



THOMPSON
RIVERS
UNIVERSITY

Food Services

RESPONSE TO TRUSU



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TRU Food Services welcomes feedback on the services it provides and looks forward to working with all members of our community to improve the overall campus dining experience.

In response to the TRU Students' Union (TRUSU) Budget Consultation Report (17/18) received by the university in September 2016, the following actions will be taken to address students' concerns with food services at TRU.

To proactively identify and pursue opportunities to introduce market competition to campus food services, TRU Food Services will:

- permit a select number of local food trucks onto campus
- introduce a broader range of food options/concepts at the International Café in the International Building, and Upper Level Café in Old Main
- redevelop the Trades Café to offer a broader range of food options and a redesigned store layout in conjunction with the development of the new Industrial Training and Technology Centre
- allow the operation of private food service providers on TRU Community Trust (TRUCT) properties (these operations will not be bound by the Aramark exclusivity agreement)

To audit current food service offerings, develop plans to address nutritional deficiencies and establish a minimum standard for accommodation of dietary restrictions, traditions and choices, TRU Food Services will:

- provide nutritional information on its website (which will also be accessible through the TRU GO app) for all Aramark operations
- provide daily updates on the TRU GO App about where different food options (e.g. vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free) are available each day
- provide signage outside of each food outlet indicating food choices available and hours of operations
- invite the Scratch Café and Common Grounds to participate in the above initiatives

To extend overall food service hours of operation to meet needs over a greater proportion of campus activity, TRU Food Services will:

- extend operating hours in The Den and Tim Hortons
- reclassify The Den to Food primary from Liquor primary to permit underage customers
- consider extending operating hours for additional specific outlets depending on campus events or a change in levels of overall activity on campus

To measurably improve the promptness of food service, particularly at the Tim Hortons outlet in the House of Learning, TRU Food Services will:

- review the service levels at our busiest locations with the intentions of reducing wait times.
- install "lineup" cameras at Starbucks and Tim Hortons so the community can view the lineup before making the trip to either outlet



INTRODUCTION

Over the years, TRU Food Services has monitored sales volumes closely, has adjusted hours of operation to accommodate campus traffic, has offered greater diversity and dietary choices, and rotated its menu offerings with regularity. It has continuously surveyed the community for feedback, and dealt with one-off concerns as they arose.

Sales volumes have remained steady across the food services portfolio (see Figure 1), and TRU Food Services has received a relatively low number of specific complaints from the community. According to data reported by the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC)*, 86% of first-year TRU students surveyed in 2016 were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with food services at TRU, higher than the Canadian average of 72%. In comparison, 59% of fourth-year TRU students surveyed in 2015 were "satisfied" or "very satisfied".

Based on these figures, TRU Food Services believed it was meeting the needs of the community from the perspectives of choice, hours of operation and nutritional value. That said, TRU Food Services has not been complacent about its offerings. Understanding its limitations and areas in which improvements were necessary (especially on the catering side of the operation), it has been working proactively with the community to address those.

*TRU data from the 2016 CUSC Survey of First Year Students and 2015 CUSC Survey of Graduating Students provided by TRU Institutional Planning and Effectiveness



In June 2016, during a meeting between TRU's senior executive and the TRU Students' Union (TRUSU) executive team, TRUSU informed the university that students were concerned about the quality of food services on campus and the lack of choice resulting from Aramark operating under what they called a "monopoly model".

Attempts were made by TRU Food Services to meet with TRUSU in the summer of 2016 to determine what the issues were, in hopes of addressing as many as possible before the Fall 2016 term began. However, the details of the students' dissatisfaction were not revealed until TRUSU released its 2017/18 Budget Consultation Report to the university administration in early September 2016.

TRUSU's budget consultation process surveyed 331 students. Complaints related to food service ranged from issues such as food choices and food quality to hours of operation and service levels.

Given the results of TRUSU's Budget Consultation Report, three things became abundantly clear to TRU Food Services.

First, there were misperceptions about the nature of the TRU/ Aramark relationship that needed to be clarified. Secondly, there were operational issues that needed to change. And thirdly, students identified several issues/needs that TRU Food Services was already meeting that students simply didn't know about; this meant that TRU Food Services wasn't effectively communicating its offerings, services and options. It is in this context that we frame our response.

