Montana Tech: Dining Services Annual Program Review

Review Year: Fall 2014 – Spring 2015
Submitted by:
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Assessment Committee Review: Summer 2016
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**Background**

Dining Services operates 4 profit centers; Marcus Deli, Coffee Mill, Highlands College and Catering Services.

The Marcus Deli is a mixed use operation comprised of a small convenience store, a grill operation, a chef’s station, buffet and salad bar service, and beverage service. The Marcus Deli is located in the Student Union Building on the main campus of Montana Tech and accommodates about 300 dining patrons in two separate dining areas. The production core at this facility supports the majority of catered events, coffee breaks, and off premise business booked through Montana Tech Catering Services.
The Coffee Mill is housed in The Mill Building in the center of the original campus. The facility seats about 30 patrons and operates Monday thru Friday throughout the school year. The Coffee Mill is known for gourmet Starbucks blend coffees served by trained baristas and also is an option for the quick snack or a grab-and-go light lunch selection.

The foodservice at Highlands College is approximately six miles from the main campus of Montana Tech. It can be described as a small, short-order, breakfast and lunch operation. The service has a loyal following and is known for large portions and a friendly and accessible staff.

Catering offered includes in-house and off-premise breakfasts, coffee breaks, luncheons, dinners and cocktail events and represent a significant portion of the overall activity at Montana Tech Dining Services.

*The Director of Dining Services and Catering Director submitted resignations in 2015-2016 prior to completing this report. This report was prepared by the incoming Director using data derived from the 2014 – 2015 Residence Hall Survey, operating statements of the profit centers, and documented and anecdotal information provided by members of the Administration, faculty, students, vendors and clients. Comment cards and satisfaction surveys that were historically collected by Dining Services were not done in 2014-2015.*
**Mission**

Montana Tech Dining supports student success through superior cuisine, exceptional dining experiences, and sustainable business practices.

Objectives:
1. Superior Cuisine
2. Exceptional Dining Experience
3. Sustainable Business Practices

**Objective 1: Superior Cuisine**

**Performance Criteria A:** Food preparation, storage, and serving will meet standards of practice.

**Assessment Method:** Dining Services Inspection Reports

**Evaluation:** Montana Tech Dining Services was inspected in February of 2015; and, there were no minor or critical citations of violations.

**Action:** Performance Criteria met.

**Performance Criteria B:** The quality and variety of the dining hall food will be satisfactory or better.

**Assessment Method:** Resident Hall Survey, Dining Hall Satisfaction Survey, and Dining Comment Cards

**Evaluation:** The Dining Hall Satisfaction Survey and Comment Cards were not collected in 2014-2015. For questions on quality of dining hall food (2.59) and weekend meals (2.94) in the Resident Hall Survey, the mean response was below slightly satisfied.

In general, patrons felt that the variety of the offerings was poor, the quality low, and the flavor lacking.

**Action:** The performance criteria was not met based off the Resident Hall Survey which represents a subset of customers. The ability of customers to provide feedback needs to be evaluated.

**Performance Criteria C:** The quality and variety of the dining services catering food will be satisfactory or better.

**Assessment Method:** Catering Feedback

**Evaluation:** Catering feedback from events was not systematically collected.
**Action:** Performance criteria not met. A systematic collection of feedback (written and/or verbal) from catering events should be reviewed.

There is no record of a follow up after each event or contacting frequent customer’s satisfaction with the food. Some customers would email after an event of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

In the recent past, the volume of events has been declining as planners have expressed increasing dissatisfaction with the planning, staffing, and overall handling of catered events. Informal conversations with some event planners indicate food quality and event oversight as primary areas of deficiency.

**Performance Criteria D:** The gap on the SSI question, “There is an adequate selection of food available in the cafeteria” will be less than the National 4 Year Public gap.

**Assessment Method:** SSI

**Evaluation:** The gap in both 2013 and 2015 SSI for Montana Tech is greater than the National 4 Year Publics gap.

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**Action:** Performance criteria not met. Changes in the dining services with the goal of choice-driven style of food service and enhanced hours of operation are being made to improve this metric.

**Objective 2: Exceptional Dining Experience**

**Performance Criteria A:** Dining environments and public spaces are clean, well lit, and accessible.

**Assessment Method:** Dining Services Inspection Reports, Disability Services Evaluation
**Evaluation:** Montana Tech Dining Services was inspected in February of 2015; and, there were no minor or critical citations of violations for cleanliness of the dining spaces. Dining spaces are evaluated for accessibility thru the local fire safety authority.

