



Finance



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Associated Colleges of Illinois

The Partnership Proposition: Dining Services at the Heart of Campus

11:15 AM

The Partnership Proposition:

Dining Services at the Heart of Campus



Changing Higher Education Landscape

- Declining enrollment; 12% decline since 2012*
- Why?
 - Increasing costs
 - Wage stagnation
 - Lower birth rates
 - Fewer international students
 - Loss of confidence in value

*National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

Faculty Instability

- Increase in faculty departures
- Brings uncertainty and instability
- Creates another layer of challenges
- Builds pressure to recruit both students & faculty

“Higher education continues to experience unprecedented transition as leaders depart or join new institutions. Such change brings uncertainty and, if poorly managed, instability.”

– *Sarah Westfall, Westfall Executive Advisors*

Role of Dining Services

- Major cost center in scope of finances
- Critical component of student & residential life
- Key factor for student recruitment
- Can improve overall campus experience and satisfaction
- Allows students to live their values

Unique Foodservice Challenges

- Rising costs
- Volatility in supply chain
- Staff retention
- Making meaningful connections
- Students' ever-growing expectations and experiences
- COVID-19's acceleration of technology's role in food experiences

Increasing Value of Partnerships

- Vendor choices are more acutely important
 - Why?
 - Meet/exceed institutional goals
 - Enhance culture and build community
 - Build confidence and value
- Partner input can be a tool
 - Why?
 - Create balance
 - Provide expertise
 - Identify blind spots & provide protection

Drive Towards a Common Goal

- Bring partners into your institutional goals
- Uncommon champions can emerge
- Can improve climate for students and staff
- Calm daily pressures and tap into needs of student body
- Improve objectives like mental health, wellness & diversity
- Create community and collaboration

Opening the door for...

Foundation supporting functions and visionary work

Value of Pragmatism

- Value of pragmatism and nimbleness is higher than ever
- The “Hollow Wow” is out
- Pragmatism and efficiencies are critical
- Students are on the go and they want solutions
- Technology is priority but unproven spending of past is out

- Students increasingly want:
 - Portability of meal plan dollars across campus
 - Meal plan to include retail areas
 - Transparency and ROI of meal plans
 - Access to food that coordinates with schedules

Optimal Partner for a Unified Campus

- Scratch made, wholesome & nutritious food as a basic foundation
- Ease of transaction and access for students
- Communication around cost and ROI as it relates to dining program and additional amenities and services
- Flexibility in programming and financial deliverables to meet institution's needs
- Innovation to support ever-changing landscape
- Supports community building and culture of institution
- Sound application of predictive analytics that can impact:
 - Purchasing efficiencies
 - Usage trends
 - Facility usage data & campus safety & more

Case Study: University of Indianapolis



- Jan 2017 account launched; previous self-operating history
- 2017-2018 came with challenges:
 - Financial challenges for University
 - Staff transitions
 - Programmatic strategy to meet student demands
 - Aging facilities

Case Study: University of Indianapolis



- 2018-2019 turning point; improved financials & programming
- 2019-2020 COVID hit and trials cemented a strong partnership
 - Importance of communication
 - Mutual respect for both parties needs
 - Flexibility tested
 - Expertise was paramount
- COVID pivots tested and strengthened program
 - Adapted financial and program model to best fit University
 - Weekly meetings and support on-site up to President
 - Adjustments implemented to break-even despite refunds
 - Student meals in dorms and quarantined areas

Case Study: University of Indianapolis



- 2021-2022 saw a big leap forward, 10-year extension
- Best student survey results ever
- Quest GM recognized by University
- Beginning stage of transformative remodel
- Dining program becomes a marketing tool for university
- Program at an all-time high

"We have finally hit the peak performance on the food experience that we've been looking for." -- UIndy Student Counsel

In Closing...

- Goal of balancing leadership and consensus
- Instability is fluid and change can occur
- Dedication to partnership can bring about positive change



Thank you!

Questions?

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