

A Resolution to Support the Replacement of the Current Meal Plan System

Daniel Marchese (for himself, Cameron Luther, Joseph Warnimont, Annie Greer, Kurt Shaffer, Caroline Gonzalez, and Mikayla Bodey) introduced the following resolution to the steering committee where it passed.

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Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government represents all undergraduate students at The Ohio State University, and

Whereas a new meal plan was proposed in the spring of 2015, with the intent of it taking effect in the Autumn 2015 Semester, and

Whereas this plan was approved by The Ohio State University Board of Trustees in June of 2015 with no undergraduate student trustee present at the meeting,¹ and

Whereas the new meal plan took effect in the Autumn 2015 semester, and

Whereas there are four different plans for first-year students living on campus,² an additional plan available to returning students,³ and two plans designed for commuters and off-campus students,⁴ and

Whereas all students living in on-campus housing are required to purchase one of the aforementioned plans,⁵ and

Whereas with the exception of the unlimited option, these plans consist of a required number of traditions meals per week – visits – an allotment of money in the form of a declining balance that can only be spent at on-campus dining locations – dining dollars – and another allotment of money in the form of a declining balance that can be spent at any merchant that accepts BuckID – BuckID Cash – and

Whereas the allotted visits can be exchanged for 5 dining dollars during the purchase of a meal at any on-campus dining location, and

Whereas the allotted visits can alternatively be traded in for a “visit exchange” in which the student can get an entrée, a drink, and a small side in exchange for one traditions visit, and

¹ <https://trustees.osu.edu/assets/files/minutes/2015/June5,2015BOTMeetingMinutes.pdf>

² <http://dining.osu.edu/dining-plans/new-2015-dining-plans/new-first-year-students/>

³ <http://dining.osu.edu/dining-plans/new-2015-dining-plans/renewing-students/>

⁴ <http://dining.osu.edu/dining-plans/new-2015-dining-plans/off-campus-and-commuter-students/>

⁵ <http://dining.osu.edu/dining-plans/new-2015-dining-plans/>

41 **Whereas** any visits not used by 3AM on Monday morning will expire with no monetary return
42 to their owner, and

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44 **Whereas** the current meal plan replaced the block plan which was implemented in Autumn
45 semester of 2012,⁶ and

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47 **Whereas** the block plan's options consisted of a weekly or per-semester allotment of "blocks"
48 with each block carrying an equivalent monetary value of \$5 at all on-campus dining locations,
49 and

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51 **Whereas** a single block could not be subdivided to less than \$5 increments, and

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53 **Whereas** students could compensate for this subdivision by either purchasing smaller items to
54 bring the total to a value divisible by \$5, or by simply paying off the difference from their
55 BuckID cash balance, and

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57 **Whereas** this lack of subdivision led to lost monetary value for the meal plans as students would
58 often simply "waste" a block on the remaining monetary value instead of paying the remainder
59 out of pocket, and

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61 **Whereas** the wasting of blocks led to significant monetary losses for the student body, a major
62 factor in the consideration of the new meal plans, and

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64 **Whereas** when approaching the end of semester, students would spend blocks at a higher rate on
65 average to compensate for the fact that blocks did not roll over between semesters, and

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67 **Whereas** before the block plan was the swipes plan which was implemented in 2003, and

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69 **Whereas** the swipe plan consisted of options where students could purchase an allotment of
70 swipes to last for the entire quarter, and

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72 **Whereas** at most on-campus locations a swipe was roughly equivalent to an entrée and 1-3 side
73 items, and

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75 **Whereas** locations that did not have this exchange policy would trade swipes for a monetary
76 value of \$6, and

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78 **Whereas** because of the lack of monetary value attached to swipes at most dining locations,
79 most students were unaware of the actual amount of money they were spending for their meals,
80 and

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82 **Whereas** it was possible to spend a single swipe (about \$11) on items that were less than \$4 in
83 value,⁷ and

⁶ Page 5 of the Dining Task Force Report

⁷ <http://thelantern.com/2011/02/usg-says-meal-plan-falls-short-of-chipotle-standard/>

