

# CAFETERIA CONUNDRUM



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**Picture this:** it's 8 a.m. on campus and the vending machines are nearly empty. To most people, this may not seem like such a big deal, but as someone with dietary restrictions and dealing with a lack of food on campus, I couldn't find any food on campus that met my dietary needs. This isn't the first time it's happened this term either and it hasn't happened to me alone. These past weeks on campus I've heard nothing but complaints about the cafeteria — so let's talk about it.

With the latest round of renovations and resurrections, CCC (Jewel Hospitality) has decided to take the majority of the cafeteria to the chopping block. If you're looking for the burrito/wrap station of yesteryear, its place has been traded for "fresh food vending machines" and "on-campus food carts." In the area where the wraps used to be, sit pizza order forms and varieties of fried food. If you were looking for fresh food from vending machines in the past two days, you were met with only a selection of drinks, a selection of potato chips or candy. Very fresh.

In the event you find a vending machine that contained sandwiches/salads, you have from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. to grab some food. However, if you're staying later than 2 p.m., you're nearly required to venture to the bookstore or off campus for food. At least there's food carts, right? Sadly, the food carts only stay between the minimal hours of 11 p.m. to 2 p.m. on a rotating schedule, with no more than two carts at the school at any given time.

As someone who is on campus five days a week, generally from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., these changes have been far from positive, especially in regards to the vending machines. If I don't want to have fried food, (I know, scary,) I go to the vending machines. The past few times I've gone, I haven't been able to access them. The entire concept of vending machines is based around convenience — the fact that you can use them nearly any time. You know how I said that they have "fresh food vending machines" as a replacement for breakfast, lunch and dinner offerings? Well, what if I told you that they decided to put these vending machines in the cafeteria, which is inaccessible after 2 p.m.? I can understand the concept of having access to fresh food that doesn't need to be individually prepared, but the entire execution of this plan was utterly idiotic.

Photo by Preston Drews



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Photo by Zachary Whitley

On the bright side, one of the benefits of these changes is the food carts. Food carts bring a wide variety of foods to campus and give students another option if they don't feel like having cafeteria food. Unfortunately, there's a catch.

That assumes there's already pre-existing food, should the food carts not be available. With a lack of options featured in the cafeteria, students with dietary restrictions are basically forced into buying from the food carts, or not eating at all. In another sequential blow, you also end up paying more for food since food carts are generally more expensive than the cafeteria. If there's one thing I can praise them for, it's the fact that they have brought some fairly good food carts to the campus. I hope that they continue to bring in new food carts to further diversify the current food situation.

To see how another student feels about this situation, I reached out to the ASG president, Ashley Magana Mendez for her point of view. (Interview featured in sidebar.)

After this interview, I was still scouring for more information, but I looked back on what Mendez had told me about how the cafeteria was dated. If the cafeteria being outdated truly is the reason for the lack of variety of on-campus food, it raises another question: should CCC be investing in new buildings or renovating and upgrading the currently more heavily-used buildings on campus? How bad is the condition of the CCC cafeteria?

With additional prying, I was able to procure the contract between Jewel Hospitality and CCC. As duly noted within the contract, it states that Jewel Hospitality "...will adhere to ADA food allergen guidelines and provide standard options for gluten-free and allergen-free meals." Because this is mandated by the FDA and ADA, Jewel Hospitality should go the extra mile to provide more options other than salads and sandwiches for people dealing with dietary restrictions. I harbor no ill-will towards Jewel Hospitality — I just hope that if enough students voice their concerns that we can affect some real change on campus.

If Jewel Hospitality is reading this, and if you disagree with me, feel free to contact the paper to share your thoughts on this matter or to schedule an interview.

**The Clackamas Print:** What is your opinion on the cafeteria changes?

**Mendez:** I personally don't like how there's a lot of restrictions and limitations on what they're offering now. I like that they have the vending machines options, how they have salads and stuff in there. I think that's nice, but I also understand that the kitchen is really outdated so it's hard for them (Jewel Hospitality) to provide more variety for students. I also like the idea of having the food trucks now, adds more variety.

**TCP:** What do you think could be done better?

**Mendez:** I think having the hours extended would be better. They close really early, and I think especially for students who are here in the evening classes, it's not really acceptable for them, and they have to go get food from the vending machines.

**TCP:** Do you think there are enough options for dietary restrictions?

**Mendez:** No, I don't think so. I think as of right now they have pizza, burgers, tater tots, fries and stuff, but I don't think it's very friendly who are people who are vegan, dairy-free and so on.

**TCP:** One final question, how often do you visit the cafeteria compared to last year?

**Mendez:** I think I've gone probably once to get a coffee, if I'm being honest, in comparison to last I would usually get a sandwich from there.