

Summer 2020 Family Webinar Series: A Conversation About Housing and Dining at WashU

Reggie Gacad: Hello everybody. My name is Reggie Gacad and I want to welcome you to the first webinar of our 2020/2021 Family Webinar series. I'm the Assistant Director of the First Year Center and tonight I'm joined by three of my colleagues. Will Andrews, Associate Director in Residential Life, Andrew Watling, Associate Director for Dining Operations, and Rebecca Miller, Assistant Director for Nutrition and Dietary Wellness. We are excited that you've chosen to join us for tonight's conversation. Some information before we get started. First, we want to make sure that you know how to submit questions during this webinar. You will notice that we have given you the ability to ask questions via the Q&A feature. Two of our professional staff members within the First Year Center are helping to field these questions. We will answer those that we find applicable to the audience as a whole on this webinar and will respond to more nuanced or personal questions via email next week. Let's go ahead and make sure you know how to use the Q&A feature. Use the Q&A feature to share some of the places you may be watching from and we will name a few of these places on air. While you do that, this webinar is being recorded live. Next week, we will upload this webinar to the families.wustl.edu website. Lastly, in a moment we will hear from Will, Andrew, and Rebecca about the services offered by both Residential Life and Dining Services. If something our panelists says sparks a question, don't forget to send us your question using the Q&A feature. After hearing from all three panelists, we will move into the question and answer portion of the evening.

Before passing things off to our panelists, I want to share some of the places people are joining us from. We have families tuning in from New Jersey, Philadelphia, Cleveland, among many other places. Now, since I know you all want to hear more about housing and dining, I will turn it over to Will to first talk about Residential Life.

Will Andrews: Well, hi everybody. Again, my name's Will Andrews and I'm in Residential Life as the associated director and director of housing operations. So I'm going to tell you a little about our housing assignments and the policies. Our housing assignments allows-- the housing application allows students to make edits to their housing application all the way up to May the 31st. What does that mean? You can go back into your housing application. You can make roommate requests. You can change your meal plan. You can change your housing preferences. So if some of you chose that you would prefer to live in a traditional double versus a single or a modern, you can go in there and make edits to that piece of the application also. And then you can update your emergency and missing person contact information. So, again, you can do all of that all the way up until the 31st. And then after the 31st, that's when we lock down the application to choose your roommate after that.

We also just want to remind all students and their families traditionally before, your families would have been the one working with your high school counselors regarding disability accommodations. Now you're going to be a college student at WashU. It is required that all students self-identify themselves. So you should definitely visit the disability resource site to be able to submit any requests for disability resources while being a student at WashU.

So picking a roommate. This is probably the most exciting time of your college time when you're going to pick out a roommate or not pick your roommate, but you're going to be selected or potentially selecting your own roommate. First, you can log in to the application and you can search for roommates that you've probably met through other social media the outlets, or you can fill out or you have to fill out the section in the application to be able to answer a couple of a match-making questions. So it's kind of like match.com. You're going to say, "Do you go to sleep earlier? Are you messy person? Do you prefer to have the room cold or hot?" We're going to, basically, take all of those questions, and we have this system, called StarRes, where we collect all of that, and we match students up based off of their preferences. And, again we don't always get at a 100% right, but we try our hardest to try to match people up as best as we can. As far as policies, you're going to hear all of these policies when you arrive to campus. Your RAs will review over them. Just the couple to kind of go over, which I think you're going to be really important to students is the roommate agreement. You and your roommates will sit down together and

come up with the agreement would be living in the space that you're going to be potentially sharing or your suitemates.

Parents, one of the biggest policy breakers of first-year students in the first two weeks is losing their room keys. And we usually give a grace period at the beginning but, after that, each time a student loses their key, we do charge a \$10 replacement card key. But that's usually the very first violation all first-year students break. Our kiosk runs out of keys consistently, but at some point, they keep up with them.

And, then, I would think the other policy that's really important for you all to know right now is we have quiet hours. Typically, throughout a weekday-- it's 11:00 PM to 9:00 AM, and then on a weekend, it's 1:00 AM to 9:00 AM, in the morning. We don't do room changes for the first two weeks of school, so we try to encourage students to meet and develop, again, those roommate agreements. And then after the first two weeks of school, we will start looking at students potentially wanting room changes. But because we are full, room changes usually are turning to swaps. So as students are, typically, making friends, if individuals want to swap with one another, that's the kind of changes that we'll have taking place in the fall.

