

**Title:** Obesity Symposium: An Exploration of Causes of Obesity

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This proposal is for a symposium on causes of obesity. Obesity has arguably reached epidemic proportions in America today: Some studies show that up to 40% of adults and 20% of children are clinically obese. The costs of health care associated with obesity reach a staggering \$190 million per year, representing over 20% of medical spending. Furthermore, Americans' annual spending on weight loss recently topped \$70 billion. This symposium will explore several prominent causes of obesity, particularly those relevant to the lives of college students. Our first talk will address how sleep deprivation can trigger hormones that disrupt normal patterns of hunger and metabolism, thus increasing the risk of obesity. The second talk will explain how chronic stress stimulates hormones that reduce metabolic rate and thus leads to obesity. The third talk explores the gut microbiome, which has a clearly demonstrated link to obesity, and elucidates how this delicate ecosystem is impacted by patterns of nursing and antibiotic exposure during infancy. The fourth and final talk will argue, based upon current research, that diet and exercise have limited effect on weight loss. One appropriate take-home message from this symposium is that obesity is not simply about food intake; the complexity of human physiology means that many other factors are involved. Furthermore, given the difficulty of losing weight once it is gained, obesity must be treated in a preventive, not curative, way. If Americans hope to address this crisis effectively, they must stop obesity before it begins.

## Works Cited

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