

# *OUTSTANDING ADVOCACY INITIATIVE*

GDS DINING SURVEY

NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF  
TECHNOLOGY  
CAACURH POST-CONFERENCE  
BIDDING 2021

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# About NJIT

New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) is a small, publicly funded university located in Newark, New Jersey. The university started as a rented building on West Park Street in 1885 and grew until it became what it is today: six colleges with top-tier research facilities. NJIT provides over 50 undergraduate programs and 60 graduate programs for anyone looking to pursue a professional career. The university hosts around 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students and 5 residence halls housing over 2,000 on-campus residents. The campus itself encompasses just about 45 acres, allowing students have easy and quick access to facilities, classrooms, and research laboratories.

Our mission encourages excellence and global impact through education, research, economic development, and engagement. Each of these elements can be seen throughout NJIT's history into today. During the post-WWII era, the university encouraged students to pursue their education through "peace-time thinking" as opposed to "war-time thinking." Our students, both undergraduate and graduate, have a multitude of research opportunities they can delve into, considering NJIT ranks as an R1 research university. NJIT is consistently ranked in the top 2% of U.S. universities for return-on-investment for our graduates. Additionally, our total economic output in the State of New Jersey exceeds \$1.7 billion dollars - an equivalent of over 11,000 jobs and an employment income of \$560 million each year. Aside from our impressive educational and research pursuits, NJIT hosts an extremely diverse student community. Our campus has hundreds of student-run organizations that connect students who have similar interests, including but not limited to cultural, artistic, professional, service, religion, and more.

For the coming years, NJIT has an ambitious plan to expand and renovate areas of campus to provide students with more resources for a better college experience. Several projects have already started, and students are excited to see how the changes will affect campus!



# NJIT's RHA

The purpose of NJIT's Residence Hall Association (RHA) is to responsibly represent all resident students in matters and affairs concerning or affecting the quality of living on campus while working with the administration and other organizations. NJIT's RHA reached an important milestone last year: our 20 year anniversary! Throughout this time, we have developed a strong relationship with our Office of Residence Life, Office of the Dean of Students, Department of Public Safety, Gourmet Dining Services (GDS), and other NJIT departments.

The RHA E-Board is composed of ten students who have distinct roles in improving residential life for on-campus students; from updating the organization's website to providing residents the opportunity to get involved with conferences, each student has experiences and skills that keep the organization growing. Each student leader strives to effectively collaborate with each other to program meaningful events, advocates on behalf of the resident population, and engages leadership development for members. RHA functions as an umbrella-like organization to the Hall Councils (HC), which are made up of student representatives from each residential hall who wish to make an impact on their local residential community. Each of the HC's has a mentor that sits on the RHA E-Board, as well as a Resident Assistant (RA) liaison. Both of these individuals help train new HC members and provide guidance for implement new initiatives and programs. To keep the entire organization connected, at least two members from each HC (usually the President and Vice President) attend the RHA general body meetings for a chance to interact with professional staff and relay important updates to the rest of their HC. Additionally, various RHA E-Board members are in charge of committees that connect positional HC members (example: the Residential Initiatives Committee (RIC) connects all of the Directors of Advocacy to discuss the most prevalent concerns from residents and work on viable solutions supported by RHA).

Keeping all the HCs connected has brought about an important tradition - our annual Battle of the Halls. Each year, the HCs and RHA E-Board plan and execute a week's worth of programs that engage the residents with competitive games. This event has been an amazing success in the past, with an incredible turnout to each of the events hosted by each HC.



# NJIT Dining

NJIT's dining service, catered by the Gourmet Dining Services (GDS), consists of multiple on-campus eateries, from the main dining hall to a pizzeria and a grocery store. Due to the current restrictions, the availability of on-campus eateries has been drastically reduced, with an additional two locations shut down in the spring semester. Usually, students have many options for meal plans including unlimited dining at the dining hall for \$1,900 per semester and several options for dining dollars (also known as flex points at a rate of \$1 per dining dollar) in amounts of 100, 200, and 600 with the unlimited plan or 1,411 in a standalone plan. Students have the option to purchase more flex points outside of a meal plan, but additional flex points are not covered by financial aid or scholarships making it outside the means of many students.

GDS offers their own dietetics and nutrition services, which include one-on-one counseling, group outreach sessions, guest classroom lectures, and menu nutrition analysis. Counseling sessions encompass a wide range of concerns such as how to maximize dining options and teach healthy cooking techniques and nutrition for athletes.

GDS also occasionally hosts dining events that draw great interest from the student body such as Midnight Breakfast and the mac-n-cheese bars. They also offer catering services for academic departments, professional staff offices, and student organizations. The catering service includes a much more extensive array of food than what is typically offered at eateries, although it can be expensive relative to other food options.

With such a modest resident population, there are few facilities dedicated solely to dining. A subsequent consequence is the added difficulty in providing quality food and service to our residents given limited resources. A representative from GDS regularly attends our weekly RHA General Body Meetings (GBM) to give updates and take feedback and suggestions from the students. While this feedback session is helpful, there has been a distinct lack of feedback from the entire resident population (beyond just RHA's general body members). The purpose of our advocacy initiative was to address this need and offer solutions to students' concerns.



