Thank you all for taking the time to participate in the Penn Dining webinar on February 6. Thank you, as well, for submitting all of your questions. We wanted to take the time to answer all of them for you, as you were inconvenienced by the technical difficulties during the webinar and may not have received an answer to your question.

Your questions have been copied verbatim, below. We have endeavored to answer all of your questions, while clustering similar questions together, organized by category.

Thank you again for your time, interest, and participation!

-Penn Dining

FOOD QUALITY AND MENU

Have you done any student surveys on their impression of food quality? See comment on Quora: "The food in the dining halls is pretty average, and sometimes below average." Also, seems most students leave dining plan after freshman year. Correlation?

- If you actually meet with a cross section of students from all across the campus, you'd get a better idea of what's really going on. My freshman has expressed concerns about almost all the same concerns I'm hearing from other parents here: high cost, vegan options, little fruit options, personnel

We conduct an annual survey at the end of the academic year, and, this year, have added an additional, smaller survey in the Fall. The end-of-year survey is a 180+ point questionnaire designed to capture a wide and thorough range of student feedback. With over 1,000 respondents in our last survey, we are able to gather good, usable data on our operations. This survey includes questions regarding food taste and appearance, as you mentioned. There are several locations in which students rated us in the 80s and 90s (out of a 0-100 scale) on food taste and appearance of food. For one example, our kosher facility, Falk Dining at Hillel, scoring a perfect 100 on food taste. If other cafés—which may be scoring high in other components—fall below those numbers, that helps us to focus on what we can improve for our students.

It is always our goal to continue creating, modifying, and demonstrating the value of continuing on a dining plan beyond their freshmen year. Every year, there is something new we offer that students didn’t have the year before, such as new, updated locations, new programming, and new
menus offerings. As a note: rising upperclassmen, your students will be able to choose from a wider range of dining plans, which will give them more freedom of plan structure and size than they had as freshmen.

**While Hill is great, they serve the same food night after night... you can get mongolian and pasta made to order... but it's the same mongolian option all the time and the same type of pasta and sauce every night - are there plans to change up the menu?**

Thank you for your feedback. With 40+ menu items at Hill for lunch alone—including several menu items that are customizable for students—it is certainly one of our challenges to keep every station new and fresh. We currently rotate some menu items daily, such as our offerings at our seafood and rotisserie stations, other menu items rotate weekly, such as the composed salads at our pizza and pasta station. That said, we have already begun to add new menus items at Hill, which will be noted on the menu display at the serving stations. For example, just this week, we have added açai bowls to our Fruit Salad station at Hill.

Finally, what we offer at Penn Dining is more than one location alone, and at every one of our all-you-care-to-eat cafés, chef managers are given freedom to create and execute their own menus in their kitchens.

**There are very few vegan options in the Quad dining halls. When McClelland runs out of salad bar and fruit options, they don't replenish it. Fruit options are very limited & they don't replenish these, even bananas! The swipes are so expensive & not worth the high price based on offerings.**

- If you would serve more fruit and fresh vegetable options and actually fill the salad bars back up at the quad dining halls, you would keep a lot more students happy who have to use these dining halls.

As different dining halls present different menus for the day, I wonder if the students can see every menu - for example, s/he could find where the fish is served today?

Great question! Students can always view our menus online, up to 6 days in advance. Students can also enroll in Menu Mail, to have the daily menus at our locations sent to their email inbox. Students can also download the Penn Guides app for their smart phone, to have those menus available in their hand.

Related to your fish question, we rotate our menus at all of our locations, but your student can always find food at ‘Catch’, our dedicated seafood station at Hill.

**COST & VALUE**

It's still not clear what the cost/swipe is for freshmen. Can you please provide a ballpark figure so we can make the right decision?
• How much is a single swipe?
• Can you address cost please. It is difficult to make an educated decision about meal plans without knowing the single meal swipe cost.
• According to my freshman students meal plan this year, a single swipe was $17.00. Just trying to confirm this so we can make an educated decision for next year.
• What is the cost of a meal swipe? Is it $17.00 per swipe?

Of course, cost and value are two criteria that we are constantly assessing and targeting with our dining plan offerings. Beginning last semester, we are undertaking both a broad and thorough overview of all of our plans, with a specific focus on targeting cost per swipe.

The cost per swipe for each dining plan depends on how many swipes are associated with that plan. Like most anything else that you buy, the more you buy, the cheaper the cost per each. As it stands now, for example, the cost per swipe for the plan with the fewest swipes—the Best Food Fit (BFF) plan—is $16.48 per swipe, while the cost per swipe for the plan with the most swipes—the Away From Kitchen (AFK) plan—is $10.10 per swipe.

