

Concerning the DePauw Dining Experience

Administrative Response

The DePauw Student Government white paper on the University's dining experience raises important issues regarding a key element of our residential liberal arts community, even beyond concerns related to the transition from the declining balance plan to a traditional swipe system. We would like to thank the DSG for the care with which they have presented their concerns and ideas, and their interest in the well-being of DePauw students and the quality of student life.

DePauw is in the midst of a multi-year transition in dining options. It is important, we believe, for students to see that the most recent changes to the meal structure at DePauw are part of a long and important set of intellectual and community enhancements at DePauw. The hope is that we can, at DePauw, create a meal plan structure that 1) serves healthy food options for all students; 2) ensures that students eat well throughout the semester; 3) provides flexibility, and 4) significantly contributes to the sense of community on the campus.

Background

Basic student living and eating patterns at DePauw have undergone very significant changes over the past several decades. Prior to 1984, over 90% of all students took all of their meals in Greek living units. In 1984 the University moved Greek unit pledging back to September of the first year, with students living in houses beginning in the sophomore year. The 1990s into the 2000s saw a general decline in overall Greek percentage. To accommodate the significantly increasing number of students eating in University facilities and to provide food options for faculty and staff, the University added the "Hub" to what was then an array of university-run dining options. The Hub was designed to be a quick, cash-and-carry food center (much like a mall "food court") complimenting what were then-existing traditional dining halls/rooms in Longden Hall and Hogate Hall (a traditional dining facility in Rector Hall was removed when the Hub was added). The Hub had a "pay-as-you go" model reflecting its design as a quick eating option (that is, one paid specifically for the individual items purchased.) It was expected that independent and first year students would take most of their meals in the more traditional dining facilities, all of which had the equivalent of a one-meal-one-swipe system.

The conversion of the dining area in Hogate Hall into a student health center, and the change of the dining facility in Longden into a casual, fast-food grill, placed increasing pressure onto the Hub. What was once designed to be a quick food court for students and faculty had thus by 2008 become the default central dining hall for an increasingly independent student body. Its declining balance pay system-- reflecting its original function as a place where students and faculty would grab a slice of pizza or a coffee on their way to class or activities--had created significant problems. By 2008 long lines in the Hub and large crowds drove more students to the Den, Café Allegro at the GCPA, and Café Roy in the library. Further, the University's reliance on a declining balance system placed significant numbers of students at risk of running out of sufficient funds to eat properly through the semester.

DePauw University, by 2008, had an unworkable, frustrating, and unhealthy dining structure.

In addition, the meal system was significantly undercutting the University's capacity to develop community through its fractured and difficult eating structure. Residential liberal arts colleges are designed to educate students in and outside the classroom. Nearly all national liberal arts institutions have in place centralized dining halls to foster community and to allow for continued intellectual conversations from the classroom. The 2010 University *Campus Master Plan* had as one of its primary recommendations the construction of an appropriate place for students and faculty to eat meals in common. A centralized facility—combined with an emphasis on meals in community—was thought to be a key element in the strengthening of DePauw's fractured community and fragmented intellectual life.

The engagement of Bon Appetit in 2012 was a significant moment for the University. DePauw engaged Bon Appetit because of its reputation for providing healthy and appealing dining options for students. Bon Appetit would provide *meals* at DePauw, rather than *items for purchase* as one saw at the Hub (which had a Pizza Hut station, and other fast-food-like options.)

The impending arrival of Hoover Hall also prompted a look at how the University was using mealtime to create community. Further, the rising problems that many students were experiencing with the declining balance system necessitated a significant review of the University's meal option.

Meal Plan Changes

The 2015-16 meal plan change resulted from feedback received from students, parents and faculty expressing concerns about students exhausting their meal plan money. To help manage their declining meal plan balance, DePauw provided students with a meal plan spending guide that calculated the remaining balance each week based on the number of meal days per semester (see Attachment A). However, the declining balance system was placing a significant number of students at peril of being unable to have food as the semester moved toward its culmination. Please note the following statistics as of April 23rd last year (with 25 days left in the semester).

Residence Hall Meal Plan

- 362 of 890 (40%) of students on the Residence Hall meal plan had spending balances less than the spending guide.
- 211 (23%) had less than \$200 (\$8 a day – enough for one meal a day)
- 125 (14%) had less than \$100 (\$4 a day)
- 93 (10%) had less than \$50 – (\$2 a day)
- 46 (5%) had \$1 or less.

