

# Project "PAW" (PEERS Affirming Wellness) Pals

Walker, F.; Dixon, B; McWhorter, R.; Duffus, E.; McWhinney, S.

Prairie View A&M University Prairie View, Texas

## Abstract

Projects PAW (Peers affirming Wellness) Pals educates, motivates, and promotes nutrition practices and physical behaviors that contributes to the health and well-being of young adults in a University setting. This is to be accomplished in three years, using one of three instructional methods, (face to face, web assisted and web based) each year to determine the effectiveness of each methods, on student learning outcomes. The project focuses on adapting existing curricula and related materials traditionally used in teaching basic nutrition and dietary principles to include information and the application of activities related to stress management, physical activity, and effective weight management strategies. Twenty Nutrition majors were trained to be Pals to their peers in exercising, food portion identification, and nutrient analyses. Changes in nutritional knowledge, food choices and behavior, physical activity, and stress management are recorded.

BMI values and stress levels are determined pre-course, followed by the development of personal goals evaluated by each student. Preliminary results after using the face to face instructional strategies indicated that 80% of students (n- 120) showed an increase in awareness of basic nutrition principles and made positive dietary behavior changes. Results of stress tests indicated that 30% of the participants had test scores above 300, indicating an eighty percent chance of illness or accident. BMI values ranged from 17 to 40, where the normal range is 18.5 to 24.9. Changes in nutrition awareness and dietary behaviors were determined by PRE/Post – assessment measures and daily food and activity records, including determinates of food choices.

## Introduction

Overweight and obesity are major nutrition- related conditions in the United States. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the adult population. Estimates are that nearly two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese. Blacks, and especially women, ranked among the highest level of obesity. Studies by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention determined that as many as 70.6% of blacks women across various age and ethnic groups classified as overweight or obese between 1999 and 2002. (CDC BRFFS 2002)

The health issues of young adults have received relatively little attention compared to those of adolescents although the critical issues in young adulthood parallel those of adolescents. Young adults are often far worse than adolescents on health indicators with many measures of negative outcomes including rates of injury, homicide, and substance use. These measures of health status often peak during the young adult (Park, 2006).

## Objectives

- To assess the changes in student Nutrition Awareness and Dietary Practices among students taught using Face-to-Face teaching method.
- To identify BMI values, Stress and Physical Activity levels of students .



