

**UIC Campus Dining Trends:
A Snapshot of Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage
October 22-28, 2012**

February, 2013

UIC OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR
FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Engaging students for success, from orientation through graduation.

Executive Summary
Campus Dining Services
Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage
October 22-28, 2012

During Fall 2012, an in depth analysis of meal plan usage was conducted to identify established patterns and trends for participants in the All-You-Care-to-Eat Meal Plan (AYCE), the Block Meal Plans, and the Dragon Dollars program. This repeats the studies from Fall 2008 - 2011. The main purpose of the study is to understand usage patterns to improve service to meal plan users. Analysis of patterns and trends will improve service by:

- Assisting Dining Services to plan for food preparation and cost containment in the AYCE units.
- Assisting in determination of seat counts and service requirements as we examine facility changes.
- Identifying resident student engagement with the AYCE Meal Plan.
- Identifying commuter student engagement with the Block Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars.
- Forming the basis for focus groups to further understand the quantitative data (e.g., examining whether students use dining locations other than those closest to place of residence for convenience, for preference, for preparation or environment, or other reasons).
- Assessing the usage level and patterns of Dragon Dollars by resident students, commuter students, and non-students to guide expansion of the program.
- Identifying opportunities to offer the convenience and value of the Block Meal Plans and Dragon Dollars to the on-campus residents in apartment style housing, commuter students, and staff.
- Assisting in the design of more effective marketing materials for non-resident students, faculty, and staff from current non-resident data.

The week of October 22 was selected due to its place in the calendar, well into the semester, but not conflicting with mid-terms or finals. Resident Assistants with meal plans were counted in the 7- day plan.

- 2,589 (2,627) (2,676) people were enrolled in meal plans, with 55.1% (62.2%) (65.8%) in the 5-day plan, 4.4% (3.0%) (3.4%) in the 6 day plan, 20.9% (19.5%) (17.9%) in the 7-day plan and 19.7% (15.2%) (12.8%) in other block meal plans. Another 744 Block Plan participants did not use their meal plans during the week.
- 25,732 (25,332) (24,918) all-you-care-to-eat transactions were made during the week. 5-day meal plan participants accounted for 57.8% (63.4%) (65.9%) of the swipes, 6-day plan with 5.1% (3.6%) (4.1%), 7-day plan with 28.7% (25%) (23.4%), and block meal plan with 7.7% (7.8%) (6.6%).
- 5-day meal plan participants averaged 10.3 (9.8) (9.3) meals for the week, 6-day participants averaged 11.9 (11.5) (11.1), 7-day participants averaged 13.6 (12.3) (12.2), and block plan averaged 4.4 (4.9) (4.8).
- 163 (198) (185) guest meals were utilized.
- 63.8% (63.9%) (62.9%) AYCE transactions were at SCE, 27.2% (27.7%) (28.0%) at JST, and 9.0% (8.4%) (9.1%) at SCW.
- 279 (321) (411) individuals made 906 (962) (1,191) purchases using Dragon Dollars.
- 51% (63.7%) (53.7%) of the Dragon Dollars purchases were made by meal plan participants with a check average of \$5.38 (\$5.46) (\$5.07).
- 24.5% (26.4%) (21.7%) of Dragon Dollars Transactions were made at Halsted Street Station with a check average of \$4.11 (\$3.61) (\$3.80), 11.7% (15.5%) (0%) at Dunkin Donuts with a check average of \$3.98 (\$3.78), and 10.5% (9.0%) (11.6%) at Morgan Street Station with a check average of \$3.87 (\$4.37) (\$3.66). All other locations received less than 9% of the Dragon Dollars transactions.

A complete analysis of usage for the week is available. Meals are an important opportunity for us to build engagement between students and between faculty/staff and students. To make effective use of this point of engagement, we need to be well informed about what is successful in our dining programs and what opportunities we have to make improvements. Understanding the needs of our students is vital to “Engaging Students for Success.”

Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

Overview

While many programs and services underscore the mission of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, the meal plan options offered by Dining Services provide daily opportunities to engage students in the life of the university. The extensive hours and ample menu choices serve as the foundation for the dining rooms where life-long friendships are forged through conversation and common experiences.

The Five Six, and Seven Day All-You-Care-to-Eat Meal Plans (AYCEP), required for students living in university residence halls that do not have kitchens, operate in three locations (AYCE) on campus that are convenient to resident students and available to student residents in apartment style housing, commuter students, faculty, and staff. The dining rooms include the Student Center East Café, the James Stukel Towers Café, and the Centennial Room. The Five Day AYCEP allow students the opportunity to visit the three dining rooms any time during the breakfast, lunch, and dinner meal periods on Monday through Friday, as well as the late evening time periods on Monday through Thursday. The Six Day AYCEP is available on Sunday through Friday. In addition, Seven Day AYCEP participants may visit the dining rooms for Brunch and Dinner on Saturday and Sunday, as well as the late evening time period on Sunday. These meal plan customers may eat as much as they choose and visit the dining rooms an unlimited number of times on their contracted days. Block meal plans offer All-You-Care-to-Eat convenience and value for campus community members who do not participate in the board plans. The Block meal plan participants purchase a set number of meals, which may be used during any of the meal periods and may choose all they care to eat during each dining room visit. Dragon Dollars afford everyone flexibility to make cashless transactions at all campus dining locations and convenience stores.

During Fall 2012, an in depth analysis of meal plan usage was conducted to identify established patterns and trends for participants in the AYCEP, the Block Meal Plans, and the Dragon Dollars program. The main purpose of the study is to understand usage patterns to improve service to meal plan users. Analysis of patterns and trends will improve service by:

- Assisting Dining Services to plan for food preparation and cost containment in the AYCEP units.
- Assisting in determination of seat counts and service requirements as we examine facility changes.
- Identifying resident student engagement with the AYCEP Meal Plan.
- Identifying commuter student engagement with the Block Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars.
- Forming the basis for focus groups to further understand the quantitative data (e.g., examining whether students use dining locations other than those closest to place of residence for convenience, for preference for preparation or environment, or other reasons).
- Assessing the usage level and patterns of Dragon Dollars by resident students, commuter students, and non-students to guide expansion of the program.
- Identifying opportunities to offer the convenience and value of the Block Meal Plans and Dragon Dollars to the on-campus residents in apartment style housing, commuter students, and staff.

Blue numbers are corresponding results from 2011

Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

- Assisting in the design of more effective marketing materials for non-resident students, faculty, and from current non-resident data.

While many trends similar to those experienced in Fall 2011, there was an increase in the percentage of AYCE meals consumed by West Area residents in the Student Center West. Unless major changes occur in the resident population related to the class schedule or physical changes/programmatic changes in the dining rooms, usage patterns should continue along the same path.

The total number of participants enrolled in the meal plans decreased slightly, but there was an increase in the total number of AYCE transactions. However, the balance of those enrolled shifted leaving a notable decrease in the percentage of students in the 5-Day Plan, compared to the 6- and 7-Day Plans. The percentage of Block Plan participants increased despite the fact that fewer residents in MRH, SSR, and TBH participated in meal plans than the previous year. Additionally, the number of Dragon Dollars transactions was less compared to the previous year.

Insight into the daily patterns demonstrates realistic application contrasted with the theoretical plan. Meals are an important opportunity for us to build engagement between students and between faculty/staff and students. To make effective use of this point of engagement, we need to be well informed about what is successful in our dining programs and what opportunities we have to make improvements. Understanding our students' needs is vital to "Engaging Students for Success" promoting the "C" for community in the UIC Experience.

Scope of Study

Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars transactions for the week of October 22-28, 2012 were analyzed. The week of October 22 was selected due to its place in the calendar, well into the semester, but not conflicting with mid-terms or finals. The analysis includes all Meal Plan and Dragon Dollar customer purchases for the week from all Campus Dining Services locations and convenience stores. Conference cards and cash transactions were excluded from the study.

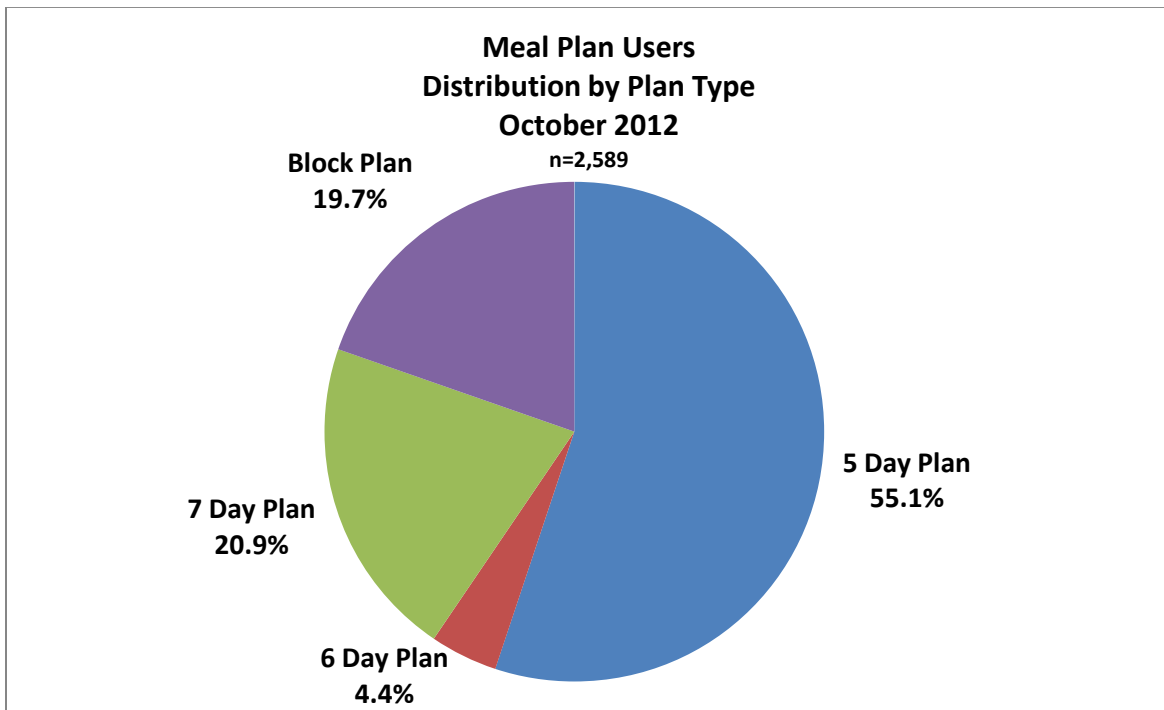
Customer Profile

- The number of unique individuals with i-card transactions during the week was 2,763 (2,818) (2,883). Of those, 164 (82) (57) were faculty, staff, or visitors.
- 2,589 (2,627) (2,676) people were enrolled in meal plans, with 55.1% (62.2%) (65.8%) in the 5-day plan, 4.4% (3.0%) (3.4%) in the 6 day plan, 20.9% (19.5%) (17.9%) in the 7-day plan and 19.7% (15.2%) (12.8%) in other block meal plans. Another 744 (606) Block Plan participants did not use their meal plan during the week.
- 68.4% (72.0%) (74.4%) of Freshman and 56.7% (65.7%) (66.5%) of Sophomore Meal Plan participants were enrolled in the 5-Day Meal Plan.
- 67.0% (60.1%) (62.2%) of the enrolled meal plan students were Freshmen, 19.2% (19.2%) (18.5%) Sophomores, 9.5% (10.7%) (10.7%) Juniors, 4.1% (6.6%) (6.3%) Seniors, and 2.0% (3.3%) (2.3%) Graduate/Professional.
- Freshmen comprise 65.8% (67.3%) (69.8%) of the 5-, 6-, and 7-Day Meal Plans and 7.0% (9.8%) (13.6%) of the Block Meal Plan enrollments.

