

MEAL SWIPES: THE EFFICIENCY OF HAVING MEAL SWIPES FOR FIRST
GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS RELATED TO FOOD INSECURITY AT TEXAS

CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This research adds to the ongoing discussion about food insecurity among college students and aims to bridge the gap in knowledge about how access to meal swipes specifically affects first-generation students. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews, to explore how meal swipes impact first-generation students' perceptions of academic success and campus involvement at TCU. The findings suggest that the inconsistent availability of food through meal swipes has a negative impact on first-generation students' learning, grades, extracurricular participation, social connections, and well-being. This highlights the need for universities like TCU to develop comprehensive solutions to support food-insecure first-gen students, as meeting their basic needs is crucial for ensuring equal opportunities for academic success and overall wellbeing. This research is relevant because it provides insights into a significant yet often overlooked issue that affects many first-gen students' health, achievement, and college experience, contributing to the broader conversation about college student food insecurity.

The research focuses on the food insecurity faced by first-generation college students at Texas Christian University (TCU). Food insecurity is a common issue on college campuses nationwide, with recent studies showing over 30% of students report being food insecure (Billings et al., 2021). The study aims to investigate the impact of a meal swipe program on the academic success and extracurricular involvement of these students by comparing those with access to the program versus those without. National surveys and research studies consistently reveal alarming statistics regarding food insecurity among college students, emphasizing the widespread nature of the problem across all types of colleges (Billings et al., 2021).

As there is a growing concern about food insecurity among college students, this research aims to investigate two critical aspects. Firstly, it seeks to understand how the availability of having a meal swipe program impacts the perception of academic success and extracurricular involvement among first-generation college students at TCU. Secondly, the research aims to explore the consequences faced by students who lack access to such a program and how it affects their college experience. These inquiries are rooted in the context of the national discourse on food insecurity in higher education and align with TCU's commitment to creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The significance of this research lies in the potential to offer valuable insights into the ongoing conversation about food insecurity and its impact on student well-being and achievement. By addressing these research questions, the study has the potential to inform policies and initiatives that can positively impact the lives of students dealing with food insecurity, both within and beyond the TCU community, thereby contributing to a more equitable and supportive higher education landscape.

Through in-depth interviews with first-generation college students, this study found that inconsistent access to free meal swipes negatively impacts students' perceptions of their

academic success and campus involvement. Students lacking meal swipes reported struggling to focus on studies and participate in extracurriculars, while those with meal plans cited ease in accessing food between classes and activities. By analyzing personal narratives, the research revealed students view meal swipes as facilitating academic achievement, social connections, and overall well-being. These findings demonstrate that universities must acknowledge and comprehensively address food insecurity to ensure students can equitably access education and opportunities. Providing food assistance promotes inclusion, retention and graduation rates, underscoring the need for multifaceted solutions like meal swipe donation programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food Insecurity Among College Students

Food insecurity (F.I.) among college students is a pressing issue that can significantly impact their academic success and overall well-being. Several studies have highlighted the prevalence of food insecurity among college students in the United States (Billings et al., 2021). The prevalence of food insecurity among college students nationwide is unknown; however, studies have shown that food insecurity is a problem for some college students, particularly those attending two-year schools and those from lower-income households (Billings et al., 2021). In 2019, one in three college students in the U.S. lacked consistent access to enough food for a healthy lifestyle. More than 40% of students seeking bachelor's degrees are the first in their families to do so; a similar percentage are students of color. Studies show these students are at the highest risk for experiencing F.I. (Laska et al., 2021). As of December 2020, 10.5% of the U.S. population is food insecure, with an average of 39.7% food insecurity on college campuses, specifically. There are limited studies regarding food insecurity at private universities (Billings et al., 2021). According to a recent study conducted nationally, out of nearly 167,000 college

students from 227 institutions, 39% reported being food insecure in the last 30 days, while 46% experienced housing insecurity in the previous year. Additionally, 17% of the respondents stated that they were homeless in the previous year (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). Besides, A study did find that Black/African American, Asian, Multi-Racial, and Hispanic/Latinx students experienced higher rates of food insecurity than White/Caucasian students (Fausto et al., 2021). While food insecurity is a well-documented concern, it remains inadequately addressed, particularly at private universities like Texas Christian University (Billings et al., 2021).

