Dining Hall Working Group
Minutes
Friday October 1st, 2021

Present: Anne, Ciel, Eliza, Jaco, Max, Michael, Mike, Mustafa, Stephanie, Tiffany, Tony, Yichen, Zahir

Regrets: Amogh, Bolu (sent notes), Minahil,

What do you like about the Dining Hall?/What is working well?
- Variety of food
- Quality of food, great breadth of options
- Appreciate the extended hours – pan and pop-up stations works well
- Like the option of take-out
- Nice staff, friendly staff, makes students feel at home
  - Very pleasant
- Improved signage – better for students new to layout
- Eco-box system – waste reduction

What could be improved upon?

- Price
  - A lot of oddities – a single piece of fruit cost a $1.50 (down the street is $0.40)
  - Experience with the buffet before, compared to now, price is very high, two dishes can be your whole allowance for the day (one meal from grill is extending $10-12) (normal meal plan is about $24 – about two meals – this assumes no one is getting snacks or anything else).
  - Meal plan amount – food price stayed about the same – lowering the food prices would be better than raising the prices of meal plan
  - People have paid more money this year, but it just means they have to spend more here
  - Students need to be able to afford 3 meals and snacks per day
  - Haven’t yet cracked the affordability piece
    - Can easily spend more than ½ of your daily budget on one meal
    - 13% students ran out of money last year
  - Carryover balances – last year was 50% of total balance minus 10% service charge (then the service charge transitioned to $50 flat fee). Now $300-$500 maximum that carry over to next year.
    - Dons are hearing feedback from students asking to allow for more carryover

- Long Lines
  - Long lines -typically around 6pm-7pm daily– usually around the cash registers, waiting for grill stations
    - Students are skipping meals as the wait may be 30-60 minutes
  - At noon, there can also be lengthy waits of 20-30 minute
  - Some students see the line, and they go to establishments nearby as they just don’t have the time to wait
  - Others skip meals because of the long lines and limited time between classes/commitments to be able to wait
• **Variety/Access to Healthy Food**
  - Previously had unlimited side dishes of veg that seems to have been removed
  - Cut veggies seem to be no longer available

• **Quality & Quantity**
  - Salads have had rotten lettuce in bottom
  - Lack of consistency in food portion – not consistent in ordering the same items - small vs large
    - Sometimes the person in front gets more than you do even when they ordered a small and you ordered a large

• **COVID-Related Policies**
  - In practice, signage is clear, but no one can follow it – especially with crowds/lines
  - If you did social distance, you wouldn’t be able to get to the pan station or grill station
  - Current lines provide roughly 2 ft/person (instead of 6ft between people). You would have a line 4x as long if you were socially distanced

• **Access**
  - Mobile App missing

• **Communication**
  - Difficult to communicate due to noise, masks, plexiglass
  - Can be challenging to communicate simple requests such as “I want takeout, I would like in the brown box”
  - Entrees get difficult to communicate what you want – meat vs veg – or just the dish or a combo
  - Suggestion for Improvement: Write on plexiglass and can point to it
  - Suggestion for Improvement: Number the options

**What are your suggestions for improvement?**

• **Price**
  - General re-evaluation of prices to make it more consistent, especially compared to general market prices
  - Food insecurity
    - Affects mental health and how you study, etc.
    - Affects wellness in general
  - Food is an essential service
  - Subsidizing healthy food items
    - Encourage students to eat healthy via the pricing of fruits/salads/fresh vegetables
  - Question: How do Food Services come up with pricing for food? A breakdown of pricing would be appreciated
• **Long Lines**
  - Wait times – need to better manage amount of time at station
    - Acknowledgement that this is a challenge at cook-to-order stations
  - Could increase number of checkouts during peak times
    - Upgrade system? Currently staff have to input combos manually, perhaps this could be pre-programmed to shorten times at cashier
  - Additional pick up point of the Mobile App
  - Caf Cam
    - Students could log on to a website and be able to see how long the line-up is, before taking the elevator down
      - Nice to have, but doesn’t solve the problem
      - Thumbs up from two students (zoom reaction)
  - Seating in the Dining Hall becomes unavailable as soon as there is a line-up
  - Separate the Grab & Go from the cook-to-order items
    - This would allow students to skip the lines and simply go to a separate check-out

• **Variety**
  - Fair Trade Chocolate is a great addition (FS to look into bringing in milk chocolate/dark chocolate options)
  - Variability
    - Fruit in bowls by cashiers sometimes only have one type of fruit, variety would be appreciated
    - Would like a diversity of fruit
      - Cut pineapple
      - Persimmon
    - Would like to see Grab N Go sandwiches return
      - Red pepper chicken sandwich was delicious

• **Quality & Quantity**
  - Consistency of quality AND quantity AND sides/garnishes
    - Once ordered salmon and didn’t get the lemon slices
    - Another ordered salmon and it was overcooked

• **COVID-Related Policies**
  - Little to no sanitization between use (seating area in Dining Hall)
  - Often individual seats available for use, but not together
    - If people want to eat on their own, they can take their food back to rooms
    - Groups of people trying to seat together
      - Consider moving the setup of the Dining Hall to provide more group seating and less/no individual seating
  - Heaters for patios?
    - Extend that seating option for seasons

• **Access**
  - Mobile App
    - Food Services did have some issues in terms of location and lack of ability to social distance, relocating and will be relaunching soon
• Communication
  o Mirror on top of food to see it easily from line
  o Write on plexiglass and allow students to point to the options they want (options for box – take out vs. eco)
  o Number the options

• Environmentalism
  o Single use plastics done away with – still using cutlery and other single-use
    ▪ Will likely be legislated in
  o Paper straws get soggy – need to use more than one

Wrap-Up
• External review of Food Services is happening right now
  o Will present findings to the whole community (Chestnut and New College)
• In an ideal case, what are timelines to approve things?
  o As soon as possible, Anne MacDonald, Assistant Vice-President, Ancillary Services is part of this Working Group to listen to students concerns and ideas firsthand. She is able to expedite decision-making as quickly as possible.

Next Meeting

Friday October 8th 6pm-7pm (Zoom Meeting)

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81386184727?pwd=eDRmSkR6M3FsNklwYXVLOE9Ldmxydz09

Meeting ID: 813 8618 4727
Passcode: Xdh6ki