

Report on Colgate's Dining Services

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On behalf of the Student Government Association – October 22, 2007

Introduction

This report includes observations and recommendations that have been compiled throughout the semester from ongoing conversations with many students including the SGA Leadership, SGA Senate, and the “Bring Back the Edge” student advocacy group. The recommendations have been informed by discussions with Sodexo Director George Murray, Director of Budget Hugh Bradford, and Associate Dean of the College Sue Smith. This report is offered as a clear statement of recommendations from the SGA and as guidance to those who have administrative control over dining services at Colgate University.

Communication

Observation: Students were not notified about the major change made to The Edge Dining Hall during the summer. Many students signed up for a meal plan or based their choice of campus residence on the previous format and hours of The Edge.

Additionally, students felt as if they were not consulted in the decision process.

Recommendation: Release a statement to the students (via The Maroon News or the “YourColgate” e-mail account, etc.) explaining in simple terms why the change to the Edge was made. This statement will help students feel like they are not completely in the dark about this important issue. Additionally, mention that there is now an open line of communication with the student government.

The Cutting Edge Bistro

Observation: Many Colgate students are upset about the change to The Edge. Many students, especially those who live in the Bryan complex, would be very happy to see The Edge returned to its old form. While bringing the Edge back to what is used to be is not supported by the SGA, finding a compromise to meet the community need is a great opportunity to make substantive change and help students be part of the decision-making process.

Recommendation: Form a compromise in which there would be additional services added to meet student need without dismantling the current Edge service or format. Some options include: Saturday and Sunday traditional brunch service; continental breakfast during the week; brunch with the current format on the weekends. There is little demand for lunch any day of the week. Additionally, non-meal plan pricing should be reconsidered.

Flexibility

Observation: The new first-year meal plan allows the students a block of 45 meals per semester at the Coop. This is an extremely popular aspect of the first-year meal plan.

Recommendation: This flexibility would be a great addition to all the other meal plans (specifically the Premiere Unlimited Meal Plan and the Classic Unlimited Meal Plan). Students often feel it is unfair that the remaining meals from their allotted 5 per week do not roll over; this change will allow them to use their meals whenever they want.

Observation: The only meal plans that allow “double-swiping” for meals within a certain meal time period are the unlimited plans. The other meal plans do not allow for this option.

Recommendation: Many students who utilize the other meal plans desire more flexibility in choosing the amount of meals that they use per meal period. There is a need for reasonable structure in the meal plan but it is recommended that double-swiping be allowed for all meal plans.

Information

Observation: For rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors it is difficult to tell which meal plan will best fit them in the coming year. Due to the computerized nature of the meal plan / Gate Card system, there is an enormous electronic database of information.

Recommendation: If a “Meal Plan Performance Report” were able to be given to students at the end of every semester, they would be able to understand their usage and alter their plan in the future based on their needs. The report would contain information about how many meals a week the student ate, where he or she ate them, and when that student ate their meals.

The Juice Bar

Observation: The Juice Bar adjacent to the Wm. Brian Little Fitness Center operates on an extremely limited schedule and is utilized by only a very small group of students.

Recommendation: Close the Juice Bar and instead transform the room into additional fitness space.

Conclusion

While there are many great things about dining services at Colgate, there are some improvements that can be made. The SGA looks forward to working with Sodexo and Colgate’s administrators to continuously develop dining opportunities for students on campus. Through cooperative efforts and collaboration, the SGA hopes to help implement optimal solutions for the challenges discussed in this report.