

Susquehanna's Meal Plan Isn't All it's Cracked Up to Be

Susquehanna University's dining plan may look good on paper, but the reality is a shocking disappointment. Ask any current student their top 5 grievances against Susquehanna and undoubtedly, the campus food will be on this list. Not only is the meal plan outrageously expensive, but the food quality in no way reflects the amount of money students are forced to invest each year. Not to mention that the dining hall's hours do not cater to student's schedules and any food allergies or intolerances are rarely represented in the available dining options. For years students have submitted their complaints and concerns to the Student Government Association, and the university continues to respond with dismissive jargon that ignores students' voices. To put it simply, Susquehanna University's meal plan is an embarrassment due to cost vs. quality, accessibility, and lack of accountability.

Let's talk about money. Susquehanna University is charging students about \$3,500 per semester for their meal plan so this would be over \$7,000 for the year, just for food. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average monthly grocery cost for a single person is between \$238 and \$434 depending on several factors. Just for fun, let's assume that every student at Susquehanna is spending \$434 a month on groceries. Then, for one semester, which is 4 months, their total would be \$1,736. Susquehanna is charging students more than twice that amount just to eat on campus.

Also, it is important to note that each student gets a set number of meals per week which if not used up, they do not roll over to the next week. As well as a student cannot use more than 4 meal swipes a day to potentially get the most of their money. To make matters worse, unless you are a senior living on 18th Street, you are required to pay for a meal plan. What is even more insulting is that out of this \$3,500, the school will only give you upwards of \$200 to spend on coffee and various snacks. But if you were to take a campus tour, this is marketed as a special one-of-a-kind feature of SU. Rather, in reality, this pocket money is but a sliver of decency and nowhere near the gift that Susquehanna purports it to be. To consider SU's position that it truly does cost this much to feed each student quality food, the question is: where is this "quality?"

It is no secret that a part of the appeal to college is the element of freedom, which is exactly what this meal plan isn't. First, the hours of the dining hall and additional food options are limited. Opening hours are not inclusive to student athletes or students with jobs, etc. Not to mention that after asking current students, their thoughts are that the main dining hall where there is the most food options is not open late enough. This forces the student to order food at the food court where there are limited options, limited availability to customize, and not accessible for anyone with food intolerances, allergies, or dietary restrictions. There is also an unmistakable redundancy to the meal options. Let alone it is impossible to deny that your life is much more difficult if you don't settle for just eating fried food everyday, ie. fried chicken, burgers, or fries.

Specifically, after talking to a student who is vegetarian, it is evident that this dining plan is not accessible to her needs. Not only does she already have limited options, but she states that it is clear that Susquehanna puts in little effort to make quality food for those who have dietary restrictions. Even though Susquehanna will argue that they are doing their part just by having options for those with food intolerances, allergies, or dietary restrictions, this is the bare minimum. The quality of Susquehanna University's food simply does not reflect the cost of the meal plan.

In conclusion, Susquehanna's meal plan does not live up to its promises, offering neither the quality or accessibility that students deserve. The extreme high cost of the meal plan, which significantly exceeds the average grocery bill, does not translate into a meaningful dining experience. Rather, students are left with limited choices, inflexible hours, and food that lacks variety and often nutritional value. Moreover, the meal plan's accessibility for students with food intolerances, allergies, or dietary restrictions is minimal at best, leaving many to feel ignored or dismissed. Despite student complaints and concerns, the university continues to disregard student voices and offer little in the way of tangible improvements. The reality is that Susquehanna's meal plan represents a disconnect between what students are paying for and what they receive. To say the least, it is a disappointment that Susquehanna University fails to provide adequate consideration to something as fundamental as student nourishment.