So things that you can bring to campus and what not to bring-- again, I'm going to encourage you to follow the newsletter because that's going to be the space where you're going to have a lot of that information. We also have a lot of it on our website, on our Res Life page. But if I have to pick out a couple of things that I think you definitely should not bring is any animal, so your pets or anything like that, those need to stay home. Other things, such as hot plates, candle warmers, get plug-ins. As much as I know, we all love to have our rooms smell really great, we need to leave the candle warmers at home, plug-ins work really great. But things that you might want to consider bringing, and things that you want to talk with your roommate about are microwaves. Might not each bring-- each roommate might not want to bring-- each one, but you might want to share one, or a micro refrigerator or a Keurig or-- the one families and, I think, our parents will definitely get this, specifically our mothers, but an iron. Occasionally, you're going to have to do presentations in front of your class or go to a nice function. And it's always funny that meeting students, some think about bring something for an iron. But we do have a laundry service on campus as a student-run business. So you can always try their dry cleaning services there. And that's all I have.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you so much, Will, for sharing all of that information. Families, as a note, in the chat feature, we'll be-- we will be sharing some links and emails that our presenters may be referencing throughout their presentations or throughout their answers during the question and answer portion. Will, while hearing you speak, I was reminded of a question, I think, many families may be wondering. What is the difference between a modern residence hall versus a traditional residence hall?

Will Andrews: So we have two different styles of halls. And, really, the difference is we have a couple of ones that have been built in the last couple of years, and then we have a couple that were built in the early sixties and seventies and so forth. All the buildings come with the same amenities. It's just one's a bit newer than the other. But we've done a lot of good-- We've done quite a bit of upgrades in our traditional buildings. One of the big differences, I would say, is in our traditionals. Some of them are more suite styles, so they have common rooms and a couple of balconies. And in our modern halls, those are your traditional doubles and got shared bathroom between the mix, but we have quite a few single-room options in the traditional area, also. That's where mostly our single room options are, in our traditional halls.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you so much. I am now going to invite Andrew to speak with us about dining services.

Andrew Watling: Great. Thank you, Reggie. How is everybody doing this evening? My name is Andrew Watling. I'm the Associate Director of Dining here for Washington University. So I have mostly some information about meal plans that everybody has questions about that I'm going to share with you all this evening. So the first thing that I like to always start off talking about our meal plans is that the meal plans here at Washington University are fairly different than what you see at a lot of other universities and that our meal plans are entirely declining balanced meal plans. There's no meals per week or meals per semester that you see at a lot of other campuses. And so that can be a little bit different when you're trying to navigate choosing which meal plan is best for your students. So our meal plans are entirely declining balance points, which means you get to spend what you want, when you

want, and where you want on campus. So when you go around campus, everything in all of our dining halls, cafes, coffee shops, convenience stores that we have on campus, everything has a price. You use your meal plan to buy it. So that means if you only want a light snack for breakfast, you're only going to pay for what you're eating. But it does mean that there's no meals per week minimum. And so a lot of students, when they're looking at what meal plan they want to pick look for how many meals a week that's going to get them. And so it's a little bit challenging with our meal plans to say how many meals per week that's going to get you because every student's eating habits are very different. So a student who eats a lot of snacks or who drinks a lot of specialty coffee drinks throughout the week isn't going to get as many meals per week out of their meal plan because they're using it for other items. So it takes a lot of looking at what you think your spending habits might be to figure out what meal plan is going to be the best one for you. So we have three meal plans that our first-year students are eligible to purchase. The silver plan is the basic plan. This is the smallest meal plan that first-year students are able to get. And, typically, we say that this gives you about 10 to 12 meals per week, and this usually covers what most students need for their dietary needs throughout the school year. This means that you have the flexibility to go off-campus, eat at restaurants in the area without feeling like you're losing some value out of your meal plan. But it gives most students enough to eat throughout the week have some snacks here and there without necessarily feeling that they're going to run out.

The gold meal plan is a little bit larger. Typically, we would say it gives you about 13 to 15 meals per week, but again, that varies significantly. If your student is into eating more expensive snack items or just larger meals in general, they may not get that many meals per week out of it. So we like to say this one is good for students who know that they're going to snack more often or are going to be looking for late-night meals more frequently, or they're going to be using their meal points at the convenience stores on campus to buy things like snacks for their rooms or drinks, because we even things like gallons of milk and other items like that the students may want to have in their rooms. And so this is another way that they could use it as well.

