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## The Meal Plan In College

College life could be the first time that students leave home and earn their living, they are like babe eagles that learning how to fly at that period. The transformation could always be painful and the health condition of college students is facing a great challenge when they are adapting to college life. The freshman 15 is not saying but a common phenomenon. A report released by the University of Minnesota Boynton Health Service says that “nearly two-fifths or 38.5 percent of all students surveyed fall within the overweight or obese/extremely obese categories and that number is just 15.6 for high school students (Report on Health and Habits of College Students Released).” The college meal plan as the main dining method for every college student is playing the most important role of the obese. It needs to be considered seriously for every college student. This passage will analyze the college meal plan as a college student perspective by comparing it with cooking and give some suggestions about how to purchase the college meal plan.

Let's talk about the advantages of a college meal plan at first. Most colleges require students to purchase the college meal plan at least the freshman year. Each college has its meal plan but the purpose could all be the same which is to handle the dining problem for college students and let them focus on studying. The best part of the college meal is convenience and it did that job perfect especially for those students who have no kitchen or time to cook. The only thing for college students who purchased the college meal plan has to do is just show up at the dining hall and grab whatever they want to eat. Those students don't have to look for materials, cooking, or washing the dishes. They could save a lot of time form dining and contribute those times to other things such as class and homework. There are some specific data from Tom Barlow to show how much time the meal plan could exactly save for college students, “Mexicans spend the most time per day on these domestic chores, four hours and 13 minutes, while Koreans spend the least amount of time, 2 hours and 16 minutes. The U.S. falls very close to the middle of the pack at 3 hours 27 minutes (Barlow, Tom).” As an old saying: “Time is money.” Such a group of college students probably have not enough time to sleep let alone spending time to cook three meals per day. That is unbelievable to put three and a half hours to cook for college students per day. Compared with cooking, the college meal plan has more benefits on time management and convenience. On the other hand, the meal plan could promote the college process for college students. The shared meals do have a link with more favorable outcomings. Just imagine after all the busy classes, eating with your friends could be the last piece of peace for the whole day. The joyful atmosphere will wash your exhausted feeling about school and let you reborn. Doctor Glasser recalled, “although my college experiences were wonderful, some of my memories have faded over time. I can't recall the details of my senior research project. I can no longer explain the differences between Venetian and Florentine artists. And my recollection of how I spent many weekends is slightly hazy. But I do have fond and vivid memories of eating in the dining hall” (Glasser). A good lunch with friends just likes a ray of sunshine in the haze which could encourage you a lot. Compared to eating along at home, take the meal plan with other college students in the dining hall is the best time to hang out with your old friends and meet some new friends. Cooking by yourself could only handle staving but the college meal plan will also handle the lonely and last some pretty good memories at the same time. The reason why most colleges require students to purchase the meal plan is the convenience and sociality of the college meal plan.

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The college meal plan is not perfect at all. let's talk about the disadvantages of it. The first one could be the high cost of the college meal plan. According to the data from Hechinger Report, "The average college or university charges around \$4,500 per year for a meal plan, with many schools charging much more(Dining Costs Eating up College Students' Budget)." With smart budgeting, cooking meals instead could cost half as much, or even less. The money gap makes the college meal reconsidered for many families. For instance, Bill Fay who is focusing on debt in his entire life suggests doing not purchase the meal plan. He mentioned that; "the average meal costs \$4.25 to make (College Meal Plans: How to Choose & Use the Right Plan)." One meal of Foy hall at Auburn University will be at least \$12.50, that's almost 3 times more than cooking. The college meal plan is not a good idea for the students who want to cut down their college costs. The wastage is always a hot potato for the college meal plan. Most colleges take the buffet as the official meal plan but it will cause food wastage easily. A study took place by doctors in the Midwest in 2011 with almost 600 university students as participants had a conclusion about the food wastage in the college dining hall, "The study found that more than 57 grams of food were wasted per tray (Haneklau)." The oversize tray is like a physical hint to force you to fill it with more foods that beyond your appetite. Those foods will be wasted without any doubt. The wasted foods will cause billions of financial loss, let alone there are still countless people are suffering hunger worldwide even at this moment. Cooking does not have the food wastage problem at all. You can control the number of materials by yourself and save the uneaten foods for the next meal. The food wastage in the college dining hall is unbelievable and needs to be solved badly. The last but not least disadvantage of the college meal plan is the flexibility. If you choose to cook by yourself that you could make your menu; making decisions about the dining time; select the materials as you wish. But if you purchase a meal plan, those things are all be done by the dining hall and you will know nothing of them. The only thing you could only eat whatever the dining hall provided or just complain about it. The meal plan is not specifically made for one college student but for everybody. They can not run the risk of please one audience but lost the others. But if you choose to be your own chef, you can have whatever you want and make a crystal clear burden sheet by yourself. That sounds so exciting, isn't it? The disadvantages of the college meal plan are as shining as the advantages. The price, food wastage, and flexibility of it are all considered as lows.

In a conclusion, the college meal plan is doing a great job of saving time and promote the college process for college students. But on the other side, the college meal plan will cost more money than cooking, causing food wastage easily and not flexible enough. The advantages and disadvantages make college students struggling with the college meal plan. Anyway, The flaws do not detract from the jade's essential beauty. The college meal plan is still playing a significate role in students' life. The best method for college students is purchasing the college meal plan at the beginning of college life. Use the first year to accommodate the time spending on cooking each time and meet some new friends. Cook by yourself for the rest of your college life to save money and have a flexible menu. Take the first year as a smooth buffer from high school to college will reduce the pain about the transfer effectually. Once you have already felt comfortable about college life that cancels the college meal plan and cooks by yourself is a good option.

## Work Cite

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