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85 **Whereas** swipes encountered the same “binge-spending” phenomenon as blocks due to the fact
86 that they would not roll-over between quarters, and
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88 **Whereas** the new plan was designed in part to address the lack of monetary transparency from
89 the swipe plan by assigning a concrete monetary value to some of the options for spending, and
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91 **Whereas** the new plan was designed in part to address the lack of ability to pay in exact values
92 by providing a declining balance segment for spending, and
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94 **Whereas** in the pursuit of addressing the problems of the old plans, the new meal plan has given
95 rise to several new issues in both transparency and complexity, and
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97 **Whereas** on average, students are losing more money on the current meal plan than with blocks,
98 as shown by a 6.3% increase in the missed meal factor,⁸ and
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100 **Whereas** students on average are paying a \$4.50 penalty every time they use a \$5 exchange at
101 non-traditions dining locations,⁹ and
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103 **Whereas** this \$4.50 penalty leads to major monetary losses for students whose schedules aren’t
104 built with the time for a traditions visit during meal times, and
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106 **Whereas** this \$4.50 penalty leads to major monetary losses for students, especially those who go
107 home on the weekend or during a holiday break, and
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109 **Whereas** the result of students using \$5 exchanges instead of traditions visits has led to a total
110 lost value of between \$0.58 million and \$2.49 million in the first 10 weeks of Autumn Semester
111 2015,¹⁰ and
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113 **Whereas** students lose \$10-\$12 if they do not use their visits by the expiration time at the end of
114 the week, an issue which is especially problematic during university holidays, and weekends in
115 which students are not on campus, and
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117 **Whereas** only two of the meal plans have been billed as full meal plans by dining during the
118 RHAC dining discussions, despite the fact that prices for all of the plans are representative of a
119 full plan,¹¹ and
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121 **Whereas** many of these issues will be exacerbated by the required move-in of sophomores for
122 the 2016-17 academic year, and
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⁸ Page 10 of the Dining Task Force Report

⁹ Page 13 of the Dining Task Force Report

¹⁰ Page 13 of the Dining Task Force Report

¹¹ Page 15 of the Dining Task Force Report

124 **Whereas** the dining dollars are the most transparent and straightforward portion of the current
125 meal plans, and

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127 **Whereas** the dining dollars component mirrors a debit system much like a credit card or debit
128 card that a student would use to pay for meals outside of the campus area, and

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130 **Whereas** Kent State University, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Pennsylvania State
131 University, Bowling Green State University, and Miami University of Ohio are among schools
132 that have successfully built meal plans on a declining balance system, and

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134 **Whereas** declining balance is a more transparent and less complex system to use and understand
135 because it closely resembles the way in which money is spent on food outside of the university;

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137 **Therefore Let It Be Resolved** that the undergraduate student body finds the current meal plan to
138 be confusing, lacking in transparency, and unnecessarily complex by construction, and

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140 **Let it Further Be Resolved** that due to the lack of transparency, the unnecessary complexity,
141 and inflexible options, the undergraduate student body believes that students are losing money
142 they would otherwise be making effective use of in a declining balance system, and

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144 **Let it Further Be Resolved** that the Undergraduate Student Government believes that a
145 declining balance system would be more transparent, affordable, and straightforward for all
146 undergraduate students on a meal plan, and

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148 **Let it Further Be Resolved** that the undergraduate student body believes that the administrative
149 fee attached to the meal plan should be transparent in its value and usage, and

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151 **Let it Further Be Resolved** that the undergraduate student body encourages OSU Dining
152 Services to be more transparent about the intended use of its current dining plans, especially with
153 respect to full versus partial plans, and

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155 **Let it Further Be Resolved** that the undergraduate student body believes that university dining
156 should implement an up-front allotment of traditions visits (similar to blocks) as a short term
157 solution to the issues enumerated in this legislation, and

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159 **Let it Further Be Resolved** that the undergraduate student body believes that a declining
160 balance option, possibly in place of the Buckeye 5 plan, should be implemented alongside the
161 current meal plan options as an additional short term solution to the issues enumerated in this
162 legislation, and

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164 **Let it Further be Resolved** that the Undergraduate Student Government encourages Dining
165 Services and University Senate Fiscal to create an OSU Dining Services Review Subcommittee
166 with representation from Undergraduate Student Government, Residence Hall Advisory Council,
167 and non-affiliated undergraduate support with a student chair in order to continue student and
168 faculty collaboration throughout the entirety of the creation and transition of a new meal plan,
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Let it Further Be Resolved that the undergraduate student body urges the university to adopt a declining balance system to replace the current meal plans.

Floor Vote: Aye: 42 Nay: 2 Abstain: 0



Abby Grossman
President



Abby Waidelich
Vice President

Date Adopted: January 13, 2016

Date Terminated: _____