# GDS Initiative

During a normal year, NJIT students can typically enjoy being on campus as well as experience what the city of Newark has to offer. We have a city teeming with opportunities for food, fun, and films that are close by, including easy transit directly into the heart of New York City. However, many of those opportunities were no longer available and students were stuck on-campus or at home - an experience that has been shared by college students around the world. As such, it was extremely important to listen to our residents and advocate for them now more than ever. Our meetings already incorporate Q&A sessions with professionals from various NJIT departments. Over the past year, we started noticing a higher residential population attend our virtual meetings to voice their concerns. When we compiled these concerns, we noticed that the highest volume of questions and concerns pertained to the on-campus dining services.

COVID-19 greatly affected how day-to-day operations function on campus and the NJIT dining hall is no different. Due to the limitations of physical interaction set by the state and school guidelines, GDS needed to considerably alter their methods for getting food to the residents. GDS experienced a snowball effect brought on by a lack of students on campus, which caused less funding through meal plans. In turn, this made providing the usual quality services the students were accustomed to increasingly difficult. Students were able to share their questions and concerns at our GBMs but it became apparent more had to be done.

RHA, as well as GDS, grew curious about what the general student census was regarding GDS's performance for the Fall 2020 semester due to the restrictions put upon by COVID-19. Students voiced multiple issues that caught our attention, inspiring us to take action. Some of the issues heard included: inaccuracies of orders, longer than acceptable wait times, a lack of food options, and much more. After hearing these concerns, RHA acted swiftly and effectively to generate a comprehensive survey using unbiased language to gauge the resident's genuine reaction to the dining situation and enable the population to voice their concerns as well as advocate on their behalf to NJIT officials.



# Goals

The needs for this initiative were established when changes to dining were made to accommodate the current restrictions. Many of the changes negatively affected students, such as the closing of multiple on-campus establishments and the way meals were being prepared and handled, but primarily the quality and size of the meals and the severe reduction in food options when compared to previous years. We felt that improvements could be made to GDS while still following the guidelines in place. The establishment of these goals was done as a collaborative effort between RHA, Residence Life, Office of the Dean of Students, as well as GDS at both the institutional and regional levels.

This past November, NJIT's RHA sought to make improvements to GDS facilities to address the issues that were brought to us by our residents and professional staff. More goals for the initiative were to gain statistical insight into the resident population's opinions on various aspects of GDS's performance and ensure the concerns of the students were raised heard by the right people. After the survey was completed and a comprehensive report was generated, our RHA President and Advisor presented the findings to the NJIT Dean of Students and Regional Director of GDS and engaged in a discussion to address some of the concerns raised by the students within the survey.

To achieve these goals, RHA worked closely with Residence Life and GDS to conduct a survey that would gauge the resident population's unbiased opinion and look for what areas could be improved. Ultimately, the overarching goal of this initiative was to gather residents' feedback, advocate their needs and wants in a professional manner, and address the concerns raised in regard to food quality, service, wait times, etc. These issues will be looked at more extensively in the pages to come.

