

ABSTRACT

THESIS: A Pilot Study on the Influence of Regulated Meal Plan Systems on
Student Food Purchasing and Dining Behavior

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College introduces many new experiences to students; it is during this time that students develop behaviors and habits that can affect them throughout their lives. Influences on dietary decisions made by college students have been well researched. However, the college foodservice system, one influencing factor, is evolving with the increase in student attendance and demands. The invention and use of meal plan systems by colleges and universities has added another variable that shapes the decisions and dietary behaviors of students. Regulations in meal plans can limit meal times, monetary amounts and number of meals allowed in a given time frame. The purpose of this pilot study was to examine the impact of a regulated meal plan system on students at a Midwest university. Students who utilized the college meal plan system were asked to complete a survey about their dietary behavior, attitude and beliefs towards the regulated meal plan offered at the Midwest University. The expectation of conducting this research was to better understand how the decisions and purchases by students are shaped when aspects such as time, money and meal allowance per week are controlled and regulated.