

COLLEGE FOODSERVICE



BOOSTING

MEAL PLAN PARTICIPATION

Students seek value, flexibility, and personalization—not just calories.



Highlight Value Beyond the Plate

- Compare cost-per-meal to grocery + takeout spending
- Emphasize unlimited dining, grab-and-go options, and built-in savings
- Showcase convenience: no budgeting, no dishes, no cooking stress



Offer Tiered and Customizable Plans

- Introduce flexible options for commuters, athletes, or students with night classes
- Allow students to mix dining hall meals with retail swipes or declining balance
- Create mini or weekend-only plans for upperclassmen or transfer students



Embrace Digital Convenience

- Mobile ordering, menu previews, wait-time updates
- Social media polls, behind-the-scenes kitchen content, or “What’s for lunch?” reels
- Integrate meal plans with ID cards, mobile wallets, and budgeting apps



Gamify and Incentivize Use

- Offer loyalty rewards for frequent diners (free drink after 10 meals, etc.)
- Create campus-wide challenges: “Swipe Streak” competitions, sustainability points
- Partner with student orgs for meal plan giveaways or themed dining events



Build Community Through Food

- Host events like “Dinner with the Dean,” holiday feasts, or night markets
- Partner with RAs for dorm dining nights or wellness meal kits
- Offer social seating areas or coworking cafe zones in dining halls

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*One Partner,
Every Solution*

**END-TO-END
SUPPORT FOR
CAMPUS DINING
AND BEYOND**



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STEAMING BUILT FOR THE
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CAMPUS KITCHENS**



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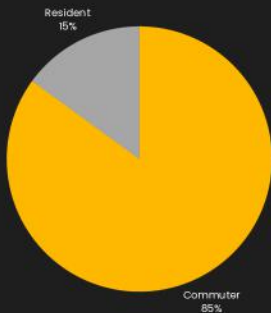
THE COMMUTER CONUNDRUM

While much of campus dining is built around residential life, commuter students make up a growing and often underserved portion of the college population.

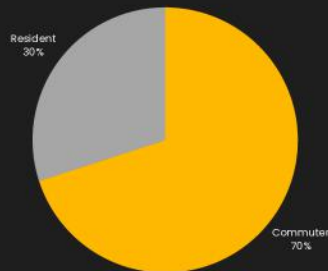
By rethinking dining services with flexibility, portability, and inclusion in mind, colleges can not only meet the unique needs of commuter students but also unlock new revenue streams and improve overall student satisfaction.

Understanding the Commuter Student

Commuter students are often overlooked in traditional meal plan models, despite making up a significant portion of the campus population. With limited time on campus, they frequently miss meals—leading to both nutritional gaps and lost revenue for dining services. What they need are food solutions that are affordable, portable, and practical enough to fit their busy, in-and-out schedules.



Approximately 85% of college students in the U.S. are commuter students, meaning they do not live in institution-owned housing.



Nearly 70% of full-time students and **almost all** part-time students hold jobs while enrolled, a trend more common among commuter students.

Fun Facts



The average commuter student **spends more time finding parking than eating lunch.** The author of this article can attest to this.



Commuters are the #1 unintentional intermittent fasters.

Not by choice—just by forgetting to eat between class, work, and a 45-minute drive.



Commuters often pay for meal plans they barely use.

Many students buy default plans during enrollment and discover halfway through the semester that they've only used 4 swipes—3 of which were for coffee.

Accommodating the Commuter Student

Offer Flexible Meal Plan Options

Introduce commuter-specific meal plans: smaller packages, fewer swipes, lower cost.

Prioritize Grab-and-Go & Mobile Ordering

Stock self-serve coolers and hot stations with portable, single-serving items and designate express pick-up zones to decrease wait times.

Extend Hours for Key Locations

Keep high-traffic campus cafes or kiosks open during early mornings and late evenings, and sync hours with peak commuter times: before 9am classes, mid-afternoon breaks, after 5pm.

Create Commuter-Friendly Dining Spaces

Offer "touchdown" zones with microwaves, fridges, outlets, and quiet seating. Commuter lounges have the potential to be hidden gems.

Market Inclusively

Avoid language like "dorm meals" or "residential plans only" in marketing. Utilize campaigns like "Fuel for the Road" or "Campus Comfort, On Your Terms".



From the walk-in to the quad, trust **CAMBRO**

Sustainability & food safety matter more than ever in campus dining.

CAMBRO delivers with made-in-USA solutions that reduce waste, support diverse diets, and keep operations running smoothly—from the dining hall to outdoor events. Rust-proof shelving, allergen-safe storage, insulated transport, and mobile carts are just the start.

Whether you're feeding 50 in the café or 50,000 in the stadium, Cambro helps you do more with less—without compromising safety, speed, or quality.

Because student satisfaction starts behind the scenes.

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COOKING MADE EFFORTLESS—
PERFECT FOR HIGH-VOLUME,
CONSISTENT MEALS ON CAMPUS**



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COMBATING FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity on college campuses is a silent crisis affecting **millions** of students.

Between rising tuition, housing costs, and inflation, many students find themselves forced to choose between basic nutrition and other essentials. College foodservice programs are uniquely positioned to be part of the solution—not just as meal providers, but as key partners in fostering equity, wellness, and student success.

By implementing targeted, accessible strategies, dining services can help ensure that no student has to learn on an empty stomach.

Create Affordable Meal Plan Options

- Offer subsidized plans or sliding-scale pricing for students in need
- Introduce meal share/swipe donation programs where students can donate unused meals
- Work with financial aid offices to include meal plans in aid packages

Partner with Campus and Community Resources

- Collaborate with student affairs, health services, and counseling centers to identify at-risk students
- Connect with local food banks and non-profits for pantry supplies or prepared meal donations
- Set up on-campus food pantries stocked with nutritious staples and ready-to-eat meals

Implement Emergency Meal Access

- Offer a “no questions asked” meal voucher system for students in crisis
- Use QR codes or student IDs to discreetly access temporary meals
- Train staff to recognize signs of food insecurity and refer students compassionately

Expand Campus Pantry Services

- Stock grab-and-go items, fresh produce, and hygiene essentials
- Extend hours and promote services without stigma
- Include culturally relevant and dietary-sensitive food options

Address Stigma Through Language and Design

- Rebrand pantries and aid programs with dignity-forward language like “Campus Market” or “Community Kitchen”
- Market as a resource for any student facing a tight week, not just for extreme hardship
- Use inclusive visuals and messaging in print and digital materials



Smarter Solutions for School Meals



Grab-n-Go Cart

Fuel busy mornings fast with the Grab n Go Cart! With a bold two-sided sign, easy-to-clean stainless steel top, and an adjustable shelf for changing menus, it's built for action.



Mightylite Insulated Carrier

Ultra-light, super durable insulated food carriers with useful features not found in any other carriers. Carries easy. Holds safe. Lasts long.



C5 3 Series

The Energy efficient 3 Series heated cabinet with cool to touch Insulation Armour exterior is a super durable, energy efficient upgrade to a standard cabinet.



ASPIRE TO INSPIRE

Vollrath Custom Serving Systems

Vollrath's 6-Series Custom Serving Systems take style, innovation, and rugged durability to a whole new level. These units are fully customizable with extensive material options. With endless possibilities and top-quality construction, 6-Series systems are designed, engineered, and manufactured to meet your specific requirements.

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