

Danielle Markus



GpWxdwwb

Entry details

Entry Name:	Allergen Safety Development Program
Institution Name:	Manhattan University
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Introduction:

The Allergen Safety Development Program at Manhattan University was launched alongside the opening of Delicious Without, a dedicated allergen-friendly dining station designed to serve students with the highest level of care and confidence. Recognizing the critical responsibility of preparing food free from the top allergens, Manhattan University Services created a structured, certification-based development pathway for team members. Led by General Manager Kevin Henriquez and Executive Chef Michael Aboshanab, the program equips culinary staff with advanced credentials and hands-on operational standards to ensure safety, accuracy, and hospitality excellence in every meal served.

Essay:

The Allergen Safety Development Program was created in conjunction with the launch of Delicious Without, Manhattan University Dining's dedicated allergen-friendly station in Locke's Loft. Recognizing the need for specialized expertise, General Manager Kevin Henriquez and Executive Chef Michael Aboshanab designed a structured pathway centered on four advanced certifications: the ServSafe Allergens Certificate of Completion from the National Restaurant Association, the 2025 Food Allergies and Celiac Disease Training for Chefs from CBDM, the 2025 FARECheck Food Allergy Basics program, and additional Food Allergies and Celiac Disease Training from FARECheck.

The program was communicated to union employees prior to position bidding, ensuring transparency and opportunity for advancement. Participation was open to all eligible union staff, with placement determined by seniority. Chef Kency Rivera, a Specialty Cook with more than sixteen years of service, stepped into the role and completed all certifications.

Success of our program is measured through certification completion, strict adherence to dedicated equipment and preparation areas within the Delicious Without station, and consistent positive feedback from the Jasper community. NACUFS professional development principles inform the program's commitment to continuous learning, industry standards, and student-centered hospitality.

Introduction:

The Allergen Safety Development Program was intentionally designed not only to elevate food safety standards, but to create meaningful career growth opportunities for frontline culinary employees. By introducing advanced certifications, a specialized role, and clear professional recognition, the program reinforced Manhattan University Dining Services' commitment to investing in its people. In a challenging labor market, this focus on development strengthened employee engagement, pride, and stability. While overall retention rates remained consistent year-over-year, the program successfully preserved experienced talent, reinforced institutional knowledge, and demonstrated that long-term team members have pathways for growth within Manhattan University Dining.

Essay:

The Allergen Safety Development Program was strategically utilized as a retention tool by creating a specialized, elevated role within the culinary team. Rather than outsourcing allergen expertise or limiting responsibility to management, Manhattan University Dining Services invested directly in frontline staff, signaling that professional growth is accessible at every level.

By communicating the opportunity prior to union bidding, the program allowed eligible employees to pursue a new, skill-enhancing pathway. Chef Kency Rivera, a sixteen-year team member, stepped into the Specialty Allergen-Friendly Cook position, gaining four advanced certifications and expanding his professional credentials. This investment reinforced his value within the organization while strengthening his long-term career trajectory. Although overall employee retention rates remained steady compared to the previous year, maintaining stability in today's competitive hospitality labor market reflects meaningful impact. The program contributed to sustained engagement by recognizing senior team members, preserving institutional knowledge, and fostering a sense of pride and ownership in a highly visible dining concept. By aligning professional advancement with operational innovation, the Allergen Safety Development Program supports retention not simply through tenure, but through purpose, recognition, and continuous growth opportunities within Manhattan University Dining.

Introduction:

The Allergen Safety Development Program enhanced recruitment efforts by reinforcing Manhattan University Dining's reputation as an employer that prioritizes professional growth and specialized training. By formally introducing the program prior to union bidding, leadership demonstrated transparency, advancement opportunity, and investment in frontline employees. While overall vacancy levels remained consistent during the reporting period, the program strengthened internal recruitment by creating an elevated, credential-based culinary role. This initiative positioned Manhattan University Dining Services as a workplace where skill development, certification, and career progression are actively supported.

Essay:

The Allergen Safety Development Program played an important role in internal recruitment by establishing a clearly defined, specialized culinary position supported by nationally recognized certifications. Prior to union bidding, the program was formally communicated to all eligible employees, ensuring awareness of the opportunity and outlining the professional credentials required. This transparency highlighted Manhattan University Dining Services' commitment to growth, safety, and advancement.

By embedding four advanced certifications into the role, the program elevated expectations and positioned Manhattan University Dining as an employer that invests in meaningful, industry-recognized training. The Specialty Allergen-Friendly Cook role became more than a station assignment — it represented professional distinction and subject-matter expertise.

