CAMPUS DINING SURVEY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Spring 2014

Stony Brook University
Center for Survey Research
Campus Dining Frequency

The frequency of dining on campus varies dramatically across different campus groups. Overall, undergraduates are the most likely to purchase food on campus on a daily basis (45%), followed by Master’s students (18%), faculty (11%), PhD students (10%), and staff (9%). Among undergraduates, campus residents and those on a meal plan eat on campus most frequently. A majority of all groups eat on campus at least once a week (71% of undergraduates, 52% of Master’s students, 55% of faculty, 44% of staff, and 51% of PhD students). But that leaves a near majority of faculty, staff, and graduate students who eat on campus less frequently than once a week.

- 65% of undergraduates on a meal plan say they purchase food on a daily basis (Q1), and 63% say they purchase food every day between Monday and Friday during the semester (Q3). 71% of undergraduate residents spend every or most weekend on campus during the semester and of those 71% report buying food on Saturday and Sunday (Q5)
- 57% of resident undergraduates say they purchase food daily (Q1) and 61% say they purchase food every day from Monday to Friday during the semester (Q3). 66% spend most or every weekend on campus (Q4) and 74% buy food on both days (Q5).
- Only 20% of commuter undergraduate students purchase food daily, and 15% buy food on each weekday between Monday and Friday (Q3).
- Fewer than 11% of faculty, 9% of staff, 18% of MA and 10% of PhD students purchase food on a daily basis.

Preferred Dining Locations

Overall, the SAC is the most frequented dining facility for a plurality of undergraduates (31%), MA students (57%), PhD students (58%), faculty (43%), and staff (54%) (Q26). For undergraduates, this was followed by the Student Union (21%), Roth Food Court (16%), and West Side Dining (16%). For MA students, it was followed by the Student Union (21%). For PhD students, the SB Union Deli (11%) was the second most frequented location. For faculty, the SAC was followed by Jasmine or J-Club (17%), and Simons Café (16%). For staff the Admin Cart (14%) and the Student Union (11%) were the next most popular dining locations.

The SAC is a convenient and popular location at which to purchase food (with 80% or more of each group having eaten there at least once in the fall semester. A majority of faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students had also eaten at Jasmine at least once in the fall, although most faculty and staff had eaten there only a few times last semester. A minority of faculty (23%) had eaten at J-Club and most had done so once or twice last semester. Few faculty and staff had purchased food from the Student Union last semester; undergraduate and graduate students are most likely to have done so at least once, although graduate students purchase food there so less frequently then undergraduates. Westside dining is almost exclusively frequented by undergraduates. Roth Food Court is also largely frequented by undergraduates although a minority of staff and MA students purchases food there occasionally. A sizeable minority of faculty, staff, and PhD students had purchased food at the Admin
food cart. A majority of faculty (73%) had eaten at Simon’s café and most did so a few times a semester. Roughly a quarter of faculty and staff had also eaten at the Hilton Garden Court Inn.

Campus groups differed in the facility they thought offered the best food in terms of taste and variety, Simons café was the clear winner among faculty (chosen by 49%), the SAC and Stony Brook Union were virtually tied among undergraduates, Staff favored the SAC (27%) followed by the Simons café (21%), Master’s students favored the SAC, and PhD students were torn between the SAC (26%) and Jasmine (25%).

A majority of survey respondents felt they were somewhat or very well informed about campus dining options, although a near majority of faculty and PhD students were not.

**Food Chains**

Undergraduate students most frequently purchase food or beverages from Starbucks: 12% purchase something at least once a day, and 41% purchase something at least once a week or more often. Master’s students are the next most frequent purchasers (31% buy something at least once a week). By contrast, only 6% of faculty and 13% of staff purchase a beverage or food at Starbucks at least once a week. 12% of undergraduates purchase food or a beverage at Red Mango at least once a week but faculty, staff, and graduate students never purchase food or beverages there. Very few people frequent Dunkin Donuts: 6% of undergraduates buy food or beverages there at least once a week but 80% of all groups never frequent it. 23% of undergraduate students purchase something from Wendy’s at least once a week and 64% had bought something there at least a few times in the last semester but a majority of faculty, staff and graduate students never buy food there.

A majority of the campus is satisfied with the current food brands offered, but a majority also had suggestions on other brands including Subway, Taco Bell, and Panera.

