



NACAS

Re-Envisioning Student Housing

How an innovative strategy at the University of Alaska Anchorage filled housing units and continued to provide revenue for the university

NACAS Annual Student Author Contest

NACAS Student Author Contest winners reflect on the ways auxiliary services kept students safe in the midst of the pandemic.

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ASSOCIATION SOLUTIONS

Moving Forward with Intention and Competence



MARK IRONSIDE
NACAS PRESIDENT

As NACAS moves forward and identifies its next CEO, the search committee held several listening sessions with the volunteer leadership team and the NACAS staff. We asked a series of questions, which were assembled by search committee co-chair Dr. Emily Messa, CASP and included:

- What is the most important leadership competency for the new CEO to bring to the role?
- What are the auxiliary services experiences and competencies that are important for the new CEO to bring to the role?
- What values are important for you to see demonstrated by the new CEO?
- What is the top priority for the new CEO to address?

It was an interesting exercise and opportunity for input and feedback and several themes emerged during the four listening sessions including:

- Social intelligence and diplomacy
- The ability to share a compelling vision
- An in-depth understanding of the higher education marketplace
- Financial experience and expertise
- Building collaborative relationships

From a business partner, we heard: A CEO candidate with diverse exposure to many different auxiliary services areas and someone who is adept at bringing everyone together to solve today's challenges in innovative and cost-effective ways. I'm sure we all resonate with the notion of innovative and cost effectiveness in today's climate!

What struck me the most about the listening sessions was the focus on competencies. It dovetailed

conveniently with a book I'm currently reading called *Competing for the Future* by Gary Hamel and C.K. Prahalad. Although written 25 years ago, it provides a useful lens through which to consider not only the future of NACAS, but also every college campus across the country.

In particular, the authors describe creating a strategic architecture. They go on to describe the need to have a "point of view on which new benefits, or functionalities, will be offered to customers over the next decade or so, on what new competencies will be needed to create those benefits, and on how the customer interface will need to change to allow customers to access those benefits most effectively." Wow, how the customer interface changed during COVID-19!

In my last article, I suggested that we ask more questions. As we pivot from questions to answers, I'm encouraging us to identify the competencies that will be needed to support our future "customers" and the benefits that they will want for their investment.

As we search for a new CEO, their ability to identify AND articulate the competencies that will be required in the future will be front and center for the search committee. If NACAS can take the lead on identifying and articulating the required FUTURE competencies of our members and provide the programs and services that support these competencies, we will intentionally and positively impact our campus stakeholders and success will follow. Move forward intentionally and competently! ■

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Re-Envisioning Student Housing

on Alaska's Largest Campus

BY DAVID WEAVER

The University of Alaska Anchorage is the largest post-secondary institution in Alaska. The Anchorage campus, located in the heart of the city's university and medical district, serves about 12,000 students each year. Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce ranked UAA in the top 15% of all US institutions for long-term return on investment.

Despite the importance of UAA's ongoing contributions to Alaska's overall regional economy, the campus has faced many challenges over the past several years. The significant decline in crude oil prices since 2014 led to higher unemployment rates, decreases in public funding, and an outmigration of workers from the state.

These macro-level forces have led to incrementally reduced demand for traditional student

housing. The UAA residential campus in Anchorage can effectively house just under 1,000 students. In fall 2010 the occupancy rate was 95.4%; this rate fell to 88.3% by fall 2015; and 62.9% by fall 2019.

Through a series of innovative cost-cutting strategies, the residential campus continued to provide positive net revenue to the institution and its students throughout this period. Examples of cost-cutting initiatives include out-sourcing Wi-Fi services, centralizing storage space leases, in-sourcing custodial services and landscaping, updating 1,000+ light fixtures to LED, and eliminating costly land line phone services.

Positive net revenue generated over the past decade has primarily been parlayed into major student-driven housing and dining facilities improvements on the Anchorage campus. The overarching

goal was to improve the student experience and holistically support our students' success and personal development.

By fall of 2018 it was clear that while the residential campus was making good progress in terms of revitalization, there remained ample surplus space to offer accommodations beyond traditional undergraduate and graduate students.

We began by developing a plan through partnerships with UAA's Conference Services department, and several academic departments beginning with UAA's College of Business and Public Policy. Starting gradually, four apartments on the residential campus were converted to fully furnished, long term guest homes. These furnishings included all necessary linens, pots, pans, smart TVs, and welcoming décor, all procured at a fairly modest up-front cost.

DEMAND FOR STUDENT HOUSING POST COVID IS LIKELY A QUESTION MANY UNIVERSITIES NOW FACE; THIS IS CERTAINLY TRUE AT UAA. WE HAVE FOUND THAT ACADEMIC YEAR GUEST HOUSING IS AN IDEAL SUPPLEMENT TO TRADITIONAL STUDENT HOUSING AND PROVIDES A NEEDED AND VALUABLE SERVICE TO THE BROADER UNIVERSITY AND MEDICAL DISTRICT'S COMMUNITY.



Without significant marketing, word of mouth began to spread among academic colleges on campus that a new “Academic Year Guest Housing” service was offered to faculty and administrators transitioning primarily from out-of-state to Anchorage for employment.

Early interest came especially from international faculty and their families. We initially served educators and researchers from overseas wanting between six and nine months of on-campus accommodations without the burden and cost of setting up households or needing to invest in vehicles for transportation.