Rector Village Meal Plan

- 35 of 81 (43%) of students had spending balances less than the spending guide
- 19 (23%) had less than \$200 (\$8 a day)
- 17 (21%) had less than \$100 (\$4 a day)
- 14 (17%) had less than \$50
- 5 (6%) had less than a dollar

UOAH Plan (Declining Balance Account)

- There is no spending guide for the plan
- 84 of 302 had less than \$1
- 127 of 302 had less than \$10

The statistics above, which were similar in prior years, indicated that significant numbers of students were at risk of having insufficient funds simply to eat as the semester came to its conclusion. These statistics were alarming and reinforced the need to fundamentally change the meal plan.

We reviewed how other universities like DePauw ran their food program and found that the majority of our peers offered a swipe program similar to the one instituted this fall in order to ensure that students are guaranteed a full-year of meals as part of their dining plan. Attachment B contains a comparison of meal plans at schools similar to DePauw.

Proposed Modifications

The following discusses responses to the suggestions offered in the DSG white paper that the University proposes to adopt in the near future.

Meal swipe structure:

A prominent concern raised is the expiration of “unused swipes” each week. This understandably results in the feeling of lost value when swipes go unused. However, the meal plan was designed to offer significantly more meals than were available under the declining balance plan. Under the former Residence Hall Meal plan, students had approximately \$15 to spend a day, which bought about two meals a day at the Hub, or 14 meals a week. Under the new Residence Hall Meal plan, students on the Residence Hall Meal Plan have the option to have meal swipes each week for 18 meals served by DePauw Dining each week plus \$200 in Flex Dollars and \$50 for out in town eating per semester. The plan was constructed in anticipation of students having unused swipes, an intentional construct to ensure that running out of swipes was unlikely. We believe that the 18 meal swipe system, among the most generous seen in the nation, should remain in place.

Multiple swipes per meal period:

To help provide greater flexibility, beginning with the spring 2016 semester, the concept of meal periods will be eliminated. All meal plans will be permitted up to four swipes per day regardless of the timing of those swipes.

Student hunger issues:

An issue raised in the white paper is the issue of student hunger. As discussed earlier, this issue was the primary driver in implementing the new meal plan structure. Since students on meal plans can no longer run out of meal money during the year, the primary concern is whether students on UOAH plans with three or four meals per week have sufficient resources to eat for the other meals during the week. Representatives from Student Life reached out to students on UOAH meal plans this fall and have developed a short-term solution for those students who expressed need. We are in the process of evaluating long-term solutions to address this problem.

Meal plan structure:

The Administration will explore introducing an “unlimited” or “premium” plan once Hoover Hall opens next fall. A block plan for upperclassmen might also be a viable option provided that it includes a mechanism to prevent students from running out of meals within the semester. The premium and block plan models will be evaluated prior to the opening of Hoover Hall.

Transparency, food quality and feedback:

DePauw recently hired Bruce Clute as Director of Collaborative Community Initiatives and Auxiliary Services and his role will include oversight of food service operations. Mr. Clute is available to meet with the DSG Auxiliary Concerns Standing Senate Committee several times a semester to discuss student concerns and future plans for all auxiliaries.

DePauw University
Dining Plan Weekly Balances - Spring 2015

(Following this spending guide will assure that your Dining Points will last throughout the 2015 Spring Semester)

		ResHall PLUS plan	ResHall Plan	RecVill Plan
	Beginning Balance - January 11, 2015	2,335.00	1,855.00	1,540.00
1/19/2015		2,185.56	1,736.28	1,441.44
1/26/2015		2,054.80	1,632.40	1,355.20
2/2/2015		1,924.04	1,528.52	1,268.96
2/9/2015		1,793.28	1,424.64	1,182.72
2/16/2015		1,662.52	1,320.76	1,096.48
2/23/2015		1,531.76	1,216.88	1,010.24
3/2/2015		1,401.00	1,113.00	924.00
3/9/2015		1,270.24	1,009.12	837.76
3/16/2015		1,139.48	905.24	751.52
3/23/2015		1,008.72	801.36	665.28
3/30/2015		877.96	697.48	579.04
4/6/2015		747.20	593.60	492.80
4/13/2015		616.44	489.72	406.56
4/20/2015		485.68	385.84	320.32
4/27/2015		354.92	281.96	234.08
5/4/2015		224.16	178.08	147.84
5/11/2015		93.40	74.20	61.60
	Last Day to use Meal Plan funds - May 18, 2015			
	ResHall PLUS plan based on \$18.68 per day			
	ResHall Plan based on \$14.84 per day			
	RecVill Plan based on \$12.32 per day			

