

REPORT OF THE

AD HOC DINING SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PART 1

May 11, 1970

INTRODUCTION

In December, 1969, the Housing and Dining Services staff consulted the Dean For Student Affairs about making a comparative evaluation of M.I.T.'s Dining Services Management, and about how to decide whether to renew Stouffers' Management contract with M.I.T. or retain another management service.

Dean Nyhart suggested that a representative student-faculty-administration group conduct the evaluation and make recommendations to guide decisions. On agreement from the administrative staff, he established an Ad Hoc Dining Service Advisory Committee (see Appendix A for committee membership). The seven undergraduate student members (six from the West Campus Houses and one from East Campus) were appointed through the nominations committee of the General Assembly with the concurrence of Dormitory Council. The graduate student member was appointed by the Graduate Student Council and the Ashdown House Executive Committee.

The Committee initially decided that the required commons plan must also be included in any evaluation, and with Dean Nyhart's agreement redefined its goals as follows:

1. Examine the alternative proposals made by several food service vendors; recommend to M.I.T. that company which the committee feels can provide the best food service management.
2. Examine the economic and social implications of various plans for organization of the dining service, focusing primarily on the question of compulsory versus voluntary commons.
3. Study the future role of food and food service facilities at the Institute.

While the committee was aware of long term reviews which might in the future overlap its conclusions, the time constraints required its

recommendations to be made before the end of the current academic year. Therefore it recognized that any decisions based on its recommendations might at some future date be modified, but felt that any future studies might well build on the work it will have completed.

The committee's conclusions and recommendations about vendor evaluation are included in the accompanying report written by the student members.

This section of the report is being released while commons is still being discussed in order to honor the contract deadline with Stouffers', in consideration of the people working in the dining services, and to allow adequate advance planning for the fall semester. The committee understands that a change in the commons program can be implemented next fall if so decided by the end of spring term.

As soon as conclusions are reached regarding commons they also will be released. Any person in the community interested in discussing these matters may contact committee members directly or through Mr. Kenneth C. Browning, Assistant Director of Housing and Dining Services, Room E18-307, Extension 5149.

The committee wishes to express special appreciation to Mr. Browning and Salvatore Lauricella for the assistance and support they have lent in the study thus far.

BACKGROUND - PRESENT OPERATION

For the past 13 years M.I.T. has retained the services of the Management Food Systems Division of Stouffers' to operate the M.I.T. Dining Service.

Under this arrangement M.I.T. retains responsibility for the receipts and expenses and net profit or loss to the Dining Service. Dining Service workers are M.I.T. employees and all policies pertaining to fees and operations are the Institute's. In particular M.I.T. had made the decision to build a dining hall in each new undergraduate House, and to operate a contract meal plan. For a management fee the contractor provides most supervisory personnel, food production techniques, and advises the Institute on its dining operations.

Early in its deliberations the committee decided that since food management companies in the long run could provide better qualified personnel and the most up-to-date knowledge about food preparation, M.I.T. should not return to operating its own dining services and should continue to have a food contractor.

VENDOR SELECTION

This report summarized the observations and conclusions of the student members of AHDSAC on the task of vendor selection. The committee is just now beginning detailed consideration of the Commons issue--which will be the subject of a future report.

A three-phase approach to vendor selection was adopted. The companies considered were Marriott, Saga, Seilers' and Stouffers'. The committee first educated itself about the scope and operational problems of the M.I.T. dining service, through a series of meetings and tours of several of the M.I.T. dining facilities. In the process, the committee gradually developed a set of specific criteria against which each vendor was later measured. The second phase consisted of visits to dining services on other campuses, operated by companies other than Stouffers'. Visits were made to

the Bentley College in Waltham (dining service operated by Seilers'), Harkness Commons at Harvard Law School (Marriott), Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut (Saga), Yale and the Harvard undergraduate houses (both operated by their respective administrations). Each visit consisted of watching the food preparation, observing the management and quality control procedures in effect, eating a meal and informally interviewing several students who ate regularly at the facility.

In the third phase, each vendor was given the opportunity to make a sixty minute formal presentation to the committee, followed by a thirty minute question period. The vendors were previously provided with an outline guide (Appendix B) on which to base their presentations. Final presentations were made by Saga, Marriott, and Stouffers'. Seilers' decided to withdraw from the competition due to time constraints and other commitments. The committee had been disappointed with the Bentley College operation.

The following paragraphs are a point by point comparison of the three final bidders. The three major points of comparison were food, student influence, and managerial ability.

The first aspect considered was the food. Variety in menus and in daily selection were considered essential for students eating most of their meals in the same dining hall. Saga had a long menu cycle (nearly twelve weeks). However, many items repeated themselves. Saga offered three entrees at each meal; often the third choice was inadequate (e.g. waffles for dinner). They offered a wide selection of desserts, but the quality was below our standards. Fruit was offered once or twice a week, not on a regular basis. Marriott, in contrast to Saga, operated on a four week menu cycle. The daily selection was comparable to the present service at M.I.T., a choice of three main courses. Marriott also offered a comparable selection

of desserts, but again the quality was below our standards. Stouffers' did not use a menu cycle. The Stouffers' Manager at M.I.T. said that they (Stouffers') have not found a cycle that worked. Stouffers' offered two or three main courses at each meal. Stouffers' offered the largest daily dessert selection.

