**Interview Transcript: Khalid Moussa**

**Interviewer:** All right, we are… recording right now. Right. Khalid, our purpose here today is to explore the University of Utah's students perceptions and experiences regarding meal planning after transitioning off campus. The insights gathered will help identify challenges and opportunities when designing product solutions that help meet these students needs.

**Interviewee:** Okay okay.

**Interviewer:** so I really do appreciate you coming here. And thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As you know, we are conducting a research study to understand how university students navigate meal planning when they move off campus and away from the canvases gaining meal plans. So for your information, this is being recorded and your input will be immensely valuable to immensely valuable. Helping us come up with solutions. And everything you say is confidential.

**Interviewee:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Right. First question.Well, before we do that um just a general… Just a general… definition of meal planning. Usually when you do meal planning you are planning out what you are going to eat usually for about a week so that's all we're basically discussing here. Okay, just your perceptions about it and what your experiences are about how you do it, that kind of thing. All right. So imagine a typical meal planning Imagine a typical meal plan. Or… your preparation experience for you. What images come to mind? When you think about meal planning what are your thoughts?

**Interviewee:** That's a very good question.

**Interviewee:** When the word meal planning or just like when I imagine meal plan meal planning what comes to my mind is the regular foods that I can prepare quick as possible right to meet my schedule needs as well as you know my needs for like, you know, for food as well so like when I think of that, I want to think of food that I can make something as quick as possible. So for myself. What I prepare for myself, especially like like you know for a week or something like that, there's some several foods, some different foods that I prepare, for example today or this week, I'll prepare three different types of dishes yeah. And I would constantly switch between those This is during the week. So, for example, I'll cook one one type of food in Monday. And then I'll eat that like for three days or two days, like some amount of time as long as how long it lasts And then. Cook another meal at the same time or that so second one as well. And then I just switch between those okay let's say I eat for breakfast this type of food But most times I for breakfast, I eat cereal, eggs, something that's quick. But like, you know, for lunch and dinner is something that's heavy that I can like, you know, that can last in a sense yeah yeah So yeah, that's my typical meal planning. I just cook three different types of food in a week and then I just like cycle. Doing them.

**Interviewer:** And then… how do these how do these thoughts or represent like challenges successes you experience when doing meal planning.

**Interviewee:** That's a very, very important question. There's the biggest challenge is the biggest challenge the challenge of time, right? As a person who works full time And it's student full time yeah there's a little time that you can find to make some sort of food that you can eat. And most times, you know, when I cook, it takes, you know. Minimum of two hours or so. Unless I'm cooking eggs or just preparing cereal, that's something different but like regular like a dish that i cook you know for my lunch or dinner it takes more time. So like biggest challenge of those thoughts or those imaginative thoughts of my meal planning is the time. How can I find the time… For my food, how can I find the time for my food cooking, how can I find a time for my work? How can I find a time to adjust my homework, you know, studying and stuff?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so it's all about one of the major issues is balancing

**Interviewee:** Exactly. Balancing between those needs.

**Interviewer:** So question two, if you could visually represent your ideal off-campus meal plan experience What would that look like?

**Interviewee:** Most foods that i eat are mostly something that I cook at home so but you know with my business schedule, I think that's a little bit kind of hard. So I want to find… some sort of meal balance where some amount of time I can eat outside right at a restaurant or something like that maybe like once a week or twice a week. And then the rest I can cook something at home where I rotate between those foods that I cook at my house. That's kind of my ideal way of, you know, my meal plan for a week.

**Interviewer:** Right. So if you were to a product of some sort or solution to help you meal plan what kind of features and elements would help you stand out?

**Interviewee:** Would stand out to you? Could you rephrase the question again? Sorry.

**Interviewer:** Yes. So what elements of a of what elements of a meal planning solution would stand out to you?

**Interviewee:** That's a very interesting question. I would say… Just having the right amount of intake or having the right amount of food, like, you know, nutritional need to meet your nutritional need yes I think that's something that could stand out a lot What our business schedule, you know, especially me, I am working full time and, you know, student full time Even though sometimes I do cook food, you know, I'm not really making sure if that's enough nutritional intake for me. So like, I don't know if it's like healthy enough for me or I'm not sure if I'm meeting my daily calorie needs or like, you know, vitamin needs or stuff. So in a sense, ideal or sort of something that's really good in terms of that would stand out is that finding a way where I can actually like calculate Or calculate like, you know, my nutritional needs, right? During the time I'm cooking and stuff. So like, that's something that I would believe that would stand out in a sense on my meal plan. You know?

