

**Report of the Task Force on
Dining and Social Options in the Four-Year
Colleges**

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Table of Contents

I. Process	1
II. Guiding Principles	2
III. Integration into the Campus Community	3
IV. Dining Environment	6
V. Quality of Food	8
VI. Meal Plans and Access	12

I. Process

The Task Force on Dining and Social Options in the Four-Year Residential Colleges met from September, 2004 through May, 2005 to develop a set of recommendations regarding the quality of food, the flexibility of the dining program, and the spaces in which food is served and eaten in Princeton's new four-year residential colleges. It became clear very early in the process that the task force's recommendations would have general applicability to all of Princeton's colleges, two-year and four-year alike, and that they would also have broad implications for the social and dining options available to all Princeton students.

President Tilghman presented the task force with a charge (Appendix A) developed from the recommendations of the Four Year Residential College Program Planning Committee. The charge emphasized four key aspects of any restructuring of Princeton's provision of dining services to students residing in the residential colleges:

- “a **flexible dining environment** that supports our aspirations for building community in the residential setting”;
- improvement in “the **quality of food**”;
- attention to “the **quality of the space**” in college dining halls, with “high standards for furnishing, lighting, acoustics, and ambiance”;
- “additional **variety in dining spaces and options.**”

In addition to the written charge, the president at the first meeting challenged the task force to present a program that could support her vision of a more “fluid, flexible social environment on Princeton's campus.” The three four-year colleges, as one of the cornerstones of this environment, would have to offer residential, dining, and social options that would be highly attractive to a very wide range of students.

President Tilghman appointed a task force composed of five faculty members, six administrators, four undergraduates, and one graduate student (Appendix B). Professor Michael Jennings served as chair, Ms. Laurel Harvey and Mr. Stephen LeMenager served as administrative staff, and Ms. Patricia Heslin served as secretary. The task force drew on a very wide experience of residential life: in addition to the currently enrolled students, it included two former college masters, one current and one former college administrator, three Princeton parents, and a faculty member who is also an alumnus.

In order to prepare for the deliberations of the task force, the chair and members of the administrative staff of the task force visited six college campuses, obtaining an in-depth view of the operations and facilities of a wide range of college dining services. In various combinations Laurel Harvey, Michael Jennings, Chad Klaus, Stephen LeMenager, and Stuart Orefice visited Cornell University, Columbia University, Rutgers University, Villanova University, Stanford University, and the University of Washington.

In addition, the task force was provided with the reports of the several committees that had gone before us, and especially those of the Sixth College Program Committee and the Four Year Residential College Program Planning Committee.

The task force as a whole met seven times during the academic year. At these meetings, the members of the task force took into consideration a wide range of information: presentations by the planning office on the plans for Whitman College and for the redesign of the remaining college serveries; formal presentations of alternative design possibilities for the dining facilities within the colleges; extensive data on club membership, student dining patterns, and living arrangements for independent students; detailed financial analyses of the current operation of Princeton's Dining Services; meetings with representatives from a number of student groups and constituencies; and a discussion with the current college masters. The task force solicited additional student opinion in a number of ways: an extended meeting with representatives of student groups, including students with special dietary considerations and religious needs (Appendix C); meetings with the presidents of the eating clubs and with representatives from independent student organizations; and a series of focus groups (Appendix D).

II. Guiding Principles

The task force was concerned to provide a set of recommendations that would make the new colleges as attractive as possible to a broad cross-section of Princeton undergraduates and to the increased number of graduate students who live there—and, as dining spaces, to the faculty. We were constantly aware that the new colleges would need to exist in an environment in which students would be presented with a number of attractive options for dining, residential life, and social life, and that the perceived quality of the dining environment, as well as the diversity and quality of the food offerings at the colleges would play a crucial role in students' decisions on living and dining arrangements. Our foremost objective was thus the provision of a series of recommendations that would enable Princeton to offer its students food of the highest quality in warm, intimate spaces.

