

Food and Hunger Initiatives at Fort Hays State University



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Introduction

Fort Hays State University (FHSU) students, faculty, staff, and alumni are committed to addressing food insecurity issues on campus, in the local community, and around the world. Beginning as a group of concerned individuals, the movement has developed into the FHSU Food and Hunger Initiatives, which includes the Victor E. Garden, the Tiger Food Exchange, educational programs, a team of student workers, and a campus committee.

Victor E. Garden

The Victor E. Garden is the campus cooperative garden that provides participants and the Tiger Food Exchange with fresh produce. The original garden was established in the spring of 2011 as a service-learning project in a political science course focused on food taught by Dr. Shala Mills. With help from the Physical Plant, it was located near their facilities along Big Creek for four years until it was relocated in the spring of 2015. With increased support from campus administration and funds from a Healthy Living Grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, the new Victor E. Garden was established in a meadow near the Robbins Center. While the original garden was a good place to start, the new site provides a more permanent location with six times the space and infrastructure supported by grant funds. The garden features thirty raised beds, a shed, a portable greenhouse, an automatic drip irrigation system, and a meeting space, that will become an outdoor classroom.



Tiger Food Exchange

The Tiger Food Exchange (TFE) is the campus food pantry as well as a place for the community to share knowledge. Located in Forsyth Library, it was established in the fall of 2012 to address food insecurity among the campus community. Expanding over the years, it now consists of numerous shelves and a refrigerator with a variety of foods, a collection of literature related to food, and a meeting space. The library has also provided additional storage and office space with a chest freezer and shelving for donations. Food is supplied by individual and business donors, food drives, the Victor E. Garden, and grant funds. The TFE is available to campus community members during times of need and, more than just a pantry, it serves as a location for a number of educational and outreach programs related to nutrition.

March 2011 – The original Victor E. Garden is established



October 2011 – First SWIPE Out Hunger event



October 2012 – Tiger Food Exchange opens



February 2013 – From Harvest to the Hungry series



April 2014 – Kansas Health Foundation grant received



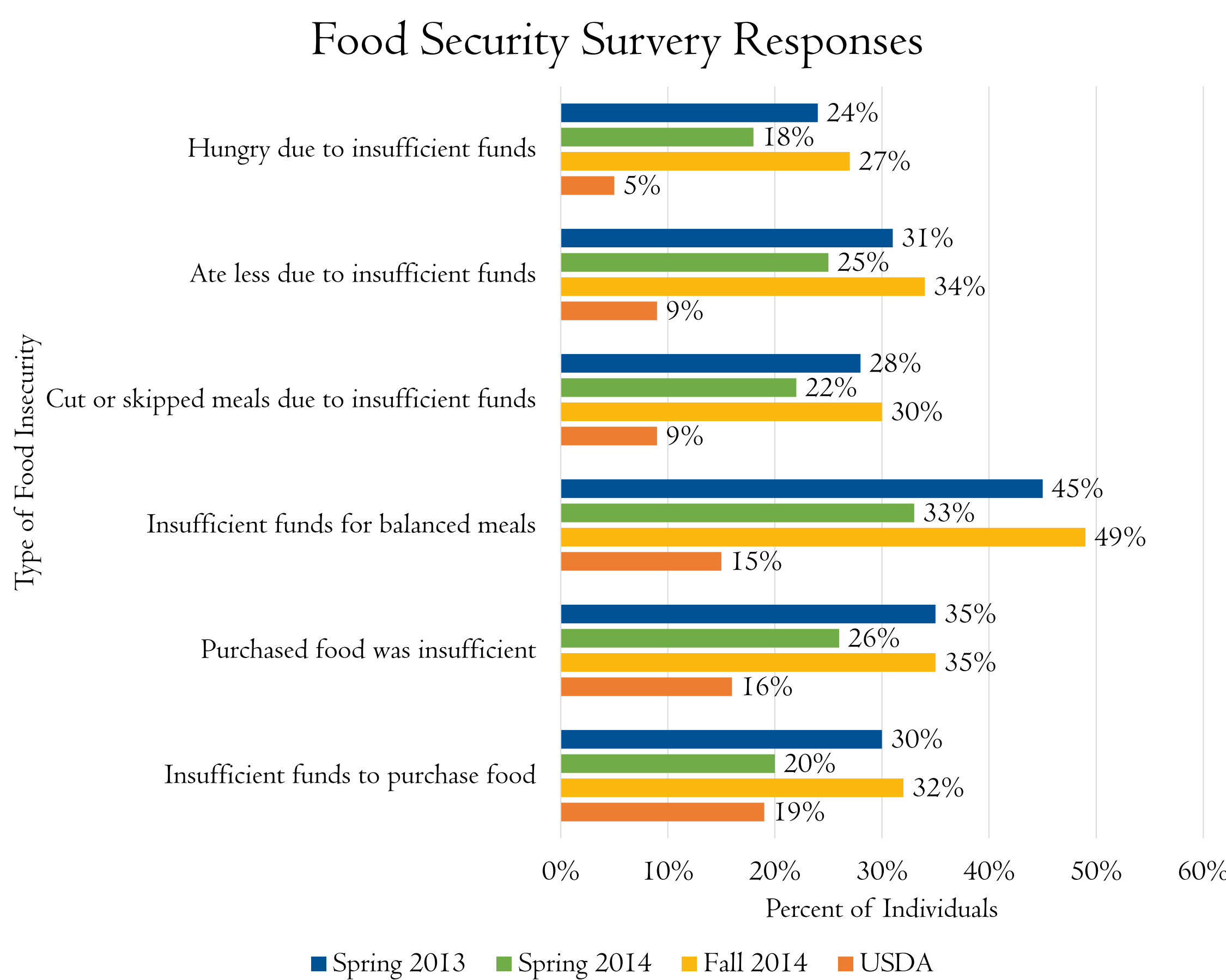
August 2014 – Fresh Food Fridays begin

March 2015 – The new Victor E. Garden is established



Food Security Survey

To measure food insecurity among the campus community, and to compare trends with national averages, a team of students and faculty conducted a multi-semester survey based on the United States Department of Agriculture Six-Item Short Form of the Food Security Survey Module. It asks individuals to indicate if they have experienced six types of food insecurity within the previous twelve months. The survey results revealed that FHSU student food insecurity rates were higher than the national average.



Kansas Health Foundation Grant

The FHSU Food and Hunger Initiatives Committee was awarded a two-year Healthy Living Grant from the Kansas Health Foundation in the spring of 2014 to broaden the reach of its campus-wide initiative by improving the infrastructure, developing and implementing educational strategies, and investing in needed resources. Funds were used for infrastructure, student worker positions, educational programming, and food. Prior to this grant, the program also received financial support from the Educational Opportunity Fund from Student Government Association that financed a student coordinator position for two years.

Acknowledgements

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