

ANNUAL REPORT

University Standing Committee _____ Dining Committee _____

Academic Year Covered by Report _____ 2015-16 _____

Date Report Submitted _____ June 28, 2016 _____

Report Submitted by _____ Bernie Hansen, Chair _____

Number of times committee met _____ 7, + 1 field trip to CALS organic vegetable garden

RECOMMENDATIONS

Background

Over the course of this past year the administration and staff of University Dining (UD) have articulated specific goals that the members of the committee felt are important, including:

- Continually improve the nutritional and esthetic quality of food and the overall dining experience to increase student, staff, and faculty interest in using dining services.
- Controlling costs to keep the service affordable and competitive with alternatives.
- Promote UD as an employer to students needing part-time work and using the experience to build their experience and resumes.
- Maximize the use of recycling and composting to reduce the waste stream generated by this huge enterprise.
- Collaborate with the CALS organic vegetable garden staff and with individuals in the office of sustainability to find opportunities to support local food producers, including other units within NCSU.
- Use a variety of promotion venues – social media, scheduled events, and web presence – to get UD’s message out to the campus community
- Generate a level of campus pride in the dining service that brings national interest to NCSU and makes University Dining an asset for recruiting and retaining talented students and faculty.

As currently configured, the committee is rather limited in terms of what it can accomplish independently or how it might contribute to UD’s internal goals. The committee charges (reproduced below) are vague and appear to be designed for informal information-gathering towards this annual report:

- Advise the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration concerning on-campus food services.
- Be familiar with the services.
- Receive suggestions from students, faculty and staff.
- Review long-term food service needs.
- Review catering services on an on-going basis.
- Consult with the Faculty Senate's Resources and Environment Committee for consideration of policies, procedures or other matters having across-campus impact.

Recommendations

We recognize two issues with the committee charge and composition:

1. As a business enterprise, UD has built-in incentives to provide an attractive product at competitive prices and there is little that the committee can offer to enhance their business model. However, one function that the committee can perform consistent with its charge is to provide feedback and suggestions for how to better serve the University community. Unfortunately, the committee configuration hinders this function because:
 - There appears to be no effort to recruit faculty and staff from multiple colleges and departments to broadly represent faculty/staff interest
 - Students are under-represented
 - There is no charge to members to represent a constituency; thus the feedback brought to UD tends to be personal, anecdotal, and represents the opinion of only the handful of committee members.
2. UD is a huge business enterprise with a large environmental footprint. As a leading research institution there appears to be a surprising absence of university administrative leadership to interface the academic/research resources of NCSU with UD to pursue opportunities for researching ways to reduce the environmental costs of food production and delivery. University support and leadership towards sustainability goals appears to be haphazard and opaque, and much of the UD contributions towards and sustainability appear to have grown from within UD itself without active direction from or participation by administration. Potential areas of research and collaboration include (but are not limited to):
 - Psychology/social sciences: Identify new ways to modify behavior and engage with the campus population in reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting.
 - Engineering: Research new approaches to infrastructure and user facilities to improve/enforce compliance with waste reduction, composting and recycling.

- CALS: Support methods of local/organic food production, e.g., more financial and infrastructure support for the needs of the organic vegetable garden.
- Poole College of Management: Actively engage with UD as a training venue for students to learn business administration, labor management, work ethic, resume building, etc.

Therefore, our recommendations include:

1. The Provost's office should consider reconfiguring the committee composition and charge to make better use of faculty and staff time to support UD's goals and represent community interests; these are described in section 3 below.
2. Committee members should be recruited with the expectation that they represent a constituency, and members should actively obtain input from a representative sample of that constituency to bring to meetings.
3. University leadership should identify and facilitate goals for College engagement, teaching, and research opportunities with UD that benefit our image as a leading research and teaching institution. If the committee includes representatives from these academic units the committee charge could be expanded to include monitoring and maintenance of the relationships between the units and UD.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION ITEMS/ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEE

Based on the Chair's experience over the past 3 years the primary function the committee usefully performs is to provide feedback to UD administration about food quality, price, availability (location/hours) and related issues; much of the committee's work this past year was directed towards that goal. I also recruited students in Psychology 541 to conduct research on composting compliance. A summary of our activities is as follows:

