

USAC Web Submission
September 2024

Idea/Question: Any plans to increase the number of EV charging stations on campus? Some of our larger buildings (with larger parking lots) do not have charging stations (C70, C66, W85, W87, W93).

Rationale/Reason: Faculty, students, and guests are driving EVs. Let's support the Green Spiders.

Response: Thank you for the question on electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. Since 2021, the University has doubled the number of EV charging stations on campus, with 2 dual-port charging stations (four parking spots) added this year alone. There are now 9 level 2 charging stations at 7 locations on campus capable of charging 16 vehicles simultaneously (learn more [here](#)). Given the increase in EV usage, an informal user group came together to discuss EV needs at the end of the spring semester. At the suggestion of this group, the Sustainability & Environmental Awareness Committee and partners in Parking & Transportation Services will take up the charge of examining this issue. That work will begin this fall.

Idea/Question: The re-usable HDC-to-go containers seem to be working really well. Has there been any thought given to re-usable packaging (even better if non-plastic) at any of the dining locations?
Rationale/Reason: Faculty, students, and guests are driving EVs. Let's support the Green Spiders.

Rationale/Reason: The example I am most familiar with is salads at Lou's, and I feel like it could be possible to have a similar system to the hdc takeout containers. This would be better for the environment and I am sure there are enough people who are concerned about the environmental and/or health impacts of plastic that an option to get some menu items at dining locations in re-usable non-plastic containers would be well received - even if there is a deposit or small cost. I know I for one would be happy to pay a \$5 deposit to get my salads in plastic-free packaging. There are also some startups that are managing food packaging recycling systems for campuses like Reusables.

Response: Thank you for your inquiry about reusable containers in Dining Services. We are always looking for ways to make our services more sustainable and have continuing conversations on this topic. Our purchasing team has been researching options for the past year and is working with Rethink Waste to determine viable options.

The green plastic boxes at the Heilman Dining Center are BPA-free and composed of NSF-approved materials. We wash and sanitize the reusable boxes on-site in the dining hall dish room, an operation unique to HDC. While we do not have the infrastructure to handle the cleaning and sanitization of reusable containers at the retail locations, we have switched over 100% to compostable drinkware, utensils, and straws at all retail and concession locations.

We will continue to look for an affordable alternative to plastic and are committed to continuing to reduce the use of plastics in the future as we shift our operations towards more sustainable container usage at all dining locations.

Thank you again for your inquiry. Please know that sustainability is a top priority for our operations, and we are working diligently towards continuous improvement.

Upen Malani, Executive Director of Dining Services

Idea/Question: Why did the university have to open on Labor Day?

Rationale/Reason: The university should have closed that day like other businesses. There was a professor who complained about it.

Response: Thank you for your question regarding why we do not close on Labor Day. It is important to note that as an academic institution, especially one that has a significant residential student population, it is not possible for the

University to “close” any day of the year. Certain staff members and offices provide service for the University 365 days of the year. As folks know, there are many staff members and offices at the University who are able to take the Labor Day Holiday.

Moreover, unlike traditional businesses, our operational decisions are driven by the need to maintain a rigorous and balanced academic schedule that best supports student learning and fulfills academic accreditation standards for class hours.

It’s important to note that holding classes on Labor Day is not unique to our university; many of our peer institutions also remain open on this day. The fall academic calendar traditionally has 70 instructional days. Were we to give Labor Day off, we would need to add an additional instructional day elsewhere or students would miss out on a Monday of Monday/Wednesday classes or of Monday-only classes, which could impact student learning opportunities.

Our academic year has begun before Labor Day, with classes in session on that day, since 1976, and we do not envision changing our academic calendar.