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## Staff Perceptions of Healthy Eating Opportunities and Choices on a Southern University Campus

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*University of Mississippi*

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STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF HEALTHY EATING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHOICES ON A  
SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

by  
Rebecca Gwendolyn Miller

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford, MS  
May 10, 2019

Approved by

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*In dedication of Gwendolyn Marie Betpouey Dwyer.  
You are missed greatly.  
I will always love you, Mama Gwen.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Georgianna Mann for agreeing to work with me on this project as my advisor. She was so willing to help when I was a complete stranger to her and came to her starry eyed and confused as to what I was going to do my research on. She also kept moral high when I was at some of my lowest of lows and pushed me to continue on. I am so grateful for this experience with her, I truly could not have done it without her. I would also like to thank Selby Entreken, who I think kept me sane and on track throughout the entirety of both of our research projects – we LOVE intercoder reliability!! Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Laurel Lambert and Dr. Kathy Knight for all of their input on this project, and for serving as my second and third readers.

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## **ABSTRACT**

REBECCA GWENDOLYN MILLER: Staff Perceptions of Healthy Eating Opportunities and Choices on a Southern University Campus  
(Under the direction of Georgianna Mann)

Maintaining a healthy workforce can help an employer to save money in the long run, due to factors such as fewer health-related absences and higher employee productivity. Obesity, a disease with many factors, is accompanied by many comorbidities. Food and beverage choices can play a strong role in the development of obesity. The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence staff eating behavior in a large university in the Southeastern United States, using a qualitative research design. Additionally, staff members provided possible solutions to improve the eating environment on the University's main campus. Using a structured question guide, three focus group discussions were conducted consisting of 3 male and 9 female university staff members. NVivo12 Pro was used for data analysis. Data were coded by two researchers to yield an acceptable intercoder reliability coefficient.

Staff members reported that they are mainly influenced by a personal will to make healthy choices, incentives, and food presentation. Additionally, they stated that it is difficult to consistently choose healthy options on campus due the lack of availability on campus or convenient options. Recommendations from staff included more healthy options, education, and more convenient methods of procurement, such as grab and go and delivery.

This is the first study of its kind that specifically focuses on staff members, rather than faculty members or all employees at a university. This study may inform future campus policies that reflect the needs and desires of staff members. By tailoring policies and interventions towards the requests of the staff members, known needs may be met, which the university will subsequently benefit from.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMI	Body Mass Index
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
JAC	Jackson Avenue Center
NIH	National Institute of Health
SEM	Social Ecological Model
U.S.	United States
USDA	United State Department of Agriculture

## INTRODUCTION

Obesity rates are increasing in America at an alarming rate, rousing universal concerns for the effects this health issue could have on society. Overweight is categorized as a body mass index (BMI) of 25.0-29.9 and obesity is categorized as a BMI of 30 or greater (United States Department of Agriculture, 2019). In 2010, overweight and obesity were estimated to cause 3.4 million deaths worldwide from related conditions such as heart diseases, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes (Ng et al., 2014) (Center for Disease Control, 2019a). This increase in obesity rates can be associated with many different factors. One example would be an energy imbalance due to a lack of healthy diet and low activity levels (Center for Disease Control, 2019b). To combat this issue, it is important to understand how the public wants to reach these health goals and what they consider to be healthy.

The meaning of health is ill-defined in today's society where non-evidenced based practices are popular. A new term called 'health literacy' has emerged to describe the ability of an individual to properly obtain, process, and comprehend basic health information and services in order to make more educated health decisions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). There is general assumption that many do not know or understand what 'healthy' actually means or is, but to what extent is this actually the case?

This study aims to understand university staff perceptions and expectations of healthy eating on campus. Although there is current research that looks into many

different worksite food offerings, and university student perceptions, there is a gap in research covering university employees, specifically university staff members.

Comparisons can be made but are not completely understood because these different populations may have different needs and expectations.

The Social Ecological Model (SEM) provides a foundation for understanding eating patterns and behaviors due to the environment surrounding an individual. Factors can be categorized as either societal and environmental, institutional, interpersonal, and individual. Implementing programs within each of the different levels can help to promote more health-conscious eating behaviors (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015c). By applying the SEM, researchers hope to be able to identify enablers and barriers to healthy eating on a large southeastern university campus, as well as proposed solutions provided by the staff members, there is hope to create healthier lifestyles

## **CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1 Obesity in America**

America is one of the most obese countries in the world to the point where obesity is now recognized as an epidemic. According to a 2015 report from the Center for Disease Control National Center for Health Statistics, from 2011-2014, more than one-third of the United States (U.S.) population was estimated to be obese (Ogden & Flegal, 2015). Obesity has been linked to numerous health-related conditions and chronic diseases. In 2013, the National Institute of Health (NIH) conducted a systematic review on the management of overweight and obesity which concluded that heart disease, stroke, type 2-diabetes mellitus, and some types of cancer are some of the leading causes of preventable death in the U.S. (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), 2013). The rising number of hospitalizations due to obesity-related conditions is affecting government resources that have been put in place by the nation. This NIH report reflects the costs on United States government, as Medicare spends \$600 more per year for obese beneficiaries compared to those of normal, healthy weight. Even with government assistance, obese patients spend roughly 42% more on medical bills than individuals with a healthy weight. Because of this, estimated medical costs due to obesity in the United States are in the billions (Finkelstein, Trogden, Cohen, & Dietz, 2009). The obesity epidemic in the United States is a complex problem perpetuated by many factors. The SEM is one tool that can assist researchers in their efforts to investigate and understand these factors.

## 1.2 The Social-Ecological Model

The Social-Ecological Model provides insight and structure to understanding factors involved in food and physical activity choices (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015c). As seen in Figure 1, the outermost circle of the model encompassing are the societal/environmental factors, and going inward, the levels reflect institutional, interpersonal, and finally individual factors (Meador, 2016). Research has shown that multilevel interventions are extremely effective, as these can promote change in each of the levels in this model.

Societal and environmental factors include the social and cultural norms and values, such as tradition and religion. Moving inward to the next circle are institutional factors, which include government policies, community advocacy, as well as the media.

These factors have strong influences on someone's personal food choices due to what is made available by an institution.

Interpersonal factors, meaning the settings someone is in and the people that make up those settings, factor into their decisions as well. Finally, socioeconomic status, personal preferences and overall choices, play major roles in food and beverage

intake and physical activity levels (Robinson & Kersbergen, 2018).

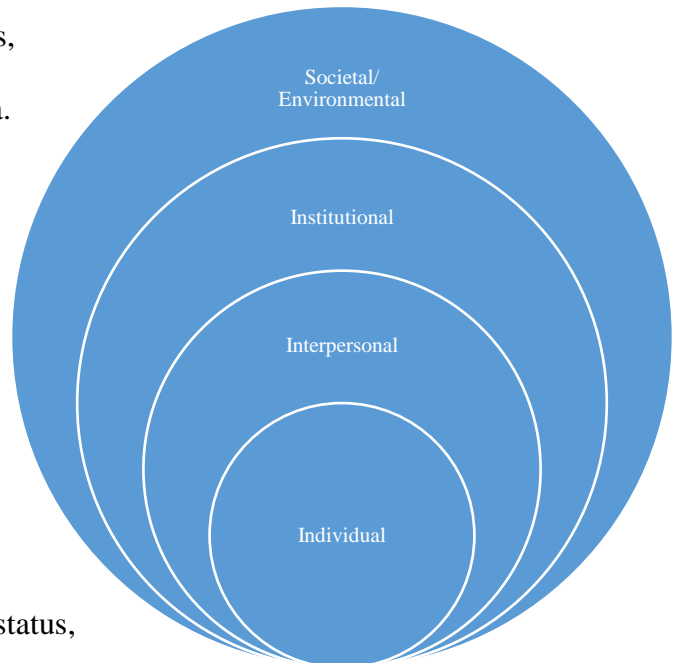


FIGURE 1 SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL DESIGN  
(MEADER, 2016)

### **1.3 Food Environment**

Many external factors play large roles in everyday eating decisions. It is evident that the average American eating patterns are laden with solid fats and added sugars (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015a). American diets are partly set in tradition, but also are affected by food policies, the media, peers, and demographics. ‘Obesogenic’ refers to something that causes obesity, this type of food environment can promote overconsumption, which is a globally recurring issue (Robinson & Kersbergen, 2018).

The standard American diet of foods high in solid fats and added sugars is not the only concern. Oversized portions have become an obesogenic factor as well. Larger portions are not only higher in calories, but also encourage people to eat more; consumers want to feel as if their money has not been wasted (Young & Nestle, 2002). One study demonstrated that ‘normal’ portion size perceptions may be able to be recalibrated if environmental factors make it so since eating behavior and appetite have been recognized as flexible (Robinson & Kersbergen, 2018).

MyPlate was implemented by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2011 to replace the MyPyramid Food Guidance System. Unlike the Food Pyramid, MyPlate focuses on the relative proportions of food to plate for each of the food groups rather than how much of each group is to be consumed in a day. For a healthy diet, MyPlate advocates eating whole fruits (rather than fruit juices), a variety of vegetables and protein, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and at least half of grains consumed to be whole grains (United States Department of Agriculture, 2017). Another recommendation from MyPlate is to choose foods and beverages that are low in saturated



and trans fat, sodium and added sugars; as these ingredients have been linked with obesity and thus, chronic diseases (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015a).

The USDA recommends lowering the intake of saturated fats, sodium and added sugars. Saturated fats are mainly found in solid fats, such as butter and animal fat, among other foods and are chosen by companies due to their extended shelf life when compared to unsaturated fats (European Food Information Council, 2014). Trans fats are a byproduct of partial hydrogenation, and are commonly used in processed snacks and many processed foods; however, their prevalence is fading due to research linking them to disease and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015a). High sodium levels are often found in ready-to-eat foods and restaurant meals, used to cure meat, bake, thicken, enhance flavor, preserve, and maintain moisture (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015b). High sodium in foods is also a concern because of its link to hypertension. A low sodium food is defined as 140 mg of sodium or less per serving (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2018). Also, a concern to health is the added sugars in processed foods. Added sugars are any sugars and syrups that have been added to foods and beverages; they are found in soft drinks, juice, and sweets, among other items (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015). Lowering the intake of each of these ingredients is said to significantly reduce the risks of obesity and chronic diseases.

Processed foods and unnecessarily large portion sizes, which are commonly found as a normal part of the daily American diet, are not the only issue when it comes to healthy eating (Martínez Steele et al., 2016). Fast food restaurants are also having a

tremendous impact, as they offer low-cost, tempting foods that are easily obtained. There are more than 50,000 fast food chains in America and over 25% of Americans consume fast food every single day; fast food has been embedded into American culture (Brown, 2013). Additionally, fast casual options, such as Chipotle and Panera Bread, are becoming more and more popular and when compared to traditional fast food options, such as McDonalds, and, while often have the impression of being a more positive nutritional choice, they can have higher calorie levels (Schoffman et al., 2016).

### ***Restaurant influence***

An increasing number of meals are being consumed away from the home environment. However, many of these meals may be energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods and calorically-sweetened beverages. Many restaurants also present customers with exceedingly larger portion sizes than what is recommended by the USDA. Research shows that away from home eating can be associated with a decrease in nutrient intake and diet quality, weight gain, as well as increased BMI and total energy intake (Popkin, Duffey, & Gordonlarsen, 2005).

Restaurants are now required by law to display caloric information on their menus and to make consumers more aware of what they are putting into their bodies. One single community study in King County, Washington observed a decrease in mean calories per purchase in the 18 months after the implementation of menu labeling of calories in some restaurant chains but not others, and only by women and not by men (Krieger et al., 2013). Another study in New York City found that 64% of those surveyed noticed the labeling but only 27% of those who noticed actually used the information to make a calorie-informed choice (Dumanovsky, Huang, Bassett, & Silver, 2010). Although more

research is needed to support the use of nutrition information on menus, there is hope that it will have a positive impact on health.

### ***Media Influence***

Eating behavior is also strongly influenced by media. The rise of social media influencers, more commonly referred to as ‘influencers’ has changed the marketing game. Influencers use their platforms to express opinions on products, good or bad, paid or unpaid. Brands utilize these platforms through influencers because there is an already established sense of trust and loyalty to that person by their followers, on which can be capitalized (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Guidry Moulard, 2018). However, this can create disordered eating patterns and strongly influence how individuals eat and behave.

Research comparing different fad diets concluded that most are effective in producing short term weight loss but are not sustainable past six months at the maximum (Kuchkuntla, Limketkai, Nanda, Hurt, & Mundi, 2018). Overall, media of all sorts heavily influences eating behaviors of consumers.

### ***Food Environment at Work***

The food environment, or ‘foodscape’, in the workplace is one critical factor in employee health. Since the average person spends 40 or more hours a week at their job, it is important that this environment provides the opportunities for healthy purchase options. Employees rely more on food purchasing options that are en route or near their place of employment compared to those who are unemployed (Kerr et al., 2012). One study conducted at the Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research at Deakin University in Australia aimed to investigate the relative importance of residential and workplace food environments for eating patterns amongst employees. They found that

easier and expanded access to healthier food options near the workplace was associated with healthier food consumption (Thornton, Lamb, & Ball, 2013). Another study reported an increase in sales on ‘healthier options’ in schools and the workplace when prices are lower and these items are more heavily promoted (French, 2005). Although changing the foodscape surroundings may be difficult for an employer, it is becoming a more common practice to instate wellness programs and incentives in the workplace.

In addition to wellness programs and adjusting food environments in and around work, coworkers also play a role in personal food and beverage choices. Peer influence and what is deemed as the ‘social norm’ affects every day eating decisions. Multiple studies have demonstrated that people eat in larger quantities when they are in the presence of others, compared to when eating alone. Other studies have seen the opposite: presence of others can also inhibit consumption (De Castro, 1990; de Castro & Brewer, 1992; De Castro, Brewer, Elmore, & Orozco, 1990; Edelman, Engell, Bronstein, & Hirsch, 1986; Klesges, Bartsch, Norwood, Kautzrnan, & Haugrud, 1984; Morland, Wing, & Roux, 2002). This has been deemed the ‘social facilitation’ of eating -- or, the audience effect. In a parallel study conducted at the University of Toronto at Mississauga, researchers found that intake of food is affected by social norms, but the intake on food choice was not (Pliner & Mann, 2004).

#### **1.4 Common Workplace Policies**

It can be hard for an employer to determine where to start when addressing and preventing potential health concerns of their employees. Surveillance and evaluation measures should be initiated as soon as possible to track and monitor employee eating and physical activity habits and changes (Saelens & Glanz, 2009). Establishing a

worksite wellness program amongst employees could not only better employee health, but it can help the employer to save money.

Around 60% of American health insurance policies are achieved through employment-based programs (Blumenthal, 2006). Employee healthcare programs can cost an employer a great deal of money per year, enough to make a large dent sometimes. But the emerging popularity of worksite wellness programs, 77% of companies with 500+ employees in 2008, is consistent with employer savings. One study reported that medical costs decrease by approximately \$3.27 and that employee absence costs decrease by approximately \$2.73 for every dollar spent on wellness programs (Baicker, Cutler, & Song, 2010).

### ***University Workplace Policies***

Worksite wellness policies are characterized by method of delivery and the focus of intervention. The most common method of delivery is through a self-reported health risk assessment survey by employees for collection of baseline data, commonly in conjunction with a clinical screening. Self-help education materials are also commonly used, as well as counseling, and seminars. Incentives, such as bonuses, are becoming more and more common with these wellness programs. Intervention is mainly focused on obesity rates, but also smoking and multiple risk factors (Baicker et al., 2010). These types of healthy interventions are vital in maintaining a healthy and happy employee work environment.

Universities employ both faculty and staff. The importance of a workplace wellness program is no different than that in a corporate environment. A 26-week workplace wellness program for employees at the University of Medicine and Dentistry

of New Jersey reported significant changes in clinical measures and quality of life of employees after implementation of the policy (Radler, Parrott, Kolesa, & Touger-Decker, 2012). Another study published by the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* utilized pedometers for activity tracking of 121 university employees and observed increase in steps in all BMI categories after implementation of the program; yet diet was not taken under consideration (Butler, Clark, Burlis, Castillo, & Racette, 2015).

### **1.5 Current Research and Overall Importance**

A study published by the *Journal of American College Healthy* examined obesity and food choices among university faculty and staff members. A survey answered by 954 employees consisted of questions on how often they eat and what they choose to consume. Six percent of respondents reported eating on campus 5 days per week, with 5% of them purchasing lunch on campus daily and 21% purchasing lunch on campus at least 3 days per week. Forty-two percent of the respondents were not satisfied with food choices on campus and 71% requested more options of food choices and places to eat on campus (Freedman & Rubinstein, 2010).