In addition, the task force was mindful of the necessity of making recommendations that would promote the integration of the colleges into the wider campus community, forging relationships with existing institutions such as the clubs, the coops, dormitories housing independent students, and a wide range of student organizations.

In the report and recommendations that follow, we have proposed what we believe amounts to a revolution from below in the provision of food to the Princeton community.

III. Integration into the Campus Community

The new colleges will of course build on a strong base: the current residential colleges offer an inclusive, tolerant atmosphere and opportunities for shared intellectual, academic, and social life with a wider range of students than is possible anywhere else on campus. Generations of Princeton undergraduates have nonetheless viewed the step from the two-year colleges into the clubs or independent life as a necessary part of a Princetonian's "coming of age."

Yet this purchase of "maturity" has traditionally come at a high price for many of our students. Independent students on Princeton's campus have been ill-served by the university. Forced either to cook in inadequate kitchens scattered across campus—and then forced to eat the food they had prepared in rooms that seldom included proper accommodations for dining—or to purchase their meals from retail establishments, Princeton's independents remain the segment of the student population that will profit most directly from the outstanding residential, social, and dining options Princeton hopes to provide in the Four-Year Colleges.

There are a number of ways in which independents—and indeed members of eating clubs and coops—should be able to take advantage of the residential colleges. Residence and thus full membership in the college is of course the most intensive such arrangement. But the colleges should serve *all* students, undergraduate and graduate alike, and not just their residents. The colleges should be encouraged to offer a range of meals, events, and activities designed to draw students into the life of the college. As the Four-Year College Program Planning Committee has recommended, a college fee included in the tuition of *all* students will give the colleges resources to offer this kind of programming. We strongly endorse this recommendation. And we recommend that the Graduate School adopt a similar policy, allocating some part of graduate tuition to the provision of services and meals to graduate students who wish to take part in the life of the residential colleges.

A second recommendation by the FYCPPC is also repeated here with enthusiasm. Mealtimes are a key to the integration of large numbers of upperclassmen and graduate students into the colleges. Provision should thus be made through tuition to provide two meals per week for *all* upperclassmen—both independents and members of clubs or coops—at one of the residential colleges.

Beyond these steps designed to integrate a broad range of individual students into the life of the colleges, the university will need to make a special effort to work together with those institutions that already exist in order to meet undergraduate dining and social requirements. Strong bonds between the colleges and the clubs, coops, and the Independent Student Union should lead to cooperative programs designed to open the colleges to the members of these institutions. The colleges have the resources to offer not just a unique academic environment, but intellectual and cultural opportunities unavailable elsewhere. True participation in such activities will take place only if the

colleges are open to the kind of free, fluid interchange envisioned here, *and* if institutional structures are put into place that will ensure firm, ongoing relations between the colleges and these institutions.

While the task force wishes to underscore that the four-year colleges have as their *primary* goal the provision of outstanding opportunities to those groups who are currently ill served by existing dining and social arrangements—especially independent students—we nonetheless feel strongly that the creation of colleges with very *broad* appeal is the essential task if the colleges are to be successful in a lasting way. If the colleges are seen as the refuges of those students who are excluded from the “Princeton mainstream”—either by choice or more directly—they will only create one more division in an already segmented social structure on campus, and thus fail to have the deep impact on this institution that they could otherwise exert. The colleges should be provided, in other words, with an economic and organizational framework that will allow them to *break down* the barriers that currently play too large a role at Princeton.

The task force believes that a key element in the creation of this more fluid community is the establishment of close working relationships between the residential colleges and the eating clubs. It must be kept in mind that more than 70% of all current upperclassmen at Princeton are members of eating clubs, and that the club membership is thus by far the largest single segment of the undergraduate community. We ignore this membership at our peril.