Demand continued to grow and the Academic Year Guest Housing program at UAA's Anchorage campus now has 14 apartments dedicated to serving our non-student campus community. No students

have ever been displaced by guest housing, and the additional revenue generated is a significant factor in our ability to keep student room rates essentially flat over the past four academic years. We now serve a number of administrators, international and domestic faculty members, and graduate medical interns from other universities.

Another benefit to our Academic Year Guest Housing business model is that it can be expanded or contracted quite nimbly. Transforming a typical student apartment into a guest housing unit can be done quickly because of the recent renovations throughout the residential campus, and the relatively low up-front costs. The periodic churn of individuals leaving guest housing allows us to revert units back to student housing when demand eventually returns.

Looking back over the past several years, we have learned some valuable lessons. Most importantly, we learned that there is strong demand for short-term campus community housing. We learned that the program can be expanded or reduced within a relatively short period of time to effectively utilize surplus housing stock. Furthermore, this program has helped keep student housing affordable, and organically created and strengthened partnerships across many areas of our campus.

Demand for students housing post COVID is likely a question many universities now face; this is certainly

true at UAA. We have found that Academic Year Guest Housing is an ideal supplement to traditional student housing and provides a needed and valuable service to the broader university and medical district's community. ■

DAVID WEAVER is Executive Director of Campus Services at the University of Alaska Anchorage. He supervises the Anchorage campus' auxiliary and business enterprises.



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CORONAVIRUS CARES ACT

Care and Safety Above All Else

How Institutions Focused on the Human Element When Determining the Use of CARES Act Funds

BY VICTORIA LIM

Towards the end of 2020, Congress allocated an additional \$23 billion dollars of Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) funds for higher education, adding to the \$14 billion designated for universities and colleges earlier in the year. As institutions applied for and received funds, despite deficits and lockdowns, they prioritized care over contracts and safety above all else in deciding how the money should be spent.

"We actually didn't expect to receive funds, so we were surprised to receive them," said Jean Kwaterski, CASP, MBA, Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor for Campus Life for the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Not unexpectedly, housing and meals became the primary focus for schools who agreed to be interviewed for this story, including UW-Oshkosh. Because students were sent home in March 2020, hundreds appealed for refunds for student housing and dining services they would not be using. Kwaterski says CARES funds were used to reimburse the Residence Life and University Dining departments.

"Students are not allowed out of their housing and dining contract unless they withdraw from school. Students can submit an appeal if they want to be let out of their contract for other reasons.

In the past, we had a handful of these requests. This current school year, the number of appeals was over 500," she said. "In the fall we started a small committee to review the appeals to allow for consistency and to have more voices at the table. Although this meant letting people out of their contracts and consequently, less revenue for the departments, we felt it was important to show care for our students and their physical and mental health."

UW-Oshkosh set up separate housing and dining for students in isolation and quarantine due to COVID-19. A convenience store was quickly set up

AS THE AVAILABILITY OF VACCINES CONTINUES TO BROADEN (UW-OSHKOSH ADDED A VACCINE SITE ON CAMPUS) UNT LOOKS FORWARD TO WELCOMING FULL CLASSES IN THE FALL.

as a way for these students to order items with free delivery to the hall. The school also set up a COVID-19 testing facility right on campus to make it easy for employees and students to get tested. In order to be able to respond to students more quickly, some of the employees were re-assigned to work at the testing center and to be contact tracers or disease investigators.

For students who lived off-campus and didn't have a meal plan, yet needed a location to quarantine or isolate, the school allowed them to stay in a room in its conference center for no charge and only charged a small fee for their meals. Several departments on campus donated items for the quarantine and isolation floors to give students things to do since the rooms didn't have television: books, coloring books, craft kits, puzzles, treats, and other items.

To address their overall well-being, the Counseling Center and Health Center called ill students to check in on them and offered a virtual support group for these students.

Housing needs also used CARES funds at the University of North Texas. At least \$5.9 million was utilized for refunds, but 1,000 students needed to remain on campus after the shut down last spring.

"We had residents who have no place to go. This is their home!" said Daniel Armitage, NT's Associate Vice President for Student Affairs Auxiliary Services.

While the number of supporting staff was cut to less than half from 1,100 to close to 450, Armitage said the goal was to keep as many employees as they could working full-time. As dining halls closed, employees took on tasks different from their normal day-to-day job. For example, some staff who were cooks cleaned, sanitized, inventoried, bagged, and prepared for the facility to close down for an extended period of time in a way that when it reopened, equipment was operational. Instead of consolidating students who remained living on campus into fewer buildings, they kept all buildings open.

While Armitage couldn't recall the total amount of CARES funding UNT received he said tightening budgets is not unusual, whether due to the pandemic fallout or economic or enrollment downturns.

"You have to, as an auxiliary professional, plan and work with a budget in mind. If we are

anticipating 70% occupancy, we made decisions to not fill vacant positions, to delay funding to capital investments, to delay spending to make sure we had our budget inline," he said. "Our commitment was to our personnel first and to the students and making sure they were safe. We did lot of training, a lot of work on social distancing, masks the whole works. We worked through an incredibly difficult position and environment and helped every one of our people, every step of the way. We worked with individual thinking versus thinking as a larger group."