Although there is a considerable amount of research on healthy eating environments in university campus settings, there is lack of data on university staff's perception of the campus eating environment. Also, most of these studies were conducted throughout urban areas, thus more rural areas need to be explored as well (Burgoine & Monsivais, 2013). More companies are implementing worksite wellness programs every year, but there is a large focus on exercise, rather than diet, as exercise can be easier and less expensive. However, workplace wellness programs should include both rather than shift to one or the other because caloric needs vary based on many factors, including

physical activity levels (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015b) .

There are many barriers to eating healthy on campus including lack of convenience and time, location, and choices offered. In order to increase health standards on campus for University employee and staff members, the University requires a better understanding of the expected food purchasing accommodations and options. There is a demand for healthier food options from University staff members and the one of many ways to successfully achieve this is to establish a full understanding of what staff members truly want and expect. However, the perceptions of what is considered ‘healthy’ may not match expectations due to the lack of knowledge of nutritionally-dense food items. This knowledge deficit may be due to the use of incredulous sources that can be highly variable and inaccurate, such as the promotion of fad diets.

### ***RebelWell at The University of Mississippi***

RebelWell is the worksite wellness program at the University of Mississippi. It is designed for employees and students of the University and for members of the surrounding community to help improve their qualities of living. This program offers wellness targeted events, activities, challenges, demonstrations, courses, and lecture programs; individual fitness assessments; and screening programs for specific health risks, with many of the programs offered at no or low cost. It was originally funded through a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation (RebelWell, 2017c). One can become a Wellness Champion through this program to help further spread the word on the programs’ goals and mission (RebelWell, 2017a). This program utilizes physical activity more than diet, which seems to be the most common case

amongst workplace wellness programs, as well as is more commonly used and known about by University staff and faculty members compared to that of students. Also in agreeance with current research, this program also has a majority female participants when compared to male participants (M. A. Jurss, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

The goal of this research was to identify how the university's staff members perceive opportunities that the food environment on campus offers for healthy eating. This study will examine enablers and barriers to making healthy food and beverage choices on campus, as well as determines staff desired policies that can be put into place by the university to meet these goals and desires and facilitate healthier food selections by staff members.



## **CHAPTER 2: METHODS**

### **2.1 Recruitment and Participation**

Focus groups with University staff were used in this qualitative study. The University, located in southern United States, consists of 20,000 students, 1105 faculty members (“Mini Fact Book 2018-2019,” 2018), and 3221 total staff members (E. Stuart, personal communication, March 21, 2019), with 2015 of them being full-time permanent staff members on the main campus (C. Jones, personal communication, March 20, 2019) in a rural setting. Participants for this study were recruited through a representative sample of university staff members from all departments on campus. Recruitment emails were sent via the Office of Institutional Research to one-third of the requested population per the university’s recruitment policy (see Appendix A). Staff members were invited to answer an informative survey (see Appendix B) with the last question inquiring about their interest in participating in a focus group to discuss their thoughts, opinions, and perceptions on the healthy eating environment on campus. To maintain complete confidentiality, a survey link was provided that led to a separate survey to input contact information for those staff members interested in participating in a focus group study. Each potential participant was emailed individually to coordinate an appropriate focus group time.

### **2.2 Procedure**

Three focus groups were conducted during the spring and fall semesters of 2018, with two preliminary focus groups to act as pilot studies. Each focus group consisted of

3-5 participants due to low interest levels (Krueger, 1998). Groups were held at the University of Mississippi JD Williams Library in a small, private meeting rooms during the lunch hour to accommodate staff schedules. Participants were seated around a table, with the moderator at the head, to promote and facilitate a discussion-style setting. One to two co-moderators were also present at all focus groups to record notes. Focus group dialogue was recorded by two audio-recorders. Participants were given a brief explanation of procedures and the aim of the study before an audio release consent form was signed by all focus group participants prior to any focus group activities per University Institutional Review Board policy. Additionally, complete confidentiality was assured to all participants.

Each focus group lasted between 30-60 minutes. Water bottle incentives were provided for all participants as well as incentive of either a \$60 Blue Apron gift card or RebelWell promotion pack of the same value, both sponsored and funded by RebelWell, the University's wellness program. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board for Research (IRB) involving human participation at the University of Mississippi. The IRB approval number for this study is #18x-189.

### **2.3 Question guide**

A structured question guide was developed by the researchers to go along with the recommended focus group methodology (Krueger, 1998). Participants for each focus group were encouraged to participate in the conversation through introductory, ice breaker questions. After introductions, a sequence of nine open-ended questions were asked by the moderator to the group. The focus group questions can be found in Appendix C. These questions were developed to target each level of the Social Ecological

Model (SEM) to provide a more comprehensive perspective of the contributing factors to the staff members' opinions (Boyle, 2017).

After introductions, the initial question set the basis for the discussions leading into the official study questions. Two transition questions then led to the main questions of the study. The last question in the series acted as a conclusion question to bring closure to the discussion and enable participants to reflect on previous answers and say anything else they feel may be pertinent for the study (Krueger, 1998).

## **2.4 Data Analysis**

Recordings of the focus groups were transcribed verbatim in Google Docs using Express Scribe (version 7.01) by the moderator (see Appendix D). All data were analyzed with the qualitative analysis software, NVivo12 Pro (NVivo 12 Plus, QSR International, Version 12.0.0.71). Intercoder reliability was used to analyze the qualitative data. Both the moderator and one of the co-moderators were the two investigators to independently analyze, evaluate, and code the data into the NVivo program. The agreement coefficient for coder reliability should be no less than a 0.80. This agreement coefficient is based off the notion that 0.90 or greater is acceptable to all, 0.80 or greater is acceptable in most situations, and anything below would be in disagreement (Neuendorf, 2002).

A combination of a deductive and inductive thematic approach was used to examine quotes from each of the focus group transcripts to determine common themes. These themes were then systematically identified across the data set and developed into a code book by two researchers, with each theme acting as a node in the coding system. The themes were grouped into three main categories: Enablers to Healthy Eating, Barriers to Healthy Eating, and Proposed Solutions. Each of the coded nodes falls under

one of these major categories, which can be seen in the Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3, respectively. As previously stated, to ensure reliability of the data interpretations, analyses were independently conducted by two researchers using the intercoder reliability method. Results from each of the three focus groups conducted were combined and reported together to identify barriers noted by staffs and proposed solutions to create a healthier eating environment of campus.

TABLE 1: ENABLERS TO HEALTHY EATING

<b><u>LEVEL OF SEM</u></b>	<b><u>Coded Nodes</u></b>
INDIVIDUAL	<p><b>Will to Make Healthy Choices</b>  <i>A personal desire to make healthy choices, may include goals/health concerns/guilt</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Presentation of Foods</b>  <i>A positive/appealing presentation of food that would encourage them to make healthy choices</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Taste of Food</b>  <i>Healthy food options taste good</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Advertisement</b>  <i>Advertising of the healthy food options that are available on campus (on vending machine, posters, etc.)</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Incentivize</b>  <i>Rewards for making healthy choices on campus (i.e. RebelWell)</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Nutritional Information Available</b>  <i>Nutrition information is available for staff to access</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Campus Wellness Programs</b>  <i>Wellness programs on campus are available and offer health information for staff</i></p>

TABLE 2: BARRIERS TO HEALTHY EATING

<b><u>LEVEL OF SEM</u></b>	<b><u>Coded Nodes</u></b>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Presentation of Foods</b>  <i>A negative presentation of food that is not appetizing or appealing to eat.</i>  <i>The unhealthier options are more apparent and prominent upon presentation</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Availability of Foods</b>  <i>The lack of availability of healthy options on campus</i></p>
INDIVIDUAL	<p><b>Awareness of Options</b>  <i>Staff's awareness of the healthy and variety of foods on campus</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Nutritional Information Available</b>  <i>Inaccuracy of the nutrition information available.</i>  <i>Complete nutritional information is not available for all products.</i></p>
INTERPERSONAL	<p><b>Convenience and Time</b>  <i>Healthy foods not located in convenient areas.</i>  <i>Locations not open at convenient hours (i.e. non-peak hours, as many meet with students during peak lunchtimes)</i>  <i>Opt for 'fast foods' due to time constraints rather than the healthier foods</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Price</b>  <i>Healthier foods are more expensive than unhealthy foods</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Lack of Healthy Vending</b>  <i>Most are prepackaged snacks high in solid fats/added sugars</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Campus Wellness Programs</b>  <i>The Wellness Program on campus focuses more on physical activity than food-related wellness.</i>  <i>Nutrition Services for staff are not widely known about</i></p>
SOCIETAL	<p><b>Location of the University</b>  <i>The culture in the south provides expectation of 'southern foods' which are unhealthy by nature</i></p>

TABLE 3: PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

<b><u>LEVEL OF SEM</u></b>	<b><u>Coded Nodes</u></b>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Fresher Foods</b>  <i>Fresher produce options and food not sitting out for hours</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>More Healthy Options</b>  <i>Increase healthy options and decrease unhealthy options</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Grab and Go Options</b>            Places that offer ready-to-eat healthy meal options</p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>Campus Delivery</b>  <i>Delivery systems available on campus (i.e. Lenoir did it one year</i></p>
INSTITUTIONAL	<p><b>More Locations</b>  <i>Additional dining hall and POD locations (i.e. at the JAC)</i></p>
INDIVIDUAL	<p><b>Education</b>  <i>More nutritional education available or make it more widely known about if available</i></p>

### CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Three focus groups were conducted for this study in order to reach a point of saturation of information and feedback. In addition to the three focus groups in which data was collected, two preliminary pilot studies were also conducted to act as pilot studies for the data collection methods. Each focus group consisted of 3-5 participants. The sample (n = 12) consisted of 3 male and 9 female University staff members with a wide variation in the number of years spent working at the University of Mississippi. The departments and their locations also varied a lot, with participants who worked on and off of the main campus, which allowed for more well-rounded overall opinion of the staff members. An intercoder reliability test was conducted between two researchers on the results, with a kappa coefficient value that is acceptable in most situations ( $\kappa = 0.86$ ) and a percent agreement of 99.5%.

As an icebreaker, each of the focus groups were asked first to describe a healthy meal. The adjectives and descriptions were then written on a whiteboard to act as inspiration and reference throughout the conversation. As suggested, staff members often referred to the adjectives on the whiteboard when considering the questions asked. The information found in Table 4 is how each of the participants answered:

TABLE 4: ADJECTIVES TO DESCRIBE A HEALTHY MEAL

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3
Balanced	Low salt	Colorful
Fresh	Green	Balanced
Light	Fresh vegetables	Fresh
Vegetables	Low, to no, sugar	Nutrient rich
Tasty	Low ‘bad’ cholesterol	Delicious
	Low carbs	Options
	Healthily cooked protein	Portions
	Antioxidants	

Towards the end of the focus groups, the staff members were asked to use a hedonic scale and rank the healthy offerings on campus from 1-10, with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best, and to explain why and what can be done to improve. Table 5 illustrates responses.

TABLE 5: HEALTHY OFFERING RANKINGS

RANK	% participants	Comments
8-10	41.7%	“I think you can find a healthy option – it may not always be what you want to eat...” - 8
		“It’s my choice. There are things that I could choose from... So I think it is a matter of what I want to do a lot of the times.” - 10
		“...convenience. Serving sizes, more options, would probably make it a 10. And I am talking snacks...” - 8
		“... because of the lack of convenience and availability.” - 8
		“... availability is a big part of it. From my perspective, I feel like if I’m gonna be in an area, where, in my work environment, I’m gonna have to use these at some point, I would there to be options that would be better.” – 8
4-7	58.3%	“I just think that the way its prepared, it could be a little bit more appealing to the taste.” - 7
		“I think it could be improved at breakfast and in the afternoon...” - 7
		“I think you need more convenience maybe and maybe cheaper.” - 5
		“... you need better convenience and better price” - 6
		“It just depends on where you are and what choices you can do.” - 7
		“... because of convenience. It’s just not convenient. The places that are convenience are the unhealthy ones. The places that offer the healthy options are not convenient.” - 5
“My issue is with the availability of food for the staff over the summer and Aramark not being here to do that in any way, shape, or form... But you know, there is virtually no food over the summer.” – 7		
1-3	0%	n/a



SEM was used as the framework for the questions during the focus groups and was then used to categorize responses into the four levels of SEM. The four levels of the SEM are Individual, Interpersonal, Institutional, and Societal/Environmental. The four levels of SEM, in addition to the staff responses from the focus groups, were then used to create a thematic codebook discussing Enablers to Healthy Eating, Barriers to Healthy Eating, and Proposed Solutions. The following consists of the most relevant quotes for each of the SEM levels and their thematic subcategories.

### **3.1 Enablers to Healthy Eating**

#### ***Individual***

##### **Will to Make Healthy Choices**

Staff members reported that a personal drive and desire to make healthy choices played a large role in influencing their food and beverage choices on campus. This included, but was not limited to, personal goals, health concerns, and guilt:

*“The reason I eat healthy is that I am trying to lose weight and that is one of my goals is to eat healthier but not be hungry, and to lose weight.”*

*“As I approach fifty, I am more conscious of what I put in my body.”*

#### ***Institutional***

##### **Advertisement**

Staff members reported feeling influenced when healthy food options on campus were well advertised and advertised in common, convenient places.

*“To me [the healthier options] stand out more than the less healthy options because they try to point you in that direction with the signage.”*

### **Campus Wellness Programs**

Participants explained the helpfulness and usefulness of the wellness programs that are available and offer them health information:

*“[RebelWell’s] social media presence is going to continue to push people to make more healthy, conscious decisions...”*

*“[Wellness Champions are] a really big deal for each office. It really does help.”*

### **Incentives**

Some departments and programs offer rewards for making healthy choices on campus, which focus group participants really enjoyed:

*“I know for the [department redacted], we have a wellness challenge and that incorporates [healthy eating], and the winner of it gets a parking space.”*

*“If you get participating in a month-long challenge, then you get a discount at certain places or you get two free vending passes... I mean I came here because I was interested in this but I’m not gonna turn down the Blue Apron [gift card], you know?”*

*“Some sort of monetary incentive to encourage people to eat well... some kind of reward.”*

### **Nutritional Information Available**

The nutritional information that is available for the food options on campus is helpful when it is accurate.

*“I know at Rebel Market, in the salad bar area, they have a larger list that has all the individual things you can put in a salad with the typical calories.”*

### **Presentation of Foods**

When the healthy food options are positively presented and look appealing, staff feel encouraged to choose those choices over the unhealthier options:

*“With some of the menus, they’re colorful in their choices, they are always hot, fresh, it’s not stale when you, when I, go to the Rebel Market to get the food.”*

*“I like the way 1810 does it. It is a great display and everything looks fresh.”*

*“[The Grill at 1810’s] salad bar is also ten times better [than the Rebel Market], as far as it’s a beautifully displayed salad bar. The fruit is wonderful. Their options are pretty good.”*

### **Taste of Food**

Staff reported that ‘taste’ plays a role in the decision to choose a healthier food option:

*“I do like the fact that food on campus is tasty.”*

*“Well the fruit [at 1810] is delicious. It’s fresh and it’s really good.”*

## **3.2 Barriers to Healthy Eating**

### ***Individual***

#### **Awareness of Options**

Staff members felt as though they lacked awareness of the healthy options and variety of foods on campus.

*“I think the options are there for the most part, I just don’t think they [people] them.”*

#### **Time and Convenience**

Staff members explained how healthy food options are not located in convenient areas. Thus, they opt for ‘fast foods’ due to time constraints rather than healthier foods. Also, they feel as though locations that may be convenient for time constraints are not open at

convenient, non-peak, hours year round due to staff meal time schedules varying from those of faculty members and students:

*“Sometimes the lines are so atrocious that I will not wait in them.”*

*“I would go to Rebel Market way before I go to the Student Union because it is closer.”*

*“Again, it’s convenient. It goes back to convenience. That’s what we are looking for: convenience.”*

*“I would like there to be, if possible, options that are, hot and cold options that are available on staff schedules.”*

*“So we go to Raising Canes because that’s the closest place for us to go where our offices are and then we both end up eating this unhealthy food...”*

*“By the time you get out of the office to the place, you really only have maybe thirty minutes, thirty-five minutes if you’re lucky, and you have to factor in the time to get back.”*

*“You are going to be waiting in line if it’s between 11:30 and 1.”*

*“Over the summer, staff doesn’t count. You know, they don’t really care about us, I think, because they close everything off... there are still 3500 University employees that need to eat.”*

*“The places that are convenient are the unhealthy ones. The places that offer the healthy options are not convenient.”*

## ***Institutional***

### **Availability of Foods**

Staff members report a lack of healthy foods available on campus:

*“I tend to be picky, so sometimes, it’s salad or it’s something not as healthy.”*

*“I bring my lunch most of the time because at the Jackson Avenue Center there’s the vending machine or there’s the bookstore, which has a lot of processed, over processed microwave stuff...”*

*“I am at the JAC so I am off campus, basically, and you got no options there for food at all.”*

*“I would eat on campus in the summer more often if there was availability of food and the menu was accurate.”*

### **Lack of Healthy Vending**

There was a specific emphasis on vending machines only including options that are prepackaged snacks that are high in solid fats and added sugars.