In the course of the year just past, members of the administrative staff of the task force conducted a number of meetings with the officers of the eating clubs, meetings at which not just a new relationship between the clubs and the residential colleges was discussed, but a broad range of larger issues as well. In addition, President Tilghman and Vice President Dickerson met with the club presidents at a key point in the ongoing discussions. Tracy Solomon, the president of Colonial Club for the first half of AY 2005-06 and a member of the task force, played a key role throughout, mediating in a most effective way. Although we encountered suspicion and no little hostility in our initial meetings during fall 2005, in the course of the spring semester, consensus gradually built around the notion of a new working relationship between colleges and clubs. In fact, all of the sign-in clubs and several bicker clubs gradually came to see the benefits of a close relationship with the colleges. We believe that a truly significant opening has been forged here, an opening that can be exploited to the advantage of the colleges and clubs alike, but also one that could lead to generally improved relations between the clubs and the university, to the benefit of all concerned.

The shared relationships recommended here can take a number of forms. Some local solutions should be easy to implement: the provision of breakfast for all upperclassmen on certain days; the closing of selected clubs and coops on certain nights, with the members returning to their home colleges; and co-sponsored social activities.

But the task force sees the establishment of shared memberships between the colleges and the clubs as the single most important—because the most visible and permanent—

form that this relationship might take. The task force recommends that the university enter into the sort of contractual relationship with some number of eating clubs that will make it possible for upperclassmen to belong both to a college and to a club, and to purchase a dining contract which allows for an equal division of meals between college and club.

While we leave it to the administration to determine the actual financial terms upon which such a relationship must be based, any plan should recognize the net loss of revenue to the clubs that will result from the transfer of 50% of a number of board contracts to the colleges. Appendix E presents one possible model for such an arrangement.

Any such relationship must, of course, be reciprocal. The clubs should be encouraged to increase the current program of offering social memberships to other members of the colleges.

In the context provided by our discussions with student groups and constituencies it also became clear that graduate students—most of whom do not have a board plan—have a major concern that finally has little to do with the questions of meal plans, food quality, and dining ambience discussed here. And that is the often-voiced question as to the real place of graduate students within the Princeton community.

Currently, the Graduate Fellow system, present in four of the five residential colleges, seeks to encourage graduate students to eat in the dining halls as a way to incorporate graduate students into the vibrant life of the college and foster constructive interaction between the University's undergraduate and graduate student members. Such a system helps address a major concern of many undergraduate and graduate students, who hope to break down perceived divisions on campus.

The new colleges will of course include both residential space and reconceived roles for an expanded graduate student population. This alone will, it is hoped, provide the basis for increased social, cultural, and intellectual contact between undergraduates and graduate students. The task force recommends, however, that the current system of graduate fellow membership in the colleges be retained and expanded, and that the colleges seek ways to actively incorporate other, non-Fellow graduate students into its dining halls and its cultural, social, and intellectual activities. The provision of meals on a regular basis is perhaps the most effective means to this end.

This could be achieved on a small scale by having one or two 'graduate student tables' per week—modeled on the current language tables—where it is advertised that graduate and undergraduate students can eat together in an informal, social setting. Or, on a larger scale, a college could offer a range of events intended to bring together undergraduates and graduate students. Such events could foster an atmosphere within the colleges leading to a broader, more inclusive community.

IV. Dining Environment

Although housing for some number of upperclassmen has for years been available in Princeton's colleges, the great majority of our students continue to join one of the eating clubs during their sophomore year. An important part of the appeal of the eating clubs stems from their homelike, intimate atmosphere—and this is nowhere more evident than in their food service. Although opinions differ widely on the actual *quality* of the food served at the clubs, especially in comparison to that offered by Dining Services in the colleges, a broad consensus suggests that the *scale* of the food service in the clubs—smaller quantities served and consumed in more intimate, comfortable spaces—is far preferable to the scale now on offer in the colleges. The task force is convinced that one of the most important goals in the design of the new college dining facilities is a renewed attention to scale—the reduction or elimination of the institutional character of the dining experience.

As Whitman College is built and planning is undertaken for renovations to the serveries and dining halls of the remaining colleges, the university should insist that the architects and designers responsible for the new dining spaces be especially attentive to issues of scale and warmth. The overall goal should be the creation of warm, welcoming, individualized dining environments in each college. The serveries and especially the dining halls themselves should be designed to deemphasize the institutional aspects of the dining experience and to offer instead dining experiences in more intimate, homelike spaces.