There are several reasons why college students experience higher rates of food insecurity. Firstly, there is an increasing number of low-income college students who struggle to make ends meet. Secondly, high college costs and insufficient financial aid make it difficult for many students to afford basic necessities such as food. Thirdly, many low and moderate-income families face financial hardship, affecting their ability to support their college-going children. Fourthly, the weak labor market for part-time workers also contributes to food insecurity among college students. Fifthly, declining per capita college resources make it difficult for colleges to provide sufficient support to students. Lastly, policies related to the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) specifically exclude many college students from participation, which further exacerbates the problem. Students cannot control these factors, yet they create even more barriers for students on their pathway toward academic success and graduation (Freudenberg et al., 2019).

On the other hand, students who are financially independent, from a racial or ethnic minority background, live off campus with roommates, work while attending school, or receive a Pell Grant are at a higher risk of experiencing food insecurity. In his article, Stebleton (2020) highlighted that first-year college students are more vulnerable to these challenges as they shift

from high school to college and navigate their newfound independence in a college environment. Ensuring access to food can guarantee that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed in college (Stebbleton et al., 2020). In addition, stigma was an issue that many students identified as impacting their access to food. Henry (2017) found a similar situation in her study whereby students, both food secure and food insecure, would avoid discussions of student hunger because of feeling awkward, ashamed, or embarrassed. Henry (2017) argues that this perpetuates the silence around student food insecurity.

The impacts of food insecurity on college students

One critical aspect of food insecurity is its association with academic success. College students facing food insecurity often struggle to concentrate on their studies due to hunger and financial stress (Freudenberg et al., 2019). Food insecurity during college can have a negative impact on students' academic performance and health. The combination of food insecurity and the stress of college leads to food-insecure students having a higher chance of falling into a lower GPA category than their food-secure peers. It also reduces students' ability to excel in class and contributes to lower attendance and completion rates (Meza et al., 2019). The transition from living on campus with access to meal plans to off-campus living during the third year can exacerbate food insecurity, potentially hindering academic progress (DeBate et al., 2021).

Furthermore, food insecurity has detrimental effects on students' mental and physical health. Stress and depression are common among food-insecure students, which can further impede their academic success (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). The health and well-being of students can be negatively impacted by food insecurity, leading to increased stress and depression symptoms (Nikolaus et al., 2019). It is crucial to note that food-insecure students frequently opt for cheaper, highly processed, fast foods packed with added sugars, refined grains, and added fats to stretch

their food budgets (Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). It is vital to steer clear of these behaviors, as they significantly increase the risk of obesity, a severe health condition that can have lifelong consequences. As a result, students experiencing food insecurity had a greater propensity to exhibit challenges related to career planning, time management, and faculty engagement (Stebbleton et al., 2020).

Regarding campus involvement, Peterson and Freidus (2020) implied that the increased prevalence of food insecurity among third-year students could reflect that third-year students are more likely to transition living off-campus or may incur additional expenses as they get deeper into specific majors. Many first-year and second-year students live in residence halls that provide outlets for social interaction and support. They also may have access to campus dining services and meal plans (Peterson & Freidus, 2020). The fact that third-year students experienced higher rates of food insecurity suggests that although they are moving toward degree completion, they may also lack similar supportive structures and be more vulnerable in terms of physical and mental well-being (Peterson & Freidus, 2020).

The intersection of food insecurity and college life underscores the need for comprehensive support systems to ensure students' well-being and academic achievement.

Perceptions of First-Generation College Students Regarding Access to Free Meal Swipe Programs

Food insecurity among college students has been associated with negative self-worth (Camelo & Elliott, 2019), which is compounded by the reluctance to express need due to societal judgments. The decision to attend college often entails incurring significant costs, and the inability to meet basic material needs can engender feelings of shame (Henry, 2017). Access to free meal swipe programs can significantly shape the perceptions of first-generation college

students regarding their academic success and extracurricular involvement (Baker-Smith et al., 2020).