**Interviewer:** what emotions would the elements you described evoke in you What would they make you feel?

**Interviewee:** These elements, um. Number one, he strokes some kind of curiosity. That's the first emotion that I'm feeling.Because I never like even though I'm like that, I never thought about, you know, what nutritional needs I need. I just cook food and I eat it. I never think about that. But I believe that's something that I got really curious about. So now that's like the emotion that I'm getting. And also the emotion of just like, you know, eating food, you know, happiness. I'll believe I'm getting down as well, you know, in a sense. I'm happy to eat my food. Get the right amount of intake and stuff yeah And then lastly. This is when the time crunch or when the time conflict between each other comes and that's stress.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Interviewee:** I don't know, like, you know, if I don't really have time to cook food, if I don't have time for school, like it's just very hard to balance, right? And sometimes, you know, it stresses you out in a sense.

**Interviewer:** Basically, you can't really balance your life in a sense

**Interviewee:** yeah exactly.

**Interviewer:** so you'd want something that kind of boosts your curiosity and simplifies things.

**Interviewee:** Yes, in a sense.

**Interviewer:** So I'm going to show you a series of six animals. I want you to choose one that represents how you feel about meal planning, and explain. Your reasoning behind what you choose. So out of these six, what do you think?

**Interviewee:** let's see. What is this? Frog?

**Interviewer:** That's a frog, yeah.

**Interviewee:** And then this is a hippo. I would kind of… go with… With the lion okay with the lion. And… The reason I chose that is even though I talked about how my scheduling is the hard part. And one thing that I'm really fortunate to have is that I have a sibling that I live with. So me and him, we kind of have the same schedule working as well as doing our schooling. We kind of rotate between who cooks and who doesn't yeah so like sometimes he cooks the food and then sometimes i cook the food So like the reason that I picked Lion is because of that, you know, lions usually when they try to eat something, you know, they worked together as a team yeah they work together like the lion pride So like they work together as a team And that's something that has been working for me. I'm working together as a team with my family to meal plan you know and meal plan Other life basic stuff, right? And that's where like, you know, when I'm trying to hunt for food or cook for food They're always there. Either I'm the one who's doing or they're the one who's doing.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, and that makes sense. You want to exactly be able to work to… work together and possibly maybe feel proud about what you're doing.

**Interviewee:** exactly yeah exactly Right. More of that group work.

**Interviewer:** So now we'll go into more and more in depth about what we've talked about. So can you walk me through how you typically plan and prepare your meals? What's your process?

**Interviewee:** So I have… I would say like three or four different type of food that I eat. For example. I have this food. That is called chemo and what basically it is is um is potatoes, ground meat And some sort of green vegetables you know yeah tomatoes and stuff that i we kind of mixed it It's like some carne asada food you know, the yeah yeah carne asada something, yeah.So I eat that a lot and that's one of my favorite foods And the way that I prepare for that one is during the week, let's say I go get, you know, a bag of potatoes, you know, get a ground meat. Yeah. Ground meat and then… have that in my fridge. Usually like the ground meat party, I would have it like for like months and stuff. I get it in a big amount because it's cheaper. Yeah. And then the potatoes are just cycle, you know, like I get one whole entire bag and then just use that thing and cook it in my bowl. In my pen like in my big pan And I'll eat it through the week. And then after I finished that one, I sometimes cook lentils Just regular lentils. But the way we cook it is different. We cook it, I guess, by itself And then we like, you know, cut vegetables and put cheese on top of it And yeah, put cheese on top of it and you know. Like vegetables and stuff we mix it around and we eat it with bread So that's one of the things that I eat on my second food. And then the third one, I would have some sort of spaghetti or Yeah, so some sort of spaghetti or pasta that I would, you know, I never know how to cook but My brother cooks. And so, yeah, so like we do that sometimes, you know, I cook that on my As a third food as well. And then I rotate between like sometimes I don't know how to cook like a what do you call chicken masala soup or beef masala soup or like lamb masala soup I cook that and eat it. But what I've seen out of all these foods that we cook other than the pasta is that all of them require some sort of bread. Yes so yeah so like I grew up in a culture where, you know, bread is heavily used, you know, in every type of food that you cook, you have to use it, you know. So yeah, we usually like, I buy a lot of bread And it's not the soft bread. It's kind of like, it's like a pita bread where you dip it and you eat the old stuff yeah yeah so yeah so that's kind of my weekly meal planning in a sense, you know, I have that keema. I have my lentils or any sort of beans. And then I have like a pasta or something. I see. Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. Do you usually

