The commons fiasco

The announcement Friday by Robert Sherwood and Eugene Brammer that the minimum meal plan requirements for freshmen were being reduced was amazing in a number of respects. Their memorandum frankly admitted that the administration had blown it by setting minimum meal plans too high. There can be little dispute over that.

There are three different aspects of the decision, though, which are extremely disturbing:

The Timing

The managers of the dining program waited until exactly two weeks before the end of the term to reduce the meal plan requirements. As a result, students who conscientiously avoided dining out in any of the wide variety of area restaurants in order to use up their minimum meal requirement were penalized.

Those who fouled the intent of the administration's program were vindicated.

Had Friday's announcement been made one month earlier, when it was just as clear that students were not on their minimum consumption schedules, students could have adjusted their eating lifestyles.

Had minimum meal requirements been stretched to include IAP, students would also not have felt they were duped into eating on a schedule which would change at the very end.

Admitting a mistake late in the game is certainly preferable to making students pay for the lack of planning. But in changing the minimum with only two weeks left, the administration's lack of consideration for those students who were cooperating with the Dining Service is appalling.

The Method

On the very day that Sherwood and Brammer issued their memorandum, Associate Director of Housing and Food Services George Hartwell and Program Coordinator for Dining and Residence Anita Walton were both quoted in these pages. 

"...said that any "recommendations" on changing meal requirements would be available by this week. Walton said that there would be no decision before the end of the term.

The lack of coordination between those supposedly responsible for managing the dining program is laughable. Either Walton and Hartwell were comically misinformed and left out of the decision entirely or they knew full well what was happening and chose to play a game of cloak-and-dagger.

Either way, if students are led to believe that they can't trust the managers of the dining program, the credibility of the entire program will surely be undermined. How this can help the smooth implementation of a comprehensive dining plan eludes us.

Stephanie Pollack

The Night Before Finals

"Two nights before finals
All through the dorm
Not a freshman was sleeping,
Which had long been the norm.

The textbooks were lost
Thrown in corners so fur
Had she wanted to nerd
She'd take hours to spot.

This freshman felt like roving
Maybe raising a flap
Since she'd just woken up
From a twelve-hour nap.

First she stopped at the room
Of the local six nerd
He glanced up from the keyboard
"Don't you have time to talk?"

"What's the matter," she asked,
"Don't you have time to talk?"
He just grunted in Fortran
"Join a club—but 'til then
How 'bout us?"

She continued her walk.

Next, she passed by the lounge
Where a senior in two
Was lamenting he still had
No thesis to do.

For the length of the hall
Every door was shut tight
Rows of blank memo boards
Made a pitiful sight.

Then, what to her wondering eyes
Should appear
But a wide open door
And a tapped keg of beer

She eagerly stroked
Toward the light and the noise
In the room was a crowd
But—of course—all were boys

She sighed with dismay
But accepted her plight
Grabbed the nearest free mug
Socked in for the night

She filled up the glass
And went straight to her work
Drained the mug in one gulp
Then she turned with a jerk

For the room that she'd thought
Full of guys on pass/fail
Contained all upperclassmen
Consuming the ale

"How is it," she inquired
"You sit here and rebel;
Whereas everyone else
Stays confined in his cell!"

"The answer is simple,"
A partyer shurred
"We are those privileged few
Who decide not to nerd."

"We belong to the clubs.
And the councils, and terms.
We're the ones who run parties,
And meetings, and schemes.

"We know what's important,
And classes do count.
But they're not all that matters
When you finally get out."

"So to round out your life here
And keep yourself sane
Join an extracurricular—
And use up your brain."

The guy kept on slurring
As she staggered from sight
"Join a club—'til 'll then
Merry Christmas, good night."

Stephanie Pollack

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