

*Best in the
Business*

University of New Hampshire *Updating Your C/Store*



WILDCATESSEN

Wildcatessen at the University of New Hampshire in Durham has been named the winner of the 2009 National Association of College and University Food Services (NACUFS) Best in the Business competition in the Updating Your C/Store category.

Jon Plodzick, director of dining, and Andrew Porter, area manager, report that the store has been updated since it was first profiled in October 2007 in *C/Stores On Campus*.

"One of the biggest changes we have been able to make is that we have expanded the foodservice menu with a line of salads, a broader line of pizzas, calzones and sandwiches," said Porter. "We just wanted to diversify the menu. We knew when we kicked it off, we wanted to go basic. We wanted to do the core of sandwiches that we have historically done. We wanted to make sure we did them well."

The store relies on a lot of repeat business. "We knew we wanted to spread the menu out a little bit, give them some more choices," he said. "The students who come in there come in very regularly, so we wanted to make sure they had items they could move on from and not get sick of the steak-and-cheese sub or that traditional turkey sandwich. We added a chicken quesadilla that's gone really well. We added some salads that have gone very well this semester. We have the Uno Express pizza line that has a line of flatbread sandwiches."

Another big addition the store has made is an online ordering system. "With the expansion of that foodservice line, we've gone into an online ordering system that the students have utilized with great success. We actually push about 300 orders a week through that online service," Porter said.

The online system, FoodPro on the Go from Aurora Systems, allows students to pre-order their food and pick it up where most of the traditional orders are placed. "It allows us great efficiency to get kids in and out," he said. In addition to ordering foodservice items, students can order groceries.

"We added this for the sake of efficiency," said Porter. "The lines queue up in the evenings for hockey games, for events and just for our regular Friday and Saturday night crowds, and to try and get the kids in and out of there faster and get more turns out of the same space and the same staff. We had the license for the system with another retail location on campus and we didn't have real good success with it. I don't know if it was a marketing issue on our end or a type of service that they used at that facility, but this just lent itself perfectly to letting the kids come in, grab their sandwich and get out without having to tie up a staff member one on one for a line of four to six questions depending on what they are ordering."

Another change at the store was the addition of late-night hours, with the store staying open until 4 a.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. "Those are the nights we targeted because those are the nights that kids are out having a little bit of fun," said Plodzick. "It has worked very, very well."

Porter agreed. "From the first night we've done it, we've done consistently 100-200 transactions in that three-hour period and that is with full service. We didn't have to downgrade any of the service to extend the hours."

Plodzick said that Porter has worked hard to improve the store. "We have gotten much more efficient. Andrew's profitability this year is much greater than it was last year. Some of it is driven by the amount of sales volume, but it is also because we were able to lower the expenses after being open for a year. Getting into the 4 a.m. operational hours is a big, big win for us financially since the campus population who used to go downtown now are able to come here. It put new money into the Wildcatessen that we didn't have and we didn't anticipate."

—OCH

