University Food Committee
Minutes
November 12, 2021
1:00-2:00 pm
Kirkhof Center 2270

Attendees: Bri Conway, Sam Asoklis, Paul Kramer, Felix Ngassa, Suzeanne Benet, Jay Chapa, Lauren Carlisi, Kylie Ohrt, Ty Krueger, Kristen Evans, Libby MacQuillan (attended via zoom), Kyle Gineman, Aaron Haught
Absent: Allison Griffin, Kimberly Quinn, Doug Wentworth, Leah Short
Guest(s): Craig Wieschhorster (for Doug Wentworth), Kyle Holcomb (for Leah Short)
Recorder: Susan Sigler

Introductions

- Committee members in attendance introduced themselves:
  - Aaron Haight (co-chair), Acting Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
  - Kyle Gineman (co-chair), Vice President for Diversity Affairs, Student Senate
  - Bri Conway, Student Senate
  - Sam Asoklis, Hospitality & Tourism Management student
  - Paul Kramer, Aramark Manager
  - Felix Ngassa, Professor and Chair, University Academic Senate
  - Suzeanne Benet, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost’s Office)
  - Craig Wieschhorster, Associate Vice President for Business & Finance
  - Jay Chapa, Campus Activities Board
  - Lauren Carlisi, Applied Food & Nutrition student
  - Kylie Ohrt, Residence Hall Association
  - Ty Krueger, Graduate Student Association
  - Kristen Evans, Housing & Residence Life
  - Kyle Holcomb, Center for Women and Gender Equity

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes approved with no changes.

Campus Dining Overview

- Craig Wieschhorster presented an overview of the Campus Dining process
  - There are two ways to run a campus dining program:
    - Self-operated by University
- Have a contractual relationship with a third-party vendor (Grand Valley’s model)
  - The majority of universities are contracted
    - Contracting provides economies of scale
    - Self-operated model is more expensive
      - Data shows ⅓ to ½ higher cost to students
    - Contracting keeps cost down for students
- GVSU financial responsibilities
  - Auxiliary costs (facilities, equipment, utility costs, space, etc.) are solely funded through dining revenues
  - Auxiliary costs are not supplemented by the University
  - The goal is not to make money but must cover costs
- New contracts go through a Request for Proposal (RFP) competitive bidding and evaluation process
- Contracts span a period of time but are negotiated each year (to review food costs, new menus, trends in Food Service industry, etc.)
  - GVSU’s contract with Aramark is for 10 years, from 2018-2028
  - Contracts are negotiated as mutual agreement/partnership with Aramark
  - At maximum capacity operations are at $22-23 million, have been $15-16 million the last few years (less food costs, labor costs, overhead)
  - This year rising food costs and higher labor costs were factors in negotiations
  - Aramark has been in partnership with GV for over 30 years
- GVSU Sustainability rates are largely driven by dining
- Approximately 30% of foods are locally sourced
- Third-party vendor contracting can take advantage of bulk purchasing
  - Savings can then be passed on to students
- The existing contractual relationship doesn’t exist on autopilot
  - Daily management meetings are held and discuss student feedback
  - Quarterly meetings occur with Aramark regional management
- We constantly evaluate to provide the best value for students
- GVSU housing/dining are the lowest in the state of Michigan
  - GVSU offers an affordable, quality education and experience
- The effect of campus dining to GVSU value is important
  - When students talk about value/quality we need to take them seriously
    - GVSU quality and experience ratings beat national averages
- Social media complaints are taken seriously
  - We take negative feedback and act on it
  - Rumors are investigated
- All are encouraged to address dissatisfaction with dining immediately (at point of interaction), so dining can correct the situation
- There will be human errors, it is GVSU’s job to correct situations caused by errors
• Infrastructure: What is owned by GVSU vs. Aramark
  - Equipment is GVSU-owned
  - When a new contract begins, an inventory is taken
  - When the vendor leaves, inventory levels restored to original

• RFP process
  - Business and Finance team solicits and reviews proposals (the committee of University representatives includes faculty, staff, and students)
  - Vendors present publicly and to the committee
  - How do we find representatives for the committee?
    - Suggestions for members are solicited from Dean of Students, Provost, Housing, Student Senate, other University offices, etc.

• Campus Dining feedback (Paul Kramer)
  - Feedback is collected daily at each location, through the use of cards with QR codes
  - Feedback (“Wow” or “Rescue”) goes directly to the manager of the food service facility, and is responded to within 24 hours
    - If the food service director doesn’t respond within 24 hours, the feedback goes to Paul Kramer
    - If there isn’t a response within 48 hours feedback goes to Aramark’s regional director
  - Talk with Campus Dining occurs on Tuesday afternoons
    - Campus Dining has been directly contacting students to attend
    - Attendance has been poor
    - If interested in attending, reach out to Campus Dining’s marketing department to be added to the invitation list
  - In October, external consultant conducted a review of campus dining
    - Results will be available mid-December
    - 1400 responses were received
    - Comparison to Aramark and to higher ed
  - Approximately 38% of GVSU’s menus are Vegan or Vegetarian
    - Campus Dining needs to do a better job of communicating where they can be found
  - GVSU has a Registered Dietician
    - The dietician is free of charge and available to work with students who have dietary allergies, restrictions, etc.
  - Campus Dining is looking at a True Balance (allergy free) station to go into Kleiner in Fall 2022
    - There is special training and equipment involved in the set up
  - Food sourcing
    - Local farms are being used, and are sourced through Gordon Foods
    - More information can be found on the Campus Dining website at https://www.gvsu.edu/campusdine/sustainability-68.htm
    - For example: GVSU uses 12,000 pounds of lettuce per year
If local farmers provide wholesale to GVSU, they lose retail opportunities, so many times they can’t provide the volume GVSU needs for a cost that’s sustainable for the farmers.

