

UNLV Students Gag on High Food Prices

BY SHARON GERRIE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

So, you're tooling through the Donald C. Moyer Student Union and you're hungry.

No problem. There is a nifty little food court inside the union. You can get deli-type sandwiches, grilled food, a salad bar, Dunkin' Donuts... what else is there?

You look around at the other diners and what they are eating. Portions seem reasonable and the food looks tasty. So, you decide on the perfect meal: cheeseburger, french fries and a medium soda.

The checkout counter is where the shock comes. Your burger, fries and soda come to a whopping \$3.59 plus tax. Yesterday you had the perfect meal at Dairy Queen, across the street from MSU. The same meal cost \$2.34 plus tax and you got a 10 percent student discount, bringing the total to \$2.10 plus tax. The day before that In & Out Burger charged \$2.79 with the discount, plus tax. Burger King was \$3.10, less a 10 percent discount, plus tax.

I mean, what gives?

Your cheeseburger, fries and medium drink are any where from \$.42 to \$1.25 cheaper off campus. And when you figure in the 10 to 20 percent student discount offered by many of the off campus eateries, MSU prices become that much higher.

What is the deal? You thought campus sponsored outlets were supposed to be cheaper than the commercial world across the street.

Obviously you were wrong.

Here's a brief overview of how the food courts on campus are run.

The food services department of UNLV is leased to an organization called ARA. This entity manages all the food courts on campus with the exception of residence hall dining. ARA is responsible for determining the menus and creating the prices.

But, according to Food Services Director Scott Wright, ARA does not act independently. "Any menu or price change first goes through the Student Union Board," Wright said. "In addition to that, we have pricing constraint put on us by some of the suppliers. For example, what we charge for a Burger King Whopper on campus is consistent with what is charged at Burger King commercial outlets. We can't do more or less than they do."

How does he explain the price of a Burger King Whopper that is \$1.29 on campus and \$.99 down the street (\$.89 with the 10% discount)?

"The campus Burger King is considered an Expressway store as opposed to a free-standing restaurant like the one down the street," Wright said. "We compare our prices with Expressways like the one in the Belz Outlet Mall and the airport. We are in line price wise with these stores."

Sound like one of those famous loopholes leaving you holding the tab? You bet it does.

And the price hike isn't just for the burger fries and drink. At 7-Eleven, a convenience store where one would expect to pay higher prices, we found the price of drink items actually lower than union prices. While they sell a 16 oz. bottle of Lipton Ice Tea for \$.99, it is \$1.35 in the union. Same deal with a 16 oz. bottle of Pepsi Cola, \$.79 versus the \$.85 in the union; a pint of milk, \$.89, in the union, \$.95.

How does the Student Union

Board swallow the higher food prices for students?

Not well, according to Student Union Chair ShaRonda Ramos. "On the bright side, prices haven't increased from last year to this year, but we are aware of how high they are in comparison to the commercial venues surrounding the campus," Ramos said, "and it isn't entirely accurate to say we have final call on food prices. All we do is make suggestions to ARA and stay on top of them. They don't have to follow our suggestions."

Is the board happy with this arrangement? "Yes and no," Ramos said. "Yes we are happy with the way ARA does things. The people are friendly, they're efficient and seem to be doing a good job. Their management seems personable and responsive to the board. And no, we don't like seeing students paying more for their good than is necessary."

Ramos said they hope to see less expensive services in the future provided by ARA.

So what do students think of the MSU food arrangement? An unofficial survey conducted at



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LACY

Student Chad Harrigan grimaces as he forks over a dollar and change for a small bottle of water.

lunch time last Thursday found students echoing the board.

Of the 20 people polled, all thought the prices were too high and, while the food was good, they would like to see more low fat and less fried selections.

If students have concerns about the food services or would like to find out more about what the Student Union Board does they have two options.

Contact one of the four student representatives: Robert

Williams, Nichole Davis, Aaron Rosenthal or ShaRonda Ramos at ext. 3221 or stop in the MSU student organization room, 130, on the first floor of the union next to the elevator.

Bon Appetit!

QUIKSILVER FACTORY OUTLETS

Come to QFO and
see why our
customers travel from
all over the world to
buy the hottest clothing at
prices so low we can't advertise them.

15% OFF

to UNLV Students
at any Quiksilver location



Call for Easy Directions • 792-5800 or 258-4991

Maryland Parkway & Flamingo Rd.
4047 South Maryland Pkwy.

St. George, Utah
805 Bluff Street South
801-674-2855

Meadows Lane & Decatur Blvd.
4530 Meadows Lane