And then the platinum meal plan is our largest meal plan. We heavily recommend this for very active students, varsity athletes on campus, students who know they're going to be eating a lot, they're going to be eating most of their meals on campus. So I strongly recommend this one for students who know that they're not going to be leaving campus a lot on the weekends, and they're going to be eating all of their meals here on campus. It also depends a lot how many meals, breakfast, your student thinks that they're going to be eating. A lot of students, against our best advice, don't eat breakfast all the time. And so that's a meal that doesn't always get counted in, but some students do regularly eat all of their breakfast which we appreciate. So that's something else to keep in mind when looking at meal plans and which one is going to be the best option.

The great thing about the meal plans here at Washington University is that if you run out of meal points, you can add Bear Bucks to your account at any point. And the great thing about Bear Bucks is that they have the same value to you as the meal points from your meal plan. So there's no penalty for running out. So if you choose a smaller meal plan and you find that it's not going to be enough for you, you can just add Bear Bucks to your account and you continue using those on campus just as your meal plan was.

Bear Bucks can also be used for laundry on campus, the university bookstore. And there's a fairly long list of off-campus locations that you can use Bear Bucks at, as well. So it's another really good way for parents to give their students some spending money to use on or around campus without just sending cash directly to them. So now, if you do think you're going to run out of meal points, you can go and add Bear Bucks. So it can be added in, basically, at any amount. So you can add them in smaller increments until you get all the way through the semester.

So I like to try to make sure we remind students and parents that you're not going to necessarily be penalized if you pick too small of a meal plan. You can just add Bear Bucks. And so the only thing you have to plan for is the financial addition to Bear Bucks towards the end of the semester. So if you choose too large of a meal plan and you have some points left over, they will roll over from the fall to the spring, and we allow students to pick a smaller meal plan for the spring. So if you choose, let's say, a platinum plan for the fall and you have some leftover, you can go to a silver plan for the spring and then use some of the leftover points to make up the difference. We also have some opportunities for students to donate some points if they have some left over to a

food security fund on campus. That goes to helping students who do have some food security challenges have enough meals while they're here as a student as well.

So when you use your meal plan, the WashU meal plan can be used at any dining location on campus. There are a few eating areas on campus that are not operated by dining services. So those are not able to use your dining plan there. But you can use Bear Bucks there. But everywhere else, the main dining halls on campus, are all operated by dining services. We also have a 24 hour minimart on campus and two convenience stores. So there's plenty of opportunities for students to use their meal plan points on campus. But we have operations that operate from 7:00 AM to 3:00 AM during the school year. So, like I said, there's plenty of opportunity for three meals a day and late-night snacks and plenty of stuff in-between kind of for students to use their meal points, so.

And we list the menu price with all of our items. We're not trying to surprise our students or make them guess how much they're spending. So we make sure that all the menus have prices listed. It's clear how much they're going to be spending. And then students can view their remaining balance if they go into their WebSTAC account or if they ask for a receipt at the time of purchase. That also always has their balance on there. So if students are unsure how much they have left, they can always ask for a receipt and see what their remaining balance is. And this is especially relevant when you start getting towards the point in the semester where students might start running out. We like to make sure that students were keeping an eye on that so that they can start adding Bear Bucks ahead of time if they think that that's going to be a concern.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you, Andrew, for sharing that information. While hearing you speak, I did think of a question that I have for you. How has the university adjusted dining services given our current situation with COVID-19?

Andrew Watling: Yeah. So we are very much still in the planning process for what that's going to look like for the fall. So it's a little bit difficult to speak on any specifics. What I will say is that at a bare minimum, we're absolutely going to make sure that we are meeting whatever St. Louis County guidelines are in play. And in almost all of those cases, we're going to far exceed the safety precautions that they're recommending. Most of those are going to be looking at spacing out students as they come into the dining hall, setting up good barriers and flow patterns to make sure that people can stay 6 feet apart while they're going through. That's going to mean we're probably adjusting the way that some of the things look just so that we can help get students in and out a little bit faster and make sure that they have seating areas that help them maintain a safe distance. So it's going to mean probably rearranging some tables. We're looking at table dividers so that everybody can sit down without coughing and sneezing on each other and things like that. So I think it's going to be a definite challenge. But we're going to make sure that when students come into the dining halls, they are as safe as they can be. We've already implemented that all of our staff have masks on. We have shields up in front of the cash registers and everything to make sure that while they're preparing and serving food, they're masked, they're getting temperature checks when they come into work. So we're already working on a lot of the safety precautions that you're going to see in the fall.

