



A Fresh Start

A fire in a key campus building leads to the rise of a new and improved foodservice operation, additional services and better operating costs.

By Michael Sherer || Photos by David Mance, Heritage University



In July 2012, a fire destroyed Petrie Hall, a building on the campus of Heritage University, a 1,250-student commuter college in Toppenish, Wash. Petrie had housed computer labs, classrooms, the campus bookstore and the university's cafeteria. Soon after the fire, the administration began the process of replacing the single building with three new ones: one where Petrie once stood for classrooms, computer labs and an art studio; another in the center of campus to house a new cafeteria, dining room and bookstore; and a third dedicated to information technology.

The school brought in Tim Stafford, FCSI, Principal, Stafford Design Group, Minden, Nev., to design the new foodservice facility portion of the rebuild. During the planning process, Stafford encouraged the university to hire a management advisory services (MAS) consultant to help with operational planning and oversee design development. He recommended Barbara Pyper, FCSI, Principal, An Apple a Day, LLC, Seattle.

"Tim brought me in to evaluate the operation that was currently in place, develop recommendations to strengthen it and guide the developing design process," Pyper says. "The client's goals for the foodservice were fairly simple. They wanted a welcoming space for students, faculty, staff and guests; a foodservice program that met or exceeded their expectations; and an operating plan to support the new foodservice program."

After the fire, the university installed a mobile kitchen on campus, and for two years it served a limited menu anchored primarily by fried foods. Creating a program that would exceed the mobile-kitchen fare didn't seem difficult. Pyper quickly discovered, though, that the first challenge lay in defining what kind of foodservice program customers wanted.

She conducted a campus-wide survey of students, faculty and staff via email and learned from the 269 responses that customers wanted more salads and freshly prepared foods as well as access to catering services, among other things.

As part of her assessment, Pyper also did a financial analysis of the foodservice department and discovered that the school had no contract with a prime vendor. Most purchases were made in cash from either Costco or Cash & Carry; other purchases were made from a local distributor. Because the school hadn't negotiated a contract, the local distributor invoiced street prices for anything the school purchased.

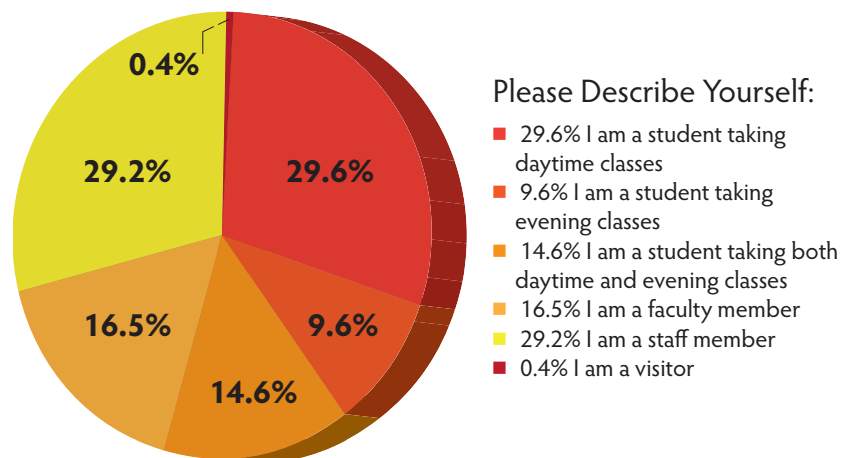
"It became clear pretty quickly that my role and scope of work would have to expand," Pyper says. "They needed a purchasing RFP, help negotiating a prime-vendor contract, development of operational procedures, menu and recipe development, product specifications and much more."

Recognizing she wasn't qualified to oversee a project of that magnitude, the school's acting foodservice director resigned early in the process, adding another project to Pyper's list—guiding the selection process for a new foodservice director.

▲ Open for breakfast, lunch and early dinner, the new cafe at Heritage University features a scramble-style servery with a salad and sandwich station and large grab-and-go section (right). The updated coffee concept is flourishing, pouring a popular local roaster's coffee (middle left and page 40).