- **Staffing**
  - Due to the current economic climate, it’s difficult to retain staff.
  - An HR manager is joining the team at end of the month.
  - Campus Dining is down 450 student positions, will need to supplement with full-time employees.
  - Staffing shortages are not unique to GVSU or Aramark.
  - Aramark has negotiated with a full-time union for competitive wages.
  - Students are being offered signing and retention bonuses.
    - There is the opportunity for up to $1,700 in total bonuses.
    - This effort did not yield an increase in student employees.
  - Aramark doesn’t force students to work during class time.
    - Senior student managers prepare staffing schedules and work with the needs of student schedules.

- **Food Insecurity**
  - LakerMeal Share – donation drive is currently open (ran out of meals and now replenishing).
  - Partner with Replenish.
    - A lot of times if a Catering event has low turnout, they partner to provide meals.
  - Non-perishable food drives are held to stock Replenish.
  - $25,000 food insecurity fund with Financial Aid.

- **Question:** can people donate to LakerMeal Share without having a meal plan?
  - Donations can be made through the Student First Fund which is administered through the Dean of Students Office.
    - Crisis funds are used for many needs (insecurity, IT, etc.).

- **Parking Services**
  - Has done a drive to pay parking tickets with canned goods donations.

- **Meal plans related to housing style**
  - Meal plan is required if no kitchen is available in housing type – North housing automatically has the 14 plus meal plan.
  - $2,900 for mandatory meal plan.
  - Just under 5000 students are voluntarily purchasing meal plans.

- **Question:** Were meal plans adjusted due to decreased availability?
  - No – Plans are based on meals per week.
  - Campus Dining is working with students who are underutilizing meal plans.
  - Students can decrease or upgrade meal plans.
• Plans have to be considered for the future, when we are back to fully staffed and fully in person
• Campus Dining is considering at adjustable meal plans
• Each year GVSU evaluates how to provide best services at best value

Exploring Student Input

• More than half the membership of the University Food Committee are students
• Student Senate provides opportunities for public comment and discussion
  o Senate will continue to share with UFC
  o Senate meeting had a campus dining conversation
    ▪ Will discuss more in depth at the next general assembly
• Dining Forums are held every 3 weeks
  o Free food is provided
  o Contact Paul Kramer to be added to the invite list
• Vice Provost Student Advisory Board (VSAB)
  o Aaron Haight will raise the campus dining/food topic again with the advisory board and will provide feedback to UFC (December meeting)
• RHA Campus Concerns
  o Meets every Tuesday night at 8pm
  o At the end of the meeting, there is open discussion of campus concerns
  o Will send findings to Aaron Haight
• Other avenues for student feedback
  o Craig Wieschhorster will compile survey data and share with UFC
• Campus Activities Board
  o CAB works with Catering on events, and usually gets feedback pretty quickly
  o CAB is considering incorporating a survey
• Reach out to Replenish students
  o Partner with Replenish to create a survey of their students
• Do we want to add a button to the UFC website to provide feedback?
  o Would this be a separate collection of data, or would we provide links to avenues that already exist?
    ▪ It’s possible students may be being more comfortable sending feedback directly to this committee rather than directly to Aramark
    ▪ May be helpful for gathering of themes and info
    ▪ Needs to be continuity so things get reported only once (not on UFC website, Aramark, Replenish) which would skew data
      • The question needs to be asked: Did you also report this directly to Campus Dining?
• Libby MacQuillan’s class is doing a project with campus dining as topic
  o The Committee can attend their final presentations if interested

• Students for Food Sovereignty is vocally against Aramark
  o SFS has been invited to meet with Aaron Haight, however to date they have declined
Are other concerns being raised?
- Factual information is part of the goal of UFC
- Doug Wentworth and Craig Wieschhorster met with SFS last spring

**Issues raised by SFS regarding Aramark**
- Aramark is: unethical, part of the prison pipeline, fired from State of Michigan prisons, lack of local purchasing, non-sustainable, work with ICE, terrible place to work, food on campus is not good, not enough options

**Questions to explore regarding third-party contracts:**
- Who is involved with how the selection is done
- What is considered in how we select a contractor
- Perhaps our recommendation could be surrounding having representation on the annual review committee and on the 10-year RFP process

- We can put forward clear-cut recommendations

**Finalizing UFC Focus Areas**

- Three Identified Objectives:
  - Accessibility/Options
  - Food Insecurity
  - Staffing Crisis

- Next meeting we will divide into three groups
  - Committee members will pick their area of interest

- A fourth area of interest is third-party contracts – Committee decided to add this to focus areas
  - Examining the selection process
  - Exploring concerns with/ethics of third-party vendors
  - Ethical issues with Aramark are of concern nationwide

**Next Meeting**

- December 3, 2021, 1:00-2:00 pm, KC 2270