To manage their belt tightening, Kwaterski said UW-Oskosh instituted furloughs for many employees for the summer, as well as putting a hold on many purchases, travel, in-person professional development, and other costs.

As the availability of vaccines continues to broaden (UW-Oshkosh added a vaccine site on campus) UNT looks forward to welcoming full classes in the fall. In-person classes have already been taking place on campus, adhering to CDC recommended guidelines and safety precautions such as social distancing, limited occupancy, and masks. Armitage says the numbers show the steps that they've been taking to reopen are working well.

"I can't think of too many colleagues who haven't been fully vaccinated. I've been pleased how positive faculty and students have been doing what they're supposed to. We haven't seen issues that have popped up in other areas, where students are ignoring policies and doing their own thing. We have not had outbreaks because of that," he said. "If you think about 40,000 students, plus add 5,000 employees and right now, we have nine active cases. That's pretty remarkable in my opinion."

Kwaterski acknowledged the assistance CARES funding has already provided in addressing student hardship and said there is still work ahead.

"With this being such an unusual situation, I believe people felt there wasn't much we could do," she said. "We were happy to get what we could and realize we will have implications from this world-wide pandemic for years to come." ■

VICTORIA LIM is an award-winning journalist and multimedia storyteller. She has worked in higher education administration leading university communications and in academia as a professor of journalism.



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SFU Ancillary Services on the Forefront of the Pandemic:

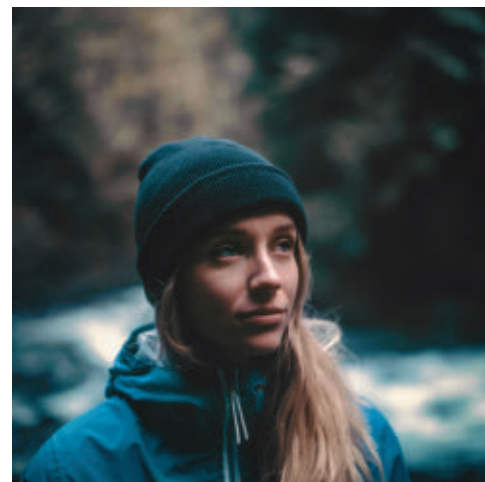
Stitching Us Back Together

BY NELL JEDRZEJCZYK

The past year has been one of the most challenging times many of us have ever seen. The COVID-19 pandemic quickly pulled the rug out from under our feet and sent whole groups of people sprawling, grasping for something solid to hold on to. University communities were no exception. As a fourth-year student enrolled at Simon Fraser University, I felt that utter subversion of my normal life as those initial emails steadily rolled in, each notification adding to the disarray: regular club meetings indefinitely postponed, classes canceled, and eventually, the entire campus closing. Of course, everyone involved with SFU experienced this shift within their own contexts. With standard procedures completely scrambled, the SFU community had to quickly find

new footing to move forward given changing circumstances. Thankfully, my university is equipped with an ancillary services department that acknowledged the colossal challenges associated with reinventing campus operations and met them head-on. This was primarily accomplished by shifting operations online and offering greater safety and accessibility services. The collaborative efforts of the entire SFU Ancillary Services department ensured SFU students, staff, and faculty still had everything they needed to stay connected, engaged, and united, despite the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the challenges introduced by the pandemic was figuring out how to welcome new students without in-person opportunities. The quintessential



Nell Jedrzejczyk

university experience for any first-year, and often one of the most memorable university experiences of post-secondary students, is that initial taste of campus life delivered through welcoming events. It is at these gatherings where the excitement and anticipation of incoming students is celebrated and given a place to coalesce. Without the possibility of meeting face-to-face, SFU Meeting, Event, and Conference Services (MECS) had to design an alternative to the typical on-campus frosh festivities. As a result, MECS built a virtual platform to host the first year's Week of Welcome, holding 120 virtual breakout rooms for more than 4,000 visitors to mingle in.¹ This adapted rendition of campus celebrations allowed the freshmen to share in each other's excitement of a new chapter through troubling times, regardless of distance and with the support of the entire SFU community behind them.

MECS also faced another trial in determining how to proceed with its yearly StreetFest, a community festival hosted by SFU and UniverCity, given social distancing requirements. How could MECS design a solution to an event that typically filled an entire street with live music, booths, and activities? The answer was to create simulations of SFU areas in augmented reality. On this virtual platform, participants could explore campus with their own avatar to engage with typical StreetFest activities and other attendees in real time. Visitors could try their hand at a scavenger hunt, listen to pre-recorded performances from local talents, check out SFU community group booths – like SFSS Out On Campus, SFSS Women's Centre, and SFU Fair Trade – and even ride a virtual gondola.² These exciting activities were a welcome interruption of the repetitive, exhausting patterns of life stuck at home. In addition to shaking the monotony, continuing with StreetFest in augmented reality highlighted local arts and talents, strengthened local commerce, and increased visibility of social justice and community support groups. Thanks to MECS' innovative design of the festival, community members could reconnect with each other in real space and time during a period of isolation.