All remaining plan balances from Fall 2014 are rolled over to Spring 2015.
Spring 2015 meal plans will be loaded and available for use on January 11, 2015.

Meal Plan Comparisons

GLCA Schools

College	Type of Meal Plan	Food Service Provider	# of Dining Locations	Swipe Expiration?	Provision for Friends/Family	Residence Hall Plans	Non-Residence Hall Plans	Comparisons to DePauw
Albion College	Swipes Per Week for Residence Hall and Block Plan for Non-Residence Halls	Bon Appetit	4	Four card swipes a day. Swipes expire each week and blocks expire at the end of the semester.	Each of the Residential Block Meal Plans includes four guest passes.	15 Swipes Plan - \$2,825 Per Semester 15 meals (card swipes) per week, \$50 in Dining Dollars 18 Swipes Plan - \$2,870 Per Semester 18 meals (card swipes) per week, \$75 in Dining Dollars 21 Swipes Plan - \$2,940 Per Semester 21 meals (card swipes) per week, \$150 in Dining Dollars	75 Commuter Block Plan - \$945 75 meals (card swipes) per semester 100 Commuter Block Plan - \$1,205 100 meals (card swipes) per semester 125 Commuter Block Plan - \$1,470 125 meals (card swipes) per semester	Meal plans are more expensive than DePauw and provide less flex dollars. Commuter plans are more expensive than DePauw's plans and don't provide flex dollars
Allegheny College	Semester Block Plan with Flex	Parkhurst Dining Services	2 (regular dining hall and food court)	Both swipes and flex are forfeited each semester.	Meals are limited to your personal consumption, with the exception of 10 meal per semester.	Complete Plan – \$2,975 - 180 meals, \$980 flex Daily Plan - \$2,545 - 150 meals, \$680 flex Frequent Plan – \$2,545 - 125 meals, \$800 flex	Lite Plan – \$1,950 90 meals, \$580 flex money per semester Mini Plan – \$985 35 meals, \$380 flex money per semester	Allegheny's plans provides more flex dollars to accommodate their food court, but DePauw's plan provides more meals.
Denison University	Unlimited all-you-care to eat and declining balance plan.	Bon Appetit	4	N/A	None on Big Red plan. Declining dollars can be used for friends/family.	Big Red - \$2,750 - All you care to eat at dining halls, 30 after hour meals, and \$100 Flex. The Hill - \$2,600 - \$1,745 declining balance dollars, Denison estimates 246 meals. Olmsted - \$2,450 - \$1,475 declining balance dollars, Denison estimates 208 meals. West College - \$2,300 - \$1,310 declining balance dollars, Denison estimates 185 meals.	1831 - \$1,450 - \$1,360 declining balance dollars, Denison estimates 192 meals. The Reserve - \$1,300 - \$1,190 declining balance dollars, Denison estimates 168 meals.	Denison implemented a plan similar to DePauw's old meal plan in Fall 2015. DePauw's plan provides more swipes per semester plus the additional flex dollars. Non-residence hall plans are more expensive at Denison, although there is little overhead taken out.
