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SOUTHERN NEWS

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New changes are brewing in student food court

By Victoria Cruz
News Writer

Following winter break, the university and Sodexo decided to reimagine the landscape of the Adanti Student Center with some major changes.

One of the most drastic changes was the closing of Peking Plate. The decision cited consistently low student usage and high operation costs.

"Continuing to operate Peking would have increased overall dining costs, including those of other student center food options and also the meal plans," Robert DeMezzo, the senior director of conferencing, events and student affairs auxiliaries said.

DeMezzo said that the restaurant's continued operation would have had negative repercussions on the student body, as it would take a toll on money budgeted for students.

DeMezzo emphasized that the main priority of the university is to avoid unnecessary expenditures in order to keep students' expenses down.

Moving forward, the university is exploring alternative dining concepts that could better meet the needs of students.

"It is a shocking change; however, it will be a successful way to create better flow in Stu and set the semester off to a fresh start," music major Jack Flanagan, a junior, said.



PHOTO | VICTORIA CRUZ

The former space of Peking Plate in the Adanti Student Center food court on Jan. 29.

One possibility the university is exploring is implementing virtual ordering kiosks.

A major issue faced in the Adanti Student Center food court is long wait times during peak hours.

DeMezzo said kiosks can minimize the wait time by giving students the option to browse menu items, customize meals and pay directly through the kiosk.

Many options exist for the space, but no final decisions have been reported at this time.

We are unlikely to see any new implementations until next fall.

Another change students will notice is the relocation of SubConnection. The space formerly occupied by Peking Plate contains equipment better suited for the needs of SubConnection.

"Relocating SubConnection allows us to make full use of this equipment and enhance the quality and variety of the meals available," DeMezzo said.

Overall, the goal is to expand the range of grilled and heated menu items for students.

The last set of the major changes will be the relocation of Dunkin' to the space where SubConnection previously was.

Students can expect this change to occur in the Spring semester.

The current space has been deemed unfit to accommodate the volume of student traffic.

Final details of the move and all potential changes are set to be shared with students as soon as decisions are made.

"Relocating Dunkin' provides an opportunity to create more space for employees and equipment to work to improve safety, speed and consistency of service," DeMezzo said.

Even so, some students view these changes in a different light. These decisions create extra inconvenience and hardship for students and employees who frequent the space.

Communication major Lucas Ferreira, a junior, said that he is not in favor of the new changes due to his prior experience in food service at the food court.

"It breaks up the vibe of the space, especially the Dunkin'. It will become more chaotic, and there will be less space," Ferreira said.

Many students like Ferreira are skeptical that the changes actually reflect the needs of the space and are concerned about the precedent of dining options that are available.

"This also limits the food options available, so hopefully the replacement is good enough for the decision to be justified," Ferreira said.

Ultimately, all decisions were said to have been carefully considered by the university team and Sodexo in order to ensure that the food court is updated, welcoming and sustainable.

"Each change supports the university's broader goals of improving service quality for our students, aligning and expanding menu variety to meet the needs of our students," DeMezzo said.

With the changes made and more to come, the university remains determined to consider all student feedback and suggestions. Time will tell over the next semester how these major changes will impact students.

Students embrace campus snow day

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

Many residents on campus awoke to a winter wonderland on Jan. 25, as a fierce snowstorm transformed the city and campus into a blanket of white.

The heavy snowfall forced the university to hit pause on all classes and events by closing doors on Sunday and Monday, giving students an unexpected break.

"I'm happy to have the day off," business administration major Jené Pena, a freshman, said. "I'm going to have a snowball fight with my friend and build a snowman later."

By 6 p.m. on Jan. 25, roughly 10 inches of snow had accumulated according to the New Haven Independent.

This created a frosty landscape for residents to have fun in the snow and even fall victim to the icy conditions.

"I took a tumble outside of Neff, and it was horrible," special education major Natalie Lindwall-Thomas, a freshman, said.

Many students also decided to make their way outside.

Communication major Gerryiki Williams, a junior, chose to spend his snow day embracing the beauty of the snow-covered city.

"I took pictures of West River just for fun," Williams said. "I enjoy taking photos, and I really like to be out in nature."