Similar to MECS' pivot to virtual landscapes, the SFU Bookstore and Spirit Shop adopted online strategies to maneuver new spatial hurdles. With the summer term approaching, the team needed to quickly create a solution for the distribution of essential courseware and other accessories. Within two weeks of the initial lockdown, the Spirit Shop had transferred its storefront online.³ Soon after, they adopted a new platform that increased item availability and began offering worldwide shipping.⁴ The timely restructuring of the university's apparel



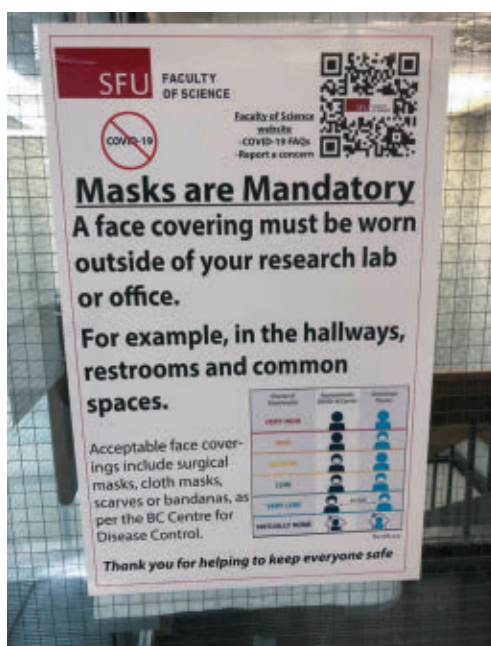
and accessories website meant students scattered globally could recapture the signature SFU spirit emblematic of campus life.

Downstairs from the Spirit Shop, the SFU Bookstore was typically the location where students equipped themselves with necessary course materials before physical stores closed. With conventional methods impossible, the bookstore developed a new website format that offers different options for digital and physical course materials. From there, students could purchase and download copies of their regular course materials, saving 40-50% of standard textbook costs.⁵ This electronic format for courseware also offers font size adjustment and text-to-speech, making course materials easy to

personalize to individual needs.⁶ In offering affordable, electronic copies of courseware, the bookstore eases financial strain while also opening the door to better accessibility for course materials into the future.⁷ These drastic changes implemented by the SFU Bookstore and Spirit Shop showcase responsive, dedicated support for the SFU community, while also creating a lasting impact for accessibility needs that will stretch beyond the pandemic.

There have been many additional efforts by the auxiliary services departments at SFU to keep the campus community safe and supported through the pandemic. As cases of COVID-19 surged, SFU Document Solutions hastily designed ample signage for physical distancing guidelines across the campus community and made them available to other institutions, such as Langara Community College.⁸ SFU Parking and Sustainable Mobility Services quickly adjusted to fully digital parking systems as part of its safety measures, and refunded remaining 2020 parking permits while continuing to provide complimentary parking accommodations to lessen financial stress for students, faculty, and staff.⁹ SFU Dining Services instituted a physically distanced take-out service model for residential students, while also offering 1,500 free meals in residence to help stave off possibilities of food insecurity.¹⁰ The culmination of these ongoing efforts work to keep the SFU community safe by preventing the spread of the virus while alleviating hardships accrued with the pandemic.

As a student enrolled in the final year of my undergraduate degree, the most impactful action SFU Ancillary Services took for me personally was by directly supporting a handful of students, myself included, through a paid co-operative learning



MARK MC LAUGHLIN



experience.¹¹ Soon emerging into the ever-increasingly competitive job market, it is vital to gain foundational experience while still in university. Unfortunately, finding student work as the pandemic surged was challenging. Listings were scarce – entry level positions seemingly being the first to be cut – and highly sought after when available. Despite squeezed budgets leaving little room to breathe, SFU Ancillary Services recognized the significance of offering students paid positions during the pandemic. The department not only facilitated deeper learning for emerging professionals when opportunities were limited, but also ensured routine schedules and financial stability for individuals in an uncertain world. Without this opportunity and support from Ancillary Services, I am doubtful my year through the pandemic could be regarded with nearly as much optimism as I hold now.

SFU Ancillary Services and all its associated departments have demonstrated its resilience, innovation, and compassion for its campus community throughout the trials of the last year. The introduction of innovative online services for the Week of Welcome, StreetFest, and SFU Book Store

and Spirit Shop, in addition to the precautions and aid offered by Document Solutions, Parking and Sustainable Mobility Services, and Dining Services, have advanced accessibility and facilitated community unity through responsible safety measures. Without such extensive, versatile, and determined responses from the teams behind these services, it is hard to imagine how the connections between the SFU community could continue to thrive through the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to SFU Ancillary Services, the scattered students, staff, and faculty have been thrown lifelines linking back to their campus community, like threads stitching us back together. ■

NELL JEDRZEJCZYK is a student at Simon Fraser University.

