

**Label:** UB52004

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**Sponsor(s):**

**Committee:** Administration & Finance

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### **The UH Student Focused Dining Act**

#### **The current meal plan options discourage living on campus**

**Whereas**, the UH Master Plan sets a goal of having 11,000 residential students<sup>1</sup> (our current residential population is approximately 8,000); and

**Whereas**, the University of Houston prides itself on being accessible to low income students and 41% of full-time first-time UH students receive the Pell Grant<sup>2</sup> (given to students of low income families); and

**Whereas**, residents of five of the seven residence halls (including all freshmen accessible halls) are mandated to purchase a meal plan<sup>3</sup>; and

**Whereas**, the cheapest meal plan available to residential students costs approximately \$3,700 per academic year (fall and spring)<sup>4</sup>; and

**Whereas**, residential meal plans account for approximately 37% of on-campus housing costs<sup>5</sup>; and

**Whereas**, potential residential students, especially low-income students, may be discouraged from living on campus due to the cost of being mandated to purchase a meal plan;

#### **The Cougar 160 meal plan is a poor value for students**

**Whereas**, the Cougar 160 meal plan is one of three options for residential students<sup>3</sup>; and

**Whereas**, the price-per-meal for the Cougar 160 is \$8.196; and

**Whereas**, the average door price for a single meal at a residential dining hall is \$8.257; and

**Whereas**, the price per meal of the Block 120 (available only to students not mandated to purchase a meal plan) is \$6.006; and

**Whereas**, the Cougar 160 meal plan should provide a greater bulk-purchase discount,

### **Meal Exchange/Equivalency Program**

**Whereas**, the University has identified 17 peer institutions for the purposes of comparison<sup>8</sup>; and

**Whereas**, six of those peer institutions (A&M, UTSA, Arizona State, OU, Temple, and George Mason) allow students to use meal swipes (intended for access to campus dining halls) to purchase food at on-campus restaurants by establishing a meal equivalency rate; and

**Whereas**, the campus dining halls are inconveniently located for many students, especially at lunch time when students are between classes and unlikely to be near the residential/dining areas of campus; and

**Whereas**, some students would prefer to be able to use their meal swipes to purchase food at non-dining hall locations;

### **Meal Donation Program**

**Whereas**, students who purchase meal plans often have meals remaining at the end of the semester; and

**Whereas**, meals do not carry over to the following semester; and

**Whereas**, students are not given refunds for unused meals; and

**Whereas**, meals purchased by students should be considered the property of the student; and

**Whereas**, students should have the right to decide the outcome of their personal property; and

**Whereas**, providing food to UH students struggling with hunger benefits our community and fosters kind-heartedness; and

**Whereas**, students ought to be allowed to donate their unused meals that they have already paid for,

**Therefore be it enacted be the 52<sup>nd</sup> Senate of the Student Government Association of the University of Houston:**

That Residential students should be given additional meal plan options that include smaller, lower-cost alternatives; and

**Further be it enacted**, that the Cougar 160 meal plan should be discounted to reflect a steeper bulk-purchase discount that is closer in price per meal to non-mandated meal plans, and

**Further be it enacted**, that the FSAC Committee, along with interested non-FSAC university personnel and students, should thoroughly review the possibility of making substantial changes to the UH dining model. Topics to review (and report findings to SGA) should include the following:

- a. The possibility of establishing a meal equivalency/exchange program (where students could use dining-hall meal credits to purchase items at any food establishment where Cougar Cash is accepted)
- b. The impact of abolishing separate meal plans for mandated and non-mandated students for the purposes of establishing a consistent price for the same food at the same dining halls, and

**Further be it enacted**, that at the end of each semester, any unused meals for all purchased meal plans should be donated, by default, to a neutral University entity that will identify UH students having financial difficulty providing food for themselves and gift the unused meals (with a new expiration date of the close of the following semester) to those individuals.



1. <http://www.uh.edu/about/initiatives/master-plan/>

2. Butrymowicz, Sarah. "Billions in Pell Grants Go to Students Who Never Graduate." *PBS*. Written 17 Aug. 2015. Web. 8 Oct. 2015.

URL: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/billions-pell-grants-go-students-never-graduate/>

The data used in the report is self-reported by schools, meaning that UH was the true source of the data, which gives further credibility to the accuracy of the information.

3. <http://housing.uh.edu/housing/dining-and-meal-plans-3>

4. [http://univofhouston.campusdish.com/Commerce/Catalog/ShopSubCategory.aspx?category=All\\_Products\\_6871&lid=6871&root=Meal\\_Plan](http://univofhouston.campusdish.com/Commerce/Catalog/ShopSubCategory.aspx?category=All_Products_6871&lid=6871&root=Meal_Plan)

5. Based on calculation of (average housing cost for 5 mandated meal plan residence halls) + (average residential meal plan cost)

6. Based on calculation of meal plan cost divided by meals (not including taxes or Cougar Cash)

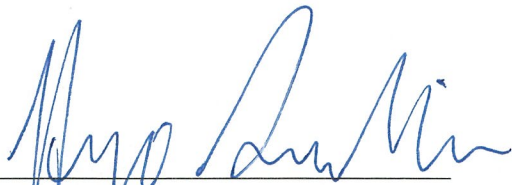
7. <http://univofhouston.campusdish.com/Locations/FreshFoodCompany.aspx>

8. <http://www.uhsystem.edu/chancellor/planning-and-performance/strategic-documents/UH%20Peer%20Institution%20Report%202012.pdf>

The peer institutions are divided into in-state peers and national peers. In-state peers are Texas A&M, UT, Texas Tech, UT-Dallas, UT-Arlington, UT-El Paso, UT-San Antonio, UNT, and TSU-San Marcos. National peers are U of Cincinnati, U of Illinois – Chicago, Arizona State, Wayne State, OU, Temple, George Mason, and Georgia State.

UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**

Student Government Association



Hugo Salinas  
Speaker of the Senate  
University of Houston – Main Campus

Date of Senate Approval: 11-4-16



Shaun Smith  
Student Body President  
University of Houston – Main Campus

Date of President's Approval: 11-5-16

**APPROVED**

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