

State's largest operation

UNL food service feeds 5,000 students

By Jim Rasmussen
Daily Nebraskan Senior Reporter

It takes a lot of money and many people to feed more than 5,000 students each day, but the UNL Food Service gets the job done.

The food service, with an annual budget of about \$7 million, employs more than 500 students, 120 full-time wage employees and 20 managers.

"We're the biggest single food service operation in Nebraska," Douglas Rix UNL food service manager, said.

The food service runs the cafeterias in every residence hall on City and East campuses. More than 5,000 hall residents pay \$1,100 per school year to eat at the cafeterias.

Rix, in his 15th year as food service manager, said he and his managers meet with a UNL dietician to plan each week's menus.

And Rix has to live with his menu decisions — he eats at least one meal a day at a food service cafeteria. How does he like the cuisine?

"Well, I think we compare to the other Big Eight schools, he said. "We were the first Big Eight school to offer salad bars, and we were one of the first to offer self-serve ice cream. And, we offer more variety than any Big Eight food service."

An example of that variety, he said, is the new way the food service is offering yogurt this year. Instead of packaged yogurt, UNL is buying bulk yogurt and various kinds of fresh fruit that food service customers can combine themselves.

In an average week this semes-

ter, the food service served about 3,000 pounds of watermelon, 900 pounds of muskmelon and 100 bushels of apples, Rix said. The university buys the fruit directly from farmers.

The university buys most of its foods through the UNL Food Stores, 1100 N. 17th St. Food Stores manager Carl Hutchison supervises a staff of 19 full-time employees and four students. Food Stores functions as a buyer, distributor and warehouse, and serves the UNL Food Service, both unions and other UNL departments that use food products.

Food Stores uses a consolidated buying method to obtain food, Hutchison said. Each outlet projects how much food it needs for a certain period of time. Food Stores personnel then total the amounts requested by all outlets, and buy all the food at once. This method saves the university money.

Four people help with the buying at food stores — the buyer, assistant manager, office manager and Hutchison. The Food Stores buyers use three methods to buy food for the university, Hutchison said.

The simplest method, for small purchases, involves calling a supplier and ordering food.

Second, Hutchison said he uses informal bidding to make larger purchases under \$1,000.

"We call at least three vendors and get a formal quotation from them," he said. The buyer then decides which bid to accept, based on quality and price.

The third method, which involves formal written price quotations, is used for purchases of



David Creamer/Daily Nebraskan

Larry Johns, left, and Jerry Dewane, meat cutters for the University Food Stores, prepare beef to be ground.

more than \$1,000. The university mails out the bid requests 15 days before taking bids. At least three suppliers must bid before the public bid opening can be held, he said.

This method, which is most frequently used, can present problems for the university, Hutchison said. If the market for a commodity changes drastically in the 15 days between bid notification and the bid opening, the university may face high bids.

For that reason, Hutchison and his staff keep a close watch on market price.

"We rely heavily on food brok-

ers, distributors and manufacturers to inform us of price trends and market projections," Hutchison said. They also read periodicals to keep up on crop conditions.

Hutchison, a 1971 UNL graduate, said Food Stores' goal is to break even each year.

The university bought \$3.4 million in products from Food Stores last year, he said.

Food Stores is a self-sustaining operation, which means the university does not budget funds for its operation. The large warehouse holds a variety of goods, from meat products to cereal to canned and frozen foods.

Food Stores employs four meat cutters and a meat room assistant, four truck drivers, a warehouse supervisor and aide, four full-time clerks and four students.

The warehouse contains several refrigerated rooms to store perishable items, a large freezer room and plenty of space for dry goods and canned pop.

The freezer room, which spans about 100 feet and has 30-foot-high ceilings, keeps food at a temperature of 10 degrees below zero.

It's no small operation, but it's no small job to feed 5,000 people every day.

Campus canned pop sales grow, Diet Coke leads all other brands

By Jim Rasmussen
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UNL students drink a lot of pop — about 1,440,000 cans to be exact.

According to the UNL Vending Service, more than \$1.1 million worth of snack foods and drinks were sold at Lincoln's two campuses last year.

Canned pop accounted for almost half that total, as machines unloaded about 60,000 24-can cases of the fizzy stuff during fiscal year 1983-84. That figure is up from about 5,000 cases in fiscal year 1977-78, vending manager Gene Meerkatz said.

"Our canned pop sales have shown a steady growth that's almost phenomenal," Meerkatz said.

One reason for the increase may be the popularity of diet

pop, which has taken an increasing share of the market at UNL, he said. Diet pop accounts for about 42 percent of UNL vending machine sales, and Diet Coke ranks as the top seller among all brands, diet or regular.

Diet pop sales rose sharply with the invention of Nutra-Sweet, now used in most diet pops, Meerkatz said.

Other big-selling items include candy bars and potato chips, Meerkatz said. About 700,000 candy bars were sold through UNL vending machines last year.

The No. 1 candy bar? Snickers.

Meerkatz said there are about 230 vending machines on UNL's two campuses. The university owns 180 of those, with the

other 50 belonging to Lincoln Canteen Inc., which has a contract with UNL.

Seven full-time employees run the UNL vending operation, assisted by four students who work part-time. Meerkatz said he'd like to add a full-time employee to fix broken machines. As it is now, a supervisor and several of the route men take turns fixing the machines.

"Vending machines that don't work can become a liability," Meerkatz said. "You go to some schools, and you see machines that have been kicked around and beaten up. But we haven't had many problems with that here."

None of the UNL machines are more than six years old, he said.



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

Nathan Ristvedt, senior, makes his way through the food service line in the Selleck cafeteria.

PHI PSI 500

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Egyptians strive to share culture

The president of the UNL Egyptian Student Association said he wants to help educate Nebraskans about Egypt.

Many Nebraskans aren't very knowledgeable about Egypt, Abdel-Razek El-Naggar said. And so his group extends an invitation to any person interested in learning more about the Egyp-

tian culture to come to the group's meetings.

El-Naggar, a graduate student working on a doctorate in horticulture, said the group provides fellowship and information concerning the social, economic and historic aspects of the Egyptian civilization.

At gatherings, members enjoy

social activities, including potluck dinners with a variety of Egyptian foods, followed by games like soccer and chess. The group sometimes shows movies — which it receives from the Egyptian embassy in Washington.

At its last meeting Sept. 5, the group celebrated The Big Feast, a four-day holiday of the Islamic religion.

Until last year, students were the only members of the group.

"We tried something new, and have included 10 Egyptian immigrant families," El-Naggar said.

For this reason the group now often refers to itself as the Egyptian Association of Nebraska.

Anyone interested in joining the group can contact El-Naggar at 467-5914 evenings. Meetings are on the last Sunday of each month.

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