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Dan Triviss, "Breakfast July 25"

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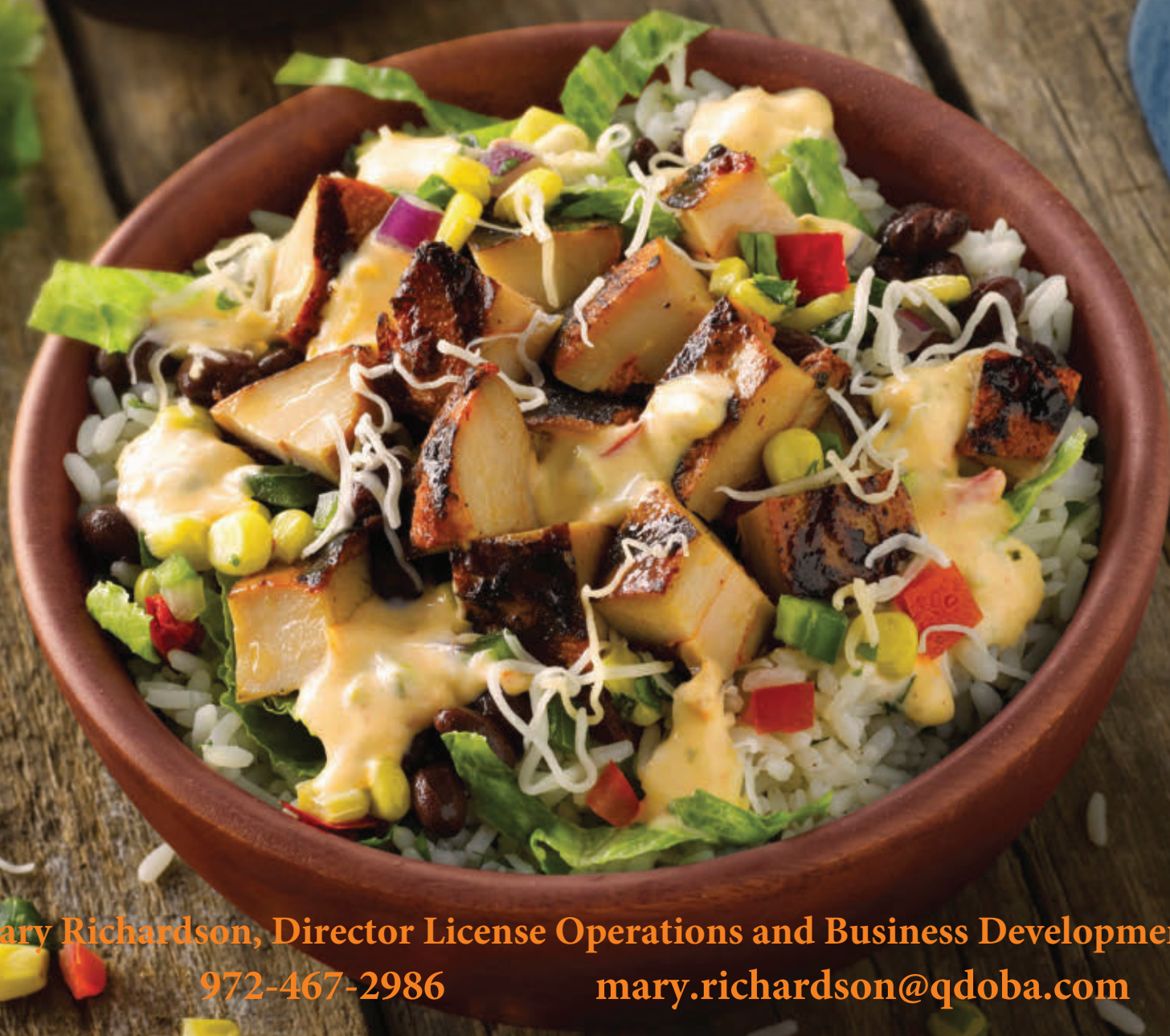
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SFU ANCILLARY SERVICES AND ALL ITS ASSOCIATED DEPARTMENTS HAVE DEMONSTRATED ITS RESILIENCE, INNOVATION, AND COMPASSION FOR ITS CAMPUS COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE TRIALS OF THE LAST YEAR. THE INTRODUCTION OF INNOVATIVE ONLINE SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF WELCOME, STREETFEST, AND SFU BOOK STORE AND SPIRIT SHOP, IN ADDITION TO THE PRECAUTIONS AND AID OFFERED BY DOCUMENT SOLUTIONS, PARKING AND SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY SERVICES, AND DINING SERVICES, HAVE ADVANCED ACCESSIBILITY AND FACILITATED COMMUNITY UNITY THROUGH RESPONSIBLE SAFETY MEASURES.

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Southeastern Louisiana University's Auxiliary Services:

Mitigation of COVID-19 Challenges



BY JESSICA MONSOUR

Southeastern Louisiana University's (SELU) auxiliary services is comprised of many different departments, such as campus card operations, dining services, document source (campus print and mailing services), event and conference services, textbook rental, university bookstore, and university housing. The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges among higher education facilities all around the world, and my campus has been no exception. Southeastern has adjusted their operations and adapted university policy to minimize the community spread and keep students safe. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the auxiliary services departments have been hard at work modifying the campus experience while still maintaining all its commodities. From shifting the layout and mechanisms for serving students in the cafeteria (also called Mane

Dish) to providing personal protective equipment at high touchpoints on campus, there are plentiful examples of how auxiliary services has overcome many new, unprecedented challenges.

