

# Shelby Stidham



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## Entry details

Entry Name: Alien Invasion

Institution Name: Liberty University

Entry Completed By (*name and position*): Shelby Stidham, District Marketer

Email Address: [shelby.stidham@sodexo.com](mailto:shelby.stidham@sodexo.com)

Phone Number: +14345927260

Address: 1550 Regents Parkway

City: Lynchburg

State: VA

Zip Code: 24515

Country: United States of America

## Introduction:

Designed to be both imaginative and intentional, our Alien Invasion menu brought the theme to life through bold flavors, vibrant presentation, and thoughtful variety. Each station contributed to an immersive dining experience, blending globally inspired dishes with familiar favorites to appeal to a wide range of student preferences. Our chefs focused on delivering diverse colors, textures, and preparation methods while maintaining quality, safety, and accessibility. Interactive elements and visually striking ingredients enhanced engagement, while allergen-friendly and gluten-free options ensured inclusivity. The result was a cohesive, high-energy menu that supported the event's atmosphere and invited every guest to explore something new.

## Essay:

Our menu was intentionally crafted to complement the Alien Invasion theme while meeting a wide range of student preferences. Globally inspired offerings such as grilled octopus, rotisserie goat, Asian crawfish stir-fry, and jellyfish salad introduced bold and unfamiliar flavors, while approachable options like pulled pork, roasted potatoes, and rice dishes ensured comfort and balance. This thoughtful variety encouraged exploration of flavors while maintaining broad appeal to guests.

Color, texture, and presentation played a central role in the experience. Purple cauliflower, rainbow carrots, and green caramel sauce created vibrant visual contrast, while desserts such as cosmic brownies, galaxy cakes, mousse

spheres, and UFO cupcakes added playful, themed elements like gummy eyeballs. These offerings delivered a mix of temperatures, textures, and flavors that kept the menu dynamic and engaging.

Multiple preparation methods enhanced both quality and guest experience. Stations featured a combination of chef-served items, self-service components like apple dipping, and action-style production with homemade Dippin' Dots prepared using liquid nitrogen.

Inclusivity remained a top priority, with our Allergen-Friendly station offering mango five-spice duck wings with brown rice alongside gluten-free breads and spreads. Throughout service, standard food safety practices were maintained, including temperature monitoring and batch cooking, ensuring both quality and safety.

#### Introduction:

Transforming Reber-Thomas Dining Center into a fully immersive Alien Invasion required thoughtful design, creative execution, and attention to every detail. Our goal was to create an environment where students felt transported into a different world, with each element contributing to a cohesive and engaging experience. From lighting and décor to service style and station design, every aspect of the event was intentionally aligned with the theme. By activating nearly every station and incorporating layered visual and sensory elements, we created a dynamic atmosphere that encouraged exploration and interaction, ensuring the theme was not only seen, but experienced by every guest.

#### Essay:

The Alien Invasion theme was executed through a cohesive transformation of the dining center that engaged guests visually and spatially. Floating UFOs suspended from the high ceilings created an immediate focal point, while purple and green uplighting enhanced the atmosphere throughout the space. Vinyl decals of alien heads, stars, and spacecrafts extended the theme across station glass and service areas, and space-themed videos reinforced the concept on digital screens. A curated playlist of popular songs referencing space and extraterrestrial themes added an additional layer of engagement that resonated with students. Several team members dressed in alien costumes, contributing to the immersive environment.

Food presentation and service style further supported the theme. Nearly every station was activated, each contributing visually through bold colors, creative plating, and themed menu displays aligned with event branding. A variety of service methods were utilized, including chef-served stations, self-service elements like green caramel apple dipping, and action stations such as the liquid nitrogen Dippin' Dots. Station signage and identifiers were customized to match event branding, reinforcing consistency throughout the experience.

The dining center layout encouraged guest exploration, allowing students to move freely between stations and gather in shared spaces, reinforcing a cohesive and immersive themed experience.

#### Introduction:

Building anticipation for Alien Invasion required a strategic, multi-channel marketing approach that captured student attention and generated excitement leading up to the event. Our goal was to create a cohesive campaign that reflected the theme while reaching students through the platforms they engage with most. By combining bold and original branding with high-impact communication channels, we ensured consistent messaging across all touchpoints. We also focused on creating a sense of intrigue and energy, highlighting key attractions that would draw students in. This approach resulted in strong visibility, heightened anticipation, and a shared campus experience that extended beyond the dining center.