**Action:**

**Performance Criteria B:** Dining environments are staffed with qualified individuals and provide satisfactory customer service.

**Assessment Method:** Job descriptions, Resident Hall Survey, Dining Hall Satisfaction Survey, and Dining Comment Cards

**Evaluation:** Job descriptions are written with minimum qualification and preferred qualifications. Following Montana Tech’s hiring procedures, staff meet the minimum qualification for employment in dining services.

The Dining Hall Satisfaction Survey and Comment Cards were not collected in 2014-2015. The Residence Hall Survey question on customer service (4.24) the mean response was above slightly satisfied.

**Action:** The performance criteria was met based off the Resident Hall Survey which represents a subset of customers and appropriate job qualifications. The ability of customers to provide feedback needs to be evaluated.

**Performance Criteria C:** Catering environments are adequately staffed with satisfactory customer service.

**Assessment Method:** Job descriptions and Catering Feedback

**Evaluation:** Catering feedback from events was not systematically collected. There is no record of a follow up after each event or contacting frequent customers of service and staffing. Some customers would email after an event of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

**Action:** Performance criteria was not met. A systematic collection of feedback (written and/or verbal) from catering events should be reviewed.

**Performance Criteria D:** Food options are labeled, visible, and communicated.

**Assessment Method:** Website activity, Dining Hall Satisfaction Survey, Dining Comment Cards.

**Evaluation:** The Dining Hall Satisfaction Survey and Comment Cards were not collected in 2014-2015. The screen with the daily menu was installed; but, the information was not posted on the web at this time and able to be tracked.
National Association of College and University Foodservice guidelines suggest food offered in a self-service environment should be labeled with nutritional/allergen information.

**Action:** Performance criteria was not met.

Allergens, special dietary concerns, and nutritional content need to be communicated and visible. Future catering and dining events will have food labeled.

**Objective 3: Sustainable Business**

**Performance Criteria A:** Montana Tech Dining Services will annually evaluate the sustainability of products used.  
**Assessment Method:** Review of products and sustainability.  
**Evaluation:** Montana Tech Dining Services began using compostable grab and go boxes instead of Styrofoam. Because Montana Tech is an affiliate of U of M in Missoula, exploration of ‘made in Montana’ product inventory already procured and warehoused for the operations at U of M foodservice in Missoula.  
**Action:** Performance Criteria met. Monitor in the coming year.

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

**Strengths:** Coffee Mill, Collaboration with Campus Partners, Commitment to try new ideas and not fear failure.

**How will the program maintain the strengths?**

We are planning to expand the hours at the Coffee Mill to 7:00pm on a trial basis. We will evaluate after the first semester and see how it is doing and if business is sufficient to continue.

Collaborative efforts such as Late Night Breakfast are examples of the departmental effort to engage with administration, faculty, staff and students to improve communications and feedback. The Ice Cream Social held during National Student Employment week, Autumn and Spring Job Fair participation and Fun Food Fridays are efforts to expand the outreach of the department and build rapport with various university constituent groups.

The program is resilient in trying to broaden and fine-tune its offerings in every area and engaging in periodic evaluation and review of product, procedures and empirical feedback sources.

**Weaknesses:** Staff service training, timely and specific guest satisfaction reporting, weekend coverage.
How will the program address the weaknesses?

Our greatest focus this fall will be service related; while we always make good strides in menu development, we are going to work hard on service points to ensure that our students receive the best possible food service options available. We are also looking at some subtle program changes and upgrades most specifically with our Chef’s Corner program. We have been running that for many years and we feel it’s time to make some changes even if they are subtle.

We will be updating our menu over the summer and focusing on dinner and weekend services. We will be looking at menu and service issues that we were having last year and we are waiting on a new management position that we want to hire to come back from Missoula. The position we are looking for needs to be classified by Missoula to a title and wage. This will give us additional support for evening and weekend shifts.

Additionally, we “covered” several student BBQ meals served outside as these were meals that would have been eaten in the dining room and we would have swiped their cards so we did not bill the student union for those meals. That being said, I am going to work with Digger Card to see if we can get hand-held scanners to use for outdoor events.

Montana Tech Dining Services needs to determine a systematic approach to collect dining and catering customer feedback.

Other Comments: FY15 brought a number of changes to the way student meal plans were handled. We increased the spending limits on both residential dining plans to allow enough money for students on both plans to be able to buy every meal served through the week. This gave students who eat all their meals enough money to do so, but for students who do not regularly eat all meals, they had more money to spend in the c-store at the end of each week. This had a negative impact on our “missed meal factor” which translates into excess revenue at the end of the year.