



Yale College Council

Expansion of Dining Hours

Trey Kinison, BR '20

Will Marks, DC '20

Jerry Zhou, TC '21

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INTRODUCTION

The Yale residential college dining experience is central to student life. The intrinsic social environment and relative availability of meals are central to both student happiness and productivity.

Consistently, Yale Dining has been sensitive and accommodating in catering to the needs of the student population. For example, in early Fall 2017, Yale Dining lengthened lunch hours to adjust to the closing of Commons. However, particularly given the 15% increase in student population, there are a few points of improvement in the Yale dining system. It is vital that even relatively small issues are resolved as quickly as possible due to the planned incremental student population increase, which will undoubtedly exacerbate the issues already present.

The 2017 YCC Fall Survey polled over 1200 students on their dining hall habits, particularly how their actual dining times align with their dining time preferences as well as their opinions on overall crowdedness, convenience, and availability of dining halls. A focus group was also held to collect more detailed student accounts about their dining experiences. According to this data, it is possible to conclude that: 1) student dining time preferences can be better met, and 2) there is a general consensus that dining halls are relatively crowded, and this problem will only get worse as student population increases.

The most efficient method for improvement of students' dining hall experiences would not be to increase the hours of operation but rather rearrange the existing times and locations to better match the preferences of students.

BACKGROUND

Yale's current dining hall hours of operations for all meal-plan holders are as follows:

	WEEKDAY	WEEKEND
Continental Breakfast Trumbull / Davenport / Pierson / TD / Murray / Hopper / Berkeley / JE	8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Davenport closes at 10:30 a.m.	Breakfast in Hopper, Ezra Stiles, Morse ONLY 8:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
Hot Breakfast Silliman / Ezra Stiles / Morse / Branford / Saybrook / Franklin	7:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Brunch in all Colleges 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Lunch	11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Davenport: 11:00am - 1:30pm Hopper: 11:30am - 2:30pm Trumbull: 11:30am - 3:00pm	Brunch in all Colleges 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Dinner	Monday - Thursday 5:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Morse/Stiles open until 8:00 p.m.	Friday - Sunday 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Morse/Stiles open until 8:00 p.m. on Friday

Other amenities and food services that are available to all meal plan holders are swipe-accepting “retail” locations and Meal2Go Plans. The “retail” locations include Durfee’s, [KBT Café](#), [Café Med](#), [Bulldog Café](#), and [Divinity Refectory](#). These locations, however, only accept a \$9 lunch swipe, and Durfee’s, the most popular of these options, only accepts swipes until 5:30 pm. Separately, Meals2Go provides students

with the possibility of ordering a pre-made meal for lunch or dinner that can be picked up during dining hall hours.

PEER INSTITUTIONS

Among Yale's peer institutions, there is a wide range of dining hall hours. This variety is mainly due to our peer schools' differing use of several small, residential college-style dining halls versus fewer and larger central dining halls. We realize that it is more difficult for colleges with the residential college dining hall model to accommodate changes in dining schedules. However, we have found that some peer institutions with residential colleges provide a wider range of dining hours. For example, Princeton, which has six residential colleges, provides brunch on the weekends from 10 AM-2 PM and provides dinner throughout both the week and weekend from 5 PM-8 PM in all residential colleges.

Many colleges have late dining hours for certain nights of the week. This can be seen at Stanford, where one dining hall is open from 9:30 PM-2:30 AM every night, including weekends. Some colleges even offer 24-hour dining options, such as Vanderbilt University which offers four separate "markets" for students to buy food items at any hour. This allows incredible flexibility for student dining.

DATA ANALYSIS

Dinner Hours

The Yale College Council received 1273 responses to the survey question 'What is your preferred time to eat dinner?' The responses suggest that the current hours do not align completely with student preferences. 41.2% of respondents claimed that their preferred time to eat was at 7:00 PM or later.¹ According to the YCC Fall 2016 survey, over half of students eat food after dinner. Even if students begin their meals exactly at 7:00 PM from Monday through Friday, the current dining hall schedule allows students to eat for only half an hour in the majority of colleges. On weekends, when dining halls close at 7:00 PM, this means that over two-fifths of the student population are unable to eat at their preferred time. This problem is also heightened by the fact that there is no alternative use of dinner meal swipes. For lunch, students can substitute their swipes for \$9 at Durfee's or other retail locations.

¹ This figure is a summation of the 7:00 PM (25.14%), 8:00 PM (14.45%), and 9:00 PM or later (1.57%) responses.

Despite the fact that over 86% of respondents indicated that they would at least sometimes use a Durfee's dinner swipe, this opportunity does not exist.