The task force was of course convened after some crucial decisions regarding the design of the new colleges had already been made. Foremost among these was the decision to move from a “scramble” servery—one in which students move from station to station without benefit of signage or conceptual organization, and in which the majority of the hot food is prepared in the adjacent kitchens and presented on steam tables—to a “marketplace” concept. The marketplace servery, which is organized into a series of branded units, allows for a greater variety of foods to be prepared while breaking down the wall between the kitchen and the serving area. The chefs are on view at their stations, and the customers can usually see their order being prepared from fresh ingredients. In addition to a fresher and often more healthful food offering, the marketplace, with its emphasis on food cooked to order, brings with it a significant decrease in waste. The marketplace concept, already in place in all of the more advanced dining operations at the institutions we visited during the summer, thus brings with it a number of advantages: the branding of individual stations segments large spaces in an appealing way while allowing for attractive design concepts; and it allows for considerable flexibility, since the individual stations are designed to change their orientation as tastes change and new food concepts rise to meet them.

Even though the general orientation of the serveries was fixed before the task force began its work, it was still possible for the group to consider the actual appearance and “feel” of the dining spaces in all of the residential colleges. The task force found that, while many

of the *footprints* of the new serveries and dining halls were already fixed, it was still possible to rethink Princeton's approach to the interior design of these spaces. The dining facilities at most college campuses—and not just at most of those we visited—are designed by large consulting firms specializing in institutional dining. While these firms are clearly highly competent, the spaces they design tend to suffer from a certain sameness—and they tend to feel very much like institutional dining spaces. The most successful dining halls at the campuses we visited had been designed not by these large consultancies, but by architectural firms with extensive experience in the design of commercial restaurants. The use of such firms, accustomed to the production of spaces that appeal directly to customers—and often to particular demographics—will maximize Princeton's chance to create individualized, appealing dining spaces in each college. The task force thus recommends that Princeton hire architectural firms with extensive experience in the design of commercial restaurants to carry out the redesign of the college serveries and dining halls.

In the design of every college dining space the question of scale is paramount. Dining spaces that can seat 400 students, with open sight lines, soaring ceilings, and geometrically arranged rows of identical, often trestle tables are impressive, but they are not conducive to the kind of intimate dining experience envisioned here. The architectural firms should be encouraged to explore solutions that allow for smaller dining areas within larger dining halls—that convey the sense of warmth and intimacy stressed in this report. The Collegiate Gothic dining halls present a particular challenge here. They are some of Princeton's most atmospheric and historically important spaces. The architects charged with the design of the dining halls in Whitman, Rockefeller, and Mathey Colleges should be encouraged to seek solutions that break the space into smaller visual and tactile units while respecting the historical reference of the space. Some of the most successful designs we saw and discussed mixed a number of seating possibilities in each space: tables of varying sizes and shapes, booths, and bar stool seating.

The task force was guided in its thinking not just by the overarching goal of providing warm, intimate spaces, but also by the sense that this intimacy would stem in part from the individuality of each space. Some of the current college dining facilities are of course already somewhat individualized—the soaring gothic vaulting in Madison, the curvaceous postmodernism of Wu, with its highly successful booths—but the task force feels that the colleges can profit from a thoroughgoing rethinking of all possibilities for individualizing the dining facilities in each college. The task force thus recommends that a different firm should be hired for each college, or at least for each pair of colleges, again with an eye to providing the college dining units with an individualized personality.

These firms should be provided with budgets that will allow for the “high standards in furnishing, lighting, acoustics, and ambience” called for in previous reports. Our visits to other campuses suggest that careful attention to finishes is as important as the overall design of the space itself. And just as the design of the spaces and finishes should emphasize individual character, each college should be provided with distinctive crockery, utensils, and glasses, further marking the intimacy and individuality of the dining halls. And, in all the colleges, Dining Services should pay attention to

opportunities for enhancing the sensory experience in the dining hall: flowers, fresh herbs, and the display of ingredients in special dishes can have an effect disproportionate to their cost.