Reggie Gacad: Amazing. Thank you. I will now turn it over to Rebecca to talk about nutrition and healthy eating on campus.

Rebecca Miller: Hi, everyone. We're so excited to have you and congrats and welcome to WashU. I just wanted to talk a little bit about nutrition on campus, how we work with students that have special or dietary preferences and needs or cultural or religious nutrition needs. And so we'll talk about all of those and more. And so again, welcome to Wash U and I just want to give you a little bit of a background on kind of our nutritional philosophy here in our dining program. And we really aim to create a supportive and comforting environment that has not only delicious but nutrient-rich food that's good for our mind, body, and soul because we know a college dining experience, it needs to be a well-rounded and all-encompassing environment. And so our goal is to create balanced meals that are ethnically diverse, readily accessible, full of variety and considerate of any food allergies or intolerances that your students might have. And we also aim to create environments that are friendly for food allergies but as well as individual and then group nutritional needs. And so it's really again an all-encompassing dining environment that we really create. And so Wash U needs to feel like home for your students and we want their foods that they eat to be one that they love and that they can learn how to eat well now but as well as later when they leave WashU.

And so just to talk about our specific nutritional needs and preferences and that we really make sure that we're meeting the needs of those groups, we have various halal meals, kosher, vegetarian, and vegan meals around campus and I'll talk more in a little bit about kind of our process for our students who have any food allergy or intolerance concerns. And you can look more thoroughly at what is available for halal and kosher but as Andrew was mentioning, we're in the very much planning stages for the fall. But we're also really looking at what is that menu going to look like and how can we improve and expand what we already have regardless of what's going on and then we can tailor and streamline it to make it appropriate with all the COVID things that are going on too. And so in some of that planning, we have the DUC comfort station that has halal menu options available, and the WUFusion at dinner in Bear's Den is also a great place to go if you have halal needs. And then we also have kosher and halal pre-pack options on campus and then we have a specific station in our Bear's Den where you can grab both a hot lunch and a dinner program or dinner meal options as well as vegetarian and vegan. And again, that's incorporated into both our standard or daily cycle and our cycle weekly menu. And so again, just lots of variety and lots of options of where you can get some of the foods that you're looking for and really do need.

Food allergies and food tolerances. And so this is a big passion of mine and wanting to make sure that everyone has the same enjoyable, comforting, friendly dining experience and really a place where you can gather to meet with your friends and your colleagues and classmates. And so even if you have a food allergy or intolerance, we really work to meet you with your needs and really try to educate you on what's available and so you can look at our dining services website for that information. And there's also an app that is in sync with the website and so that's also updated with the menus at each location. And there on the website and the app, you can also find the whole nutrition facts label with the ingredients and any allergens that might be in there. And so that's a great reference to kind of keep in the back of your pocket and to always kind of pull up depending on where you are on campus and where you might want to dine. Additionally, you'll see some icons here and these are some top eight or top nine allergy icons that we kind of an extra step to put those on our menus and our pre-packaged items around campus so that if it does contain as you'll see here: eggs, dairy, wheat, soy, nuts, you can see that really clearly called out just to make it easier to identify because we know everyone is in a rush and yet is pressed for time and so we're trying to help with that process too.

And we do have retail items in our convenience store that Andrew was referencing and we're both protein milk or oat milk or soy products or silk products. And so that can help with students who might need one or the other depending on their allergies or their needs. And then just to kind of give a little bit of reference because I know a lot of students reach out to me with a nut allergy or a nut intolerance. And just to give some reassurance, we really don't use nuts in much food production and you're not going to find those when you go into Bear's Den at the stations. The one place that we really do use that is the main bakery and some might be in some muffins or some scones and so you might look out for that and I mean just kind of be cautious with where the nuts might be. But that's really the only place on campus that they're utilized and so I hope that provides some reassurance. And I'll reference this in my next slide but you can always reach out to me and we can walk through these steps that are kind of more individualized for you too if you do that.

