

Free essay on a call for better food

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As a student at BPC, I am grateful for the opportunity to receive a quality education, and the instruction in the classroom has exceeded all of my expectations so far. However, the cafeteria is not sufficient for the needs of the students, which has created a situation that must be rectified immediately.

First of all, there are not enough choices on the menu. If we wanted to be subjected to the same set of unattractive options each day, we would have stayed in high school so that we could endure “ Mystery Meat” every Tuesday and mixed vegetables three days a week. There are many colleges that provide meal options that attract students, such as the University of Chicago. Occasionally, red-pepper risotto tossed with salmon makes an appearance, as does grilled flank steak (Bhatia). The name of the game is competition – students that don’t have to stay on the meal plans will go to the grocery stores or go across the street and eat at restaurants. College students spend \$9 billion a year on food – which is almost the same amount that we spend eating in fine restaurants a year (Bhatia). Rice University just invested \$31 million in two giant kitchens to keep up. However, students who have bought the meal plan and who must stick to it. Why can’t they get attractive options for food?

Not all of us can afford red-pepper risotto. However, food that is fresh and well-prepared is a right for anyone who is forced to take part in a dining plan. Adding some fresh fruits and vegetables would be a welcome touch – there are food groups that aren’t primarily brown in color, and vegetables taste much better when they haven’t been sitting in the same warm water for five hours. The produce at our school looks like Dr. Shrinker was using it for

target practice with his special ray gun. Why should we have to eat it? With the money we pay to the school for the dining plan, we should receive attractive, diverse options that are healthy.

A la carte items are one suggestion that has been tried (Bhatia). However, picking out an attractive meal a la carte can run over \$10 each – if not higher. At some of the pricier colleges, those meals can approach \$20 if you're not careful. That's why we're not clamoring for flank steak every night (although the occasional option would be nice). We just want a variety of food options that are reasonably priced – but that are also attractive and tasty.

It would also help if conditions were a little cleaner in our cafeteria. The space is small, dark and dusty. While we haven't seen any insects or rodents scurrying around the main area, it wouldn't surprise me to learn that they've been showing up in the back of the kitchen. After all, New York City has been hit with an epidemic of health violations in college cafeterias (Foderaro). At Fordham University, a health inspection of the Student Deli found live roaches and cooking surfaces that had not been cleaned and sanitized. As a result, the inspector gave it a rating of " C" – the lowest possible grade. At Pace University, conditions were so unsanitary that the city shut the cafeteria down briefly – and students were so outraged by the conditions in the cafeteria that they boycotted it once it opened. For students who depend on the cafeteria meal plan as a part of their financial aid or simply because they paid for it, a sanitary kitchen is a must.

Food-borne illnesses are more frequently in the news than ever. Meat, poultry and fish (what am I saying? It's not like we're ever going to see fresh fish in our cafeteria?) that are not prepared correctly can lead to illness – or even worse. Remember what I said about Pace University? On the day of the inspection, the health staff found 79 violations in the main cafeteria. It only takes 27 to get a C – Pace's cafeteria had three times as many (Foderaro). Things like dishcloths that were soiled and insufficient numbers of hand sanitizers were on the list, as was insufficient refrigeration of food. I understand that a college cafeteria will typically serve a lot more meals in a day than most restaurants will, but if there are more meals, shouldn't that mean that there is more money coming in? Shouldn't that translate to more money for cleaning supplies, and more money to make sure the refrigerators are running correctly? I wonder what the health inspectors would find in the dark, dusty corners of our own cafeteria's back area.

Students at BPCCC work hard – we hold down jobs, we go to class, we go back to second jobs, and then somewhere in there we sleep, eat and maybe even do our homework. We deserve food that is attractive, healthy, clean and reasonably priced. The current state of our cafeteria is unacceptable. The administration should either set up relationships with area restaurants to let us use our food plan money there or bring in a new operator for the cafeteria system – and begin plans to build a larger, more inviting space where we can eat. If we are the future of America, we deserve better than this.

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