



Xavier Opens **Hoff Dining Commons**

In order to better serve an increasing campus population, Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, recently opened the new Hoff Dining Commons.

In addition to the new dining area, the new 245,000-square-foot Residence and Dining Complex includes a rooftop recreation area, street-level retail outlets and a large “green” space in front of the building.

“Enrollment has been increasing over the past 5-10 years at a pace to where

there were a lot of triples on campus,” said Clinton Kernen, marketing director with Chartwells, the campus foodservice provider. “It was built to, No. 1, increase the number of beds on campus and No. 2, to alleviate some of the extra pressure on dorms that were not designed to have triples that have triples in them. The net gain was about 300 beds.”

That increase in enrollment meant that the previous dining facility, the Hoff Marketplace, was overburdened. “It was in the

Cintas Center, our basketball arena,” he said. “Over 10 years time, that facility became quickly outdated. So the university had the foresight to build into the master plan a new dining facility when they were building the new residential center.”

The design of the new commons was closely connected to the university’s Jesuit heritage. “The theme and design were connected to the “Five Gifts of Our Ignatian Heritage” (mission, discernment, reflection, solidarity and kinship, and service rooted in love and justice),” said Michael Ross, senior dining director. “Each of the seating areas and each of the five platforms relates back to those Five Gifts of Ignatian.”

A major aspect of the new facility is expanded seating. “Being that we are a Jesuit university, the university is big into community, so we have one main student dining hall where everyone eats in one community,” he said. “The increased seating going from 400 seats to 700 seats is a big help for us — getting everyone in one space during a dining period.”

The new facility has five major platforms with substations, doubling the number of service locations from the old facility.

The first platform is the Queen City Marketplace. “We have two full salad bars,” said Kernen. “We have our soup



station. We have a sizzle station where we top salads with different cook-to-order proteins.”

Also part of this platform is a gluten-free area. “In general, we are seeing gluten issues becoming more common in university dining,” he said. “I believe at this point, it has really overtaken our peanut allergies, which were the last big thing. It was surprising how many students at this year’s orientation made a point to come over and say something about their dietary needs compared to last year.”

Vegan and vegetarian students have options at this platform as well. “We have a lot of students who like to eat healthier, and they believe that eating vegetarian is a healthy option,” said Ross. “I don’t know if they are full-time vegetarians, but because of the entrées and sides that we make in the vegetarian area, I think that we get more than just the vegetarian community eating there.”

The next platform, Blue Flame Exhibition, is made up of three serving areas. “Our Blue Flame exhibition area is where we do exhibition cooking, breakfast with omelets to order at two locations within that exhibition area,” he said. “Lunch and dinner are exhibition, so it could be Kung Pao chicken, or we could do a baked potato.”

The “My Kitchen” area of the Blue Flame platform serves comfort foods and daily entrées. “We have a rotisserie oven there, so we have done rotisserie chicken,” said Ross. “We’ve done pork tenderloins. We’ve done whole hams. We have carved roast beef. Then on the other side we have our grill for hamburgers, hot dogs, French fries and all the things that every college student needs.”



Cincytown Bakery is an area that Ross is very excited about. “Over the summer, we hired a pastry chef — Eric Schene,” he said. “Eric does some amazing things. We’ve got some amazing display cases. We also have gotten four chairs that you can sit on and watch the bakers work. You can sit and have a cup of coffee, eat some pastries. The students love us for it.”

Bistro Grill 1831 is the deli platform. “We had a deli in our old building,” Ross said. “It was very popular. We have doubled the size of it. We have four people working at peak periods creating sandwiches. We have specials every day. We have a flat-top grill right in the middle, so we’re grilling sandwiches to order.”

The Fireside Cookery features a 7-foot Wood Stone oven and features pizza and pasta dishes. “Of course, the architect (Shepley Bulfinch) made sure that it was beautifully walled in,” said Kernen. “There is a glass tile wall behind it. As you move around the space, depending on whether the oven is on or not, the tiles change colors. One band can change from looking blue to looking green to

looking black. The red band can change from red to orange to yellow depending on where you stand and how light hits off of it. It is a great architectural feature and, of course, the fire you see in the back is a great draw also.”

Sustainability

Sustainability has played a huge part in the design and day-to-day operations of the facility. “The entire space was built to LEED silver standards,” said Kerner. “During construction, debris was diverted any way possible to recycling. The entire space features low-flow water filters and motion sensors on most of our light fixtures.”

The school also launched Green-To-Go, a program which uses reusable containers for grab ’n go items. “Every student with a meal plan gets a free clamshell container,” he said. “They bring it back when they finish their meal or whenever it is convenient for them. We wash and sanitize that for them. They pick up a new box or a Green-To-Go card, which they can exchange for a box the next time they need to go.”

“Last year we were going through about 400 Styrofoam containers per day for takeout, so switching over to this Green-To-Go program, we are saving about 30,000 Styrofoam boxes from our local wastestream.”

Technology

Students have 13 digital screens throughout the dining and serving areas to find out everything from the temperature outside to that day’s menu.

Two Coca-Cola Freestyle machines give guests 125 flavors of Coke products delivered in touchscreen interface, allowing students to personalize their drink experience and discover new favorites like Raspberry Diet Coke or Peach Sprite.

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