Competition and ask what type of an impact it had on its participants. I would like to find out what aspects of wellness it focused on. Also, I plan on interviewing a participant of that competition and see what his/her experience was. Along with the analysis of many artifacts related to university taking strides to improve wellness.

**Data:** 2 Interviews

- 1.) Director of the Residence Hall Wellness Competition
- 2.) Participant of the competition

Analysis

- 1.) University Housing and EatSmart website
- 2.) 3 Articles relating to wellness at college and the nutritional problems that arise when living in dorms.
- 3.) Brochure on the competition

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**Discuss:** "In order to achieve a state of wellness in our own lives or try to guide others to it, we must pay due diligence to each of the dimensions," (Wellnessdefinition.com). There are many factors to wellness including: social, occupational, spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, environmental, financial, mental and medical wellness. College campuses all over the United States are doing everything they can to aid students in the fight to improve daily habits and all the factors of wellness that effect a student's well-being. Each category plays a giant role in the student's overall wellness. This spring semester at the University of Illinois (UofI) many things have changed in the

cafeteria as well as the activities offered around campus related to well-being. Of these activities, the newest and most successful was the "Residence Hall Wellness Competition." This competition deals with social, physical, intellectual, emotional, financial, and mental aspects of wellness. The university is doing all it can to break the bad habits of overeating, also known as binge eating, lack of exercising, lack of sleep, and time management.

Melanie Pridemore was the director and creator of this Residence Hall Wellness Competition. She came from a family concerned about wellness and nutrition. She graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in kinesiology. Currently, Pridemore attends graduate school for teaching and advising. She came up with this competition two years ago and tried it out on resident advisors and other employees that work in housing. The results were successful and the findings very beneficial when giving tips on health or when looking to change something in the residence halls related to wellness of the students. The Residence Hall Wellness Competition was open to students for the first time this year. "This was a way to interact with the students and promote something that is affecting people around the country," Pridemore advocated.

The first day was a huge success as 380 participants registered and were ready to participate to improve their wellness. All participants were required to be full time students at the University of Illinois and live in university public housing. For registration the students were given a pedometer, which is an instrument for estimating the distance traveled by foot by recording each step. Additionally, two free group fitness passes were given to the Activities and Recreation Center (ARC), which is the new building at UofI dedicated to fitness. These passes gave students access to classes and activities such as: yoga, zumba, cooking, and other nutritional and fitness related classes. The costs of these passes are usually quite high so this was a great bonus on top of improving one's wellness.

The competition was set to run for 7 weeks starting from February 1st to March 20th, which was just enough time to change student's wellness and actually see legitimate results. Participants were asked to record various topics related to their overall wellness on campus each week and log these every Sunday on a website that scores and ranks the competitors. There was a possible of 285 points per week meaning a total of 1995 points possible in the seven weeks and each category had

a different point value. (Pridemore, Residence Hall Wellness Competition)

The first category the students were asked to record, was the daily servings of fruits and vegetables each student ate per meal. Each participant could earn two points per serving and a total max of 70 points per week. (Pridemore, Residence Hall Wellness Competition) "This was just the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables for a college student" (Pridemore, Personal Interview). They weren't asking anything excessive just the bare minimum recommended by most nutritionists and dietitians.

The second category was daily exercise, meaning how much the participants worked out or participate in an active event. This is a rather lenient category because it would be hard to specify exactly what type of exercise and how much exercise is needed to qualify for this category. Pridemore took recommendations from the American College of Sports Medicine and they came up with a point system for this category. There was a possibility of 25 points and participants could earn 5 points a day for 5 days of the week. (Pridemore, Residence Hall Wellness Competition) This was limited to 5 days because people who exercise everyday need recovery days from vigorous exercise because your muscles need time to recover and rebuild.

