

Assignment 4.1

Program Rationale

Nourishing Minds: Promoting Healthy Eating Habits Among Sorority Women at Emory University

(NourishU)

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Young adults aged 18-25 are globally recognized as a vulnerable group in maintaining healthy dietary habits, particularly during adolescence to adulthood (Poobalan et al., 2014). This period is marked by significant lifestyle changes, such as increased independence, busy schedules, and social pressures, often leading to poor eating behaviors. Research indicates that young adults in this age group are at heightened risk for weight gain, with dietary behaviors like irregular meal patterns, frequent snacking on energy-dense foods, and skipping meals contributing to the issue (Sogari et al., 2018). Despite generally positive attitudes toward healthy eating, many young adults struggle to translate these intentions into consistent behaviors, often citing barriers such as cost, time constraints, and lack of cooking skills (Capper et al., 2022).

The prevalence of overweight and obesity among young adults has been steadily increasing worldwide. For instance, 34.1% of college students are classified as overweight or obese, reflecting a significant health challenge within this demographic (Li et al., 2022). Unhealthy eating behaviors not only have immediate consequences, such as weight gain and reduced energy, but also increase the risk of long-term health issues, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health disorders (Wang et al., 2024). The impact of social media on body image and eating behaviors has added to this issue globally, amplifying social comparison and unrealistic appearance ideals (Skubisz et al., 2023).

At Emory University, sorority women represent a specific population at heightened risk for poor dietary behaviors. Sorority culture often emphasizes appearance, further intensified by high social media use, especially platforms like Instagram (Skubisz et al., 2023). Research indicates that sorority members experience significant pressure to conform to appearance ideals, which can lead to unhealthy dietary habits, including meal restriction and disordered eating, spurred by social comparison and body image concerns (Skubisz et al., 2023). The unique social dynamics of sororities—including emphasis on appearance and social media engagement—expose these women to greater pressures, influencing their eating behaviors (Skubisz et al., 2023). Additionally, these women frequently juggle busy schedules filled

with academic responsibilities, sorority commitments, and social events, often relying on quick, processed snacks to meet their needs (Skubisz et al., 2023). These factors make sorority women an ideal target for an intervention addressing social and individual challenges in fostering healthier dietary habits.

To address these issues, the proposed program, NourishU: Promoting Balanced Eating Among Sorority Women, will provide education, peer support, and practical tools to encourage healthier eating habits. The program will implement a series of meal preparation and balanced nutrition workshops, supplemented by group challenges that incentivize nutritious choices. Additionally, the program will collaborate with Emory's campus dining services to ensure more accessible, nutritious grab-and-go options. These workshops will cover practical topics such as identifying affordable healthy snacks and incorporating fresh foods, and discussing psychological motivators behind unhealthy eating, like coping with stress. The program will create a supportive environment conducive to long-term dietary changes by addressing individual, interpersonal, and institutional influences.

If every sorority member replaced just one processed snack with a fresh, nutritious option daily, it would reduce caloric intake by approximately 150 calories daily (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2024). Over a 15-week semester, this simple change could prevent an intake of nearly 16,000 calories per student—equivalent to about 45 fast-food meals (McKenzie et al., 2023, p. 31). Reducing caloric intake helps manage weight and can lead to improved energy levels, better concentration, and decreased risk of chronic conditions like obesity and high blood pressure. This small, consistent change could significantly enhance students' well-being, promoting healthier habits beyond their college years (Sogari et al., 2018).

This initiative aligns closely with Emory University's health promotion goals, which include fostering a supportive environment for student wellness (Emory University, 2024). Improved eating habits can enhance academic performance, social well-being, and overall energy levels, contributing to a more vibrant campus culture (Pooblan et al., 2014). By improving students' nutrition, the program could reduce stress and potentially lower healthcare costs associated with poor eating habits. This program offers sorority organizations an opportunity to support members' health and well-being, potentially boosting

academic success and quality of life. Parents and families will also appreciate the emphasis on health and wellness, as the program equips their daughters with the skills to make healthier choices—impacting their college years and lifelong habits. By addressing this need now, we set these students on a healthier trajectory that extends well beyond their time at Emory (Emory University, 2024).

The success of this program lies in its tailored approach that leverages the social dynamics of sorority life, promoting health-conscious behaviors within an existing peer network. The alignment with Emory’s wellness initiatives provides a strong foundation for long-term sustainability, and evidence-based practices increase its likelihood of success. With potential expansion to other groups on campus, NourishU has the potential to become a model for addressing dietary health among college students.

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