*“Our vending machine, we’re at the Jackson Avenue Center, and it’s not healthy at all. I mean, I’ll be honest, its chips or its cake or its chocolate...”*

*“The two [healthy vending machines] that I have seen only have like three options.” Or maybe one of them had only two options.”*

*“Yeah, we need a few more healthy options in that machine because I zero right in on those darn Peanut M&Ms.”*

*“I’ve never seen a healthy option in a snack machine in this, on campus, but maybe I’m not looking in the right places.”*

### **Campus Wellness Programs**

Staff members emphasized that although campus wellness programs can be helpful, the University’s wellness program focuses more on physical activity than food-related wellness. They stressed how although there may be nutritional services available, they are not widely known about and thus not taken advantage of:

*“I think it’d be great if RebelWell did a food challenge instead of always just fitness challenges.”*

*“It's been food stuff in [RebelWell] but a lot of the focus has been fitness.”*

*“I've heard we have a nutritionist to us but I don't know what to expect, I don't have a name, I don't know who to call.”*

### **Nutritional Information Available**

Although there is nutritional information for the food offerings available to the public, it has been found by the staff members to be inaccurate, whether the online menu does not match what is available in person or the actual portion does not match the portion for the nutrition facts:

*“I would eat on campus in the summer more often if there was availability of food and the menu was accurate.”*

*“I don't know that I am always getting the amount that is posted as the typical serving size... I mean a lot of the time I think I am getting more than that.”*

*“I count salt more than anything and that is not listed on the posted stuff.”*

*“I think, one, the informational display is lacking sometimes... it's either a card on a sneeze guard or the digital displays that are not updated at all.”*

*“I went to the commons at least a half a dozen times of the summer and every time that menu was wrong.”*

*“The nutritional information might or might not be accurate, I don't know. But, the actual menu is wrong.”*

### **Presentation of Foods**

The staff members described the barrier of food presentation as two-fold. The first reason being that the healthier options may not be appetizing and appealing to eat. The second is that the unhealthier options are more presented more apparently and prominently than the healthier options:

*“I have one complaint with the Rebel Market, and 1810, you can like, make your own salad and at Rebel Market, you’ll ask for lettuce and they’ll give you like a scoop, and it’s not the biggest, happiest salad you ever get.”*

*“It’s not appealing.”*

### **Price**

Participants reported the idea that healthier foods on campus are more largely more expensive than the unhealthy foods, which sways them away from making better choices:

*“Cost would be a factor if it were too high.”*

*“A lot more people would be grabbing those granola bars if there were half the cost of a candy bar.”*

*“Freshii has lots of great healthy options... you can’t get out of there for less than twelve or fourteen bucks... Which is pricey compared to if, you go to Chick-fil-a... so there is price different.”*

*“There is an upcharge for dinner [at 1810].”*

*“And why is it that healthy food has to be more expensive?”*

*“The expense keeps me from going and making that choice.”*

### ***Societal/Environmental***

#### **Location of the University**

Staff members explained that the location of the school, which is in the deep south, provides a culture in which there is an expectation of ‘traditional southern foods and taste’ which are unhealthy by nature:

*“I’m from the south and vegetables are cooked a certain way with a certain thing. I would like for it to taste that way, but without the unhealthy prep.”*

*“That’s the problem we have. That’s an American problem. We’ve got – we live in a rural area where you can grow all kinds of stuff and yet we pay so much for it.”*

*“So, it’s a lot more to for, I think, with people who are working at the University who have lived a fried life for so long.”*

### **3.3 Proposed Solutions and Interventions**

#### ***Individual***

##### **Education**

Staff members would like to see more available nutritional education and if resources of this kind are currently available, to make them more widely known about and readily available to the population:

*“But also, maybe some healthy facts. Fact sheets... you can look at while you are eating.”*

*“Maybe having some people to come in and talk about healthy eating...”*

*“I think something that would help... is to hire or work with a nutritionist... so I guess that’s one of the things I was curious about and came today is are those services available on campus to staff?”*

*“Help me make good decisions. Don’t make me rely on myself. I’m bad at it!”*

#### ***Institutional***

##### **Fresher Foods**

Staff members request there to be fresher produce options and food not to be left sitting out for long periods of time – rather entrees be made in smaller batches so they are fresher upon consumption:



*“But to me, fresh vegetables and fresh fruit and some whole grains would be what I would want, would be my choice.”*

*“There is not anything you can pick up fresh to eat.”*

### **More Healthy Options**

There was a consensus among the participants that the University needs to provide an increased amount of healthy options and locations and a decrease in those that are unhealthy. They find that the opposite is the current situation:

*“I would say, the foods that are provided, I think they’re general, but you do have people on campus who are you know, diabetic and other things, you know they’re, you know, weight conscious or something of that nature and maybe having some meals prepared for them with that in mind so that all the burden is not on the person.”*

*“There is not a lot of fruit options at Rebel Market.”*

*“It would help if there were expanded options.”*

*“Give me something healthy, give me something that sounds good, that looks good.”*

### **More Locations**

The staff members requested additional dining halls and POD locations, especially off campus (e.g. at the Jackson Avenue Center).

*“So you know I would love it if we had something over there (at the JAC) that offered some kind of healthy options. Cause really we have nothing over there.”*

### **Procurement**

Staff members suggested several options for more convenient procurement of healthy food items on campus

### **Grab and go options**

There is a need for healthier ready-to-eat options on campus that are easily portable and accessible:

*“Gerard doesn’t get a lot of student traffic, so you could pack a vending machine in there with staff-related foods.”*

*“I want a snack and I want a healthy snack.”*

*“Even if the JAC had a POD that had some things pre-prepared like the other PODs do that you could pick up...”*

### **Campus Delivery**

The suggestion of a campus delivery system for a small fee was brought up by the staff members: *“Delivery would be awesome!”*

*“Well, Lenoir did that one year... They did a healthy lunch delivery. Kind of a sack lunch with a bottle of water and a healthy sandwich, turkey, whatever. It was awesome!”*

## **CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to identify the collective opinions and perceptions of staff members on the healthy eating environment at a large southern university campus in the Deep South of the United States. Participants voiced solutions and proposed interventions to the issues they recognized on campus in three focus groups. This study fills a critical gap in the current research, by focusing specifically on staff perceptions. Through policies that improve the healthy food environment on campus, a positive and healthy work environment may impact campus obesity rates and overall health status.

Using the SEM, four domains (Individual, Interpersonal, Institutional, and Societal/ Environmental) were used to categorize enablers and barriers to healthy eating on campus, as well as proposed solutions and interventions. This research is important because a better understanding of what staff members truly want and expect is necessary to design appropriate policies and programs. If the university can instate initiatives that employees want, this provides opportunities to have healthier and happier employees, and could possibly lead to fewer sick days and higher productivity levels at the university.

### **4.1 Enablers to Healthy Eating**

When asked what motivates staff to make healthy food and beverage choices on campus, most commented on a personal will to make healthy choices. In the SEM, this is categorized as an individual enabler. The reasons given by staff members were concurrent with the Health Belief Model (HBM) which hypothesizes that health-related actions, including food choice, are dependent upon pre-existing motivation, perceived

threat of poor health outcomes, and that the choice made reduces said threat.

(Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988) Although this seemed to be the primary driver for positive healthy choices, other enablers were institutional. Presentation of food and how options were advertised and displayed played a large role in the day to day decision making process. If the food options looked appealing and were located in prominent areas, the general consensus was that the staff members would be more willing to choose those options. However, the same was said for the unhealthy options: whichever is more prominent, that is what they are drawn towards. This is supported by current research: ‘nudging’ is used to help consumers make choices, so when healthy choices are more prominent, they would be selected more often (van Kleef, Otten, & van Trijp, 2012). The focus group discussion revealed that if personal willpower is not a driving factor, healthy options need to be better marketed and clearly advertised compared to unhealthy options.

#### **4.2 Barriers to Healthy Eating**

Staff members were also asked about what prevents them from making healthy choices on campus. Lack of convenience was the most common barrier noted. Staff members felt that healthy options were not convenient for them and their personal time restraints, but the opposite was true for the unhealthy options. It is a lot easier and more convenient to eat something unhealthy and staff members feel they have to go out of their way to find a healthy options. Staff members want help making healthy choices. The university could make the unhealthy foods less accessible, in order to make healthy options the easy choice (Ashe, Graff, & Spector, 2011).

There was also a large emphasis on a lack healthy vending. Staff are on very different and more restrictive schedules when compared to students and faculty members.

They often have a short window in which they can procure food, and due to convenience factors that were just mentioned, they rely on quick options like vending, where most, if not all, available items are extremely unhealthy by their standards. Although healthy vending initiatives have been made on campus as of Fall 2018, staff members feel as though these initiatives are more targeted towards students, rather than employees and that the current options are not up to expectations (RebelWell, 2017b) (L. Lambert, personal communication, March 27, 2019).

Additionally, price plays a large role in food-related decisions. Staff were adamant in the idea that healthier foods cost more, thus dissuading them from choosing these options. They discussed how this reflected in their experience with cafeterias, restaurants, and vending machines (when healthy items are available). This is congruent with a study conducted by Harvard researchers that found that purchasing healthier foods costs a consumer, on average \$1.54 more than when purchasing less nutrient-dense foods (Rao, Afshin, Singh, & Mozaffarian, 2013). Equally important was the lack of accurate nutritional information available. Staff members complained of not truly knowing if what they perceived to be healthy actually was due to the constant occurrence of inaccurate or incomplete nutritional information. Another issue that was only briefly discussed, is the geographical location of the University and the kind of food culture that comes with being the Deep South – this should be further explored in future studies.

### **4.3 Proposed Solutions and Interventions**

Although a majority of each discussion focused more on barriers to healthy eating on campus when compared to enablers, staff members were open to suggesting possible solutions, most of which could be implemented by the institution through policy changes

and program additions. The general consensus is that staff want more healthy options overall. Staff specifically suggested more locations, more ‘grab and go’ options, and fresher options through locally sourced foods. In addition to these solutions, staff often mentioned the need for more nutrition education to help them know how to make healthier choices. Staff members were pleased with the campus wellness program, RebelWell, but urged for the program to provide more services, with a focus on nutrition rather than physical activity. By comparing the RebelWell initiative to other worksite wellness programs that incorporate nutrition, this desire could be met. Staff also mentioned that incentives to eat healthier and participate in workplace wellness encourage them to be healthier. Previous work has shown that incentives can help individuals make positive eating choices (Chan, Kwortnik, & Wansink, 2017). Additionally, the ideas of different methods of procurement, such as ‘grab and go,’ à la carte, and delivery, were also mentioned. It is evident that staff members are open and ready for a change in the campus food environment. Although the staff members sometimes joked about their ‘biggest dreams’ on campus, most ideas seem feasible given the University’s current infrastructure.

#### **4.4 Limitations**

Although the results of this study fill an important gap in current research in the field, there are more unexplored ideas that need to be addressed and limitations in this study. Firstly, it should have been addressed on how the participant was raised when it comes to food consumption because food preferences are shaped by many factors including regional differences, family health levels, and personal relationships with food. Questions in this study primarily produced more institutional enablers/barriers/solutions

rather than individual reasons for choosing certain foods. Additionally, although participants were asked for solution suggestions and were seemingly willing to support healthy eating on campus, it is unknown if they would actually use those options if they were readily available.

Due to the method of recruiting where interested faculty were able to sign up for time slots, the only demographics data that was collected was gender. Furthermore, the anonymity of this study inhibits the researcher to disclose known demographics of the staff members, such as department and location of their workspace in relation to the food locations on campus. Also, since the focus group questions were open ended and broad it was difficult to gather a full and complete indication on staff perceptions, this leaves much interpretation. Also, because multiple people were involved in the discussions, it is possible one person was swayed to answer a certain way because of another person's answers. For example, during the ranking question, participants answers would piggyback off of the previous answers – if one person 'low-balled' their ranking, then the others would too, and vice versa – allowing for personal biases to unintentionally affect another's answer.

This study focuses on one university that is very regionally specific: the Deep South which has a completely different food culture than that of other regions in the United States. Furthermore, it does not reflect that of other universities across the globe – this study cannot be generalized. Also, the research was limited due to the lack of interest of the University staff, which resulted in a very small sample size. The study only consisted of full-time, main-campus staff opinions, those of faculty members and other employees, such as students or part time workers, were not considered. This study was

consistent with the literature and observations in that more women participated than their male counterparts (M. A. Jurss, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

#### **4.5 Future Research**

This study is important to the field of research because most other research on universities focus the attention towards students, rather than employees. Additionally, research that focuses on employees does not specifically narrow down to University employees, specifically staff. Also multiple studies in different areas of the nation and in universities of different sizes to fully grasp what university staff want and expect their workplace to offer in terms of food choices may be beneficial to examine the difference between perceptions of males and females, since this study mostly consisted of females, which may have skewed the data. It may be beneficial to conduct focus group discussions consisting of either solely men or solely women and compare them, to line up with the research that states men and women view nutrition and health differently (Beardsworth et al., 2002). In addition to these suggestions, future research should evaluate the efficacy of work environment changes to create sustainable change in eating behaviors outside of work. To further prevent the possibility of participant answers being swayed by another's answers, especially with ranking questions, it is suggested to have participants write down their rankings before publicly discussing them. This would create a more objective campus evaluation.

#### **4.6 Policy Questions**

Many of the mentioned enablers and barriers were institutional concerns, which shows promise for the efficacy of the University in implementing policies to provide a healthier campus eating environment for staff. In order to get a better grasp on what kind



of policies would actually be feasible, it is important to compare policies and programs at similar universities in the southeast region improve employee health. Knowing this information will allow for a better understanding of how to adapt current policies and to integrate new ones that were suggested by the staff members in these focus groups.

Four schools in the surrounding areas of The University of Mississippi were looked at in order to acquire a better understanding about what is feasible in the Deep South. The University of Alabama's wellness program for faculty and staff is called 'WellBama.' It is a personalized program that consists of free health screenings, health coaching, and other resources with a financial incentive of two \$50 gift cards – one at the beginning of the program after the health screening and one after completion of the program. Progress is self-reported and wellness classes and exercise programs are available to participants (The University of Alabama, 2019). Auburn University has 'Healthy Tigers' which, with the completion of a yearly wellness screening, provides an opportunity to earn an insurance premium discount. The program also provides online courses on nutrition, fitness, and overall wellbeing (Auburn University, 2019). Mississippi State University has a program called 'MSU on the Move' which is in partnership with the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation. This program provides fitness, nutrition and other health resources online (Mississippi State University, 2015). The entire program is for students, faculty and staff and allows them to become 'Healthy Heroes' through competitions. Additionally in 2018, an 8-week nutrition and exercise program, called 'Healthy Dawgs Nutrition and Exercise Program,' was implemented which was incentivized (Team, 2018). Louisiana State University offers an

online healthy living community for employees using the university insurance program. This includes access to free diet and fitness programs (Louisiana State University, 2019).

In comparison to all of these programs, RebelWell would be most similar to that of Mississippi State's, but could expand programming to include health screenings, better incentives, more nutrition education, and nutrition-focused competitions. Improving, or even just adding to, the current campus wellness program would be one way that University could better educate and monitor staff members and their choices towards a healthier lifestyle. It would also make it easier for staff members to try to be healthier.

Another feasible policy could be to expand the Healthy Vending Initiative on campus that has already been implemented at some of the residence halls on campus. Expanding this to office and academic

buildings would increase availability of healthy options. As of 2019, RebelWell has placed healthy vending options in 10 buildings on campus, as well as in the JAC off campus. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of what is considered to be healthy vending at the University of Mississippi under RebelWell (RebelWell, 2017b). However, as stated by staff members in these focus groups, the options seem to be easily overlooked or the heightened price is a deterrent. The reality of this initiative could do more to meet the

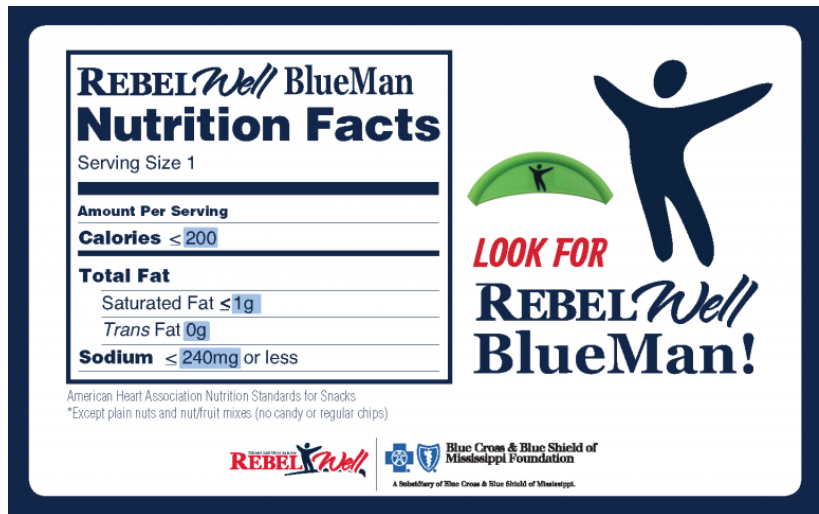


FIGURE 2: HEALTHY VENDING INITIATIVE ("Healthy Vending Options," 2017)

expectations and demands: suggestions include having more than just a couple of options in each machine, as well as specifically adding fruit and unsalted nuts into the machines. The program could also be expanded through additional locations, especially locations that only contain office buildings with low student traffic.