DePauw University	Swipe with Flex	Bon Appetit	8 - 6 for flex plus The Duck and 2 West for Flex	Weekly	Five guest swipes on all plans in addition to student swipes plus Flex dollars.	Residence Hall Meal Plan (\$2,720 - excluding \$50 laundry fee) - 18 Meals Per Week (292 swipes in Fall 2015) & \$250 in Flex (includes \$50 OIT) - 14 Meals Per Week (232 swipes in Fall 2015) & \$450 in Flex (includes \$50 OIT) Rector Village Meal Plan (\$2,340 - excluding \$50 laundry fee) - 14 Meals Per Week (232 swipes in Fall 2015) & \$150 in Flex (includes \$50 OIT) - 12 Meals Per Week (201 swipes in Fall 2015) & \$250 in Flex (includes \$50 OIT) - 10 Meals Per Week (169 swipes in Fall 2015) & \$350 in Flex (includes \$50 OIT)	UOAH Meal Plan - \$750 - 4 Meals Per Week (70 swipes in Fall 2015) & \$150 in Flex (includes \$50 OIT) - 3 Meals Per Week (53 swipes in Fall 2015) & \$250 in Flex (includes \$50 OIT)	N/A
Earlham College	Weekly Swipe & Block Plan	Metz Culinary Management	2 - Traditional dining hall and a coffee shop	Weekly	Meal plans are not transferable and may not be shared with another student.	19 Meal Plan (\$2,250) - 19 meals available per week, plus \$155 Quaker Cash. 14 Meal Plan (\$2,090) - 14 meals available per week, plus \$175 Quaker Cash. \$2,090/semester 10 Meal Plan (\$1,910) - 10 meals available per week, plus \$175 Quaker Cash. 150 Block Meal Plan (\$2,250) - 150 meals available per semester, plus \$240 Quaker Cash. 90 Block Meal Plan (\$2,090) - 90 meals available per semester, plus \$290 Quaker Cash.	Earlham students are required to be on a meal plan. First-year students are required to be on the 19-meal plan for the first semester. 7+ Meal Plan *** \$1,680 7 meals per week, 1 free snack and 1 free beverage per day, 5 Quesadillas. 4 guest meal passes, 3 Pizzas, 2 \$10 gift certificates at the Bookstore, and 1 Parent Package: Free night at the Haworth Inn	The 19 meal plan provides more swipe opportunities than DePauw's plan, but there are only two locations. Also, the lowest meal plan available is \$1,910, which is significantly above the \$750 UOAH plan.
Hope College	Weekly Swipe Plan	Self-Operated	3 - 1 traditional dining hall for all students and 2 for commuters and residents of a dorm.	Weekly	Each student receives 2 guest passes on their ID each semester	21 Meal Plan per Week (\$2,540) 15 Meal Plan per Week (\$2,345) 10 Meal Plan per Week (\$1,935)	20 Plan Premium (\$1,617 Per Term) - 20 meals per week + \$115 K Cash per term 20 Plan (\$1,517 Per Term) - 20 meals per week + \$15 K Cash per term 15 Plan Premium (\$1,529) - 15 meals per week + \$125 K Cash per term 15 Plan (\$1,429) - 15 meals per week + \$25 K Cash per term 10 Plan Premium (\$1,298) - 10 meals per week + \$135 K Cash per term 10 Plan (\$1,198) - 10 meals per week + \$35 K Cash per term	Plan is similar to DePauw but does not have a flex dollar component.
Kalamazoo College	Weekly Swipe Plan	Creative Dining Services	3	Weekly	Meal swipes may not be shared with other guests or students.		All residents except those in campus apartments or living learning housing units are required to carry a meal plan.	Plan is similar to DePauw but less flex dollars and fewer locations. Meal plan prices are for terms.

