

DINING SERVICES

Unit Plan: 2009 - 2014

Dining Services Mission

Our passion is our food, but people are our purpose. Our program resonates with this focus because of our alignment with the academic mission of the university and the Department of Residence Life & Dining Services.

Residence Life and Dining Services Mission

Acting as an integral and supportive component of the Division of Student Affairs, the department of Residence Life & Dining Services creates an inclusive customer-service oriented living and dining environment by providing a safe, clean, and healthy educational setting that fosters academic and personal growth. Serving a diverse audience comprised of students, families, campus community members, and guests, the department is committed to furthering the goals of the University of Wyoming.

Responsibilities

Dining Services is responsible for all food service locations and their requisite support operations on the University of Wyoming campus with the exception of dining services within the Wyoming Union and Intercollegiate Athletics. These operations include:

- The Washakie Dining Center (the main residential dining program);
- Ross Hall Dining Room (located in Ross Hall in the core of campus); Elements (located in the Classroom Building);
- The Book and Bean (located in Coe Library);
- The Fine Arts Food Cart (located in the Fine Arts Building);
- The Washakie Bakery
- University Catering Services
- Recently added, The 5 dining operations on the main floor of the Wyoming
- CJ's Convenience Store (located in the Wyoming Union)

In support of these numerous operations, Dining Services also includes areas devoted to nutrition and purchasing. Dining Services employs over 300 part-time student staff, 42 benefited staff (both full-time and calendar), and 13 management-level employees. Washakie Dining Center serves approximately 1.3 million meals per year and has over 2,000 students on a meal plan.

Dining Services offers programs and services for a variety of target audiences including residential and commuter students, faculty and staff, on-campus guests, and other employees and units within Residence Life & Dining Services. The Washakie Dining Center primarily serves students who reside in the residence halls and who are thus required to hold a 12-, 15-, or unlimited-accesses-per-week meal plan. However, as is evident in the table included in Chapter 2, contracted meal plans outpace occupancy due

to a number of “voluntary” meal plan holders. In 2003, Dining Services sold 26 non-residential meal plans; in 2007, the number had grown steadily to 264 voluntary meal plans and had provided a substantial amount of additional revenue. During the weekday, Washakie Dining Center offers continuous service from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. (until 6:00 p.m. on Fridays) with a Late Night Snack served from 8:30 – 10:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. On weekends, an early morning “Breakfast on the Go” option is offered for early risers with primary meal service beginning at brunch, which runs from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Dinner service on Saturdays and Sundays begins at 4:00 p.m. and respectively runs until 6:00 or 6:30 p.m.

In October 2003 the Washakie Center celebrated its grand re-opening after having undergone a nearly \$13 million renovation. Prior to the renovation, the dining center was a traditional straight-line operation. The renovation resulted in a re-configuration of the dining center into a marché or marketplace concept. The renovation not only elevated the dining program and its ability to respond to changing trends and preferences, but also allowed staff to produce food in smaller batches while letting diners personalize their meals. Seven individual stations offer food concepts with rotating selections and a variety of vegetarian and vegan options.

Programming is an important component of the Washakie Dining operation. In order to maximize variety, a number of “pace-changers” – small programming events such as a monthly celebration of student birthdays – are conducted. Approximately once every other month, an elaborate dinner special occurs. In the past, these have included a Beach Party with live lobsters, a celebration of Mardi Gras with a roving jazz band, Dinner Down Under, the Art of Southwest Cuisine, and a Holiday Tale. Oftentimes, live music or guest presenters accompany the specialty menus and decorations. These events are designed to keep the resident dining program fresh and exciting, but also provide an additional learning experience for the student diner. The dinner menus are crafted with the desire to facilitate students’ learning about other cultures and their associated cuisine. Such specialty dinners are often prepared with the assistance of UW’s international student organizations.

Student diners are also served through several retail outlets located across the campus. These retail locations are also popular with faculty, staff, and university guests. Dining Services operates the following retail locations: Ross Hall Dining Room (located in Ross Hall in the core of campus); Elements (located in the newly remodeled Classroom Building); the Book & Bean (located in Coe Library); King Street Market (located in the upper level of the Washakie Center); the Fine Arts Food Cart (located in the Fine Arts Building); and Rendezvous Café (located in the American Heritage Center), with retail hours ranging from 7:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. Elements, the Book & Bean, King Street Market, and the Rendezvous Café have all been opened in the past five years and have allowed RL&DS to extend its reach across campus while offering greater flexibility to campus diners. Detailed historical information about sales, patron counts, and average sales per patron for each of the retail locations is included in the Appendix.

Ross Hall Dining Room, adjacent to Prexy's Pasture, offers a variety of both hot meals and grab-and-go items for breakfast. Ross Hall Dining is particularly popular at lunch with faculty and staff; it offers a daily sandwich and entrée special, a soup and salad bar, a variety of convenient, ready-made items, and specialty coffee drinks. Book & Bean offers primarily pre-made items and specialty coffee drinks. With limited seating, this location is designed for the diner on the go or for the diner on the east side of campus.

Elements is the newest dining facility on campus and is located in the newly remodeled Classroom Building. Elements offers a variety of made-to-order sandwiches and salads, as well as pre-made, convenience items.

Support Services Updates

In keeping up with the goals of the Support Services Plans we have been able to accomplish a great deal, but still have more to address.

The Washakie Dining Center has been renovated 6 years ago and has provided the ability to produce more consistent products with reduced energy costs.

