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Assessing Health Trends and Disparities of College-aged Students at a Mid-Atlantic HBCU

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Overweight and obesity numbers are at record high rates and climbing. Obesity affects all age ranges, genders, and populations; however, it is more prevalent in specific groups such as African- American women and men, women of any race, and those aged 18-40. Young adults aged 18-25 are in the prime years to make decisions regarding their own health. Because obesity affects the younger age groups the most, it is important for colleges and universities to look at the health status of their students and to help them take action towards better health with educational and exercise programs. **PURPOSE:** To investigate whether differences existed between body weight, body mass index, body fat percentage, and systolic blood pressure based on gender and ethnicity. **METHODS:** This was a descriptive research study using ex-post facto data from the TriFit Laboratory at Delaware State University. SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data using descriptive statistics. Two-sample *t*-tests were used to examine differences in the variables based on gender and ethnicity. **RESULTS:** There were 2,051 participants in this study. Demographic data show 77.08% ($n = 1581$) of the participants were Black, 9.61% ($n = 197$) were White, 6.73% ($n = 138$) were Hispanic, 4.73% ($n = 97$) were Biracial, and 1.85% ($n = 38$) were listed as "Other." There were 66.75% ($n = 1369$) participants who were female and 33.25% ($n = 682$) of participants who were male. Significant differences at the $p < .05$ level were found between body weight and gender, body fat percent and gender, body fat percent and ethnicity, and systolic blood pressure and gender. While not found to be statistically significant, other trends were readily apparent in the data. **CONCLUSION:** The results of this study indicated that there were several statistically significant differences in the participants' body weight, body mass index, body fat percentage, and systolic blood pressure based on gender and ethnicity. Based on the findings of this study, a comprehensive, campus-wide strategy to prevent weight gain and to promote weight loss in college-aged students is proposed.