Blue numbers are corresponding results from 2011

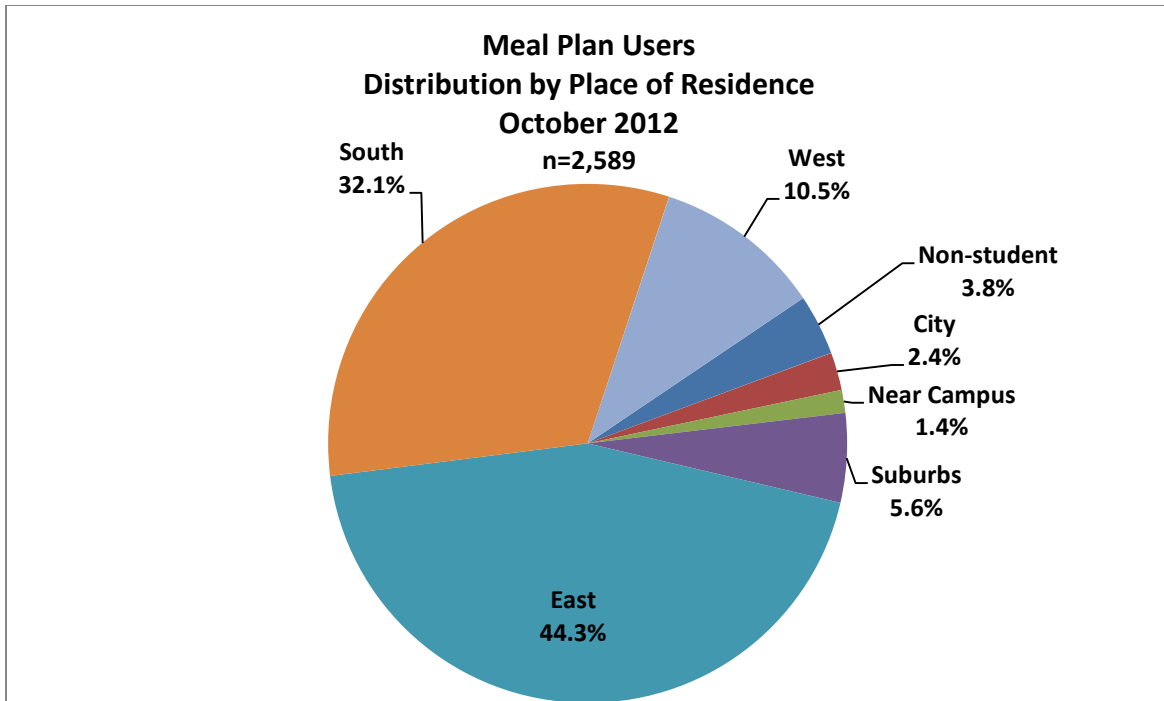
Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

- 44.3% (46.9%) (43.6%) of the meal plan participants lived in the East Area, 32.1% (30.9%) (29.9%) in the South Area, 10.5% (12.2%) (14.3%) in the West Area, and 10.1% (10%) (12.2%) lived off campus and 3.8% were non-students.
- 127 (149) (173) students from MRH, TBH, and SSR, where board plans are not required, participated in meal plans. 10.6% (10.7%) (17.3%) use the 5-day plan, 2.8% (3.4%) (1.7%) use the 6-day plan, 15.6% (18.8%) (20.2%) use the 7-day plan, and 70.9% (67.1%) (57.5%) use the block plan.
- 355 (334) (346) commuter students used i-cards to purchase food. 39.1% (37.1%) (28.8%) of them lived within the City of Chicago.
- The commuter population included 14.6% (15.0%) (20.2%) Freshmen, 15.8% (18.6%) (17.9%) Sophomore, 19.4% (18.6%) (21.1%) Junior, 30.1% (24.9%) (23.1%) Senior, and 20.0% (22.8%) (16.8%) Graduate/Health Professional.



Blue numbers are corresponding results from 2011

Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010



Meal Plan Usage

Frequency

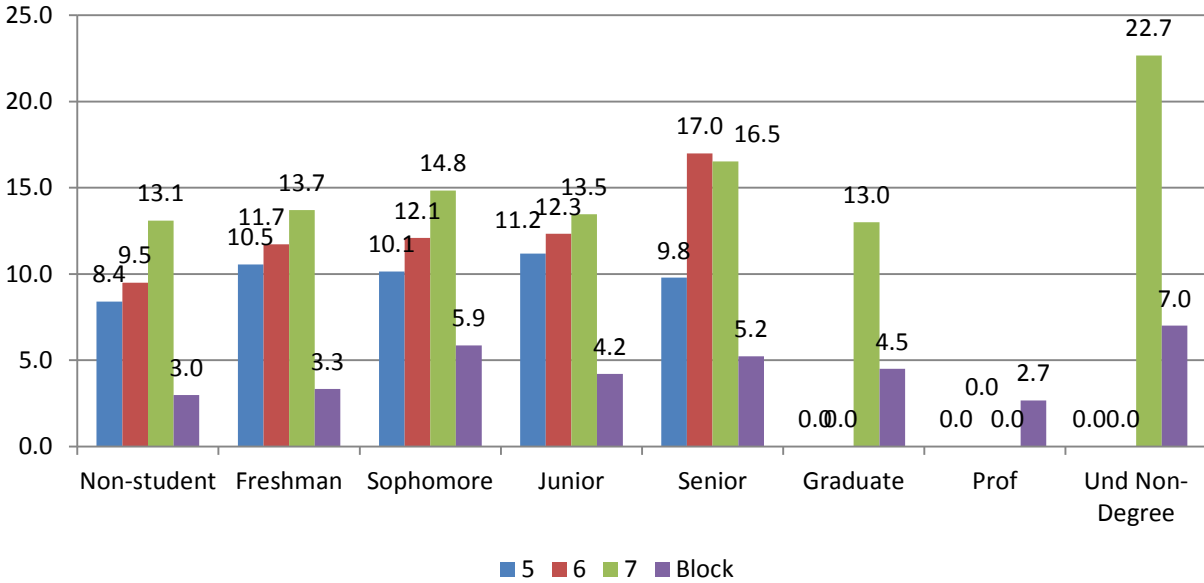
- 5-day meal plan participants averaged 10.5 (10.0) (9.3) meals for the week, 6-day participants averaged 11.9 (11.9) (11.1), 7-day participants averaged 14.1 (12.9) (12.2), and block plan averaged 4.3 (5.1) (4.8).
- The number of transactions per person ranged from 1 to 35 (1 to 40) (1 to 28) during the week. The mode was 10 (10) (9) AYCEP transactions.
- 8.3% (10.8%) (12.8%) of the 5-Day Plan participants ate less than one meal per day in the AYCE units. 21 (22) (40) students in the 5,6, or 7 Day Plans had only one AYCEP transaction for the entire week.
- 9.8% (9.7%) (12.7%) of the 7-Day Plan participants ate less than one meal per day in the AYCE units.
- 744 (606) Block Plan participants did not use their meal plan during the week.

Meal Plan Usage Frequency	# of Users	Total Swipes/Week	Average Swipes/Week
5 Day Plan	1427	14723	10.5
6 Day Plan	113	1301	11.9
7 Day Plan	540	7320	14.1
Block Meal Plan	509	2227	4.3

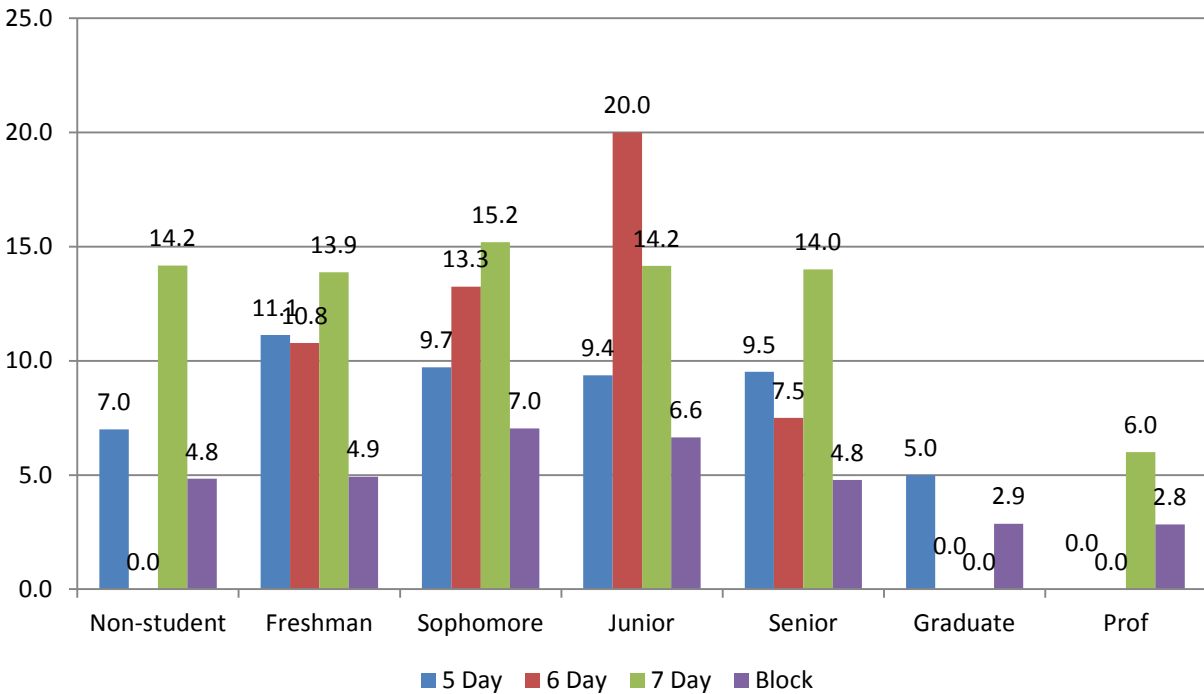
Blue numbers are corresponding results from 2011

Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

**AYCE Meals Per Week
Distribution by Meal Plan
Students with No Dragon Dollars
October 2012**



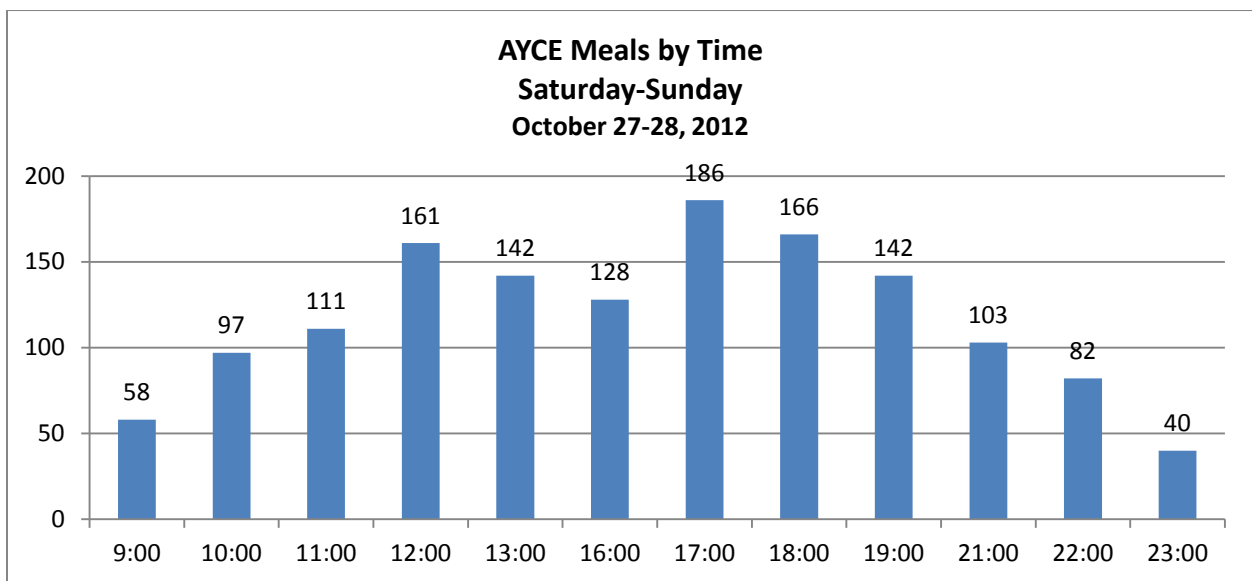
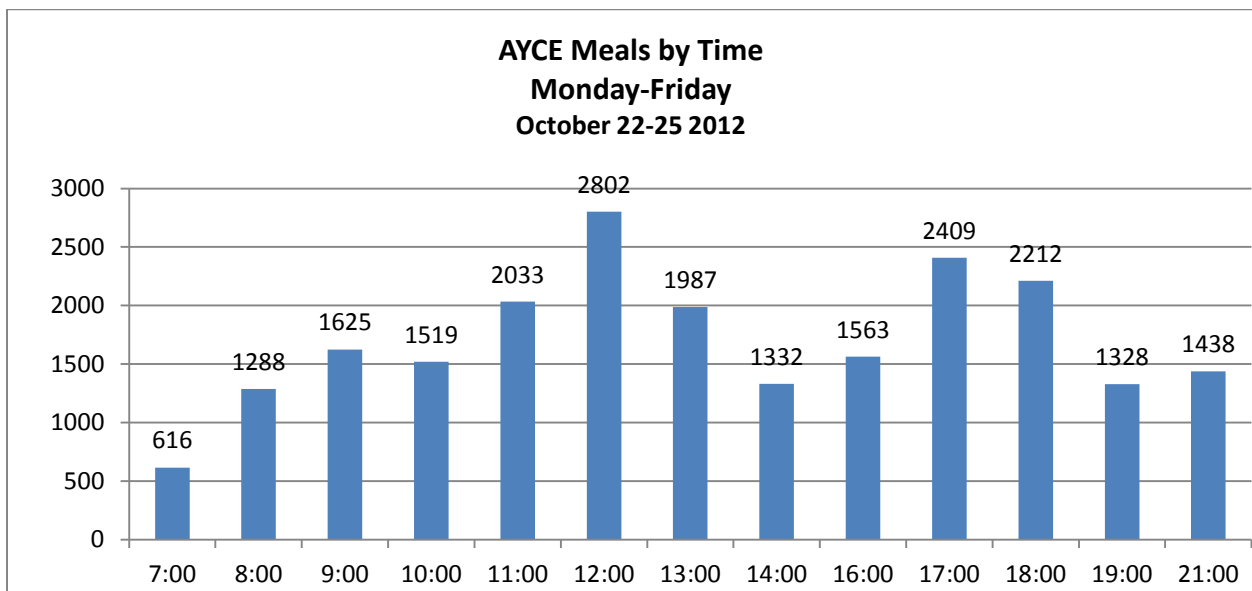
**AYCE Meals Per Week
Distribution by Meal Plan
Students with Dragon Dollars
October 2012**



Blue numbers are corresponding results from 2011
Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

Time Trends

- For purposes of analysis, meal times are defined as follows: Breakfast 7:00am-10:45am (Monday-Friday), Brunch 9:30am-2:00pm (Saturday and Sunday), Lunch 10:45am-3:00pm, Dinner 4:30pm-8:00pm (9:00pm on Friday), and Evening 9:00pm-midnight (Sunday through Thursday).
- The busiest hour of the day is noon-1pm, accounting for 13.5% (11.6%) of the AYCEP swipes for the week. Tuesday from noon- 1:00pm was the busiest hour of the week.
- Lunch accounted for 34.1% (34.5%) of the AYCEP transactions, Dinner 31.6% (32.5%), Breakfast 17.2% (18.1%), Evening 14.9% (13.9%), and Weekend Brunch 2.2% (2.6%).



Blue numbers are corresponding results from 2011
 Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

Location

- Based on the Campus Housing Census for October, the expected distribution of residents required to purchase a meal plan (n=2,080) (n=2,217) (n=2,273) by area is East 55.4% (55.6%) (54.2%), South 34.7% (32.4%) (31.0%), and West 9.9% (12.0) (14.8%).
- Actual meal plan transactions made by residents deviated slightly from anticipated with East 63.1% (63.4%) (50.9%), South 28.0% (28.2%) (33.4%), and West 8.9% (8.4%) (15.6%).
- West area residents made 71.4% (65.2%) (56.1%) of their AYCE transactions in SCW and 25.8% (32.1%) (39.4%) in SCE. This positive trend coincides with the renovation of the Centennial Room.

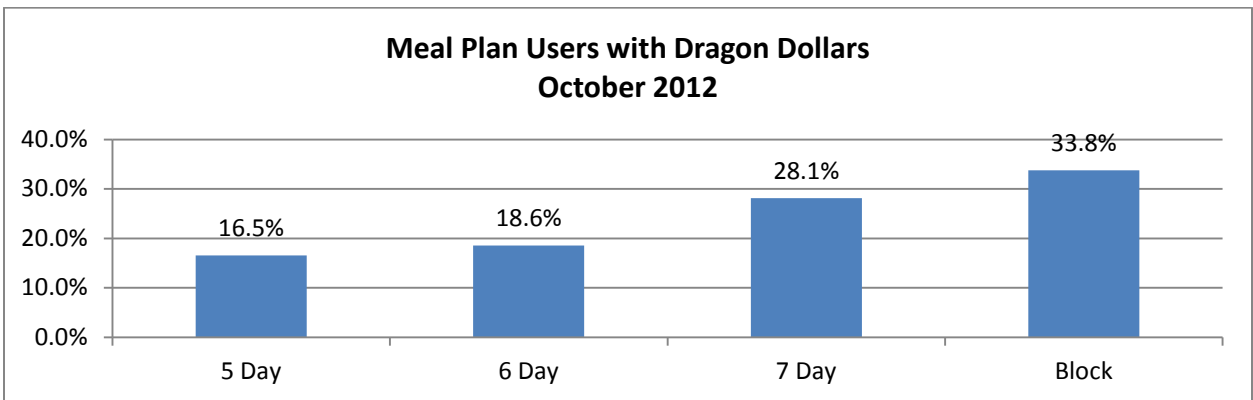
Expected vs. Actual Usage			
	Expected from Housing Census (excludes MRH, SSR, TBH)	Actual Swipes by Area of Residence	Actual Swipes by Dining Location
East	55.4%	52.0%	63.1%
South	32.7%	36.0%	28.0%
West	9.9%	13.0%	8.9%

- East Area residents ate primarily at SCE; about 3.4% (4.4%) ate dinner at JST or SCW.
- More than two in five of JST students (about one-third) ate lunch and nearly one in four ate breakfast at SCE.
- The percentage of west area residents eating breakfast in SCW increased slightly to 60.2%. The percentage of west area resident dinners in SCW also increased slightly from 84 % to 86.4%.

Dragon Dollars Usage

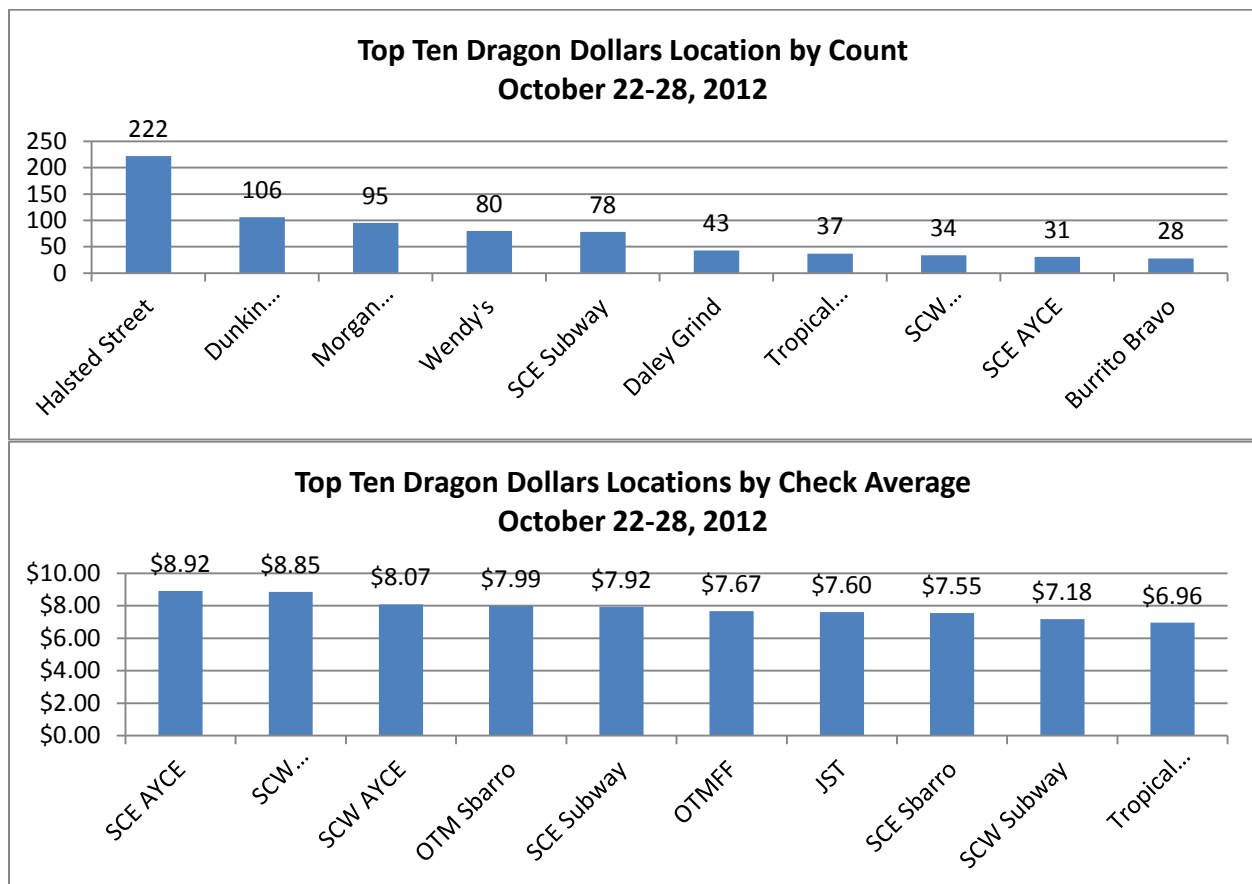
Frequency

- 279 (321) (411) individuals made 906 (962) (1,191) purchases using Dragon Dollars.
- 19.7% (21.7%) (23.1%) of Dragon Dollars users did not participate in a Meal Plan.
-