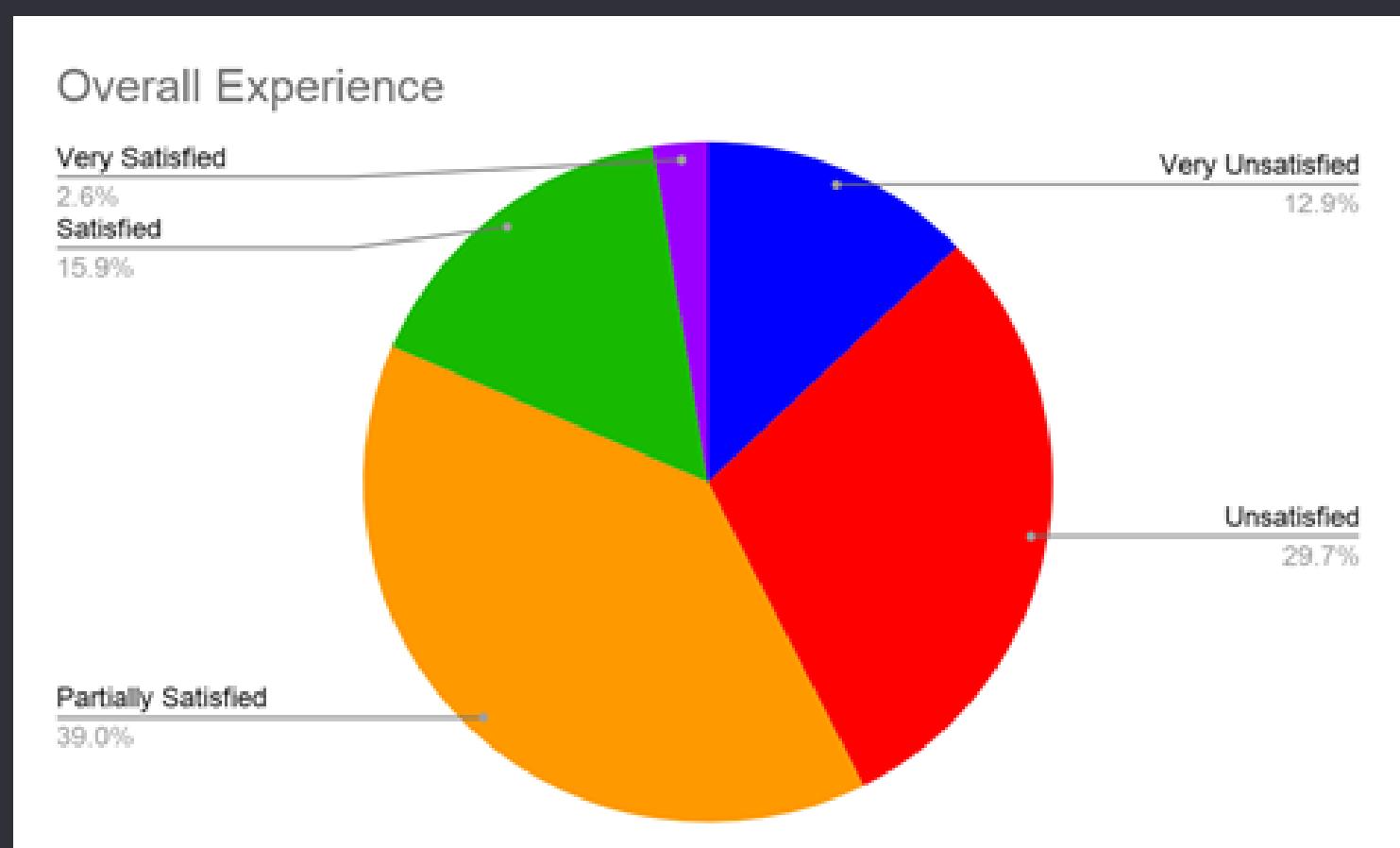


# Survey

The survey was conducted to determine which practices were working well and which needed to be altered to improve student's experiences with on-campus dining services. The survey was sent to our resident population of approximately 1,300 students and later to staff members to get more diverse and comprehensive results. One of our goals when creating the survey was to address more than just the quality of food and get more detail about everything associated with the food experience. Some of the questions asked included "What is your average wait time at Highlander Commons?" and "Have you had any issues with dietary restrictions with regard to your order?". Additionally, levels of satisfaction for specific GDS services and experience were measured.

One of our major points with this survey was to ensure that it was conducted in a non-biased manner. To do so, we worked closely with the Office of Residence Life, the Dean of Students, and GDS staff to ensure that this goal was met. We meticulously worked on each question to ensure that it did not instill a sense of negative or positive feelings into the survey respondents.

The survey collected over 400 responses from students (nearly one-third of the total on-campus population) and the results were mixed but were overall normally distributed with slight variance. The most positive discovered were that the majority of students loved the new mobile ordering app, the vast majority of polled students waited less than 10-20 minutes for their order and were relatively satisfied by the accuracy of orders. The areas that required improvement included the food options, food quality, and value of food options. Further details can be found in the complete copies of the survey and the official survey report in the Appendix.



## Gourmet Dining Service Survey

The Residence Hall Association is dedicated to representing and advocating for the overall student experiences. Please share your honest feedback regarding your experiences with Gourmet Dining and their various services around campus. We look to gather this important information and report it to the proper school officials. Thank you for your feedback, we look forward to hearing what you have to say.

# Presentation

NJIT's RHA reached out to the Dean of Students Office and GDS to report on what the results of the survey showed. Our organization has been in direct contact with both groups since the summer, as our President has held a seat on the Pandemic Recovery Sub-Committee as the Resident Representative, at which both of the aforementioned departments attended the weekly meetings. The Dean of Students, Dr. Marybeth Boger, heavily encouraged our group to go forward with the initiative and assisted in reaching out to the Regional Director of GDS, Stacey Sclafani, to attend the meeting to debrief the survey results. After we communicated with all parties, a meet time was agreed upon, and in early December, the involved parties met and a presentation was given with Ms. Sclafani, the NJIT Staff Manager David Arluna, Dean Boger, and RHA Advisor Matthew Cecere in attendance.

The goal of this meeting was to accurately portray the concerns of the residents through the use of a brief yet comprehensive presentation, open a dialogue with GDS and the Office of the Dean of Students to clarify notable issues raised, and work together to improve the overall student dining experience for the next semesters. The presentation consisted of: an explanation of the purpose of the survey, an outline of the goals we looked to achieve, a comparison of the results and formatting of a 2019 RHA GDS survey, a detailed review and analysis of statistical data acquired, a highlight of the areas GDS excelled at as well as the areas of improvement, and lastly a list of recommendations for GDS to implement to address some of the issues. The improvements suggested included: employing a student worker to better market GDS and provide a more direct line of communication, allowing meal swipes at other eateries manned by GDS staff, and investing in stronger cutlery.



# Effect on Campus

The initial effect of the survey could not be seen during the Fall semester, due to the fact that the presentation was given towards the end and no notable changes were apparent. Entering in April, the results of the survey, report, and presentation are much more noticeable. As a starter, GDS has greatly widened their selection of food and customizable options, ranging from more main course meals and an increased variety of condiments, spices, and toppings to a much-improved selection for residents with dietary restrictions for both religious and allergenic reasons. Occasionally, students will ask for specific items to be added or removed but when comparing the food options and customization from last semester to this, GDS has greatly improved at securing a wider spectrum of scrumptious sustenance.

Expanding on the latter point further, the overall accuracy saw a drastic improvement from the Fall. This improvement was apparent by the lack of complaints at our GBMs compared to the last semester. From the collected data, more students were satisfied with the accuracy of their order. However, the issues we were most concerned about were those who found food in their meals that conflicted with their dietary needs, particularly for religious reasons and those with severe allergies.

