

WWU CAMPUS DINING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

Friday, April 3, 2009

4:00pm, VU 462A

Present: Chris Kenney, Nancy Johnson, Norah Fisher, Tim Bartunek, Lisa Philbrook, Jim Schuster, Jill Kelly, Jessica Chen, Ramon Rinonos-Diaz, Maria Torres, Byron Starkey, Joe Meyer, Keegan Tarbell, Kurt Willis, Stephen Farrell, Luke Minor

1) Welcome & Introductions

2) Rocket Donuts Sampling

- Ira passed out samples of Rocket Donuts' new Vegan muffin that will be in campus markets soon. Ira said there would be a few varieties available.
- The overall feedback was positive.

3) Review Minutes from March Meeting

- Ira has not heard an update from Francis Hale since the last meeting about the proposed table arrangement in the Tony's Haggard Hall lobby.
- Ira is waiting to hear back from Chick-fil-A on an ETA for the compostable lemonade cup.

4) Catering & Western Preview Weekend

- Western Preview is on Saturday and Catering will be working 5a-10p, doing various events for it.
- An appreciation dinner for Karen Morse will be held this weekend.
- Tim announced that University Catering is entering two events in a national food service competition sponsored by NACUFS. Additionally, the Mediterranean Grill is being entered in another category.
- Chris said the dining commons is serving over 2000 Western Preview guests for lunch on Saturday.
- Lisa added that there would be special hours in some of the retail cafés and markets.
- Lisa is doing a presentation with John Purdie for Western Preview guests and will be showing the Dining Services video.

5) Annual Plan Part 1 Discussion

- Ira guided the committee through the sections of Annual Plan Part 1.

Financial Section

- Ira highlighted that the largest increase this year was in food costs, with it budgeted to be over \$600,00 more than the 2007-2008 academic year.
- Actual revenues are beating projected revenues. Ira said that the additional revenues above budget are going to be funneled back into the dining program.
- Resident Dining is projected to be up 9.16% over last year; this is mainly due to an increase of "heads in beds" (more students in housing). Retail is projected to be up 19% over last year, mainly due to the increased Dining Dollars with the meal plans.
- Jim asked what the main contributors were to the decrease in Catering sales. Tim said it is due to less events and/or less elaborate events being held, primarily with administrative offices on campus.
- Keegan asked what changes food waste savings have had on Resident Dining. Ira said that money this savings goes back into the program in the form of an improved menu. For example, this year Resident Dining food cost has increased from 36.8% to 37.5%, yet student participation is about the same.
- Ira pointed out that Munch Money participation has been up significantly since the new 10% discount program was introduced in 2007.
- Nancy asked about the status of being able to buy Munch Money online. Lisa said that it will be available on Monday 4/6. Ira informed the group there will now be a \$1.75 online convenience fee, which will change to a 2.75% convenience fee later on.

Proposed Pricing

- Keegan asked why the Proposed “Door Price” for Dinner has not increased, yet it has for other meals. Ira said that we can keep this the same as we have a better weighted average since there is more participation in that meal.
- Nancy asked if Munch Money could be used to purchase Dining Hall meals. Ira said yes, and that we will plan on marketing that better.
- Next year Dining Services is offering a Commuter Meal Plan to better meet the need of off-campus students. Currently ~200 students are on voluntary meal plans and we are looking to increase this. Staff and faculty will also be able to buy this plan.
- Conference Guest Prices will increase next year due to economic impacts.

Retail Pricing

- Joe asked if our food cost has gone down recently since commodity prices spiked and fell.
- Chris said that our food costs are very smooth due to the way our accounts are set up with our suppliers. Produce will spike every once in awhile
- Stephen asked about the necessity of stocking many different pack sizes of a specific item. Why carry more than one size, if only one is selling well? Ira agreed and said that we have been working with product movement reports so we can get rid of those slow movers.
- Joe asked why the bagel price is increasing by so much (40%). Chris said last year’s price was based on a lesser quality bagel, but since we have switched to a Shepherds Grain bagel, the price is adjusted.
- Nancy asked why biscotti are so expensive (\$1.99) and thought \$0.99 seemed more appropriate.
- Nancy asked why the price on Baker’s Cookies hadn’t gone down, as this was discussed at one point. Ira said that we were not able to purchase directly from Baker’s and has to purchase through a distributor, which keeps our cost higher.
- Stephen asked if Rocket Donut sales have gone up as he has noticed better quality lately. Chris said that they had a change in management and had been restructured. They are not passing along a price increase this year.
- Ramon asked if there would still be a turkey wedge sandwich in the \$3 range. Ira said yes, at \$3.19.
- Jim asked why there was a 27% increase in the price of sushi. Ira said the food cost is high and the first year was an introductory period, so we needed to adjust the price up this year.
- Nancy noted some of the healthier foods seemed to have the highest increases. She asked why rice was increasing by 40 cents. Chris and Ira replied that rice takes up a large the footprint inside a unit for a relatively small amount of sales. Nancy said that a lot of students don’t have money don’t have many options, so she is opposed to the increase. Ira said we can look at revising this price.
- Jessica asked why the peanut butter and jelly sandwich has risen so much (to \$3.29). Ira agreed and said we will look at keeping this price lower than other wedge sandwiches that have meat.
- Keegan asked if it would be possible to lower the price on healthier items and raise the price on more popular items.
- Mediterranean Grill prices are increasing next year and the platters are going away. The menu will be simpler and less confusing for customers. Kurt said he liked that we did a local market comparison for Mediterranean Grill to set the new prices.
- Nancy asked why there were no Chick-fil-A increases. Ira said Chick-fil-A doesn’t pass price increases along until mid-year.
- It is proposed to have a made-to-order deli sandwich format at Rock’s Edge next year. The dining committee did not think this would be worthwhile as it is too similar to Sub Connection. Maria said she polled students about it and they said they wouldn’t go there anymore if it was changed. Ira asked if people were ok with waiting in line to get paninis. The committee said they would be.
- Jill asked if it would be possible to stock the Essential wraps and burritos at Rock’s Edge Café.