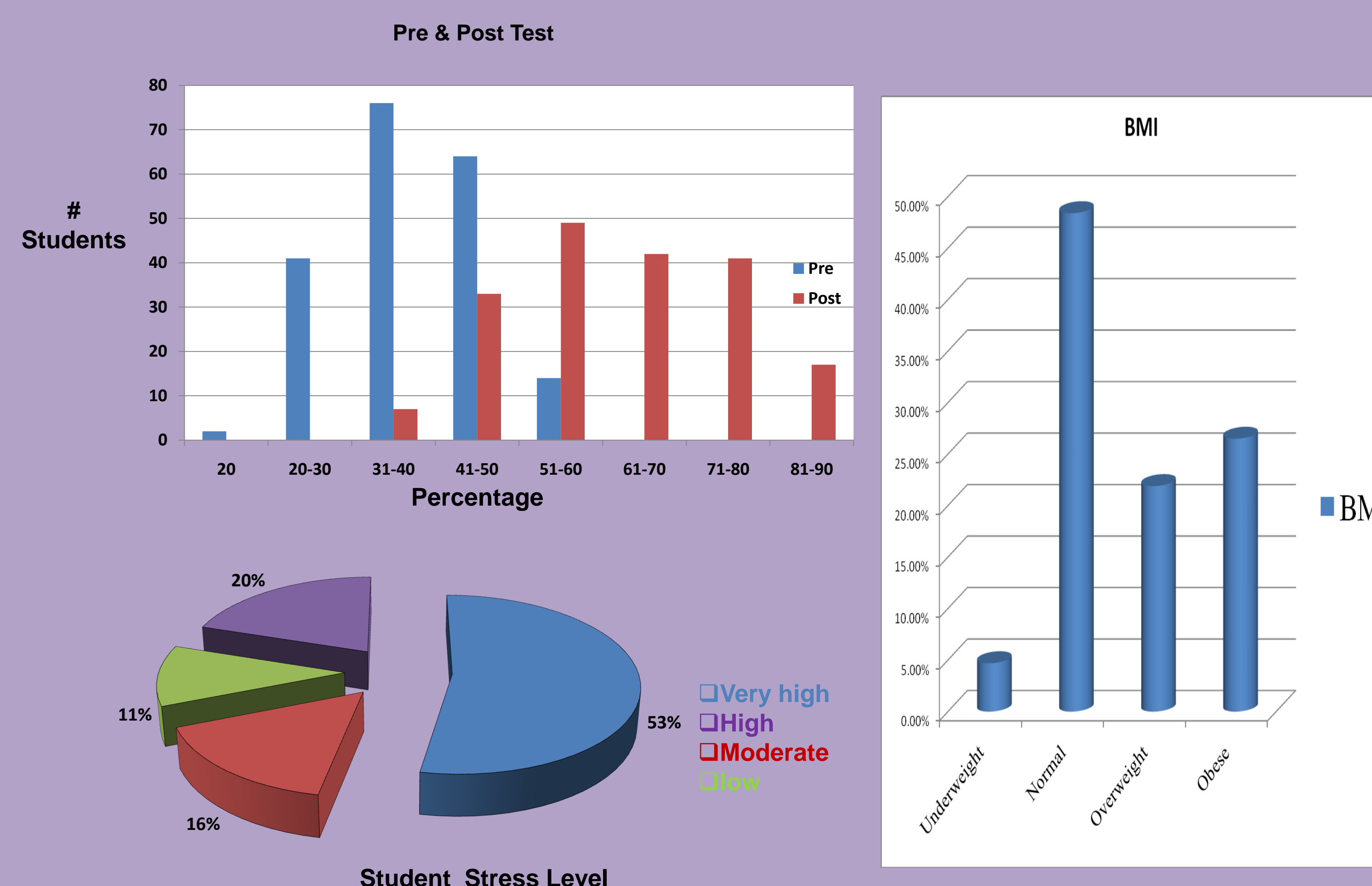
## Methods

The research was conducted at Prairie View A&M University, during the spring and fall semesters of 2009. The Nutrition and Human Science faculty and staff developed enhanced nutrition modules for the Human Ecology classes. Enhancements included Daily Food Dairy, Nutrition Awareness, Physical Activity with peer support.

Students who registered in the basic nutrition course volunteered to participate in this project. Twenty nutrition majors were trained to be Pals to their peers in exercising, food portion identification, and nutrient analyses. Pedometers, and food inventory forms were given to all the participants to record their daily activities and food intake. The instructors used enhanced face-to-face teaching strategies that included individualized wellness plans. Stress test was administered to all participants and special support was provided to those who were overweight, obese, and had high or very high stress levels. Pre and post –tests were administered for nutritional awareness and psychosocial behavior. The preliminary data were analyzed using Microsoft excel software.

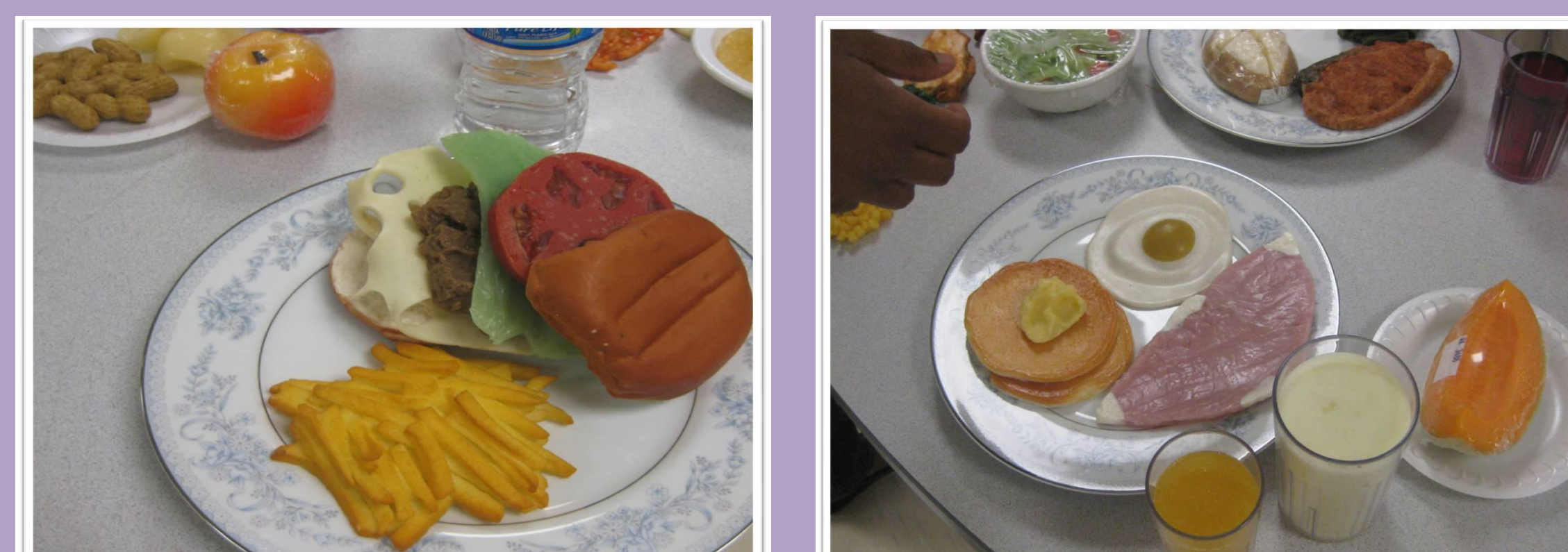
## Results

Preliminary results showed a significant increase on the nutrition awareness post test. Evaluation of their wellness plans indicated positive changes in students' nutrition knowledge, behavior, and physical activity.



## Students' Comments

- I recognized that I ate too many discretionary calories and not enough of the calories from food that I needed.
- I am surely but slowly meeting my goals
- I have recognized a great change throughout this experience. It has definitely been a positive experience.
- I am eating more complete meals, especially breakfast, and exercise at least three times a week.



## Discussion/Conclusion

The modified teaching modules were effective using the face-to-face method. The results showed significant changes after intervention. Majority of the students were more health conscious, and understood the stages of behavioral changes. The participants stated that they were more motivated to reached their nutrition and wellness goals. For the future more support will be made available to student from PAW Pals and faculty.

In conclusion, data showed positive changes in the participants' awareness of basic nutrition principles and behavior changes . More stress management techniques will be emphasized which will help decrease BMIs and unhealthy practices .



## References

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