The department of dining services has made a multitude of changes over the course of the past year. When the COVID-19 spread was at its highest in 2020 and right before campus closed for several months, the cafeteria had shut down all stations and created ready-to-go boxes filled with individually wrapped items. Upon reopening our doors to students and faculty, the Mane Dish, which originally functioned buffet-style with many self-serve stations (i.e., salad bars and soft serve ice cream machines), underwent major alterations. Given the need to minimize all contact and contamination, the cafeteria underwent huge changes as Plexiglas was



JESSICA MONSOUR

ALL IN ALL, SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY HAS MADE SURE TO PRIORITIZE THE SAFETY OF ITS COMMUNITY AND STUDENTS OVER ALL ELSE, ESPECIALLY THESE ACCOMMODATIONS HEADED BY THE AUXILIARY SERVICES DEPARTMENT. WE ALL DESIRE A WORLD OF NORMALCY TO RETURN AGAIN, AND AUXILIARY SERVICES IS MAKING THE NECESSARY PROVISIONS TO LOWER RATES OF COVID-19 CASES ON OUR CAMPUS WHILE STILL PROVIDING AN EXCELLENT COLLEGE EXPERIENCE.

installed around all stations and tables (also placed six-feet apart), and all food service workers are now required to wear gloves and masks while plating food for the guests. The catering team, which serves all rental customers utilizing our campus' space, also made similar changes. Additional procedures were modified to ensure that any food to be provided on any space on campus met the new COVID-19 policy guidelines.

The event and conference services department has partnered up with the university healthcenter's COVID-19 rapid testing task force. Each weekday, the director of this department builds a testing station in one of the university's resident halls. This traveling testing center is made up of several six-foot tables set up with self-administered, nasal swab rapid COVID-19 tests managed by either the Director or Assistant Director of Event and Conference Services or the University Housing Director. The table includes available tests and corresponding paperwork for tracking results to trace any exposed students. Sanitizing products and various t-shirts were distributed afterward as further incentive for testing. The document source has also partnered up with these departments to print signage to place inside the resident halls as well as outdoor signage to guide students to the testing site.

These testing sites function from early morning to late afternoon, and the location changed every day. There is a detailed schedule indicating which hall you can find the rapid COVID-19 testing sites, based on day of the week and location. The campus card operations department has been tasked with unlocking the main entrances to each location for the duration of the testing. The results from the testing locations are filed into the Louisiana Non-ELR Lab Submission surveys and additional auxiliary services' spreadsheets in an effort to keep the university administration up-to-date on any hot spots on campus. The graduate assistant for the Event and Conference Services department is tasked with entering all of this data and reporting results to their director daily.

Furthermore, the event and conferences services team has partnered with staff at the student union to enforce masking in high traffic areas or other "hot-spots" on campus. These mask enforcers monitor individuals entering high usage buildings to ensure they are wearing masks properly unless otherwise indicated as exempt by student accessibility services' lanyards. These mask enforcers make rounds at popular facilities and manage lines by ensuring that individuals abide by the social distancing policy. The Document Source printed floor stickers marking the appropriate place to stand while in line. Lastly, mask enforcers set up and maintain stations around and inside all buildings, providing disposable masks to all who wish to enter and are on rotation with disinfecting gear to sanitize high touch points, including stairway handrails, doorknobs, tables, and chairs.

The campus card operations department has also updated their procedures for distributing campus IDs to freshman and transfer students. Instead of operating out of their smaller office on North Campus, they partnered up with the University Center (our basketball stadium) to ensure social distancing policies are being maintained. The director and student workers for this department were tasked with creating an appointment-based system to further minimize long lines and opportunity for unnecessary congregating. The university bookstore and housing departments have also worked toward eliminating multiple entrances to facilities to further minimize contamination and allow for quick turnaround times for disinfecting doors and other surfaces. In addition, the housing staff has worked to maintain connection with students by creating virtual gatherings to get students residing in resident halls creating relationships with one another to prevent distress due to isolation.

Finally, the textbook rental department has undergone one of the most challenging tasks of all – distributing and collecting textbooks from students while abiding by all COVID-19 policies and guidelines, minimizing contact and contamination, and also providing excellent customer service and

communication to students. Before the pandemic, our students were able to enter our textbook rental facility to return select textbooks, that were organized nicely among many aisles. The large majority of campus classes offer rental textbooks. This is how thousands of students obtain their books for each semester. Because thousands of students congregating in one facility to get books would be a huge issue, the textbook rental staff created a large-scale, appointment-based drive-thru service for picking up textbooks. Textbooks had already been gathered from the shelves and packaged for delivery, or mailed to students at no cost. To return books, the staff created a drop box system and made sure to disinfect books according to policy. In Spring 2021, the bookstore shifted to a walk-up model to avoid long car lines that had happened with the drive-up model.

All in all, Southeastern Louisiana University has made sure to prioritize the safety of its community and students over all else, especially the accommodations headed up by Auxiliary Services. We are all hoping to return to more normal life after 15 months of the pandemic. Auxiliary Services at SELU has shown that they are committed to helping make that a reality. With the partnering of all auxiliary services departments, campus card operations, dining services, document source, event and conference services, textbook rental, university bookstore, and university housing, the campus remains a safe and exciting place for students, faculty and staff, and rental customers and visitors. These are just some of the examples that colleges across the country faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our auxiliary services team did a great job of mitigating virus spread, while also coming up with innovative ways to decrease disruption of campus life. I believe that as time passes, our auxiliary services team will make all of these solutions even more efficient and effective. **Geaux Lions!** ■

JESSICA MONSOUR is a student at Southeastern Louisiana University.



