



Chamber Business Profile

Sodexo at William Penn University

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On any given week at William Penn University, students might walk into the dining hall and find a seafood boil inspired by Mardi Gras, a menu built around foods from a major U.S. city, or a healthier “mindful” meal designed for balance. Behind those experiences is Sodexo, the campus dining team that has been feeding students since 1998, while quietly expanding its services to include catering throughout the community.

Known on campus as Sodexo at William Penn University, the food service provider manages multiple dining operations to meet students' daily needs and create memorable dining experiences throughout the academic year. Its main offering is an all-you-can-eat buffet-style dining hall, complemented by a retail location, the PACCAfe, which operates much like a convenience-style cafe with grab-and-go options.

While students are the primary focus, the organization also serves the whole community through off-site catering. Orders can be placed online, with options ranging from simple snack trays and box lunches to formal plated dinners featuring upscale menus. “We can do very basic to very upscale,” Jeff Halverson, General Manager of Sodexo WPU said, describing offerings that include everything from box lunches and buffets to plated meals such as Calabrian Chile Roasted Chicken and Grilled Mahi Mahi.

That flexibility is a key part of the operation’s success. Through Sodexo’s network of college partners, the local team can share ideas, borrow equipment, and access additional support when needed. “We have a lot of resources available to us with other colleges that have Sodexo,” Halverson said. Those connections help the team continue to evolve menus and keep pace with changing student tastes.

Campus dining is rarely static, and the team plans special events throughout each semester to keep meals fresh and engaging. About once a month, the dining hall features a large themed meal where the entire menu is built around a concept. One of the most popular is Mardi Gras, which includes a seafood boil and flavors inspired by New Orleans. “It is one of the more popular ones for the students,” Halverson said. “They can try crawfish if they’ve never had crawfish, or just different things they maybe haven’t had before”.

Beyond large events, smaller themed offerings happen weekly. Programs such as “Big City Eats” explore regional foods from cities across North America, while “Mindful” meals emphasize healthier choices. The goal is to create variety while encouraging students to step outside their comfort zones and try something new.

The dining team says student feedback plays a big role in shaping operations. “Probably our customer service,” Halverson said when asked what students appreciate most. Staff members focus on creating a welcoming environment, knowing that meals are often one of the few consistent touchpoints in a student’s busy day.

Part of what keeps the work interesting, Halverson said, is how quickly student preferences change. “Every year, the students change, their palettes change,” Halverson said. “Flexibility with menus is really fun to have”. That constant evolution pushes the team to adapt and stay creative with menu planning.

Growth on campus has also brought opportunities. The Sodexo team has expanded alongside increasing student enrollment at William Penn, which has allowed for more events and additional services. Looking ahead, plans include updating equipment and potentially expanding the PACCafe to offer more options and create a space where students want to spend more time.

Although many in Oskaloosa may associate the operation solely with campus dining, the team hopes more community members recognize that catering services are also available to local businesses and organizations. With options for delivery, pickup, and full-service events, Sodexo aims to be a resource both on and off campus.

As William Penn University continues to grow, Sodexo’s role extends beyond serving meals. Through themed events, adaptable menus, and expanded catering offerings, the team helps shape everyday campus life while building stronger connections with the broader community. For students arriving each fall with new tastes and expectations, the dining hall remains a place where food, creativity, and community come together.