The last major issue that was solved was the issue of food not being fully cooked or under-prepared. Being served under-cooked food is a major health hazard and completely eliminates one of a student's already limited meal swipes. Prior to the meeting, these issues were being raised and addressed to some degree, but the quality of the food also saw a noticeable improvement following the debrief.

One issue that has yet to be fully resolved was allowing meal swipes to be used at other eating locations. This was discussed in detail at the debriefing, but due to limitations on the mobile ordering app and GDS's current ordering system, this change would be a major undertaking and would not be feasible to implement at the current time. However, we reached a compromise that would allow students to get an extra snack included with their meal. While this has yet to be implemented, GDS consistently reports their progress in making the suggestion happen.



# Conclusion

Improving NJIT's dining services is instrumental in enhancing the lives of residential students and will continue to be an ongoing process that will evolve with NJIT and our RHA organization. The support that we received from GDS, the Dean of Students, various staff members, and our residents played a large part in making this initiative possible. The collaboration between so many departments and organizations shows how far NJIT students and staff are willing to go to improve life on campus. One thing that we would change to improve this initiative would be to make a greater effort to get more residents, students, and staff to fill out the survey, which would provide a more diverse and comprehensive set of results. More specifically, we would aim to include more members of the faculty since we observed that the response rate for that population was very low. With these changes, we hope to continue to provide members of the NJIT community with a reliable avenue of providing feedback for NJIT's Dining Services.

Conducting this initiative was very informative to those involved, especially considering the process provided a look behind-the-scenes at GDS to learn more about the department, its staff members and the struggles they are facing. The initiative also improved the professional bond between our RHA organization, GDS staff, and other NJIT officials such as Dean Boger. One of the best parts about this initiative is that the implementation can be applied effectively to other universities with little change to the overall structure, allowing our efforts to go beyond our initial scope of what we considered advocacy.

With a third of the resident population participating, invaluable insight was gained regarding what our residents truly desired and assisted greatly with streamlining a discussion into necessary areas of improvement for dining and their on-campus experience. The responses we received allowed us to give GDS honest, constructive, and anonymous feedback to improve their dining services at NJIT. We received a mix of positive and negative feedback to not only see what needs to be improved upon but also to understand what residents think is already being handled well. With the presence of local and regional managers during the presentation, we were able to ensure that the voices of the students were brought to professionals able to enact impactful changes. For our efforts, the RHA E-Board members were recognized and awarded the 2020 Fall Challenge Coin by Public Safety: an award given to student leaders who have worked selflessly to improve the safety of other students on campus. The end result of the initiative can be labeled a success and resulted in a net positive impact on NJIT residents. The group has learned and grown a great deal from this experience, and it is our hope the initiative will continue to have an impact for future semesters to come and can serve as a model of what meaningful and diligent advocacy can do for the many RHA E-Boards to come.



# Letter #1



New Jersey Institute of Technology  
180 Bleeker Street  
Newark, NJ 07103  
973.596.6294

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

*CAACURH  
Central Atlantic Affiliate  
National Association of College & University Residence Halls, Inc.*

Dear Selection Committee:

It is my pleasure to submit this letter of support as a collective endorsement on behalf of NJIT's Residence Hall Associations Executive Board bid to receive the "Outstanding Advocacy Initiative" award. The RHA Executive Board and I have had the pleasure of persevering through the Pandemic together for about a year now.

RHA is the largest resident student leadership organization supporting an on-campus population of approximately 2,200 students. There are currently around 1,300 students on campus due to pandemic. The past two semesters have been increasingly difficult, but we have collectively worked to advocate, represent, and support those who are taking part in the residential experience. We have tailored our goals to make the most impact in the virtual world and redirected our efforts to problem solve during this emotional time.

This has not been a "normal" year but we also kept our eye to the future. We believed that food was one of the main pillars of student success and happiness. Food is essential. The Gourmet Dining Survey was our effort to impact both the current and future residential populations. RHA found a need for student feedback after our dining services launched their new app. It was a major collaborative undertaking and aided our organization in building upon an already strong relationship with Gourmet Dining staff.

Older RHA surveys were used as references, but member found that the questions may have provoked negative responses/perceptions and questioned the validity. We tried to learn from the previous board's experience. The RHA team work diligently to ensure that the current survey was unbiased, asked meaningful questions, and provided data that could help all parties involved. Both GDS & the Dean of student approved the survey before it was distributed.

Data was collected, recommendations were created, and the RHA President presented the information to high level administrators. It was then presented again during GBM. I am proud to say that I believe that each board member learned from the experience and played a significant role in this process. As a collective, we truly left a positive impression on staff and the GDS survey influenced changes made during the spring semester. It was a tremendous experience.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Cecere".

4/5/2021

Matthew Cecere  
NJIT Residence Hall Association Advisor  
cecere@njit.edu - (908)-461-6414

# Letter #2



April 3, 2021

The Central Atlantic Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls  
CAACURH Incorporated

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to provide a letter of support to the Newark Institute of Technology's Residence Hall Association (RHA) towards their bid for the Outstanding Advocacy Initiative. I believe the organization demonstrated significant and purposeful leadership in designing an objective assessment aiming to increase student satisfaction in regards to campus dining services. I believe how the outcomes of the initiative were communicated and processed with the involved parties is commendable and may serve as a model for other organizations to follow.