BC Dining Services:

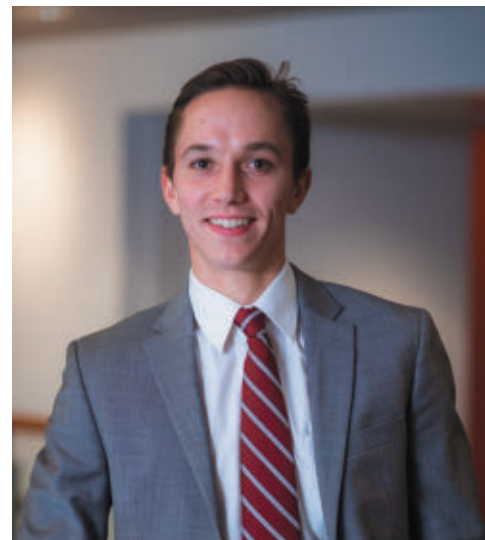
Rapid Innovation in Rapidly Changing Times

BY WILL PETERS

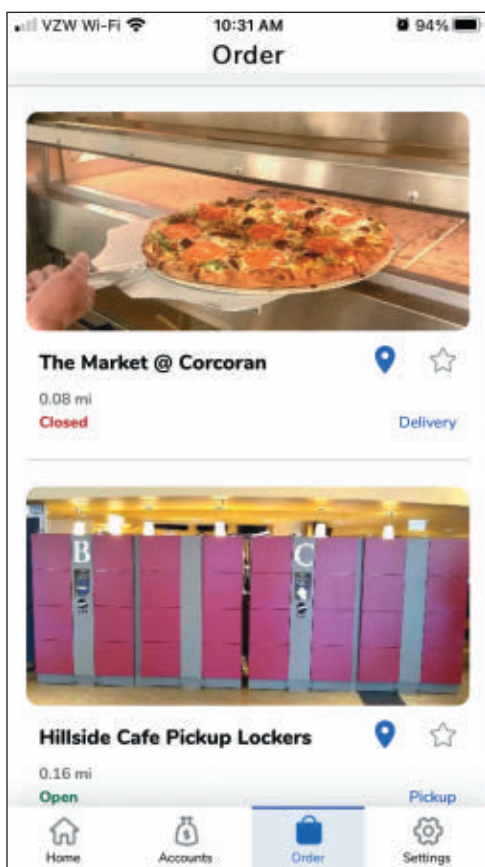
When Boston College decided to bring the full student body of roughly 9,000 students back to its compact, residential campus in the fall of 2020, the university and its auxiliary services faced a variety of questions: How would spread of the virus be prevented in spaces such as classrooms or study spaces? To what extent would students be permitted to socialize in a COVID-safe manner? How would safety guidelines be encouraged and enforced across campus? While certain units faced only a few of these types of questions, Boston College Dining Services (BCDS) faced all of these questions and more. Because of the heavily residential nature of BC's campus, many students rely on dining halls for more than just their nourishment; dining halls are study spaces, social spaces, and more. How would BCDS respond to the challenge of feeding a student

body, over half of which relies on a full meal plan, during times of social distancing and de-densification, while also meeting the experiential needs and expectations of students residing on campus? Well, as the saying goes, friction makes fire, and when faced with rapidly changing times and demands, BCDS responded with rapid innovation and creativity.

First and foremost, at the top of BCDS's concerns in times of COVID was ensuring that dining halls were not locations of heavy spread of the virus. When, in the past, BC Dining served 20,000+ meals in a day across all locations, the dining halls were poised to be central super-spreader locations. BCDS started by following suit with local ordinances, limiting the number of individuals at any given table to six and limiting the duration that students could spend at their table during a meal to 90 minutes. Decals were



WILL PETERS



This image shows the landing page for submitting an order through the GET mobile app. Students can easily select a location to order from, see if that location is open and where it is located on campus, and even mark a location as their favorite. They can also choose delivery or pickup options.

added to the floor in the serving lines to encourage social distancing while waiting to be served, and managers took a more active role in the flow of students through these lines in order to prevent any kind of bunching up in line. It would have been easy for Dining Services to stop there; they were doing their part to prevent the spread, and the rest would fall on their patrons to act responsibly. However, BCDS did not stop there, knowing that crowded lines and long wait times would frighten some students and annoy others.

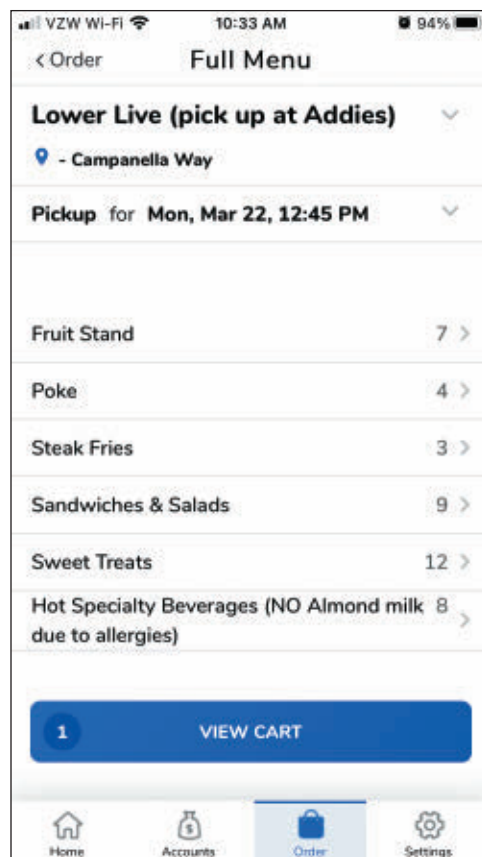
To facilitate more efficient distribution of meals and to de-densify dining halls further, BCDS scaled up its previously rarely-used mobile ordering system to accommodate students who would prefer to order their meals ahead of time and avoid waiting in lines. BCDS started by transitioning two dining locations, and more later on, to exclusively serving mobile orders.

