

EMU food profit on the up

■ EMU food services have had a tough time profiting since renovations were completed last year

By Emily Gust
Oregon Daily Emerald

You wouldn't know it from the full tables and the bustling employees that The Buzz was having any trouble making money.

But what you don't know is that when you're in the college campus food service business, breaking even means success.

"It's become increasingly difficult to break even in retail food services on campus," EMU Director Dusty Miller said. "That's a nationwide trend."

Since opening last school year, The Buzz and the other EMU food services have struggled to simply make ends meet. During the first year of service in a brand new facility, the food services lost around \$250,000.

Last year was so difficult, Miller said, because as the food court was still young, those running it were not yet provided with the necessary tools to measure performance and make decisions quickly. Those specific tools are sheets detailing revenue and expense that managers now receive daily; last year those reports only came every six to seven weeks.

In addition, the presence of fewer students during the summer months and breaks cut down on potential revenue.

Add to the fact that the restaurants are fully costed — meaning that each has to pay for its own expenses such as utilities, employee salaries and garbage removal — and you have a challenging situation.

"The full-time expenses are always there," Miller said. "They don't care whether you're making money or not."

Without tools to gauge success, the managers would sometimes travel along the same paths for up to several weeks, all the while unaware that their

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Stephanie Winchester
The Buzz Manager »

methods may have been losing money.

A recent turn in that trend, however, finds the EMU food services financial situation in better shape. During February this year, the food services caught a glimpse of the previously invisible: it saw a profit.

What caused this change is a mixture of new tools to measure success and an attempt to market the food services in a better way.

"The bottom line is, the managers get a lot more information a lot more quicker so they can make decisions," Miller said.

The managers now use the information provided on the rev-



Ryan Starkweather Emerald

The EMU food court is finally beginning to make a profit. The Greatful Bread is a popular place to get snacks and coffee in the EMU.

enue sheets to make any necessary changes in operations, or for reaffirmation that what they are doing is working.

"A lot of it has to do with staffing levels," The Buzz manager Stephanie Winchester, said. "It's the easiest thing to change off and on."

In addition to the new information, marketing techniques can claim their part of the success.

"We've done a much better job marketing ourselves and listening to students," Miller said.

One of those techniques has been creating combination deals that offer students a discount on certain items that are purchased together. It seems to be working, Miller said, because the information sheets indicate that slightly more people are spending slightly more money each day in the EMU.

While those tools have certainly had their impacts, many people also feel that the focus on making students comfortable and appreciated has done a great deal, as well.

"The students that work in The Buzz have done an awesome job this year, working on customer service and coming up with good ideas to please students," Winchester said.

Emily Goldthwaite began working at The Buzz last week, and mentioned how the cafe's atmosphere drew her in.

"It's a place that people like to be and they don't feel ignored by the people working here," she said.

Because of the increased attention to revenue patterns and marketing techniques, the EMU food services has managed to do better than in previous months. Optimism is out there that the

path will continue to be upward.

"I'm confident that we will at least continue to break even," Winchester said.

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