Advocacy is at the heart of any resident student government's mission and I believe the organization was timely in its efforts and to improve the student experience while strengthening relationships with senior university administration responsible for the dining program, Gourmet Dining.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NJIT's dining program augmented its services leaving students frustrated about service changes and meal selection opportunities while simultaneously experiencing challenges utilizing a new online ordering application. Additionally, students engaged in quarantine on-campus due to a COVID-19 were required to accept Gourmet Dining meals and regardless of one's dietary restrictions and familiarity with the program. Hearing patterns of negative feedback from its constituency groups, RHA decided to seek data capturing the student voice in which the findings were shared with senior administration resulting in service changes increasing student satisfaction.

RHA assessed one's perception of Gourmet Dining specifically the program's new application, meal choices, and amended hours being careful to ensure the questions were objective. Nearly one-third of residents completed the survey and the results illustrated positive and negative perceptions about the program. The creation of an online ordering system, new meal exchange options, and availability of diverse dining facilities on campus was seen positively while the reduction of operating hours and meal options, especially for those with dietary restrictions, were viewed poorly. RHA offered qualitative information in their findings and added specific student comments, anonymously, which served to provide context for senior administration including Gourmet Dining's management.

Gourmet Dining was offered an informative tool created by students, for students, that enabled services changes increasing student satisfaction while simultaneously strengthening Gourmet Dining's program and bottom line. RHA's work demonstrates purposeful and collaborative advocacy initiatives to ensure the student voice is captured, communicated, and utilized to ensure a program's efforts meet the needs of its students.

Kudos, Highlanders!

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Sean Dowd".

Sean Dowd  
Associate Dean of Students

# Letter #3



April 2, 2021

Dear CAACURH,

As the previous RHA advisor, Associate Director of Residence Life, and now the Director of Resident Life, I can without reservation recommend the initiative of NJIT's RHA conducted this year to improve dining on campus. This initiative is deserving of the 'Outstanding Advocacy Initiative Award'. The commitment, enthusiasm, and dedication shown by all involved, students and staff, is unparalleled.

On behalf of the Residence Life Office at NJIT, I commend the members of this initiative for their willingness to challenge the difficulties faced by residents on campus during a pandemic. Their strive to respond to feedback from students and community members and bring issues to the attention of staff and managers shows their resilience and perseverance. Not only did they observe the issues the students were experiencing, but they went above and beyond to gain feedback and compile complete and unbiased reports.

In my experience, completing successful large-scale initiatives on campus is difficult when so many departments are involved, however clear and direct communication and strong relationship between NJIT's RHA, Dean of Students, NJIT's Dining Service, and students played a large role in making the endeavor possible. Their efforts did not go unnoticed as they overcame the obstacles the pandemic brought, social distancing, virtual meetings, and a mandated mask policy. Their ability to persevere is admirable.

The student leaders in RHA have created a long-lasting legacy that will have a long-term positive impact on NJIT's community for years to come. I am very proud of the progress that NJIT's RHA has made since its formation just over 20 years ago. I highly recommend RHA for the 'Outstanding Advocacy Initiative Award'. Should you need additional information please contact me at 973.596.5347 or [quackenbush@njit.edu](mailto:quackenbush@njit.edu).

Sincerely,

*Karen Quackenbush*

Karen Quackenbush  
NJIT, Director of Residence Life  
180 Bleeker Street  
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973.596.5347

# Appendix

## Gourmet Dining Service Survey

The Residence Hall Association is dedicated to representing and advocating for the overall student experiences. Please share your honest feedback regarding your experiences with Gourmet Dining and their various services around campus. We look to gather this important information and report it to the proper school officials. Thank you for your feedback, we look forward to hearing what you have to say.

\* Required

1. Email address \*

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2. Please indicate your current standing at NJIT: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate

3. Please indicate your current meal plan: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Plan A: 21 Meals Per Week, 1 Meal Swipe per Meal Period; 5 Guest entries; and \$0 Dining Dollars
- Plan B: 21 Meals Per Week, 1 Meal Swipe per Meal Period; 5 Guest entries; and \$100 Dining Dollars
- Plan C: 21 Meals Per Week, 1 Meal Swipe per Meal Period; 5 Guest entries; and and \$200 Dining Dollars
- Plan E: 21 Meals Per Week, 1 Meal Swipe per Meal Period; 5 Guest entries; and \$600 Dining Dollars
- Plan F: 80 Anytime Meals Per Semester, 1 Meal Swipe per Meal Period; 5 guest entries; and \$400 Dining Dollars
- Plan G: \$1,114 Dining Dollars (\$300 fixed expenses)
- Plan H: 80 Anytime Meals Per Semester, 1 Meal Swipe per Meal Period; 5 guest entries; and \$0 Dining Dollars \$967
- 5 meals per week, Breakfast and/or Lunch entry \$764
- RA Meal Plan

4. How would you characterize your GDS experience so far this semester? \*

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5. How often do you visit Highlander Commons (Dining Hall) and/or other GDS Services? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Less than 7 times a week
- 7-14 time a week
- 14-21 Times a week
- More than 21 times a week

6. What is your average wait time at Highlander Commons? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Less than 10 mins
- 10-20 mins
- 20- 40 mins
- More than 40 mins

7. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following GDS services and/or experiences. \*

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Partially satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Mobile Ordering/App	<input type="radio"/>				
Food Options	<input type="radio"/>				
Food Quality	<input type="radio"/>				
Accuracy of Order	<input type="radio"/>				
Operating Hours	<input type="radio"/>				
Value of Food Options	<input type="radio"/>				
Overall Experience	<input type="radio"/>				