Another feature common to the most successful designs around the country is the breaking down of barriers between serveries and dining halls. Just as the concept of the open kitchen has provided restaurant diners with a sense of participation in the preparation of food, open serveries make for casual, welcoming spaces. In some of the most successful designs, counters and bar stools at the periphery of the servery, granting an unobstructed view of the preparation of food, were some of the most popular seats in the house. Similarly, the placement of some parts of the servery—a dessert bar or café, for example—serves the same purpose.

Recent experience at Princeton has shown that the most successful projects are those in which the architects have collaborated extensively with a “client” with an ongoing, proprietary interest in the success of the project. In the case of the colleges, the masters and administrators of the colleges should be designated as the primary clients for each project. No one else—and least of all the architects—have the kind of immediate, hands-on experience of student residential life and of the kind of architecture that can most enhance it. Masters should be involved in the selection of the architectural firms, and have a clear role in each stage of the design process for their unit.

V. Quality of Food

A. A New Model for Princeton’s Dining Services

In the last decade, Princeton’s Dining Services has continued to make strides under the leadership of Stu Orefice—but the quality of food now being served in Princeton’s board plan operations will not in itself convince students to remain in the residential colleges. The task force’s overall goal was a series of recommendation that could lead to the consistent provision of food of superb quality in the residential colleges.

The ability of Dining Services to produce food of the quality envisioned here is limited by a number of factors. 1) Food at the colleges is produced according to a cycle menu dictated by a central kitchen, a kitchen with little direct contact with its final customers. 2) Each college dining unit is run by a business manager who supervises the general operation, but whose influence on the kind and quality of food served is limited both by training and by the pervasiveness of central decision making. 3) The current system includes very few built-in incentives that would encourage every member of the staff at every college to provide better food. The chefs at each college produce food according to menus and recipes in which they have little personal stake. And the students in the residential colleges are too often seen as a captive audience—a situation utterly unlike that confronting a chef in a commercial restaurant on a daily basis. 4) Perhaps most importantly, the current budget structure under which Dining Services operates could not

support the kind of changes envisioned in this report. In a nutshell, there were two major surprises in examining dining services budget data. The first was that the Frist Campus Center dining service operates at a significant loss, whereas the residential college dining service unit operates at a net profit—though these profits were not “reinvested” in improvement in food quality in the colleges. (Note that profit and loss in dining is relative as no cost center is charged for overhead expenses such as rent, utilities, major equipment, insurance, etc.). The second was that the inflation rate for board charges and, by extension the increase rate for the Dining Services Budget averaged a mere 1.9% for the past five years, which had no relationship to the true inflationary costs associated with buying groceries or providing dining service workers with “living wages” and benefits. The net result was that Dining Services found itself in a squeeze play – trying to find ways to “do more with less.” Stu Orefice provided examples – Dining Services no longer can afford to purchase flank steak and more dark meat chicken is served than had been true in previous years. See Appendix E for the budget data comparisons provided to the task force.

At some of the college campuses we visited, dining services have replaced this model, with its reliance on centralized budgeting as well as centralized menu and recipe planning, with a series of largely autonomous dining units, each one run by a chef who not only creates the menus and recipes for his or her unit, but is responsible for the production and execution of a successful business model. At the heart of these models is the notion that every dining unit is its own cost center. The revenues from dining contracts, retail sales, and catered events *stay in the dining unit*. Similarly, units that fail to support themselves are subjected to major changes, often including the hiring of a new chef / manager.

We recommend that Princeton reconceive the budgeting structure within Dining Services, with a new emphasis on the autonomy of each dining unit as a cost center. If the dollars generated by board contracts are kept “home,” we are convinced that a talented chef will have the resources to provide first-class food to his or her customers. Under any new budgetary structure, board rate increases must be pegged to actual inflationary – both food costs (29% of expenses) and wages and benefit (59% of expenses).

