

Feeding the Future

Grant Abstract

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Since the Sense of Community Questionnaire was created in 1986, there has been extensive research into young students' sense of belonging and their overall success. However, there has been limited research on undergraduate students' sense of community at university. This research investigated the link between sense of community and food among students living in Bailey Hall. During Fall Semester 2013, twelve first-year undergraduate students were selected based on their membership in the Residential Initiative for the Study of the Environment (RISE) program and their level of participation in program events as of October 2013. One-on-one interviews with selected students were conducted, and gathered information about the student's demographic background, what the word "community" means to them, and their current sense of community at MSU. Preliminary interview responses showed that students who participated in RISE events, engaged with peers and faculty, and took advantage of opportunities to get involved on campus felt a strong connection to the RISE community and to MSU. During the months following the initial interviews, community-building activities focused on food and agriculture were staged. These activities were intended to provide a space for students to connect with peers and faculty through the spectrum of food production, preparation and consumption. Students will be interviewed again during Spring Semester 2014 to assess changes in their perception and definition of community. The researchers expect to see a greater sense of community among interviewed students in their Spring 2014 responses compared to Fall 2013.