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## Sodexo Offers a Fresh, New Dugout Experience

Sept. 23, 2013

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— At the beginning of May Term 2013, Illinois Wesleyan's food service company, Sodexo, embarked on a major project. The Dugout, located in Illinois Wesleyan's Memorial Center (104 E. University Ave., Bloomington), underwent a total renovation and menu expansion for the new school year. President Richard F. Wilson and the administration gave approval of the project for completion in the summer of 2013 and Sodexo fully funded the refurbishments. The Dugout was officially completed on August 7 and has been fully functional since the arrival of the current students on August 26.

Students enjoy the new Dugout environment.



Sodexo served as director of the project under the leadership of Mike Welsh, Sodexo director, and Dan Koenen, Sodexo district manager. Mark Parker of Johnston Contractors in Bloomington supervised the building process, IWU's Physical Plant provided assistance under the direction of James Blumberg and the EDE Corporation's Vice President of Millwork, Tony Akstins worked with IWU Dean of Students and Vice President of Student Affairs, Karla Carney-Hall, to coordinate color themes and design elements. Akstins served as lead designer for equipment, flooring and lighting and assisted with furniture selection.

The Dugout has taken on a new look that reflects its fresh, new menu. Nature's Paths Select wood floors and Natural Creations vinyl tile, which, according to the company, gives "the essence of earth's woods and stones." The rich, dark green Oxford Series booths as well as the EDE tables finished in aged bronze and mahogany, keep the naturalistic feel alive in brilliant, low-key lighting.

For assistance in the design process, Carney-Hall called upon Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, Blake Bradley, for his apparent eye for color. After some initial choices were made based on Corian countertops, they set to work on selecting the remaining colors. The two wanted to make the "nook" areas – the Coffee Shoppe, Student Organization Counter and the Grab and Go area – really stand out, so they selected a bright orange with a contrast of very calming and neutral hues of green in other low-key sections.

Faculty members make use of their new lounge



“We wanted a classy space with a homey, lived-in feel,” said Carney-Hall. “So in doing that, I think we chose things that are warm and rich – like the cherry laminate, the greens, golds and oranges.”

In addition to its totally new design, the eatery now has seating accommodations for 225 people. There are a total of 10 new flat-screen televisions in the space – five for displaying menu options and five for student use. A new quiet room next to the faculty lounge is open and available to students who wish to eat and study without being disturbed, and the room is equipped with hardware to facilitate the use of laptop computers. One of the main lounges comes complete with a fireplace to help patrons achieve a new level of warmth and comfort.

The Dugout has anticipated its new look since former Sodexo District Manager Jeff Lataille sparked and developed the idea five years ago. For inspiration, Lataille visited other facilities in Wisconsin that provide Sodexo services. It was there that he discovered the new “formats” that IWU’s Dugout offers today.

Welsh has been involved with the project’s development from the outset as well. Lataille collaborated with Welsh and other members of Sodexo’s management, including Mark Tylk, executive chef, David Nicholson, residential life manager, and Bob Kelch, retail manager, to determine the new structure of the menu, which includes the familiar Subconnection as well as Souper Salad, Cactus Café and Passport (rotates weekly from Asian, Indian, Italian and Mediterranean cuisine). While all of the menu items come from a list determined by Sodexo USA, Welsh and the other administrators recognize the growing trend of healthier eating habits among college students. “We wanted to make sure we had healthy options through the Souper Salad and Passport formats,” said Welsh.

Welsh said Sodexo made the decision to remove the grill from the Dugout because Tommy’s and the Bertolf Commons offer those items to the campus community.

“People are becoming more conscious of what they’re eating, but we still realize that sometimes students need to have their fries and chicken strips,” said Welsh. Sodexo also strives to provide options for vegan and vegetarian patrons on the menu.

According to Carney-Hall, Sodexo also worked with Student Senate in the fall of 2012 in order to weigh-in on student input for the new Dugout. The design committee began to meet in the spring of 2013, and Carney-Hall held forums and personal talks to gather input as well.

Sodexo’s staff, which consists of over 50 full-time members, 24 student managers and an eventual team of 60 to 70 work-study students, had to be trained on all-new equipment with new cleaning processes to be mastered.

A Sodexo employee prepares a new selection in the Cactus Cafe.



Before the first day of classes, Sodexo closed Tommy's and held a "soft-opening week" for the faculty in early August as a test run. During the soft opening, Sodexo's management made a lot of changes to help make the process more efficient. They recognize that there are a large number of students, faculty members and visitors of the University using the Dugout facility, and they strive to ensure that patrons spend the least amount of time standing in line as possible.

"It takes every one of us to keep the operation running," said Welsh. "Even if we only have one member missing, it kind of sets us back. It's a huge job."

With its new logo in place at the entrance to the food service area, the Dugout is expecting a few more minor changes. There will be individual black and gold hanging logos to represent each format. New lights will be installed near the faculty lounge, and Welsh hopes to decorate the space with plants to create an even warmer atmosphere. Marketing managers are working to develop an online menu for the Sodexo page on the University website.

The dining room in May 2013 during renovations.



Welsh described being so deeply involved in the project through every step of the way as a surreal experience.

"When they gutted the area of the old Dugout, it seemed like it would never get to a place where it looks like what you see today. It was very exciting to see the transformation of the build as all of the parts and pieces arrived during the summer. The more I saw, the more excited I became. Then the colors that the Dean selected were just beautiful. On August 6th, I just had to stand back and look at it all. It was really a 'wow'."

The reaction from both students and faculty has been a very positive one overall. One student described the new design as "simply beautiful," while others have praised the quality of the new menu choices. Whether they're socializing, talking about

campus issues, meeting with professors and student groups, watching TV with friends or just grabbing a bite to eat, the Dugout has something for everyone.

"I'm overjoyed," said Welsh. "I think the Dugout sets a different tone for everyone who comes into the Memorial Center. It's a place where students, faculty, staff and friends of the University can feel comfortable. I couldn't ask for anything more."

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