




UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

UNIVERSITY SENATE

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Memorandum

To: Linda Clement, Vice President for Student Affairs

From: Jordan A. Goodman, Chair-Elect of the University Senate 

Date: February 23, 2016

Re: Proposal for Transparency in Campus Diner Food Production (Senate Doc. No. 15-16-24)

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) reviewed the attached proposal entitled, "Proposal for Transparency in Campus Diner Food Production (Senate Doc. No. 15-16-24)" at its meeting on February 19, 2016. The SEC was informed that the Residence Hall Association has oversight over the dining halls and that the Dining Services Advisory Board advises them. Therefore, SEC Members voted to forward the proposal to you so that it could be put through a review by the appropriate channels within the Division of Student Affairs. Following your review, we request that you provide the SEC with an update of any actions that you take related to the proposal. If you have any questions regarding this action, please contact Ms. Reka Montfort at x55804 or reka@umd.edu.

Attachment

JAG/rm



University Senate PROPOSAL FORM

Name:	Erik Rosenbaum
Date:	2/14/16
Title of Proposal:	Proposal for Transparency in Campus Diner Food Production
Phone Number:	215.262.3324
Email Address:	Erikrose1@gmail.com
Campus Address:	4103 Ellicott Hall
Unit/Department/College:	AGNR-College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Constituency (faculty, staff, undergraduate, graduate):	Undergraduate
Description of issue/concern/policy in question:	<p>Currently, the dining services website provides no clear or obviously available description of where their food comes from, what form that food is in when it is delivered, and how that food is ultimately prepared before being served to students in the dining halls. This issue affects the students and faculty that regularly get food from the dining halls. Similar to how the University posts nutritional information for its food (although, this is done in a very ambiguous manner), the University of Maryland – a public university – should also acknowledge the students’ right to know where diner food comes from and how it is prepared on campus. There is some attempt, or at least a feigned attempt, at trying to display how food is prepared. This attempt, or façade, can be observed in how staff cook burgers on open stoves or heat up pasta in a saucepan; yet, more transparency is needed for these foods and many others. Ranging from the suspiciously perfect fruit in the salad bar to the odd-tasting eggs in the breakfast line to the feathered chicken wings at late night, it is the duty of a transparent, honest institution to make available the details of a truly important and potentially detrimental aspect of many students’ daily lives.</p>
Description of action/changes you would like to see implemented and why:	<p>I could not find a Section or Policy in the UMD Policy and Procedures document in which the dining services activities and logistics are explicitly addressed. Section V-(A) “University of Maryland, College Park Policies Concerning Student Housing” under “Student Affairs” (http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/2014-V-500a.html) briefly addresses dining services, purely in terms of meal plans for students.</p>

	<p>A new subsection for Section V, or an entirely new Section, should include the need for constant transparency of diner food, enacting an update of the website no less than 90 days after this section or subsection's passage. This "update" on the "transparency of diner food" shall be defined as, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A comprehensive description of each meal and each ingredient's path from producer to consumer. This pertains only to unmarked items, e.g. A1 sauce, Old Bay seasoning, etc. do not count. Pasta, French Toast, Grilled Chicken, etc. do count.• Mention of the name of the company from which the school buys food, as well as the specific location of the facility in which that food was produced, farmed, or otherwise processed.• An explicit description of how staff prepare the students' food from delivered items. This description must include a detailing of what state the food stuffs are in when they arrive on campus, e.g. frozen, fresh, vacuum sealed, etc. <p>The entire explanation of the processes for each meal should always conclude with "The food is then served to students," or something of the sort. This is simply to illustrate the thoroughness each explanation should have.</p> <p>The purpose of this proposal would be to make more information available to the public. This idea is essentially the same as the reason for posting the diner food's nutritional information.</p> <p>Other than the trouble of getting someone to write these descriptions, there do not really seem to be any immediate, potential negative consequences from the proposal. What was the downside of posting the dining food's nutritional information?</p>
<p>Suggestions for how your proposal could be put into practice:</p>	<p>The dining services website claims a 20% reliance on sustainable foods (http://dining.umd.edu/sustainability/sustainable-food-purchasing/). But all the details the diner claims can only be seen as positive (which almost exclusively regard sustainability or sustainability efforts). A policy should be made for a currently non-existent or very weak practice, that is, the practice of increased diner transparency. This policy could easily be implemented by hiring someone, or a small team of people, to collect information from the diner and its managerial staff (through testimonies or direct observation), and then write descriptions on the dining services</p>

	<p>website.</p>
<p>Additional Information:</p>	<p>The only “campus” support I can cite is from the consistently occurring, slightly disgruntled conversations I have with my friends while eating cold, funky-tasting eggs, slightly chilled bacon and French toast, and syrup that solidifies when it cools immediately upon contact with the air as I pour it on my French toast.</p> <p>Students who eat at the diner would be positively affected by this policy. A study cited in the Chicago Tribune reported a correlation between healthier eating and improved academic performance (http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/sns-health-nutrition-better-grades-story.html). A report by LiveStrong.com also cites that improved eating habits improve students’ ability to perform well in school (http://www.livestrong.com/article/508170-how-does-eating-healthy-affect-your-grades/). In other words, it is not too difficult to find information on how good eating habits lead to good grades. Although I acknowledge that eating habits are largely decided by the individual, eating habits are first decided by what options are available to the individual, and those options, in the case of most on-campus students at UMD, are decided by the diner. Now, the decision is yours.</p> <p>A financial consequence of trying to create a more informed public with an understanding of where their food comes from could include the cost of hiring staff to write these short descriptions for the meals.</p>

Please send your completed form and any supporting documents to senate-admin@umd.edu or University of Maryland Senate Office, 1100 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, MD 20742-7541. Thank you!