Blue numbers are corresponding results from 2011
 Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

- For the meal plan participants, 16.5% (20.0%) (24.3%) of the 5 Day Plan, 18.6% (41.3%) (70.4%) of the 6 Day Plan, 28.1% (30.6%) (43.3%) of the 7 Day Plan, and 33.8% (43.5%) (91.1%) of the Block Plan had a Dragon Dollars account.
- Freshmen meal plan users were least likely to use Dragon Dollars, with 16.7% (16.6%) (19.3%) having Dragon Dollars accounts.
- The average number of Dragon Dollars transactions for the week was 0.04 (0.06) (0.1) for all people with Dragon Dollars accounts. However, all account holders did not make Dragon Dollars purchases during the week. The actual average of Dragon Dollars transactions for active purchasers for the week was 1.2 (3.0) (2.9).
- 51% (67.2%) (53.4%) of the Dragon Dollars purchases were made by meal plan participants with a check average of \$5.38 (\$5.01) (\$5.31).
- 24.5% (26.4%) (21.7%) of Dragon Dollars transactions were made at Halsted Street Station with a check average of \$4.11 (\$3.61) (\$3.08), 11.7% (15.5%) (0.0%) at Dunkin Donuts with a check average of \$3.95 (\$3.78), 10.5% (9.0%) (11.6%) at Morgan Street Station with an average of 3.87 (\$4.37) (\$3.66), 8.8% (6.7%) (10.1%) at Wendy's with average \$6.28 (\$6.81) (\$5.31) and at 8.6% SCE Subway with a check average of \$7.92. The rest of the units received less than 4.8% (9%) each of the Dragon Dollars transactions.
- 5 Day Meal Plan Users with Dragon Dollars ate 0.6 (0.2) (0.4) fewer AYCEP meals than those who did not have Dragon Dollars. 6 Day Meal Plan Users with Dragon Dollars ate 1.1 (0.7) (1.1) fewer AYCEP meals. 7 Day Meal Plan Users ate 1.5 fewer AYCEP meals than those without Dragon Dollars.



Blue numbers are corresponding results from 2011

Grey numbers are corresponding results from 2010

Time Trends

- 65.6% (63.5%) (61.6%) of the Dragon Dollars Transactions were between 10:00-3:00pm.
- Less than 2.7% (2%) (2%) were during the late night time period.
- 7.4% (7.7%) (12.3%) of the Dragon Dollars transactions were made during the hour and a half that the AYCE units were closed between 3:00 and 4:30 p.m.

Conclusion

The AYCEP Meal Plans offer students value, convenience and choice with ample hours of operation and the opportunity to eat an unlimited number of meals and snacks per day. Students also have the ability to expand the variety of their dining experience through the purchase and use of Dragon Dollars. Based on the usage for the week, the following trends were observed:

- More than half of the Meal Plan users are enrolled in the 5 Day Plan, which is a reduction from nearly two-thirds during the previous year.
- 5 Day Plan, 6 Day Plan, and 7 Day Plan students visit the AYCE units twice a day.
- 5 Day Plan participants were least likely to use Dragon Dollars.
- More than half of the Dragon Dollars purchases were made by students with meal plans.
- West side residents utilized the SCW AYCE location more frequently in previous years, increasing their percentage of meals eaten in that unit to 71.4% from 56.1% in 2010.

The data presented in this snapshot of dining trends provides a starting point for informing the on-going improvement of service to resident and commuter students, faculty, and staff. Continued study of the dining trends and campus community interaction will assist the campus in making effective use of dining rooms and meal times to foster the development of community at UIC and “Engaging Students for Success”.

Appendix

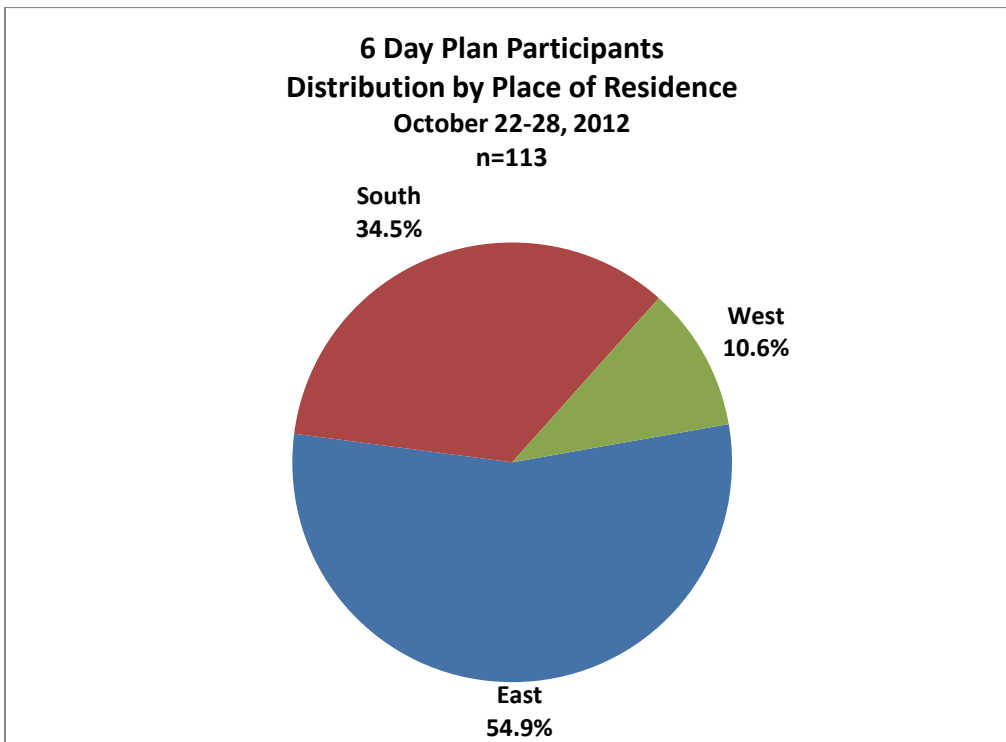
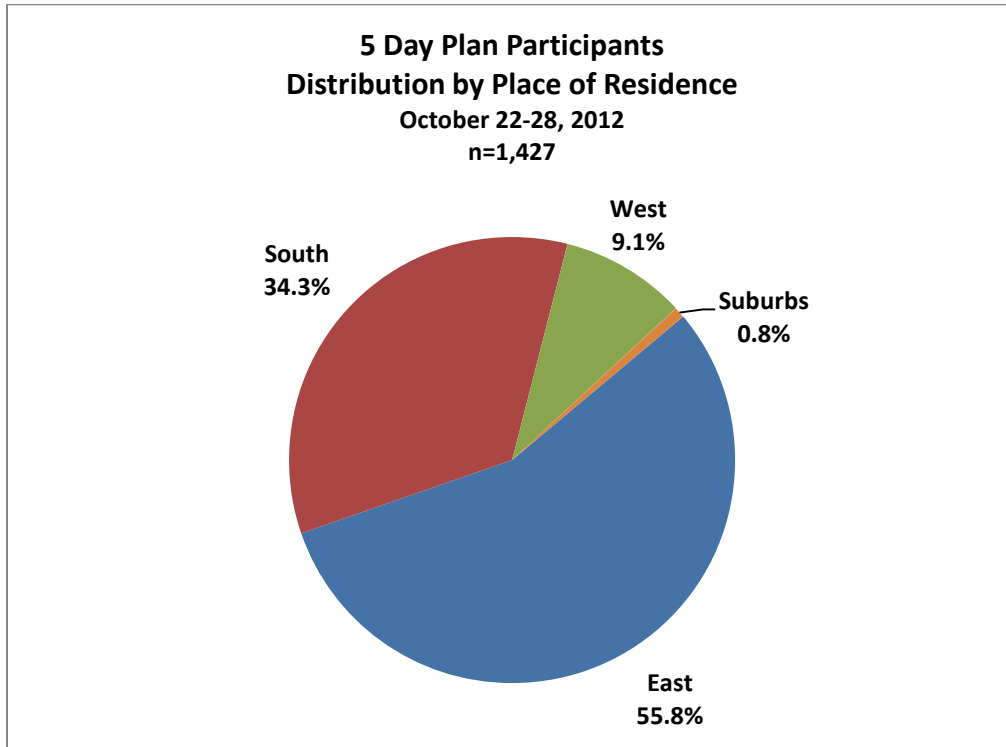
Appendix I – Customer Profile

Campus Dining Services Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage October 22-28, 2012

The Customer Profile identifies the composition of the electronic purchase universe through the Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars programs. Breakdown of participants by meal plan, area of residence, and university status are included. Seven areas of residence are defined. The East Area includes Commons North, Commons South, Commons West, and Courtyard, of which all of the residents are required to participate in a meal plan. The South Area includes James Stukel Towers, where residents are required to purchase a meal plan, as well as Marie Robinson Hall and Thomas Beckham Hall, where meal plan is optional. The West Area includes Polk Street Residence and Student Residence Hall, both of which require meal plans, and Single Student Residence, where meal plan is optional. Commuter Students are split into 3 areas, Near Campus, Chicago, and Suburbs. For the purpose of this study, Chicago includes all of the Commuter Students residing in the city, except for 60601-60608 and 60612. These zip codes comprise the Near Campus area. Although technically, not an area of residence, non-students make up the seventh “area”.

