

## Introduction

We all have a food story. Whether your family ate every meal together growing up, struggled to find food, or didn't think much of it, food is something that everyone has an opinion on. When students come to Iowa State, they in-part hand over their food story to Dining, which is tasked with being the main source of meals for those living in the residence halls, and to a lesser extent those who live off campus. Iowa State Dining wants to provide students with the food that they want at a reasonable price, but because of a lack of communication with students, there is a gap between what students want and what they are actually being served. This is particularly clear when it comes to students with dietary restrictions.

## Situation

Iowa State dining, which operates separately from the university, is a business that is projected to bring in an adjusted gross income of \$47,557,458 for the 2018 fiscal year, with \$33,594,156 of that coming from the meal plan contract that Dining has with Iowa State. With the addition of Friley Windows and plans to renovate most of the cafes for the upcoming school year, Dining is doing its best to bolster its image while generating more profit. These renovations, along with other functions of the budget, are funded in part by students required to have meal plans. Although the construction of Geoffrey added more students to the meal plans, ISU dining is still trying to figure out how to pay for the massive projects that it has taken on. Last year ISU dining increased rates by 4%, but after a successful attempt to save money, this year's increase will only be about 2% for the upcoming school year.

Dining has tried to address the needs of students, the efforts of which resulted in the ISU dining committee, a group of students and Dining administrators that meet weekly. This committee typically focuses on dining hall logistics, without addressing dietary restrictions that are common among students. Although this committee did begin to bridge the gap between students and Dining, the committee is exclusive by nature. There is currently no information online regarding it, and a student must have prior connections in order to hear about it and join. As a result, many of the members already hold leadership positions on campus. Created in order to hear student feedback, the ISU dining committee represents those already in some position of power, while overlooking the majority of the student population.

Incorrect labeling, a relaxed following of online menus and a limited selection of food all contribute to an unfriendly environment for those with dietary restrictions. Iowa State dining, which has plans to renovate the special diet kitchen, has hired a new dietitian specifically to work with students with allergies. They will be introducing a completely gluten-free bakery, but these are just the first steps needed in order to accommodate students.

## Plan

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Dec					Jan						
				Nov 26	Dec 3	Dec 10	Dec 17	Dec 24	Dec 31	Jan 7	Jan 14	Jan 21	Jan 28	Feb 4	
Committee Creation Meeting	1d	11/29/17	11/29/17	█											
Plan spring meeting times	2d	11/29/17	11/30/17	█	█										
Coordinate advisors with ISU Dining	3d	11/29/17	12/01/17	█	█	█									
Book consistent meeting room	4d	11/29/17	12/04/17	█	█	█	█								
Club/organization outreach	12d	11/30/17	12/15/17	█	█	█	█	█	█						
Student Outreach	19d	01/08/18	02/01/18							█	█	█	█	█	█

## Committee Creation

After an initial meeting between representatives from Friley hall, Cy's Gluten Free Friends and Dining, we reached a consensus that students would benefit from forming a new committee in order to specifically

address food in the dining halls. A meeting time of 6pm in the Union Drive Heritage room the Wednesday after Thanksgiving break was agreed to be the most accessible time for students as well as Dining staff. This first meeting will address the mission statement of the new committee, as well as logistics. In order to maintain our overall goal of engaging the student population, the meeting will be open to anyone who is a part of Iowa State, with an emphasis on those who need dietary accommodations. This committee will meet twice a semester and discuss any proposed menus, renovations regarding stations (such as the Special Diet Kitchen) and other student input.

**Club/Organizational Outreach**

With certain clubs on campus focused on food and issues regarding Dining, reaching out to as many organizations as possible would be a beneficial way of spreading the word about the new committee. Hearing student feedback and interest in the committee would help us to make it more accessible to students across campus.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Organization's Purpose</b>	<b>Importance of Outreach</b>
Inter-Hall Residence Association (IRHA)	"Student led organization representing residence hall students"	Representatives would be able to take information of the committee back to every residence hall on campus
Cy's Gluten Free Friends	"Provide an informative, interactive support group for gluten-free students and other students interested in a gluten-free lifestyle"	Many members of the club use the special diet kitchen
Ethical Eating Club	"Open-mindedly and inclusively advocate a rational, ethical approach to all aspects of one's diet"	The club primarily focuses on vegetarianism/ veganism

**Student Outreach**

Reaching out to various organizations is not enough to inform the general student population. Fliers, a method that many clubs utilize in order to inform the student population, would be one effective way of garnering name recognition across campus.

## Benefits

With the hiring of an outreach coordinator specifically to engage students on campus, Dining is trying to promote their image as a company that does good on campus. Mohamed Ali, the director of dining for Iowa State, likened his image of Dining to that of Chipotle, in which every customer would feel like they had made a positive impact by eating there. In the past, students haven't had an outlet to express their dissatisfaction with Dining. Reaching out to students who are not necessarily having a positive dining experience would do a lot to show their commitment to every student, as opposed to the bottom line mantra that they have been repeating for the last several years.

## Evaluation

In the past, ISU dining has used surveys as a form of self-evaluation. An email with the link to a ten-minute survey is sent midway through the first semester, along hundreds of other surveys that are sent to students. As expected, the response rate excludes the majority of the population, and after talking with students, the general consensus was that face-to-face interaction was the best form of feedback. The newly formed committee could then host open forums at least once a semester in order to attract students to the meeting and further promote the committee. This could function as both a social event as well as the preferred method of communication for many students with dietary restrictions.

## Qualifications

Elected president of Friley Hall, part of my responsibilities include meeting with residents and representing their ideas to various organizations across campus. As a result, many students have come up to me with suggestions on how to improve dining halls, but unsure of how to communicate their ideas directly to Dining administration. Talking to different people within Dining has allowed me to learn more about the structure of the business, while at the same time relaying information from my residents and clubs such as Cy's Gluten Free Friends to Dining. As a result, I am able to look at the issue of communication from both the perspective of both Dining and the student body population, and come up with a plan that will hopefully address the concerns of both parties.