Hours

- Jim noted that on Sunday after Thanksgiving, the VU Market and Café are scheduled to be open, but the VU is not open. Ira said we could look at opening up Miller Market instead and asked for

committee input on the proposed hours. Keegan suggested opening at 1:00pm. The committee agreed it would be ok to move it to Miller and not open until 1:00pm.

- Keegan thought that some locations seem to be open too late on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.
- Ira pointed out that Breakfast opens earlier at 7am for resident dining, there will be Sunday Late Night and Late Night hours have shifted (the last one closes at 11:30p now instead of Midnight).
- Joe asked about snack outs/pack outs going away. Stephen said he asked around in Nash if students would be ok sacrificing those to get Sunday Late Night, and everyone was.
- Norah said that some classes on campus go until 9pm, but Miller is only open to 6:30pm. She asked if it would be possible to keep it open until 7pm. Nancy agreed. Jill agreed, but said 7:30pm may be better.
- Keegan said BT Market doesn't need to open at 5pm and could be pushed back to 6pm.
- Stephen asked if VU Market or Café could be open until 8pm on Fridays.
- Keegan advised making sure students are well aware of opening week hours.

Student Catering

- Keegan asked about what happened to pack outs/snack out. Tim said it was absorbed by Catering. Stephen asked how students would be informed about it. Tim said he would be working with ResLife, promoting it at RA trainings.
- Keegan asked if a Catering representative could come to RHA and inform them about Catering student services. Tim said that they would. Lisa added that we could do some marketing materials.
- Maria asked how the "Gifts From Home" information would be distributed to parents. Tim said a postcard size handout would be created to hand out at info fairs.
- Ira pointed out that for Student Catering, the items need to be picked up at a central location. Jessica asked how catered food is presented /packed. Tim said they are packed in recyclable packaging such as cake boxes, trays, etc.

6) Market Research Study Discussion

- There will be a dining market research survey being distributed later this month. Ira wanted Dining Committee feedback on the prize incentives. Right now they are:
 - Grand Prize: \$1000 Travel voucher from Bellingham Travel (1 winners)
 - First Prize: \$250 Western Bookstore or Community Food Co-Op gift card (2 winners)
 - Second Prize: \$100 in Munch Money (3 winners)
- Keegan suggested making the grand prize be an option: either the \$1000 travel voucher **OR** a \$1000 academic scholarship. The committee agreed and Ira said that would be ok.

6) Dining Services Discussion – April 16th Forum

- A Dining Services Open Forum will be held April 16th from 7p-9p in HH253. The objective of the forum is to create better transparency to the campus community in the way Dining Services prepares food on campus.
- Ira asked the committee their opinion on whether all detailed ingredients lists need to be posted in the dining commons, or would it be ok to provide that information on our website
- Keegan said it should be located inside the dining hall.
- Ira asked if it would be sufficient to provide a book at a central location with all of that information. The committee said that would work well.
- For the forum, Ira requested that volunteers from the Dining Committee run a sign-in table at the entrance of HH253 to greet forum attendees. ***Several DC members volunteered to be involved***
- Nancy agreed, and said that if students attending the forum saw other students being involved in the process, it would seem less authoritarian to them. She also suggested having the panel be a mix of students and Dining Services staff.
- Lisa will be directing (moderating) the forum.
- Stephen suggested the panel meet before the forum, so they are prepared for student questions.

- The forum will be advertised via an ad in the Western Front and large signs in the three dining commons and at VU Market. On the signs, Stephen recommended prompting students to send questions beforehand via email.

7) Other/Closing Comments

- The Omnivore's Dilemma is the Western Reads book for next year. Ira is currently reading it and recommended that the committee read it.

The meeting was adjourned at about 6:00pm. The next meeting will be May 8th at 4:00pm in VU 462A.