



David Porter's Five Proactive Steps To Even More Self-Op Success

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What if you could demonstrate to your President that your dining program has the potential to increase student retention (fall freshman returning as fall sophomores), six year graduation rates, acceptance yield rates, increase alumni giving and better prepare graduating students to succeed in the work force? Would or could that change anything regarding your future and the future of your dining program?

Here are five proactive steps that can significantly contribute to making your self-operated dining program even more successful and elevating it to its full potential of becoming a major factor in fostering day to day development and success regarding the interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence of your resident and non-resident students.

1. **Conduct Market Research.** This does not have to be time consuming, but is it valuable. Use market research to help determine customers' current perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of your campus dining program. Hint, do not ask them what they want. Also through stakeholder interviews glean how dining is valued by housing, admissions, advancement, alumni relations etc.
2. **Confirm Campus Dining Concepts & Services.** Using the information gathered, take a hard look at your venues and services and determine where changes can be made to enhance the overall program. Confirm/develop:
 - a. Method(s) of service
 - b. Size, type and variety of dining locations
 - c. Growth potential over next 10 – 20 years
 - d. Hours of operation
 - e. Operating days
 - f. Catering
3. **Revisit Your Meal Plan Program.** We have been engaged by hundreds of colleges and universities in all corners of the United States and Canada. In turn, we have witnessed hundreds of administrator (and a few consultants and food service operators) coming up with new meal plans, sometimes at a lower price, that in our opinion is effectively an attempt at making a less than desirable dining program more desirable by charging less for it.

Work to understand the symbiotic relationship between the dining program and the meal plans that are tied to that dining program and proceed accordingly. For example, on the rare occasion students are complaining about the price of the mandatory meal plan(s), rarely does it truly have anything to do with the actual price of the meal plan. This has proven to

be true on campuses where the established price of the mandatory meal plan is \$3,500 per year or a campus where the established price of the mandatory meal plan is \$6,500 per year.

- 4. Determine the “Yikes” Factor.** We all have experienced the “Wow” factor. We walk into the magnificent atrium of a brand new marche’ or atrium of a hotel and our inside voice goes “WOW”. Most of us have also walked into a dining facility on a campus (state of the art 1960’s or 1970’s vintage) and our inside voice goes “YIKES”.

Not only do facilities need to look and “feel” good, they have to functionally support the program that has been developed to meet the needs of the target market(s) the venue will serve. Style and substance are NOT mutually exclusive.

- 5. Crunch the Numbers.** Understanding and projecting the financial consequences and capital requirements and return on investment of your recommended program and or facilities improvements requires a five- to 20-year financial proforma.

Deal or No Deal.....In a vacuum, if a foodservice contractor offered your school \$50 million dollars in exchange for contracting out your dining program to them for the next 20 years.... Should the school seriously consider the offer? BUT, what if the 20-year financial projections for your new next generation 24/7 Anytime dining and retail operations program projects a \$250 million dollar surplus to your school? Time to hit the “EASY” button. And, what if your strategic plan demonstrated how your next generation dining program can increase tuition revenue(s) from even higher student retention and six year graduation rates?

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail...” - Benjamin Franklin

Call Carolyn Watkins, vice president, at 410.451.3617 or speak to her at the Porter Khouw Consulting booth #634 at NACUFS in Indianapolis to arrange for a completely confidential (NDA required) Next Generation Twenty Year Strategic Plan. Through the month of August, PKC is offering a 100 percent money back fee guarantee.