

To: Dr. Erika Paterson, ENGL 301 professor

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Subject: Proposal for improved ingredient and allergen labelling at food establishments in the AMS Student Nest

Audience

The intended audience for this proposal is the UBS AMS.

Introduction of Topic

The AMS is UBC Vancouver's Student Union. The AMS has been operating since 1915, and their purpose is to hold UBC and government accountable to the students. There are currently 8 food establishments in the AMS Student Nest, however not all the menus and items have clear labels of what is contained in each product.

Statement of Problem

Not all food establishments in the AMS Student Nest have clear indications of whether their food items for sale contain common allergens or ingredients that an individual would want to avoid due to ethical or health related reasons. Although some food establishments have signs indicating if a particular item is vegan, vegetarian, or gluten free, there are not always signs indicating if it is dairy free. Additionally, there are also different kinds of vegetarian diets, therefore unclear as to what might exactly be used as ingredients which can lead to confusion. During peak meal hours, food establishments in the AMS student nest can become incredibly busy and crowded, making it difficult to approach staff to simply ask if a certain item contains a common allergen or ingredient you are purposely trying to avoid. Additionally, sometimes staff don't know if it contains the ingredient in question. This makes a straightforward task of choosing a snack or meal more difficult and may discourage people with dietary restrictions from eating at a particular establishment.

Proposed Solution

One possible solution to this problem is to introduce better labelling that clearly indicates if the food product contains a common allergen or an ingredient that is not part of vegan or gluten free diets. This label should be placed on the menu or near the packaged item's label and should be consistent throughout the AMS food establishments to make it easy and convenient for students to find something that meets any dietary restrictions they may have.

Scope

To assess the feasibility of implementing improved ingredient labelling I plan to investigate the following areas of inquiry:

1. Do students with any dietary restrictions or food allergens frequent the UBC AMS nest to get a snack or a meal?

2. Do UBC students who have any dietary restrictions choose to avoid purchasing food from AMS food establishments due to the difficulties finding out if certain food products contain ingredients they are trying to avoid?
3. For students that do have a dietary restriction or food allergy, has it been easy finding out if certain food products contain an ingredient you are trying to avoid at any of the AMS food establishments?
4. Would implementing better labelling on food products help students when choosing a snack or meal from any of the AMS food establishments?
5. What kind of labelling system would work best if it were to be implemented?

Methods

My primary data sources will include surveys I will send out to UBC Vancouver students, as well as observing what kinds of labelling are currently being implemented at different AMS food establishments.

My secondary data sources will include online peer reviewed journal articles that contain information regarding allergens, specific diets, and food labelling practices.

My Qualifications

As a student at UBC, I am automatically part of the AMS community. Additionally, I am currently a UBC Vancouver student, who has a specific allergen. I sometimes visit the UBC nest in search of a meal but have had some difficulty finding specific ingredient information just by looking at the food label or menu.

Conclusion

Implementing better ingredient and allergen labelling would make the process of choosing a snack or meal at any AMS food establishment faster and easier for anyone that has a dietary restriction. It would also make the AMS food establishments more accessible as it would allow people to know if what they are looking at is safe for them to ingest.