

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)



An employee at Tower Dining Center clocks out from a shift using a new hand-scanning system. The new scanners were first used in Carman Dining Center last year and are now used in all dining locations on campus. (Megan Cruz/The Daily Eastern News)

A handy new way to punch in to work

New bio-scanners replace Panther Cards for Dining employees

By: Vicki Paisley/Staff Reporter

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Jody Horn said it was time for a change.

For the past 10 years, student workers in the university dining centers have swiped their Panther Cards through a machine to log work hours.

Horn, director of university dining, said Time Wolf, the maker of the machines, was only supposed to be used for three years.

"They weren't sophisticated enough," Horn said.

A committee was formed to choose a different product for logging work hours.

The committee decided on "The Scout," a biometric hand reader that was implemented in all dining centers this fall.

The Scout is a biometric hand reader that reads key points on each individual's hand.

When a worker places their hand in the Scout, it recognizes their pre-programmed handprint and records the time they clock in and out for work.

Brian Schneider, assistant director of university dining, has spent the past five months programming seven biometric hand readers for campus. He worked with InfiniTime, the maker of the Scout, while programming the program.

"We've already gotten three updates since joining the InfiniTime program," Schneider said.

The Scout differs from the old system because it can hold different accounts. Cooks in the dining center can log hours at any dining center with the Scout, while other workers will only be able to log hours at one dining center.

Each registered hand can also have time restrictions put on it, limiting how many hours the students can work a week and only allowing them to clock in when they are scheduled.

"If you forget your hand, you shouldn't probably come to work," Schneider said jokingly. "Also, it's just cool that Eastern is using something biometrical."

Student workers are finding other problems adjusting to the hand readers. "It doesn't tell you if you are clocking in or out," said Kelli Malone, junior environmental technology major.

When placing a hand in the scanner, it reads the key points on the hand, and then the screen on the Scout reads "OK."

Some students have put their hand in twice in a row thinking that it didn't register the first time, said Amber Braze, sophomore business major. When student did this, the Scout clocked them in and then out, she added.

"I didn't get paid for six hours last week and there is no way to prove that I was working," Amber Braze said. "I may not get that money."

Another concern raised by the workers was that it's a health concern for the kitchen, said Ashley Braze, sophomore graphic design major.

"You don't know where their hand has been or if they washed it before and after like they are supposed to," Ashley Braze said.

Horn said the hand readers are sensitive, which has caused some problems as well. For example, if a worker wore a ring when they registered their hand, they have to wear it every time in order for the readers to recognize the worker's hand, she added. Conversely, a worker cannot wear extra jewelry on their hands after registering in the program, Horn said.

The next step for the Scout system is incorporating the hand scanners with Banner, which incorporates Eastern's payroll system.

"(Interfacing will) save time and provide valuable reports and instant stats that weren't available before," Horn said.

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