



THE IVY CLUB

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President

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Dear Fellow Member of Ivy,

I'm writing to make you aware of a surprise announcement made by the University of a policy that will force Eating Club members to purchase a University meal contract next Fall in addition to their full club board plan. The extra cost to students is expected to be in excess of \$1000 for meals our members did not ask for and do not want.

Not only is this proposal unfair and unreasonable, but the Graduate and Undergraduate Inter Club Councils have made very clear to the University in recent years that they strongly oppose such a plan. There is no support for it on campus, and no rationale has been offered by the University except that it needs additional revenue.

Some Background

To all current upperclassmen, the University offers two free meals per week in the dining halls. Very few club members take advantage of these free meals. For no discernible reason, the University floated the idea of charging club members for these meals several years ago, but it was withdrawn due to strong undergraduate and alumni opposition. No support was expressed for the proposal from the University's Board of Trustees.

The University then conducted a dining pilot study with the cooperation of the clubs. The results confirmed that, other than late meals offered at the Frist student center, there was virtually no interest from club members to eat in the dining halls.

Undeterred, the University hired a consultant, The Huron Group - to assess dining and housing at Princeton. Because the study confirmed significant dissatisfaction and social isolation among upperclassmen who choose not to join clubs (though there is always room for them in one or more of the non-selective clubs) a key Huron recommendation was that upperclassmen should be required to have a dining contract, either at a club, a food Co-op, or the University. Unfortunately, University administrators misrepresented Huron's findings by saying the consultant suggested all juniors and seniors -- including club members -- should have a University meal contract. When Huron made clear at a meeting of Trustees with the GICC that they had not recommended double meal contracts, the Trustees and club representatives believed, and were told, that no further consideration was being given to the subject—until the September 29th announcement.

Impact

If this proposal goes forward, it will weaken the club system by making it more difficult for certain students to afford two meal contracts. Although the University claims that all members on Financial Aid

will have the additional cost covered by an increased grant, this is a waste of University resources since so few students want the University meals. While a very small group of families can easily afford the additional cost, many who fail to qualify for Financial Aid will struggle. **There is in any event no justification for a separate University contract, since all students can purchase individual meals at any time.** Thus, a much smaller allowance could be provided to aid recipients to cover the expense of occasional University meals.

Currently, although the vast majority of upperclassmen want to join clubs, several non-selective clubs are not at capacity. All clubs are committed to ensuring that the eleven existing clubs can continue to thrive and to provide the smaller communities Princeton students need more than ever as the student body grows. We are deeply concerned that this proposal will weaken some clubs, and the system as a whole, leading us down the road toward the Harvard system in which a handful of clubs cater to a small, privileged fraction of the student body. We believe this would be a disastrous mistake for Princeton. Non-aid club members should not be charged for meals they don't need or want.

Next steps

The GICC is assessing next steps in the coming weeks and months with the intention of having all clubs act in unison to demand the University reverse this misguided initiative and avoid the confusion it will cause among students and their parents, before it goes live next year. If this plan goes into effect, the Princeton experience we loved will never be the same.

How can you help?

A general petition opposing the proposal is being prepared which you will be receiving for your signature. In advance, as an Ivy member, your individual voice opposing the proposal, highlighting the unwelcome, inequitable and costly meal plan for club members, will go far. So I ask you to write a note of opposition ASAP and send it jointly to the VP for Campus Life, Rochelle Calhoun (Rochelle.calhoun@princeton.edu), VP for University Services, Chad Klaus (klaus@princeton.edu) and to your specific rep in Advancement or, if you don't have one, to Kevin Heaney, VP for Advancement (kjheaney@princeton.edu)

The unintended consequences of this mandate will cause untold and possibly existential damage to Princeton's enormously successful and popular eating club system. Please take action, send an email asap and sign the petition when it arrives in your inbox.

Best wishes,