For the next challenge, daily steps had to be recorded, which is the reason pedometers were handed out at registration. Pridemore said, " This was just to promote leaving early for class so they had enough time to walk and get the minimum steps recorded." The steps were not to be included with the daily exercise but strictly on the steps dedicated to transportation. 10,000 steps were the maximum steps that were recorded and each 1,000 steps were worth two points, this coming to a possible 140 points per week. (Pridemore, Residence Hall Wellness Competition) 10,000 steps is the recommendation for a college student from ages 18 to 24 again asking students to meet the standard of healthy living. (thewalkingsite.com). This was recommended by the American College of Sports Medicine, a reliable source that many nutritionist and dietitians use when they practice.

Next on the list of recordings was tracking your finances. These included many categories related to normal spending, including food, transportation, recreation, and entertainment. All these categories related to normal daily expenditures. Participants

were able to earn a possible 10 points per week for just answering a question: Did you track your expenses this week? (Pridemore, Residence Hall Wellness Competition) This obviously does not deal with the diet and nutrition but it is a huge part of being "well" overall. "Financial wellness is having an understanding of your financial situation and taking care of it in such a way that you are prepared for financial changes." (definitionofwellness.com) Competitors were also encouraged to meet with the financial wellness office at the ARC to learn how to track their expenses and budget their finances.

Last but not least were the outreach programs. These programs were offered to students every week, and related to specific parts of wellness. The various programs ranged from, "Fitness-Getting Started, Myths and the Fat Burn Button" to "Stress Management-Relaxation of the Mind and Body" and even to "Sexual Health-What's Hot, What's Not." This was a large part of the competition and they were worth 10 points per meeting with a max log of 20 points per week. Most of these programs were just offered to the participants so competitors were pressured to attend. Each meeting was used to educate the students about health and all the factors involved with wellness that, contrary to belief, is NOT just exercising. The programs were very flexible because there were so many offered each week. If the participant could not make any meetings they could set up a meeting with the program director on their own time, which would be the equivalent to attending a program.

Since the first year was such a success, Pridemore, is planning on organizing another wellness competition next year. She plans to add a few new categories in the competition in hopes to cover all the wellness factors. The main goal of the program is to attempt to make every participant well rounded. Because it was the first year, Pridemore had many difficulties with the IRB Consent and Approval Forms so it prevented adding many of the categories she originally planned on including. In result, next year there will be a category dedicated to sleep. Sleep is one of the most important health aspects of ones life, and being in college it can be very difficult to get a normal routine and enough sleep needed to stay healthy. "Being sleep deprived can contribute to memory problems and difficulty in logical reasoning; can interrupt physiological processes related to hormone function and blood pressure; and is associated with decreases in both efficiency and ability to concentrate." (Colorado.edu/wellness.com) This will deal with how many

hours per night a competitor usually gets. Eight to Nine hours will be the maximum time allowed per night to be able to receive full point credit. Also being looked at to add is sexual health. This is still up in the air as it is unclear on how this can be managed and scored, but Pridemore said if not this next year, it will eventually make its place on the list. She was also contemplating adding a category dedicated to academics. Going into detail would be extremely difficult but asking a simple question such as "did you attend all your classes today?" to receive all or no points would be possible. Unlike this year where the competition was held in the spring semester when it was still very cold out, next year they plan to hold it in the fall semester in August. "This will change the results drastically because students tend to be much more active in the earlier months of school," (Pridemore).

All these programs are related to the overall wellness of the participants but that can be very hard when in college and forced to eat in the dining halls day after day. Typically, the foods offered here are very unhealthy and students are misled by the nutritional facts on the sneeze guard. Kids think of a serving as a big scoop of each entrée. In reality a serving is quite small and usually about half the scoop. Another problem linked to this is greasy foods tend to be the foods that kids love and look forward to. Students dig into these foods that they are not accustomed to at home and their diets go down hill from there. A nutritional diet also includes, "lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts all of which should be low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt, and added sugars," (Mypyramid.gov) All of which are foods that are very difficult to find in the dining halls on campus. Dining hall foods are packed with sugars, salt, and both trans-fats and saturated fats. Furthermore, the buffet style dining has contributed to this weight gain and bad nutrition. "Eating in all-you-can-eat dining halls encourages a 'supersize it' mentality," (A Freshman's Toughest Course). Students are used to having their parents serve them and having the servings chosen for them. Without this structure new students have a hard time deciding what and how much to eat.

