

NACUFS (2025)

Residential Dining Facility of the Year

Samford Dining

Samford University

Introduction:

Marketing at Samford Dining isn't just about promoting food—it's about making dining a part of the student experience. We strive for creating an inclusive, dynamic dining that goes beyond just serving meals.

We have built a freedom-driven, all-access dining hall that is integrated with innovative technology, making The Caf a place for connection and fellowship.

Through in-person outreach, digital promotion, and interactive campaigns, we make dining an engaging part of student life, from themed events to personalized experiences that invite students to be part of the process.

Essay:

We know students don't just want to be told what's for lunch, they want to feel involved. That's why our marketing is built around engagement, surprises, and making dining an experience. We achieve this through in-person outreach, digital promotion, and interactive campaigns. In the past six months, our Instagram following grew by 39.7%. Our approach has shifted from simply telling to showing, giving students opportunities to see themselves in dining, literally and figuratively.

But it's not just about our online presence. We keep dining fresh with themed events like You Ask, We Answer, where we turn student suggestions into station takeovers. Inside The Caf, we use 13 digital menu boards and seven marketing screens in

high-traffic areas to promote events, hours, surveys, and meal plans. Guests can also purchase meal swipe cards at two self-serve kiosks.

During monthly appearances of celebrity chef James Briscione, we capture the moment with high-tech recording and broadcasting, featuring a large projector and four additional viewing screens to ensure every guest has a front-row seat.

Introduction:

At Samford Dining, we are committed to promoting the health and well-being of every student who walks through The Caf. We provide diverse meal options that cater to various dietary needs, from enhanced protein and hydration boosts to plant-powered health foods. Our approach goes beyond just serving food—we focus on offering healthy, inclusive dining choices that support students' physical and mental wellness. Through initiatives like Wise & Well and True Balance, along with our weekly Wellness Wednesday events, we are dedicated to providing students with the resources they need to thrive inside and outside the dining hall.

Essay:

We are committed to providing an easy health path for all our guests in The Caf. Our dining options support enhanced protein and carbohydrate needs, hydration boosts, and plant-powered health foods to keep students energized and nourished throughout the day.

Wise & Well is focused on serving fresh, local, plant-forward meals, tailored for the health-conscious student. The station highlights an array of plant-based options made with locally sourced products whenever possible. From made-to-order vegan bowls and fresh salads, Wise & Well offers something for everyone. It's composed of three parts: deli, salad bar, and vegan, all designed to showcase the bounty of regional farms.

True Balance is dedicated to offering allergy-friendly selections, ensuring students with dietary restrictions feel supported and included. This station underscores our commitment to health, wellness, and allergen-friendly dining.

At Samford, we believe wellness is holistic. In addition to our nutritional offerings, we host weekly Wellness Wednesday events in The Caf, giving students a chance to pause and recharge both physically and mentally. We recognize that mental health is a key factor for college students, and we aim to provide not just food, but resources to support overall well-being.

Introduction:

The Caf offers 16 stations, each designed to let you choose your own path. With a variety of customizable options, students can create meals to suit their tastes, from simple sandwiches to more complex dishes. Our menu follows a 4-week cycle, with new items introduced regularly based on food trends and student suggestions through our "You Ask, We Answer" campaign. Food safety is always a priority, ensuring cleanliness and safe food handling at every station. At The Caf, we give students the freedom to personalize their dining experience and enjoy fresh, safe meals.

Essay:

The Caf offers a dynamic, flexible menu designed to accommodate every student's taste and dietary preferences. With 16 stations, 13 of which allow customization, students can enjoy a variety of options based on personal preferences. Inspired by our "You Ask, We Answer" campaign, we regularly introduce new items that reflect current trends and feedback from the student body. From the classic Deli station to more sophisticated offerings, like our scallops & shrimp Fra-Diavolo, The Caf caters to all cravings.

Our commitment to food safety and cleanliness is a top priority. All stations are designed to uphold high hygiene standards, ensuring each meal is prepared with care and served safely. We also collaborate with our campus dietitian to meet dietary needs. Twice a week, we host popup events, ranging from limited time offered entrees to sweet themed desserts. These events spotlight unique ingredients and showcase our talented cooks. One popular takeover featured a student-submitted burger, "The Most Egg-cellent Burger," which highlights our dedication to incorporating student creativity into our menu.

At the Caf, dining is an experience tailored to each individual. Our menu blurs the lines between fast casual and fine dining, providing students with an elevated dining experience.

Introduction:

We take great pride in how we merchandise and promote our Caf dining experience to ensure it's both inviting and efficient for our students and guests. Each day, we display beautifully plated meals at every station in The Caf, refreshing these displays between meal periods to keep things dynamic. To further enhance the experience, we post daily on Instagram showcasing one of our station displays, giving students a sneak peek of what to look forward to. Our stations are designed with action cooking areas, ensuring that students experience the vibrancy of freshly prepared meals made to order.

Essay:

Food displays are a key part of our merchandising and promotion strategy. Each day, we showcase beautifully plated meals at every station, refreshing them to maintain a fresh look.

Our newly renovated Caf was designed for efficient guest flow. Stations like Bulldog Crafted, Global Sauté, and Global Oven feature double lines, helping students move quickly during peak hours. Each station also includes an action cooking area, where meals are freshly prepared in front of guests, adding a fun, interactive element. 13 of our 16 stations offer made-to-order meals for customization, while others provide quick grab-and-go options.

Beyond the layout, our open-access dining offers 24/7 self-serve bars, ensuring students always have options. A meal plan is more than just dining access, it's a membership with unlimited entry, allowing guests to enjoy meals, snacks, or a comfortable space to study and unwind.

We keep students engaged by regularly updating social media with images of station displays, ensuring they stay informed and excited about daily menu offerings. Our goal is to provide an experience that is efficient, visually appealing, and enjoyable, making dining with us more than just a meal—it's a part of campus life.

Introduction:

At Samford Dining, innovation is at the heart of everything we do. From collaborating with celebrity chefs like Chef James Briscione to offering interactive cooking demos, we push culinary boundaries to create engaging experiences for our students and Caf guests. Our dining experience is constantly evolving, incorporating student feedback, industry trends, and cultural collaborations with our campus partners. Through these efforts, we remain a leader in culinary innovation. Whether through creative station takeovers or cutting-edge technology, we strive to ensure that Samford Dining offers exciting, innovative, and impactful dining experiences for our community.

Essay:

We're committed to innovation in every aspect of The Caf, from the food we serve to the technology we use to enhance the student experience. One example is our collaboration with celebrity chef James Briscione, whose cooking demonstrations bring cutting-edge culinary techniques to campus, offering students the chance to learn from a renowned expert.

In addition to these experiences, we work hard to keep things exciting by partnering with our campus Global Education department, working to educate students on diverse cuisines, and creative station takeovers, which provide respectful, inclusive options throughout the year.

The design of our open-concept space allows guests to swipe at each station separately, ensuring that students with limited meal plans can enjoy a full meal, including dessert. This level of flexibility, paired with our service hours from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. and the availability of three fully operational stations during meal intervals, fosters an accessible and efficient dining experience. We also collaborate with Samford Cares to support the Swipe Out Hunger initiative and donate to Grace Klein, which recently collected 103 pounds of food waste from students' plates as part of a campaign to raise awareness about food waste.

Log in to nacufs.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.



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Marketing Video... 2.0 MiB



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