Camelo and Elliott (2019) noted that food insecurity is generally linked to negative self-worth among college students, with the stigma around seeking help adding to the challenges. This stigma can deter students from utilizing support programs, potentially exacerbating their situation.

Hickey et al. (2019) found that students often resort to purchasing cheap, unhealthy options to compensate for a lack of funds for food. To address this issue, initiatives like food pantries, extended dining hall hours, meal sharing programs, and task forces have been suggested to combat food insecurity on campuses. However, Hickey et al.'s research was limited to a single campus, and more comprehensive research involving diverse student demographics is needed.

Olfert et al. (2021) identified factors associated with an increased risk of food insecurity for first-generation students, including race, age, school year, childhood food insecurity, and awareness of campus food resources. Notably, students with a history of childhood food insecurity were over twice as likely to experience food insecurity in college. Further research is required from students' perspectives to comprehensively understand how food insecurity shapes their college experiences and success.

Pratt et al. (2019) emphasized that first-generation college students face considerable financial burdens, which often necessitate employment, impacting their engagement in campus activities and integration. Retention, as highlighted by Pratt et al., not only reflects university culture but also the individual welfare of students. Stephens et al. (2014) added that first-generation students typically struggle more with the college transition and exhibit lower performance.

Strayhorn (2006) conducted a comprehensive study that revealed first-generation students face unique challenges related to finances, family support, cultural transition, and integration. Interestingly, even after controlling for various factors, first-generation status remained a significant predictor of college GPA, highlighting the distinctive difficulties this group encounters. Strayhorn's research also uncovered that first-generation students report lower academic self-efficacy and confidence than their peers. Their apprehensions are not limited to academics; they also anticipate greater difficulty in fitting in and making friends on campus. Financial concerns, according to Strayhorn, are a strong predictor of retention for first-generation students, as working to afford college leaves them with less time for campus activities and integration.

In conclusion, access to free meal swipe programs can profoundly influence the perceptions of first-generation college students regarding their academic success and extracurricular involvement. These programs have the potential to alleviate financial burdens, reduce the stigma associated with food insecurity, and encourage students to seek assistance when needed. While there is a growing body of research on this topic, further investigation is essential to develop comprehensive solutions that address food insecurity for all college students, especially those who are first-generation.

Contribution to Previous Research

Although previous research has addressed food insecurity among college students, there has been limited investigation specifically comparing first-generation students with and without access to meal swipe programs. This study aims to fill this gap by interviewing both groups and analyzing the differences in their perceptions of academic success and campus involvement. By examining the personal narratives of students, this study provides valuable insights into how inconsistent

food access affects first-generation learners who are pursuing a degree. This research is essential for understanding the barriers faced by these students and for informing policies that promote equitable opportunities in higher education. By focusing on the students' voices, this study highlights the human component of food insecurity and its impact on inclusion, wellbeing, and achievement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

This study aims to explore the impact of access to a free meal swipe program on first-generation college students' perceptions of their academic success and extracurricular involvement at Texas Christian University (TCU). The research is guided by the following questions:

RQ1: How does having access to a free meal swipe program impact first-generation college students' perception of their (a) academic success and (b) extracurricular involvement at TCU?

RQ2: How does not having access to a free meal swipe program impact first-generation college students' perception of their (a) academic success and (b) extracurricular involvement at TCU?

Setting

The setting for the present study is Texas Christian University, a private liberal arts college in Fort Worth. At the time of the study university enrollment was approximately 10,000 undergraduate students, approximately 62% of whom were female. Around 63% were white. The faculty and student body are spiritually diverse.

Participants

The participants were recruited through a screening survey distributed via Qualtrics. The survey collected information about the respondents' socioeconomic status, academic standing,

first-generation college student status, meal plan availability, on-campus residency, and participation in the Community Scholar or STEM Scholar programs. This screening process ensured that the selected participants met the following criteria:

- College juniors or seniors at Texas Christian University (TCU)
- Self-identified as working or middle class
- First-generation college students
- Had or did not have access to scholarship-supported meal programs

Approximately 30 potential participants met these criteria. Six participants were randomly selected, with three having access to scholarship-supported meal programs and three without access to such programs.