#### Essay:

A cohesive campaign supported the Alien Invasion event from initial promotion through execution. Custom branding featuring a black space background with neon green and purple elements was applied consistently across all materials, including flyers, digital kiosks, menu screens, and in-dining signage, creating a unified and recognizable identity. This consistency strengthened the connection between marketing efforts and the in-person experience.

To maximize reach, the event was promoted through multiple high-impact channels. Digital displays across campus, including university and residence hall screens, ensured broad visibility, while social media generated excitement. Convocation announcements, reaching the full residential student body, amplified awareness, and a targeted email and text blast through Liberty University Marketing provided direct communication that drove attendance.

The campaign emphasized key attractions, including the Alien Masked Singer competition, teasing the involvement of campus celebrities as both performers and judges to build intrigue. The reveal of the head football coach during the performance created a memorable surprise moment. A student hip hop dance group, DTREX, performed a flash mob to the Men in Black theme song, adding an exciting and high-energy moment. Vendors were also guided to adapt their offerings, creating alien balloon characters and transforming caricatures into personalized alien portraits for guests.

Introduction:

The success of our Alien Invasion event was measured not only by attendance but through the level of engagement, collaboration, and overall impact on the student experience. Our goal was to create a high-energy end-of-year event that would draw students into the dining center while fostering a sense of community and excitement. By combining immersive design, interactive programming, and strategic promotion, we delivered an experience that resonated with our campus. Strong participation, meaningful student and staff involvement, and a naturally sustainable dining environment all contributed to an event that exceeded expectations and demonstrated the value of innovative residential dining programming.

Essay:

The success of the Alien Invasion event was clearly demonstrated through both attendance and engagement. The event welcomed 2,383 guests, representing a 25% increase over median Thursday counts during the spring semester. Additionally, 133 guest passes were used, nearly five times the typical daily average, indicating strong student interest and increased social participation. Engagement remained high throughout the event, with consistent participation across activity stations and strong crowd involvement during key moments.

Collaboration played a critical role in the event's success. A student contributed alien costumes from his graduate film project, enhancing the immersive environment, while the student hip hop dance group DTREX delivered a flash mob performance that energized the crowd. The Alien Masked Singer competition featured campus leaders, including Liberty University's head football coach, Jamey Chadwell, whose surprise reveal created a memorable and high-energy moment. Our culinary team, bake shop staff, and front-line employees worked together to execute the themed menu and guest experience, with many team members actively participating in costume and additional engagement efforts.

Hosting the event within the dining center supported a sustainable environment through the use of reusable plates and service ware, along with compostable elements at select stations, reducing reliance on disposable materials.

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



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# ALIEP INVASION

Thursday, April 17, 5-8 p.m.<sup>®</sup>

Dear [W/FIRSTNAME%],

EARTHINGS BEWARE! The Silver Thomas Dining Center is under alien attack! But don't let that stop you from joining us Thursday for an out-of-this-world evening as extraterrestrials take over for a night of cosmic chaos, intergalactic fun, and space-age snacks.

Activities:

- **UFO Crash Site:** Take a 360° photo of the wreckage of a downed spacecraft... before the Mars in Space show up!
- **Alien Caricatures:** Have your earthly features morphed into your true alien form.
- **Adopt an Alien Center!** Take home a balloon alien companion from another galaxy.
- **Cosmic Ink, Starborn:** Get a shimmering, space-themed, temporary tattoo to show your allegiance to the alien overlords.
- **ATAG (Alien Tag):** Dodge, chase, and evade captives in an interstellar battle of humans vs. aliens!
- **Alien Masked Singers:** These mysterious extraterrestrial vocalists take the stage to sing their hearts out while our judges attempt to unmask their true identities.

Prepare for an intergalactic experience unlike any other. **JOIN US... OR BE ADDICTED!**

Dining Services

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**

Liberty University | Dining Champion for Christ since 1971

\*Please note: In preparation for this event, the dining center will be closed from 3-8 p.m.

Site Information Released

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2026\_Spring\_Ali... 3.8 MiB



2025\_Spring\_Ali... 4.6 MiB



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Attachment name  
Promotional social med...

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