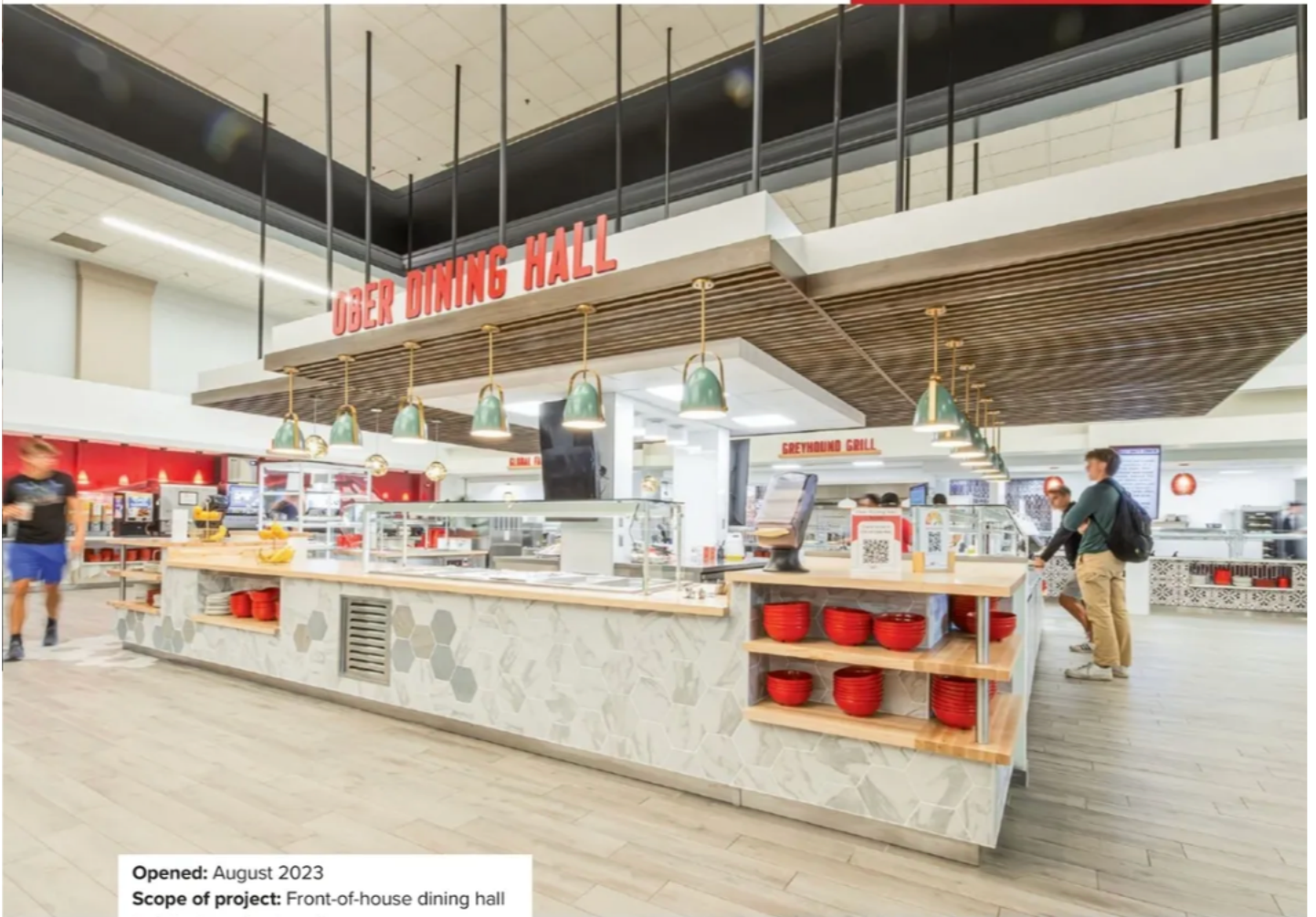




Opened: August 2023

Scope of project: Front-of-house dining hall in Schwitzer Student Center

Website: dineatuiindy.com

| By Donna Boss |

*Photos courtesy of Reitano Design Group;
photos by Marco Ladron de Guevara*

Building Community at Ober Dining Hall

The dining operation in the Schwitzer Student Center at the University of Indianapolis (UIndy) had become outdated. “The dining space was enclosed by walls and a few windows,” says Amy Dugan, resident district manager and general manager at UIndy for Quest Food Management Services. “The seating area was only accessible to people buying food in the dining area.”

A transformation turned the Schwitzer Student Center into a hub for a diverse student body to connect. Now, anyone on campus can enjoy a bright, inviting seating area, whether or not they purchase food in the renovated dining area, named Ober Dining Hall. Students, faculty, staff and visitors who want to purchase food pass through point-of-service stations as they enter Ober Dining Hall and swipe their cards for meal plans, dining dollars or credit to pay for their

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all-you-care-to-eat meals.

The Schwitzer Student Center draws its name from the Schwitzer Corp., a major producer of cooling pumps, superchargers and other auto components. The company was founded in the 1920s by Louis Schwitzer. An emigrant from Austria, Schwitzer was an engineer and also the winner of the first race at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1909, which earned him an induction into the Automotive Hall of Fame in 1970. Ober Dining Hall is named in dedication to Mary Elizabeth Edwards Ober and Ceril Strauss “Cy” Ober for enriching the quality of life in the Indianapolis community through their civic, charitable and political leadership.