Data Analysis Procedures

This study was conducted using grounded theory as the theoretical framework. Grounded theory is a systematic qualitative research methodology that involves generating theory through the analysis of data. It is an inductive approach, where the researcher starts with the data and allows theory to emerge from the patterns and relationships observed within the data. The key principle of grounded theory is to let the theory be grounded in or derived from the data, rather than imposing a pre-existing theoretical framework (ATLAS.ti, n.d.).

The epistemological stance of grounded theory is rooted in interpretivism and symbolic interactionism, which recognize the subjective nature of knowledge and the importance of understanding the meanings and interpretations that individuals ascribe to their experiences. In the field of higher education, grounded theory can provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of students, illuminating the social processes, interactions, and contextual factors that shape their academic and personal journeys. By adopting a grounded theory approach, the

researcher can explore the data without being constrained by predetermined hypotheses or theories (Vingerhoets 2018). Instead, the theory emerges from the data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complex phenomena under investigation. This bottom-up approach is particularly valuable in higher education research, where the experiences of students can be diverse and influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic status, cultural backgrounds, and institutional policies.

In the context of this research on the impact of meal swipe programs on first-generation college students, grounded theory can be highly relevant. The study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of these students, which aligns with the exploratory nature of grounded theory. By analyzing the interview data through coding, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling, the researcher can uncover emerging themes and patterns that contribute to the development of a substantive theory.

The study employed a hybrid approach to gather and analyze data. The process involved the following steps:

1. **Screening Survey (Qualtrics Survey):** This was used to identify potential participants meeting specific criteria (n=90). It ensured diversity and relevance in capturing insights into food insecurity among first-generation college students at TCU. (See Appendix A for Screening Survey)
2. **In-depth Interviews:** The researcher conducted one semi-structured individual interview with six randomly and anonymously selected participants from the pool that met inclusion criteria (n=30). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. This enabled gathering of nuanced narratives about participants' experiences with food insecurity during their college years (See Appendix B for Interview Protocol).

3. **Data Storage and Transcription:** All collected data was securely stored TCU Box and protected by a password. Transcription was performed by Rev, the contracted transcription service of the TCU McNair Scholars program. The researcher checked these for accuracy and made corrections as necessary. Interview recordings were disposed of after transcription.
4. **Coding and Analysis:** Coding took place in September and October of 2023, aligning with the academic calendar. Following a grounded theory approach, open coding was first employed to fracture the interview data into discrete concepts and label them with codes capturing their essence. For instance, Student 3's quote "I don't eat, you know. Because you don't have the money to buy food..." was initially coded as "lack of finances" and "inability to purchase food." During axial coding, related open codes were synthesized into broader conceptual categories, like grouping the above codes under "barriers to food access." Finally, selective coding integrated and refined the categories into a core theoretical model grounded in the data, such as positioning "barriers to food access" as a key determinant impacting "academic success" for students without meal swipes. Alongside coding, memoing and constant comparative analysis facilitated theory development until saturation.

Trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness was established through prolonged engagement with the interview data during coding over several months, triangulation by using both survey and interview data sources, peer debriefing with the research team to discuss emerging codes and themes, and member checking by sharing transcripts and findings with participants to confirm accurate representation of their experiences. These strategies enhanced the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings grounded in the rich data from first-generation students.

RESULTS

This section delves into the detailed findings from the data analysis, uncovering the multifaceted impact of having or lacking consistent access to meal swipes on first-generation college students at Texas Christian University. The analysis illuminates how food insecurity intersects with various aspects/themes of the student experience, including academic success, campus involvement, social connections, mental health, and financial struggles. Additionally, it highlights the participants' perspectives on the need for the university to acknowledge and address food insecurity through supportive initiatives and resources.

