

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
University Dining Services
Office Planning and Review Executive Summary
July 2004

Presented and approved by Chancellor's Staff November 8, 2004

Introduction

University Dining Services' Office Planning and Review process began in July of 2003 and was completed in June 2004. The University Dining Services staff conducted a self-study that included the collection of data through surveys, focus groups and financial information. A report was prepared that reflected the outcomes of office activity and utilization of resources. This report served as a resource guide for a Campus Evaluation Team and an External Consulting team

The nine member Campus Evaluation Team consisted of stakeholders from across campus including three students. The external consultants were James Mueller, Director of University Centers and Dining Services at UW-Platteville and Richard Thomas, Director of Student Centers at DePaul University. They were selected because of their expertise both in retail and residential dining. Both teams prepared reports of their findings that have been incorporated into this Executive Summary. In addition, as part of the master planning for the University Center Addition/Remodeling, a food service consultant from Baker Group conducted an evaluation of the University Center dining concepts and facilities.

The results of the following assessment instruments were used to accumulate data for the self-study and allow University Dining Services to evaluate the effectiveness of meeting their stated objectives.

- Chartwells Customer Satisfaction Surveys (one for each fall and spring semester)
- Secret Shopper Surveys (ongoing)
- Catering Surveys (ongoing)
- ACUHO-I/EBI Resident Study (annual)
- ACUI/EBI Student Center Assessment (bi-annually)
- Hall Wine and Cheese Parties (minimum of 4 per semester)
- Resident Hall Association feedback (on-going)
- University Center Board feedback (ongoing)
- Whitewater Student Government feedback (minimum of once per year)
- Summer camp Director's survey (ongoing)

Major Objectives of University Dining Services

The mission of University Dining Services is to meet the dining and catering needs of residential students, non-residential students, staff, faculty and guests in state of the art facilities while providing students with experiences and employment opportunities that enrich their campus experience and enhances student learning.

The University Dining goals tie directly to the Division of Student Affairs and University goals. The institutional goals best served by the office goals include the following:

- *Improve the retention rate from the freshman to sophomore year and increase the six-year undergraduate graduation rate by providing nutritional, high quality, cost effective and innovative food service programs for residential and non-residential students that meet and exceed their level of expectation.*
- *Continue a comprehensive physical development plan that results in building newnon-instructional facilities and renovating existing ones to meet current and future academic demands by maintaining modern efficient and appealing facilities while continuously adjusting to trends in the food service industry that meet and exceed student expectations.*
- *Maintain the campus exterior and interior facilities consistent with the University's comprehensive physical development plan by developing a 6-year facility plan that complements the campus master plan and addresses dining/concession needs in appropriate locations throughout campus.*
- *Continue to develop partnerships with the community and region by providing facilities and services that serve meeting, banquet and dining needs.*
- *Develop private funds by negotiating terms within the food service contract that allow for facility and concept upgrades along with scholarship dollars that are available throughout the life of the contract.*

Selected Findings/Observations/Measurable Outcomes

The following are select findings and observations from the Campus Review Team and the External Consultants along with measurable outcomes that were part of the self-study.

- With 33 variations of meal plans, four meals offered each day from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. and nine restaurants on-campus in which to use the meal plan, UW-Whitewater offers a large number of options and flexibility for student dining. (Campus/External)
- The number of meals eaten per student increased by 11.34% in 2003-04 from 2002-03. (Self-study)
- 68% of all meals eaten in 2003-04 were from grab & go options rather than the all-you-can-eat as compared to 57% in 2002-03. (Self-study)
- Drumlin and Esker main dining halls are underutilized facilities because of the grab & go choices that are preferred by students. (External)
- A survey conducted in the residence halls to assess the residential dining operations indicated that when comparing data from past years, the results showed improvement over the last years in all seven areas. In comparing UW-Whitewater to six peer institutions (4 of the 6 UW System institutions), in all seven areas the mean score was slightly lower than the weighted mean for the six peer institutions. (ACUHO/EBI Survey)
- There are potentially too many food service venues thereby having an inefficient food service delivery system. (Campus/External)
- The University Center houses six retail units and four kitchens, making it very difficult to operate an efficient food service operation. (Campus/External)
- All areas within the food service facilities are clean and inviting. The kitchens demonstrate good sanitation practices. (External)
- All facilities are in generally good condition – no facility is out of date or tired, however the delivery of food service in Drumlin is outdated and appears institutional to students. (External)
- The Markets are an excellent service to students and changes made in product mix in 2003-04 helped increase revenues. (Campus/External)
- A survey of student union operations, indicated that all aspects of the delivery of food service in the University Center were above the weighted mean and in most cases statistically higher in comparison with the select 6 institutions, the Carnegie class and all institutions that participated in the survey. (ACUI/EBI Survey)
- With an annual cost of \$1,560 for the 14-meal plan, UW-Whitewater is 17% lower than the average of the other institutions within the UW-System offering comparable meal options. This has impact for both the contractor's ability to make a reasonable return on their investment and the University's ability to maintain the facilities and keep up with the students ever changing expectations. (Self-Study/Campus/External)
- Purple point usage in the food service operations decreased by 35% from 2002-03 to 2003-04 due to more purple points being spent off-campus and greater usage of the meal plans on-campus. (Self-study)
- As compared to other UW-System campuses, prices for UWW affiliated summer camps are 9% lower than the system average while prices for non-affiliated camps are 10% higher. (Self-study)
- Because of the Auxiliary Reserve Reduction, the current reserve of \$266,086 is at a very low level for a \$5,773,882 annual budget. This could limit facility upgrades and operational necessities within the Dining Services operating budget in the future. (Self-study/external)