While the number of unfilled openings remained consistent throughout the reporting period, maintaining stable staffing levels within a competitive hospitality labor market reflects the strength of the organization's employment value proposition. The program reinforced that long-term career paths exist within the department and that new and current employees alike can pursue specialized training opportunities.

Through intentional communication, credential-based advancement, and visible leadership support, the Allergen Safety Development Program contributes to a recruitment environment rooted in professionalism, opportunity, and operational excellence.

Introduction:

The Allergen Safety Development Program has had a meaningful and immediate impact on employee satisfaction by elevating purpose, pride, and professional recognition within the culinary team. By investing in advanced certifications and creating a specialized role, Manhattan University Dining empowered frontline staff to expand their expertise and take ownership of a highly visible dining concept. Early feedback demonstrates strong engagement and enthusiasm from participating employees. Although the program is new, satisfaction indicators exceed initial expectations, and leadership anticipates long-term positive influence on morale, professional fulfillment, and overall tenure within the department.

Essay:

Employee satisfaction has been significantly influenced by the creation of the Specialty Allergen-Friendly Cook position and the structured certification pathway that supports it. Chef Kency Rivera, a sixteen-year member of the Manhattan University Dining team, embodies the program's impact. Long known for his warm personality and pride in his craft, Chef Kency now brings an added layer of professional confidence to his role.

After completing four advanced allergen safety certifications, he describes his work at the Delicious Without station as even more "rewarding," knowing he can safely and skillfully serve guests with dietary restrictions. The opportunity to gain nationally recognized credentials reinforced his sense of value within the organization and deepened his connection to the students he serves. His signature declaration that he makes "the best food in town" now reflects not only pride in flavor, but pride in safety and care.

As a newly implemented program, there is not yet sufficient data to correlate changes in average tenure directly to the initiative. However, early satisfaction indicators and employee feedback suggest strong potential for increased long-term retention as team members experience enhanced professional growth and purpose-driven work.

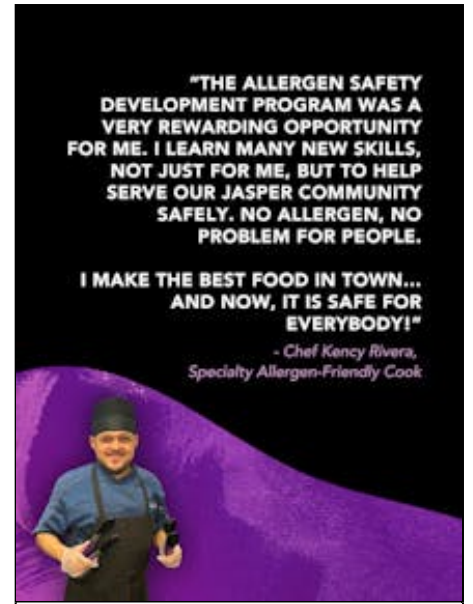
Log in to nacufs.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.



Delicious-Witho... 2.6 MiB



Chef-Kency.jpg 4.5 MiB



Chef-Kency-Qu... 4.8 MiB



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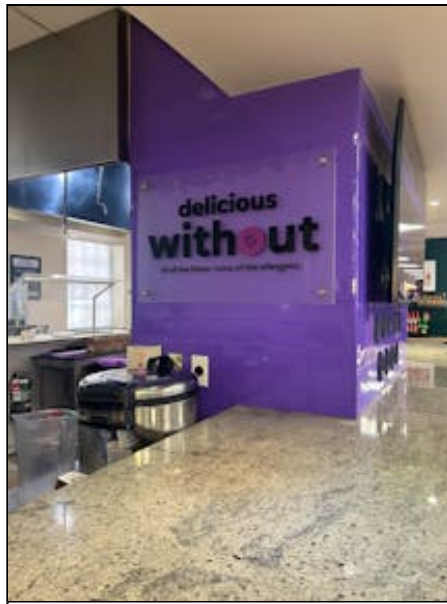
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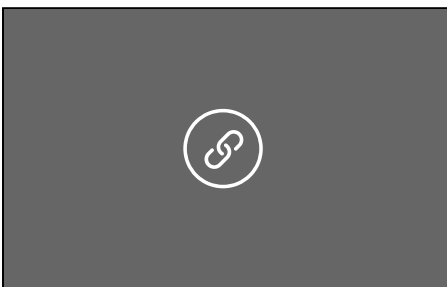
Delicious-Witho... 2.5 MiB



Delicious-Witho... 1.3 MiB



Delicious-Witho... 2.0 MiB



Attachment name

<https://youtube.com/sh...>