University public housing is also doing many things to improve students overall wellness and the many factors that go with that. The university housing website introduced many new programs this year including a link called "Eat Smart". This is a page dedicated to track your intake and plan out your meals in the university dining halls. You can choose your dorm you are

eating at, the daily menus and choose what you ate or plan to eat each day. When finished selecting your meals it takes you to a site that calculates all the nutritional facts and recommends the meal you should choose. Tracking your meals puts you on the right path towards a healthy lifestyle.

The buffet style dining is not the only thing that these freshmen are not acclimated to. In the article "A Freshmen's Toughest Course", Sunny Dawson, a freshman girl new to the college life came to school with a healthy diet and routine workout plan. The day she got to college that routine was changed into skipping workouts and eating more and more food in the dorms. Her Friends would ask her to go get ice cream or different unhealthy cafeteria food when she was going to workout, so in result she traded her good nutrition and dieting for socially eating foods that contains no nutritional value. This was an obvious recipe for disaster and she gained ten pounds in just one semester. "While experts say the so-called Freshman 15 is usually 5 to 7 pounds, it is a common experience for many college newcomers faced with unlimited cafeteria food, late-night pizza binges and snacking that comes with irregular student schedules." (Freshman's Toughest Course) This makes getting comfortable socially in college very difficult and just damages students mentally and physically. Exploring many diets online made by various athletes and college students, I found many tips and tricks to beat the unhealthy food and unwanted weight that many have gained through their earlier college years. This all relates to the so-called myth "the freshman fifteen" in which they can follow these tips to avoid this gain. The most popular diet fact was to track your food intake. This is clearly presented in the Residence Hall Wellness Competition, so maybe this competition had a deeper meaning by hiding dieting tips to their competition to make students more nutritious. "I think tracking my fruit and vegetable intake each day. It's surprising that you can go a meal without eating a serving. This encouraged me to eat healthier and opened my eyes up to what poor choices the dining halls offer." (Park) Tracking your intake makes you think about what you are really choosing to eat, making each choice a healthy choice or you will feel quite guilty writing down an unhealthy substitute. "Also it makes you feel more accomplished at the end of the week when you look back at your meals consumed,"(100 Smartest Diets). Next I have found that eating fruits and vegetables boosts your nutrition. Eating these foods decreases your appetites, which obviously makes you eat less while still obtaining the nutrition

you need from your meals. Following this tip comes working out regularly, which is the most common among the sites. Working out regularly helps you boost your metabolism meaning you burn more calories. As you can see all these tips are tied in somehow to the wellness competition.

As the years roll on, incoming freshman grow more aware of such issues as wellness. Melanie Pridemore's program may just become the norm at Universities across the country to help freshman transition into college life. Adaptations and improvements will be necessary to let this program develop into the tool that Pridemore envisioned. It is her vision that will help so many down the road and hopefully combat many of the negative issues that freshman deal with on a regular basis. The University's recognition and acceptance of this program shows its willingness to help. Strides have already been taking such as the aforementioned "Eat Smart," but many more plans must be implemented for this program to succeed. Thanks to Pridemore wellness will fall over incoming freshman and future students.

**EUI**  
**Links:** None

**Reflect:** After my research, I was very surprised on my findings. The university is very concerned with the well-being of students and obviously see this as a huge issue. The Residence Hall Wellness Competition was just the start of the trend to start this wellness movement. The dining halls are now taking long strides to get students to eat healthier and learn to become more nutritious. Also, with the new recreation center (ARC) many students are utilizing their resources and going to classes about wellness.