- Academic Success
 - Students without consistent access to meal swipes reported that food insecurity negatively affected their academic performance, focus, and time management. The additional burden of securing meals was a significant distraction from their studies. Student 1 estimated that without a meal plan, they spent over five hours per week obtaining food, time that could have been dedicated to studying or other academic pursuits. Student 3 felt they were operating at half capacity academically due to financial struggles and personal issues exacerbated by a lack of meal swipes, stating, "I don't eat, you know. And because you don't have that money, you have to wait for something cheaper or maybe something unhealthy so you can save money. It's definitely not healthy." In contrast, students with meal swipes expressed that having consistent access to meals allowed them to focus on their studies without the added stress of finding time for grocery shopping, cooking, and eating.
- Campus Involvement

- Five out of the six participants reported that lacking meal swipes would limit their participation in campus activities and events. Student 1 shared that when they previously had a meal plan, it was convenient to stay on campus for events, club meetings, and other activities, but without one, they typically went home after classes instead of participating in evening events. Student 2, a commuter student, noted that a meal plan would encourage more involvement by allowing them to meet club members on campus instead of buying takeout. Student 3 felt that not having consistent access to food prevented them from fully participating in some campus events where no food or water was provided.
- Social Connections
 - Three participants cited meal plans as facilitating social bonds and connections over shared meals. Student 5 and Student 6 both mentioned that having meal swipes facilitated socializing and bonding with peers without financial concerns. As Student 6 stated, "Having meal swipes facilitates socializing and bonding over meals without financial concern. It also provides energy to continue participating in activities after eating."
- Accessing Campus Resources
 - Four out of the six participants were unaware of existing campus resources or programs specifically addressing student food insecurity. Student 1 and Student 2 were unaware of any such resources, while Student 3 knew only of the Student Support Services (SSS) providing some food items. Several students suggested the need for a campus food pantry or meal swipe donation program to assist those struggling with food insecurity.

- Mental Health
 - Two participants directly linked having consistent access to meals with improved mental health and overall well-being. Student 6 shared a poignant quote that encapsulates this connection: "I've had a therapist tell me 'Here's your checklist: Have you drunk water today? If not, maybe that's why you're feeling down. Have you eaten today, including snacks or a full meal? If not, that could be contributing to your sadness. Have you had social interaction?' These are little things we don't really think about until we start tracking them, but they can significantly impact our mental health." This quote highlights how consistent nutrition, hydration, and social interaction can positively influence one's mental well-being.
- Financial Struggles
 - Five out of the six participants noted that food insecurity compounded their financial struggles. Student 1 worked 27 hours per week partially to afford groceries, and Student 3 had to pay full tuition as a single mother with five children and no income, despite needing more financial aid. Student 4 shared that financial issues almost forced them to drop out at one point, and Student 6 recognized how fortunate they were to have a full scholarship and meal plan compared to relying on food pantries and food stamps growing up.
- Acknowledging the Need
 - Four participants emphasized the need for the university to acknowledge the existence of food insecurity on campus and provide direct support through initiatives such as meal swipe donation programs, food pantries, or extended dining hall hours. As Student 5 stated, "TCU needs to acknowledge food

insecurity exists on campus and do more to address it, such as having a food pantry. They emphasize the importance of destigmatizing the issue and making support accessible, so students focus on school, not finding their next meal."

- Impactful Quotations

- "Having a meal plan is efficient, and there are so many factors to consider when getting food for yourself. You either eat unhealthy food outside or have to go to a grocery store, plan meals for the week, and spend money to buy groceries."
(Student 1 without meal swipes)
- "I would get hungry later in the day and think, 'Okay, I've already used my meal swipes 4 or 5 times this week. I want to go to the BLUU [dining hall], but there are two problems. First, it closes at 9, which I believe is too early, especially since it's the main food source on campus.'" (Student 4 with meal swipes)
- "As a busy student, not having guaranteed access to meals on campus would add significant burdens that could undermine my studies. I would have to devote time to grocery shopping, cooking, and meal prepping - valuable time taken away from academics. Though I'm fully capable of meal planning, having consistent meals provided through a meal plan allows me to direct my limited time towards studying and classes. Food insecurity doesn't just impact my stomach, it hinders my ability to succeed at what I came here to do - learn."

