

Healthy
Eating
Research



NOPREN
Nutrition & Obesity
POLICY RESEARCH & EVALUATION NETWORK

Summer Speaker Series for Students 2024

Getting Started!

- Update your name on Zoom, if needed
 - *Right click on your Zoom box, click “rename”*
- Type your name and institution into the chat box!
 - *Question: Which best describes you?*
 - *Ex. Undergraduate Student, Dietetic Intern, Masters Student, Doctoral Student, Post Doc, Public Health Practitioner, Researcher/Professor, Other*
- Remember to keep yourself on mute.
- Type your questions into the chat box.

NOPREN HER Summer Series for Students

- Explore various public health topics related to:
 - Food and nutrition security
 - Federal nutrition assistance programs
 - Nutrition equity
- This series is a collaborative effort of Healthy Eating Research (HER) and Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN).

NOPREN HER Summer Series for Students

Schedule and Topics

- June 12: Food Policies in Schools - More than just Lunch!
- June 26: Food is Medicine: What does it mean?
Where are we going?
- **July 10: Leveraging Food Service Contracts at 4-year Public Universities to Understand Meal Plan Costs and Affordability**
- July 24: Policy Systems and Environmental Strategies to Support Young Children's Diet and Health
- August 7: Collaborating Successfully across Sectors toward Nutrition Security
- August 14: Student Presentations

The series will take place
on Wednesdays from
4:00 - 5:00 pm EST

For more information or to register:

<https://nopren.ucsf.edu/her-nopren-summer-speaker-series-students-2024>

Student Presentations!

The HER/ NOPREN Summer Speaker Series will end with Student Presentations and Poster Sessions on August 14!

Selected students will give a presentation on a public health nutrition-related project or research they worked on over the summer. **Applications are due July 17th.** To apply, scan the QR code below:



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**Session 3: Leveraging Food Service Contracts at 4-year
Public Universities to Understand Meal Plan Costs and
Affordability**

Healthy Food Retail Work Group

The mission of the HFR Work Group is to build a network of researchers and leaders from academia, non-profit organizations, government, and funders focused on increasing the quantity and quality of research in the area of childhood obesity and nutrition in the food retail setting to:

- Influence purchases by children and their families toward healthier foods and beverages that align with the DGA by increasing demand for these options;
- Improve access to healthier foods and beverages by working directly with retailers;
- Facilitate the development and implementation of evidence-informed policies.

Special emphasis is placed on equity and addressing needs of communities and people at highest risk for obesity, especially lower-income & racial/ethnic populations.

<https://nopren.ucsf.edu/healthy-food-retail>
Contact: Alex Ross: aaross@email.unc.edu

Today's Presenters



Caitlin Lowery, PhD
National Poverty Fellow
Institute for Research on Poverty
University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Jennifer Falbe, ScD, MPH
Associate Professor
Department of Human Ecology
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Learning Objectives for the Session:

1. Learn about the freedom of information (FOI) laws and how they can be used to obtain information about the food and beverage environment at public institutions.
2. Describe the variability in food costs on public university campuses and factors associated with higher costs.

Goal of this Project:

Obtain **food service contracts** from large, 4-year public universities in the U.S. using freedom of information laws

to explore **factors** related to **meal plan costs** and **affordability**

Third party dining operators (not self-operated dining)



Introduction

How this project came to be

NOPREN Healthy Food Retail Working Group surveyed member interests

Leadership reached out to me to kick-start **contracts** project

Convened interested members, narrowed focus, applied for funding

Hired and trained students to request and code contracts

Inspiration for this research



International Journal of
*Environmental Research
and Public Health*



Article

Healthy Food Policies Documented in University Food Service Contracts

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Abstract: In the United States, there is an opportunity to improve the nutritional health of university students through the campus food environment. This project used a content analysis approach to investigate whether healthy food standards and policies were incorporated into the contract agreements between North Carolina (NC) public universities and their food service management companies. Food service contracts were collected from 14 NC public universities using food service management companies on campus. Each contract was evaluated using the 35-item North Carolina Food Service Policy Guidelines Assessment to examine four elements of the campus food environment: Beverages, Packaged Snacks, Prepared Foods, and Other (e.g., strategic placement of healthier food). Five university food service contracts incorporated no North Carolina Food Service Policy

