

Hello! I am a senior Social Work student at Ohio University, co-chair of the Collegiate Mental Health Advisory of Ohio and a Resident Advisor of three years. My experiences in these roles have shown me that Resident Advisors occupy a unique space on campus. We are student leaders responsible for supporting hundreds of peers yet often navigate our own basic needs challenges with little acknowledgment. With support from Ohio University's Honors Tutorial College, I decided to conduct an IRB approved focus group study exploring experiences of food insecurity among OU's Resident Advisors and Senior Resident Advisors. This study serves as my undergraduate thesis, as well as contributing to a greater body of research for this understudied population. It explores how food insecurity affects the personal wellbeing, academic performance, and job responsibilities of the RA/SRA population.

Existing research shows that food insecurity affects college students in much deeper ways than just not having enough food. It influences their academics, mental health, emotional well-being, and physical wellness. Many students cope by skipping meals, buying cheaper but less nutritious food, or stretching limited resources, which can create long-term challenges. Through my literature review, I am yet to find a study highlighting the specific experiences of RA/SRAs.

This thesis allows me to merge my social work lens with my prevention background as an Ohio Certified Prevention Specialist Assistant (OCPSA), giving me the opportunity to dive deeper and understand how individual struggles are shaped by broader institutional structures. My goal is not only to document the realities RAs and SRAs face, but to advocate for policy changes and resource strategies that address these gaps. By elevating the voices of a student employee group often excluded from basic needs conversations, I hope to help Ohio University (and higher education) recognize that those responsible for supporting campus communities must also be supported.

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