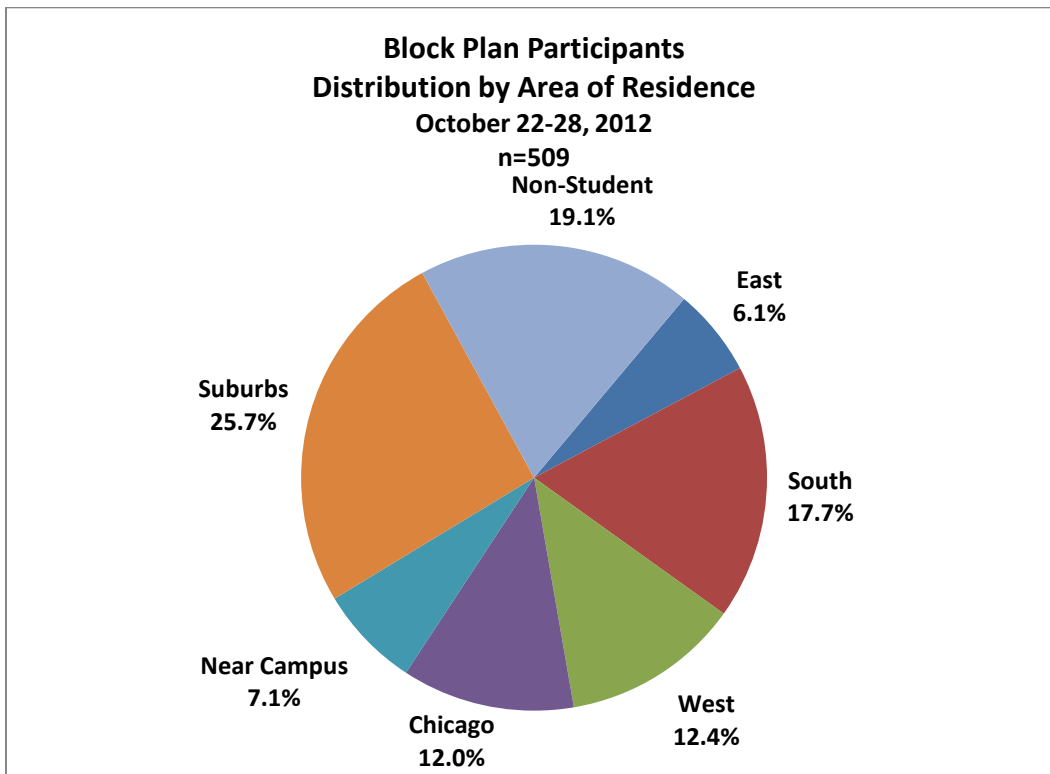
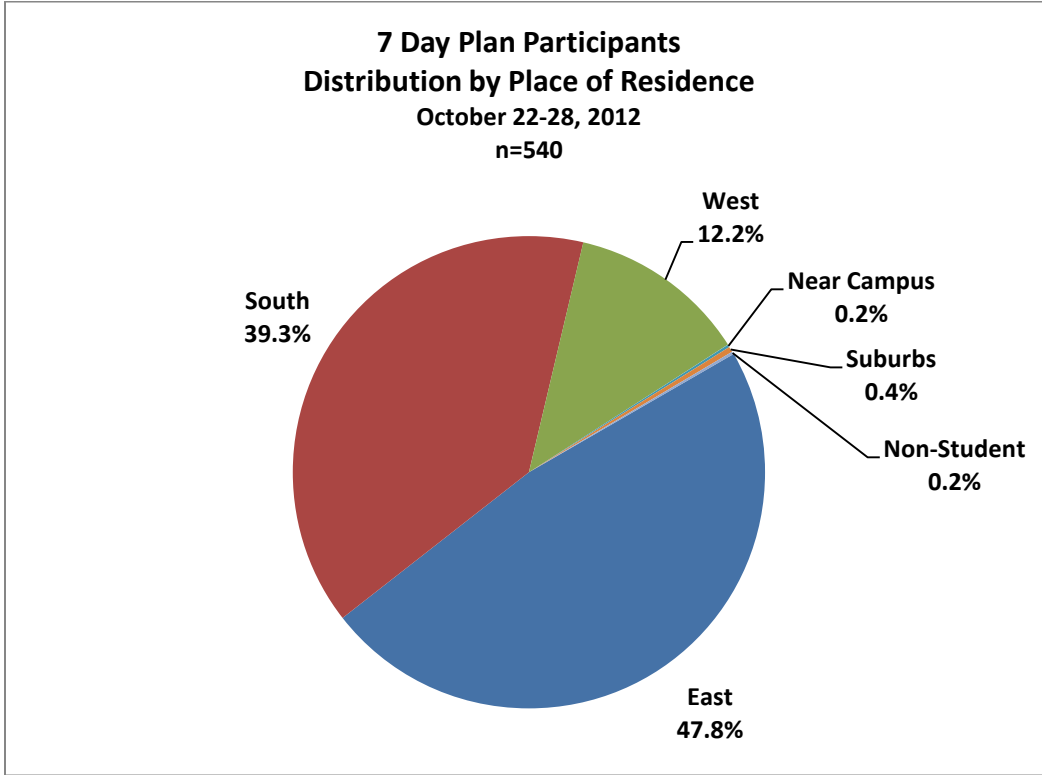
Appendix I – Customer Profile

Campus Dining Services Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage October 22-28, 2012



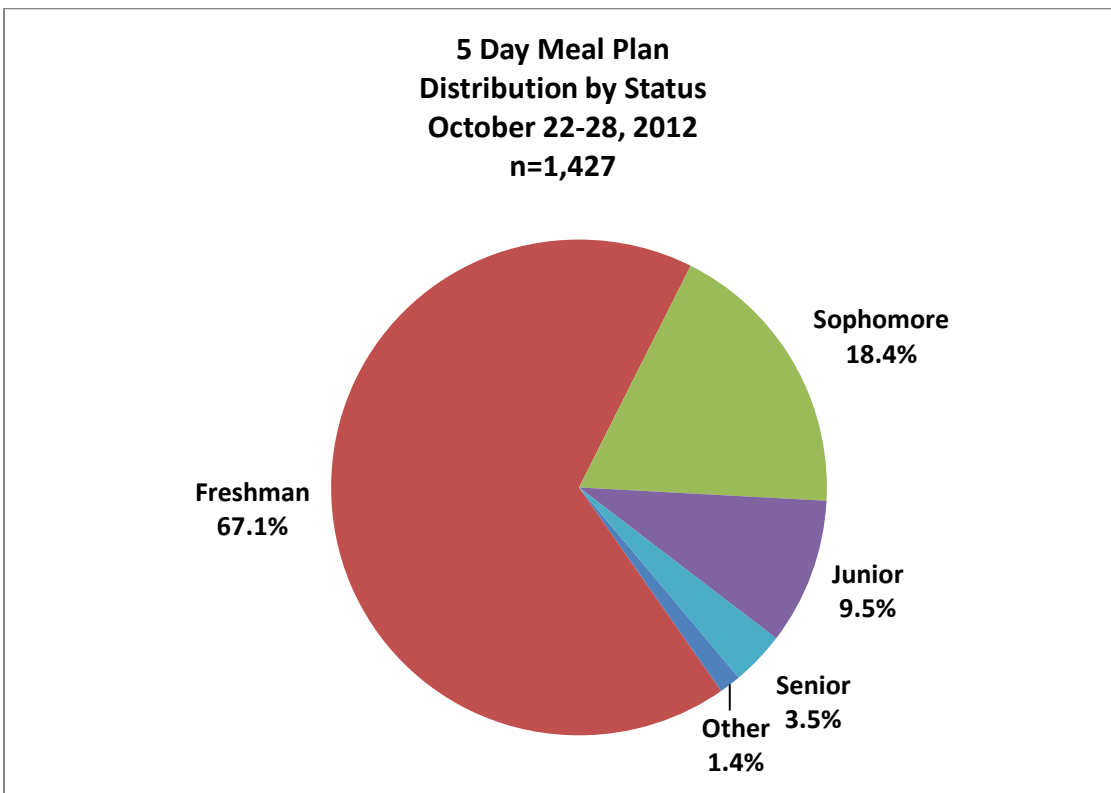
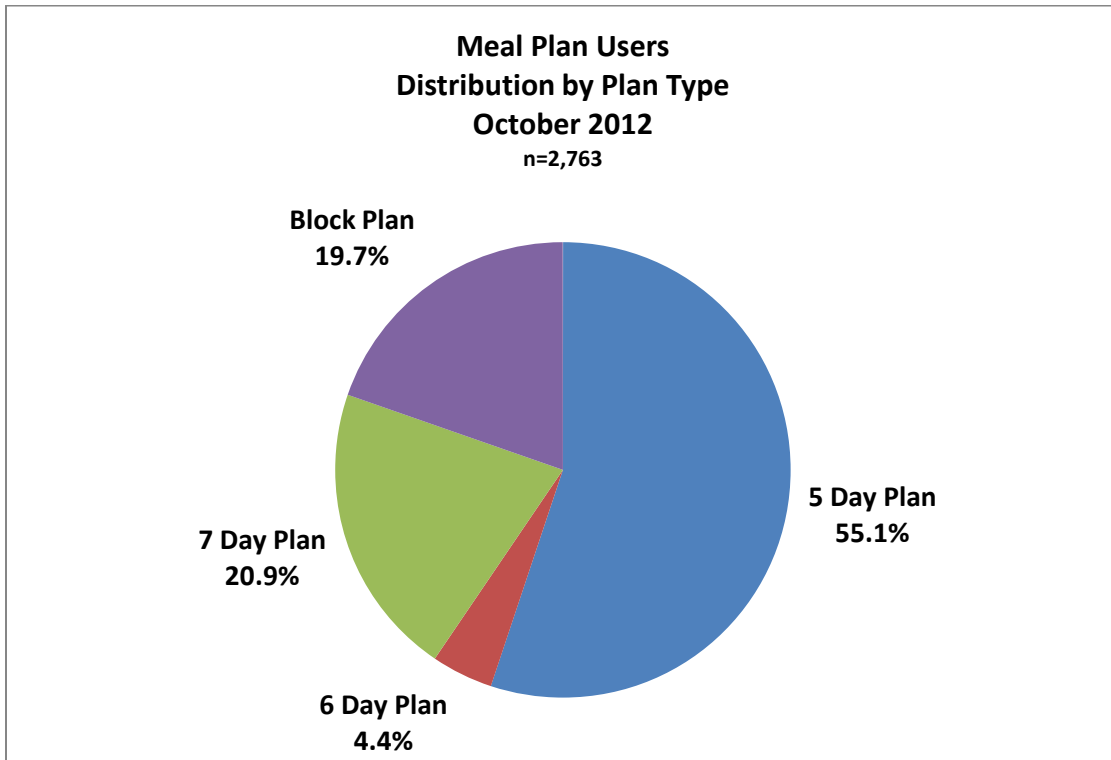
Appendix I – Customer Profile

Campus Dining Services Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage October 22-28, 2012



