

To the Western Washington University Community,

I wanted to personally address recent dining concerns brought to my attention. First and foremost, I want to extend my heartfelt apologies to students, parents, or any community member for failing to adequately perform to Western's expectations and standards in recent weeks and months. The services, food availability and dining hall operations that you experienced recently – and in particular during January's snowstorm – were unacceptable and not reflective of the care and concern you deserve and should expect from us.

As Senior Vice President of dining operations, my primary goal is to ensure each member of the community receives a quality dining experience that embodies value, variety, and safety. I deeply regret that we have fallen short on this promise, especially as we navigate our first year as your campus dining partner.

Please know that my team and I are doing everything possible, in the near and long term, to turn the situation around and operate a dining program worthy of Western. These are a few of the steps we are taking in the very short-term:

- Bringing in new on-the-ground leadership: Andrew Gaynor, Chartwells West District Manager, will be WWU's new interim point of contact for any matters concerning dining services and can be reached at Andrew.Gaynor@compass-usa.com
- Implementing rigorous recruitment efforts and re-training with Dining at WWU associates to ensure consistent service, food quality, safety and nutritional value.
- Increasing the variety, availability and quality of our dining hall foods through menu cycling and increased management presence on floors during peak meal periods.
- Planning a robust calendar of events to include numerous free events: DIY, surprise and delight pop-ups across campus, themed events at each dining hall and retail outlets, as well as Freebie Friday giveaways on social media in addition to our current Win-It-Wednesday social media giveaways.
- Planning a mid-February weeklong celebration across campus, known as Delightful, to spread kindness and cheer to the WWU campus community with free food and activities for students to enjoy with their friends.
- Addition of ice cream coolers while ice cream machines are being ordered.
- Establishing multiple platforms to receive feedback, including the formation of a Dining Committee, regular attendance to Housing-led forums, and upcoming short scheduled focus groups.
- Planning "Midnight Breakfast" for the week of March 18 before finals to provide students a fun late-night study jam and food session.
- Meeting with the Athletics department to discuss more offerings at athletic events through concessions.
- Opening "Smoothie Lab" at the Rec Center on March 4, with a menu offering of smoothies and protein-packed items.
- Communicating regularly with the Health Department and construction groups to see through proper implementation of equipment and codes to open Bok Choy in Viking Union.

We understand that a vibrant, engaged, and high-quality dining program is vital to a healthy and happy campus life and is also a significant investment for you and your families. Please know we are wholeheartedly focused on improving our services and delivering a dining program dedicated to exceeding expectations.

In an effort to continue to build community on the WWU campus and spread joy through food, we are committing to providing many additional free food events scheduled throughout the year. These events will be open to meal plan holders and the general campus community, such as our Love, Dining at WWU pop-ups and national food holiday giveaways.

Lastly, if you have any additional questions or concerns, please reach out to me directly at my email address below. Your feedback is invaluable to us, and we are here to listen, learn and take the necessary steps to ensure we deliver an excellent dining experience for all of you.

Thank you for your continued support of Dining at WWU and for the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,



Shannon Mariani
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