Inspiration for this research

My ongoing work studying **pouring rights contracts (PRCs)** in public universities:

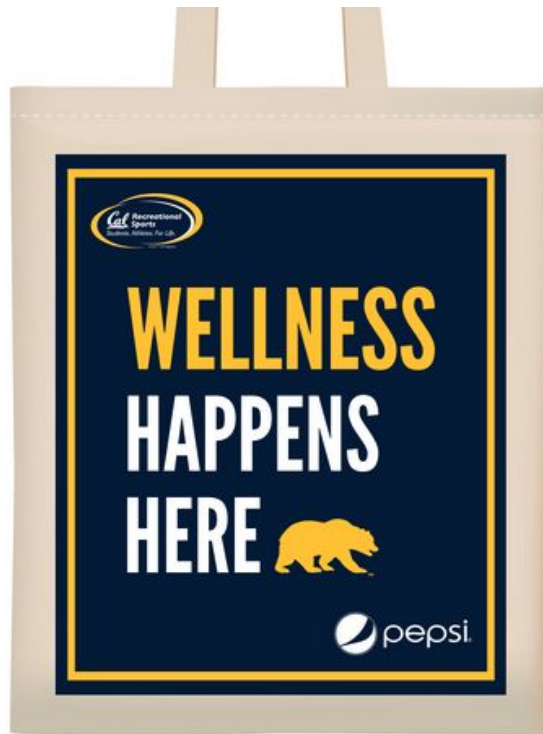
1. **Soda PRCs: FOI laws and interviews**
 - University service
2. **Alcohol PRCs and sponsorship agreements: FOI laws**



Introduction

Soda PRCs

- University of California contracts
 - “Wellness Happens Here sponsorship: (1) Presenting sponsor designation/placement on all Wellness Happens Here...materials”
 - “Up to six (6) logo inclusions on murals throughout the [gyms]”



Soda PRCs

- Cannot always get all the info from contracts alone



“We wanted to introduce **spa water**... We put those things next to the [soda] machine...and [the soda company] **threatened us...**”

Alcohol contracts:

- 162 public 4-year universities

“The [University] shall provide the [Company] with exclusive naming rights to the area located underneath the football scoreboard”

17% of public universities* have sponsorship agreements with **alcohol companies**. These contracts include **brand exclusivity, naming rights, co-branded items**, and more.

*Based on 112 randomly sampled universities who did not deny or ignore FOI request



Inspiration

JOURNAL OF AMERICAN COLLEGE HEALTH
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2022.2076098>



MAJOR ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS



Incentives and penalties tied to sales volume in contracts between beverage companies and public universities in the United States

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^aCenter for Science in the Public Interest, Washington, DC; ^bDepartment of Health, Behavior and Society, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD

ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess whether and how beverage companies incentivize universities to maximize sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) sales through pouring rights contracts.

Methods: Cross-sectional study of contracts between beverage companies and public U.S. universities with 20,000 or more students active in 2018 or 2019. We requested contracts from 143 universities. The primary measures were presence of financial incentives and penalties tied to sales volume.

Results: 124 universities (87%) provided 131 unique contracts (64 Coca-Cola, 67 Pepsi). 125 contracts (95%) included at least one provision tying payments to sales volume. The most common incentive type was commissions, found in 104 contracts (79%). Nineteen contracts (15%) provided higher commissions or rebates for carbonated soft drinks compared to bottled water.

Conclusions: Most contracts between universities and beverage companies incentivized universities to market and sell bottled beverages, particularly SSBs. Given the health risks associated with consumption of SSBs, universities should consider their role in promoting them.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 21 April 2021
Revised 16 March 2022
Accepted 6 May 2022

KEYWORDS

Sugar-sweetened beverages;
pouring rights; university; food
marketing

Food service contracts



Request
contracts



Data
management



Create
codebook



Code (&
double-code)
the data



Analyze the data

How did we request food service contracts?

Federal: The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) provides “the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency.”

- “The basic function...**is to ensure informed citizens**, vital to the functioning of a democratic society.” (FOIA.gov)

States have FOI laws for state government records.

- Public universities included in most states
- Submitted requests under the relevant state law

Look-up your state here:

<https://www.nfoic.org/state-sample-foia-request-letters/>



How did we request food service contracts?