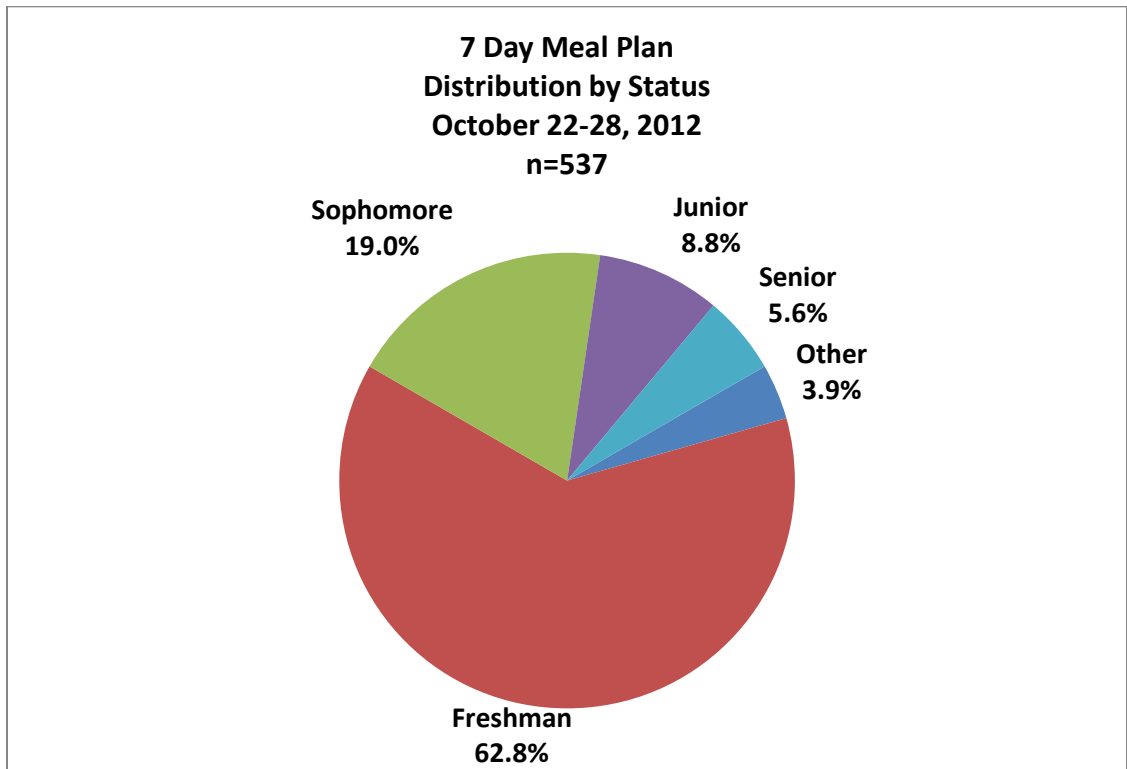
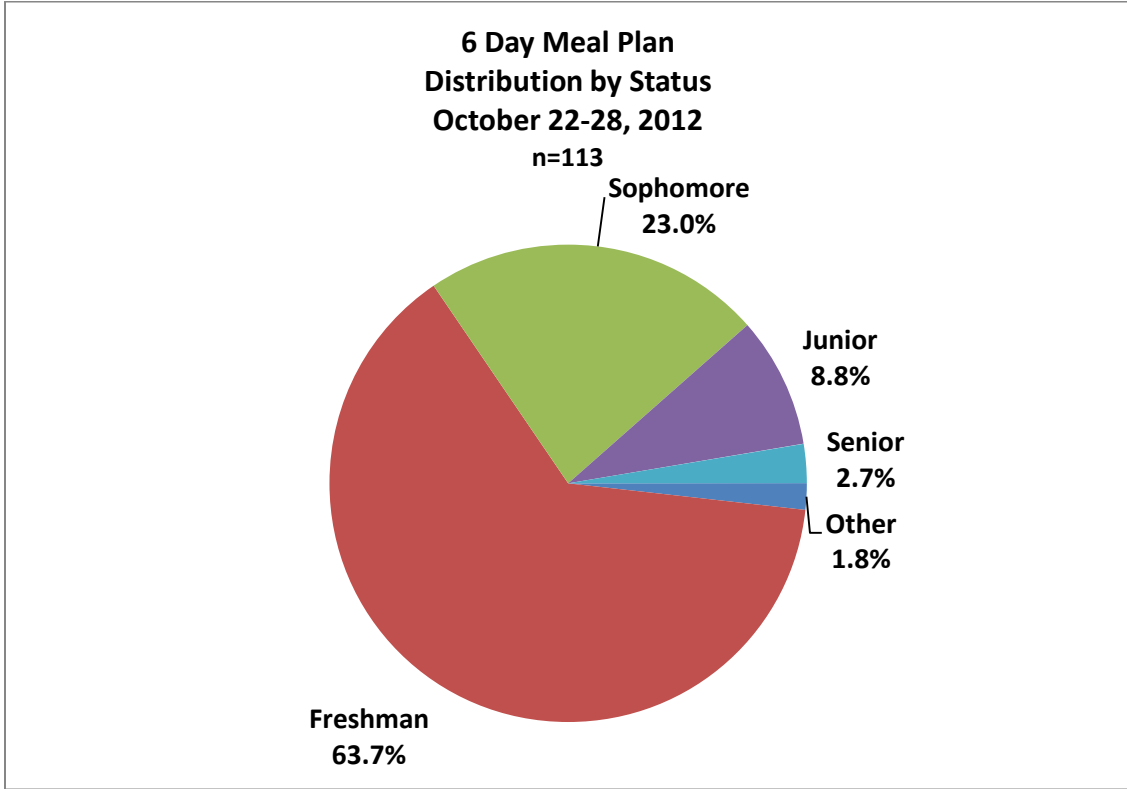
Appendix I – Customer Profile

Campus Dining Services Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage October 22-28, 2012



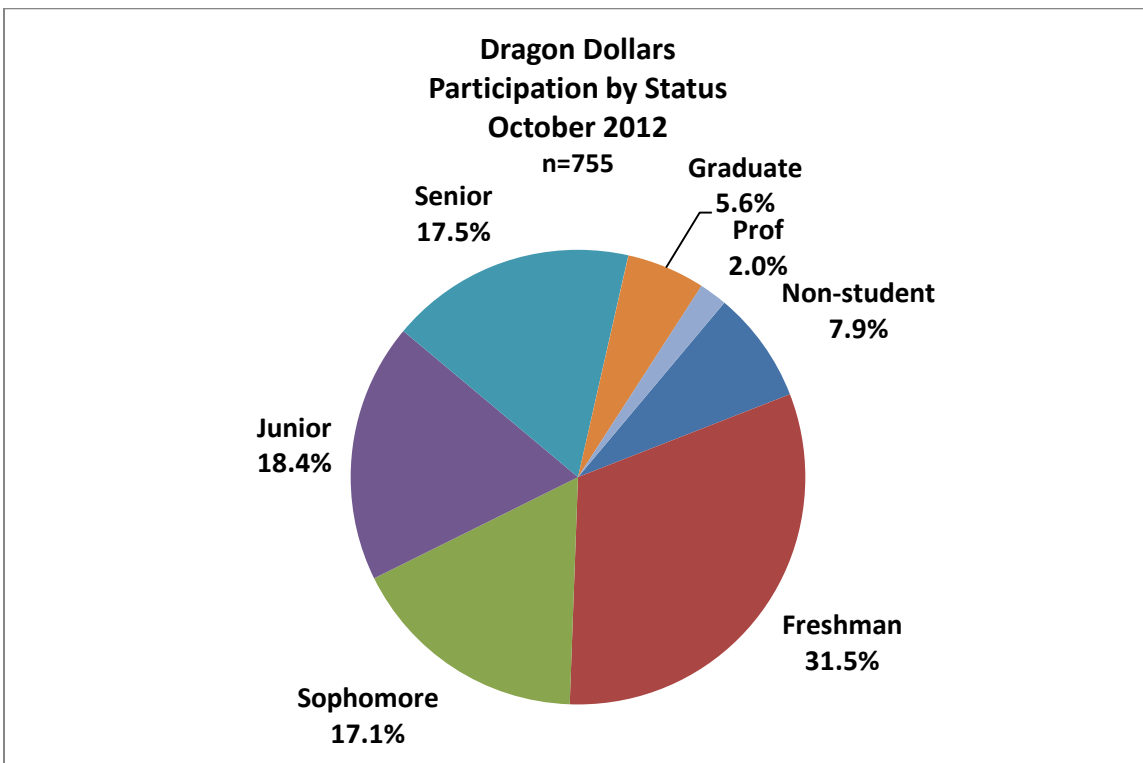
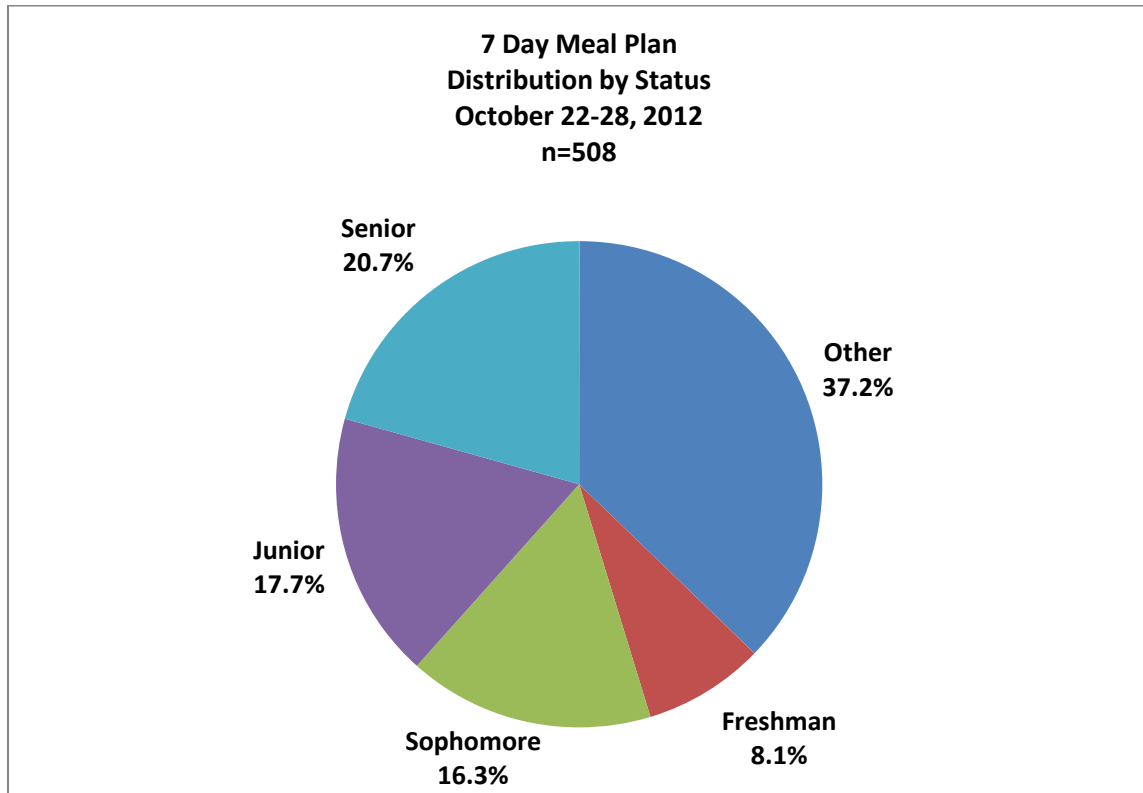
Appendix I – Customer Profile