Ross Hall remains on the table as a project for 2009 or 2010. Dining Services will be conducting surveys and focus to gather information for our customer base. It is the intention to make improvement based on this data. Ross Hall focus groups will begin in late fall 2008, with the intention of establishing new concepts that could be operational for fall 2009.

The operational focus on the Washakie Dining Center remains critical, due to the fact that it make up the majority of the dining business on campus. For 2008-2009 the Washakie dining facility was expanded, by taking over the former King Street space, to handle increased business.

Bases on the needed for additional business on the west side of campus, Elements was created in the Classroom Building to meet that need. Elements' has achieved great success and continues to grow exponentially.

Student Learning Outcomes

In response to the need to focus on student learning, the Division of Student Affairs identified eight learning outcomes. Dining Services has identified two learning outcomes to focus on during this year: Personal Responsibility; and Healthy Life Style Choices.

Dining Services has become very active as a leader in Sustainability Initiatives for University of Wyoming. Dining Services has made a range of improvement towards becoming more sustainable, by improving packaging material, shifting to green cleaning products and working to compost non-meat food waste with the ACRES Farm and

offering Fair Trade Organic Coffee. It is the intention of Dining Services to educate our customers on how they can help make the university more sustainable. Success will need to be measured through student involvement, and student pressure to develop more sustainable practices. It is critical that the University of Wyoming establish a composting facility or a program to work with the city of Laramie. To improve our grade on the universities sustainability report card composting is a must. A program should be established before fall 2010.

Dining also works hard to educate our customer base on eating right and making healthy life style choices. Choosing to adopt a healthy lifestyle early can add great benefit to the success and longevity of one's life. Making the right decisions about diet is a core component of this decision. Success will be measure through evaluation of product movement and evaluation of just what students are eating and requesting.

Dining Services will work with the Wyoming Union to provide expertise in the management of the retail dining business. This puts the University in a unique position to balance dining options on the core of campus. Besides factoring in what the Wyoming Union's dining program will look like, Dining Services will also have an enhanced presence with the Book & Bean in the new library complex (IL²C). The new Book & Bean should open in the fall of 2009. This combination of dining options in close proximity to one another provides opportunities to explore joint programming opportunities when the library is complete. As previously mentioned part of the review of retail dining, Ross Hall Dining Room will also need to be assessed and improved. The kitchen there is a challenge—allowing little production activity to take place on site. Many patrons of Ross are also happy with its current configuration, suggesting that conversations about its future need to involve a wide audience. By reviewing assessment data and involving patrons in the process, Dining Services will embark on a plan to improve Ross Dining Hall. A business plan will be developed, by spring 2009, to determine what level of investment is possible with a goal of continuing to operate within the break even range.

Sustainability Program

In support of campus sustainability and the signing of the presidents Climate Change Initiative, Dining is continuing efforts to be a leader in campus sustainability. Elements, is and will continue to be, the test market for the introduction of sustainable efforts in Dining Services and our growing attempts to modify practices to become more consistent with the global values of recycling and sustainability. While this is a challenge, dining is committed to this vision.

Due to the lack of local agriculture, almost all products originate from outside the general area and state. It is the intention of Dining Services to buy a limited amount of products that are grown or produced locally. Due to the lack of agriculture near Laramie, locally

needs to be defined as a 150 mile radius. It is the intention of Dining Services, to be buying limited quantities of locally grown products by fall 2009.

Dining Services recently introduced compostable, biodegradable plates and bowls made of recycled paper. Dining has recently added a new line of organic, fair trade coffee to Elements, Washakie Dining, Ross Hall and University Catering.

Some of the biodegradable waste produced by the Washakie Dining Center becomes compost for the on-campus Acres Farm. In support of campus sustainability programs it is imperative that University of Wyoming establishes a program to compost the greater food waste from the Washakie Dining Center. A compost program could be started in conjunction with the city or could be established as an on campus initiative. Waste that cannot be safely composted or is not desired by the Acres farm is minimized. For example, styrofoam and plastic products are gradually being replaced with more “green” alternatives as they become cost-effective and available. Rather than sending them to the landfill with the trash, many products – boxes, cans, plastic, and glass – are separated and recycled.

Currently, discontinuing the use of trays, a practice which may further reduce waste, is being debated. Additionally, the use of “green” detergents to clean the facility and equipment began last year. We will continue to educate our customers about the efforts we are making and the positive gains these efforts will have on the environment.

If current inflation levels continue it will be critical to establish improved and additional vendor contracts that assist Dining Services in efforts to keep costs to our customers as low as possible. Dining Services recently joined the College and University Resource Board (CURB) in 2007. CURB is a group comprised of 75 college and university members that tracks all rebates for which Dining Services is eligible, but is not aware of or does not have time to track internally. As payment for its service, CURB retains 20% of all rebates and Dining Services receives 80%. In the first quarter of the program, Dining Services received rebates totaling approximately \$1,700. Dining Services also recently signed a prime vendor agreement, with US Foods, that has reduced the cost of raw food products by almost 7%.

Both residential and retail dining participates annually in the NACUFS student satisfaction surveys. Additionally, questions specific to dining services exist on the EBI student satisfaction survey, which is administered to hall and apartment residents. Further input is gleaned from a customer comment box located in the Washakie Dining Center, as well as the Washakie Food Advisory Committee. Often suggestions from this committee are what drive changes and modifications in the residential dining program. Dining Services will continue to use these tools to help keep ahead of an ever-changing industry.