Dining Services Efficiency Cheat Sheet

To help CBOs and VPs of Finance and Administration identify areas of greatest opportunity to make dining services more efficient, the Business Affairs Forum has compiled a "cheat sheet" of replicable tactics from institutions that have successfully decreased operating costs and increased revenue. Each tactic is evaluated on two fronts: revenue potential and difficulty of implementation. Revenue potential ranges from low ($) to high ($$$). Implementation difficulty ranges from low (1) to high (3).

	Tactic	Example	Financial Impact	Implementation Difficulty
Alternative Products and Services	**Develop Catering Services** Provide catering services for on-campus events such as graduation, reunions, and conferences.	Dining services at one institution caters internal events hosted for donors and trustees as well as off-campus events. This provides dining with the largest source of revenue after student board plans.	$$$	1
	Establish Contracts with Local Businesses and Charities Seek opportunities to partner with community organizations to generate additional revenue.	One institution offers contract services to the local Meals on Wheels chapter and a daycare center, producing an additional 1,800 meals per day for these programs.	$$	2
	Offer Meal Plans for Faculty and Staff Offer meal plans to faculty and staff to generate additional revenue.	Meal plans offered to faculty and staff provides one institution with a substantial source of additional revenue and transforms dining areas into community spaces.	$	1
	Offer Summer Meal Options Provide catering and board plan options for summer academic programs and conferences.	Dining services at one institution provides meals for summer conferences and academic programs, which represents the operation's third largest source of revenue.	$$$	2
Recalibrate Options and Locations	**Centralize Campus Dining Locations** Consolidate service locations to increase efficiency and decrease staff and inventory requirements.	One institution closed three of five student dining locations to provide more cost-effective services in the remaining two locations. Another institution closed fifteen of its twenty-six student dining locations in addition to its heavily-subsidized faculty club. The faculty club is now a conference center, which offers a steady stream of catering opportunities.	$$$	3
	Open Concession Stands or Commissaries Establish snack bars or commissaries to attract busy students.	One institution maintains a small but popular café in a heavily-trafficked area on campus. Concession operations have high revenue potential and require minimal food preparation and staffing needs.	$$$	3
	Eliminate Costly or Unpopular Meal Options Collect data to track dining utilization and eliminate costly or unpopular meal options.	Following a survey revealing that few students eat breakfast, one institution eliminated breakfast service at many locations. Another institution eliminated luxury items like authentic maple syrup from menus.	$$	2

Source: Business Affairs Forum.

Dining Services Efficiency Cheat Sheet (cont.)

	Tactic	Example	Financial Impact	Implementation Difficulty
Staffing	**Hire Part-Time and Student Workers** Staff dining services with part-time and student workers to reduce labor costs.	Dining services at many institutions hire student workers, who are paid at far lower rates and do not receive benefits. Many students prefer jobs in dining services to other on- and off-campus work due to the opportunity to study during less busy hours.	$$	1
Technology	**Utilize Inventory Management Systems** Utilize an inventory management system to track inventory and find cost savings.	Most institutions rely on inventory management systems and software (e.g., FoodPro, CBORD, Sodexo, Aramark) to manage recipes, track inventory, and streamline purchasing.	$$$	2
Technology	**Track Consumption and Food Waste** Track food consumption and waste to find efficiencies and reduce costs.	Within four months of implementation of LeanPath, a food waste prevention software, dining services at one institution saved $70,000 in wasted food and reduced food cost by 1% year-over-year.	$$	2

Source: Business Affairs Forum.