Figure 1: Retail Food Sales relative to Student FTE's





TRU'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ARAMARK

TRU Food Services, a branch of TRU Ancillary Services, manages TRU's contractual relationship with Aramark Incorporated, which operates nine food outlets spread across multiple buildings on the Kamloops campus (a full listing of food service outlets can be found at tru.ca/campus/life/food). TRU has worked with Aramark since 2003. The contract with Aramark was last renewed in 2013 after a competitive process and is scheduled for a review in 2018. Aramark has 32 full-time employees, 43 part-time student employees and 15 part-time non-student employees.

- TRU's relationship with Aramark has generated the following benefits for TRU and TRU's students:
- In the last three years, 68% of Aramark's employees on the TRU campus have been students. Aramark offers flexible scheduling options that make it convenient for student employment.
- In the last three years, \$1.4 million has been paid in student wages.
- There is a paid marketing internship position awarded to a TRU student annually. This internship has led to full-time employment after graduation.
- 17 TRU alumni work full-time at TRU Food Services at either a supervisory or managerial level.
- TRU Culinary Arts saves thousands of dollars annually in food costs through Aramark's procurement channels.
- Aramark continues to support the Education and Skills Training Program (ESTR), providing an on-campus training lab for their students.
- TRU has received more than one million dollars over the last three years from commissions resulting from overall food sales. This money is used to offset the university's operating costs.
- Aramark has invested more than \$850,000 in infrastructure improvements to the university.
- Aramark has donated more than \$100,000 to student scholarships and has been included in the President's Circle.
- Aramark has worked with our Sustainability department to recycle and dispose of material in a more environmental and sustainable way.
- Most of the organic material from the main kitchen is making its way into our composting program.
- Aramark offers Fair Trade coffee and chocolate at several locations around campus.
- Aramark is currently growing fresh herbs and micro greens in the Campus Activity Center.



There is a misperception that Aramark operates under a “monopoly model” on TRU’s campus. To clarify TRU’s relationship with Aramark, the extent of Aramark’s exclusivity rights on the TRU Kamloops campus are as follows:

The agreement with Aramark gives them the *retail* rights to operate on campus *with the exception of* Culinary Arts and TRUSU’s Common Grounds. Aramark holds the exclusive rights to catering *only* in the Campus Activity Center, the Panorama Room, the Barber Center and TRU’s residence buildings.

While Aramark has contractually guaranteed rights as specified, it is not the only food provider on TRU’s campus. Aramark is in competition with TRU’s Culinary Arts department, TRUSU’s Common Grounds coffee shop and Ryan Vending.

The Culinary Arts department operates the Scratch Café and Accolades Restaurant, both of which are significant living labs for our students, as well as vibrant, popular food service options on campus. Even though Scratch Café and Accolades compete directly with Aramark, Culinary Arts benefits significantly from Aramark’s purchasing power. Procurement through Aramark’s supply chain saves department thousands of dollars annually, reducing its overall operating cost.

Common Grounds is operated by TRUSU and has the purview to provide its own food options and to adjust its operating hours to satisfy the needs of TRU students, independently of Aramark or TRU Food Services. The misperception that Aramark operates under a “monopoly

model” has led to the concern that it has no incentive to improve quality or maintain competitiveness in their pricing. It is important to note that:

- Aramark does not have a revenue guarantee from TRU
- TRU does not subsidize Aramark
- Students in TRU residences do not have a required residence meal plan

This means that to be profitable, Aramark must respond to market forces. It needs to understand what the competition is doing (both on and off campus) and respond with a product line-up that the community desires at a price-point the community is willing to pay.

As Figure 1 indicates, campus sales at Aramark retail outlets trend relative to on-campus student enrolments. While there are other choices on campus and in close proximity off campus, as recently noted in the *Omega* (Nov. 7, 2016 and Nov. 22, 2016), as well as the option to bring food from home, the data suggests that students, faculty and staff continue to support TRU Food Services.

With that understanding, the question remains—could TRU Food Services be better? TRUSU’s report, TRU Food Services’ own feedback mechanisms and initiatives already underway suggest room for improvement. TRU Food Services has therefore identified actions to address each of TRUSU’s recommendations.