And so just to go a little bit step further, if someone really has a number of food allergies or they're really sensitive or highly sensitive especially to any potential cross-contamination, and well, we do try to prevent that and minimize it anyways, we have a couple of different processes that a student can take advantage of. And one, and again might kind of depend on the fall, but you can always go up to the manager on duty or the executive chef at that specific location where you're choosing to dine and ask and let them know about your needs or your food allergies or intolerances and they can make a meal fresh and special for you in a separate area of the kitchen. And the only trick with that is that you have to kind of treat it like a restaurant and you have to wait the 20 to 30 minutes it would take to prepare that. And so to prevent that and minimize that wait period, we utilize a mobile ordering system or an app called Get Food and you can download that on your phone for free. And that app allows us in a separate area of the kitchen to prepare that food and so most of our students with a lot with a number of food allergies or cross contamination concern, they will utilize get food to place their order. So it's prepared separately just like if they were talking to that manager chef, but it saves them that wait time in between. So you can actually place that order 30 minutes advance, four hours in advance, or even a day, a semester in advance if you really do want to. But then again, you can always reach out to me if you have any questions or needs that arise

before semester, during the school year and throughout, because I'm here as a resource for you to make you feel comfortable and engage in the dining environment. And then lastly, I feel like it another frequently asked question that I always get, but I want to make sure that I'm sharing with you is that we have a-- the healthy meal option is always kind of the question. Where can I get that? What is it? What does it look like? And at Wash-U is this is a Wash-U-specific program. It's called the Bear Balance program. And it's basically me working with the chefs to identify some criteria, but really improve the quality and the availability of the nutrient-rich foods on campus. So think of these as your RD dietitian recommended foods, you can look for the little Bear Balance icon that's right up at the top of that slide, and know that these items are chef crafted but designed with the dietitian in mind as well. So that you're getting in full, complete, balanced meals that are nourishing, good for you, energizing, but also delicious, right? It's really important that food is not only good for you, but it also tastes good too. And just to give you a little bit kind of like what the meal would comprise is whole grains, lean proteins, vegetables, fruit, complex carbohydrates. And I do have some benchmarks that I work with the team on kind of watching out for added sugars, animal based saturated fat, sodium, and calories as well but I try to defocus those numbers. We want students to enjoy their food and eat more kind of in tune with their body and not worry so much about the numbers. So let me do the worrying for you and do that planning, and you can just look for the Bear Balance icon around campus.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you, Rebecca. I want to ask an initial question that some of our families may be wondering. When should a student reach out to you if they have significant dietary restrictions and would like to connect one on one?

Rebecca Miller: They can do that anytime. I've had a number of students already reaching out there this spring for next fall. So really, anytime we can kind of set up a quick email-- usually it takes them more like a phone call just to kind of connect and then we can connect again in person when the school year gets closer to starting to make you feel more comfortable as well.

Reggie Gacad: Amazing. Thank you. Family members. We are seeing a few questions regarding COVID-19. Chancellor Martin has appointed a fall contingency planning committee. We anticipate a recommendation from that committee will be available at the beginning of June. Both students and family members will be emailed with information about fall as soon as it's available. In addition, Residential Life is working with public health and infectious disease experts to ensure that we can offer a safe housing option and environment. This may look slightly different than it has in the past, but it will still be a highly quality residential community as well, as we always offer. Habif Health and Wellness is also reviewing the organization of our medical services and working with Residential Life to explore quarantine spaces if they may be needed during the school year. Again, more information will be available soon and we will host a webinar to answer more questions regarding COVID-19 as soon as the fall plan is released. We will now be moving on to the question and answer portion of our webinar. As a reminder, please submit your questions via the Q&A chat function. Will, we have a question. Should a new student be requesting a roommate if they're hoping to get a single room?

Will Andrews: No. They should rank the... They can still request a roommate because we do have some rooms and suites that have multiple rooms in them. So they can still request a roommate but it's not a guarantee that they would necessarily receive a single room. More likely if they request a roommate, they will be in a double with the roommate that they've requested.

Reggie Gacad: Great. Thank you. A question about dining. Andrew, could you give us a sense of what some of our food items cost? For example, what's the average a student may pay for a lunch or dinner, and what might that include?

Andrew Watling: Definitely. So our average meal or ticket, if you will, throughout last school year I think was 6.75 give or take a couple pennies. That does include snacks and some more expensive items. So I like to give about an \$8 ballpark as a rough figure of what students should expect to pay for a meal, and that should include-- and this is something that Rebecca is also heavily involved in making sure that we have well-rounded meal options that sit within that kind of a price point. So that's approximately what students should look to pay. We obviously have much more expensive options on campus, for example, we have Ibbey's which is a sit-down restaurant and you can

buy a \$20 steak with your meal points, which is obviously not going to last you nearly as long. But we also have cheaper options. We have meal options that are in the 5, 6-dollar range as well. So it's really important that students pay attention to the prices of what they're eating, and I think is a really important time for parents to have some budgeting conversations with their students before they come into the school year to make sure they understand how far the meal plan's going to get them, and what that looks like in the real world as well.