This qualitative study revealed the profound impact of food security on the experiences of first-generation college students at Texas Christian University. Participants who lacked consistent access to meal swipes reported significant challenges in academic performance, campus involvement, and mental well-being. The burden of securing meals detracted from their

ability to focus on studies, participate in extracurricular activities, and maintain overall well-being. Conversely, students with access to meal swipes expressed heightened academic focus, increased campus engagement, and stronger social connections facilitated by the convenience of on-campus dining options. Financial struggles and the compounding effects of food insecurity emerged as recurring themes. Ultimately, the findings underscore the critical need for the university to acknowledge and address student food insecurity through comprehensive support initiatives, such as meal swipe donation programs, food pantries, and extended dining hall hours, to foster an environment that promotes academic success, campus engagement, mental health, and overall well-being for its first-generation student population.

DISCUSSION

This research shed light on the critical yet often neglected issue of food insecurity among first-generation college students at TCU. The study aimed to explore how having access to free meal swipes affects students' perceptions of their academic success and involvement on campus. The results clearly indicated that the lack of consistent access to food has a significant impact on students, making it harder for them to concentrate on their studies, achieve good grades, participate in extracurricular activities, form social connections, and maintain their overall well-being.

Many students who lack reliable access to meal swipes experience a significant impact on their academic performance. They have to spend excessive time acquiring food, which distracts them from studying. Constant hunger and nutritional inadequacy make it difficult for them to concentrate. On the other hand, students with meal plans can easily access food in between classes and activities, thus maximizing their time for academics. Shared campus meals also promote social bonds and integration. Ultimately, the research shows that first-generation

students consider consistent access to meal swipes to be a significant benefit for their college experience.

During this project, it became evident that food insecurity is a prevalent issue among students. However, many students tend to downplay their struggles due to the shame or stigma attached to seeking food assistance. The project incorporated diverse perspectives, but capturing the nuances of food insecurity requires even broader insights, particularly from marginalized populations. Food insecurity intersects with various challenges that students face, such as financial, family support, work obligations, and mental health. Quick solutions are unlikely to solve the problem. Nonetheless, highlighting this critical issue can represent a crucial first step in bringing about positive change.

Throughout the intensive research process, I acquired essential skills in qualitative interviewing, data analysis, and academic research. It reminded me of my passion for supporting marginalized students. This project also reinforced the importance of collaborations between students and communities in implementing solutions. I hope that these findings will encourage further efforts to address student food insecurity at TCU and beyond. The next crucial steps involve broadening research and implementing supportive programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research highlights several potential avenues to address food insecurity among first-generation college students at TCU:

- A meal swipe donation program allowing students with excess meal swipes to donate to food-insecure peers would provide direct food access. Eliminating stigma about using the program through marketing and education is crucial for success.

- A campus food pantry/market could be a great supplement to donated meal swipes by offering culturally appropriate and preferred food items through a community-engaged model. It would be beneficial to have two easily accessible locations and discreet access procedures to ensure that students can utilize the service. Regularly surveying students' needs and preferences using participatory methods would enhance the service's utility.
- Keeping dining halls open until 10 pm would enable late-night studiers to access food. More weekend and holiday hours also help students on campus during atypical times when most operations are closed.
- Workshops on nutrition budgeting and cooking offer students the skills to maximize limited food resources. Collaborating with nutrition/dietetics students to run engaging workshops provides mutually beneficial learning opportunities.
- Increased need-based financial assistance and emergency aid through TCU helps reduce students' need to work long hours. More time for academics and self-care is essential for success.
- Food literacy programs teach practical skills such as wise grocery shopping, nutrition label reading, meal planning, batch cooking, and preparation of affordable healthy meals, which promote self-sufficiency.
- A food recovery program redistributes surplus dining hall and event food to pantries, reducing waste and feeding students through feasibility research and provider collaboration.

- Needs-based microgrant programs assist students in paying for groceries and meals during emergencies. Having small pots of emergency funding in various campus departments streamlines access.

To address food insecurity, I can take individual actions like volunteering at the proposed campus food pantry, promoting donation programs, applying for grant funding, and sharing this research with TCU officials to advocate for expanded resources. It's important to have multifaceted solutions and support systems in place to create lasting change and foster an environment where all students can thrive holistically. Although progress takes time, every step, no matter how small, can make an immediate, tangible difference in the lives of students experiencing food insecurity.