And we recommend that Princeton move aggressively toward the hiring of a series of chefs with extensive restaurant experience who will head the four residential college dining units.

Although we do not at present recommend the conversion of Princeton’s board plan system to a full retail or points operation, it is essential that the *spirit and driving force* of a retail operation suffuse every aspect of a newly conceived dining operation at Princeton. In the newly conceived dining system in which each unit is a cost center, students must be considered as customers who are able to exercise options regarding where and what they eat. With the introduction of significant numbers of upperclassmen and graduate students and their more sophisticated tastes and their access to a wide range of dining options, it will have to become clear that these customers, if not satisfied with the food and service in their unit, will take their business elsewhere. And the inevitable

byproducts—sameness, a feeling of institutionalized taste—of large-scale institutional food preparation and service, with its emphasis on quantity and efficiency, must be combated at every level.

We thus strongly recommend that Princeton’s Dining Services undergo the sort of “revolution from below” described here. If the college dining halls are reconceived as chef-driven, entrepreneurial, restaurant-like units, we are convinced that Princeton can provide outstanding food to its students, and in fact convince them to “stay home” in the colleges. The combination of a chef who is responsible for every aspect of his or her unit and the concept of the cost center brings with it a number of compelling advantages.

- The ability to make full use of the revenues generated by meal contracts will allow the chefs to introduce significant improvements in ingredients and preparation techniques. The chefs will be able to address a number of significant problems in the current operation, but especially the quality of produce and of meat. We have much to learn from operations such as dining services at the University of Washington and Berkeley College, Yale University. A new position with responsibility for sourcing produce, spices and meat will have a major effect here; the individual hired should have extensive experience in commercial restaurants.
- This newly conceived division of revenues should also eliminate current inequalities between retail and board plan operations on campus. Members of the campus community should expect the same high quality at all dining units—meal plan and retail alike. Hamburgers at the colleges might be prepared and presented differently, but they should under no circumstances be smaller or inferior to a sandwich at Frist or one of the cafes.
- The ability of the chef to create his or her own menus and recipes brings with it a number of signal advantages. 1) Individual menu items and broader culinary directions can be tailored in direct response to the desires and needs of the clientele in the college. 2) The chef will be able to put his or her stamp on the operation, with dishes and menus unique to each college servery. This newly individualized college cuisine will itself play an important role in the reshaping of student attitudes toward the food served in the colleges. We should be able not just to approximate, but to significantly exceed the level of individualization now offered in the eating clubs. 3) And with the introduction of the new “marketplace” serveries, the chefs will be better able to judge the success or failure of individual dishes, to judge quantities, and, in particular, to reduce waste. The marketplace concept will emphasize the preparation of fresh food in front of the customer—and this tendency should be accompanied by the elimination of centrally planned menus—and especially of the notion of a fixed cycle menu. The money saved by reducing waste should itself be enough to introduce major improvements in quality.
- The chef should be able to instill new sense of proprietorship in the staff of the dining unit. At the University of Washington, some of the most successful stations in the various dining units have been handed over to individual staff members. An unsuccessful Mongolian grill became a tacqueria, with recipes from the mother of the cook entrusted with this micro-unit.

- An annual budget allocation should be made to allow for the retraining of line staff and cooks during the summer months. The training would cover improved customer service skills, knowledge about ethnic and religious dining requirements, and advanced culinary techniques.

Much of the success of this model will depend upon the quality of the chefs we are able to attract. At the University of Washington, emphasis has been placed on the recruitment of chefs who have run their own successful restaurants. One chef, who was self-taught, had created the leading vegetarian restaurant in the northwest; another had been trained for several years on the line at Restaurant Daniel in New York, and then went on to create an ambitious restaurant in Portland, Oregon. Princeton should seek to recruit chefs from regionally or even nationally prominent restaurants. Qualifications should include demonstrated ability to produce contemporary, innovative cuisine, proven management skills, and experience in creating and executing a business plan.