**Food Satisfaction**

There are only modest levels of satisfaction with campus food. In terms of taste and appearance, a majority or near majority say they are somewhat satisfied (the middle category) with a slightly greater percent not at all or not very satisfied than very or extremely satisfied. These are middling ratings at best. There is greater dissatisfaction with the variety of food on offer, and even greater dissatisfaction with the range of healthy food options. There are relatively minor differences in these ratings across faculty, staff, undergraduate, and graduate students.

A majority of all groups are dissatisfied with the quality of food in relation to its price. 73% of undergraduates, 74% of PhD students, 58% of faculty, 67% of staff, and 54% of master’s students said they were not very or not at all satisfied with the campus food in terms of its value (quality of food in relation to price).

Undergraduates are more dissatisfied than other campus groups with portion sizes.
**Dietary Restrictions**

The percent of vegan/vegetarians on campus ranges from a high of 24% of master’s students, and 14% of faculty to a low of 8% of staff, 9% of undergrads, and 11% of PhDs. With the exception of faculty, a majority of vegetarians found it somewhat or very difficult to find vegetarian food on campus. A majority of staff, undergraduate, and PhD vegetarians were somewhat or very uncertain that the food they purchased on campus was strictly vegetarian.

A minority of undergraduate (7%), Master’s (5%), PhD (7%), staff (1%), and faculty (7%) follow religious dietary restrictions. A majority of faculty, staff, and PhD students found it somewhat or very difficult to find food on campus that fit their restrictions whereas a majority of undergraduate and master’s student found this somewhat or very easy. A majority of all groups felt somewhat or very satisfied that the food they bought was correctly prepared to meet these requirements,

Roughly 6% of survey respondents had some kind of food allergy, of which seafood was the most common, followed by peanuts, and dairy. Most found it somewhat or very easy to find food that did not contains foods to which they were allergic.

A sizeable minority of survey respondents were on a diet for health reasons or to lose weight, although the majority was dieting to lose weight. This varied from 43% of staff, 31% of Master’s students, 28% of faculty, 26% of undergrads, and 16% of PhD students. A majority said that it was somewhat or very difficult to find food on campus that fit their diet.

**Satisfaction with Specific Dining Facilities**

1. **SAC**: The SAC was the most popular campus dining location. 396 survey respondents, or 39% of those who ate on campus at least once last semester, listed the SAC as the place they purchased food most often. A majority of people who ate at the SAC were satisfied with its opening hours during the week, although a sizeable minority of undergraduate and PhD students wanted it to stay open later during the week and on the weekend. A majority of all students (undergraduate and graduate) wanted it open later during finals week. A majority of all those who eat at the SAC are dissatisfied with the time it takes to purchase food, with all campus groups reporting a modal wait time of roughly 15 minutes. This congestion is largely confined to lunch time. All diners give a middling rating to the speed of service, with roughly 35% rating it as very good or excellent. A majority of undergraduate students regard the SAC as a very good or excellent place to socialize with friends or colleagues but few faculty or staff views it that way. Other aspects of the SAC were well rated, including the safety of food preparation, the cleanliness of the dining area, the courteousness and helpfulness of managers and staff, and the marking of items. Overall, a majority would recommend the SAC to others.

2. **The Stony Brook Student Union**: The Union was the second most popular campus dining location, and is largely frequented by undergraduates. 160 or 16% of those who purchase food on campus purchase food most often at the Union; among undergraduates, 21% purchase food there most
often. A majority were satisfied with weekday opening hours, although a sizeable minority of undergraduates would like it to open earlier during the week and on the weekend, and would like it to open earlier and close later during finals. A majority of those who eat most often at the Union were dissatisfied with the time it takes to purchase food there, with undergraduates reporting a modal waiting time at peak hours of roughly 20 minutes (somewhat longer than at the SAC). This congestion is most common at lunch time but a minority reports that it also occurs in the evening. Diners give a middling rating to the speed of service, with 27% of undergraduates rating it as very good or excellent, and another 35% as good. There are greater concerns about food safety and cleanliness at the Union than at the SAC; only 35% of undergraduates rate the food preparation as extremely or very safe. Most undergraduates do not view the Union as an excellent or very good place to socialize with friends or colleagues. Other aspects of the Union were well rated, including the cleanliness of the dining area, the courteousness and helpfulness of managers and staff, and the marking of items. Overall, a majority would recommend the Union to others.

