

Boston College Dining Services | Elizabeth Emery



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Entry details

Entry Name:	BC Dining's Legal Grounds - Retail Sales: Marketplace of the Year
Institution Name:	Boston College
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Introduction:

Legal Grounds is more than a coffee stop on Boston College's Newton Campus, and that is by design. It serves as a welcoming, reliable hub where law students and first-year undergraduates can refuel throughout their day. The menu is curated to meet student needs, offering convenient, healthy, sustainable, and protein-forward options to support their busy academic schedules. Seasonal options, customizable drinks, and all-day breakfast options allow students to find something familiar while still experiencing variety. The result is a student-centered menu.

Essay:

The menu at Legal Grounds is structured to provide consistency while allowing flexibility and creativity. The core offerings include customizable all-day breakfast sandwiches on bagels or buttery croissants and classic cafe pastries. These daily staples are complemented by rotating monthly drink specials and seasonal beverages, such as our buzz-worthy peppermint mochas to encourage repeat visits. Finally, we increase check averages by pairing warm and savory foods, like a warm sandwich, with a velvety, chilled drink of our signature cold-foam brews.

Student feedback is vital to menu development and to ever-changing dining trends. When students expressed interest in more filling breakfast options to sustain them through long days of classes and study sessions, Legal

Grounds emphasized protein-forward items, such as sous vide egg bites. Nutrient-dense grab-and-go options, premium protein bars, and expanded energy drinks satisfy student demand for healthy fueling options.

Food safety and consistency are heavily emphasized during operation hours. Standard production sheets and temperature logs are strictly adhered to ensure operational excellence. For example, breakfast sandwich temperatures are logged every hour to ensure quality from the first bleary-eyed student in the morning to the late morning rush.

Introduction:

Following a recent renovation, Legal Grounds has been transformed into a modern, warm space on a limited budget. The design maximizes a compact footprint to create a seamless flow between high-traffic checkout and “unwind spaces.” With new cafe aesthetics and strategic product placement, students can easily get their coffee fix or grab a coveted spot to take a study break with friends. The merchandising strategy focuses on grab-and-go refrigerators and premium snacks at arm’s reach while waiting for a beverage. Fresh bakery goods, hot breakfast, and lunch items are highly visible throughout the space.

Essay:

BC’s Newton Campus is in constant motion with law students filing into lectures and first-year undergraduates commuting to and from classes on the Chestnut Hill campus. BC Dining wanted to create an elevated space that softens the pace of academia. Soft seating, cafe tables, and a mix of plants and natural wood create a calm, welcoming environment.

Flowing seamlessly from the marketplace entrance is the hub of Legal Grounds. Bakery cases and dynamic digital menu boards are positioned at eye level to drive purchases and create brand cohesion. The team transformed Legal Grounds from a functional marketplace to a destination supported by an efficient and welcoming staff.

By utilizing every square inch for convenient checkout and comfort, Legal Grounds has become a “hangout spot” on Newton Campus, proving that a facility does not need to be brand new to feel relevant.

Introduction:

Marketing for Legal Grounds is strongly tied to the Boston College Dining Services’ brand strategy, with a focus on engagement and connection with the student body. Promotional efforts are carefully designed to generate excitement while maintaining a consistent brand presence across platforms. Rotating digital signage, social media promotion, and point-of-sale signage are created by students for students. Legal Grounds uses marketing not only to drive traffic but also to reinforce its presence as a vibrant campus staple.

Essay:

Legal Grounds’ marketing strategy centers around promoting the regularly changing specials to both law and undergraduate students. Monthly drink and food specials with seasonal offerings keep the menu feeling fresh while encouraging repeat engagement.

Marketing channels include monthly table tents strategically placed in nearby Stuart Dining Hall, digital signage, and prominently displayed menu boards within the dining hall itself. Social media is a vital part of Legal Grounds’ marketing, with frequent posts and stories for real-time promotions. Coordinated posters are posted around the dining hall and at the bus stop on Newton Campus to extend visibility of Legal Grounds. Together, these strategies create a successful layered marketing approach.

Introduction:

Legal Grounds understands the importance of student wellness. They offer transparent nutrition information and balanced menu options that support overall wellness. Legal Grounds’ approach emphasizes informed choice. With intentional menu planning and clear allergen communication, Legal Grounds empowers students to make decisions that align with their lifestyle and health goals.

Essay:

At Legal Grounds, wellness and nutritional information are always available to support Boston College's focus on caring for the whole person. Nutrition information and allergen data are available on a dynamic, online menu. In the physical space, all items available for purchase are clearly labeled with allergen information, ensuring students can make informed decisions and stay fueled throughout the day.

Special dietary requirements are directly integrated into the menu rather than treated as an afterthought. The Legal Grounds menu was expanded to include gluten-free, allergen-friendly, and vegetarian-friendly options to support a wide range of dietary preferences and ensure inclusivity.

Menu development is based on direct student feedback in partnership with our culinary team and registered dietitian. BC Dining identifies any opportunities to increase access to higher-fiber and balanced-protein items to help sustain students throughout demanding academic schedules. Legal Grounds aims to support student wellness in a practical and approachable way by combining transparency, balance, and responsiveness.

Introduction:

Our team has achieved strong financial results with the recent refresh and menu upgrades at Legal Grounds which have resulted in exceeding our goals. Our revenue increased by 31.84% from the prior year, with customer counts rising by 4,403 (25%) and average check increasing by \$0.32 (5.4%). Our profitability increased by 14.2% from the prior year.

In addition, we made significant progress with our sustainability goals. By encouraging our customers to use reusables, we reduced our paper costs from 4.9% to 3.4% of revenue which was a reduction of 1.5%, or 150 basis points.

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