

Link To Website: www.abettermealplan.org

Statement of Goals and Choices

Texas Tech Dining Hall Challenges Website

Project Overview

With the Multimodal project I decided to choose my stakeholder of Texas Tech students, to be my primary stakeholder while also including some secondary stakeholders such as families, and university administration. I chose these stakeholders because I would like to inform the Texas Tech community about how the current meal plan system makes healthy eating unaffordable and persuade students to advocate for systemic change. With this project I created a multi-page website that presents data, explains the problem, shows why it matters, and provides concrete action steps. I believe there are serious issues with how meal plans are structured at Texas Tech. My goals with this project are to inform students and families about meal plan inadequacies using real data, persuade administration that this affects student success and retention, and empower students to take collective action for reform. The current system creates a \$1,430 per semester shortfall between what students receive (\$1,250) and what they actually need (\$2,680) for adequate nutrition.

Why I Chose a Website

I decided to make a website over an essay, presentation, or social media campaign because I think a website is the most effective way to reach my primary stakeholder with different needs. Students aren't really going to read a 10-page research paper, and a single social media post doesn't have space for the detailed data and solutions this issue requires. With a website I can organize information into separate pages so students can go straight to the meal calculator, parents can review the cost breakdown, and administrators can see the research and proposed solutions. The website can be accessed at any time from phones, laptops, and tablets, shared easily on social media or in group chats, and updated as the advocacy campaign progresses. When people are making meal plan decisions or discussing dining concerns, they can pull up the website immediately rather than trying to find a document or remember statistics. When I started to create my website, I created a clear structure that would guide my audience through understanding the issue step by step. The homepage gives my mission of the project and introduces the problem with a statement that immediately shows this is about affordability and inadequacy, not just food preferences. I used Texas Tech's official red and black colors throughout the design because I wanted the site to feel like

it belongs to the Texas Tech community, this is internal advocacy from students who care about their university, not outside criticism. The Data & Evidence page uses logos effectively by presenting specific numbers: the \$1,250 meal plan versus the \$2,680 students actually need, the 62% of Gen Z students who believe they have wrong eating patterns, and the 16% decline in state funding that created financial pressure on universities. I included an interactive meal plan calculator that lets students input their own spending to see personally when their funds will run out. This is more effective than just telling them "meal plans run out" because they can verify it with their own numbers.

Using Rhetorical Appeals

I took some risks on the Data & Evidence page by including the statistic that some campus dining workers rely on food stamps to feed their own families. I believe this could be very effective because it shows the irony of the system, the people preparing food for students can't afford to feed themselves adequately either. This appeals to pathos by creating moral indignation while also supporting the logos argument that the entire system underpays and underfeeds everyone involved. When I was mapping out The Problem page, I wanted to show all the root causes without making it sound like students just want free food. I explained how declining state funding forces universities to contract with corporate food service companies that prioritize profit margins, how mandatory meal plans create a captive market, and how healthy ingredients cost 2-3 times more than processed options. This shows that while it's very ideal for the cost of the food to go down, it's not as simple as I want it to be. The Why This Matters page is where I really focused on pathos and connecting the dining issue to outcomes that administration cares about. I created three graphics showing how inadequate nutrition affects academic performance, mental health, and physical health. I included my personal experience of having to spend \$20 per meal to eat healthy and knowing I won't make it through the semester at that rate. I added a side-by-side comparison showing how students with financial resources can supplement meal plans with money from parents while students without extra resources are forced into unhealthy budget options or skip meals. I believe this inequality framing is effective because it appeals to values of fairness and equity. College should be an equalizer, not a place where your family income determines whether you can eat well enough to succeed. I also included a section showing how the current dining system contradicts Texas Tech's own mission statement about supporting student success and providing accessible, affordable education. This uses the university's own words against them, which is harder for administration to dismiss.

Design and Action Strategy

Throughout this project I have tried to maintain a tone that is informed and assertive but not whiny or aggressive. I avoided language like "this is unfair to us" or "we deserve better" and instead focused on "here's the documented problem, here's why it matters for student success, here's what could fix it." I used "we" language throughout to create

collective identity rather than pointing fingers at individuals. When discussing food service companies and administration, I acknowledged their constraints and interests while still holding them accountable for the outcomes. I decided to add specific data visualizations like the timeline showing meal plan funds running from \$1,250 in August to \$0 by November because numbers on a timeline are more impactful than just stating "funds run out early." The visual shows that if the money is spent at an average of \$18 per day, the money will disappear month by month. For the What Needs to Change page, I'm showing concrete solutions that don't require unlimited budgets, implementing dining swipes instead of dollar amounts to prevent overspending on single meals, adding price caps on nutritious meal options, making meal plans optional or better-matched to actual student needs, and including examples of other universities that have implemented better systems. This shows I'm trying to find solutions instead of just identifying problems.

Risks and Effectiveness

The risks I took with this project include being very direct about the \$1,430 shortfall and stating clearly that the current system makes healthy eating impossible for many students. Some might say this is too confrontational or that students should just "eat cheaper food and stop complaining." However, I believe these risks have paid off because I've backed every claim with data and acknowledged all stakeholders' perspectives. I'm not attacking individuals, I'm documenting a problem that I believe has many solutions. Another risk I'm taking is building a website instead of doing posters or a slideshow because it may be harder to push out to my audience. But I believe this is actually more effective for my purpose of creating real change rather than just completing an academic exercise. I believe a website is more effective for my issue because it can serve as ongoing infrastructure for a student advocacy movement. It's not just making an argument, it's creating a tool that students can use to educate peers, that parents can use when questioning meal plan value, that student government can reference when meeting with administration, and that campus media can use when covering the issue. The website shifts the conversation from "some students are unhappy with food" to "here is documented evidence of systemic inadequacy affecting student success with specific proposed solutions". By making all the information publicly accessible and professionally presented, I'm demonstrating that this advocacy campaign is serious, organized, and based on rigorous research rather than casual complaints.