

Surveys prompt dining changes

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Student feedback received in 2004 through surveys conducted by the University Housing and Dining Services have helped bring about changes for the fall 2006 semester.

The smallest meal option will be seven meal swipes a week, two more than the old plan.

Five bonus meals will also be added onto all plans, and will be available for use anytime throughout the semester and can even be used to purchase meals for guests.

"Say you are especially hungry one week and use up all of your meal swipes, that's where these meals come in," said Mark Hudson, director of University Housing and Dining Services. "(They) will also be free of charge."

Students will also have the option of being able to use their Panther Cards for meal swipes every two hours instead of once during each meal zone.

"If you eat at 8 a.m., you no longer have to wait until the brunch or lunch meal zones," Hudson said. "Instead, you will be able to eat at 10 a.m."

"The dining halls have started to cater to many different tastes," said Jill Huhn, a junior family and consumer sciences major and resident of Andrews Hall.

Changes are made based on surveys done every other year to ensure student satisfaction throughout campus. The survey is 125 questions and inquires about areas such as physical environment in the dorms, relationship with residence hall staff members and general satisfaction.

Although these changes are greatly anticipated by most students, the surveys are said to only represent about one-third of the student population and have a return rate of about 45 percent due to the length of the questionnaire.

"Students are afraid of the survey because they think it will take them a long time," said Jessica Leathers, a sophomore biological sciences major. "But in the end, it's worth it because you have a say in the improvement of your school."

The Housing and Dining Services Web site has also made improvements, including a nutritional calculator, menus for the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union Food Court and comment cards.

"These new changes are a huge accomplishment and an awesome improvement," said Elizabeth Gergits, Resident Hall Association president. Surveys are available in each dining center and on the Web site, <http://www.eiu.edu/~housing/>. Tabitha Miller, staff reporter, contributed to this article.