RESPONDING TO TRUSU'S BUDGET CONSULTATION REPORT

TRUSU's 2017/18 Budget Consultation Report made the following recommendations with respect to TRU Food Services:

- proactively identify and pursue opportunities to introduce market competition to campus food services
- audit current food service offerings and develop plans to address nutritional deficiencies and to establish a minimum standard for accommodation of dietary restrictions, traditions and choices
- extend overall food service hours of operation to meet needs over a greater proportion of campus activity
- measurably improve the promptness of food services, particularly at the Tim Hortons outlet in the House of Learning

To address students' concerns with food services at TRU, the following actions will be taken in response to each of TRUSU's recommendations.

To proactively identify and pursue opportunities to introduce market competition to campus food services, TRU Food Services will:

- **permit a select number of local food trucks onto campus**

On Sept. 21, 2016, TRUSU held its "Hungry for Choice" movie night/food truck festival on campus. While external food service providers are not permitted on TRU property without authorization from TRU, TRU Food Services worked with TRUSU staff to adhere to proper process, ensuring that TRUSU had a safe venue to voice its concerns over Aramark/TRU Food Services.

Over the years, TRU Food Services has heard the suggestion by faculty, staff and students that food trucks would provide a viable alternative to TRU Food Services retail offerings. In its "Hungry for Choice" food truck festival, TRUSU reinforced that perception and TRU Food Services took notice.

In October 2016, TRU Food Services began discussions with a number of local food truck operators with the intention for food trucks to provide services on the Kamloops campus by January 2017. The seasonality of food truck businesses is an obstacle, as most food trucks tend to shut down during the winter months, not to reopen until spring, which means missing a large portion of TRU's peak operating months. In spite of such operating realities, TRU Food Services is continuing to pursue operators who may be willing to provide services during the winter months (in addition to the fall, spring and summer).

The expectation of food trucks on campus would be to help satisfy the demand for food services that students perceive to be lacking. Providing food that is tailored to people with dietary restrictions or lifestyle choices (vegan/vegetarian) and operating into the evenings, would be TRU Food Services' top priority for the truck(s).

- **action item:** pursue discussions with local food truck operators (in progress)
- **implementation timeline:** winter 2017
- **success indicators:** ongoing online customer satisfaction surveys; food truck operator satisfaction with sales volumes





- **introduce a broader range of food options/concepts at the International Café and Upper Level Café**

TRU Food Services has identified two locations on campus as opportunities to redevelop and introduce a broader range of choice: the International Café in the International Building, and the Upper Level Café on the second floor of Old Main. Since November 2016, TRU Food Services has been in negotiations with various companies to establish new food concepts in these locations that will provide a wider variety of food options on campus.

Due to the lack of infrastructure in the existing buildings, this will not be a quick fix; however, we expect to have new menu offerings at Bento Sushi at the Upper Level Café by January 2017. TRU Food Services is also looking carefully at the International Building to see what new kitchen infrastructure will fit best in the location, with minimal disruption during installation. TRU Food Services had meetings and site visits scheduled in early December with a plan to decide on a concept for that space in early 2017.

Regarding infrastructure issues, the TRUSU Budget Consultation report asserted that TRU Food Services reneged on its promise to build a food court on the second floor of Old Main. TRU Food Services had every intention of moving this initiative forward in 2014, but discovered in the planning process that the concrete floor where the food court was to be located was not engineered to the appropriate loading standard. The concrete floor was only rated at 50 pounds per square foot, where a commercial kitchen requires 100 pounds per square foot. In light of the exorbitant costs to reinforce the floor to loading standards, TRU Food Services decided to switch concepts, but recognizes that the change in plans could have been more effectively communicated to the broader community.

The revised concept, U&M Deli, was created with the intention to provide a wide range of food options in a smaller space. The unused space originally envisioned as part of the food court plan was converted into a student seating/dining area and funds were set aside to upgrade the furniture package to support that conversion.

