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How Does Outsourcing Dining Services Affect University Students?

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Recommended Citation

Kern, Laurie, "How Does Outsourcing Dining Services Affect University Students?" (2022). *Research Days Posters 2022*. 92.

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Laurie Kern, Source Project- People, Politics & The Environment
Title: Outsourcing facilities in Binghamton University;
How is it impacting the student population?

Special Thanks to Professor Valerie Imbrue + Professor Robert Holahan

BACKGROUND:

- Prior study, done by American School & University predicted that over half of all American Universities are outsourcing, a number that will grow over the years.
- Binghamton University has a contract with Sodexo for dining services spanning until 2025
- There are over 30 locations Sodexo has opened with Binghamton
- Sodexo also prepares quarantine/isolation meals since the Covid-19 outbreak
- There is limited research done on University Outsourcing facilities. Most studies done are 20+ years old.

METHODS

- A survey sent to the general student population who lives on campus (first-years only taken into account)
- Series of interviews with student workers outsourced.
- Interview with executive director of Auxiliary Services
- Extensive background research on the meal plans + dining dollars

REFERENCES

Wood, P. A. (1999, November 30). Outsourcing in higher education. Eric Digest. ERIC. Retrieved February 20, 2022
 Sodexo. "Frequently Asked Questions." Binghamton University Dining Services, <https://binghamton.sodexomyway.com/my-meal-plan/questions>.

Main Findings

Auxiliary Interview insights

- Auxiliary Services runs majority of campus events.
- Binghamton has been outsourcing facilities for over 20 years.
- Auxiliary services are in control of fundraising for the university, Ellison describing it as "the backbone" of the University.
- They are not specialized in dining services, and would be unable to preform the job as well if in house, describing Sodexo as "the experts".
- Sodexo has high order priority with food supplier Sysco, as well as cheaper prices due to large orders

2021 - 2022 Plan Price	-	Membership Fee	=	Dining Dollars
\$3,054/semester	-	\$1,873/semester	=	\$1,181/semester
\$2,914/semester	-	\$1,873/semester	=	\$1,041/semester
\$2,783/semester	-	\$1,873/semester	=	\$910/semester
\$2,635/semester	-	\$1,873/semester	=	\$762/semester

Figure 1, Sodexo BU Dollar meal plans

"Yes, you may use cash or credit card at any of the Resident Dining halls, however, you will pay 1.8 times the posted item price for prepared food items."-Sodexo's FAQ on BU dining website

"Let the experts take over."

-Deanne Ellison, Director of Auxiliary Services, when asked her thoughts on the decision to outsource or remain in house.

-Majority of students are enrolled in Plan C (highlighted), with their membership fee being 67% of their total meal plan cost. Students have expressed frustration over such prices in the "Other" section in figure 2.

Student Worker Interviews

- Series of on Campus Marketplace employees were interviewed
- Sodexo offers work study programs
- Free food offered on the job
- Starting wage for student worker = 13.25\$/hr, all reported having the same current wage as starting wage
- Majority reported 18hr/week scheduled.
- Few complaints regarding management.
- Larger HR complaints with Sodexo, older workers being out of line with Student Workers is primary complaint, half reporting this.
- No opinions expressed on what difference would be if facilities were in house operated.
- Majority still felt they worked for Binghamton rather than Sodexo, since they are also students.

Do you think that Sodexo is doing a good job at providing the dining services (food quality, employee quality, cleanliness)?