However, the value of the swipe can change based on how they use their swipes. If the student spends most of their swipes on breakfast, rather than dinner, then they are getting less value out of that swipe.

There are upperclass plans that, as of now, have a cost per swipe in the $17.00/swipe range. However, those are the plans with the fewest number of swipes. Again, if students use the majority of those swipes for dinner, then they are getting more value out of that swipe, as their cost per swipe is still lower than the door rate for an all-you-care-to-eat dinner. Additionally, upperclass students retain the ability to purchase freshmen-level plans, to obtain a lower cost per swipe.

How do the on campus retail prices compare to off campus prices?

We conduct a market basket study twice a year in order to gauge and set our prices. We feel our prices are responsibly competitive compared to what we offer. With many of our retail goods, for example, our prices are lower than students can find off campus. For example, we provided high-quality, reusable hot/cold mugs to all students living on campus this Fall. Students can then use those mugs to get coffee for $1.00, through our Buck-A-Brew program. We’ve also compared our build-your-own salad prices to our competitors in the area, and have found that, when you take in the quantity and type of add-ins that we include, we come out on top when it comes to price.

Dining Plans seem too expensive. Justify the cost. Provide a convincing rebuttal that "small eaters" are subsidizing "all you care to eat" for others.
• Is there a way to accommodate small eater? What about they can’t use up the dinning dollars or swipe?
We occasionally get the question about ‘small eaters’ on dining plans, just as we get questions about ‘big eaters’ on dining plans. Some parents are concerned that their students are not getting enough meals on their plan, while others share different concerns.

Upperclass plans are voluntary plans, and students have a broader choice of plans, to find the plan that best-fits their needs.

Regarding the mandatory plans, the University decided that all three of the freshmen plans share the same overall cost. Within that range, we created three plans with the idea of providing flexibility to the 2400+ freshmen, and their myriad lifestyles and schedules.

Without exception, however, each of these plans was designed with the intention of forwarding the mission of building community for our students, which is so vital for first-year students, especially. Breaking bread around the table is a uniquely important piece of building community. And the importance of sharing a meal around the table has been further validated by the University’s recent mission to greatly expand the Take Your Professor/Mentor to Lunch/Dinner program, in partnership with Penn Dining. This is why the freshmen plans include higher level of swipes and Dining Dollar$ that facilitate this aspect of the University experience.

Again, the value of the plan can be adjusted by how the student uses their dining plan.

If the student signs up for a meal plan prior to the May date and gets this year's dining prices for next year, what happens if they change their plans during the first three weeks of school? Would

That is a good question. As of now, any student that signs up for their dining plan at the promotional rate, then changes their plan during the Fall or Spring Change Period, would be purchasing the new plan at the ‘regular’ price rate.

That said, we are looking at changing this policy for this upcoming year, whereby students who enroll in a plan at the promotional rate, then change their plan in the Fall Change Period, would retain the promotional rate of their new plan.

We have heard the feedback, and think that it’s a fair change to make.

**DIETARY RESTRICTIONS/FOOD ALLERGIES**
My freshman has severe allergies and is uncomfortable eating at the meal swipe dining halls. Who should I contact about switching her swipe dollars to dining dollars?

If students have any concern about dining as it relates to their food restrictions or needs, and are seeking some type of accommodation, the first step is to meet with our Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Dan Connolly. You can reach Dan at daniel.connolly@cafebonappetit.com.

My child is lactose intolerant, will she be able to eat on the meal plan?

Absolutely! Your student will be able to eat well with her dining plan. Part of our strategy is to have all of our chefs use descriptive menu nomenclature to describe the ingredients in our menu items. Additionally, we have an array of non-dairy milks at our beverage stations, including lactose-free, soy, and almond milks. If a student doesn’t see a milk they’d like, simply ask us, and we can most often order it to be made available for them.

What are the allergy labelling policies at these 2 new locations?

In receiving these questions a few days after the webinar was delivered, we’re not sure to which two locations you are referring. For more visit our food allergen information page, click here. Should you have any specific question that you would like Dan to discuss, please email him at daniel.connolly@cafebonappetit.com.

Does UPenn plan to change it's policies re food allergies? Your current policies are stigmatizing, cumbersome, and unsafe, and inferior to other schools. My child who has multiple LTFA had a near miss last year, and now no longer eats in UPenn's dining halls, which negatively impacts

- Do you have medical personnel (allergists from Perleman, for example) on this board giving you feedback on the sub-par food allergy policies?
- Can we set up a meeting to review your food allergy policies? Who is the head department, other than Dan @ "cafebonappetit"?

