

## The Insider: Freshman 15, an urban legend

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Insider@tulane.edu

A new study suggests that the freshman 15 is a myth, but Dr. Timothy S. Harlan, also known as Dr. Gourmet, says first-year students may not want to double back to the dessert line so quickly.



“I think that adults should never splurge on a second dessert because dessert is just that, a splurge,” says [Harlan](#), who specializes in healthy eating for healthy living. “A splurge is not something that goes with every single meal.”

The term [freshman 15](#) was popularized by a 2000 study reporting that students gain an average of 15 pounds during their first year of college after moving from home to campus.

Studies ? old and new ? have found that irregular sleeping habits and buffet-style dining hall menus are still considered the culprits in weight gain among students.

Harlan, associate professor of clinical medicine at Tulane, says the first thing to be noted from older studies as compared to the [new study](#) is the size of the sample used. In the 2000 study, there were only 60 students surveyed whereas the latest study followed more than 7,000 students.

While the new study does not indicate that there is no weight gain at all, it suggests that students often gain between 2.5 and 3.5 pounds during the first year of college, not 15.

Harlan says that making healthy food choices and avoiding drinks loaded with calories is the best way to stay on top of freshman weight gain.

“The single easiest way for students to be healthier is to never drink soda, ever,” says Harlan. “One soda every other day translates to about eight pounds per year worth of calories.”

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