

## **ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** Perceived factors that affect freshman college students when choosing foods from university dining facilities

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Late-adolescents experience significant changes when they leave their homes and live independently while pursuing a degree at colleges and universities. During this transition, overall health can be influenced by many factors including individuals' dietary choices. Individuals in their twenties tend to gain weight faster than any other age group, showing importance in the foods that they choose to eat when transitioning to college. This study's goal was to determine the perceived factors that affect freshman students' food choices during their first year of college while obtaining their meals from on-campus dining facilities. This study applied a qualitative approach to collecting and analyzing its data. The results of this study revealed freshman students experience both internal and external factors that affected their food choices. These identified factors resulted in suggestions to assist students in choosing healthier food options. These suggestions included helping students understand the dietary importance of healthy eating, time management, and food availability. Results implicated the importance of the universities' support when trying to establish healthy eating on college campuses. This study's findings also suggest providing ample support to mothers of various communities due to their significant influence in how students choose their food during their first year in college.