**Interviewer:** Do you usually follow a strict plan or do you kind of just shop when you need it spontaneously?

**Interviewee:** Um… And in terms of the ingredients are consistent. But the type of food that i cook It's kind of just spontaneous in a sense. For example. This week I cooked that like in monday And Sunday, actually, when I had time i cooked it in the key part when then we finished it like that After three days after yeah And then the week before that and sunday we cook something entirely different. You know, it was like a chicken masala or something like that. So in a sense, I would say spontaneous But the ingredients are usually the same. There's some heavy protein. And there's a lot of carbohydrates or bread. I see. Yeah. Carbs yeah right so question two Do you feel, wait, sorry, how do you feel about the time and effort required. To prepare your meals. It takes a lot of effort. It takes a lot of effort. Soup, lentils. The lentils pasta It doesn't take that much time. But the special foods you know that I eat most of the time They take a lot of my time. Like I said in the beginning, the minimum amount of time it would take for a certain food that I cook is two hours. And most times it's like four hour and beyond you know When I get the potatoes, I like to peel them and I have to wait for like I have to fry the potatoes and then… On a separate dish i have to like prepare something and then once all of those are ready and then I put them together, mix them up, each of those take like a certain amount of time that I have to do. So it's a lot.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah. So now we'll move on to focusing on the kinds of challenges you face with meal prep. So… What are the biggest challenges you've encountered with your meal planning. Off campus. Meal planning off campus. The biggest challenge

**Interviewee:** Currently right now is money. Yes. Food has become… So expensive. Like I would come out of store, you know, with just two little small bags And that would be like, you know, upwards of I don't know like thirty dollars or stuff you know And it's just like, for some reason now it's just like… If you're trying to like eat the right amount of food, the nutritious food and stuff is very hard to do that very hard the pricing and being as a college student, you know we don't have that much amount of money to spend. So the pricing is the biggest challenge right now, I believe.

**Interviewer:** How do you typically try to budget your groceries? Do you face any challenges with trying to stay within budget?

**Interviewee:** Um… I do. Face challenges in terms of budgeting for my meal plan. But I do not organize it. In a sense. I mean, one of the only things that I believe that I do help that helped me with mine. Thing is that when I buy stuff, I buy them in bulk yeah So like I don't buy individual stuff other than like, you know, the vegetables that are they'll go back, you know, when I'm, for example, when I'm buying noodles or pasta, I buy them in bulk, right? Like I said in the beginning as well. When I buy ground meat. Ground beef or ground lamb whatever it is I buy in bulk as well. So I buy in a big amount, put it in the freezer, just let it stay.

**Interviewer:** I see.

**Interviewee:** And usually that makes it a little bit cheaper.

**Interviewer:** So you tend to probably buy bile all these things in bulk and then just buy vegetables and fresh foods when you need it.

**Interviewee:** Exactly. Exactly. But in terms of having a specific budget, I don't really have it.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** Just based on needs.

**Interviewer:** So do you put in a lot of time to planning what you're going to eat to prepare

your meal and does that impact your eating habits?

**Interviewee:** Yes. It's not sort of, it's not more of a thinking side. I don't really think about what I need to eat. No. But it's just the sense of, you know, the time, right? Time is the most important part, just balancing those times. And so, for example, let's say you know like Today, I'm interested in eating let's say chicken masala soup or something like that but I look at my schedule and I was like oh I don't really have time like that. So what I do, I just have time Put beans or lentils in lentils In the pod, just put a lot of bunch of water and just let us stay until it's ready. That doesn't take a lot of time. I don't really need to look at it or stuff just like 30 minutes. Like one hour yeah yeah it's ready and the food is ready to eat.So a lot of times when that's what happens. When I don't have time I just tend to stick to the easiest things that I could do And sometimes I even bought it sometimes even pup noodles, you know, the instant cup noodles. I buy those and just cook it on the spot and just eat it.

**Interviewer:** Do you typically try to balance the need for convenience with like nutrition and dietary needs?

**Interviewee:** Yes. Yes but So, you know, there's no ideal world where you know you balance with your nutritional need and stuff And it's a lot of times it is very hard to do that. So most times I just tend to ignore that side completely. You know, I just don't think about my nutrition intake or how much I need to eat today yeah is I'm just trying to just put something on my stomach. That's the number one priority. Yes. I don't go hungry, but I don't really think about the nutritional intake, how many calories I'm eating. I don't do that.