Reggie Gacad: Great. Thank you. Can students still have roommates, Will, if social distancing is in place?

Will Andrews: Again, we are working - and I believe you alluded to this earlier - with our Habif Wellness team here on campus, and they're going to be providing Residential Life with recommendations on how students should be housed in a residential hall. So more information to come, but at this time, we're relying on the health professionals here at the university to guide us on how we're going to house students in the fall.

Reggie Gacad: A question around nutrition and dining. How does the university train staff around allergies and food restrictions?

Rebecca Miller: We have a couple of programs, and for the fall, specifically, Andrew and I, we're looking to do a FARE certification, and so we will be doing that and implementing it on our staff before the fall starts.

Reggie Gacad: Great. Thank you. A question about the housing application. Is the residential education experience section of the housing application used in assigning roommates?

Will Andrews: Not necessarily in assigning roommates. It helps guide our live-in staff which are all master-leveled individuals who are-- they're trained in creating a residential experience here in WashU. So it's kind of a gauge of what students are looking for, what are some factors our staff need to be aware of students coming in so that the RA staff and our professional staff can definitely align programs with what the students' needs are.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you. Andrew, we had a family member ask that-- you spoke briefly about this, but would you be able to clarify? "If my student selects a larger meal plan to start the semester, can my student change their meal plan later on?"

Andrew Watling: They can change it later on with some restrictions, and so there are deadlines that students can make changes to their meal plan especially downgrading to a smaller-size meal plan. My recommendation is typically to either wait for the next semester to see how far that goes and to get a smaller meal plan then. It's also not necessarily a bad thing to run out of meal points and to use their Bear Bucks towards the end of the semester. So I like to kind of make sure I remind parents and families going in because you can add Bear Bucks at the same value. So if you don't think that you're going to use a larger meal plan, maybe take that extra money, set aside to add in Bear Bucks. Later on, that gives you just a little bit more flexibility if that's a concern for you as well.

Reggie Gacad: Great. And in the chat function families, we've just linked a web page that explains a little bit more about Bear Bucks over there. Will, if I am a student who is applying, what are my odds of getting a single as a first-year student if it's my first-choice request?

Will Andrews: So we do have singles, but majority of our housing for first-year students is made up of doubles. So I would say maybe about 10% of the freshmen beds that are available are singles and the rest are majority doubles. Your chances are, again, at this time, I don't know. We have to wait until all of the class submits all of their applications. And then we will run our housing process. And based off that-- but I will tell you, we do our best to get students in their first, second, third choice. Again, in the application, we have you rank all eight. We try the majority, I would say, 85 or 90 percent of the students receive their first, second, or third choice in our housing selection process.

Reggie Gacad: Great, in terms of food, if the university changes a recipe or modifies a food that's typically served, do you provide signage to let people know?

Rebecca Miller: Our menus are pretty set in advance. And so if you're going to-- if we're changing something you're going to know in advance. Some of our chef specials might be posted or change more short-term. Right now, it's probably closer to a couple days, but in the future for the fall, it's going to be closer to a week, if not more.

But again, the website is really the best place to get that and kind of keep that, and like I said, in the back of your pocket, so that you're always checking it if that is of a concern for you. So you can really know what's available and just kind of stay in tune with that. So yes, it is posted, and it's available in advance.

Reggie Gacad: We have some family members asking, what is gender-inclusive housing?

Will Andrews: So gender-inclusive housing allows your student to be able to choose and live with whom they want. No matter gender, race, ethnic background, you name it. We provide gender-inclusive housing. So all of our restrooms for the-- almost all gender-inclusive, except in some of our buildings where the restrooms are gender-specific. But yeah, that's really what it is we allow the students to make their choice for themselves. And we will accommodate. If any student feels uncomfortable, we encourage them to reach out to Residential Life, if they don't feel comfortable putting it on their housing application. And our assignments team will work closely with those students to ensure they're a safe environment where they feel like they can be themselves.

Reggie Gacad: Great, in terms of the dining plan, how does the pricing compared to, say, local groceries and restaurants, and is one meal point equal to \$1 in the meal plan? How does that work?

