



opeeMkMP

University of Lynchburg

Entry details

Entry Name:	Burton Dining Hall
Institution Name:	University of Lynchburg
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Benuel Hostetter - Dining Hall Manager

In an era of digital noise, the marketing strategy for Burton Dining Hall is a precision strike of authenticity. Led by a creative crew of student interns, we've traded corporate polish for campus milieu, meeting residents on TikTok and Instagram with real-time engagement. We don't just broadcast; we listen. By utilizing QR codes and digital signage throughout our residential facility, we've created a feedback loop that is as instantaneous as it is impactful. In short: We've moved past the era of "taped-up flyers" and into the "scroll-stopping" reality of our students, driving record engagement.

Essay:

At Burton Dining Hall, we leverage data to elevate the resident experience, but our most impactful marketing is rooted in radical reliability. During this year's severe winter storms, while the city and campus were largely shuttered, our "Creative Crew" utilized social media to broadcast that our team was operational. The response was immediate: a 40% spike in engagement and a wave of gratitude from parents nationwide. One mother's reply, thanking us for "taking care of her student," underscored our true ROI: emotional security.

Strategic growth is guided by the NACUFS Customer Satisfaction Priority Matrix. We analyze 2025 data to bridge the gap between importance and satisfaction, ensuring our resources are focused on the "High Importance" categories that matter most to our students, such as food quality and hours of operation. This data-driven approach allows us

to evolve our services and menu offerings based on real-time student needs. We further humanize this data through “Suggestion Box Sessions,” where the Culinary Team turns logistics into entertainment — because answering inquiries like “Why no more nuggets?” can require the diplomatic skill of a UN envoy. By blending analytical precision with this “student-first” digital presence, we’ve turned residential marketing into a two-way street.

Introduction:

Wellness at Burton Dining Hall is a proactive promise, not a reactive policy. We view our primary residential facility as a “Wellness Hub” where dietary restrictions never mean flavor restrictions. Our menus are internally vetted and scrutinized by our Culinary Team, with the primary goal of providing the cleanest label products possible. By prioritizing whole ingredients and transparent sourcing, we empower residents to navigate their health journey with confidence. We don’t just provide food for the body; we provide peace of mind for students and their families.

Essay:

The Culinary Team has transformed allergen safety with “StingFree Bites,” a dedicated sanctuary in Burton Dining Hall that’s devoid of the top nine allergens. To scale this commitment, we are developing an advanced back-of-the-house menu/nutrition management platform. This initiative, a major digital leap in our roadmap toward total transparency, will eventually provide public-facing nutritional and allergen information directly to our residents’ smartphones.

Beyond safety, we prioritize “Clean Label” integrity. The team actively pursues products with maximum nutrient density, strictly sourcing items free from antibiotics, nitrates, and hormones. This includes featuring Boar’s Head premium meats at our deli bar and sourcing from Homestead Creamery, a nontraditional dairy farm well-known for its quality. To lower our carbon footprint, we source 100% of our ground beef from a producer in a neighboring county. This partnership reduces fossil fuel emissions from transport, while directly supporting area jobs. By combining the physical safety of the stanchion-protected StingFree Bites sections with our evolving digital nutrient database, we ensure every resident can dine with total confidence. We believe a clean label is the foundation of student success.

Introduction:

Modern residential dining requires a balance between the familiar and the exotic. Menu development is led by Executive Chef Emeritus Michial Neal, who serves as our Menu and Purchasing Coordinator. He designs our roadmap in consultation with a production team including Kitchen Manager Angelo Harris, Chef John Barker, and Lead Cooks Kameron Wright and Dante Rosales. From our traditional Thanksgiving lunch to pop-culture homages like our “Stranger Things” themed meal, we ensure our cycle is constantly broken by discovery and fun. Our menu is a living document, evolving with our students’ palates.