8. What are some factors that have contributed to the satisfaction score above?

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9. Have you had any issues with dietary restrictions with regard to your order? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No  
 N/A

10. If yes, please elaborate on your experience(s).

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11. Do you have any suggestions to recommend for GDS such as: new food options, longer dining periods etc. If not, put N/A. \*

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12. Do you have any additional remarks or comments about GDS's dining hall service? This includes other services on campus such as: Leaf and Grains, Village Market, Fortes, Taco Bell \*

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Google Forms



## Residence Hall Association: Gourmet Dining Survey Summary

December 7th, 2020

In an effort to improve the residential experience during the Covid-19 pandemic at NJIT, the Residence Hall Association committed to creating a partnership with Gourmet Dining and obtaining specific feedback about their services. A student satisfaction survey was created with the following questions in mind:

**Major research question:** *How do students perceive Gourmet Dining?*

**Subquestion 1:** *What is the students initial perception of GDS's new App?*

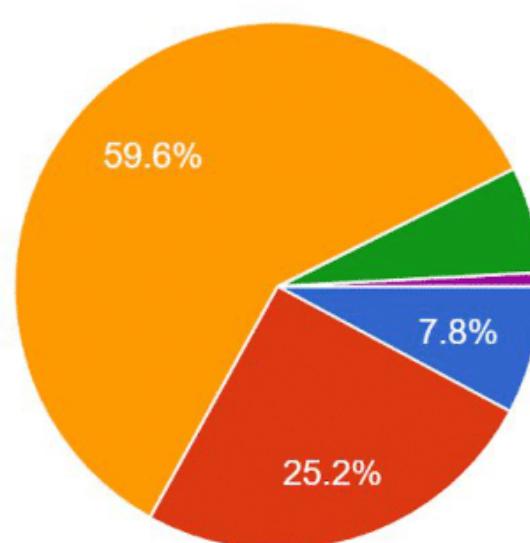
**Subquestion 2:** *Are the modified Hours affecting the student experience?*

The primary goal of the form was to identify positive and negative perceptions of Gourmet dining. The need to obtain this information came after the Residence Hall Association received routine feedback and questions regarding Gourmet Dining at the start of the 2020-21 academic school year

RHA started by reviewing a previously conducted survey. In February of 2019, the RHA executive Board collaborated with SGA and various other groups to gain similar feedback. The survey can be found [HERE](#). The validity of the questionnaire was in doubt due to the negative/biased tone taken throughout the instructions, but highlighted trends and provided a foundation for the new survey. 599 responses were collected during the span of roughly 4 weeks and the individual submissions can be found [HERE](#). Highlighted below is the students' overall experience:

How has your dining experience been during your time at NJIT?

599 responses

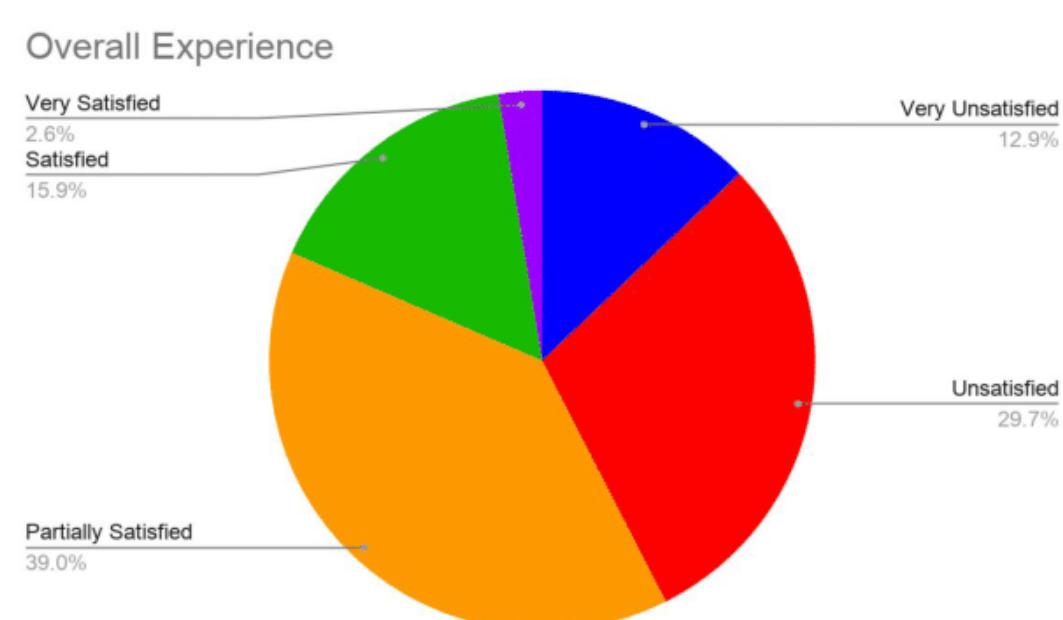


- 1 - Terrible. I have never had any good experiences when dining.
- 2 - Worse than average. I can maybe remember an incident or two in which...
- 3 - Average. Nothing too special. There are good days and bad days.
- 4 - Above Average. Its better than my normal dining experience.
- 5 - Awesome. Every day at GDS is a wonderful dining experience

Once best practices were identified, the Residence Hall Association created their survey. A copy of the final survey can be found [HERE](#). Members of the Executive Board wholeheartedly believe that the questions embody an unbiased evaluation of current policies and practices that will serve to improve students' Dining overall experience.