In addition to expanding the Healthy Vending Initiative on campus, another easy intervention could be adjusting the posted nutrition facts. Online postings should be monitored to match what is actually available in cafeteria options, such as the Rebel Market and Grill at 1810, each day. Also, portions could better match postings or vice versa with postings reflecting actual portion sizes provided, since nothing is self-serve. Another suggestion from staff members is to include all content information, since some items seem to only have select nutrient information available.

Staff members often mentioned that it seems like the healthy food options are inconvenient, while the unhealthy food options are convenient. To combat this issue, a more long term approach could be to aim towards having one or more healthy options offered at every location or even phasing out unhealthy foods – although that may not be an entirely attainable option, especially within the school's geographical region. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) has a program called Y.E.S, which stands for You're Eating Smarter program, in which their dining services designs menus that provide healthy options in all of the campus' 11 dining halls (Virginia Tech, 2019). All locations offer whole grain options, a variety of fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, and protein options, as well as limit the use of *trans*-fat. The program even includes grab and go options that are less than 600 calories with less than 30% from total

fat, and contain no trans-fat. A similar initiative at the University of Mississippi could be feasible, as well.

## CONCLUSION

Staff members at a large, rural university in the Deep South of the United States expect more from the food and beverage choices on campus. Through multiple focus groups, it has been observed that based on staff perceptions of the definition of the term ‘healthy food,’ the main campus location does not meet current desires. Using the Social Ecological Model for Food and Physical Activity Decisions, enablers and barriers to healthy eating on campus, as well as proposed solutions, were categorized in to one of four domains: societal/environmental, institutional, interpersonal, and finally individual. The main driving factor for making healthy decisions was personal desire; however staff members reported that the institution should provide healthier options and make the decision making process easier. Through slight policy changes and new initiatives, it is possible for this university to alter the food `environment to promote healthy eating opportunities on campus. These changes have the opportunity to lead to better overall campus health, which then in turn lead to more productivity amongst workers, fewer health-related absences, and fewer sick days. Staff members feel that they need a little more help in making healthy decisions than what the university currently offers. One staff member said is best: *“Help me make good decisions. Don’t make me rely on myself, I’m bad at it!”*

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Staff Recruitment Emails

#### Healthy Eating Opportunities for University Staff Focus Group

Thank you for your interest in the Healthy Eating Opportunities for University Faculty and Staff focus group! Please click on the survey link and choose a time you are available. You will be sent a reminder email prior to the date you choose. If you become unavailable for the time you chose, please let me know at your earliest convenience.

Feel free to bring your lunch to the focus group as they will be held during the lunch hour. After completion of the focus group you will receive a Blue Apron meal box gift card.

I greatly appreciate your participation and look forward to meeting you. Please let me know if you have any questions.

[http://uofmississippi.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eaoOypbl48uuCO1](http://uofmississippi.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eaoOypbl48uuCO1)

All the best,  
Rebecca Miller  
[rgmiller@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:rgmiller@go.olemiss.edu)

*FIGURE 3 UMTODAY STAFF RECRUITMENT EMAIL*



## APPENDIX B: Preliminary Interest Survey

### Consent Form

Thank you for participating in this study to evaluate eating habits, dietary intake and food purchase behaviors of SJSU faculty and staff, conducted by nutrition graduate student Rebecca Rubinstein and nutrition professor Dr. Marjorie Freedman as part of the Healthy Campus: SJSU Initiative.

Results of the study may be used to improve existing food venues and food availability on campus.

To participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a 10-minute survey. As an incentive, all faculty and staff who complete the survey by March 6 will be entered in a drawing to win a \$25.00 "Gold Points" VIP gift card, which can be used at campus eateries and the Bookstore. No other compensation will be given for completing this survey.

All information gathered will be completely confidential. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included.

Questions about this research may be addressed to Rebecca Rubinstein at rebeccarubinstein@yahoo.com or (650) 279-8510 or Professor Freedman at marjorie.freedman@sjsu.edu. Complaints may be presented to Dr. McProud, Department of Nutrition, Food Science and Packaging, at (408) 924-3100. Questions about your rights as a research subject, or about a research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., AVP, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.

No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled at SJSU, will be lost or jeopardized if you do not choose to participate in the study. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study, and you have the right to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. You are also free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with SJSU or with any other participating institutions.

If you agree to participate in this research, please click NEXT to continue, which will confirm that you have been fully informed of your rights and are voluntarily agreeing to participate.

You can take as long as you'd like to answer each question, but the survey must be completed in one sitting. We very much appreciate your taking the time to fill out this important survey.

#### 1. Are you:

- Administration (not affiliated with a particular college)
- Administration (affiliated with a particular college)
- SJSU full time faculty
- SJSU part time faculty (or instructor)
- SJSU full time staff
- SJSU part time staff (non-student)
- SJSU part time staff (also attending school at SJSU)
- Auxiliary staff at SJSU (Foundation, Student Union, etc)

Other (please specify)

College

**2. What college are you affiliated with?**

- CASA
- Business
- Education
- Engineering
- Humanities and Arts
- Science
- Social Sciences
- non-academic

Other (please specify)

**days on campus**

**3. On average, when school is in session, what days of the week are you on campus at SJSU? (Please choose all that apply)**

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday

**4. Please rate the following on a scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree":**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Maintaining my health is important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What I eat affects my health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What I weigh affects my health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am in good health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the food choices on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**5. The next set of questions will ask you about your typical eating habits:**

**Please rate the following statements based on how important each is to you:**

	Not at all important		Important		Extremely important
What I eat is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating 3 meals a day is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating breakfast is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating fruits and vegetables is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating whole grains is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating dairy foods is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My body weight is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drinking water is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drinking carbonated soft drinks (soda) is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drinking caffeinated beverages is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snacking between meals is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**6. How would you best describe your current body weight**

- Underweight
- Just right
- Overweight



**7. How many times in the past week did you eat breakfast?**

**Breakfast is defined as eating any calorie containing food or beverage consumed as the morning meal. Water, black coffee or black tea does not count as breakfast**

**8. Thinking of your breakfast eating habits ON JUST THE DAYS YOU ARE AT SJSU, how many times a week do you typically:**

	Times per week
Skip breakfast	<input type="text"/>
Eat breakfast at home or during your commute	<input type="text"/>
Bring your breakfast to campus from home	<input type="text"/>
Purchase your breakfast on campus (e.g. at Burger King, Jamba Juice, Subway, Market Café, Student Union, Food Court, On Fourth Cafe, Sbarros, Jazzland Café, hot dog stand)	<input type="text"/>
Eat breakfast at an on-campus meeting or event	<input type="text"/>
Purchase your breakfast from a vending machine	<input type="text"/>
Eat breakfast at the campus Dining Commons	<input type="text"/>
Eat breakfast off campus at a restaurant/cafe/fast food establishment	<input type="text"/>
Eat what is provided in your department (e.g. muffin, bagel)	<input type="text"/>

**9. How many times in the past week did you eat lunch?**

**10. Thinking of your lunchtime eating habits ON JUST THE DAYS YOU ARE AT SJSU, how many times a week do you typically:**

	Times per week
Skip lunch	<input type="text"/>
Go home for lunch	<input type="text"/>
Bring your lunch to campus from home	<input type="text"/>
Eat lunch at an on-campus meeting or event	<input type="text"/>
Purchase your lunch on campus (e.g. at Burger King, Jamba Juice, Subway, Market Café, Student Union, Food Court, On Fourth Cafe, Sbarros, Jazzland Café, hot dog stand)	<input type="text"/>
Purchase your lunch from a vending machine	<input type="text"/>
Eat lunch at the campus Dining Commons	<input type="text"/>
Eat lunch off campus at a restaurant/cafe/fast food establishment	<input type="text"/>

**11. How many times in the past week did you eat dinner?**

**12. Thinking of your dinnertime eating habits on JUST THE DAYS YOU ARE AT SJSU, how many times a week do you typically:**

	Times per week
Skip dinner	<input type="text"/>
Eat dinner at home	<input type="text"/>
Bring your dinner to campus from home	<input type="text"/>
Purchase your dinner on campus at Burger King, Jamb Juice, Subway, Market Café, Student Union Food Court, On Fourth Cafe, Sbarros, Jazzland Café, hot dog stand	<input type="text"/>
Purchase your dinner from a vending machine	<input type="text"/>
Eat dinner at the campus Dining Commons	<input type="text"/>
Eat dinner off campus at a restaurant/cafe/fast food establishment	<input type="text"/>

**13. In the following questions, SNACKS are defined as any food or beverage consumed between meals. Snacks may include soda, coffee, lattes, tea, juice, or any food.**

**Thinking of your snacking habits on JUST THE DAYS YOU ARE AT SJSU, do you snack?**

Yes

No

**14. Do you: (check all that apply)**

Purchase a snack from a vending machine

Purchase a snack from an on campus dining facility (e.g. Burger King, Jamba Juice, Subway, Market Café, Student Union Food Court, On Fourth Cafe, Sbarros, Jazzland Café, hot dog stand)

Snack on food or beverage provided by your colleagues or department

Snack on food you brought from home

Go off campus to get a snack

**15. Would you purchase food on campus more frequently if: (check all that apply)**

There were more places to purchase food on campus

There were shorter lines at on-campus eateries during peak eating times

There were specific faculty/staff dining facilities

You had more time

There were different food choices (e.g. more vegetarian, low fat, ethnic foods)

The eateries were quieter

The food choices were more economical

There was a Farmers' Market on campus

You were here at different times of the day or on campus more hours

There was a really nice place to eat

None of the above (e.g. you really are not interested in purchasing food on campus)

Other (please specify)

**16. Please rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following:**

	Not at all satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
The availability of fruits and vegetables on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The availability of whole grains on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The availability of drinking water on campus (bottle, water fountains, places to refill bottles)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The cost of food on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The availability of dining options on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. Please rate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements:**

	Not applicable	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The type of food offered on campus influences what I eat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The type of food offered in the neighborhood around campus influences what I eat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The food my colleagues are eating influences what I eat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The food my spouse/partner eats influences what I eat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The food my children eat influences what I eat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The food my friends eat influences what I eat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident that I know how to make healthy food choices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**18. The next set of questions asks about your intake of specific foods.**

**Thinking about FRUIT, and using the following serving sizes as a guide, How many servings of fruit do you typically consume EACH DAY?**

**Each of the following is ONE serving, so ADD up all you eat to get your daily intake**

**1 medium piece of fruit (e.g. apple, orange, banana, peach, plum, mango) OR**

**1/2 cup fresh fruit (e.g. watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberries, pineapple, blueberries) OR**

**1/2 cup (4 oz) 100% fruit juice OR**

**1 cup (8 oz) Jamba juice -- so one 16 oz cup is 2 servings – OR**

**1/2 cup frozen or canned fruit OR**

**1/4 cup dried fruit**

**19. Thinking about VEGETABLES (excluding all potato products) and using the following serving sizes as a guide, how many servings of vegetables do you typically consume EACH DAY?**

**Each of the following is ONE serving, so ADD up all you eat to get your daily intake:**

**1/2 cup raw vegetables (carrots, tomatoes, zucchini, mushrooms, corn, peas, broccoli) OR**

**1/2 cup cooked vegetables in soup, stew, stir fry or other vegetable dishes OR**

**1/2 cup vegetable juice OR**

**1 cup salad greens (lettuce, spinach)**

**20. Thinking about GRAINS and using the following serving sizes as a guide, How many servings of grains do you typically consume EACH DAY?**

**Each of the following is ONE serving, so ADD up all you eat to get your daily intake:**

**1 slice of bread OR**

**1/4 of a large bagel OR**

**1 small tortilla OR**

**1/2 of a hamburger bun OR**

**1 cup of dry cereal OR**

**1/2 cup of cooked rice/pasta/noodles/or cereal OR**

**3 cups of popped popcorn**

**21. Thinking about MILK and DAIRY PRODUCTS, and using the following serving sizes as a guide, How many servings of milk and dairy products do you typically consume EACH DAY?**

Each of the following is ONE serving, so ADD up all you eat to get your daily intake:

- 1 cup (8 oz) milk or yogurt OR
- 1.5 oz cheese (cheddar, swiss, jack) OR
- 2 oz processed cheese (cheese spread, American cheese) OR
- 1 cup of ice cream or frozen yogurt OR
- 1 cup pudding made with milk

**22. How many sugar-sweetened (NON-DIET) sodas/energy drinks do you drink each day? (cans or bottles)**

**23. You're almost finished!! The next few questions will ask about your household food purchasing behaviors.**

**Who does the food shopping in your household? (check all that apply)**

- I do
- My spouse
- Another adult

Other (please specify)

**24. How many times per week do you or does someone in your household shop for fresh produce?**



**25. Please identify the place(s) where you (or someone from your household) normally obtain(s) FRESH fruits and vegetables: (check all that apply)**

- Grocery store: large chain (Safeway, Nob Hill, PW, Lunardi's, Save Mart, Lucky)
- Discount super store (eg. Costco, Walmart, Sam's Club)
- Local supermarket: not a large chain (e.g. Whole Foods, Mollie Stone's)
- Food delivery service (safeway.com)
- Local produce stand
- Farmers' market
- CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)
- Own garden

Other (please specify)

**26. How important is each of the following when choosing which fruits and vegetables to buy?**

	Not at all important		Important		Extremely important
How the food tastes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How the food looks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That the food is fresh (as opposed to canned or frozen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How the food was grown (organic or pesticide-free vs. using pesticides)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Where the food was grown (local farm vs. not locally grown)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your relationship with the grower	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How much the food costs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convenience: that the food is already cut and washed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your ability to cook the food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your knowledge about the health benefits of the food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**27. How important is each of the following in your overall food purchase decisions?**

	Not at all important		Important		Extremely important
Purchasing food that does not waste resources or increase global warming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoiding food that is highly processed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoiding foods that involve inhumane treatment of animals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How food is packaged	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Where food is grown (local vs. far away)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Whether the food is organic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is there something else that influences your food purchasing?	<input type="text"/>				

**Demographic Information**

**28. What is your age?**

**29. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**30. What is your marital status?**

- Single
- Married/living with partner
- Divorced/widowed

**31. How many children do you have?**

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

**32. How many of your children are living at home?**

**33. What is your height?**

Feet

Inches

**34. What is your weight?**

Pounds

**35. Are you currently on a diet to lose or maintain your weight?**

- Yes
- No

**36. What type of diet are you currently on? (choose all that apply)**

- I count calories
- I try to limit carbs
- I try to limit fat intake
- I am on Weight Watchers
- I try to exercise more

**37. Have you been on a diet within the past year?**

- No
- Yes, I have been on one or more diets in the past year

**38. How far do you live from campus?**

- I live on campus
- Within 1 mile
- Within 5-10 miles
- About 10-20 miles
- More than 20 miles

**live on campus**

**39. Do you cook or prepare any food in your on campus apartment?**

- No I never cook at home
- I make some meals at home
- I make all my meals at home

**why not cook?**

**40. Why don't you cook in your apartment? (mark all that apply)**

- Don't know how to cook
- Don't like to cook
- Don't have enough time to cook
- It is hard to get groceries near campus
- Don't have the necessary equipment (pots/pans/appliances etc)
- Prefer ready to eat foods and those that don't require cooking
- I prefer ordering take-out
- I have a Spartan Dining plan

**41. Which statement below BEST describes your cooking skill level?**

- I don't know how to cook at all
- I don't cook but I do heat up foods in the microwave
- I am able to make a few foods as long as the instructions on the box are very clear
- I am able to make a few simple foods following a recipe
- I am comfortable making most foods as long as I have a recipe to follow
- I am comfortable making most foods and do not need to follow a recipe

**42. How many years of service do you have with the University (round to nearest year)?**

Years

**43. Which best describes your race or ethnicity?**

- African-American or other Black
- Asian, Asian-American, Asian Indian
- Hispanic/Latino
- White, Caucasian
- Filipino

Other (please specify)

**44. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about food options or eateries on campus?**



## Appendix C: Focus Group Questions

### Healthy Eating opportunities and perceptions for university staff: **Focus Group Script**

Introduction: Hi everyone, my name is Becca Miller. I am a dietetics and nutrition undergraduate student working on my Honors College Thesis.

