

## How do you introduce your dining program to new and incoming students?



**Anthony Coschignano**  
Director of Dining Services  
Valparaiso University  
Valparaiso, Ind.  
3,900 total students  
2,500-2,800 meals served daily

At Valparaiso University our program for all incoming freshmen and transfer students is known as FOCUS. FOCUS gives each department on campus an opportunity to showcase their operations to students and their families. One of the big things, of course, is what there is to eat on campus.

For FOCUS this year, Dining Services instituted a new program for introducing incoming students to campus foodservice activities. During FOCUS, we supply many meals and breaks to the parents and students; this is our opportunity to demonstrate what dining is all about at Valparaiso University. We set up our main dining hall, Founders Table, as we would during the school year. We provide students and their families with the opportunity to experience the food offerings that are available to the students during a semester for breakfast, lunch and dinner. During these meals our managers and staff interact with students and parents and inform them about our dining



**Mike Flory**  
Director of Dining Services  
Hendrix College  
Conway, Ark.  
1,250 total students  
2,400 meals served daily

Our biggest recruiting tool is campus visitations, which are conducted through our admissions department. Prospective students and their parents enjoy a meal in the cafeteria, and are introduced to our dining hall, board plans and services. Our new dining hall opened this spring, and is a great selling point with the additional venues. Once these students are admitted and registered, the college business office sends out billings in which they recommend various dining plans and encourage our “unlimited” plan first, which offers the best value.

Throughout the year, we participate in various activity fairs organized by admissions and student affairs groups. This gives us again the opportunity to promote ourselves. Additionally, each summer since 1980, our college has hosted the Arkansas Governor’s School, an educational program consisting of 400 gifted and talented high school seniors from across the state. Many of



**Richard Fritz**  
Director of Dining and Racer  
Hospitality Services  
Murray State University  
Murray, Ky.  
10,400 total students  
5,300 average meals served daily

The first introduction to Murray State, for most students, is at Summer Orientation. The day for them is very structured and, we’re not going to lie, it’s probably stressful as they are flooded with new information. Being in the hospitality industry, we do our best to put them at ease by keeping our session fairly short and to the point. We do present a PowerPoint detailing the program, plans, locations and special services. A complimentary lunch is provided in our residential dining facility. We don’t pull out all the stops for this lunch, either. The dishes and services provided should be as close to a normal semester day as can be achieved in the middle of summer, so parents can be assured their daughter or son will be well taken care of and students can know what to expect.

Students are divided into groups, and each Summer Orientation leader receives training on the dining program, plans and locations. The leaders are students them-

program and what it has to offer.

Our dining program is unique from many campuses that mainly serve using all-you-can-eat facilities; because we use an a-la-carte system, we are able to show that the money spent from their meal plan is only what they choose. Our Founders Table has different areas of offerings, which are Grill, Brick Oven Pizza, Chef's Corner, Sizzle, Salad Bar, Deli and Soups and Grab and Go areas. This gave the parents and students a positive outlook on our daily offerings that would be available to them throughout the semester.

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these same students return with their parents during campus visits and they recollect their dining experience.

Each fall during parents' weekend, we serve a theme luncheon, such as a luau or Italian special, so new students and their families can share the dining hall experience together.

To market more widely, convenience hours and menu selections are posted on our website. A department newsletter is distributed throughout campus and can be passed on to visiting guests.

Upperclassmen are essential in our marketing process. They share dining experiences and food favorites with prospective students. Our staff remains close with the students and each one is greeted by name when entering the dining hall and service lines. This hospitality is conveyed to prospective students and their families by ways of an introduction.

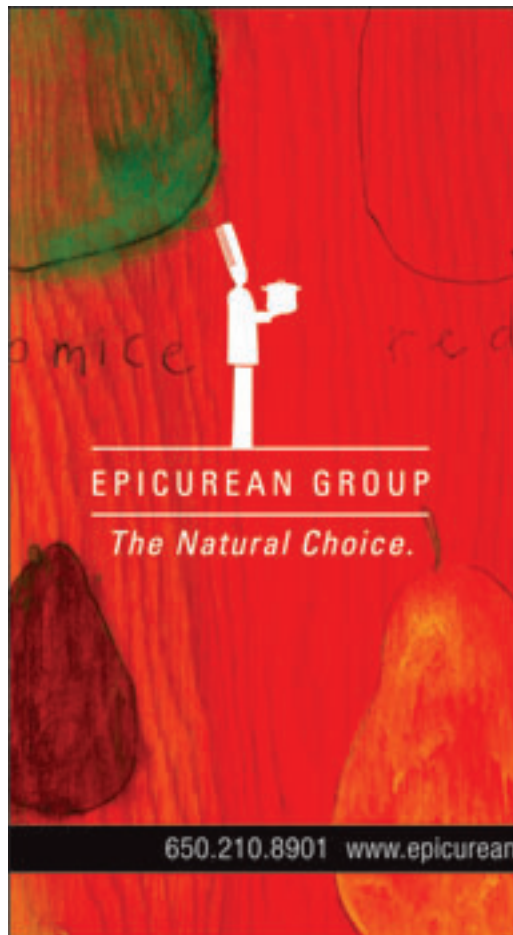
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selves, so they can be the most trusted advisor on how things work since they've been in the new students' shoes.

During the school year, Murray State hosts open houses and campus visits. We also treat these prospective students and families to a complimentary meal. If a picture is worth a thousand words, this experience can provide infinitely more insight into our program. Our staff knows when new students are on campus and take extra care to be informative and welcoming to their questions. Mostly for parents, a simple brochure is provided, which directs students and parents to our website for more complete information.



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