3. **Roth Food Court:** The Roth Food Court was the third most popular campus dining location, and is also largely frequented by undergraduates. 118 or 12% of those who purchase food on campus purchase food most often at Roth Food Court; among undergraduates, 16% purchase food there most often. A majority of undergraduates would like the Roth Food Quad to open earlier and stay open after during the week, on the weekend, and during finals. There was broad dissatisfaction with the time it takes to purchase food there, with undergraduates reporting a modal waiting time at peak hours of roughly 25 minutes (the longest at any campus dining facility). This congestion occurs at both lunch and dinner, although a slightly greater number of students experienced this congestion in the evening. Only 24% of undergraduates rated the speed of service as very good or excellent, another 35% rated it as good, and 40% rated it as fair or poor. Roth Food Court gets generally good reviews for the cleanliness of the facility, and helpful and courteous managers and staff. It is also regarded by undergraduates as an especially good place to socialize with friends and colleagues. Roth Food Court is especially popular among those who frequently eat there, with 37% of undergraduates saying they would be very likely and 54% saying they are somewhat likely to recommend it to others (compared to 28% who said this about the SAC).

4. **West Side Dining:** West Side Dining is frequented largely undergraduates with 16% choosing it as the place they purchase food most often. A majority of students are satisfied with the opening hours at West Side Dining; although a majority would like longer opening and closing hours during finals (but are satisfied with weekday hours). As for other dining facilities there was widespread dissatisfaction with long waits during peak times; undergraduates reported having to wait roughly 20 minutes at peak times with the greatest congestion occurring in the evenings. Over 40% of undergraduate students rated the speed of service as fair or poor. West Side Dining gets generally positive marks for food cleanliness, the cleanliness of the facility, and the helpful and courteous managers and staff. Undergraduates regard it as a good place to socialize with friends and colleagues (although not as good as Roth Food Court or Jasmine). Undergraduates also rate it as a relatively easy place to meet others if dining alone. Nonetheless, over a third of those who
frequently ate at West Side Dining, a higher percent than at other facilities, said they were unlikely to recommend it to others.

5. **Student Union Deli**: A mix of PhD students (11%), undergraduates (9%), Master’s students (6%), and staff (5%) said that the Deli was the place they purchased food most often. A bare majority is satisfied with its hours but a large minority would like it to open earlier and stay open later during the week, and a majority of students would like it to stay open later during finals. Undergraduates still complain about wait times at the Deli, but most are satisfied. Only 31% say they are not very or not at all satisfied, one of the lowest levels of dissatisfaction with wait times at any of the dining facilities frequented by undergraduates. The modal wait time is just over 10 minutes at peak times, one of the lowest waiting times for any of the popular dining facilities. The bulk of congestion occurs at lunch time. This leads to somewhat better ratings of the staff’s speed of service, with only 17% of undergraduates rating it as fair or poor (compared to 42% at West Side Dining). A majority of customers rate the food preparation environment as clean and safe, and regard the managers and staff as courteous and helpful. Not surprisingly, the Deli is not seen as an especially good place to socialize. Overall, undergraduate customers are more likely to recommend the Deli to others than they are to recommend any of the other dining facilities. 43% said they were very likely to recommend it to others compared to 37% who said that about the popular Roth Food Court or 20% who said they were very likely to recommend West Side Dining (a less popular dining venue).

6. **Jasmine or the J-Club**: A mix of faculty (17%), graduate students (9-10%), and undergraduates (7%) purchase food most often from Jasmine. Faculty and graduate students are generally satisfied with Jasmine’s hours but undergraduates would like it to stay open later during the week, on weekends, and would like it to open earlier and stay open later during finals. There was general satisfaction with the time it takes to purchase food at Jasmine with a modal wait time of 10 minutes at peak times with most diners experiencing longer waiting times during lunch. Most rate the food preparation environment as safe, the dining area as clean, food items well marked, and regard Jasmine as a good place to socialize with friends or colleagues. Mangers and staff are rated as helpful and courteous. Almost 90% of diners say they are somewhat or very likely to recommend Jasmine to others.