\*Introduce co-moderators

I first want to thank you all very much for taking the time to volunteer for my focus group. Before we get started, I am going to read over the audio recording release and have everyone sign it. We will be recording this session so we don't miss anything

\*read statement

We are going to make every effort to keep the discussion focused and within our time frame. If too much time is being spent on one question or topic, we may move the conversation along so we can cover all the questions. I'm going to quickly go over some ground rules

1. WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING
  - Let's hear from everyone!
  - One person at a time, please
  - I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while
2. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS
  - Everyone's ideas are valuable
  - It is important to hear all sides – positive and negative
  - We will not always agree, but we must show respect for one another

Like I mentioned earlier, we are recording this session and we do have a note taker. But we will only be using first names today and there will not be any names attached to the final manuscript.

**\*\*You may be assured complete confidentiality**

Great. Our topic of discussion today is healthy eating and food venues on campus from the perspectives of university staff. Let's start by introductions. Let's go around the table and please say your name, department, and your favorite place to eat on campus.

1. How would you describe a healthy meal?
  - a. **Go around the table again**
  - b. **Write answers on white board**
2. Do you try to make healthy food and beverage choices when eating on campus?
  - a. If so, why or why not?
3. What prevents you from making healthy choices on campus?
4. How are healthy items being presented and served?

- a. Are they served in an appealing manner?
  - b. Did you know that Aramark has nutrition information posted online?
5. Are there places you can go on campus to eat healthy?
  - a. Y: Where are they and what kind of items do you normally select?
  - b. N: What are you looking for?
  - c. N: "Vending" – We've tried some healthy vending initiatives in the residence halls. Do you think we need more options here?
6. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rank healthy food offerings on campus?
  - a. If not a 10, what needs to be changed to bring that ranking to a 10?
7. What would a healthy campus-eating environment look like to you?
8. What are some other things that we need to know about the healthy eating environment on campus?
9. How do you think we should encourage healthy eating on campus?

## Appendix D: Focus Group Transcripts

### **Focus Group 1: 5/1/18**

Mod 1: Okay so, um, we're gonna start make every effort to keep it the discussion focused and within our time frame. If too much is being spent on any one question or topic, we may move the conversation along so we can cover all the questions. Umm and we want you to do the talking so I want to hear from all of you, I mean there is just three of you but I do wanna hear from all of you, but one person at a time please, cause the recorder can only pick up so much. And if I haven't heard from you in a while, I may call on you. Umm, there are no right or wrong answers and we like value all of you opinions and ideas and its important to hear all sides of the story whether they are positive or negative, and although we may not always agree, we must show respect for one another. So, um, our topic of discussion today is Healthy Eating and Food Venues on Campus: Perspectives of University Staff. So, let's start by introductions, um, can you go around the table and say your name, your department, and your favorite place to eat on campus?

Mod 2: Double check the recorder.

Mod 1: [Checks recorder] It's goin'.

Mod 2: Okay

Mod 1:[Laughs] Sorry. [participants laugh] So your name, your department, um and like where you work and what your favorite place to eat is on campus, if you do eat on campus.

So I'm [name redacted].. [stops], oh I was gonna say my last name, I work at the [department redacted], umm and I guess my favorite place is uh Rebel Market.

Mod 1: Okay.

I'm [name redacted], uhh I work at the [department redacted], and my favorite place is the Rebel Market.

I'm [name redacted], I'm with [department redacted], umm my favorite place is 1810.

Mod 1: Okay awesome, so, the first question is 'how would you describe a healthy meal?' So we are just gonna go around the table and if you can just throw out some adjectives on how you describe a healthy meal. And I'm gonna write them on the board.

Hmm balanced [mutters].

Mod 1: balanced? [marker squeaks]

Fresh



Mod 1: Fresh

[Laughing]

Light

Vegetables

Mod 1: Anything else? ... If not, that's totally okay. [laughing] Okay so, the ..

Oh one more!

Mod 1: one more?

Gimme the question again.

Mod 1: Umm, how would you describe a healthy meal?

Tasty!

Mod 1: Tasty?

Yeah, there you go! [laughing]

Mod 1: Okay.. umm.. So, when eating on campus, do you try to make healthy food and beverage choices? If so, why, or if so—if not, why not?

I do, I do try to make um healthy eating choices and why is because um, as I approach fifty, [laughs] I am more conscious of what I put in my body, um I do like the fact that the food on campus is tasty, as well as I can always get options for vegetables and fruit and I can make it as healthy as I can, so..

Usually, yes but no, when I'm stressed. [laughing]

Mod 1: okay yeah.. [name redacted] do you have anything?

yeah, I try to eat healthy all the time, I'm working on my weight so it is important to me to be consistent all the time.

Mod 1: okay! Umm so what prevents you from making healthy eating choices on campus?

Time constraints, we have to get and grab something.

Well since I was chose the Rebel Market, uhh chicken and fish day! [laughing] kinda cause I like those foods and um I wanna try to get them as much as I can.

Mod 1: okay

Sometimes, options—I tend to be picky, so sometimes, it's salad or its something not as healthy, so..

Mod 1: Umm, on campus how are the healthy items being presented and served? Are they being served in an appealing manner, umm, and did you know that Aramark has nutritional information posted online?

Yes..

Mod 1: you knew that?

I did know that..

Mod 1: Okay. and when y'all see like the healthy options, are they being presented, like, and like do you want to eat them? Are they appealing to you?

Yes for the most part.

Mod 1: okay, umm can you describe that? Like how are they appealing? How are they doing it?

Umm, with some of the menus, they're colorful in their choices, they're always hot, fresh, it's not stale when you, when I, go to the Rebel Market to get the food, so.

Mod 1: Anyone else?

I think, you know, I go to the Rebel Market, also but when I can I go to 1810 and I think there's, there's always a pretty good variety, I think I like the variety there better, I guess. There's a lot more options, especially like smoothies and different things that I enjoy.

Mod 1: Good, do you have anything?

I have one complaint with Rebel Market, and 1810, you can like, make your own salad and at Rebel Market, you'll ask for like lettuce and they'll give you like a scoop [laughing] and it's not the biggest, happiest salad you could ever get [laughing].

Mod 1: umm, are there places you can go on campus to eat healthy? If yes, where are they and what kind of items do you normally select there? And if no, what are you looking for?

I think Freshii is a healthy option, although I have not tried it yet. But I at least do know where it is.

Mod 1: Okay, umm.. If you were to go there, do you know what they have?

Umm..

Mod 1: Like what would you select if you were—

I don't know what they have. I remember a conversation with someone who had something that looked really good and I asked where they got it from and they told me that's where they got it from. So I plan on visiting.. Umm..

Mod 1: okay.. umm does anyone else have anything—

I've never tried Freshii, yet.. the times that I thought to go down there, it wasn't open for one reason or another and.. and the other times, I forget. So that is something I should try.

Sometimes the lines there, and especially like, umm, the Union, places over there, like the lines are so atrocious that I will not wait on them. Umm so I think that at Freshii, I have eaten that, but there's times I have walked over there and the line is like twenty people long and [inaudible]..

Mod 1: okay! Are there any other places you can go on campus to eat healthy? [laughing]

Umm.. I think a lot of the places on campus, is just making those options when you get there. So you could take a burger and remove the bread part and uhh you know, fill it up with veggies and make it healthier than just eating the..

okay. Does anyone else want to elaborate—

I think so too. I think, I think she's right. Options. Umm, you can go into any place and you can lean towards this way or lean towards that way, and decide what you're gonna eat. But I think almost everywhere there are healthy options, but it's just choosing the healthy options all the time [laughs]

Mod 1: so if, I'm at these places that you think have the healthy options, what would you normally select?

I'm, I'm big into fruit, I like the fresh fruit, um, Rebel Market usually has some fruit but if you eat fruit every day, sometimes the choices—and it's probably what's in season—but umm, umm, I, I like myself fresh fruit and I like to have, also, cooked and fresh vegetable options. So, I like to know that it's not sitting in butter, or you know the choices are good choices.

Mod 1: Okay. [name redacted], do you have anything on that? On what you would select?

I try to select vegetables or salad, but umm, not like a dressing, a salad dressing, that's gonna be 800 calories..

[inaudible]... or covered in cheese. Um so, I think...

Mod 1: okay, um so.. So we've tried some healthy vending initiatives in the residence halls, have um, do you think we need more options here? Have you noticed them?

In the, umm?

Mod 1: in the residence halls?

Oh okay, I haven't.

Mod 1: so no?

I don't think so.

Mod 1: okay. But would you, or if we had healthy vending, healthy vending initiatives, if we moved them to like where y'all work, would you, like, like what do you think the options would be and would you use them?

Our vending machine, we're at the Jackson Avenue Center, and its not healthy at all [laughs]. I mean, I'll be honest, its chips or its cake or its chocolate, and there are no—I went by one and thought 'ohh I just need something' and I thought 'not very good choices'.

So I would love some healthy choices.

I think umm healthy option in vending would work well in the [department redacted] 'cause we have students there around the clock, and rather than eat something unhealthy in a vending machine, there should be a few extra, you know, healthy options for them to have.

Mod 1: okay

Same. Something that has, like protein or something in it to keep me full in the afternoon, cause our vending machine has like potato chips, honey buns [laughing].

Okay, anything else on that one? Okay, so the next question is: On a scale of one to ten, one being um the least healthy and ten being the most healthy, how would you rank the healthy food offerings on campus, and if not a ten, what needs to be changed to take that ranking to a ten?

From what I can see, I would give them about a seven or eight.

Mod 1: Okay.

Ten being the most healthy?

Mod 1: yes.

umm, to bring it better, um, I just think that the way its prepared, uhh it could be a little bit more uhh appealing to the taste. I know they cutting out a lot of different seasonings, especially for vegetables. I'm from the south and vegetables are cooked a certain way with a certain thing. I would like for it to taste that way, but without the umm unhealthy uhh prep. And I think more people would eat it, if it was, you know, more pleasing to the palate.

Mod 1: Okay. What would you rank it?

I would think about an eight, because I think you can find a healthy option—it may not always be what you want to eat, but um I think that, you know. I bring my—I'll be honest—I bring my lunch most of the time because at the Jackson Avenue Center there's the vending machine or there's the bookstore, which has a lot of processed, overprocessed microwave stuff and that's not really kind of following. So, uh you know I would love it if we had something over there that offered some kind of healthy option. Cause really, we have nothing over there. Umm so, you know, uh if I go to campus, which it's a problem to—parking and you know all of that, so, so umm it's take the bus and, and you have an hour to take the bus and get to where you're going and then get back in an hour and it's not always the best thing to do so I would love to have something in our neck of the woods or across the street. And we desperately need some—I think a lot of people, now that we're over there, all of outreach is over there and everybody either brings their lunch or goes out to lunch because there's—

It's hard to go to campus and it's hard to get out. Traffic on Jackson Avenue at lunchtime is horrible so I bring my lunch, mostly because it gives me the best choices.

Mod 1: okay. [name redacted]what would you rank it?

I would say seven. Umm and I think it could be improved at breakfast and like in the afternoon. Cause I think at lunch, there's lots of options but in the morning but hear on main campus like you can go to Starbucks and they don't have like hardly yogurt or anything. Umm, Einstein Bagels doesn't have anything really. Um like for breakfast and the same thing in the afternoon. So I feel like those times of day, it's hard. Or Freshii isn't always open. Umm, those types of issues.

Mod 1: Okay. Anything else for that one?

I agree. [laughing]

Mod 1: Okay. Umm so, what would a healthy campus eating environment look like to you? Ideally.

Umm, I—I'll go. I—I'm a sometime-atarian. Which means I'm vegetarian most of the time and so that leaves fruits and vegetables and and whole grains and, and water and you know where most people might want lean meats, or whatever, but to me, fresh vegetables and fresh fruit and some whole grains would be what I would want, would be my choice.

Mod 1: Okay.

I think a clean environment, uh where ever it is, things needs to be presented clean, very clean. And I think for the most part, we're doing okay on that on the couple places that I've been. Um, I like the fact that our people keep the places pretty clean. But also, maybe some healthy facts..

Fact sheets you can eat while, you can look at while you are eating. Or something to say that 'did you know that, you know, this, substituting this for this will help out'. I mean, just little, uh, tips and things that you can get while you're in, inside the place to kind of help out.

Mod 1: okay. Do you have anything?

I would say be colorful, quiet. [laughter]

Mod 1: umm, what are some other things we need to know about the healthy eating environment on campus? Anything else to add?

Well, I would say umm, the foods that are provided, I think they're general, but you do have people on campus who are you know, diabetic, and other things, you know they're, you know, weight conscious or something of that nature and maybe having some, um...meals prepared with that in mind, um, so the that all the burden is not on the person who is actually diabetic or dealing with weight issues. Whether losing or gaining, that there would be some um, you know, some type of I guess, presentation or something at the restaurant or at the sites that would let the folks know 'hey, this would be better for you' or, um, 'rather that eating this, eat this.' Just some more information like that.

Umm, I'd like to say, we have in, we have summer camps come through our thing, so we have hundreds of kids come to campus every summer. And the biggest complaint we hear about—we have a lot of um, children, for religious reasons or allergy reasons, that have special needs and it's not always real evident what they should do. And a lot of times they think 'well, I have salad or I have nothing.' You know, so I think...Some of the options, maybe even signage saying 'this is gluten free' and 'this is' you know, 'this is not prepared with meat' and that kind of thing because they'll come to us sometimes and say 'I can't eat because I don't know where' and I think the options are there for the most part, I just don't think they see them. You know if you, like in the Rebel Market, it's kind of hidden off to the side and they walk in and see hamburgers and pizza and they're like,

you know, 'how many times can I eat cheese pizza?' or you know, I'm not maybe not supposed to have cheese or whatever. So we have a lot of kids with dietary things that they can't find what they need. And so, they don't think that the options are there. So.. that is something we hear.

I think better signage, cause even, like if um, you go online and see the menu it will tell you if there is something. Like Rebel Market every day, where is it like 'this is the healthy option of the day.' To help, kind of guide you...Before you get sidetracked by fried chicken. [laughter]

Mod 1: Okay, anything else to add on, um, what we need to know about the healthy eating environment on campus?

It just, it just needs to be promoted a bit more, umm outside of the sites for food, outside of the restaurants. Umm

I was really surprised—I'm sorry I didn't mean to—I was really surprised when I, when I went into the Rebel Market the first time or two. There's a little station back there and it's a really neat little station. And they make like grilled cheese with all kinds of things on it, and they make potatoes with all—and I thought 'I wonder how many people even know it's back there?' you know, and that became, when I, when we were on campus, we just moved about six months ago. That was my favorite station to check out all the time, cause it would be stir fry or it would be—and you could see 'em, they're right there making it. I thought 'wow, that is really neat' I had no idea that was there the, the year that I went in there then all of a sudden it was like 'oh, where'd you get that?'

It was like, 'oh, back there!' So I think, yeah if you, kind of showcased one station or something so people would know that, that that's there cause that was a really neat place where you could get what you like on whatever they were making for the day, and it changes all the time. So I really, I really liked that. That was one of my favorites.

Mod 1: anything else? Okay so, how do you think we should encourage the healthy eating on campus? Healthy eating on campus.

I know for the [department redacted], we have a wellness challenge and that umm incorporates that, and the winner of it gets a parking space. So, as incentive to eat healthy, ummm, whether it's a checklist item or its whether it's for a drawing, if you, you know, I'm not sure exactly what to do but it has to be promoted outside of the places. You know, in the dorms, in the academic buildings, um...and then maybe having some people to come in and talk about healthy eating in the dorms and in the academic buildings.

Mod 1: Anyone else on how we should encourage healthy eating on campus?

I can't think of anything.

Mod 1: Well, that's all the questions if y'all can't think of anything else to say?

---

**Focus Group 2: 5/8/2018**

Mod 1: Okay, So we are going to make every effort to keep the discussion focused and within our time frame. If too much time is being spent on one question or topic, we may move the conversation along so we can cover all the questions. So here's some ground rules: 1. We want y'all to do the talking, not me um and I want to hear from every person, but one at a time please because the recorder won't pick up more than one. Um Also, if I haven't heard from you in a while, I may call on you. Uhm there are no right or wrong answers so everyone's ideas and opinions are valuable and its important to hear all sides, whether they are positive or negative. And although we might not always agree, we must show respect for one another. Also, I really want to know y'all's perceptions, as staff, rather than like what you think the students want, or what the faculty want, I want to know what you want. So, like I mentioned earlier, we are recording this session and Dr. Lambert is our notetake. But we will only be using first names today and there will not be any names attached to the final manuscript. So, you may be assured complete confidentially. So our topic of discussion today is healthy eating and food venues on campus: perspectives of university staff. Let's start by introductions. Let's go around the table and please say your name, department, and your favorite place to eat on campus. So whoever wants to start...

[name redacted], [department redacted], and I like eating at 1810.

Mod 1: Okay

[name redacted], [department redacted] and Umm I usually eat in my office but if that's not an accurate answer then I will go to the Rebel Market.

Mod 1: okay

[name redacted], [department redacted], and I'm also a Rebel Market fan.

Mod 1: awesome! So the first question is, how would you describe a healthy meal? We are going to go around the table and just throw out some adjectives, whatever comes to your mind about a healthy meal and we are going to write them on the board. So how would you describe a healthy meal?