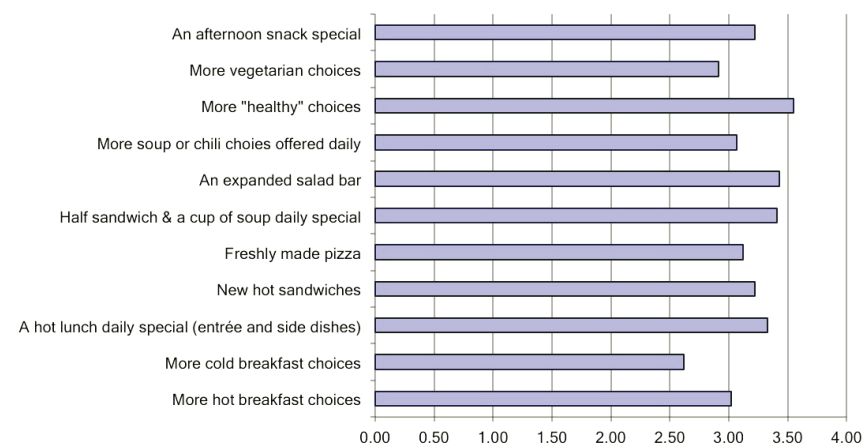


Survey Participants



New Space Offering

With our new building and new cafe space, we plan to enhance our service. What would you like us to offer?



Rate on a scale of 1 to 4:

1 = Not necessary • 2 = Neutral • 3 = This would be nice • 4 = This would be great

"The school ended up hiring Tim Newbury, an Executive Chef trained at South Seattle Community College's culinary school," Pyper says. "He's a rock star, and he came on board in time to take part in vendor negotiations and help me develop the menu, recipes, pricing structure and operational procedures for the new facility."

At the same time, Pyper also collaborated with Stafford on the facility design and equipment selection. "Tim had a limited footprint to work in, but as we learned what customers wanted, the design began to fall into place. We moved much of the equipment from the mobile unit, including a range, an oven, a reach-in refrigerator and a soda machine, but didn't move the fried-food equipment. We didn't use the fried-food hot cases, either, and we bought new fryers that would fit in the new location."

Besides having limited space in which to deliver the foodservices the client expected, other challenges arose. Because the university operates an early learning and daycare center that receives funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, all of the food produced in the new facility had to meet the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program requirements. (CACFP nutrition guidelines address meal patterns and the size and number of servings of meat/meat alternatives, fruits and vegetables.)

Another challenge was balancing menu selections with menu pricing. About 90% of the student body receives financial aid, and because the university is a day campus, there's no room-and-board system. Students, faculty, staff and guests pay cash or use credit cards for food. "We knew we couldn't put \$10 entrées on the menu," Pyper says, "and food costs had to be in line with menu prices we could set."

The final foodservice design features a scramble-system servery with a large salad bar and made-to-order deli-

sandwich station, large grab-and-go section, freshly made pizza station, a large grill and an expanded espresso station. The facility is open for breakfast, lunch and early dinner and offers one hot entrée daily.

Pyper also developed the facility-opening plan, including employee training manuals and initial marketing materials. "The project presented a challenge, but starting with a clean slate gave us some neat opportunities." The baristas in the campus's old espresso stand, for example, had very little training. That gave Pyper and her team the chance to start over on a coffee concept, bringing in a popular local roaster's coffee and fresh baked goods from a nearby bakery. By training the staff anew, the coffee concept is booming.

Despite the limited space, the layout is efficient enough to allow in-house catering for staff meetings and conferences, which had been on the client's wish list. Stafford's design includes a small finishing space off of the storeroom that leads to the meeting room as well as adequate storage for catering supplies.

Sales are up dramatically since opening in August 2014, far exceeding client expectations. "All the client knew was that they wanted something better, but they didn't know how to get there," Pyper says. "The fun part was educating them about what was possible." 🌍

At A Glance

- **Facility:** The Eagle's Café, Heritage University, Toppenish, Wash.
- **Project:** College Foodservice Facility
- **Scope of Work:** Operational Development, Menu Development, Vendor Contract Negotiations/RFP Writing, Hiring and Training Planning and Manuals, Operations Planning and Manuals, Accounting Processes, Design Consultation, Opening Logistics
- **MAS Consultants:** Barbara J. Pyper, MS, RD, FCSI, FAND, Principal; Amy Frasier, MS, RD, CD, Consultant; An Apple a Day, LLC, Seattle
- **Design Consultant:** Tim Stafford, FCSI, Principal, Stafford Design Group, Minden, Nev.