Submission: Emails or online forms

"I am a student from UC Davis. I am conducting research in the **public interest** to study...

Under the **Alabama Open Records Law § 36-12-40 et seq.** We request copies of the following:

- 1) **Any contracts or agreements...signed and/or active as of July 1, 2023, between [University] and food service contractors** or providers...
- 2)

If this request is denied in whole or in part, please state in writing the specific statutory exemption upon which you have relied (as required by law) and notify me of the appeal procedures available to me under the law.

Please waive any costs associated with this request, **or first inform me prior to taking any action that would incur costs.** Our research team does not seek the records for commercial purposes.

Please respond in a timely manner upon your receipt of this letter, as required by A.L. § 36-12-40. **If other requested documents will take longer to produce, please send the documents in request (1) first,** rather than waiting to produce all requested documents at one time.

What is a food service contract?

- An agreement between a university and food services contractor, in which the contractor agrees to operate the university's dining services.

How are food services contracts created?

- University puts out a “request for proposals” (RFP).
- Companies submit proposals in response to the RFP.
- The university awards the contract to the company with the highest ranked proposal, based on the university's own criteria.



Contract Examples

THIS FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT (“Agreement”) shall be effective as of April 28, 2022 (the “Effective Date”) by and between the Regents of the University of Minnesota, a Minnesota constitutional education corporation, with principal offices located at 1300 S. 2nd Street Minneapolis, Minnesota 55454 (the “University”), and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] will provide food services in connection with this Agreement by and through its [REDACTED] division. [REDACTED] shall be referred to hereinafter as “[REDACTED]”. The University and [REDACTED] may at times be referred to individually as a “Party” and collectively as the “Parties”.

WHEREAS, University issued a Food Service Request for Proposal – Twin Cities Campus dated February 17, 2021 (“RFP”) seeking a contractor to manage and operate certain food service operations identified in the RFP;

WHEREAS, [REDACTED] submitted a proposal, and after further discussions and negotiations, the University has determined that it is in the best interest of the University to contract with [REDACTED] to provide Food Services (as defined herein) at the locations identified in this Agreement; and

Revenue Type	Commissions
Meal Plan Declining Balance (Dining Dollars)	24.0%
Block Plans (150, 80, 50 Blocks)	26.0%
Net Sales from Retail Operations	24.0%
Net Sales from Convenience Stores	24.0%
Summer Camps and Conferences	24.0%
Catering, including Carlson Private Dining Room and Coffman	24.0%
Subcontractor Retail Sales	24.0%

2) COMMISSIONS

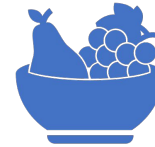
[REDACTED] shall pay to University a [REDACTED] percentage of Net Sales during the Term of the Agreement as set forth in the following table.

Meal Plans & Affordability

What is a meal plan?

- A pre-paid account that provides students with access to dining services on campus
- Common types include: “unlimited”, weekly, and “block” plans
- Often associated with “all-you-can-eat” dining halls

Why are we interested in meal plan costs?



High rates of food/nutrition insecurity



Rising costs of attending university



Student debt crisis

Meal Plan Examples

TRADITIONAL PLANS

PLAN 10 **\$2,104**

10 meals (per week) + \$135 dining dollars

PLAN 15 **\$2,266**

15 meals (per week) + \$85 dining dollars

PLAN 15 PLUS **\$2,332**

15 meals (per week) + \$185 dining dollars

Feed yourself for as little as \$119/week with this plan!

UNLIMITED **\$2,462**

no limit on meal swipes + \$60 dining dollars

ORANGE PLAN

This plan is automatically assigned to first-time, first-year students.

5 meal swipes per week

+

\$450 dining dollars

TOTAL COST: \$1,500

UPGRADE OPTIONS

10 meal swipes per week

+

\$500 dining dollars*

TOTAL COST: \$1,915

Unlimited meal swipes

+

\$150 dining dollars

TOTAL COST: \$2,500

Unlimited meal swipes

+

\$425 dining dollars

TOTAL COST: \$2,745

BLUE PLAN

This plan is automatically assigned to sophomores and above who live on campus.