1. In an attempt to leverage our small numbers, committee members recruited 102 colleagues (faculty, staff, and students) who normally do not eat at UD venues to complete an online survey designed to explore the reasons why; recommendations were formed based on those results that UD administration incorporated into their planning. Results are summarized in the minutes for October 20.
2. Committee members took colleagues to lunch at the 1887 bistro and had them evaluate their experience via an online survey. Faculty and staff were chosen on the basis of being potential opinion leaders for recognizing 1887 Bistro as a desirable venue to bring official guests for promoting the University (faculty and staff committee members) or student peers for obtaining feedback on the value of the venue as a destination for students (student members). The survey results were discussed as summarized in the minutes for the November 17 meeting.

3. The committee members individually tested the Tapingo system to obtain feedback for UD at the meeting on January 12; results are summarized in the minutes for that meeting.
4. The chair recruited a member of the Psychology department (Dr. Anne McLaughlin, director of the LACElab) and associate director TJ Willis of the Talley Student Union administration and facilitated development of a research project by students in Psychology 541 (Fall semester) to study the composting and recycling behavior of patrons of the UD dining venues at One Earth in the TSU. The project also investigated the effect of modifications to composting signage on composting compliance. Their full report is appended to the January 12 minutes.
5. Committee members ate at the special functions “A taste of Korea” and “A taste of Brazil” at the Fountain and Clark dining halls, respectively, to provide feedback on the food and the concept of drawing students in to new/unfamiliar cuisine.
6. The committee went on a site visit to the CALS organic garden at 4400 Mid Pines Road to gain insight into how the garden functioned, how UD supports it, and what might be needed to improve the staff’s ability to get fresh produce to UD.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR REVISION OF CHARGE AND/OR
MEMBERSHIP CONFIGURATION (if applicable)**

We have two general recommendations for change:

1. Alter the composition of the committee to more accurately reflect the needs of the campus community and provide consistent representation from Colleges and departments whose academic missions are aligned with UD goals.
2. Charge the committee with taking an active role to bring university academic resources to support UD’s efforts to minimize the environmental costs of food service, or at least to monitor the relationship between UD and the University Sustainability Office.

Specific recommendations for each of these:

1. Alter the committee composition:
 - a. Several committee members have had unexcused absences from some or all meetings (unexcused being defined as missing a meeting with no attempt to contact the committee chair). Committee chairs should be empowered to dismiss members who are unwilling or unable to attend meetings. **We therefore recommend that two unexcused absences are sufficient grounds for removal from a committee by the chair to allow replacement with members who are willing and able to participate.**

- b. Students are by far the single largest UD user group and their representation to the committee should be increased to provide more representative feedback about food service to UD. Recruitment of students has been difficult in part because of a confusing and cumbersome process requiring that students request appointment through student body representatives. This process is not unique to the Dining Committee and perhaps should be re-evaluated if it is perceived to be a barrier to student participation elsewhere as well. **Streamlining the process for student committee volunteerism may help to increase student participation.**
 - c. The committee description should **require faculty representation from CALS, CHSS, and Engineering** – three Colleges with resources and interests that are aligned with UD goals.
2. Bring university academic resources to help UD reduce the environmental costs of providing the service. University Dining is a huge enterprise responsible for serving an average of > 30,000 meals every day; as such this business unit generates a large environmental footprint. Faculty representation from the key Colleges in 1.c. above would provide greater access and leadership connect UD to academic resources.
- a. Engage faculty in key Colleges and departments in research (via student projects and externally funded sources for faculty research) to improve compliance with recycling and composting efforts (CHSS and Engineering).
 - b. Improve local sourcing of food from NCSU and regional sources (CALS). Production by at least two NCSU units – the dairy farm and organic vegetable garden – is already supported by UD, and the University should strive to materially support these relationships. The staff of the organic vegetable garden has identified physical plant shortcomings – notably a processing area – that are acute barriers to efficient and reliable delivery of produce to UD.