For me, low salt.

Mod 1: low salt?

Green

I would say, fresh veggies. I try to pack my meals with as much of that as possible.



Low sugar. Low, to no, sugar.

Mod 1: anything else?

Low to no, what's the um... low cholesterol, low bad cholesterol.

I think of low carbs too.

I always try to get some good proteins in there that are cooked in a healthy way. Because a lot of the proteins are not always cooked in the most healthy way.

antioxidants

Mod 1: Okay, any others? If not, that is a solid list! Okat. So, do you try to make healthy food and beverage choices when eating on campus? If so, why? If not, why not?

I do I've got high blood pressure. Thanks, in part, to Ole Miss.[laughter] no, um I actually think it's family history. Anyway, um yeah I try to make smart choice. Particularly pertaining to low salt and low cholesterol, bad cholesterol anyway. It's something I look for, so, I love the asian cuisine at Rebel Market but don't eat it more because of the salt content.

When I go to Rebel market I try to always go to, hit the salad bar first and try to get my stomach to fill up on the salad stuff and then I might add something to that if I still feel like I am hungry. But I always try to start with that first, the good stuff first, and that way I am less tempted for the other things that are out there that are varying.. I also do pay attention to calorie counts that are listed in the Rebel Market at every little venue.

Mod 1: and what is your reason for trying to eat healthy on campus?

For me, I am trying to eat healthy in general, and there are days that I do have to eat on campus so that's part of my overall calorie count for the day. So it helps me to know, if I eat for instance at the union not everything has calorie count, and so I am just kind of guessing at where I am to be able to plan my breakfast and my dinner around it.

I love at 1810 to go all the way across and I start with spinach and then just load up, like I will go back and get the fruits and all that, and try to stay healthy. I really fill up a lot in there and then if they have a good meat, I'll go do that and get protein but then I have to balance it out with about four chocolate chip cookies, so... I do have a sweet tooth. And the reason I eat healthy is that I am trying to lose weight and that is one of my goals is to eat healthier but not be hungry, and to lose weight.

Mod 1: Okay. So, what prevents you from making healthy choices on campus?

chocolate chip cookies!

time

I live in Tupelo, so I commute, and we all work at the same place so we know we can't eat out every day, even if we could, it is not healthy, but um... So I go to the Rebel Market rarely, but that is where I go when I didn't bring lunch or just don't want to eat what I have. Umm but uhh yeah like sometimes just with the, especially within busy seasons umm if I didn't get to bring lunch for any reason or I don't have time to go to Rebel Market, I would love to have some option. Last year, or the year before that, there was some survey about healthy choices in vending machines. But it never happened in our part of campus, I don't know if it did in other parts. But I would go to the Rebel Market way before I go to the Student Union because it is closer.

Mod 1: What part of campus is your building on?

I am across from the police station by the new water tower.

yeah, I am the same thing. Union, even if it had healthy choices, would be too far for me. If I am doing Rebel Market, it is usually because I have forgotten my lunch or I have to be on campus around lunchtime and I kind of hit on my way back because I am at the JAC so I am off campus, basically, and you got no options there for food at all. I mean, we have some really not that great vending machines, and otherwise there is no POD, there is no.. I would love to have something. The Bookstore has a few things, but they are mostly like ramen noodle-type things. There is not anything that you can pick up fresh to eat.

I'm in [department redacted], which is on the far corner of campus. So 1810 is very convenient for me. I don't eat there a lot, but I.. it's funny, you said you shouldn't eat out everyday, I eat out everyday. But I do try to make good choices when I eat out, because I want to eat healthy. So that is part of why I am here, to get educated more on what is healthy.

Mod 1: Okay! Anything else on what prevents you from making healthy choices on campus other than time and convenience?

When I went to the doctor last year and found out how high my blood pressure was, and what I need to do to fix that. She asked me what do I do. And I said when I didn't have time, I would just go get something out of the vending machine. And she said I was the poster child for someone who doesn't need to eat chips. So that pretty much severely limits my options out of a vending machine. So yeah..

So you said the question was 'why we don't eat healthy?'

Mod 1: What prevents you from making healthy choices on campus?

Convenience

yeah

I would also say, at least for outreach, since we hold so many events, there is always food left over from events. Somebody is always bringing in donuts in the morning. There's always something tempting you just laying about. So that is the hardest one for me. Like I can plan a healthy lunch if I bring it and pack it. Or if I go to the Rebel Market, I am good about eating what I know stacks up to the calories I need for lunch. But if I walk in and there is donuts and somebody has leftover Newk's sandwiches and salad, and then somebody in the afternoon just got back from a reception and they have petifores.. That really gets in the way. I know that is not campus stuff but..

I am gonna come hang out with you guys!

I am not humble bragging here, because it is obviously a challenge for me but it is just, you know, there is always something in the building. And if it is not leftover food, it is the smell of food in the building constantly.

I would say time and cost, as well.

Mod 1: Do you think it is too high or..?

well, uhh aside from there not being quick, convenient options umm cost would be a factor if it were too high.

Mod 1: so, how are healthy items being presented and served? Are they served in an appealing manner?

At the Rebel Market, yeah. I think they are served, to me they stand out more than the less healthy options because they try to like point you in that direction with the signage.

I would agree.

I like the way 1810 does it. It is a great display and everything looks fresh.

Mod 1: Did you know that Aramark has nutrition information posted online?

yes

Yes.

No.

Mod 1: The ones that do know about it, what has been your experience with it?

um, I know when they didn't have it. When I looked for it originally so I was happy that they added it. Um but I do think the one difference, and this is for the posted information

too, I don't know that I am always getting the amount that is posted as the typical serving size. Um, when I go back and look at it online or look at it on the card, I am not sure that is actually.. I mean a lot of time I think I am getting more than that. The ladies are very nice at the Rebel Market and serve you and they can like.. I have asked for like a little bit of mashed potatoes one day and she gave me two servings of mash potatoes. So, sometimes you end up with more than you expect. So the calorie counts are great but you still are eyeballing to make sure that you're staying within the range.

I am not a calorie counter. I count salt more than anything. And that is not listed on the posted stuff. And if it is online, I do not know, I just know it is online. I think what is online is the same thing they have posted in the Rebel Market.

yeah, I think it is the same online. Because I have looked for like sugars and things like that and some things have it and some things don't. And I am pretty sure some of the things that don't, do have sugar. So I don't think if its not part of it, it's not listed.

That is a good point about the serving size and what it pertains to.

It's hard. I know the scoops are suppose to like, for instance at the salad bar, supposed to kind of match up with the serving size. And the same thing for the veggies at the home cooking place. But I think it's like a you know, you would do flour -- like a flattened off scoop -- and you usually get a heaping or in some cases, 'we're at the end'. I come late a lot so at the end they are trying to clean out the pan and just give you all that is left over, kind of thing! Which is nice, they are being really nice, I am not trying to get them in trouble or anything. But you as the consumer have to, you know, either say no adamantly, or you have to be really good about not eating it all and I am not good about not eating it all.

I don't know about you but I feel guilty if there is food on my plate.

I do too!

I am the same way! I don't want to take the food and throw it away. I just feel bad about throwing it away.

at 1810, I have to tell her just a little, because if it is on the plate I will eat it! So she will really cut down the servings and it ends up being smaller. But that is exactly what I wanted

and I think att 1810, I have eaten there a few times. I think they tend to be a little better about that too because they are often with folks, often with athletes, who are on a specialized plan and so they have to be careful about who gets what and how much of it but at the Rebel market its like your mom cooking for you! Fill the plate and hand it over to you, you know?

Mod 1: Okay so, are there places you can go on campus to eat healthy? If yes, where are they and what kind of items do you normally select? If no what are you looking for?

I would say yes. Rebel Market they have salads and the wraps, but again the salt is a little high in the wrap itself, but if you do it in moderation its fine! I just like to get my money's worth.

Yeah, that's the thing. You are paying almost \$10 and you want to get your money's worth.

I think 1810 for me, is very healthy. It has healthy options. I don't remember your other questions..

Mod 1: what kind of items do you normally select when you are there?

green spinach and lots of fruit. All that, I don't know. I try to go with a vinaigrette dressing if I can, if not its ranch.

I think yes for the Rebel Market. I will say though, no for vending. Which is a necessary evil sometimes if you, I mean I can't always get the bus over. This is the last week for the bus until August so we're stuck. So you either have to go out and get something. Which again is not always the healthiest. Or remember to bring it yourself. Um and if you need a snack there's just not healthy options in the vending machines. I would love to see some fruit, or some, even if it is prepackaged, some things that are labeled. I know I have seen a couple of the vending machines that do have this healthy snack options in them and they have tag that says 'healthy snack option' but healthy means different things to different people and I can't tell that from the outside unless I know the food product already. So if there is someway to say like 'low salt option' or 'low sugar option' or you know 'high protein option' on top of having just the little label, that I think would be great. Or even the same thing at the PODs. You could say 'hey if you are looking for a healthier option, here is the low sugar row, here is the low salt row' something. I don't know something like that that would meet the needs of different people. Particularly staff members that might have diagnosed issues. They are dealing with that most students wouldn't. Especially in buildings where it's mostly like.. Gerard doesn't get a lot of student traffic, so you could pack a vending machine in there with staff-related foods. Ours is different because we do have a lot of students.

We don't have a vending machine at all. We have to go across the street or to behind to Bishop.

Mod 1: So the next question actually has to do with the healthy vending initiative.

Mod 2: What about in the Rebel Market or 1810. Are there foods not there now that you would like to see if you trying to eat healthier? Or are they meeting that?

There is not a lot of fruit options at Rebel Market, they have an orange or an apple.

Yeah, it's pretty limited.

Or like canned.

Occasional they will have bananas. I have noticed that a few times. I know those are harder to ship and store and what not.

Fresh fruit I should say, maybe.

I would love to see the prepared vegetables have a low sale option or a 'healthier option' and the vegan options are pretty heavy on the fat, which I tend to lean towards sometimes from that same area. But yeah, that is the kinds of things I can think of that would be significantly different. Maybe a dessert that is a healthier dessert option? That's not fruit.. I have a sweet tooth too. That, you know, I get raisin oatmeals cookies, which is a little bit better, but it's not. You know, it's not great.

Or at least the cookies identify... One of the things I don't like is Splenda and I don't like substitutes. I would rather have sugar than I would Sweet n' Low. I am just kind of weird about that stuff.

no, I don't trust artificial sweeteners.

I just can't stand the aftertaste.

I don't either and so I have to like, if you want to do low sugar, because it seems to substitute itself that way and I don't like that at all.

So when I bake at home, I use honey and that makes a big difference.

honey would be great.

Because I don't like the substitutes. But, I don't know, that also comes back to what you can get that is prepared and easy to cook and cook in a mass scale and I don't know, you know, you would have to see how many people would actually take advantage of that. But that would be nice.

One of the things at 1810 is they make smoothies and I like smoothies. But the thing I am wondering about is, like I don't put any sugar in my smoothie. I don't put yogurt in there. I use almond milk and so I am wondering when I am eating that I don't, I am sure it is probably listed somewhere, but I don't know what I'm -- I don't know what.. Did I just load up with 1500 to 2000 calories on that thinking I was being healthy? And I guess it all depends on what I put in there.

Mod 2: Do you have the option to tell them what goes in?

Oh yeah. Which is really nice, it's great!

I know Rebel Market, in the salad bar area, they have like a larger list that has all the individual things you can put in a salad with the the typical calories.

Then they probably do. I know they do on the hot meals, they have it on a video screen up there but I have never seen it on the smoothie side.

So if you were trying, if you had that and you were trying to pick out, maybe you would make exchanges to keep it, but I don't know if they have it over there.

It seems like all the fruit, but then the medium that you put in the smoothie can end up sabotaging what you are doing, to me, as far as sugar. And I don't want anything like orange juice -- you put orange juice in there that's just loaded with sugar. I don't like that sweet taste and I don't like what it does to my stomach, my waste line

Mod 1: okay so um.. Just to finish talking about the vendin that we were talking about earlier. So we have, you've said that you have noticed some of the healthy vending initiatives and we have tried them in some of the residence halls and I know y'all don't go to the residence halls but do you think we need more options on campus for healthy vending?

Yes

Sure

Mod 1: and if you have noticed them, what would you like change about them?

I haven't noticed them.

I haven't either.

Besides what felt like a really long list earlier...

Mod 1: No, it's okay!

Um, the two that I have seen only have like three option. Or maybe one of them had only two options

Granola bar

It was like a granola bar and some other packaged bar of some kind. Um and that was it. And so, it was healthier than a bag of chips but it wasn't as healthy as it would have been if I had brought something from home, if that makes sense? You know, and that's always a trade off with vending but, and it was also just one little spot. And so if were looking for a bag of chips, I wouldn't probably had noticed that. I just happened to be looking for

granola bar that day because I didn't have my lunch with me. And so, that's when I noticed it. So, I think if it were more like clearly lined out then, you know 'these two rows' or 'this area' is what to look for. And then, like I said earlier, are tagged with what makes it healthy. They're letting a lot of people go to just a regular vending machine and go 'oh, a granola bar is better than a bag of Reese's Pieces' but it may not be when you really look at the label. And so, helping people, I mean it's kind of like educating as they are consuming, I guess in a way.

Mod 1: okay, and since y'all haven't noticed them, what would you want to see in them?

Um, healthy granola bars and also some healthy savory snacks.

I would agree.

Mod 2: Do you have anything in mind?

no

Mod 2: like when you say 'granola' is there a brand?

I trust KIND Bars.

I think there are a lot of like, Luna Bars and Lara Bars are pretty good, that have high protein in them.

Mod 2: And savory? Like low-sodium chips or something? Or peanuts?

Well, uh.. More options than just peanuts.

I was thinking nuts, in general, with no salt. It's hard to find nuts without salt, but I love salt!

and maybe even in packaging that is like one serving size, or, you know, because all the candy in there is like five servings. It says its like 290 calories per serving. So, its, you know, massive amounts of calories all at one time. And even some of the bagged peanuts and stuff you can buy that are no salt in the machine are gonna be three servings worth of your fat, you know? So if it could be something that your like, 'okay, this should fill me up -- eyes and stomach will get this and we'll go.' I think would be helpful. And you don't have to -- I mean if you are using the vending machine you don't have time. So you don't have time to do the math to figure out. And you are probably eating it while you are walking somewhere or at your desk when you are working on something that has to take your full brain, so you're gonna continue to eat until it is empty.

again, it's convenient. It goes back to convenience. That's what we are looking for: convenience.



help me make good decisions. Don't make me rely on myself. I'm bad at it!

It's valid though. I mean, I think.

Mod 1: Okay, so on a scale of 1-10, how would you rank the healthy food offerings on campus? So 1 being the least healthy, and 10 being the most healthy. Um, if not a 10, what needs to be changed to bring that ranking to a 10?

Fap

Well, I think it's a matter of choice. I could say 10 because it's my choice. There are things that I could choose from, that's the reason that I go to 1810. But I enjoy, and there's things that I enjoy fried there. There are things that are grilled. There is salmon there. There are all choices. So I think it is a matter of what I want to do a lot of the times. But I can get a hamburger there, too. So, it's probably not, I don't that that's the answer that you...

Mod 1: no, that's a good answer!

I know you're not looking for any particular answer, but yeah. I mean I could say 10. But I just think that, to go back to some of the things we are suggesting here is how could you make it a 10? If I said 8 or 9, then convenience. Um, serving sizes, more options, would probably make it a 10. And I am talking snacks, now, because in about three hours I need a snack. Or at least I think I do, you know? I want a snack and I want a healthy snack.

I agree.

Mod 1: What would you rank it?

I would say, based on a lot of what you said. I would say 8 because of the lack of convenience and, um, and availability.

I think I would probably say 8 too. Um, and availability is a big part of it. From my perspective, I feel like if I'm gonna be in an area, where, in my work environment, I'm gonna have to use these at some point, I would like there to be options that would be better. But, I can also say, having been here, I was in school here, started 20 years ago and left and came back a few times, but its way better than it use to be, for sure. And I really appreciate the change, um but I do think that we could do better for our employees of the University.

Mod 1: Okay. So, what would a healthy campus-eating environment, ideally, look like to you? Like if you had your dream?

If I had a dream, well I would have a chef there in my office, with an array of all kinds of things there to pick from. And I would never have to go shopping at home -- you're saying dream! They would bring it all to me and I would have it ready to go home! And they would actually go home with me, but that's the big dream, right? But, to know, to have things labeled would be great, I think! [name redacted] was talking about that, I love

that! It makes it easy and convenient choices. Fresh, especially when the students -- I understand when the students are gone, we shut down, but when the students are here to have fresh choices, which I feel like we do!

Mod 1: okay!