**Interviewer:** All right, question four. Have you found any resources or services like a meal kit or pre-made meal options that make meal planning more convenient.

**Interviewee:** No, no. I have tried one. It was called Factor.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I've heard of it.

**Interviewee:** But… I didn't even try. It was just my brother. He just, you know, subscribed for one month and stuff. And they send them some sort of food. And I could even put the food in my mouth. It was just terrible yes it was just terrible you know And that's why it's just like now I just tend to turn into, you know, either just cook, mostly cook myself Or… by, you know, go to a restaurant going out but even that, you know, we don't have enough money to do that. I don't have enough money to do that. You know, it's expensive. So most times I just end up cooking myself in the food that I want to eat.

**Interviewer:** Which aspect of meal planning… Oh, you've answered this already. Which aspect of meal planning is the most challenging?

**Interviewee:** Why? Balance. Balancing between everything. That's the most challenging part time the need and also the the pricing of the foods. The other thing you just have to keep in a consideration. That's the biggest challenge.

**Interviewer:** do you find you… have the right tools, appliances, and ingredients to be able to cook what you need?

**Interviewee:** Sorry. Yes.I do have the right tools to cook on what I need. No, I haven't. The pods, you know, the spoons and stuff. I mean, I live in my house you know yeah I don't really live on campus. So in a sense, yeah, I do have the right tool to cook for my food and I have the right resources as well, you know, to work to find the best kind of deal for my budget and stuff so. Yes, I do have the right tools. All right.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever tried skipping meals? Like out of necessity? And if so How frequently?

**Interviewee:** Um…

**Interviewee:** Yes. And that's mostly due to not food is being there, but just mostly not having the time to just like you know eat food For example, I come to the school in the morning and In the morning, early morning. So it's just like sometimes I have breakfast. Sometimes I don't have breakfast. So sometimes I skipped out. And then also like in the middle of the day, you know, I skipped my lunch as well. Yeah. And just like, you know, sometimes I just eat breakfast and then eat dinner And most times I'd be skipping my my lunch because I don't have the time to eat it. Yeah, that makes sense. So maybe something like a packaged meal or something of that sort that you can carry in a backpack would be good. Yes. I never thought about it, but that's something that would be good. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** All right, now we'll go on to university resources and if you use them at all okay So are you aware of the University of Utah's resources such as the Feed U Food Pantry or they used meal prepping services.

**Interviewee:** I heard about them, but I'm not familiar with it. When i was when i was You know, when I was here for When I transferred here, they provided all of that information to us Yes. But I never went to them and never used the resources. Yeah. But that's something that I would consider going into.

**Interviewer:** And is there any particular reason why you haven't used the resources yet?

**Interviewee:** It's just I'm not familiar. It's something that I heard before, but I was never able to utilize it. So if a food, if a food pantry only offered preserved foods would you still use the food pantry. Reserve foods. You know like canned foods, packaged foods, nothing fresh. I mean, depends on what I need. For example, this, like you have sometimes I'm not really sure about what they have there, but… if they're the right preserve foods then yes but if not, then, you know, it's always the fresh is preferrable.

**Interviewer:** I see. Yes. So now we're going to financial considerations. Well, before that, let's do question six. What additional resources or support would make you feel would make, sorry. Let me start over. What additional resources or support would make meal planning easier?

**Interviewee:** That's a hard question. I mean, I have been doing this for a while now. I know it's not possible, but if there's a financial financial help that would help a lot. Yeah. I'm thinking it's not really possible. But that's something that I could do, you know, just trying to reduce the time that I spend on other things, Allah. For example, it says i'm a student now you know maybe find a part-time job or something like that where i would have enough time for me to cook food or like schedule my class scheduling In a way that I have time to cook food. I don't think there's any other way that I thing is good, but I believe if the college has like the food pantry just add some additional like you know need that student one you know for example, if they have pastas or dried noodles, you know, preserved noodles or something fresh like you know Sometimes vegetables. Fruits and stuff you know that are essential i see yeah if they have that, I think that would help a lot of students But I've never utilized it. If there's such services, then I'm more than interested in going to them. Food pantry and utilizing the university resource.

**Interviewer:** All right, now we'll move on to financial considerations. You already said you don't really have a budget right you know no particularly follow one. Yeah. No, I don't really particularly follow a certain budget.