Andrew Watling: Great. So one meal point is not exactly equal to \$1. With every meal plan on campus there's an additional overhead charge, and that's one of the reasons that we require all students to have some kind of a meal plan so that everyone's paying into supporting the infrastructure of campus dining here at Washington University. And that includes a lot of the additional amenities that we have and some of the other resources that we can provide for students. In regards to pricing at restaurants around campus, we try to make sure that we keep that pricing competitive to the good for students and you all, certainly with restaurants in the area. Grocery stores, we're not necessarily competing price-wise because we're operating in a different capacity than they are. We do make sure that we try to provide in our convenience stores, we try to make sure we provide items that are priced somewhere between a grocery store and an actual convenience store, so they're not necessarily going to see the prices that you would at a Walmart or a Target, but they're not going to be necessarily the same prices you would find at Walgreen's or a 7-Eleven if you were to go into one of those to buy those items. So we try to find the balance for those items, so. We do try to make sure that our meals are reasonably priced, and that's one of the things that we put a lot of effort into the menus to make sure that students can get full well-rounded meals within a balanced price-point. That's our biggest goal.

Reggie Gacad: All right, thank you. A follow up to that, are healthy options such as fruit similarly priced as prepackaged snacks like chips to encourage students to eat healthier?

Rebecca Miller: Andrew, do you want me to answer that one?

Andrew Watling: Sure, you can answer that one.

Rebecca Miller: So, as Andrew was kind of pointing out, our prices are based off of essentially our food costs and then we have some labor costs in that. So we're very mindful, Andrew, and I, especially work together, and collaborate on this and do price checks around campus and make sure that it's affordable and that it's appropriate for what you should be finding out in the community. With that being said, we do have some added labor costs and so we just want to make sure that it's appropriate. But again, we're always evaluating and kind of checking to make sure those are in line with what's feasible, reasonable.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you.

Rebecca Miller: And I guess, can I add to that as I'm thinking about it. That's also where, kind of just reaching out and even it's just shooting me an email to kind of express some concerns, I can give you some tips. So just kind of think, buying some whole fruit is going to be a better value for you than buying the pre-packaged, pre-cut fruit because you're having someone else do that cutting and that chopping for you. Whereas if you can just grab the apple, the orange, the banana, the pear, the kiwi, whatever it is you're saving some cost there. So those are some real world tricks and tips nutrition-wise that I would recommend to families as well as students.

Reggie Gacad: All right. Thank you. Do students have to clean their own bathroom in a suite, Will?

Will Andrews: So we have a scheduled housekeeping that goes through and clean all of the restrooms and all of our shared areas. So they'll create some really great relationships because it'll be typically the same housekeeper that goes in on a scheduled base to make sure those restrooms are cleaned and prepared for the students. I wanted to just do a follow-up question regarding the gender-inclusives because I thought of it and I just want to make sure. On our housing application, we ask individuals are they open to gender-inclusive housing, and I want to make sure I just kind of go into it a little bit more, but what that means is all of our floors at WashU are-- we are coed. And when you select that you're open to gender-inclusive housing it just doesn't mean that you're open to the opposite sex living in the room with you. That means you're open to any student that expresses their gender or their sexuality in any way. So we want individuals to be very-- it's very important when you're answering that question you answer very carefully because when we place students who are looking for gender-inclusive communities or roommates we will match you up based off of how you answer that question on the housing application.

Reggie Gacad: Great. Thank you so much. We have a number of family members who are asking when they can ship items to campus and what local shopping options are available. The answer to that is 14 days before your student's move-in date is when you can ship items to campus. And then in terms of the local shopping options, there is the Shopping in St. Louis guide that has at the bottom of it the packing list. And we will put some links to that into the chat as well. We have a question in regards to unused meal points. Do students get reimbursed for unused meal points at the end of the semester or year?

Andrew Watling: No. So at the end of the year, unused meal points stay with dining services. So we do a few things to try to help students manage that. The first one is allowing them obviously to buy a smaller plan for the spring semester and the fall does roll over into the spring. The other options that we have, we allow students to donate their meal points which I think I mentioned earlier. We also have an opportunity for students to transfer meal points to another student if that's a need that the other student might have. And then there's opportunities for them to use those meal points to buy items at the end of the semester as well. So at the end of the spring semester especially we'll see students spending down the last remaining bit of some of their meal plans. You can buy items that get donated to the food pantry. You can buy items that you just get to take home for the summer with you as well. So we try to make it as easy as possible for students to spend money if they have any remaining on their meal plan. Most of our students find themselves in the opposite situation, and they actually have to add a few Bear Bucks at the end of the semester to get through. And that's one of the reasons we size our meal plans the way we do is I would much rather have a little bit too few and you have to add some at the end to get through than you have a whole bunch of meal points left over at the end of the semester, so.