Partnering with GET mobile, a platform designed for mobile ordering, BCDS was now able to accommodate orders for students that would prefer to order meals ahead of time and then pick those orders up at the designated time and location.

The popularity of this ordering method immediately skyrocketed after students became aware of the option. Of the roughly 9,475 meals served at the largest, most central dining locations daily during the week, mobile orders make up 1,975 of those purchases, or a total of 20% of daily purchases across these locations. It is safe to say that the introduction of mobile ordering as a primary method for meal ordering was successful far beyond its intended COVID-response consequences. While it has certainly been effective in de-densifying dining halls and reducing times spent in lines, it has also met student demand in ways previously unknown; the demand for the convenience and efficiency of mobile ordering that has arisen in the dining industry across the country will certainly stick around after the pandemic has subsided, and BCDS is now ready to meet that demand moving forward.



Pick-up lockers allow for speedy, contactless pick-up for orders.



GET mobile's menu interface allows for easy selection of menu item and pick-up time.

Building on the positive response to its mobile ordering system, BCDS added new meal delivery and pick-up options to their mobile ordering portfolio as well. For students that prefer entirely contactless pickup, pickup lockers were added. While a seemingly small advancement on the mobile ordering system, which already experiences almost zero wait time upon pickup, this additional option eliminates the need for any person-to-person interaction at time of pickup. The option is limited by the number of time slots and number of lockers available, yet the capacity of 487 meals for pickup is met nearly every day. And for students that wanted even *more* convenience, on-campus delivery options were added. As of now, the on-campus delivery is limited to two nights a week, yet they are still receiving 100 pizza orders per night. This new offering not only introduces a new, fun, COVID-safe dining option, but also allows students to order late night eats from BCDS directly instead of ordering from off campus restaurants.

The list of BC Dining's achievements goes beyond just these digital innovations, as well.

BCDS has successfully expanded its farmers market and CSA farm-share offerings during the pandemic, rolled out a new reusable container option for to-go meals at dining halls, and successfully engaged students better through social media. The rapid digital innovation that BC Dining has successfully implemented in this crazy year has been a highlight in enhancing the on-campus student experience, but the work did not stop there. Through and through, BCDS chose to chase excellence in an effort to feed its students well, regardless of external circumstance. While many might have viewed a global pandemic as a setback or hurdle, BC Dining saw it as an opportunity for progress and innovation. And we, the students, could not be more grateful! ■

WILL PETERS is a student at Boston College.

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NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO LEARN AND ENGAGE WITH NACAS

Summer is just around the corner, and with it, the fleeting promise of a break. As more people become vaccinated and the world begins to open up again, vacation seems like a realistic possibility! With students gone from campus, you can now take a sigh of relief — at least for a moment.

But come August, it'll be time to plug in and focus once more as students return for the fall semester. The majority of our members will be adjusting yet again to accommodate an influx of people — some for the first time in a *long time*. Last fall, the future looked uncertain. Now, we can move forward with cautious optimism. There is hope in the air.

At this point, it's safe to say, auxiliary services professionals are masters of change. I have been so impressed with institutions that have been operating with a human-centered approach to leadership, reenvisioning what community means in a virtual or limited environment, and working across departmental silos to keep students safe. This past year has shown that when there is a strong community, people see it, respond to it, and become strengthened by it. On campus, auxiliary professionals are the leaders who build that community. At NACAS, we're mirroring these efforts and focusing on the people who make our community thrive.

NACAS Community: We are currently working to recruit and expand our volunteer leadership through our Call for Volunteers campaign. Year-round volunteer leadership will engage you in the specific issues of the time, ask you to co-create value for fellow members, and provide you the opportunity to contribute to the future of the organization you know and love. The deadline to volunteer or nominate a peer is June 25 for Board Positions and August 13 for Committee Positions. Learn more at nacas.org/volunteer.



Supporting Students: We are also accepting applications for our Campus Care Grant. Funded by the NACAS Foundation, this grant awards up to \$25,000 annually to programs or services that support student achievement by addressing a basic need of students on campus, such as housing, food, mobility, safety, academic resources, and counseling. The deadline to submit an application is July 30. Learn more at nacas.org/campus-care-grant.

Regional Community: Our Regional CX Conferences throughout June as well as On The Roads or region-specific virtual events, provide the perfect opportunity for members to convene with their regional peers to explore in depth the important topics affecting your local communities. Learn more at nacas.org/regions.

Industry and Innovation: We invite you to join us for the C3X Annual Conference & Expo, which will be held both in person and virtually this year. Learn more about the experience and RSVP at nacas.org/c3x.

I hope you take the time to learn more and engage with some of these opportunities coming up in the summer and fall. Hope to see you soon, whether on webcam or in person! ■

Lillian De Lisle Stott
NACAS Interim CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lillian De Lisle Stott".

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