Memorandum
Date: May 10th, 2013
To: Luther College Dining Services, Food and Waste Sustainability Task Group
CC: Jon Jensen
From: Bekah Schulz and Jess Landgraf, Environmental Philosophy Students
Re: New Caf Student-Worker Portion Education Plan.

This project focuses on a concrete step toward waste reduction in the Caf. The US and other developed nations exorbitantly waste food, but Luther College has the ability to change its waste pattern. Since many students eat in the Caf daily, changing portion sizes in the Caf is a good start to reducing the college’s waste.

The Investigation
Our investigation concerning the status of how current portion education occurs in the Caf ranged from talking to Executive Chef Jason Skarin, Dining Services General Manager Wayne Tudor, and Resident Dining Manager & Student Worker Coordinator Leah McCrea to surveying students. Jason Skarin informed our group that portion education is communicated to student workers once a year at their start-of-year orientation, but is not maintained consistently after this unless a line-chef communicates a specific appropriate portion to a student worker. Normally, however, the student-workers are simply to maintain a consistent portion, adjusting as directed by students eating in the Caf.

We also surveyed the student workers and asked them about their portion education from the Caf staff. The small number that responded reported that portion size education was rare at best, with the stipulation of not teaching the incoming shift correct portion sizes.

We also investigated students’ perception of portion sizes in the Caf and surveyed students eating in the Caf at two separate meals. At least one-third of students eating reported that they wanted either more or less food than what was given to them. Independently, roughly one-third of all surveyed students were not going to finish the food on their plates, food that is primarily then dumped into the trash. From the students’ perspective, portion sizes as currently served in the Caf are a significant source of food waste.

Proposed Changes
As part of the Caf renovations, each food line will consistently have a chef present to monitor student portion sizes. Also, more food is to be cooked on-demand, with personalized portions. However, the results of our surveys suggest broader systemic changes should be implemented.
Outline:

1. Orientation Meeting. Managers would stress appropriate portion serving and show pictures and figures from past studies on waste generated in the cafeteria. At this meeting, visual demonstrations of portion sizes would occur and students would actively participate in this demonstration so as to get a more hands on idea of appropriate portion sizes.

2. Daily Education. Every time a student starts a new line shift, the student manager or chef in charge is responsible for teaching the student worker the correct portion size.

3. Sample Plate. Each line would have a sample plate, replated as necessary, of the appropriate portion of offered food dishes.

4. Portion Awareness Signs. Each line would have a small sign displayed next to the sample plate. The sign would say: Less, Just Right, and More. The student worker would then ask the student which of the three choices they would like for their portion amount.

5. Monthly awareness. Every month, a student worker would be in charge of communicating an encouraging reminder to the students for continued portion awareness.

Costs/Labor

This proposal will not infer any costs from Sodexo or the Caf. However, it will require greater dedication and intentionality from the Caf staff, as the above outline will need to be implemented in both larger meetings as well as everyday duties in the Caf.

Approval/Debriefing

We met with Jason Skarin and Wayne Tudor to discuss our findings and proposed changes to the Caf. They were both pleased with the proposed outline and saw this as a viable opportunity for waste reduction in the Caf. We plan to work with Jason and Wayne at the end of the summer/beginning of fall semester 2013 so as to encourage the implementation of this program. We will be working to create Portion Awareness Signs over the summer as well as an awareness poster to post at the beginning of the fall semester so as to communicate the changes in the portion servings to the students.

Conclusion

We recognize the need to decrease waste in the Caf, and after investigation and analysis of the Caf’s current portion education system, believe that implementing a standardized program to reduce waste could greatly benefit this effort.
Appendix: Survey Results.

This survey was conducted by a team of volunteers who asked questions for a verbal yes or no from students, and recorded their answers before moving to the next table. The survey was conducted during the period of heaviest traffic for both meals and volunteers took five minutes to ask students the questions. At least thirty-eight students took part during the April 17th lunch survey, with more than forty-seven the following evening, April 18th.

Results of students eating at the Caf:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lunch, April 17th</th>
<th>Supper, April 18th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Want a different portion than served</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want more, want less</td>
<td>47%, 53%</td>
<td>33%, 67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not inform server of desired portion</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not plan on finishing food</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan on more food</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also created a survey of student-workers that was emailed to a representative sixteen. Only four responded. Of those four, two reported that education on portion sizes was rare at best, while the other two reported no portion size education. All reported they were not to teach the incoming shift about portion sizes.