

## NACUFS (2025)

### Special Diet Program of the Year

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UNCW Dining Special Diet Program

UNC Wilmington

#### Essay:

At UNCW Dining, health and wellness are at the core of our mission. Led by our Registered Dietitian, Joe Bush, and recognized by Allergic Living Magazine, our Health and Wellness Program fosters an inclusive dining experience that meets the diverse needs of our students. In a recent survey, 46% of UNCW students identified mindful eating and nutrition as essential to their mental well-being, reinforcing our commitment to promoting both physical and mental health.

Our program goes beyond accommodating dietary needs- we strive to build a supportive community that allows students to thrive in their academic journey.

Through interactive education, innovative dining solutions, and a strong digital presence, we empower students to develop sustainable, health-conscious eating habits. To provide transparency, we provide QR codes on our sneeze guards with allergen acknowledgments, direct contact information for our RD, and ingredient information on our digital displays. We have increased our menu transparency from 53% to 91% across campus since the Fall 2023 inception of our program.

From the moment students commit to UNCW, we prioritize proactive connections with them and their families. Students who register a special dietary need receive a welcome email before orientation, outlining available resources and inviting them to schedule a meeting upon arrival. During orientation, Joe personally engages with students, gathering insights to ensure their needs are met year-round. Through scheduled check-ins, feedback sessions, and an end of semester survey, communication is ongoing, allowing us to refine our program in real time.

In our dining halls, we bring wellness to life with bi-weekly “Dietitian Is In” events, featuring interactive recipe spotlights and one-on-one engagement. These sessions make nutrition education approachable while introducing students to delicious, health-conscious meals.

Our wellness initiatives extend beyond the dining hall. With over 15,000 followers across three social media platforms, we share engaging health and wellness content, event updates, and interactive opportunities. Additionally, our Nourish the Nest newsletter delivers themed content and recipe spotlights each month, offering students continued inspiration.

With 33% of students indicating a special dietary need or preference, our dedicated allergen-free spaces, and customizable menus allow students to dine with peace of mind. Our True Balance stations at Wagoner Hall and The Shore offer flavorful meals free from the top nine allergens. Our retail concept, Heirloom—located in the student union—offers vegan and made without gluten meals through meal exchange swipes. Additionally, Worry-Free Zone, a unique retail concept within a residential dining space, provides allergen-friendly snacks and desserts, ensuring all students can dine confidently.

Inclusivity and community are priorities in our programming. At Wagsgiving, our largest annual event with over 2,400 attendees, an entire station is dedicated to allergen-free dining. Prior to the event, the menu is communicated to our students living with dietary restrictions.

We continually seek new ways to create a health-conscious, inclusive, and engaging dining experience. Through our program, we’re not just serving meals—we’re cultivating a community that nourishes the body, mind, and spirit.

Log in to [nacufs.awardsplatform.com](https://nacufs.awardsplatform.com) to see complete entry attachments.

PDF


Allergen Guide 2... 2.1 MiB




Food Allergen an... 1.4 MiB

PDF

Joe Bush Sched... 444 KiB



Joe Dill.jpeg 242 KiB



Joe Meet the Tea... 237 KiB



[Joe Speaking at S...](#) 2.2 MiB



[Nutrition Facts...](#) 2.7 MiB



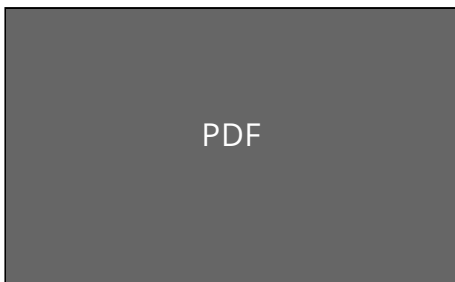
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[Worry Free zone...](#) 424 KiB



[Students with DI...](#) 980 KiB





True Balance Loc... 1.1 MiB



Joe Bush Digital... 866 KiB



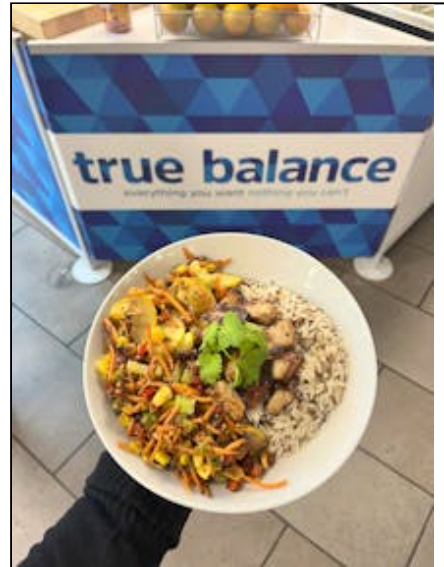
Acai Bowl.jpeg 2.7 MiB



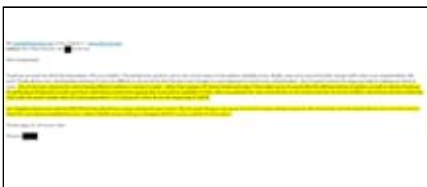
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Joe DII 2.jpeg 351 KiB



True Balance Wa... 2.3 MiB



Joe Feedback Em... 156 KiB



Attachment name

UNCW Dining, RD, Joe Bu...

<https://www.allergicliving...>