**Campus Dining Services
Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage
October 22-28, 2012**



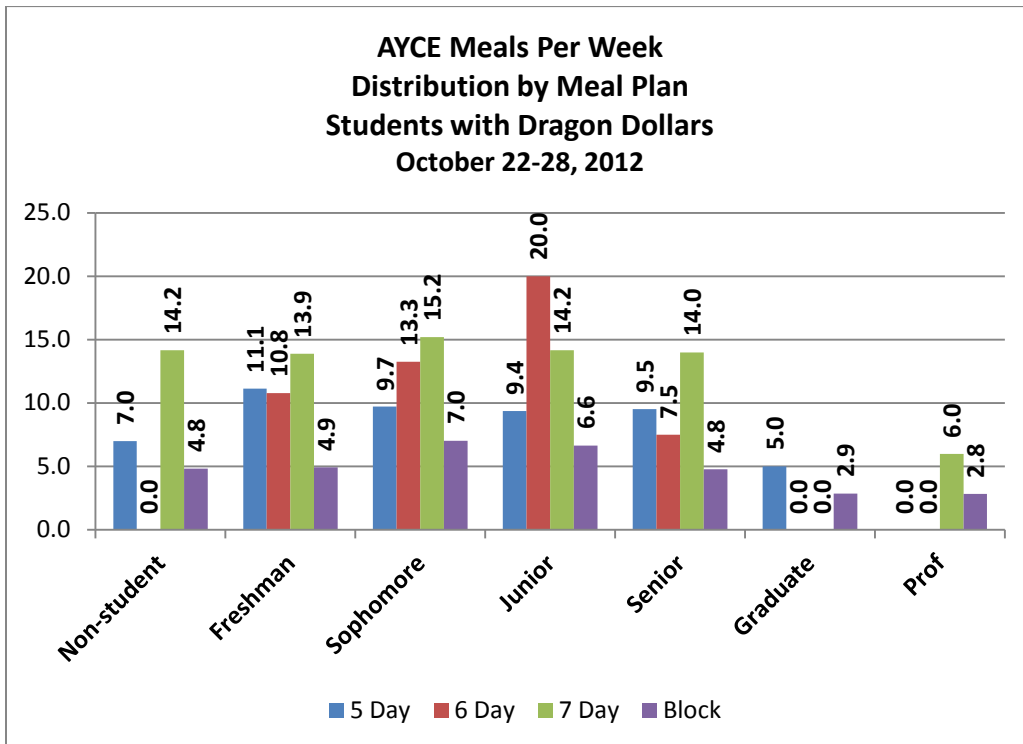
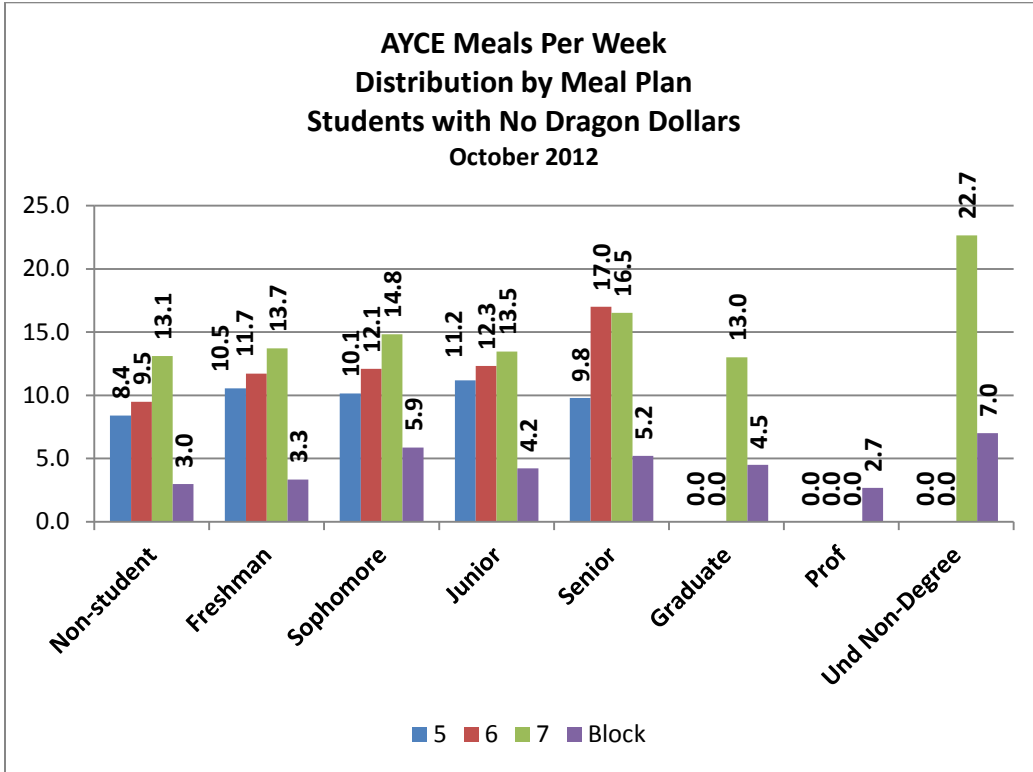
Appendix I – Customer Profile

Campus Dining Services Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage October 22-28, 2012



Appendix I – Customer Profile

Campus Dining Services Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage October 22-28, 2012



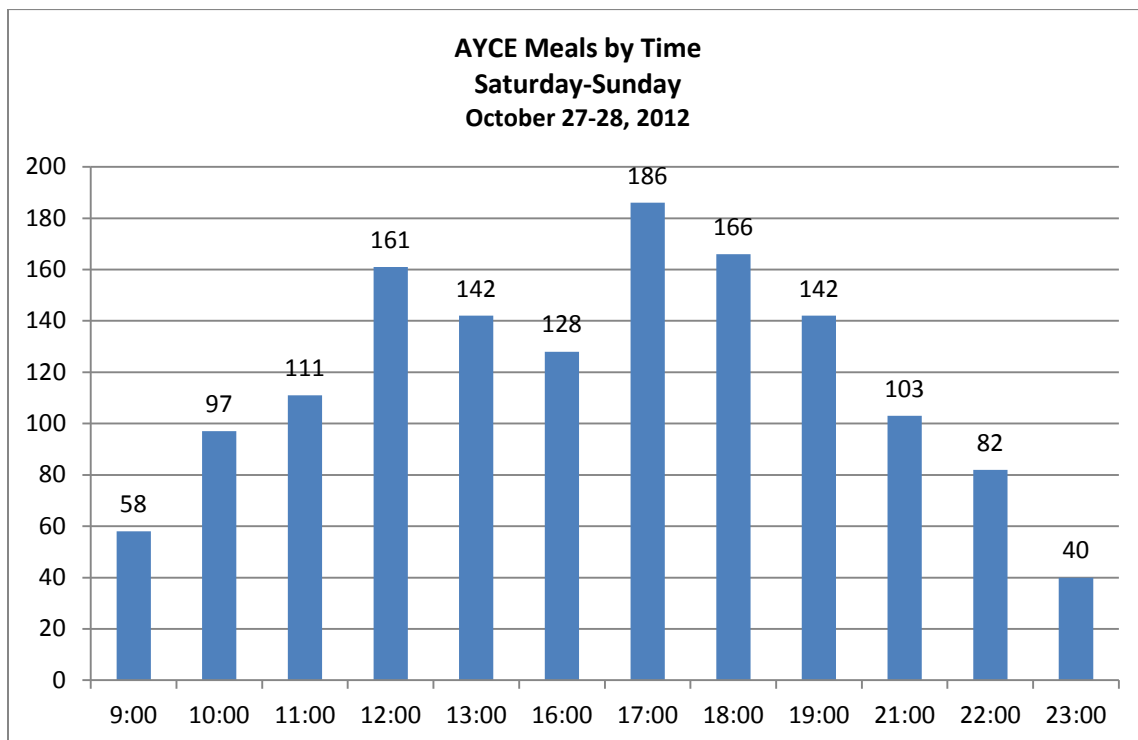
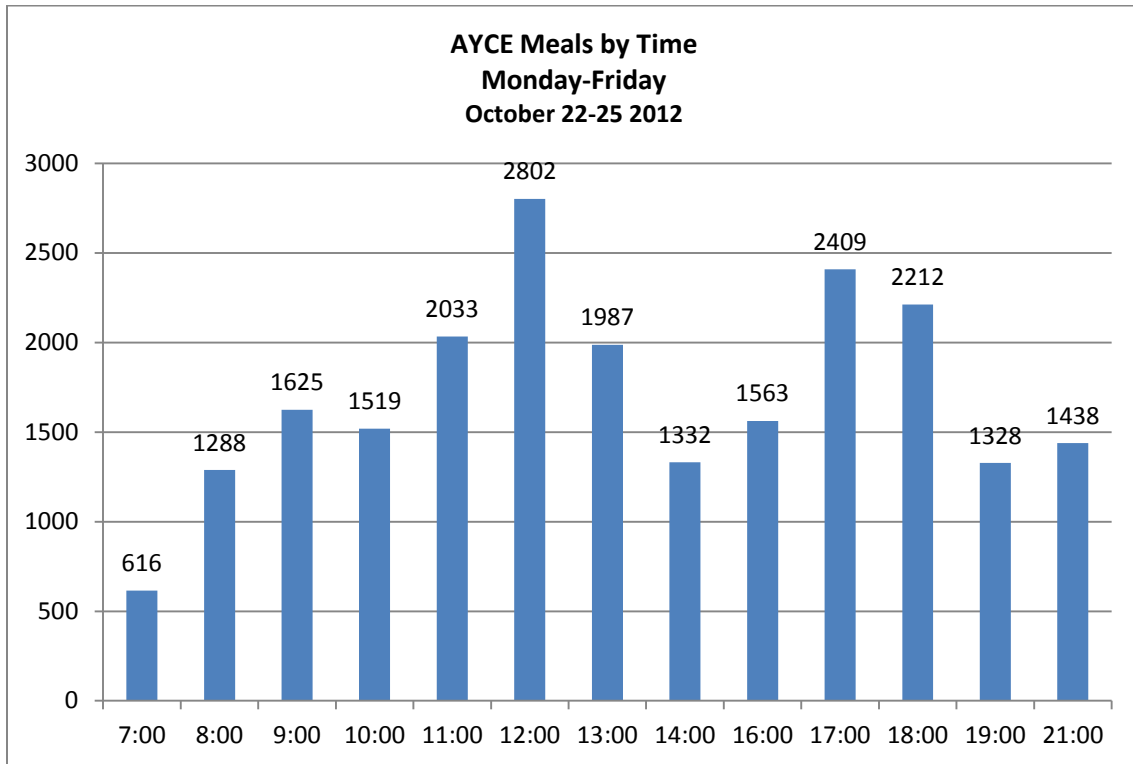
Appendix II – Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage Frequency

Campus Dining Services Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage October 22-28, 2012

This section of charts relates to the times that customers visit the AYCE locations. Because of the differences in volume and hours of operation, the week days and weekend days were separated into two charts. Please note that the weekend hours beginning at 21:00 only include Sunday, since the venues are not open for late night on Saturday. Also, the 9:00 hour represents only one-half hour of service on the weekends. The week day hours beginning at 21:00 include four days of service, since the venues close at 21:00 on Fridays.