Selected Recommendations

The following are selected recommendations from the Campus Review Team and the External Consultants. There was great consistency in the recommendations from these two groups.

- To address the issue of the trend going from the all-you-can-eat to a grab & go format, remodel Drumlin Dining Hall into a retail concept such as a "food court" or "Marche" design that allows students to grab and go or eat in the restaurant. (Campus/External)
- To address the issue of too many food service venues on campus, incorporate the Drumlin Market into the main Drumlin Dining Hall. This new concept integrates the "Market" and the retail food service units into one facility. This enhances the variety of venues available on campus at the same time reduces the number of physical locations. (Campus/External)
- Also to address the issue of too many food service locations and the lack of efficiency in the delivery of food in the University Center, reduce the number of venues in the University Center. At the same time, the efficiency of the facilities in regards to equipment, staffing and kitchen design need to be upgraded and improved so that they are as cost effective as possible for the University and the food service contractor. (Campus/External)

- To address the issue of underutilized space in Esker, change concepts at Esker to create it as a unique dining experience and destination location. Upgrade the entrees offered, add features not available elsewhere on campus, offer more personal service and improve the ambiance with music and a blend of different dining atmospheres will assist in driving business levels. (External)
- To address the trend to more grab & go products, create a product mix at the Markets that resemble the neighborhood grocery stores versus gas station convenience stores. Offer more convenient grab and go items that can be easily prepared by students in their rooms. Examples include frozen entrees, fresh fruit and produce, grocery items, bulk sliced meats and cheeses, ready to eat sandwiches and heat and eat entrees. (External)
- To address the disparity of summer pricing and to ensure our competitiveness for non-affiliated summer camp business, develop a plan to move both affiliated and non-affiliated cost closer to the average with the ultimate goal of creating one price for summer camps. (Campus/External)

Improvements and Modifications – Next Five Years

The challenges for University Dining Services continues to be keeping up with food service trends that students expect as part of their living environment on-campus. This needs to be done in a way that continues to provide a nutritional, high quality, cost effective and innovative food service program. The addition/remodeling of the University Center will create opportunities to delivery food service in a very different and more effective manner. Determining the amount of space to allocate, what concepts should be included and the flexibility that will be necessary in the future will be part of the planning process.

Even though there are 3 types of meal plans with 33 options and operations are open 19 hours a day, there continues to be requests for greater flexibility in dining options and expanded service hours. This will have impact on participation and on cost. Determining the process to balance ever increasing and ever changing expectations with an expectation of continued low cost is the ongoing challenge. In addition, accommodating these changes requires a determination if the changes can be handled within existing specifications or should be included in the new food service contract starting in 2007-08.

The cost of the program is in a very positive position being so much lower than the comparable campuses within our system. However, based on the past few bids within the System, this could result in a very large increase during the year the contract is bid, 2007-08. Determining an equitable and gradual increase method could be part of a long-term financial plan for University Dining.

Even though a tremendous amount of effort is put into listening to students and adapting the program to meet their needs, survey data continues to tell us that we can improve. Therefore, continuation of current data gathering methods needs to remain and potentially expand to truly meet the needs of our students/customers.