We recommend that Princeton form an advisory board composed of nationally prominent chefs with ties to the university; such a board could help not just with advice on culinary directions, but especially with the recruitment of talented young chefs.

Although we believe that the changes recommended here will allow for the kind of significant increases in food quality the colleges need and deserve, we nonetheless recommend that a systematic evaluation of food quality in the colleges be conducted once the new system has had time to take effect. Such an evaluation should be undertaken by an independent panel: members of the present task force and former masters could provide a pool. And if the food quality envisioned in this report has not been achieved—either because of cost increases or because the plan outlined here has not been fully successful—we recommend that even more radical measures, such as the introduction of a full retail or points system in the colleges, be seriously considered.

B. Coordination of Campus Food Services

Although we have focused here on the student clientele of the new system as an undifferentiated group of customers, it is clear that college dining operations face challenges from an increasingly diverse student population. The food offerings in individual residential colleges need to be conceived as part of a broad strategy aimed at providing outstanding dining options for Princeton's entire community. Just as the Center for Jewish Life provides dining options for students who eat kosher, Princeton will in the years to come need to consider the needs of a growing number of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff who eat halal. The task force heard not just from spokesmen for these two large campus communities, but from a wide range of students with other religious and dietary requirements. Every residential college servery cannot, of course, provide a range of options that can serve every requirement. Yet the offerings in the colleges should nonetheless be coordinated with those at the retail operations and at sites such as the CJL in order to ensure that students have adequate access to the food they need. Student leaders from the CJL showed, for example, a gratifying willingness to add a halal line to the current kosher line. But given the size of the community eager for

halal options, a new line at the CJL should not be construed as a sufficient response to demand; at least one of the colleges should, in addition, offer halal options.

VI. Meal Plans and Access

The task force feels strongly that Dining Services should introduce major changes to the “front end” of the food operation, and especially the meal plans, general information, and opening hours offered to students. The overall goal here is an increase in transparency and ease of access.

Previous committees have recommended that, as a general rule, the dining halls should take on the character of the rest of the college facilities: they should afford extensive, trouble-free access to members of the community. We endorse these recommendations wholeheartedly and seek here to suggest actual changes that could lead to the experience described above.

The dining halls at the residential colleges currently offer rather restricted meal hours: a very early breakfast, followed by a two-hour lunch and a two-hour dinner—with no late night option at all. This goes against the tendency of college food service operations around the nation, which tend to have much more extensive opening hours during the day, *and* to have added a late-night meal option, either in a main dining hall or in a purpose-built facility adjacent to a dining hall. Such an approach to meal hours recognizes not just the variability of student eating habits, but the fact that different sectors of the community—athletes, actors, work-study students, musicians, disk jockeys, etc.—often have schedules that don’t fit well with restricted opening times in the dining halls. To take only the most-discussed example: athletes work at a consistent disadvantage when it comes to meal contracts. If a team’s practice ends at 6:30 and the athlete showers immediately, an athlete from an up-campus college will still reach the dining hall well after 7:00 PM—when the offerings are diminished and the food often has the feeling of leftovers. If the practice runs late, or the athlete lingers for ten minutes to chat with a teammate, or, in an especially troubling case, if the athlete is part of a team that must share facilities, and thus *starts* practice only at 6:30, there is often no dining option other than a late meal,¹ with its starkly reduced value-for-money factor.

A significant increase in the meal hours will not just serve these constituencies, but the entire student community, since such an increase will accommodate a wide range of eating schedules. The task force recommends that the dining halls at the residential colleges open for breakfast at 7:30 AM and close only with the end of the lunch hour at 2:00 PM, with a change from a breakfast menu to a lunch menu at 11:00 AM. Dinner should be served from 5:00 PM until 8:00 PM, opening a significant window for athletes and other students forced to dine late. Most importantly, a fourth meal hour should be

¹ Dining Services has for several years offered students compensation for a meal missed in the dining hall: the ability to take a late meal at Frist. But the meal pass at a retail outlet necessarily represents a fraction of the meal charge for that meal, and enables the student to purchase a rather skimpy meal.

