

*Inside look*

# Formulated food management makes menu

**By Dalton Carver**  
*Staff reporter*

Students file into the cafeteria each day to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner without giving a second thought as to how that food got there. The options and the variety from day to day is something that has become expected. So how does Sodexo organize the cafeteria menu that students have come used to dining on?

“We have a program that’s called Food Management Systems,” said Chris Stettensch, director of food services. “It’s used by Sodexo and campus services globally.”

The program is used by district chefs, who are responsible for putting menu rotations into the software. The FMS then distributes the menus to various campuses. There are also regional chefs who insert menu ideas that

may be more familiar to specific colleges. These chefs know what is commonly eaten by students of that region.

“Our regional chef is based out of Kansas State,” said Stettensch. “He’s probably more in-tune with Kansas-type of students than a student that would go to UCLA or USC.”

The menu that was submitted by the district chef is sent to the Sodexo staff at Southwestern. From there, the recipe list is downloaded and the products are purchased. “I’d say that 99 percent of what we make is all recipe-based,” said Stettensch. “When you see something, no matter if it’s fried tofu or whatever, that’s not something that we made up off the top of our heads.”

Almost everything served in the cafeteria came from a formulated menu. “It’s not just the entrees. The only creative freedom we

really have is the pizza station and the salad bar,” he said. “They say things like ‘This is what you’re supposed to have on your entrée, this is what your soup is going to be and this what your expo is going to be.’ They pretty much mandate that to us.

“They really give you a complete roadmap on how to get from Point A to Point B, food-wise and menu-wise,” he said. “They even give you a shopping guide and list the UPC numbers on what specific products to purchase.”

Sodexo will soon be receiving a new rotation of menus. “It’s going to be a lot more elaborate than what you guys are used to seeing,” said Stettensch. “It’s definitely going to be more labor intensive for us on the production side of things. It’s going to have a lot more variety and lot more options for students in the cafeteria.”

Since Stettensch’s arrival last

February, Sodexo has done their best to get some variety in the menu. “We’ve done a lot of tweaking with that in the short time that I’ve been here,” said Stettensch. “It’s not always successful, sometimes it is successful. We heavily rely on our student government at Southwestern to give us feedback, whether it’s positive or negative.”

In addition, Sodexo keeps a log book on the food that they serve. “We keep track of what we serve on the hotline every day,” said Stettensch. “If yesterday was meatloaf, we write that stuff in there.”

Sodexo also writes down how much food was plated up and sold to students, the amount left over, how much was considered waste and how much spoiled. Workers record how popular the dish might have been in the nearby comment section.

“Those go into a file, so when that menu rotation rolls back around, we can look at it and go, ‘Oh, they didn’t like the tofu. Let’s change that to something else.’”

If students have any questions, requests or complaints, Stettensch guides them to their Student Government Association representative. “That’s kind of how we communicate with students as whole,” he said.

This behind-the-scenes process eventually lands the food on the students’ plates. From the hotline to the dessert, everything is placed according to plan. The food might not have legs, but they make a long, ongoing journey to the cafeteria and into your stomach.

*Dalton Carver is a junior majoring in communication. You can email him at dalton.carver@sckans.edu or tweet him @DaltonJames.*



Walter Williams Jr., Sodexo, offers a variety of choices in the cafeteria. Students can choose from a vegetarian option, as well as a number of sides, usually including rice or soup. Insert: A student’s lunch, comprised of visits to the hotline, sandwich line and expo. All menu items are made in advance and sent to Sodexo to prepare and serve. (Min Jiao/Collegian photographer)