Reggie Gacad: Great. Thank you. Will, can you talk a little bit more about the building amenities that can be found in each of the residence halls? So we have families asking, "Is there a kitchen? Is there a laundry?" What kinds of stuff can they expect to find in each res hall?

Will Andrews: Yes. So in each residential college there are kitchens, there are community spaces, there are computer labs, print stations, there's laundry, there's TV, cable. In most cases there's multiple televisions for those individuals that like the PS4s and all those gaming equipments. We also have music rooms. So if you are an avid piano player or guitar, we have rooms on South 40 for students where they can be enclosed and be able to play music. And in one of our common room areas we had mirrors set up so if you're a part of a dance team or if you like to practice, there's mirrors for you to practice your activities there. So we are your home away from home. And yeah, if there's any other questions you have, please come and question us. We'll definitely be able to get [inaudible]. I think we provide all the amenities from tutoring spaces to campus security that's on South 40 to the dining to the First Year Center that's on there, academic resources, all of those things, to make your experience great.

Reggie Gacad: Great. Andrew, we had a follow-up regarding the points versus a dollar. Question, so is the price that a student sees in the dining halls the equivalent of a point? So for example, if the sign says that a hamburger is \$5, is the student paying \$5 or are they paying 5 meal points?

Andrew Watling: They're paying 5 meal points. So there's no math that they necessarily have to do it in the dining hall. So the price that's listed on the menu boards is the points that they're using.

Reggie Gacad: Great.

Andrew Watling: And that's the amount that will get deducted off their plan.

Reggie Gacad: Perfect. What type of bathrooms are available in traditional residence halls? Are they community or are they individual?

Will Andrews: So we do have a mixture. We only have two buildings on the South 40 that have community bathrooms set-ups. In all of our other buildings, there's no more between four to six people-- four to five people, I'm sorry, sharing one restroom at any given time on campus.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you so much. So we are going to ask one last question for the evening. As a reminder, any questions that we were not able to answer during this webinar will be addressed via email directly to the person who posed the question. Panelists, thank you so much for the information you shared tonight. What is your one last piece of advice for families of WashU students as they look to the fall semester?

Andrew Watling: I'll go first. My biggest piece of advice, especially related to dining, around food, is encourage your student to be adventurous to try new things. This is going to be the absolute best opportunity you have to try food that they've never tried before, to meet people that they've never necessarily shared a meal with before, and to just have some of those experiences in a safe and controlled environment. And so, I would strongly encourage you to push your students to try new things and to just take some chances. I know it sounds funny, just say take chances with food, but that's a really big life skill that a lot of students can take away from college.

Will Andrews: My advice or recommendation to families is, definitely, spend as much time with your child as you can do right now because once they get to campus, they will be busy. And maybe, schedule calls. You're not going to expect a call every day. Occasionally, I get the call from a parent saying, "I haven't heard from my child in five days. I want to know if they're okay." Well, guess what? They're just having an amazing time, and they're engaged in all the activities that are going on across campus. So I would just say, maybe schedule some weekend calls, but - yeah. And then a plug for dining services, one thing students love, really, right now, are the endless coffee cups. I don't know how many times, first thing in the morning, I see the line of students leaving The Bear's Den with their mugs. And I think the coffee to go's one of the biggest things whilst they're trying to get to class. And when it's cold here, it's nice having a warm cup of coffee to walk across campus.

Rebecca Miller: The mom in me is just going to say to enjoy and relax as much as you can over the summer because being away from home, I mean this will be a transition for both the families, the parents, the students, for everyone. So it's a fabulous time that you're going to look back and think fondly of but it's definitely a transition. And so I think everyone just wants to have some time together and enjoy that time. And really, I mean, from a dining and nutrition perspective, I would say, actually, start to teach your kids some of your favorite recipes that you guys make at home so that you can come to campus and share those and send those to us and so we can help to kind of share them and create them and replicate them for your students to have while they're here. So teach them to cook, just like Andrew was talking about life lessons, about trying new foods and budgeting your meal plans or your dollars. That's a valuable skill you're going to learn here. I would also say, let's start to teach them to cook this summer and share those recipes with us.

Reggie Gacad: Panelists, thank you so much. The information you provided this evening was extremely helpful. I am confident families of WashU students learned quite a lot from your presentations and answers. Families, we hope that you learned some valuable information this evening. Stay tuned for our next webinar, A Conversation with Habif Health & Wellness Center, occurring on Monday, June 22nd. You'll be able to register for this webinar at families.wustl.edu. We'll see you then. Thank you.