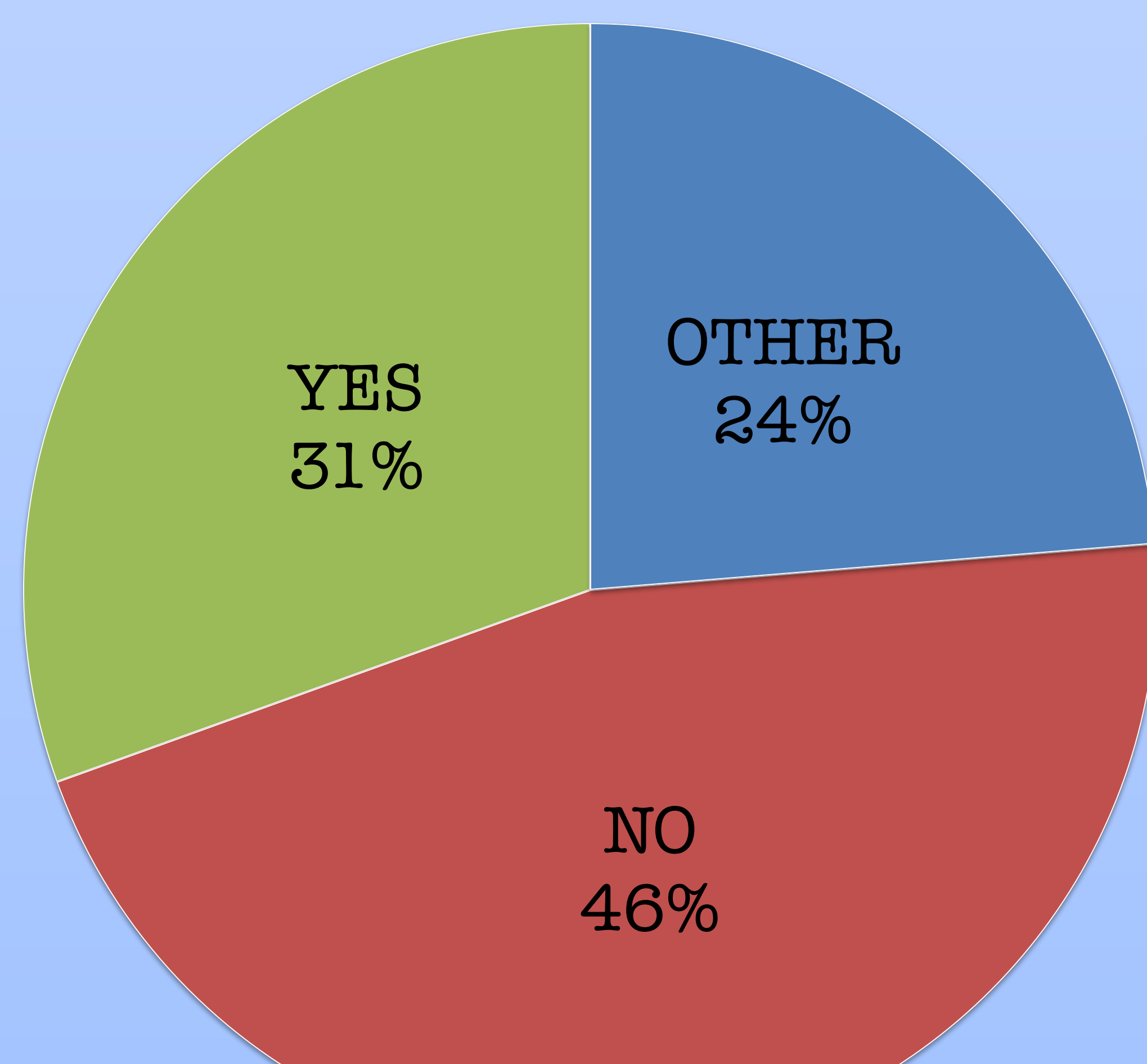


Figure 2, Survey of 50 first-year students

Results

- Every five years, Binghamton puts their facilities contract up for bidding in a RFP process.
- When Outsourcing, there is a larger priority with Sysco, saving the University money in budgets.
- If University should shut down due to any reason, it is less harmful to share the hit with Outsourcers rather than if it should have been in house operations
- There seems to be a disconnect between the general population of the University and Sodexo regarding student satisfaction and pricing of membership costs.
- The management communication between Sodexo and the University is the reason for student worker success in outsourcing employment
- There were many limitations to this study, and should be further researched as to the effects of University Outsourcing.

Other

- There are two non-outsourced, student ran dining establishments on main campus, the John Arthur Cafe and the Binghamton Food Co-Op
- These establishments do not accept BU Dollars
- Sodexo has donated dishwashers to both locations as a gift, is on good terms with both establishments