Besides variety of food, the quality of food was considered. The committee examined methods of quality and consistency controls used by various vendors. All three vendors used recipes. Stouffers' had the greatest number of recipes, and these were more detailed than Saga's and Marriott's, as they specified techniques as well as ingredients. The committee felt that the detail of a recipe contributed significantly to quality and consistency. Several students at Trinity (managed by Saga) said that quality deteriorated towards the end of each weekly cycle; also the use of the recipe file was up to the discretion of the cook--a possible source on inconsistency. Marriott did not appear to emphasize constant use of recipe cards. Stouffer's emphasized the importance of using the recipes and required employees to follow them. Our on site inspection of Stouffers' facilities verified their use. Stouffers' demonstrated the most organized approach to ordering and quality checking raw materials.

Strong student influence was the second quality. Students should be permitted menu review on a regular basis. Menus should be posted in advance. The food manager should be generally responsive to student complaints. From both the visit to Trinity College and the formal presentation, the committee felt that Saga was unresponsive to student input. Both the manager at Trinity and a manager from Boston College (Saga) stated that they did not like to post menus in advance; preposting menus would constrain the manager's freedom to change an item because "students would be on his

(manager's) back". Menus for all accounts were prepared by Saga's home office in California. Changing an item required considerable red tape. The committee felt that a time consuming change procedure would limit student ability to alter menus. Marriott, like Saga, did not seem as responsive to student inputs. Menus were prepared in Washington, D.C. Since many items had to be purchased from Marriott's commissary in Washington, it seemed to the committee that the manager was limited in his ability to change items readily. Although in their presentation Marriott said they welcomed student input, the managers at Harkness Commons reacted very unfavorably to the suggestion of student menu review. As with Saga, menus were not preposted. Stouffers', in contrast to the other bidders, prepared their menus on-campus and did not use a cycle. Menus were posted weeks in advance. The committee felt that this on site menu preparation afforded the students the most influence. Presently students in each house review the menus with the head dietician who prepared them.

A third factor examined by the committee was the managers' background and training. The personnel selected for managerial positions would indicate that Saga and Marriott stressed structured management. Saga preferred men with liberal arts degrees. Those selected were sent to a three week training program. Marriott preferred men with hotel and restaurant experience or training. Stouffers' emphasized quality food production and preferred women with degrees in Home Economics or Nutrition.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION - VENDOR

From our visits to Harvard and Yale, we have learned that the issue of Commons is more than food quality and responsiveness to students. However, we feel that decreasing our present service standards would only

be a step backward. Even though a change of vendor might have a beneficial psychological effect in the short run, a change now would hinder the efforts to solve the real problems of Dining Service at M.I.T.

Therefore, we the members of the AHDSAC unanimously recommend that the contract with Stouffers' for operating the M.I.T. Dining Service be extended. We feel that Stouffers consistently offers food of comparable or better quality than the other vendors while allowing maximum student input, and that the Stouffers' approach to food production is superior.

APPENDIX A

AD HOC DINING SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- A Laurence H. Bishoff
Assistant to Vice President, Operations
- S Deborah Bovarnick '72
McCormick Hall
- A Kenneth C. Browning
Assistant Director of Housing and Dining Services
- F Roy Feldman
Chairman, Committee on Student Environment
- S Gary Felser '71
Student Member, CSE
Burton House
- S Mark Fishman '71
East Campus
- S John Head '70
Chairman, Dormitory Council (1969-1970)
Burton House
- S Paul Johnston '70
President, Burton House (1969-1970)
- A Salvatore Lauricella
Manager, Student Center Dining Service
- A Howard F. Miller
Director of Housing and Dining Services
- A Dean J. Daniel Nyhart
Dean for Student Affairs
- S Oscar Orringer G
Ashdown House
- S Paul Palmer '71
Baker House
- A Dean R. A. Sorenson
Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
- F Nafi Toksoz
Housemaster, Baker House
- S Nancy Wheatley '71
Student Center Committee
McCormick Hall

APPENDIX B

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR PRESENTATION

I. Company

- A. Brief history of the company.
- B. Number of college and university accounts and a rough geographical description of where they are.
- C. Growth in the college area in the last few years.
- D. Growth in the youth and institutional markets.
- E. Commitment to the college market for the future--projected growth in this area.
- F. Relationship of college feeding to the rest of your company.
- G. Support services offered to college and university account.

II. Management Capability

- A. What organization chart do you propose for staffing the M.I.T. dining service?
- B. What kind of person would fill each of these management slots --background, education, experience. etc.?
- C. How do you train your managers and how are we assured of getting good people?
- D. How do you motivate your managers to do a good job for us? What advancement, incentives, etc. to they see?
- E. How long can we expect the senior people to stay at M.I.T.?

III. How do you ensure consistently good quality food and consumer satisfaction?

- A. What are your specific procedures relating to food production and quality control? If relevant, please comment on and supply samples of specifications, recipes, etc.
- B. How and where are your menus prepared?
 1. How do they take into account M.I.T. students' tastes and individual Houses' preferences?
 2. How can they be changed and how quickly will the change take effect?
 3. What is the basic makeup of your menu, e.g. length of cycle, number of entrees?

- C. How do you get feedback from the students and what do you do about it?
- D. What kinds of "special events" do you provide? Please be specific.

IV. Adaptability and flexibility to serve a diverse and changing college student market.

- A. How do you keep abreast or ahead of changing student tastes and desires?
- B. What changes do you see in the college feeding market in the future, and how do you plan to adapt to them?

C. What new ideas would you wish to implement if you were given the contract? Please refer specifically to each of these areas:

- 1) Snack bar
- 2) A la carte
- 3) Commons

V. Economics

A. How do you propose to make the dining service break even?
B. Please describe the management fee and any incentives you propose.
C. For sales of \$2.1 million (and break-even), how much (in dollars) would we pay you for:

- 1) The management fee
- 2) The salaries, etc. for your personnel (give a specific breakdown of salaries)
- 3) Any other charges

D. How does the data given in C change for the same sales but a:

- 1) Profit situation
- 2) Loss situation