

## **First-Year College Students' Physical Activity and Dietary Behaviors: A School-Year Follow-Up Study**

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Entering college can be an exciting, yet stressful event for many young adults. While first-year college students are trying to changes in academic workloads, support networks, and their new environment, students have shown to struggle in self-regulating their health behaviors, including physical activity (PA) and dietary behaviors. Although “Freshman 15”, i.e. excessive weight gain of 15 pounds, is a myth, research has shown that first-year students are vulnerable in adopting negative health behaviors, e.g. declines in PA, unhealthy diet, and weight gain. Research has shown that multiple intra-individual (e.g. self-efficacy) and inter-individual (e.g. peer support) factors impact college students’ PA and dietary behaviors, but very little is known about how institutional factors (i.e. available student services) contribute to these changes.

In this context, the overarching research question of this project is: How do the usage and awareness of health and recreational services contribute to the change in first-year students’ PA, dietary behaviors, and body composition. Specifically, this project aims to 1) examine the extent to which the usage and awareness of health and recreational services contribute to first-year students’ PA, dietary behaviors, and body mass index (BMI), 2) examine the development of the usage and awareness of health and recreational services of health and recreational services, PA, dietary behavior, and BMI during the first year, and 3) investigate the role of moderating factors (BMI, age, academic workload, alcohol usage, food plan, residency location) on the development of the usage and awareness of health and recreational services of health and recreational services, PA and dietary behaviors.

These findings will contribute to the scientific knowledge and will be used to improve the efficacy of PA and dietary behavior interventions among first-year college students. The findings can guide the University Health Center and Recreational Sports in their efforts to increase awareness and improve the programming of their key services.