I would like there to be, um if possible, um options that are, hot and cold options that are available on staff schedules. Like, I don't get an 11 to 2 break most days, that's when people come to see me and want me to work on things for them, so if I go to the Rebel Market after 2, I'll have the burger station and I may have the salad station, if they haven't already started to take down. And so, or if I have to squeeze it in before 11, that's where the convenience foods come in. That's when I wind up going and grabbing something packaged. So, um it would help if there were expanded options. Even if, like the JAC had a POD that had some things pre-prepared like the other PODs do that you could pick up between two and four o'clock or one and three o'clock or maybe, you know, something like that that would help for folks who so get stuck covering the office during lunchtime.

Mod 1: okay

Since we are dreaming here, I would say definitely low-cost or no-cost with the incentive being the university wants their employees healthy, you know.

yeah, a lot more people would be grabbing those granola bars if they were half the cost of a candy bar.

exactly!

Mod 1: Wow, everything's pretty good so far! Okay, so we have a couple more questions! Um so other than everything that we have already mentioned, what are some other things that we need to know about the healthy eating environment on campus? Anything that you can think of?

I can't think of anything that I haven't already -- or somebody hasn't already

Mod 1: So we have talked about like salt and nutrient content. We have talked about the availability, the convenience, cost.

When I work out in Turner Center -- I just thought of this -- for convenience. That POD opens at 8 and I'm leaving at 7:30, so there's probably a lot of times I would spend money in there if it were open earlier. Instead, I go back to my office and make my smoothie, which is fine too but probably the time, some of the times, looking at the time change at the Turner Center would be more. I know I've gone over there and it's like 'oh man, I didn't even know this was here!'

Yeah. and it's not open on Fridays.

It's not?

No, because I have been, you know, leaving the gym and thought 'I'll grab something and take it for my lunch because I won't have to worry about the convenient store or the vending machines,' and it's not open on Fridays. And I don't think it's open at all in the summer.

no, I don't think it is either.

Mod 1: So you want more like consistent hours?

That would be handy because folks do come in earlier hours and stay later too, I mean I know it's not as big a crowd as the student crowd would be but at places like the Turner Center, it might still be large because they have night classes but other places it may not be. We have night classes in the JAC so we're going 24 hours a day, almost.

You've got two different operations. You have the students who work for Turner Center and then you have Aramark. And it's like there is a disconnect between the two. It would be -- because those students are there at 6am and they have to be there til closing. Wouldn't it be cool if they had the authority and the ability to do both because you got two people sitting there. If they could somehow figure out how to get the food over there to where the employees could actually run it or be a part of it. Because they're busy but it's not like they're having to be focused. A lot of times they are watching the TVs, kind of saying 'hey' to people and checking things. It seems to me the food could be moved down or it even, automatically you got it 6am its open. There you go.

I think it'd be great if RebelWell did a food challenge instead of always just fitness challenges.

That's a great idea.

And connect that in with the vending machines and the Rebel Market. Because I think a lot of people, when you talk about food, there can be a lot of shame in that, just like fitness and um so they don't talk as much about it or they aren't willing to write it down. But if they knew like and were being encouraged like: 'hey there's good options in the vending machines and its okay to use a vending machine.' You know, we live life. That's the way life is but, you know, if you are using these things in the vending machine, you are doing better, than if you are using others. Or if you go to Rebel Market, here's a station if you're doing the Rebel Healthy Eating, here's a good station for you to try or here's a new dish this month to try or whatever.

I think advertising, too, marketing. And maybe that I unsubscribed from the list, there may be marketing now but it would be great to know, where, if something knew pops up like 'hey, we're doing this now' it would be great to know that!

Mod 1: Okay, so, y'all kind of segwayed into the last question. Y'all have been really good about that! So how do you think we should encourage healthy eating on campus?

you gotta make it cool!

Mod 1: So the marketing aspect?

I mean, if it...

Cool, convenient, cost effective.

incentivise it in some way to kick it off.

You're incentivised because it's your health. I mean that's the [inaudible] part of your drive.

It is!

and I think it is for me to, to be healthy.

that's partly mine too, is the health. But, I think, if you are trying to break the barrier of someone who doesn't have a pre-existing condition or have kind of internal, you know, reason for it.

I would like to have been..

An incentive, really.

Yeah, like you said, I have an incentive, but for those who don't have a health risk.

Mod 1: What kind of incentives would you..?

A discount at the Rebel Market, if you are gonna go and 'you need to eat these certain things or you need to participate' if you are participating in a month-long challenge, then you get a discount at certain places or you get two free vending passes. I don't know, something that would relate to it. That might get you to say, 'well, I can do that!' You know, like, I mean, I came here for because I was interested in this but I'm not gonna turn down the Blue Apron thing, you know? That's part of it, um and being in Marketing I see that with student stuff. We do it all the time. If you're asking to do a survey, they better be getting something and it better be better than a \$5 gift card, you know they aren't gonna do it for that, even if it's only three questions. So, some kind of incentive that would give them a tow into whatever we are trying to offer.

Mod 1: So do we have anything else to add? Anything that's in your brain that needs to come out? That the world need to know?

well, I think something that would help, and I don't know if this falls in but one of the things I'm looking for, is to hire or work with a nutritionist. And so, I've reached out to athletics and I have a friend of mine that we meet in a group and he hired a nutritionist to work with him, and you know, we all have goals, we all need it and you see the successful people hire coaches, they all have people in specialties that hire them so I guess that's one of the things I was curious about and came today is are those services available on campus to staff?

Mod 1: Have you looked into RebelWell or heard of RebelWell at all?

I've heard of RebelWell, but ... Andrea Jakobsons running around campus on bicycles and exercising. That's when I think of RebelWell. I think of Andrea.

And it's been primarily that. It's been food stuff in there but a lot of the focus has been fitness.

But I don't want to go to a group. And I don't want to read anything and I've listened to audiobooks on nutrition. I want to talk to a real person. And I actually want accountability. I would love accountability. That's why I joined Turner Center, was to have a trainer for to make me go in there. Because when I had to spend \$15 an hour to pay for a trainer, I went, at 6 o'clock in the morning and it got me into the habit and now I haven't had a trainer in a long time but I still go. So that was 6 years ago, so we have trainers periodically.

I wouldn't mind and I also would be interested in meeting with a nutritionist and I wouldn't mind meeting in a group, as long as it was a group that was relative to my health needs. Like I have rheumatoid arthritis and food is a big part of that it wouldn't necessarily be the same kind of nutrition advice that you would need for your health. So I think, like I'm not opposed to group, I would love to have one on one, but I'm not opposed to group because I know we have limited resources but I think that it needs to be a group that has similar goals and that's kind of hard to get down to sometimes, with that.

I've heard we have a nutritionist available to us but I don't know what to expect, I don't have a name, I don't know what to call. And I haven't dug into it either.

Yeah and I think that and the health, the counseling center on campus are the two things that are probably most needed by staff and are least known to staff members, sadly.

The counseling center is really good. And I wanna say it's like 8 free visits and the nutritionists, that's the first I have heard of that.

I've heard, but I can't verify.

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**Focus Group 3: 9/10/2018**

Mod 1: So we are going to make every effort to keep this discussion focused and within our time frame. If too much time is being spent on one question or topic, we may move the conversation along so we can cover all of the questions. So I am going to go over some rules. So number one: we want all you to do the talking, I don't really want to talk that much other than to ask y'all questions or facilitate who is going to talk. Um so, we're, um so I want to hear from every single one of you but please one person at a time so the recorder can pick it up and I may call on you if I have not heard from you in a while. There are no right or wrong answers so everyone's ideas are valuable. It is important to hear all sides, whether they are positive or negative and we might not always agree but we must show respect for one another. So as I mentioned earlier, we are recording this session and we do have a notetaker over there. We will only be using first names today and there will not be any names attached to the manuscript. So we can assure you complete confidentiality. So our topic of discussion today is Healthy Eating and Food Venues on Campus from the Perspectives of University Staff. Let's start by introductions: go around the table and say your name, your department, and your favorite place to eat on campus if you do eat on campus. So who wants to start?

I'll start. [name redacted], I work in the [department redacted], I've worked there two and a half years, prior to that I spent two years working for [department redacted] on campus so I thought I would bring a unique perspective to this discussion. I was a marketing manager for two years as well so confidentiality is pretty — I've got a lot of friends there [laughter]

Mod 1: We can assure you that.

Oh favorite place on campus. Well, I eat at the Rebel Market everyday pretty much because it is free.

Mod 1: Okay.

That makes the choice for me.

Mod 1: That's good! So who wants to go next? [muttering]

I will go next. My name is [name redacted], I am at the [department redacted]. I'm a new employee, I haven't been here very long so I haven't eaten a lot on campus, except since I live in the community, I come to campus to eat. I like Lenoir Dining. I think that is a really great place to eat on campus.

Um, I am [name redacted], I work in the [department redacted]. I've been here three years — three and a half years — umm and my favorite place is Lenoir. Absolutely hands down.

I'm [name redacted], I work at the [department redacted] so I eat downstairs, but I also like Lenoir. I haven't been to the student union yet, not since they remodeled.

Mod 1: Okay just say your name, um, your department — just first name — and your favorite place to eat on campus.

[name redacted], [department redacted], and I'm a Lenoir diner as well. I do go to Johnson Commons sometimes, but most of the time it is Lenoir. Johnson Commons is nice for variety but Lenoir Dining is just, yeah, it's really good.

Mod 1: Okay, so the first question um I am going to ask is “how would you describe a healthy meal?” So just throw out some adjectives, I am going to write them up on the board in case you want to reference them throughout the rest of the focus group so how would you describe a healthy meal?

Colorful

balanced

Mod 1: Okay, anyone else? Anything works.

Fresh

Mod 1: Fresh?

Nutrient-rich. That's not one word, I suppose.

It's okay. It's an adjective.

Delicious!

There ya go!

options

Mod 1: anything else?

Portions

[inaudible mumbling]

Mod 1: anything else come to mind? Okay so the next question is going to be “do you try to make healthy food and beverage choices when eating on campus? If so, why or why not?”

Mostly

Mod 1: Mostly? Can you elaborate on that?

Most of the time, I try. I try to make the best options at Lenoir. I would not say going over to the Pavilion, there is any really healthy options over there so um that's a splurge day. I don't not get anything, I just get all the bad stuff. But yeah, most of the time I'll try to make healthier options. I'll try to pick, you know, a healthier sandwich at the commons versus the pizza. You know, things like that.

I'd say that the reason for not picking is time. Not having enough time and having to carry something out. If I have to carry something back to the desk, that is not always the best option. Definitely.

I would say yes because when you eat a healthy meal in the middle of the day, you have more energy and you feel better for the second half of the day all around.

You don't need that three o'clock pickup of caffeine.

Right. Physically and mentally you feel better.

Mod 1: either of you two?

I try to go for a colorful meal. So that usually means the fruits and vegetables. But, I will not give up my fried chicken Friday. [laughter]

But if you have a healthy vegetable next to ...

I take the skin off.

Oh that's the good part!

Well, I know but that's the part with the fat.

I know, but then why have fried chicken? [laughter]

I think personal motivation is probably my biggest struggle because you know, if there are healthy options there, the unhealthy options tend to be the most attractive.

Yeah, exactly. Oh unfortunately so, yes. That salad bar is gorgeous but that fried chicken with mac n cheese, yum.

Just keep walking, right passed it.

Yep, it's like I know it's right there! So can you get a salad that tastes like fried chicken? [laughter] Just a suggestion!

Mod 1: Um, so, what prevents you from making healthy choices on campus? I know we touched on this a little but can y'all elaborate on what prevents you from making healthy choices?



No choices! Like over at the Pavillion — I mean Raising Canes and Steak and Shake, they are convenient, they're quick, but there is not one healthy option on either one of their menus. Nothing.

Nothing grilled.

Nope.

All fried.

Only fried.

Yeah, Canes only does chicken fingers.

Canes only does chicken fingers. They don't do anything. They don't do grilled chicken fingers, they don't do a grilled sandwich, anything. And Steak and Shake is obviously just burgers and fries. And so, at their individual restaurants, I am sure that they offer something different. Now I don't know about Raising Canes, I had never even known about Raising Canes til I got here.

It's uhh, there menu is the same at every location.

Every location?

and now the uhh the Steak and Shake, that is a modified menu specifically for an Express type — college students. So is this supposed to be focused on our perceptions of students interactions or just ours?

Mod 1: Yours. I want staff. I want y'all. I don't want anything about the students. I want to know what you want, what you think, all of your feelings.

Uhh so what was the question again?

Mod 1: Okay. [laughter] it's okay! What prevents you from making healthy eating choices on campus?

The fried chicken next to the salad bar. [laughter]

I think there's options.

I'm pretty new here but isn't it kind of expensive to eat at the Johnson Commons? Am I right?

I would say price would be a large portion of that. Because, you know, Freshii has lots of great healthy options, even though they're very high in sodium, if you look at the content.

Umm but it's also, you can't get out of there for less than twelve or fourteen bucks. And upstairs, for that same perspective, it's a ten dollar door fee, you know, to get in there. Uhh...

Which is pricey.

Which is pricey compared to if, you can go to Chick-fil-a and get a combo for like seven bucks, seven fifty. Uh so there is a price difference.

And then you want to say 'hey I paid ten dollars, I want to get ten dollars worth of food.'

Yeah. So it encourages

It encourages you to eat more

Eat more, not necessarily better.

There's also the social part of being working and wanting to get together with a friend. Like a friend says 'hey, do you want to go have lunch?' And so I want to see my friend, right? So we go to Raising Canes because that's the closest place for us to go where our offices are and then we both end up eating this unhealthy food but I value the social connection that I have with my friend. So sometimes, the social connection take precedence over the healthful quality, where we could get something healthy.

Alright, I'm not gonna be...

Uh oh!

Mod 1: Go for it!

My perception on that is that the distance isn't that great. If you're.. So really although the distance is the inhibitor, is it really or is that the mindset? Because...

Oh it could be some mindset.

But in the same situation, we both identified two healthier places to eat on campus: Freshii and potentially the Johnson Commons upstairs— they're located in the same building. It would make more sense if those two healthier options..

Separated..

...were at different locations. My beef from the beginning when I worked there [laughter] Um, you know the thought to how to make dining on campus efficient, which that would be a tool for that, is not considered.

And that is one of the constraints is time. I know their's is very strict, I have some flexibility, but for some people, by the time you get out of the office to the place, you really only have maybe thirty minutes, thirty-five minutes if you're lucky. And you have to factor in the time to get back so..

and you have to factor how long it takes. You are gonna be waiting in line if it's between 11:30 and 1. Time and convenience!

Mod 1: Okay.

Pretty much what the world revolves around now.

Mod 1: So, the next question is: How are the healthy items being presented and served? Are they served and presented in an appealing manner. So when you go somewhere, how are they presented?

Yeah, I mean I would say, at least at the Commons, that the salad is beautiful looking. I mean it could be more prominent, I would say, to maybe entice you a little bit more to take it. Because, but, I mean when I go over to the salad area, it looks nice and I mean, I don't have any issues with it. But I'm still gonna pick the fried chicken?

Mod 1: and why is that?

Because it smells good [laughter] You walk in there and it smells really good.

The smells.

I think, one, the informational display is lacking sometimes

It's not big enough.

Well, I've been in the Rebel Market — yeah it's either a card on the sneeze guard or the digital displays that are not updated at all.

And pretty please, pretty please, scream at somebody for updating the website.

Oh my gosh. Especially over the summer!

Mod 1: That is actually our next question.

Oh my gosh, I went to the Commons at least a half a dozen times over the summer and every time that menu was wrong. I was livid and there is no email address to send a screaming email to anybody to explain that guys, if the menu is wrong, you are going to have some really unhappy people. And I do understand, over the summer, staff doesn't count. You know, they don't really care about us, I think, because they close everything off and you know, the JC is open here and then only half of it is open. And I understand,

there's some economics behind it to some extent but there are still 3500 university employees that need to eat. And I would eat on campus in the summer more often if there was availability of food and the menu was accurate. Sorry I'm done now.

Mod 1: no, it's okay. That was literally our next question! So did you know that Aramark has nutritional information posted online?

Now the nutritional information might or might not be accurate, I don't know. But, the actual menu is wrong. The menu it drives me crazy. Because that is all we have to base on. And when I go there and they don't have what I wanted, I just spent my

ten dollars

Well its seven, I get the seven for seven or whatever. Um I spent my seven dollars and I'm not getting what I wanted. And I'm usually not getting what I like.

I do look at the calorie count.

I do too. I definitely look at the calorie count.

especially for desserts.

Is it posted in there? I haven't been there.

there's cards for some of them and it should be up on the menu boards as well

Okay, that's good!

It's there protocol but does that happen? No.

It's mostly there.

On the website or on the [inaudible]

On the website, it is there.

on the website its there, but it pulls directly from like a menu creating thing. Uh, so if they make an audible change on that, it doesn't update in the system. Uh yeah. There's issues.

Yeah, I would not say that it's probably not ridiculously accurate but it's probably ballpark.