**Interviewee:** And the reason is it's just the reason is you don't know the pricing of anything you know oh yeah definitely exactly and then you buy it based on need. And as I said, I buy mostly i eat My food, mostly when I cook at home. So it's just like I buy my stuff in bulk, you know, me, I buy a lot of amount at the same time so I save a few amount of dollars. Pasta same thing. Like, you know, some dry stuff, like even like food ingredients and spices I buy those like in a lot of terms and even oil In a sense, I buy all of those in bulk. So I save some few amount of dollars, but I don't particularly have any budget that I follow.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And do you do.. and Do you accept like financial assistance? From like parents or government existence at all in like regards to food.

**Interviewee:** Yes, I do. And that's our parent assistance. Yeah, I know. Yeah, I'm fortunate enough, you know, for my dad to help me out in terms of food needs.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Have you utilized student discounts or community partnerships with the local restaurants in Salt Lake?

**Interviewee:** No. I didn't know such things existed.

**Interviewer:** Yes. Yes. The U has a list of specific restaurants and other places you can shop at where you get about like a 10% discount for like student resources.

**Interviewee:** Oh, that's pretty interesting. And I'm more than happy to know more about it.

**Interviewer:** It's not a very extensive list, but it's there.

**Interviewee:** Holy.

**Interviewer:** All right, so now we'll go on to like how your living arrangements impact your eating habits How do your living arrangements, things like your roommates, your family influence you in your meal prep.

**Interviewee:** So I live with my brother. So, like I said, you know. Since he's there to he knows how to cook and stuff He's there to like basically i delegate my meal planning or food prep Especially because I have him so like he if he's not there, you know, I would have a little amount of time to cook. So since he's there, you know, and I live with him, he helps me a lot, you know, in terms of sometimes I cook, sometimes he cooks yeah right so whoever has the convenience, they're able to cook. So that's something that has influenced a lot. Influenced me a lot in terms of my food prep, in terms of how I eat, in terms of my meal planning and stuff.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. All right. And then the last question. If you could design a solution or product to improve meal planning for off-campus students. What would that look like? What features would you prioritize? And if there's any tools, services, or technology What would you use?

**Interviewee:** This is a very deep question. Yes. So what is the… perfect solution or a good solution to improve meal planning.

**Interviewer:** Or maybe just like a solution you would want.

**Interviewee:** Solution Like I said, you know, one of the biggest issues right now with meal planning is finding the right pricing. Yes. So I believe if there's an app or some sort of, you know, services Doward. Allow students to find in certain stores for some sort of different kind of foods you know let's say I'm having to go to the noodles a lot because that's something about recently. But yeah, but something like, you know, that gives you like can, like, you know, preserve foods, canned foods, you know, yeah. Fresh foods, you know, something like that, where if there's an app that like shows you the discount amounts right and the time the time frame that is available that would like, you know, show students they just download it and they show it shows them hey. This discount is available right now at this food place you can go grab it. If there are such services, I believe that would be good. And also, in the same thing, if there's a way for like for them to plan the ingredients or the foods that they need. Yeah. For example, I'm just talking in a way of like, you know, someone cooking from their home. Yeah um that's off campus for me. But so yeah so like in a way, if there's like a kind of like, you know, planner in a sense, you know, tells them. Hey this this would be good you know this is the nutritional intake. This is the amount of calories you'll get from this side of food. And this is how you cook it, you know? In a sense, to find one way to integrate all of those together where it's going to show you, okay, the amount of nutrition you're taking, the amount of calories you're taking, the amount of food that you're taking and stuff like, you know, and then it plans that for you like Through the entire the whole week, you know, let's say. This week, it would be nice, you know. And this is the value of it. And this is where you can find cheap stuff, you know, for the ingredients of this hood If there's something in a utopian world, in a sense, it would be good. But we hope for it. Oh, yeah. Definitely. Well, Khalid, thank you for sharing your experience and your insight. Your input will be incredibly valuable for our study. And it will play an important role in helping us design a better solution for all campus students.

**Interviewer:** Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience or your challenges with meal planning.

**Interviewee:** I just want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my opportunity to share my meal planning you know the way I work around how I eat food, how I cook food. And that's pretty interesting. And I never really thought about it. This way, you know, deeply. And so these questions kind of helped me as well. So I'm really appreciative of this opportunity to share And I don't really have any questions, you know, and then thank you very much. Appreciate it. And thank you for your time, Zach.

**Interviewer:** Yes. Thank you. I appreciate it as well. All right. We'll wrap up then.