

## ***Dining Program Recommendation by the Consultant***

To: Chancellor Joan K. Wadlow  
From: John D. Craven, Chair  
UAF Master Planning Committee  
Date: June 19, 1999  
Subject: MPC Recommendation Related to the Dining Program Recommendation by the Consultant

The RICCA Planning Studio has completed a review of the UAF dining facilities and on June 14, 1999 submitted its review and recommendations. The chancellor has asked the MPC to consider this report and, in a sentence, "If the University wishes to proceed with implementation of a consolidated approach, it is recommended that an architectural study of the Wood Center should be undertaken to further quantify issues related to building infrastructure, utilities and expansion capabilities." **The unanimous opinion of the six MPC members present for the meeting is that UAF should move forward with this "scoping" study.**

The lengthy discussion at this single meeting exposed several issues that the committee members wish to share herein.

- The "scoping" study should include all food service on campus, being sure to address the estimated 1000-plus faculty, staff, and graduate students that are on campus for 12 months of the year.
- The exercise should also consider other ongoing UAF projects such as the museum expansion, Rasmuson Library enhancements, etc. and think about how lower campus entities such as the book store and library might become more visible to those using the dining facilities.
- There are numerous challenges associated with a westward expansion of the Wood Center, specially access for food delivery vans, trash removal, roads and parking. What impact might this have on the current UAF Master Plan and its emphasis on a pedestrian campus?
- Many of the recommendations are so obvious as to seem trivial, but like the dust never seen by the one who is dusting, someone else needs to bluntly tell UAF where it needs help. There is much in the recommendations that warrants serious attention apart from the issue of a consolidated approach, making the review even more valuable to UAF.
- UAF should be certain of its decision to develop the recommended consolidated food service on the lower campus in lieu of a distributed system such as some variant of the existing system. This is separate from the West Ridge issue. In parallel with the "scoping" study, UAF should develop a master plan to accomplish the long-term needs, and then not stray from that course.

### **Notes:**

- This is the same consulting group that worked with UAA in their program.
- Site visits to facilities similar to those recommended here would be visited by UAF as part of this exercise.

### **Individual Comments**

The single meeting in which only six members of the MPC were able to attend means that the MPC was not able to fully discuss the issue in a manner consistent with its normal routine. Individual comments are placed here.

John Craven

The consolidated approach is an issue in itself. This is a huge undertaking for which UAF needs to be rock-solid certain that the outcome will be close to what is being expected. It is the central vs. distributed issue, and it is necessary to make certain that financial blinders have not limited the discussion from the outset to the centralized option and never let the majority stockholder in this adventure, the students, even consider a more distributed option. For example, would students in the upper campus dorms prefer to remain in their dorm for dinner in a distributed format as opposed to having to walk to the Wood Center, and if so would they be willing to pay a premium for the increased study time in the evening? This is generally dismissed because there was once a food service in the upper dorms. However, it is the institutional service of those earlier days that the new report abandons for a contemporary approach. What if that the new food format was tried in a more distributed system? Additionally or alternately, would students support a small service in the dorms in the later evening vs. vending machines? Were they ever asked? These issues are raised here in support of the central theme of the document, "...to support the educational mission of the University" and to me reduced travel time is one way to increase time for study, part of the educational mission. It is one thing to appreciate an ideal that at first blush looks attractive, the consolidated approach, and given the present state of affairs in food service it will undoubtedly yield success. Having said that, it is quite another thing to join a bandwagon without asking hard questions. Hence additional investigations of student concerns and interest should be carried out in parallel with the "scoping" activity recommended by the MPC.

Dan Flodin

The changes in Food Service are very important to the future satisfaction of our students. This consultant has proven very successful at other schools (including UAA). Students want modern flexibility and quick service. Six focus groups and the Food Service Advisory Board (both have student representation) indicated they would prefer Wood Center to the Lola Tilly Commons as a central "state of the art" food court. One glaring absence in the Master Planning Committee's representation is student input. Important questions need to be raised and student input needs to be part of any solution. 25 years ago the upper campus commons was opened and failed after one year. We all agree we need to do this the right way. I believe the answer is before us.

Brian Barnes

Sorry to have had to miss this. A quick comment: I believe a goal of West Ridge food service should be to move out of the Arctic Health Building. This is a research and teaching building, severely limited in space and with a long list of demands for faculty and graduate needs, with no appropriate room for a restaurant. I must say that with the providers new menu, heavy on grilled foods and garlic, I pity those trying to sit at their desks doing their jobs to have to smell this over half the work day. This includes most of the first floor. I would hope that a full campus plan for food service would maintain access to lunch and coffee on the West Ridge, but most appropriately in its own building.