
UA COMMITTEE ON DINING AND HOUSE DINING ADVISORY GROUP PUBLIC FORUM

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2010

7.30-9PM, FIRST FLOOR STUDENT CENTER

Present: Adam Bockelie (Chair-UA Dining), Karen Nilsson (Senior Associate Dean-Residential Life), Rich Berlin (Director-Campus Dining), Tom Gearty (Communications-DSL).

Attendance: About twenty students over the course of the Forum.

PROCEEDINGS

Forum opens 7:40. Tom presents outline of House Dining Advisory Group.

The initials and residence of each speaker are noted

DB (Bexley) + TH (East Campus): Why eliminate subsidy?

- With subsidy Dining has no reserve fund
- Reserve takes money from other parts of the system
- No reserve means no money for renovations

LM (Bexley): Why not remove dining halls?

- Dining support community in these dorms
- We've tried removing it before
- Some people want a dining hall

DB: Does the Taskforce recommendation explicitly say to remove the deficit entirely?

- The people who wrote it say to remove the subsidy
- Millions in other savings requested by the Taskforce

TH: Clarify Financial Aid recommendation:

- NOT two tiered
- No intention of the financial aid office to create a tiered system in the future; that is against their principles

TH: How will a new meal plan affect waiting lists for dorms without kitchens?

- This is a concern. Many dorms have a waiting list. We hope that the one year lag time is enough for the shifts.
- Housing is aware of the additional stress on the lottery

SW (Burton-Conner): What are the opt-in options?

- Depends on the tradeoff between flexibility and value.
- Can be part of system; can also walk in

Question to the audience: what do you want?

- At a convenient central facility, maybe 5 nights/week

Question to the audience: what about breakfast?

- Maybe grab and go
- Don't think that students will wake up for a hot breakfast

GJ (Random): What is the benefit of a plan?

- Give predictability to the operator

LM: What about building a central dining hall?

- That is a long term proposal which would not solve the issues in the short term
- W1 will offer this
- Cannot close dining halls in dorms because a central facility is not convenient for them

NK (Bexley): Has the committee thought about the number of dining halls? What about closing Baker or McCormick?

- Suggestion comes up every few years. Residents don't like the idea.
- McCormick closed their dining hall for about ten years in the 1990s. Killed dorm vitality. They voted to bring dining back.

TH: Why are you proposing class differentiation?

- More flexible for upperclassmen since they have UROP/lab/etc.
- Institute has an interest in helping students transition

TH: How do you incentivize quality in vendor selection?

- We have specific quality benchmarks for ingredients (e.g. USDA grade A meat, minimum orange sizes, etc.)
- Vendor negotiates basic contract which specifies baseline subsidy to vendor; they are expected to break even with this subsidy. Also give vendor a portion of sales to incentivize them to sell more. If costs grow, vendor may not make a profit.
- Even with a meal plan we can withhold some money from vendor if they do not meet performance standards

JC (Next House): What about a tiered (e.g. 7/10/14) plan?

- HDAG can look at it. It still must erase the subsidy.
- Price per meal will increase with additional flexibility

SS (Green Hall): ????

- We have tried a lot of different "meal plan" type things in the past
- Current House Dining Membership system was designed by Simmons students when the dorm was first built.

SS: What about late night options?

Question to the audience: How late? Where?

- 2am

- Baker would be convenient

SW: Why incentivize vendor on revenue not profit?

- Subsidy for first year is pre-negotiated. If vendor spend more they lose money. If they spend less the subsidy is reduced.
- It is easiest to pay vendor per sale because sales are easily tracked. "Profit" is easier for vendor to manipulate

SS: Why a new dining facility in W1?

- There will be 460 new students in that building
- We hear a lot of talk about a central dining hall
- Dining hall will be outside security and will be large (~400 seats).
- This was a decision by the phoenix group

JC: When will W1 open?

- Still needs funding.
- Shooting for fall 2011 or 2012. 2012 more likely.

RC (East Campus): Have you considered closing a dining hall when W1 comes online?

- That would be a decision of the houses involved

TH: Will W1 affect offerings elsewhere on campus (e.g. Stata, Café 4)

- Probably not
- Sloan Dining is more likely to affect those operations

Forum closes 9pm