Armed with his 1995 Sony camera, Williams said he was thrilled to capture the captivating photo of the winter scene.

"The river freezes over, so you get these nice radiant hues of white and blue," Williams said.

After spending the day outside, Williams said he planned to warm up in his dorm.

"I plan on staying in to watch movies and heat up some hot cocoa with marshmallows," Williams said.

Other students treated the storm as an opportunity to rest and catch up.

Communication major Jermaine Gunzell, a sophomore, said he enjoyed being snowed in, as it allowed him to unwind.

"I did homework and caught up on sleep," Gunzell said.

With this snowstorm being one of the heaviest since 2013, Gunzell said it will be a memorable event.

"This is my first big snowstorm that I was aware of," Gunzell said.

Gunzell also noted concerns about campus safety as the snow continued to pile up.

"I wish they shoveled some areas of the school better to prevent slipping and sliding," Gunzell said.

Williams also encourages more students to take advantage of future snow days.

"Go explore West River and enjoy the snow while you still can," Williams said.



PHOTO | LILY RAND

A snowman in front of West Campus Residence Complex on Jan. 26

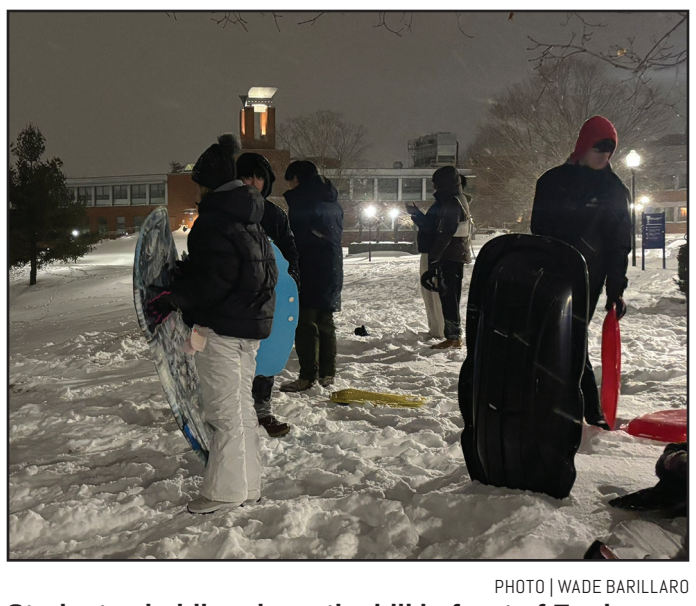

PHOTO | WADE BARILLARO

Students sledding down the hill in front of Engleman Hall on Jan. 26.

Guide dogs promote accessibility awareness

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

With guide dogs in training drawing smiles, the Guiding Eyes puppy raising club is inviting students to help raise future guide dogs while building responsibility and disability access awareness on campus.

The Guiding Eyes puppy raising club at the university hosted its first information session at the Adanti Student Center Theater on Jan. 27, introducing students to volunteer roles that range from short-term puppy sitting to yearlong raising commitments.

"Guiding Eyes for the blind is a national nonprofit organization that provides dogs free of charge to those with visual impairments," English major Ella Bernegger, a junior and president of the club, said. "It's a way to get involved with the community, provide advocacy for those who aren't really talked about a lot and be part of something meaningful."

The organization places hundreds of dogs nationwide each year, matching trained guide dogs with people who are blind or visually impaired.

Student volunteers help care for puppies during their early development, socializing them and preparing them for formal training.

According to Maureen Hollis, regional puppy instructor with Guiding Eyes for the Blind, the dogs go on to make a measurable difference in daily independence and mobility for their future handlers.

"It really provides greater independence for the blind," Hollis said. "A white cane will find objects — a dog will avoid objects. So, it allows them to travel in a more free and natural way."

Students interested in participating are not required to commit to raising a puppy full time.

Options include serving as a beginning raiser for young puppies, co-raising with another student or acting as a certified sitter when coverage is needed.

While a full raise can typically last between 12 to 16 months, shorter placements can run for just a few months.

Organizers said college campuses are especially strong environments for puppy raising programs because of their built-in communities.

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