- **action items:**

- pursue discussions with several food companies about occupying these locations (in progress)
- conduct further research through focus groups to determine the best fit for these locations
- as a short term solution, the Upper Level Café will introduce Bento's expanded menu that includes fresh made sushi and hot rice and noodle bowls (see bentosushi.com/menu/bowls)

- **implementation timeline:** winter 2017

- **success indicators:** ongoing online customer satisfactions surveys; average spend/transaction; overall sales volumes

- **redevelop the Trades Café to offer a broader range of food options and a redesigned store layout in conjunction with the development of the new Industrial Training and Technology Centre**

The new Industrial Training and Technology Centre, slated to open in April 2018, will open up space in the Trades and Technology Building, allowing TRU Food Services to expand the footprint of the Trades Café in its current location and reconfigure the dining area. At the request of Trades staff, faculty and students the menu will be significantly overhauled, and further dialogue with the dean of Trades and Technology, staff, faculty and students will be conducted to form the foundation of these plans.



- **action item:** meet with stakeholders in the Trades and Technology Building to determine the best concept to support the expansion
- **implementation timeline:** fall 2017
- **success indicators:** ongoing online customer satisfactions surveys; average spend/transaction; overall sales volumes

- **allow the operation of private food service providers on TRU Community Trust (TRUCT) properties (these operations will not be bound by the Aramark exclusivity agreement)**

The TRU Community Trust is in the process of securing its first development partner for a market residential housing project behind Old Main. While there is no retail envisioned in that particular project, future TRUCT development, especially at the corner of McGill Road and Summit and along McGill, are all expected to have some type of retail food services. These will all be privately owned and operated, and will not be excluded by TRU Food Services' relationship with Aramark or any potential contracted food service provider.

- **action item:** include language excluding TRUCT properties from the definition of "campus" in any future food service agreements
- **implementation timeline:** summer 2018 (upon termination or renewal of the Aramark contract)
- **success indicator:** number of private providers operating restaurants on or within TRUCT developments

To audit current food service offerings, develop plans to address nutritional deficiencies and establish a minimum standard for accommodation of dietary restrictions, traditions and choices, TRU Food Services will:

- **provide nutritional information on its website**

Providing more information on the TRU Food Services website will help students make informed decisions about their food choices. The goal is to provide as much information as possible about the food being served, to give students, faculty and staff that have dietary restrictions necessary information about the food they consume.

- **action item:** compile all of the necessary data to be included on the website (in progress)
- **implementation timeline:** winter 2017
- **success indicators:** ongoing online customer satisfactions surveys; click-through monitoring



- **provide daily updates on the TRU GO App about where different food options (e.g. vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free) are available each day**

In the last few years, we have seen an increase in the demand for specific foods that meet various dietary requirements, confirmed by both TRU Food Services surveys and information outlined in the TRUSU Budget Consultation report. TRU Food Services is working hard to develop more options to meet this growing demand.

As new items are developed, sampled, and introduced into menu offerings, TRU Food Services will need to improve communication to the community. The TRU GO app will be an important tool for conveniently reaching TRU students, faculty and staff.

- **action Item(s):**
- **implementation timeline:** winter 2017
- **success indicators:** ongoing online customer satisfactions surveys; click-through monitoring
- **provide signage outside of each food outlet indicating food choices available and hours of operation**

TRU Food Services has developed a series of logos to clearly indicate the dietary options available. These logos will be displayed at each location and also on the TRU Go app.



Our hours of operation will be posted on the website, TRU GO app and at all food services outlets.

- **action Item(s):**
- **implementation timeline:** winter 2017
- **success indicator(s):** n/a
- **invite the Scratch Café and Common Grounds to participate in the above initiatives**

To best serve our community, TRU Food Services welcomes and encourages Culinary Arts and Common Grounds to join this initiative. Providing information about food should be a priority for all food providers on campus.

- **action Item(s):** Culinary Arts and Common Grounds will be asked to participate in January 2017
- **implementation timeline:** winter 2017
- **success indicator:** participation of Scratch Café and Common Grounds

To extend overall food service hours of operation to meet needs over a greater proportion of campus activity, TRU Food Services will:

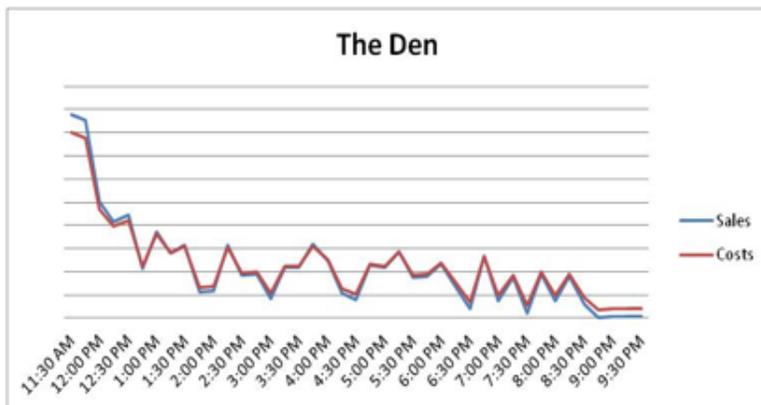
- **extend operating hours in The Den and Tim Hortons**

Activity on campus may vary from semester to semester and year to year. Relying on transactional data to determine the hours of operation is not enough. A review of class scheduling, events on campus, exam scheduling and feedback from students, coupled with transactional data will be the foundation for setting these hours.

To date, TRU Food Services has responded to much of the feedback gathered and made the appropriate changes where necessary.

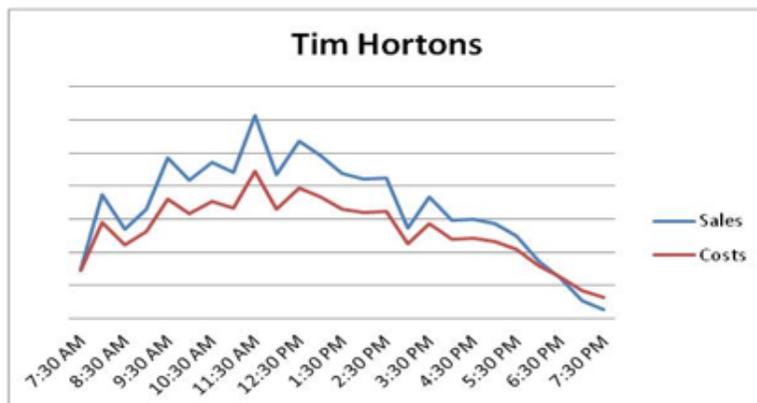
The transformation of The Den in the Campus Activity Centre to an all-ages restaurant has increased usage significantly. However, the adjusted hours of operation at The Den have had less of an impact, with reduced sales activity after 8 p.m. Figure 2 shows the average sales per hour since the changes to the operating hours were made.

Figure 2: Average sales/hour at The Den (Monday through Friday)



The changes at Tim Hortons have also been well received. Responses received from students and transactional data supported substantial changes in its hours of operation. Based on feedback from students, TRU Food Services identified two particular days that required additional hours. Tim Hortons' hours of operation have been increased by six hours per week to meet the demand, and the hours will continue to be adjusted if demand continues to increase. Figure 3 shows the transactions by the hour.

Figure 3: Average sales/hour at Tim Hortons





- **action items:**

- extend hours of operation at The Den to 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday to Friday (open 4 hours longer per day)
- amend hours of operation at Tim Hortons: Monday and Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. (last year only open until 6 p.m.); Tuesday and Wednesday 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. (last year only open until 6 p.m.); Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (same as last year)

- **implementation timeline:** fall 2016 (completed)

- **success indicators:** ongoing online customer satisfactions surveys; average spend/transactions; overall sales volumes

- **reclassify The Den to a “food primary” location from a “liquor primary” location to permit underage customers**

Changing the liquor license was necessary to provide accessibility to all of our students. A large percentage of our student population living on campus are not 19 years old, and need a safe and convenient place to socialize.

During the summer the televisions, cable programming, Wi-Fi, menu options, beer selection and hours of operation were improved to accommodate becoming a busier location. Activity has increased during daytime hours but The Den still remains slow in the evenings. TRU Food Services will continue to communicate with students about the changes and future events to help build a social culture on campus.