Our charge to feed Penn students is only achievable if we do it safely and responsibly, which is why we invest significant time and resources into accommodating students with a range of dietary restrictions and needs.

We rely on the expertise and efforts of our campus partners in order to accomplish this mission. We meeting annually with the Student Disability Services (SDS) office to review our process. The process is designed to ensure that we are not missing any information that would help us better-serve the student.

Regarding our process, it all starts with information we receive from our students. If a student has any concern about dining as it relates to their food restrictions or needs, the first step is to meet with our Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Dan Connolly. Dan’s role at this stage is to listen, and give students the opportunity to share any and all of their concerns. If, after meeting with Dan, it is determined that Penn Dining cannot adequately meet the student’s specific needs,
they are then referred to SDS. Staff at SDS make the determination as to whether our dining facilities can meet the student’s needs or if they need to be released from their dining plans.

As a note: outright waivers from dining plans by the SDS office are rare, which is a testament to everything that we are able to do in our dining cafés and across our program, to ensure that we can serve students with all sorts of dietary restrictions and needs. We have the ability to offer many types of accommodations that are not simply cancelling a student’s dining plan, for students with food allergies. For example, we have had students meet with chefs who prepare individual meals for the student, to ensure the integrity of the food’s safety, with respect to allergens.

If you have concerns about food allergies, please contact Dan and let him know you are concerned about whether or not our dining plan can meet your student’s needs. Should you have any additional questions regarding this process, please email bsd-dining@pobox.upenn.edu.

My son is overweight. How can he help himself as we cannot help or he would not listen. Most common problem in our country.
Penn has a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist on staff. Dan Connolly, RDN is available to speak with students who have general nutrition questions as well as those who have special dietary needs. Learn more about Dan.

You can also follow Dan on Twitter at #DansDailyDish.

FREE nutrition services are also offered at Campus Health and Student Health Service. Nutrition workshops for student groups are available upon request by Campus Health. Additionally, Student Health Service has two nutritionists on staff who provide:

- General nutrition information including how to eat a healthy diet as a busy student.
- Specific nutrition counseling for medical issues like celiac disease, lactose-intolerance, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, etc.
- Specialized nutrition counseling for patients who have disordered eating patterns, have been diagnosed with anorexia or bulimia or have other concerns relating to these issues.

An initial nutrition evaluation at Student Health is a 60-minute appointment, follow-up visits are 30-minutes. You can schedule an appointment online or by calling 215-746-3535

Really appreciated Dan's help when my Freshman daughter started at Penn and we could meet with him one on one to discuss her needs. Also, have eaten at 1920 and Hil myself and was very impressed with the food choices, quality, and presentation. Thank you!!

We’re very happy to hear that! And we’re glad we were able to help!

DINING DOLLARS
Can dining dollars if not used this year be used next year?

- Does dining dollars carry over to the next school year?

Unused meal swipes do not carry over from the Fall semester to the Spring semester. Dining Dollar$ will roll over from the Fall semester to the Spring semester, but not from one academic year to another.

Is there an advantage to using dining dollars versus cash?

Dining Plan holders enjoy a 5% discount at Houston Market, Gourmet Grocer, Mark's Café, New College House, McClelland Express, Joe's Café, and Accenture Café when using Dining Dollar$.

Where can my student use Dining Dollars? And how can I add new dining dollars to his account?

Students with dining plans may add Dining Dollar$ to their PennCards at any time via Campus Express, the online student portal. The portal is Penn Key protected so your student will need to assist you to add more dining dollars.

Students can use Dining Dollar$ to purchase a-la-carte items at our retail operations, including:

- Houston Market - Houston Hall*
- Beefsteak - Houston Hall
- Tortas Frontera and the ARCH - 3601 Locust Walk
- Starbucks at 1920 Commons - 38th and Locust Walk
- The Gourmet Grocer in 1920 Commons Retail - 38th & Locust Walk*
- Mark's Café - Van Pelt Library, Lower level*
- Accenture Café - Towne Building*
- McClelland Express - in the Quadrangle*
- Joe's Café - Steinberg Hall- Dietrich Hall*
- Pret A Manger - Huntsman Hall
- Farmers' Market - University Square, 36th and Walnut St., Wednesdays, September through early November
- New College House Retail*
- Falk Dining Commons - 39th and Locust Walk

*Locations where a 5% discount will be applied when making purchases with Dining Dollar$

Dining Dollar$ can also be used in place of swipes at our all-you-care-to-eat locations as well.

