

The Relationship Between Meal Plans and Visits to Dining Halls

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Many colleges that offer dorms for students also offer meal plans in order to encourage students to eat at their dining halls. At Creighton University, students have the option of choosing from seven different types of meal plans or none at all. The student can then use their meal plan to buy food at three dining halls and six food courts. Each meal plan contains a certain number of meal swipes that can be used in order to enter the dining halls and dining dollars that can be used to buy food from the food court. However, four of the seven meal plans contain a significant amount more of meal swipes. Therefore, it is predicted that students with a much bigger meal plan will visit the Creighton dining halls and food courts more often than students with smaller or no meal plans. For this experiment, the meal plan will serve as the independent variable while the amount of times a person visits a dining hall will serve as a dependent variable.

Methods

Participants

With a Facebook group page, I was able to have fifteen students from the sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma, to participate in this experiment. All fifteen students were currently attending Creighton University and their class ranged from sophomores to seniors (sophomores – 9, juniors – 4, seniors – 2).

Materials and Procedures

The study was performed with an anonymous online survey. The survey contained two questions: What Creighton meal plan do you have and How often do you visit a Creighton dining hall per week (Becker, Brandeis, Harper, Starbucks, Skutt, Java Jay, Cafe a la Cart, Brew Jay, Birdfeeder)? To get participants, I posted a link to the survey on the

Kappa Kappa Gamma Creighton Facebook page and asked the members there if they would like to participate.

For the meal plan question, each meal plan was listed, and when the data was collected, it was given a number (9 meals + \$550 Dining Dollars = 1, 12 meals + \$460 Dining Dollars = 2, 15 meals + \$360 Dining Dollars = 3, 45 flex meals + \$325 Dining Dollars = 4, 65 flex meals + \$400 Dining Dollars = 5, 90 flex meals + \$450 Dining Dollars = 6, Dining Hall All Access Plan + \$150 Dining Dollars = 7, no meal plan = 8). For the visits to the dining hall question, participants were asked to pick the number of times he or she visited one per week, and when the data was collected, it was given a number (never = 1, once a week = 2, two to three times a week = 3, four to five times a week = 4, six to seven times a week = 5).

Results

For the meal plan, three people had 9 meals + \$550 Dining Dollars, four people had 12 meals + \$460 Dining Dollars, 1 person had 15 meals + \$360 Dining Dollars, 2 people had 45 flex meals + \$325 Dining Dollars, 2 people had 90 flex meals + \$450 Dining Dollars, and three people had no meal plan. Nobody had the Dining Hall All Access Plan + \$150 Dining Dollars. For the visits to the Creighton dining halls, one person said never, two people said once a week, four people said two to three times a week, six people said four to five times a week, and two people said six to seven times a week. For the correlation between the independent and the dependent variable, the eta showed to be .951, which represents a high correlation. For the standard deviation, 12 meals + \$460 Dining Dollars and no meal plan both scored .57735. The rest had 0.

Discussion

As stated before, the hypothesis was that students with a much bigger meal plan will visit the Creighton dining halls and food courts more often than students with smaller or no meal plans. Also, as stated before, the results have revealed that there was a high correlation between meal plans and visits to dining halls. This means that the experiment may have proven my hypothesis to be true that there is some correlation between the two variables. However, at the same time, correlation does not give the full knowledge of the two variables. Therefore, while it is possible that there is a relationship between the two variables, it is unknown whether there was an external force that could have affected the number of times the participant visits a Creighton dining hall. As for now, the results show that there is a high correlation between meal plans and visits to dining halls, which proves my hypothesis.