LIMITATIONS

It is important to acknowledge that this study has some limitations. Firstly, the small sample size of only 6 participants might not reflect the diversity of experiences among first-generation college students at TCU. Having a larger number of interviews could provide more insights with greater depth and variety of perspectives. Secondly, as I am a first-generation student myself, I might have certain biases that could influence my interpretation of the data. Although efforts were made to minimize any biases through objective analysis, my positionality could still affect the findings. Lastly, there is limited existing research on food insecurity specifically related to first-generation students and meal swipe programs. Therefore, more studies are needed to place my findings within a broader knowledge base. Overall, while this study offers valuable insights, the limitations affect the generalizability of the results. For a comprehensive understanding of this complex issue, further research with larger and more diverse samples and increased objectivity is required.

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APPENDIX A**Screening Survey**

1. Name
2. Email
3. Gender Male Female Non-Binary Decline to State
4. Age
5. Race/Ethnicity American Indiana/Alaska Native Asian Black/African American
 Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander Hispanic/Latinx Multi-Ethnic U.S. Non-Resident
 Decline to State White
6. Are you a college junior or senior? No ["No" response ends the survey with a message
 "Thank you for participating!"]
7. How would you describe your family's socioeconomic status?
 Working Class Middle Class Upper Class [A response of "Upper Class" ends the survey
 with a message "Thank you for participating!"]
8. Are you a first-generation college student? Yes No ["No" response ends the survey with
 a message "Thank you for participating!"]
9. Do you currently have a meal swipe plan at TCU? Yes No
10. Do you live on campus or do you commute? Live on Campus Commute
11. Are you a Community Scholar? Yes No
12. Are you a STEM Scholar? Yes No

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Topic Domain: Financial Resources

1. You said on your survey that you consider your family to be [working class] or [middle class].

Potential follow-up Questions

- Can you tell me what you mean by that?
- What do your parents do for a living?
- Do you feel comfortable estimating your family's annual income while you were growing up? What about now?

2. How does your family support you financially while you are at college?

Potential follow-up questions

- How did you pay for it all on your own?
- How do you use that financial support from your family?

3. Are you working now?

Potential follow-up Questions

- How many hours per week do you work?
- How many jobs do you work?
- Can you estimate what your monthly income is?

4. Do you feel that being a first-generation college student has impacted your experience with food insecurity or access to meal swipes on campus?

Topic Domain 2: Student Success

1. What is your current GPA?
2. How successful do you think you are at TCU? Can you tell me a bit about that?

Possible Follow-Up Questions

- What does success look like to you?
 - How do you manage all of your classes?
 - How many hours do you spend each week studying for your classes?
3. Do you feel that having access to meal swipes on campus has helped you to focus on your studies and be successful in college?

Topic Domain 3: Campus Involvement

1. Tell me about your campus involvement.

Possible Follow-Up Questions

- What clubs are you part of?
- Do you hold any leadership positions on campus?
- How many hours per week do you spend on campus involvement?
- In what ways has food insecurity [explain] affected your ability to participate in campus activities and events?

Topic Domain 3: Campus Resources

1. What resources make it easier to be successful at TCU?

Possible Follow-Up Questions

- You said you have meal swipes. How does this impact your ability to be successful at TCU? OR

- You said you don't have meal swipes. How does this impact your ability to be successful at TCU?
- Are you aware of any resources or programs on campus that help to address food insecurity among students?
- Have you ever sought help or support from faculty or staff members regarding food insecurity or access to meal swipes? If so, what was your experience like?

2. What makes it harder for you to be successful at TCU?

Possible Follow-Up Questions

- You said you have meal swipes. How does this impact your ability to be successful at TCU?
- You said you don't have meal swipes. How does this impact your ability to be successful at TCU?
- Have you ever had to go without food because you couldn't access a meal swipe or afford to buy food on your own?
- How do you think the college or university could better support first-generation college students who are experiencing food insecurity or struggling to access meal swipes on campus?
- Can you tell me about your experience with accessing meal swipes on campus? Have you ever experienced any issues with using your meal swipes?