Essay:

To support our “Passport to Flavor” program, Chef John Barker led the initiative to secure an American Culinary Federation (ACF) Property Membership. This milestone empowers the Culinary Team with professional standards and national certification pathways. This technical expertise is vital when executing complex international dishes like our “Road to Kathmandu” goat curry or authentic pho.

Executing diverse global menus requires intentional cultural collaboration. The team works directly with international students to ensure dishes are as authentic as they are delicious. Our residents provide the soul of the recipe, and our professional chefs provide the technical execution. This process is a continuous feedback loop; the team adjusts offerings based on survey data and holiday “monotony breakers,” ranging from St. Patrick’s Day festive takeovers to our SpongeBob Seafood Dinner. To manage this complexity, we utilize centralized recipe management to ensure 100% consistency across every batch. Safety remains our top priority, with digitized protocols and real-time temperature monitoring. By blending high-volume efficiency with small-batch flavor and elevated professional standards, we’ve created a residential menu that is as inclusive as it is adventurous.

Introduction:

We believe a residential meal is a “Broadway show,” and Burton Dining Hall is our stage. Overall management falls to Burton Dining Hall Manager Benue Hostetter, supported by Assistant Manager Will Hounsel and supervisors Anthony Slaughter and Tyrone Branch. Together, they oversee the dish rooms and serving lines to ensure a seamless guest experience. Our goal is to eliminate “line fatigue” by creating an environment where the sizzle of the grill acts as an opening act. We don’t just serve food; our team choreographs a multisensory experience — complete with encores.

Essay:

Presentation is our silent ambassador. At Burton Dining Hall, we use “Visual Storytelling” to connect farm to fork. This theatricality is a daily mandate, not a special occasion. From our recent “Broadway Late-Night Breakfast,” featuring a nonalcoholic champagne fountain, to our signature Thanksgiving spread, which draws faculty, staff, and students together, we use food to “spruce up” the campus experience.

Our team maintains strict “hot foods hot, cold foods cold” protocols, utilizing 22 flexible temperature-controlled wells to ensure peak food quality at every hour of operation. We’ve moved beyond standard cafeteria plating to create “Instagrammable” moments through intentional garnishing and “Vessel Versatility.” This includes everything from rustic mini-skillets for hot entrees to authentic ethnic bowls for our global stations. By utilizing tiered elevations and strategic lighting at our action stations, we ensure that even at peak volume, the integrity of the dish remains uncompromised. By treating our facility as an evolving gallery, we ensure our merchandising is as dependable as it is exciting. We focus on the “sizzle” of the action station and the precision of the display, ensuring that every resident feels they are attending a premiere event. When the campus needs a home, we provide the hearth.

Introduction:

Burton Dining Hall is the heartbeat of our campus community. As one of the largest student employers on campus, providing over 165 labor hours daily, we are a “Leadership Lab” for the next generation. We’re more than a residential food service provider; we are a 3-star Green Certified operation with a focus on social and environmental stewardship. From ethically sourced local beef to vocational training for the community, we create meaningful connections. We aren’t just serving 1,000 meals a day; we are powering the future and the campus in any weather.

Essay:

Our mission is simple: We invest in people and the planet. This year, we moved closer to our fourth GRA star by integrating inventory management with automated tools to drastically reduce overproduction. This data-driven sustainability is matched by our community outreach; our chefs regularly volunteer for local fundraisers and maintain a vital partnership with the area food bank to combat regional food insecurity.

While our team’s resilience was proven during this year’s severe winter storms, when we were our residents’ only operational dining facility, our true pride lies in our role as a mentorship hub. Our management team treats student employment as a vocational bridge, providing soft-skills training and leadership opportunities to 100+ student workers. This commitment to the greater Lynchburg area extends beyond our gates through our ACF membership,

providing staff with national professional development. Whether it's minimizing waste or mentoring a student employee, we prove that a residential dining hall is a catalyst for citizenship. At Lynchburg, we don't just feed the campus; we invest in the well-being of our entire community — one clean, sustainable plate at a time.

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