

Student Research on Food Insecurity in Rock Hill, SC

Five students from a fall 2018 seminar course on Food Systems and Sustainability will present research papers completed for that course. These papers focus on root causes of food insecurity and potential solutions to move communities towards greater food sovereignty. Several of the papers take a broader view of the issue, examining the approaches that have been successful in creating greater food security. Students do not shy away from controversial topics, such as race or the role of policy in the food systems challenges we face locally or on a national scale. Several students hone in specifically on Rock Hill and the Winthrop University campus to look at issues of food security, how our values affect our shopping habits, and the lessons that Rock Hill/Winthrop University can apply from successful tactics employed by other cities/campuses. Dr. Katherine Metzger, their instructor, will serve as discussant.

Paper 1: The role for communities and governments in addressing “food deserts”

Bradley Ghent

This paper is meant to shed some light on the threats posed by food deserts and how both government involvement and community engagement can work towards a solution to these areas. Along with that, this paper is meant to inform readers of food deserts and how it is not just a food insecurity issue, but a socioeconomic and race issue as well. Despite the name given, a food desert is not barren of food, but rather, they lack the proper nutrients that people need to live a healthy and productive life. Inside of a food desert, one will find food in the form of fast food and whatever the local gas stations and corner stores offer. The food that is available to the residents of food deserts often leads to diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and other health issues. This paper has used academic journals and reports to find that community involvement has greatly helped these areas. Farmers markets and urban agriculture has assisted in providing residents with healthy and nutritious foods. Food hubs have also played a large part in providing food deserts with the proper foods they need, with research showing almost half of the food hubs are distributing to food deserts. This paper also found that municipal governments have been taking steps to resolve the issues of food deserts through funding, offering programs, and zoning. Through the research examined for this paper, it has shown clear examples of food deserts being remedied from government and civic engagement.

Paper 2: From Racism to Capitalism: The Issue with Modern Day Grocery Store Chains in Low Income Communities

Mikayla Mangle

Gentrification and discrimination have pushed people of color and low-income residents out of the conversation about food security. People of color and people living in low income communities need to have their voices heard to stop the gentrifying of their neighborhoods with large grocery store chains and to evaluate alternative ways to relieve food insecurity within their communities. This paper will explore the historical discrimination against African

Americans by the U.S. government in the sector of farming, food, and economics. The paper will then explore how the years of discrimination by the U.S. government has had lasting impacts on African Americans and poor farmers. It will then be argued that poor people and people of color are still being discriminated against in the sector of food by large grocery store chains and the American capitalist society. It will be discussed how the new discrimination against poor people and people of color is framed as, “helping needy communities” and “providing healthy food.” This paper will use qualitative research by discussing various scholars, court cases, and case studies on specific cities to explain the issue and to support the thesis. Finally, this paper will conclude by exploring various alternatives to help low income communities with the issue of food insecurity that value the people of a community more than the community’s potential economic value.

Paper 3: Appropriate Measures for Combatting Food Insecurity in Rock Hill, SC

Jordan Hamrick

For this research project, I’d like to explore/investigate what I think is a rather complex question. What specific types of food initiatives are able to provide the best social, environmental, and economic benefits for the communities within Rock Hill, South Carolina struggling with food insecurity? In hopes of finding examples that can be applied specifically to Rock Hill, I will approach the question using the lens of case studies involving community gardens, urban farms, food markets, and other urban horticultural projects that have recently sprung up in the United States and have been effective in reducing food insecurity. I especially want to highlight the potential for food initiatives to aid in promoting healthy lifestyles within the community. The focus of this paper will entail the ability for urban agriculture projects to provide food sovereignty, food security, and economic opportunity for low-income areas and communities of color. This project will explore the means by which all communities within Rock Hill may be able to have easy access to healthy, affordable, and diverse food options. By focusing on cities similar in size, in relative location to farmland, and in close proximity to growing urban areas such as Charlotte, I hope to uncover potential solutions to the ever-growing problems inherent in the current food system that affect the people of Rock Hill.

Paper 4: Food Insecurity on College Campuses in the Carolinas and Beyond

Jason Smith

In this study I will examine food insecurity on nearby university/ college campuses in comparison to Winthrop University. College students often face food insecurity due to the lack of money, time, and resources. Not to mention, there are many students among Winthrop’s campus with a diverse range of diets whose needs are not met with the foods options available, which encourages unhealthy eating or worse hunger. I will execute my investigation by finding places on Winthrop campus that are most likely to provide that cater to our student’s needs.

Paper 5: Grocery Habits and Values of Winthrop University Students

Kelly Klimas

Understanding the factors that influence the various choices that college students make when grocery shopping is beneficial to understanding what kinds of consumers they will become as they enter the workforce. The research presented investigates the relationship between students' majors and their grocery shopping habits. Students studying in the sciences and education fields were analyzed in order to distinguish if students in either category had a particular grocery shopping pattern compared to the other. A series of interviews were conducted to determine the specific concepts and values that are emphasized in these fields of study, and their motivations to pursue an education in their field of study. This data was compared to the students' grocery shopping patterns they described, and interpreted to determine if students' majors have an effect on their grocery shopping habits.