What conclusion should be drawn from student ending every year with a large excess of Dining Dollars? (she gives that as a reason to want to move off campus and no dining plan)
A student with an excess of Dining Dollar$ at the end of the academic year are likely not eating the majority of their meals at Penn Dining locations. Dining Dollar$ are more flexible than meal swipes, as students can use them between at locations open from 7:30 AM – 2:00 AM.

As a note: there are several hundred students who live off-campus and are still on a dining plan, as they are on campus throughout the day, and enjoy using their dining plans before or after class or their activities.

Can the student switch from swipes to dining dollars?

As always, students will get the most value of their swipes by using them at the residential cafés for all-you-care-to-eat dining. However, in the past, students have been offered the opportunity to convert anywhere between 0-30 of their meals swipes into Dining Dollar$. This opportunity is available to all dining plan holders in the Fall, as unused Dining Dollar$ carry over from the Fall into the Spring. The Spring Swipe Conversion period has traditionally only been made available to students who enroll in a dining plan for the upcoming year.

We are evaluating the Swipe Conversion offer for next year, as we do every year. The opportunity to convert swipes is not guaranteed from one year to the next, and we will have more information about next year in the coming months.

HOURS OF OPERATION

What are the earliest and latest hours dining locations are open? (my student has provided feedback that these places are not open late enough for nite owls.)

- What late night options are there for athletes?
- My student is a night owl and often spends money utilizing Uber Eats after cafe closes. Is there any way that we can use meal plan currency for these meals?
- So you keep saying Hill is open late. Do they close at 7p.m. and then reopen at 9p.m?
- What are the weekend hours for both swipe locations and dining dollars?

We know a lot of students who consider themselves ‘Night Owls’, which is why Penn Dining facilities open from 7:30 am to 2 pm. Specifically:

- Beefsteak is open until 8:00 PM, Sun-Thurs
- 1920 Commons serves dinner until 9:00 PM, Mon-Thurs, 8:00 PM on Sunday, and 7:30 PM on Fri and Sat
- Gourmet Grocer offers to-go meals (for a meal swipe) from 9:00 - 11:59 PM, Sun-Thurs
- Starbucks in 1920 Commons is open until 11:59 PM, Mon-Thurs
- McClelland Express (located in the Quad) serves late night options from 8:00 PM to 11:59 PM, Sun-Thurs
- Hill House serves dinner until 9:00 PM and late night until 11:59 PM, Sun-Thurs
Hill does not close at 7:00 PM. Rather, after the dinner hours are over at 9:00 PM, some of the stations close, while others stay open until midnight for late night dining.

- English House serves dinner until 8:00 PM, Mon-Fri
- New College House serves dinner until 8:00 PM, Sun-Thurs, and until 7:00 PM on Friday
- Mark’s Café (located in Van Pelt Library) is open until 2:00 AM, Sun-Thurs
- Tortas Frontera is open until 10:00 PM, Sun-Thurs, and until 8:00 PM on Friday
- Pret a Manger is open until 9:00 PM, Mon-Thurs

To view hours at all our facilities by current serving period [click here].

Is there a place to see hours, days and what is available?

You can see our current hours and menus by [clicking here]. While you can choose your day, please note – that the hours are listed by dining period. So, for example, if you click the link early in the morning you will only see Breakfast hours. Likewise, if you click later in the evening, you will only see late night hours.

Students can also download the [Penn Guides] app for their smart phone, to have those hours of operation available in their hand.

Houston hall is closed until sunday night, correct? It also is closed all day Saturday and closes early on Friday.

- McClelland & Houston Hall are closed almost all weekend and all day Saturday. My student had to order out when she was too sick to walk far away. Also, she says McClelland servers are rude to the students.

Currently, that is true: Houston Market and McClelland Express are closed on Saturday. And McClelland is open from 8:00 – 11:59 PM and Houston Market is open from 12:00 – 7:00 PM on Sundays.

However, we plan to renovate Houston Hall over the summer, which will enable us to keep portions of the Market open during the evening and weekend hours. We do have other retail options open on the weekends including Pret A Manger, Tortas Frontera, Mark’s Café, Starbucks, Gourmet Grocer and New College House retail.

With respect to your student being too ill to get food, we do have a policy in place to allow dining plan holders to get a meal—i.e. having a friend pick it up for them—when they are ill. Please email us at bsd-dining@pobox.upenn.edu for more information on the Sick Policy. (We will also put this information up on our website in the near future.)

