

## 48. SWACSM Abstract

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### Assessing Changes in Exercise, Dietary and Sleeping Habits in Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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#### ABSTRACT

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to analyze changes in exercise, dietary and sleeping habits of undergraduate and graduate students at University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and Albany Medical College (AMC) before the COVID-19 pandemic, in April 2020 (start of stay-at-home restrictions) and in April 2021 (1 year later). **METHODS:** An anonymous online survey was distributed to UCSD and AMC students. Participants used the Likert scale with “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree” to report how COVID-19 has changed each aspect of their lifestyle during three time points: before pandemic, April 2020 and April 2021. Responses were divided by undergraduate and graduate students. Paired t tests were run to determine if there was a statistically significant difference before pandemic vs. April 2020; before pandemic vs. April 2021; and April 2020 vs. April 2021. **RESULTS:** Our study found the following statistically significant trends ( $p < 0.05$ ). Undergraduate students reported fewer hours of sleep before pandemic vs. April 2020 and before pandemic vs. April 2021. Graduate students reported decreased exercise levels before pandemic vs. April 2020. Both undergraduate and graduate students experienced decreased access to recreational facilities and healthy food sources at each time point. Graduate students reported significant difficulty in following a healthy lifestyle at each of the three time points. **CONCLUSION:** Undergraduate students experienced statistically significant difficulties with obtaining adequate sleep, access to recreational facilities and access to healthy food sources. Graduate students reported statistically significant difficulties with participating in weekly exercise, access to recreational facilities, access to healthy food sources and healthy lifestyles overall. Both student communities would benefit from administrative policies that increase access to on-campus recreational facilities and dining halls. Further interventions for undergraduate students include targeted sleep hygiene or sleep education programs. Graduate students could benefit from wellness programs that involve a fitness component to help meet the recommended 150 minutes of weekly exercise.