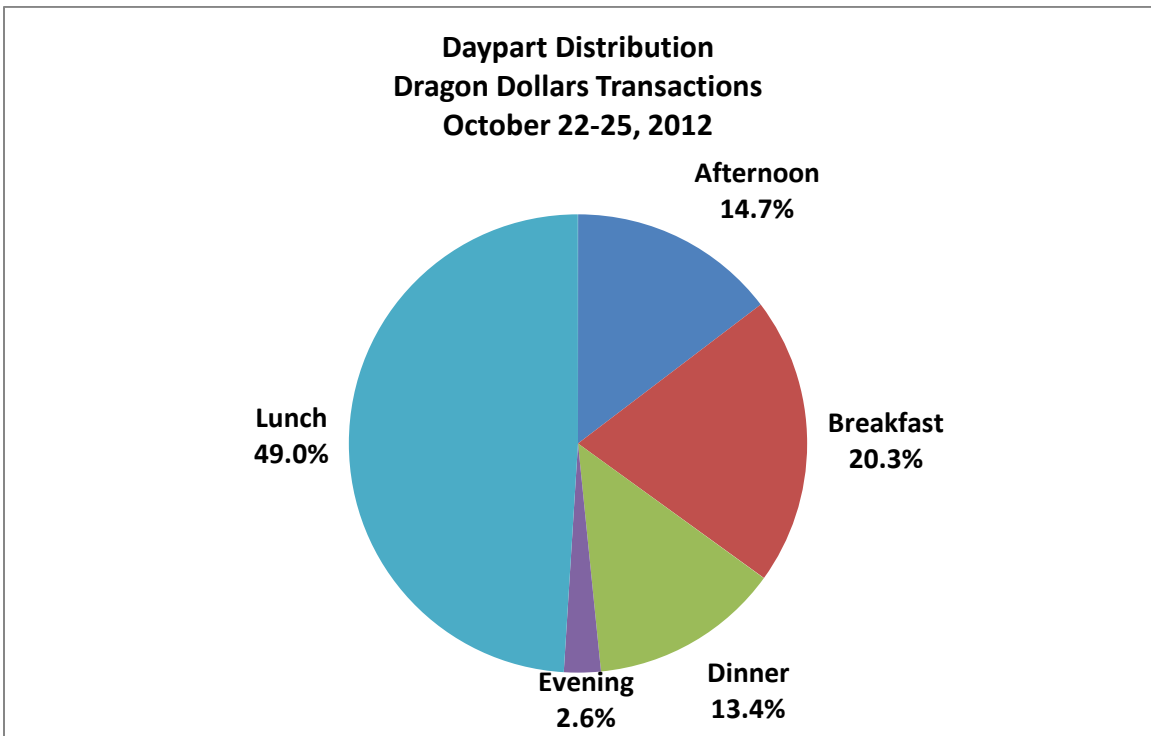
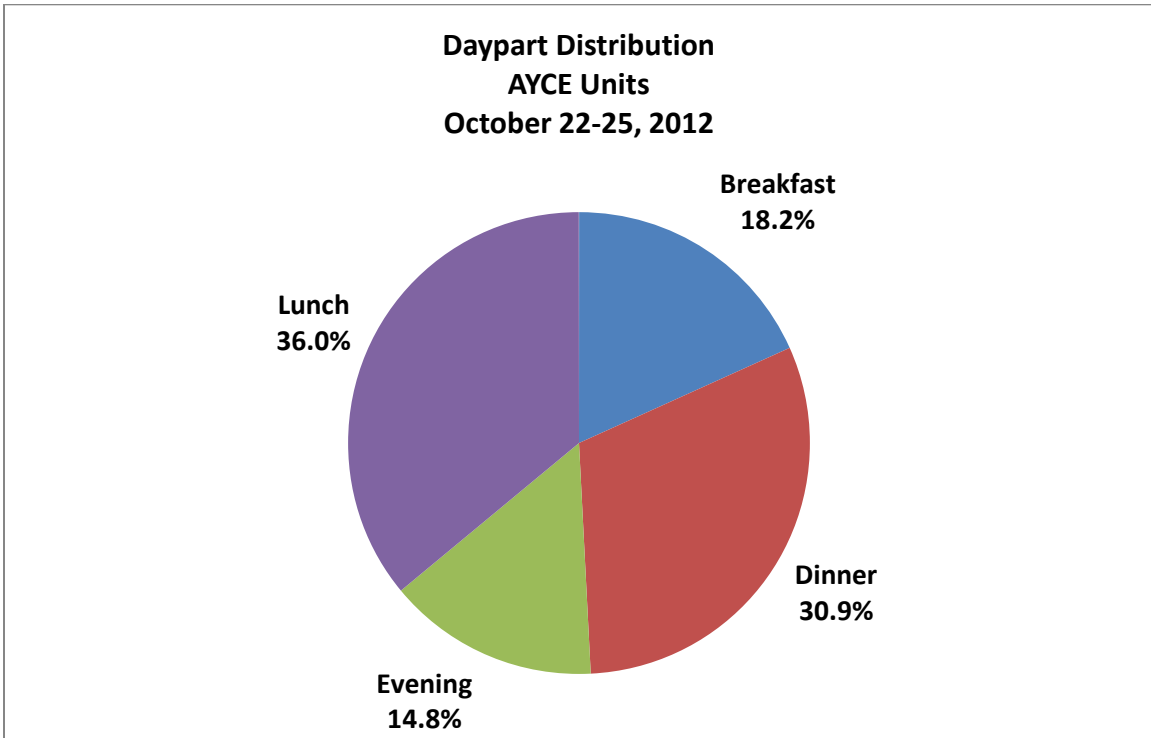
Appendix II – Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage Frequency

Campus Dining Services Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage October 22-28, 2012



Appendix II – Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage Frequency

**Campus Dining Services
Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage
October 22-28, 2012**



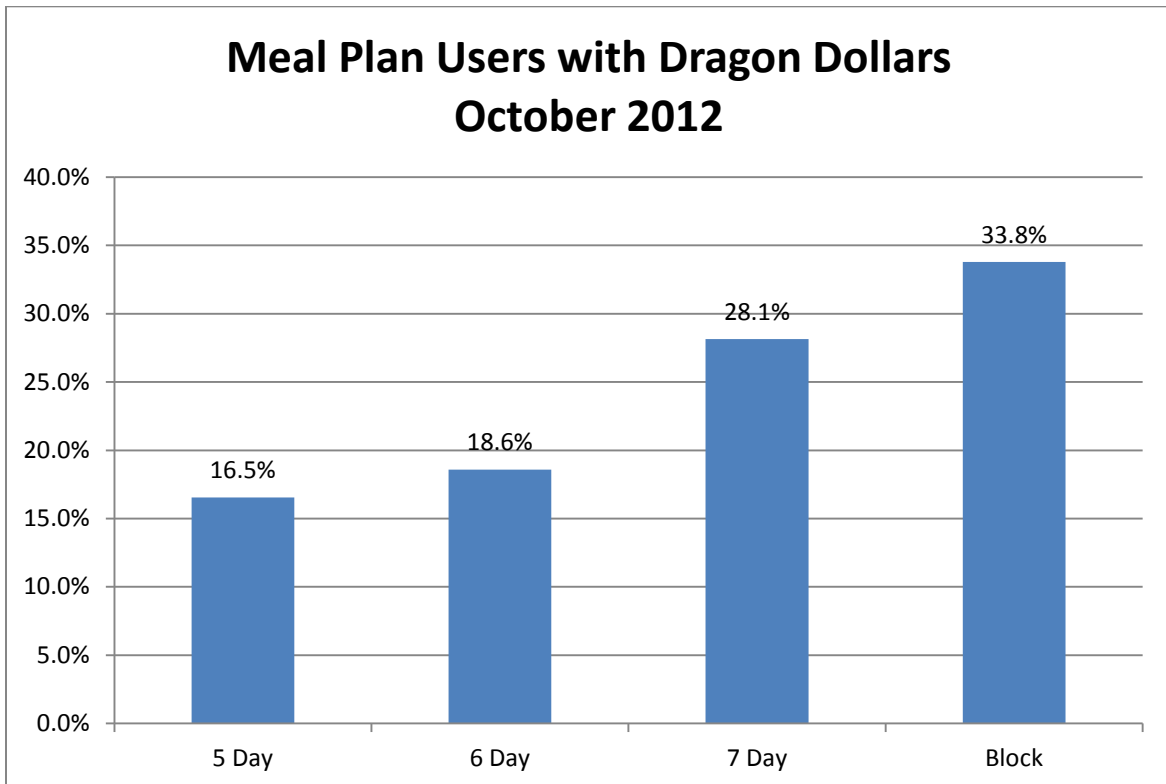
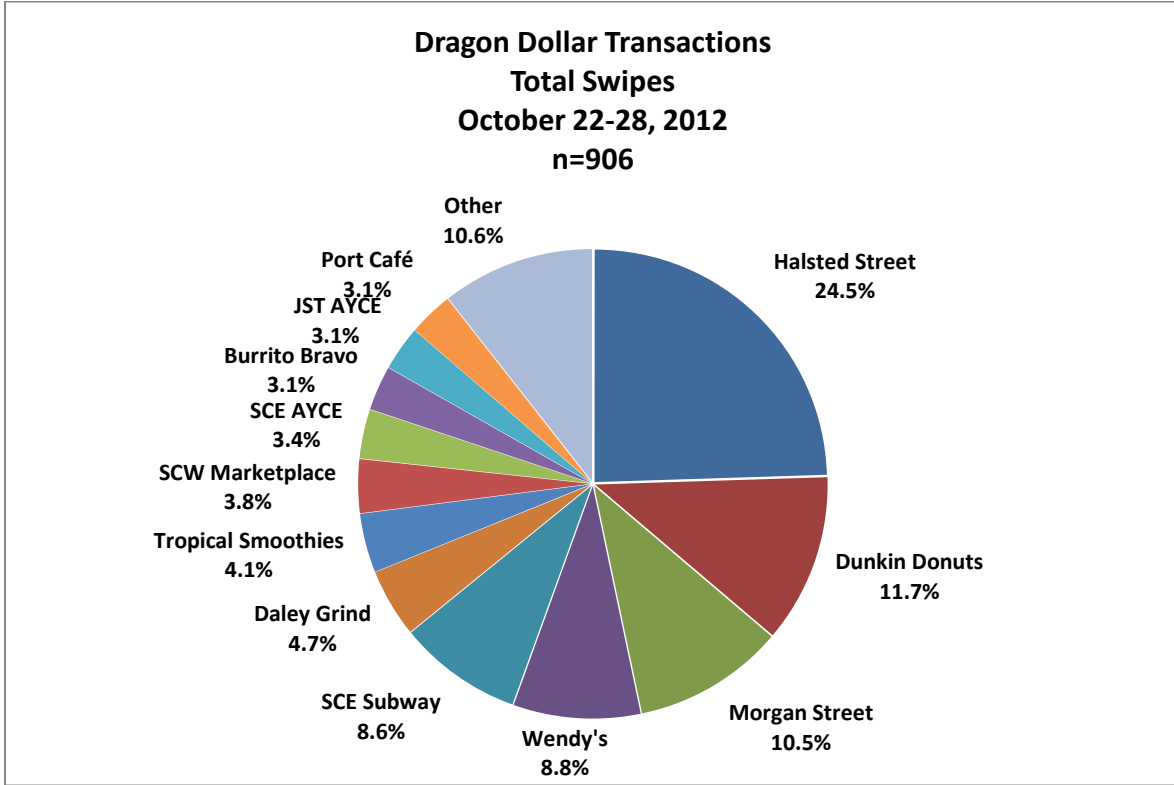
Appendix III – Dragon Dollars Usage

**Campus Dining Services
Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage
October 22-28, 2012**

This section of charts relates to Dragon Dollar usage. Charts identify distribution of usage by location and meal plan participation.

Appendix III – Dragon Dollars Usage

**Campus Dining Services
Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage
October 22-28, 2012**



Appendix III – Dragon Dollars Usage

**Campus Dining Services
Meal Plan and Dragon Dollars Usage
October 22-28, 2012**