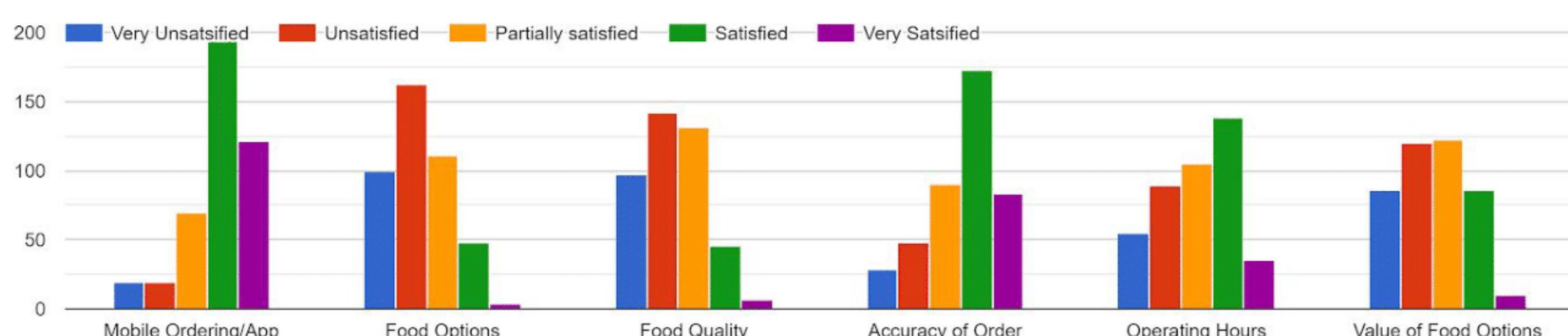
## RHA Survey Summary

The Residence Hall Association Executive Board and their Advisor utilized a student satisfaction survey to examine the positive and negative perceptions of GDS. The survey was sent out to all residential students on October 5th, 2020 using the Housing Director (THD). The Email can be seen [HERE](#). The survey was advertised and live for two weeks. The summary of the findings reported that a total of 424 students submitted a response. Individual responses and the full report can be found [HERE](#). This is a little under 33% of the residential population for the Fall 2020 semester. Below is the Student's overall experience:



The results were similar to the feedback obtained in 2019, but there were increases in the number of students who were satisfied & very satisfied. Below are other areas of satisfaction that were also assessed;

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following GDS services and/or experiences.



Both positive and negative perceptions about Gourmet Dining emerged.

### Positive Perceptions of Gourmet Dining

- 1) The App
- 2) Alternative Locations: Smashburger, Village Market, & Taco Bell
- 3) Meal Exchange Program

### Negative Perceptions of Gourmet Dining

- 1) A general dissatisfaction with the quality, cooking, and seasoning of food
- 2) Overall lack of selection: specifically for vegetarians, vegans, and health conscious students
- 3) Quantity versus Cost
- 4) Hours of operation

The following is direct feedback and specific quotes from students based on their indicated level of satisfaction with their overall GDS experience:

Very Unsatisfied
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>"The fact that there is an hour between breakfast, lunch, and dinner is a huge conflict with my schedule. I understand that you might need time to switch what food you are serving, but most days I get out of class at 10:20 and my next class is at 11, but from 10-11 there is nothing shown on the app to order."</i></li><li><i>"A lot of times I will just get completely wrong orders, or the quantity will be ridiculously small, even if I order several portions of it, the quality of some food is better than others, some are extremely questionable. And what I need to stress the most is that for how much I'm paying for this meal plan, I would at the very least expect that I don't have to worry about bugs being in my food as I've seen many students complain about in my dorm building and show pictures of."</i></li></ul>
Unsatisfied
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>"I am not satisfied with the lunch options as they are always very similar to the dinner options. The food is sometimes stale and not good. However the app is not difficult to use and I have never had my order messed up. The food could improve."</i></li><li><i>"Undercooked food, lack of more portions when adding a second order of items like pasta/mac&amp;cheese, lack of vegetarian options"</i></li><li><i>"There is an overall lack in variety of food, and the food is often bland. The hours are set up such that I can rarely get breakfast."</i></li><li><i>"I can only eat halal, and sometimes there is no option in the menu that is halal except tofu, which sucks."</i></li><li><i>"Just be better. We spend 2k and we're not getting 2k worth of service. Bring back stuff from regular gds. bagel bar and stuff like that"</i></li></ul>
Partially Satisfied
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>"How fast the food is made is good, but food can be soggy, mixed portions, french fries are dry and not salty etc"</i></li><li><i>"I rely on GDS for all of my food. GDS hours are tough for me because I work at 7 in the morning. Also the weekend schedule is bad. I would like to see more options available before the shutdown."</i></li><li><i>"Occasional excessive wait times, poor food quality and lack of options, and an app that only works sporadically"</i></li><li><i>"The overall quality of gds food is average to poor. I end up throwing away most of it because I cannot finish it. Sometimes it is good."</i></li></ul>
Satisfied
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>"The mobile app is easy and accessible allowing me to order food where ever I am. Food options are good but are either not enough to fill me and or sometimes when ordering multiple items there seems to be too much of one item, like to many vegetables, or to much meat, or to much pasta, that the resulting items I have order are relatively smaller portioned. Aside from that, that is my gripe. The accuracy of the order is perfect every time. The hours of operation seem to fit my schedule. Overall,</i></li></ul>