Regarding a negative experience at McClelland Express, we take customer service satisfaction seriously, and hope to always address any issues when they arise. Please have your student email bsd-dining@pobox.upen.edu should she have any issue that we can help address for her.
MEAL PLAN STRUCTURE

Please address approximately how many meals the freshman plans include

- For the freshman plan how many meals per day does it cover?
- The meal plans seem to offer only about a dozen meals per week (depending on how far dining dollars can be stretched). What are students supposed to do for additional meals?

Freshmen can choose between three plans that range from 16 meals a week to 8. These refer to meals purchased with a swipe at our all-you-care-to-eat cafés. In addition, each of these plans includes Dining Dollar$, which allow students to purchase meals at our retail locations. See details below.

Away From Kitchen (AFK)

This plan is great for the student who enjoys an all-you-care-to-eat option. The AFK Plan offers 250 meals in the Fall semester and 250 meals in the Spring semester – which averages out to 16 meals per week. In addition to the balance of meals, this plan comes with $100 Dining Dollar$ per semester to use in our retail locations.

Balanced Eating Naturally (BEN)

This plan has a good balance of Meals and Dining Dollar$, ideal for students who want larger meals but also want the flexibility offered by having $225 in Dining Dollar$ per semester to grab a snack on the go. On this plan you have approximately 11 meals a week.

Best Food Fit (BFF)**

This plan allows for a more flexible schedule, with more Dining Dollar$ and fewer Meals -- approximately 8 per week -- than some of the other options. It works well for students who tend to skip meals or have busy schedules that don't allow time to eat in the dining cafés on a regular basis.

How do students decide which plan to choose?

The simplest way to choose a dining plan is to start with the number of meals the student anticipates eating in an all-you-care-to-eat café. This would determine how many meal swipes a
student should need. After that, find the plan that includes an amount of Dining Dollar$ that you would reasonably use during the semester.

As a reminder, students always have the first three weeks of each semester, during the Fall and Spring Change Periods, to change their dining plan for no change fee.

Additionally, students can always add more meal swipes to their dining plan—in blocks of 15, 25, 50, 75, or 100—which, if purchased in the Fall, do carry over into the Spring. Students can also always purchase add-on Dining Dollar$ at a one-to-one ratio. So, if a student wanted to purchase the Take Your Pick 13 (TYP13) plan, which is the cheapest dining plan, they could add-on meal swipes and Dining Dollar$ to tailor a plan that works for them.

**Any student polls? Why do students drop meal plans after freshman year?**

As was stated above, Penn Dining has many ways to gather student feedback. These include a yearly satisfaction survey, smaller semester satisfaction surveys, comment cards in all our cafés, and a student-led Dining Advisory Board.

The reasons student drop dining plans after freshmen year are varied. Most of our all-you-care-to-eat cafes are located in freshmen college houses so as many students move into apartments with kitchens where they can prepare their own meals. Others have internships or other activities that may keep them off campus for large parts of the day.

That said, we have well over a thousand Upperclass students on dining plans—including hundreds of students living off-campus—with a significant number of students that stay on a dining plan for all four years.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Can my student donate their extra meals to a local non-profit at the end of the year?**

That’s a great question. We have partnered with the Swipe Out Hunger chapter at Penn, which is a student-founded, student-run group. Swipe Out Hunger gathers donated swipes from students on dining plans, which are used to fund efforts to combat food insecurity right here on Penn’s campus. Swipe Out Hunger typically conducts two events: one in November, and one in April.

Other than this effort, unused meal swipes will expire at the end of the year.

**I don't believe you've addressed the question when personnel at McClelland do not replenish fruit options even when requested.**

As McClelland is located within an historic building, the food service resources available to us are limited. As a result, we prepare the food served at McClelland Express elsewhere on campus. Though we do our best to plan accordingly for our meal periods, sometimes, we don’t
plan correctly, and food may run out. This results in delays in how quickly we can replenish our food.

Thank you for forwarding your students’ concerns to us. Following the webinar, we shared your concerns with the staff at McClelland. If your student says that this continues to be a problem or has other issues, please email us at bsd-dining@pobox.upenn.edu.

Can the students take-out meals from any of the swipe locations?

Yes. Penn Dining operates the Green2Go Program in its residential dining cafés, to reduce the usage of disposable to-go containers. Students on a dining plan are automatically eligible to participate, and can see their RA or visit either 1920 Commons, New College House, Hill College House, or King's Court English House at the beginning of the academic year, to pick up a Key2Green tag.

Visit any of the participating locations and present your Key2Green key tag to the cashier to receive your first Green2Go container. Next time you visit, simply return your rinsed container to one of the three participating dining cafes and exchange it for another or for a key tag.

Thank you again for all of your questions!