

Annual Summer Training Days

NC State University

Introduction:

The Annual Dining Training Days at NC State Dining were established to address training gaps and boost staff engagement. Launched in 2023 and expanded in 2024, the program fosters skill development, collaboration, and a sense of pride. Split into two days for supervisors and non-supervisors, it provides tailored content while promoting shared values of safety, wellness, and customer service. Success was judged by the impact on retention, recruitment, and employee satisfaction.

Essay:

The Dining Training Collaborative, comprised of representatives from various operational areas, was formed to design a comprehensive and engaging training experience. Sessions emphasize professional growth, cultural awareness, and well-being. Safety and compliance training, led by Food Safety Specialist Ben Chapman and executive chefs, reinforced best practices.

Cultural connection and sensitivity was also a key theme, with Madison Sinclair from the Office of Global Engagement sharing insights on global food traditions. Supervisors receive FISH! Philosophy training, while non-supervisors gain customer service insights from alumna Simone Saleh Lawson.

Additionally, financial literacy workshops cover budgeting, food costs, and labor management. Panels on HR benefits, transportation, and resources offer comprehensive support.

The program's measurable success included record-breaking Fall Meal Plan sales (over 12,790 plans sold) and increased Spring Meal Plan retention. Enhanced customer satisfaction has reduced operational strain, while financial sustainability has strengthened. Employee feedback highlights the engaging sessions and well-being focus, contributing to the highest retention rates in five years. Full-time employment has risen by 15.7% over two years, aligning staffing with growing meal plan demand. Dining Training Days have become a cornerstone of NC State Dining's culture, driving operational success and building a motivated, skilled workforce.

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The program has also enhanced recruitment efforts by serving as a compelling demonstration of NC State Dining's commitment to its employees. New hires are quickly onboarded through engaging training sessions, which showcase the organization's investment in their success. Over the last two years, full-time employment has increased by 15.7%, aligning with the growing demand for meal plans and dining services. The structure and visibility of the program have positioned NC State Dining as an employer of choice within the university and beyond.

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Efforts to drive satisfaction at underutilized operations resulted in a noticeable shift in customer feedback, moving from negative to overwhelmingly positive sentiments. Additionally, high Spring Meal Plan retention rates reflect sustained satisfaction and loyalty, strengthening financial sustainability and enabling reinvestment in employees and operations.

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Feedback from employees underscores the program's positive impact on job satisfaction. Participants consistently highlight the engaging content, connection to campus partners and focus on their overall well-being. Sessions such as wellness breaks, cultural insights and safety training demonstrate that NC State Dining views employees as whole individuals rather than just team members fulfilling specific roles. This holistic approach has fostered a sense of belonging, pride and motivation among staff, which translates into improved performance and customer service across all dining units.

Essay:

Employee Quotes

"I look forward to attending more training sessions in the future as we all know, 'Knowledge is Power'."

"I really enjoyed this training session and I liked how the managers session was separate from the food techs, and each training session was geared more towards the audience instead of having everyone together."

"Everyone should see this!!! Great stuff."

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