- its good common hall food, but the portions for each dietary category can be improved.”*
- *“The short wait time, accurate orders, etc. I’m paying the same amount for less options of food in GDS, which is pretty upsetting. I understand the current circumstances are very different, but more variety in hot food at the least would be a good start.”*
  - *“Wait time is usually low which is convenient, but I do wish you can select portions because sometimes they give too much food resulting in lots of wasteful meals.”*
  - *“It is satisfactory. Although sometimes when the highlander commons kitchen is closed or something the app just doesn’t show a menu at all. I was really confused for a while why it would do that. Not even a message, just a blank screen with nothing at all.”*

### Very Satisfied

- *“You get a lot of food and the app seems to be working well!”*
- *“Leafs and grains wait time says 80 min usually on the app and it only takes 20”*
- *“Meal Exchange for Leaf and Grains is great, but is lacking for Forte’s”*

## Student Suggestions

The Residence Hall Association felt that it was important for student advocacy. A section within the questionnaire was dedicated solely for this purpose and suggestions. They have been compiled below. Each recommendation has the potential to serve as a positive improvement to current practices that will enhance the students bodies overall dining experience.

RHA would like to acknowledge GDS's consistent and continued dedication to improvement. Members of their staff routinely participate in General Body Meetings with RHA and it is worth noting that some suggestions have already been implemented within the dining halls. The Board also endorses these suggestions as potential suggestions to improve any lingering negative perceptions that may not have been addressed throughout the course of this semester. This includes A general dissatisfaction with the quality & taste of food, an overall lack of selection: specifically for vegetarians, vegans, and health conscious students, Quantity versus Cost, and the Hours of Operation.

The suggestions below are pulled directly from the findings and student feedback received within the Residence Hall Association Gourmet Dining Survey Summary:

### Suggestions

- *“Longer Dining Periods (Meal Exchange Swipe Access), food should be available throughout the day without flex. Increase weekend swipes to three. Clearly define swipe system and times allotted”*
- *“Dining Period: Extend lunch to 4:00PM, Extend Dinner to 9:00PM”*
- *“Definitely having longer dining periods on the weekends because we still eat around the same*

- time. Additionally, there being pasta for every meal has not been very appealing so we'd like if there could be a variety of dishes and more vegetarian options other than just tofu".
- "Could have more options, options are very limited. Maybe more lactose intolerant friendly foods."
  - "Would also recommend earlier hours on weekends because breakfast shouldn't start at 10 and 11am. Would also recommend later hours daily."
  - "Offer fajitas, offer meal exchange at other locations at dinner as well. Keep other locations open longer."
  - "Better information as to how the new swipe system actually works"
  - "I would like it if you could add a deli option; last semester I enjoyed going to the cold cut counter and making my own sandwiches (ham, turkey, salami, tuna, roast beef, etc). Also, if it isn't too much trouble, I'd like it if you brought back sushi."
  - "Fajitas, meal swipes back at forties, open at least 1 hour longer, and PLEASE put more sauce on the pasta the penne vodka was mad dry"
  - "MORE VEGETARIAN OPTIONS. Usually when I go to order I will just see a combination of veggies or pasta and it would be appreciated if there were more options. For example, more salads, opening the fajita bowl option, sandwiches, quesadillas, etc. Also, for breakfast bagels should be added because they are an easy grab-and-go item. They can be cut and given with a small container of cream cheese or butter on the side."
  - "More eco-friendly containers, bins for recycling, use of the red soda machine, better vegetable dishes"
  - "Please include more salads, sandwiches, and cereal. Additionally yogurt would be nice to have consistently. Breakfast should be longer and there shouldn't be any time where there is no food being served. Also PLEASE serve sushi and more Chinese food."
  - "I feel like there aren't enough vegetarian options. Some potential ideas could be veggie sandwiches, vegetarian burritos, veggie wraps, etc . GDS should also add snacks that one can get (chips, cookies, crackers, etc) I wish there could also be a dessert option, even if it was only for one day of the week (cakes, brownies, ice cream)"
  - "Grab and go food (cereal, bread, packaged snacks) , desserts (cookies, brownies) , more fruit and condiment options"
  - "As I said before, I recommend showing the calories a food item is worth while you are ordering for those like myself who are trying to lose weight. It would be nice to have pictures and more detailed descriptions when I'm ordering so I have a good idea what I'm getting."
  - "longer dining periods! the breakfast ends at 10 and i have classes 3x a week from 7:30-8:50 and 9:00-10:20 so there's barely any time to stop at GDS for a meal. if they extended breakfast until 11, that would be great! Also, it would be cool if they had grab and go cereal options!"
  - "Absolutely need more food options. Label properly, include ingredients list for foods offered. Need to provide the food promised (tofu for tofu, seitan for seitan, not vice versa). Need to provide enough food for the value promised (not 2 dumplings for \$6)."
  - "Since there are now 7:30 classes in lieu of 8:30 classes, earlier opening times would be appreciated."

# References

## Images

[https://www.instagram.com/njit\\_rha/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/njit_rha/?hl=en)

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## Theme

Canva - Red Food Festival Poster created by  
Marketplace Designers

All other content and images are of our own creation  
and design