added: a late meal from 10:00-12:00 PM. Such a meal might well offer less variety than the regular dinner, but should nonetheless offer the possibility of a substantial, hot late night meal—pizza, hot and cold sandwiches, salads, and desserts. Student testimony is unanimous in its support for this option: the late mealtime is the one period during the day that sees virtually every undergraduate on campus obtaining something to eat—yet this is the one period during which the university offers its students no options. As an additional benefit, athletes in sports in which practice facilities are shared—and who are often unable to eat until after 9:00 PM—will, under this plan, be able to have a late dinner in their college.

Just as a liberalization of temporal access to the dining facilities will have a beneficial effect, the elimination of physical barriers in the dining halls will underline the warm, intimate atmosphere recommended here. The university should explore ways to make student access to dining spaces as transparent and unimpeded as possible. In the current setup, students are forced to stand in long lines and be checked in at the entrance to the serveries—all of which sets an alienating, highly institutional tone *before* the first part of the meal is even selected. The installation, for example, of electronic monitors at the entrances to the serveries—a kind of Princeton EZ-Pass—would enhance each student’s dining experience in a subtle way, affording homelike access to one more college facility. The incorporation of unobtrusive electronic checking will of course require some changes in student habits. If students exceed the number of meals purchased in a given period, for example, their student account will be charged for the additional meals. But such charges of course already appear in the student’s account—for food charged at a retail facility and not at a residential college. Similarly, independent students will have unimpeded access to dining facilities at the residential colleges—with the resultant charges billed silently.

Finally, the number and kind of meal plans on offer should be streamlined and made considerably more perspicuous. Although the current welter of meal plans made available to Princeton undergraduates and graduate students alike is well intended, confusion surrounds the many plans and the options they offer. This, too, functions as an obstruction to the dining experience. We examined the fourteen different board plans offered to undergraduates and graduates in 2005-06, as well as the historical data showing the percentage of students who choose full versus partial board options. We also examined the volume of points used by all students. Excluding different board plans based on points, the data showed us that undergraduate students were roughly split between plans offering full board and the 14-meal option. The task force was surprised to discover the very small dollar differential that separated the two basic plans: over the course of the year, a student saved only \$180 by opting for a 14-meal plan rather than the full 20-meal plan. The recommendations below foresee the elimination of the 14-meal option. See Appendix F.

After extensive consultation with undergraduate and graduate students, the task force recommends that the number of plans be reduced to two. A *full* meal plan can give students extensive access to the dining halls, while *one* reduced plan can serve the needs of many upperclassmen. We recommend that this reduced plan include seven meals per week; these meals, when combined with the two meals available to all upperclassmen,

should allow for free movement between colleges, clubs, coops, independent eating arrangements, and retail facilities on campus and in the town. We further recommend, based on our discussion of the data, that neither plan include points to be used at other facilities: points are merely sources of confusion, especially since cash or charges to student accounts accomplish the same ends. All meal plans should, to the maximum extent possible, be *block plans* that give students increased flexibility in when they take the meals for which they have paid. And there should be no difference, in cost or options, between undergraduate and graduate plans.

In addition to these changes to the central offering by Dining Services, the task force recommends that the university explore a series of options that can augment an improved food service operation. One such option is the creation of sites for the serving of alcohol within the four-year colleges. The creation of wine bars or pubs in the colleges will offer opportunities for a number of segments of the campus community to come together in ways now impossible on campus. Upperclassmen, graduate students, faculty, and staff would be drawn to such spaces. And they can provide an important alternative / addition to social options offered by the eating clubs. If it proves to be impossible to provide such facilities in each college, the creation of at least one centrally located space should be seen as a high priority.

Even without the creation of a space devoted to the serving of alcohol, opportunities for programming that includes alcohol will undoubtedly emerge. Special chef's dinners with accompanying wines and wine tastings themselves, for example, should appeal to upperclassmen, graduate students, and fellows.