Sure

I mean if I'm gonna get fried chicken, I'm not gonna care if it's, you know, the calorie count is not even in my mind. But if I want a grilled turkey sandwich, you know, versus that, I would love to know how many calories are in that versus the fried chicken to make an educated decision on you know if it is worth it.

Technically, it's the law pretty soon. And Aramark falls under that, I would assume. Yeah, I think there is a lack of oversight of both the website and menus. I would definitely agree with that.

Does it include your sodium count?

yeah. In the break down.

It does because the soups are very high — they are very salty. But soups typically are anyway.

And if you go to Freshii, look at the sodium content on some of that stuff, it will blow your mind. Like there are things that have easily 800 milligrams of sodium in them. It's big.

Mod 1: Okay so..

My heart hurts just thinking of it.

If we don't have anything else on that one, um so we kind of already touched on this but I'm just following the script. Are there places you can go on campus to eat healthy? If yes, where are they? What kind of items do you normally select from them? If no, what are you looking for?

Well on the rare occasions I get to go to the Grill...

The Grill at 1810?

The fresh fruit is.. To me that is an entree and dessert.

There salad bar is also ten times better, as far as it's a beautiful displayed salad bar. The fruit it wonderful. There options are pretty good. I mean, with them having two different comfort options, it is kind of nice. They have a healthy version, a healthy option that they say is the healthier option. You know, so it's kind of nice to have sort of like a comfort, really bad stuff, and then a comfort, okay maybe I'll be a little bit better. You know, they do lack in the dessert, which obviously does not fall in the healthy realm at all but...

Can you get in and out of there fast? I haven't been there.

It's like the JC, only it is for the athletes but obviously everyone can go. It's priced the same as the JC.

Okay.

there is an upcharge for dinner, though.

Oh, yeah I've never gone there for dinner. But it is a little bit of a heftier walk. It's behind the Pavilion, sort of. It's about a half a mile walk, but it's nice.

I know that downstairs in the RC, our fruit usually is melon and cantaloupe and melon. Sometimes we will get grapes or something like that..

On very rare occasions. Honeydew and cantaloupe

very rare occasions, but it looks good but it has no taste. And we have that issue at the stores in general

It's out of season too

But I'll look and walk right by it because I can't do it again today. You know, I had it yesterday.

It was healthy but no.

It is not appealing. So, whatever they're doing at the Grill at 1810, can you splurge and do once or twice a month at the RC?

Is it the same company?

Yeah it's the same company. It's two completely different contracts. One's a PNL contract one's a Cost Plus, I probably shouldn't say that but I don't care anymore

Mod 1: It's okay, it's all confidential.

Um so basically from the money perspective — and I don't even know if this perspective is relevant.

Mod 1: No, I want all of your perspectives. I think you have a very unique perspective.

So, there is no profit incentive for Aramark over there. We just, they just slap a percentage on top of it. Uhh but granted the recipes are the same, there's no difference in the quality. It's the consistency that the problem is. Uhh the way that they may be prepared over there, pays more attention...

So no incentive for profit at the RC or at the Grill?

At the Grill.

The Grill? Okay so that makes sense. Okay. I thought you meant the RC. But that makes perfect sense. But they do a decent job!

So, athletics calls the shots and they tell you, you know, they help develop your menus umm it was always hard to uhh reconcile the nutritional content because it really is the same. I mean they are buying the same product from the same vendors, they are preparing it uh with the same recipe. Um but the perception over there, for some reason, has always been that it is healthier. Now they will have more fruits there because, that is not standard Aramark practice, but since its Cost Plus, they can provide more fruit without getting deemed on type of quality.

Well the fruit is delicious. It's fresh and its really good.

I'm gonna tell you about the melons: they are the two cheapest uhh fruit you can buy and the amount of food waste from that is like miniscule compared to like a pineapple or something or a banana. There's just less food waste. They are cheap so that's what they consistently put in there.

Well I think a lot has to do with season also. As far as, if they aren't in season, they aren't gonna taste as good. So they are gonna have a lot less flavor.

If you have melon year round, it's not...

but other than just for the healthy places, I think the Residential dining is always gonna be healthier when you are eating in like the 1810 or the Rebel Market or the RC because those are less, what they call AP products, where they're already prepared or whatever. Like when you go to Canes, granted I guess their chicken fingers are created fresh, or somewhere else, it's not really a fresh product. Where there's more fresh products at these residential places. So that is where I intended to always eat. Uhh, and Freshii, but you know, all things said, Freshii is kind of a misconception.

They just started doing fresh fruit smoothies once a week downstairs.

Mod 1: at the RC?

uh huh

That's nice.

so that's where I can get the strawberries and..

Once a week.

Hey it was zero!

I know! But like, come on, if you are gonna do it.. I mean they probably did it because everybody loved the smoothies at the 1810 so they said ‘help, can we make this?’”

And then they started sushi, which...

It should be good this year because [name redacted]’s daughter is living down there so.. [laughter]

Not like it matters.

Oh, I guarantee you it matters. I guarantee you they’re acting differently down there for sure.

Oh, well I’ll try to keep her there! [laughter] Keep her in the building.

yeah exactly.

Mod 1: Okay. Um so the next thing we are gonna talk on is that we’ve tried some healthy vending initiatives in like the residence halls and a few other buildings and we just wanted to know if you have noticed them, if you think we need more options around campus in this particular area? Like what are your thoughts on the healthy vending initiative?

In our building we need a few more options.

Mod 1: In which building is that?

[department redacted]

Yeah, we need a few more healthy options in that machine because I zero right in on those darn Peanut M&Ms. Give me something healthy, give me something that sounds good, that looks good. Even those PopChips, I mean those are tasty. They are very low calorie, they are not high in fat, they are tasty and they just, well they feed your need to impulse eat. You know, without a whole lot of damage. I can eat a bag of those Peanut M&Ms like that. So, definitely in the machines in [department redacted] we need a lot more healthy options.

We just have a Coke machine in our’s, so.

Mod 1: And which building is that?

That’s the Old Athletics Building.

I’ve never seen a healthy option in a snack machine in this on campus, but maybe I’m not looking in the right places.



Mod 1: There are a few.

That was what I was going to ask. What are you considering healthy options for vending?

Mod 1: I do not know as much about it. One of my advisors runs the Healthy Vending Initiative on campus and I know that they are putting in like, it's something to do with like, how public schools have to have certain, like the first three ingredients have to be a certain thing and like certain calories and like that's kind of what they are doing but I think they are trying to push more towards maybe like fruit or something like that?

Is it incorporated into the existing or are they specific machines that are supposed to be...

Mod 1: I think they are specific machines.. Does the RC have any?

Yep, we have them. There is a little symbol on the ones that are healthy choices and there is a sign in the room next to the vending machine saying you know, 'make healthy choices, look for' blah blah blah. And they I think they subsidize the cost to keep it relatively close, so say like baked chips versus fried chips, to encourage students to make healthier choices. Now I don't know how that works because I don't see what they bring out of the vending, I only see what students eat downstairs. But I know there are a lot of students that love it! They love having the option.

Mod 1: Okay so, the next question is, we are going to go around the table again and on a scale of 1-10, how would you rank healthy food offerings on campus? If not a ten, what needs to be changed to make the ranking a ten? So whoever wants to start on that, how would you rank it from one to ten, with ten being the best and one being the worst, and how can we make it better?

I haven't been here that long, so I guess I would give it a five, and uh, I think if you want to, I think you need more convenience maybe and maybe cheaper.

And why is it that healthy food has to be more expensive?

I don't know why that is.

Fresh costs more.

Yeah and it shouldn't be. That's a problem we have. That's an American problem. We've got — we live in a rural area where you can grow all kinds of stuff and yet we pay so much for it. So.. we can't solve that problem here.

Because it is a lot more expensive to eat at the JC, even to pick the healthy options, and the JC takeout is not worth ten dollars. So, you are not likely to do that. I mean you need better convenience and better price.

So, what would you rank it?

Umm, I mean that the fact that the JC does exist, the fact that the Grill has their healthy options that you can choose, that they are available, even though they are pricey, but, and Lenoir Dining offers healthier options too when you guys cook, which is wonderful. Um, I would rank it probably a six.

Mod 1: Okay, what are you thinking?

Okay what are we ranking?

Mod 1: Um, The healthy options on campus from 1-10: 10 being the best, 1 being the worst.

I'd say between six and seven. It just depends on where you are um and what choices you can do. So like if you order something, skip the extra salad dressing, or whatever, you can order something healthier. Like at Lenoir. I'll get a burger, and I'll say, I don't want this this and this, I only want meat and cheese. That's it.

Yeah, I'm gonna be in line. My first thought was five, um because of convenience, it's just not convenient. The places that are convenient are the unhealthy ones. The places that offer the healthy options are not convenient.

Mod 1: and how could we make this like more convenient?

I don't know.

Delivery.

Ohh, delivery would be awesome!

Well, Lenoir did that one year. Lenoir had too many for the program and so they had to come up with something for them to do. And they did a healthy lunch delivery. Kind of a sack lunch with a bottle of water and a healthy sandwich, turkey, whatever. It was awesome!

See if they could do it through that program, they could make it affordable.

And it was five bucks!

See!

Oh my gosh!

So what happened?

Well it was a special deal for that one class that was too much.

Bump it up to six and all the classes do it! Oh my goodness, yes.

It is, yeah, delivery is a big thing.

My guess is that contractually, Aramark put a squash on that pretty fast!

Well, but Lenoir Dining is a non-Aramark thing. So they should be able to do as they wish.

yeah but as their contract, the Aramark contract has something to do with that..

Yet they don't cater to the staff over the summer so what's the point? I'm just saying!

I am not defending anything. I will say this:

No, I don't have anything against Aramark per say...  
Well your administration negotiated the contract so..

Right. My issue is with the availability of food for the staff over the summer and Aramark not being here to do that in any way, shape, or form. Um, unless the students are here. And the students are here, second summer, the students are here August Intersession, there's just not as many. But, you know, there is virtually no food over the summer.

It's all in the contract.

Lenoir Dining should be able to do whatever they want.

I will say this if, having known some of the other side of this, if that were to be the case, Aramark would not be profitable and they would pull out of here in a second.

But that's only catering to the staff, not to the students?

Yeah, but ultimately Aramark is here to...

Make money!

Well, make money yes, but, make lots of money!

Well, off the students, because they are not trying to make money off of staff, they are trying to cater to the students.

as we are all here. As you are here to service the students, Aramark is here to service the students as well. Umm, so in reality, it doesn't make economical sense. I will say this though: if, having been on both sides of this, if the University really wanted to get serious

difference on healthy options on campus, put this on the record: they need to be a self-op campus because I have seen self-op campuses, University of Georgia is self-op, they do all the dining services in house and it's a different ball game man, because you take out the profit drive of it and everybody is happy. The problem is, and I've read a lot of articles about this, is companies like Aramark come in, and I would say, probably with their last contract extension negotiated, the University probably negotiated 6-10 million dollars in the new student union, Aramark paid for a large portion of that. The stuff over at the basketball arena, Aramark paid for a large portion of that so....

So there is a huge dollar incentive?

Yeah, there is a huge dollar incentive and I think that's where it gets lost. And you can't make change like this unless you, one: take out the profit motivation or you let Aramark be in charge of it, but then they hire and contract out local restaurants to run the operations. Because unless you have an owner-operator in there, quality is gonna be garbage. Uhh, so and you get the owner-operator sense if you are self-op because, then these people, this is their job. If they don't do their job properly, you know, then the administration will let them go.

Does anybody go to the PODs? Provisions on Demand? I know there is one in Lamar.

And I will say, there are, as far as healthy options, you can grab a sandwich.

Mod 1: What would you rank it?

Overall, for the campus?

Mod 1: For the campus, yes.

Okay, I was gonna say a seven.

Mod 1: Awesome. So we have just a couple more questions. This is a big one: what would an ideal healthy eating campus environment look like to you? Like, ideally — your wildest dreams.

The Rebel Market would be like Whole Foods, with prepared items there, like prepared salads.

Can you buy at anywhere on campus, like 'I just want a banana'?

The PODs should be..

The PODs? It'd be nice if a place like the Rebel Market had, where I just want for lunch today, I just want a little scoop of that broccoli, and umm some slices of apple, just to give you an example. And that's gonna cost me three dollars.

I think it's gonna eventually get that way. Everything will become at some point a-la-carte. And driven by Flex dollars, as opposed to meal swipes because that's where they make their money is the meal swipes and they're gonna hold onto that forever, but really it should be a transactional thing.

That would be incredibly wonderful for that to happen is to be able to, not have to pay ten dollars and all I did was eat a salad.

and the awesome thing is that's how the Rebel Market was designed. If you notice, there's the counters all have space where you can put a cash register there, so that's, the long-term planning was eventually, you know, that's probably where it's going.

A lot of universities are doing the you pay this much for your semester of food and each time you go, dollars get taken off, so that is something that is happening that has a high profit.

I mean you can do that here too.

Well, I'm just saying. When you go, it's not meal swipes. It's just, I've spent \$3000 to eat this semester, let's just say.

And that's what the kids do?

yeah yeah yeah.

And everytime they go, tonight I spent two dollars, tomorrow I spent twelve. And at the end of the semester, you'll see, you know, do you have enough money left to eat?

Mod 1: Do y'all have options like that, for staff?

no, there is not Flex dollar option, yeah, so that would be a good suggestion for faculty and staff. Say hey: 'buy a hundred dollars in Flex dollars, and we will give you a 20% discount, you get \$120 worth of Flex dollars for \$100.' I've always pushed for that and never got a good response.

And then you can just get what you want.

Yeah.

I agree, because I have had bariatric surgery and my portions are super small. So I am paying for a whole meal that I can't eat or take out with me. So the expense keeps me from going and making that choice.

And whatever is ideal and works, don't have it just in one place. Have it all around so that you aren't within a 7 minute walk and it is cold and rainy and dark or whatever.

Particularly for the time constraints. You know the time constraints for some of us that have to be back in an hour.

Mod 1: perfect, um. Two more questions: What are some other things we need to know about the healthy eating environment on campus, that we haven't touched yet, if you can think of anything?

It was interesting where we were talking about healthy food costs more. I thought that was an interesting concept and I truly do believe that is the case. Uhh, if you look at the price per meal that Aramark spends, you realize that it's not fresh and it's not great. I think that there are probably some prisons that spend about the same amount of money on food, as the RC in particular. The RC's price per meal, when I worked there, was probably between a dollar and a dollar twenty five per meal and at the Rebel Market, it was upwards of two dollars and the people that were managing it were getting their ass handed to them because it's supposed to be around a dollar thirty five. Now, with that consideration, that average student meal swipe is valued somewhere between eight dollars and eleven dollars. Due to their contribution, we'll sell it as a 625 unlimited meal plan but they will only swipe, you know, half their meals and their price is like thirteen dollars a meal and that is why I don't work there anymore. It felt dirty.

Mod 1: Anything else we should know about the healthy eating environment on campus? Okay. So the last question is: how do you think we should encourage healthy eating on campus for staff? Like if we just keep it the same, how should we encourage it?

How about, you get a pay raise if you eat healthy? [laughter]

There you go!

Boy, you would see people eating so well.

Some sort of monetary incentive to encourage people to eat well. How about time off? Yeah, if it can't be money, of course it can't be money, but some kind of reward. You know, there would be no way to quantify it.

Keep funding RebelWell.

Yeah, RebelWell is wonderful.

There social media presence is going to continue to push people to make more healthy, conscious decisions I feel like,

And getting more Wellness Champions. That really is a big deal for each office. It really does help. Some people push more than others.

Yeah that is a good program, the Wellness Champion program. You know, if you do it, if you really do your part.

I don't know if I am listed anymore, because when I moved to Financial Aid, I think there was one already there and I don't know. But the one that was already there isn't in that department anymore. I emailed and I don't know if they considered changing it.

You know what is a good program, is the Good Food For Oxford Schools Program. Because what really needs to happen is, you need to start eating at a very very young age. You have to start developing good eating habits when you are five years old.

Teach them young.

Right. And even if it's just breakfast and lunch that they are getting a healthy meal at, even if they go home at night and they eat fried chicken and fried this and fried that and fried everything, they've had two meals at school where nothing was fried. And so that is bound to have a long term effect. So, it's a lot more to do, I think, with people who are working at the University who have lived a fried life for so long.

the good news is, if you start them that young, then when they come to college, they are going to make more healthy eating decisions, which is going to push the parameter for companies like Aramark to put more focus on that. Because that was the hardest thing, back to the Raising Canes thing. I remember going through that decision, I had four healthy options and put them in front of the students and they wanted Steak and Shake, which blew it away by like 95%. Uh so, at that point, I can't go to the administration and say 'oh let's put an Au Bon Pan in there!' Even though that is what Athletics wanted. Athletics really wanted an Au Bon Pan and Wendy's was originally supposed to be there instead of Steak and Shake but CSpire had a problem with Wendy's so we couldn't do that. So you would have had salad, had it not been for the CSpire contract.

Wendy's has killer salads, they have really good salads.

Mod 1: Okay well, if you don't have anything else that is all! Thank you!