50 meal swipes per semester

+

\$425 dining dollars

TOTAL COST: \$1,005

UPGRADE OPTIONS

Choose any of the Orange plans

75 meal swipes per semester

+

\$425 dining dollars

TOTAL COST: \$1,290

Please note: Meal plans are for one semester.

Research Process



Request
contracts



Data
management



Create
codebook



Code (&
double-code)
the data



Analyze the data

Our Sampling Criteria



University size
($\geq 20,000$ students)



Public universities



4-Year
degree-granting



Excluded
online-only schools
and community
colleges

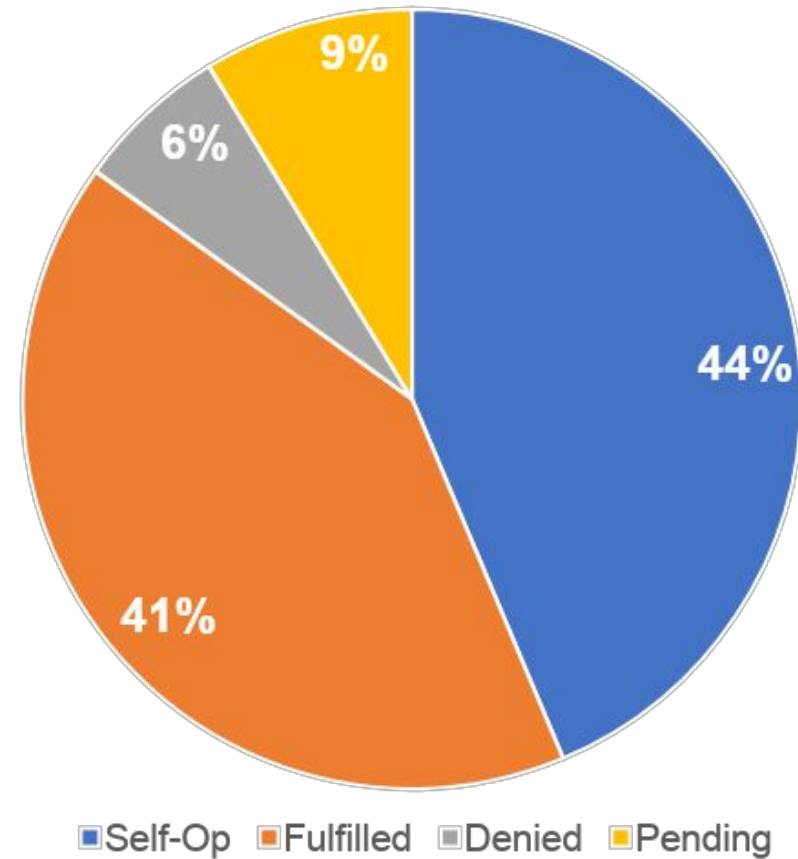
Our Sample

Response to FOIA Request:

- Self-operated, n=55
- Fulfilled, n=52
- Pending, n=11
- Denied, n=8

Total, n=126

FOIA Responses

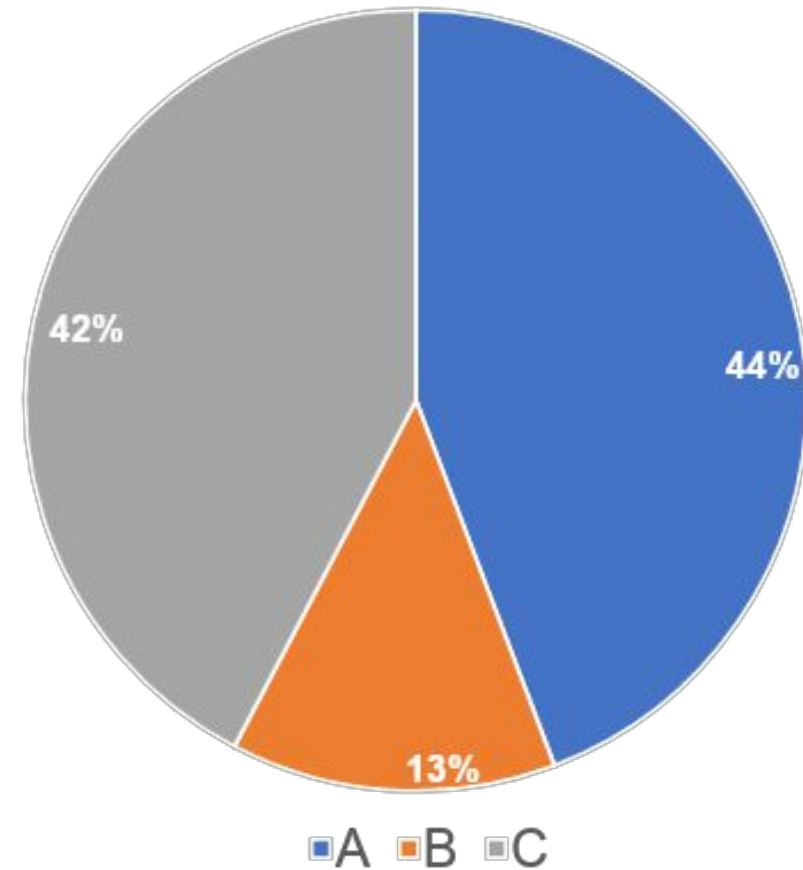


Our Sample

Food Service Contractor:

- Company A, n=22
- Company B, n=7
- Company C, n=23

Contracts by Company



Coding Process

Contract Terms

- Contractor
- Start date
- Duration
- Renewal terms

University Incentives

- Commissions
- Capital investment
- Other financial incentives

Consumer Cost

- Meal plan types & costs
- Mandatory v. optional meal plans
- Cash charges per meal

Next steps: Data Analysis

Meal Plans

- Average cost of a meal plan for students living on campus
- Who is required to purchase a meal plan
- Cost comparison of meal plans at self-operated v. contract-operated dining services

Financial Incentives

- Types of financial incentives provided (student scholarships, catering donations, etc.)
- Average commission for university on meal plan sales
- Average amount of capital investment by contractor per year



Future Directions



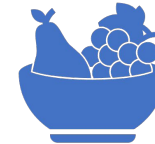
Adherence to Food Service Guidelines



Nutrition Standards



Menu Labeling



Sustainability, Local Foods, & Food Waste Prevention



Occupational Health & Safety

Lessons learned

- Need a detailed system for tracking FOI requests, responses, and follow-up requests
- Many universities provide irrelevant documents
- The fewer documents requested, the faster it takes
- For some states, you must be a resident
- Anticipate costs: Most do not charge, but some some universities request unreasonable \$ to provide requested documents

Acknowledgments

Collaborators: Drs. Megan Winkler, Beth Racine, Alicia Dahl, Sumathi Venkatesh, and Bree Bode, Stacy Fandetti, Sarah Solar, and the HER NOPREN Healthy Food Retail Work Group

Research Assistants: Dominique Pace, Mercedes Pace, Cynthia Hoang-Duong, Adithi Sumitran, Cathy Nguyen, Maha Raya, and Rosalba Chavarria

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Q&A

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Breakout Rooms

Breakout room instructions

Take a moment to look up the 2024-2025 cost of an “unlimited” (or highest cost) meal plan at the university of your choice.

1. Is the meal plan cost listed per semester, per year, or per quarter? Determine the **annual** cost.
2. Calculate the (approximate) cost per meal of the plan:
 - a. $(\text{Cost}/\text{year}) / [20 \text{ meals}/\text{week} * 32 \text{ weeks}]$
3. Who is required to purchase a meal plan?
4. Compare your findings with others in your group.

Bonus: Can you tell if your university’s dining services program is operated by a contractor, and if so, which company?

(Hint: Check the “Staff” or “Meet the Team” page of the campus dining site)

Additional Questions

- What questions do you have about your university's food services program?
- Do you think this information would be available in a food services contract? If not, how could you access this information?

Announcements

Please fill out the session evaluation after today's session.

- You should be directed to fill it out after the call ends OR you may scan the QR code on the right.

Apply for the Student Presentations:

- Applications due on July 17

Join us for the next session of the speaker series!

- Wednesday, July 24 from 4:00 - 5:00 PM ET
- Title: Policy Systems and Environmental Strategies to Support Young Children's Diet and Health



To view past recordings, visit <https://nopren.ucsf.edu/her-nopren-summer-speaker-series-students-2024>