Meal Plan Comparisons

GLCA Schools								
College	Type of Meal Plan	Food Service Provider	# of Dining Locations	Swipe Expiration?	Provision for Friends/Family	Residence Hall Plans	Non-Residence Hall Plans	Comparisons to DePauw
Kenyon College	Unlimited all-you-care to eat	AVI Food Systems	1	N/A	None noted.	Meal Plan - \$3,360 - Unlimited access to the dining facility. 19 Meal Plan (\$3,660) 19 meals available per week, plus \$40 Flex. 14 Meal Plan (\$3,275) Board meals cannot be used to purchase meals for guests, but you may use the Flex Points that come with your meal plan,	Not offered.	More expensive and meal plan is required for all students (including students living in apartments).
Oberlin College	Weekly Swipe Plan	Bon Appetit	6 - four for swipes and 6 for Flex dollars	Weekly	Points that come with your meal plan,	12 Meal Plan (\$3,155) 12 meals available per week, plus \$170 Flex. 10 Meal Plan (\$2,920) 10 meals available per week, plus \$240 Flex. Plan A (\$2,900) - \$2,479 dollars available Plan B (\$2,655) - \$2,156 dollars available Plan C (\$2,310) - \$1,791 dollars available	7 Meal Plan (\$2,109) 7 meals available per week 5 Meal Plan (\$2,109) 5 meals available per week, plus \$335 Flex	Meal plan is similar to DePauw, although significantly more expensive and does not offer as much flex dollars
Ohio Wesleyan University	Declining Balance	Chartwells	6	N/A	Swipes	19 Meal Plan - \$2,300 15 Meal Plan - \$2,100 Meal Plan A - \$2,755 End of semester. No limit on number of swipes per day or meal period.	None - All resident students are required to be on a meal plan	Meal plan is similar to DePauw's old one, but OWU requires all students to be on a regular meal plan.
Wabash College	Weekly Swipe Plan	Bon Appetit	1	Weekly	None noted.	200 meals + \$450 Flex (average 12 meals/week) - default Meal Plan B - \$2,755 240 meals + \$300 Flex (average 15 meals/week) Meal Plan C - \$2,755 288 meals + \$150 Flex (average 18 meals/week)	Not offered.	Similar plan to DePauw without the swipes per week.
The College of Wooster	Swipe Block Plan	Self-Operated	6		No limits	Meal Plan D: \$1,755 80 meals + \$500 in Flex (only available for independent housing)		For the Residence Hall meal plans, DePauw provides a lot more swipes per semester with similar flex dollars. Non-Residence Hall Meal Plan is significantly more expensive.
Other Peer Schools								
College	Type of Meal Plan	Food Service Provider	# of Dining Locations	Swipe Expiration?	Provision for Friends/Family	Residence Hall Plans	Non-Residence Hall Plans	Comparisons to DePauw
Carleton College	Swipes per week.	Bon Appetit	4	Weekly	3 guest swipes on 15 meal plan.	20 Meal Plan (\$2,040 per term) - 3 meals per day Monday-Saturday and 2 meals on Sunday. \$75 in flex dollars 15 Meal Plan (\$2,040 per term) - 15 meals per week and \$300 in flex dollars Carte Blanche - unlimited meals with \$75 flex per year. 14 Meals with \$495 flex per year 10 meals with \$675 per year.	5 Meal Plan (\$757 per term) - 5 meals per week plus \$175 in flex dollars.	Structures is very similar to DePauw's new meal plan, but DePauw's appears to be less expensive (Carleton has a quarter system complicating the comparison).
Centre College	Swipes with Flex	Sodexo	3	Weekly	None	7 meals with \$945 flex per year.	Not offered.	Similar to DePauw's new plan. Cost is included in a comprehensive fee, so unable to determine relative value.
Grinnell College	Swipes with Flex	Self-Operated	2		Weekly on residence hall plans and semester for non-residence hall plans.	Full Meal plan - (\$3,010) - 20 swipes 15 Meal Plan Plus (\$3,010) - 15 swipes plus \$230 flex 15 Meal Plan (\$2,780) - 15 swipes 10 Meals Plus (\$2,835) - 10 swipes plus \$300 19 Meal Plan - (\$2,532) - 19 meals plus \$50 flex 14 Meal Plan - (\$2,532) - 14 meals plus \$175 flex 10 Meal Plan - (\$2,532) - 10 meals plus \$250 flex	80 Meals Plus - (\$1,154) - 80 swipes plus \$135 flex 65 Meals Plus - (\$1,020) - 65 swipes plus 175 flex	Similar to DePauw's new plan, but Grinnell's plans are comparatively more expensive. Residence hall meal plans are similar to DePauw - although less expensive due to less flex dollars.
Macalester College	Swipes with Flex	Bon Appetit	5	Weekly	5 guest swipes on residential meal plans	Full Board Options (\$2,535) - 21 Meal Plan - no Flex Dollars. - 17 Meal Plan - \$130 Flex Dollars - 14 Meal Plan - \$185 Flex Dollars	150 meals per semester (\$2,282) - available for juniors and seniors only.	
St. Olaf	Swipes with Flex	Bon Appetit	3 (2 for swipes and 3 for Flex Dollars)	Weekly	Flex dollars		Partial Board Option (\$1,270) -90 Meals Per Semester - \$160 Flex dollars	Similar structure to DePauw with less flex dollars and fewer dining service locations.