This misalignment of student preference and options available results in 1) more students eating off-campus, and 2) students eating at less desirable times. Nearly 72% of students indicated that they eat off campus at least once a month because they were not able to eat during the given hours. Approximately 20% eat off-campus for this reason at least once a week. This situation can create an unnecessary financial burden for students by being forced to dine at restaurants or other places that are not included in their Yale meal plan during hours when the dining halls are all closed. Furthermore, our data suggests that students often eat in dining halls at times that they do not consider preferable. 24.8% of respondents say they normally eat at 5:00 PM, compared to only 13.9% of students who reported 5:00 PM as their preferred time to eat. This represents a 79% increase in what would be expected. The 6:00 PM results told a similar story; there was a 33% increase in students who actually ate at 6:00 PM from those who preferred to eat at that time. In contrast, at later times, when the dining halls are closed or about to close, the opposite holds true. Only 52% of students who responded that they preferred to eat at 7:00 PM actually ate at this time; similarly, for 8:00 PM, only around 12% of students who preferred to eat at this time did so.

There was also an interesting distinction between the subgroups of students living on-campus and those living off-campus, suggesting that dining halls have an impact on students' decisions where to live. We would recommend further research to understand this relationship more fully. However, our data showed that those who live off-campus are nearly three times more likely to eat dinner at or past 7:00 PM. They are also 9% more likely to prefer to eat dinner past 7:00 PM.

Finally, we sought student input on the proposal to shift dining hall dinner hours in certain colleges to increase dining flexibility while maintaining the overall number of operating hours. Importantly, only 37% of respondents marked that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement: "*It would be acceptable if my residential college's dining hall closed before 7:30 PM on weekdays if a different dining hall was open past 7:30 PM.*" This result suggests that shifting hours from one dining hall to another may be met with student dissatisfaction.

Brunch Hours

Brunch in all colleges lasts from 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM. Our focus group expressed concern that, since breakfast is not served in most colleges on the weekend, the dining halls open fairly late. In total, 29.3% of respondents listed their preferred time for brunch on the weekends as being outside of these times, of which approximately 25% preferred their meal prior to 11:00 AM, and about 4% preferred their meal at 2:00 PM or later.

Lunch Hours

Our focus groups continuously mentioned the issues that arose with the conflict between lunch hours and class time. Many students find themselves in class between the hours of 11:00 AM and 2:30 PM. While significant strides have been made, with certain dining halls staying open for longer, our results suggested that these dining halls could be better spread out geographically across campus. For example, opening Pauli Murray or Benjamin Franklin late, in addition to Grace Hopper and Trumbull (which are both close to each other) would accommodate a larger number of students. We acknowledge that more research about this particular issue would be beneficial.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Shift or extend brunch hours to begin earlier, preferably starting at 10:30 AM rather than 11:00 AM, in order to match the schedules of students better.
- Add a northern college to the colleges offering late lunch hours throughout the week (Hopper and Trumbull) - for example, Benjamin Franklin or Pauli Murray could offer late lunch. This would allow students with lunch classes on Science Hill and other northern buildings to have enough time to walk to and eat a late lunch.
- Extend dinner hours of at least one college until 7:30 PM on the weekend and, if successful, potentially extend until 8:00 PM. In exchange, start those colleges' dining hours later (Ex: Weekend dinner hours for Branford change to 5:30-7:30 PM). This would give students a wider range of time to eat on the weekends without affecting the number of hours any one dining hall is open.
- Add a dinner swipe option to Durfee's. While this would be a more major change, allowing students to exchange a meal swipe in the dining halls for a

retail swipe at Durfee's (similar to the lunch swipe option) could allow students much more flexibility. An example could be allowing students to use their dinner swipe for a retail value of \$9 from 5:00 PM until 11:00 PM. This would not affect Durfee's opening hours, as the store is already open during that time. While more research needs to be done on this option, it would lessen the pressure students might feel to make it to dinner before a dining hall closes.

CONCLUSION

Assuming a fixed number of hours that dining halls can be open, we feel that shifting certain dining hall hours would increase the number of students who are able to eat during their preferred dining hours, improving the health and well-being of the Yale student body. In addition, shifting the dining hours to better accommodate students' schedules and location on campus alleviates the financial burden of eating off-campus because of missed dining hall hours.

APPENDIX

Q60: What is your preferred time to eat brunch on the weekends?

9AM	4.56%
10AM	20.60%
11AM	32.97%
12PM	28.56%
1PM	9.21%
2PM	3.15%
3PM	0.87%

Q62: If your ideal meal hours do not align with your actual meal hours, why? (Select all that apply)

Avoid overcrowded dining halls	14.17%
Conflicts with class	14.46%
The dining hall is not open	28.18%
Conflicts with sports	4.10%
Conflicts with extracurricular commitments	10.99%
Friends' preferred eating times are different from mine	11.71%
(If in Berkeley, Morse, or Stiles) Prefer to eat during hours whe dining hall is closed to students from other residential colleges	5.69%
Not Applicable	8.49%