- **action items:**

- submit application to the BC Liquor Control and Licensing Branch to change to a food primary location
- rework the menu to provide more options and value pricing

- **implementation timeline:** fall 2016 (completed) and will continue to respond to feedback and improve customer satisfaction

- **success indicators:** ongoing online customer satisfactions surveys; average spend/transactions; overall sales volumes



- **consider additional extension of hours for specific outlets depending on specific campus events or a change in levels of overall activity on campus**

TRU Food Services will continue to adjust hours of operation at specific outlets to meet the needs of the TRU community. Feedback from students, faculty and staff will help us determine the optimal hours of operation to support the demand. Current activity does not show significant demand after 6 p.m., as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4: Average sales/hour at Starbucks

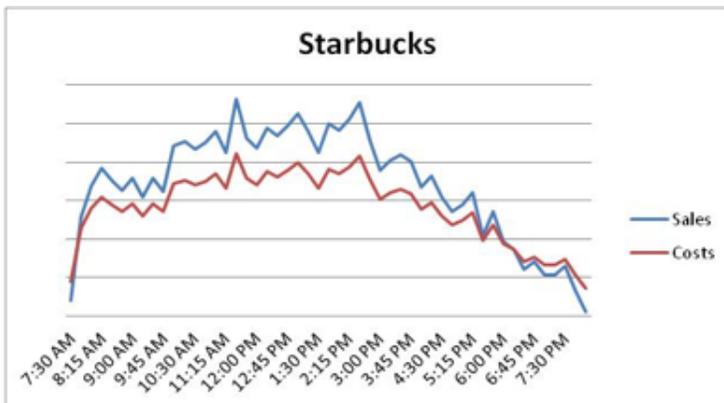
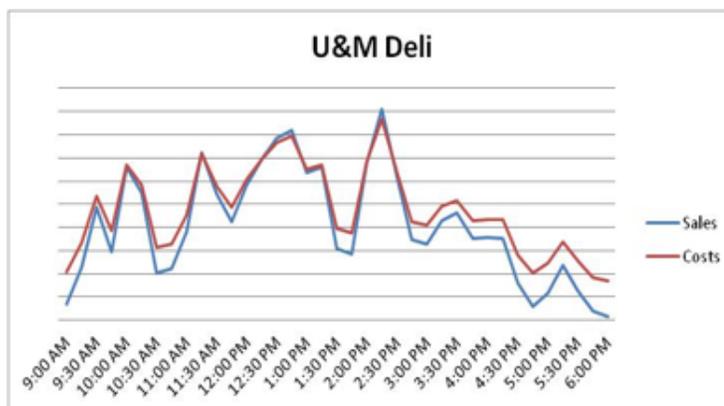


Figure 5: Average sales/hour at U&M Deli



- **action item:** review data
- **implementation timeline:** ongoing
- **success indicators:** ongoing online customer satisfactions surveys; average spend/transactions; overall sales volumes



To measurably improve the promptness of food service, particularly at the Tim Hortons outlet in the House of Learning, TRU Food Services will:

- **continue to work with district managers from Tim Hortons and Starbucks to streamline processes and procedures to reduce wait times**

TRU Food Services will continue to adjust staffing levels to support peak times throughout the day. Due to the demand at Tim Hortons, another solution to reduce the wait times could be the expansion of the location. Adding a third register that would become an “express line” for coffee and baked goods could potentially reduce wait times.

The solution for Starbucks is somewhat limited. The production time for many of the products and the limited space behind the counter make it challenging to reduce wait times. The only solution for Starbucks is to make sure it is fully staffed and the staff are properly trained to be as efficient as possible.

The remaining food outlets on campus do not experience the same wait times as Tim Hortons and Starbucks. The staff at these locations still require regular training and review of procedures to ensure service levels are met.

- **action items:**

- invite district managers from both Starbucks and Tim Hortons to review current practices. Make recommendations on staffing levels and operational procedures to maximize efficiencies.
- provide additional training for staff to improve customer service and speed

- **implementation timeline:** fall 2016 (process is never complete, ongoing training and review from district managers will happen regularly)

- **install “lineup” cameras at Starbucks and Tim Hortons so the community can view the lineup before making the trip to either outlet**

In 2017 TRU Food Services plans to install cameras at the Tim Hortons and Starbucks locations that will show the length of lineups at both food outlets. The lineup feeds would be accessible via the TRU GO app, giving students and staff the ability to time their visits to the locations and hopefully reduce their wait time.

- **action item:** get cameras installed and link to TRU GO app
- **implementation timeline:** winter 2017