“This is the most transformative project we’ve ever had the opportunity to be a part of in the higher education market,” says Scott Reitano, FCSI, principal, Reitano Design Group, Indianapolis. “With the design team and operational team, we transformed the student union to include hospitality as part of the community hub. Parents and students are concerned about academics, of course, but also where the students are living, eating and participating in the community.”



Schwitzer Student Center's building addition contains the Ober Dining Hall and seating areas.

In addition to Ober Dining Hall, diners on campus may purchase food at three coffee shops, a retail food court and a convenience store.

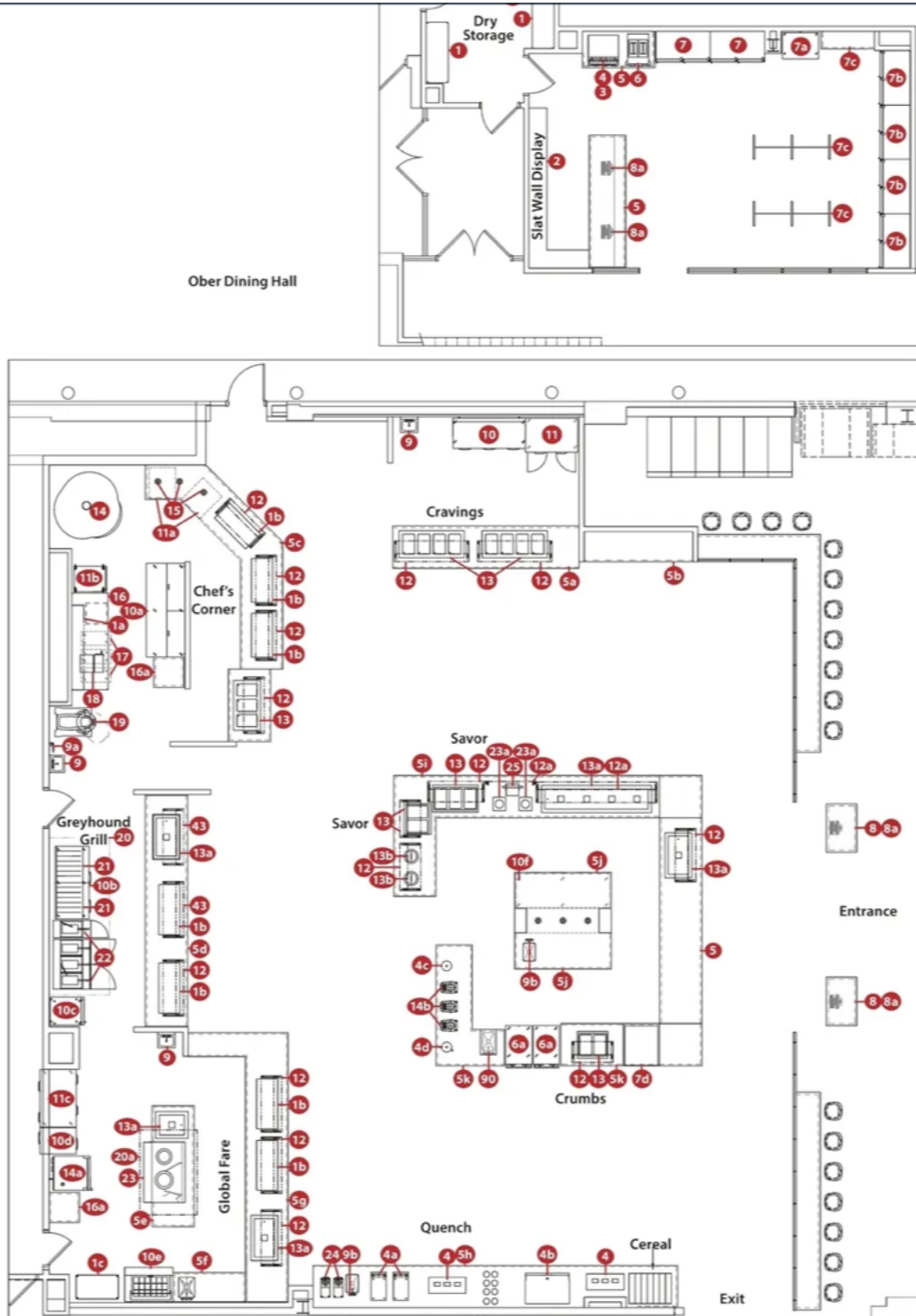
“The university wanted the dining program to make a statement that felt like a fresh way for community building to happen on campus after COVID,” says Nick Saccaro, president, Quest Food Management Services. “It wasn’t just about aesthetic appeal but in the way the dining hall opened to

the student union, creating a welcoming, modern space where students want to hang out.”

Carpeting and overall lighting had to remain as part of the final design scheme, though the other finishes were available for a makeover. Using a muted, light base palette of grays, creams and taupes, the team from designSMART accented the color in the space with school colors and gave a nod along the beverage wall to the

Floor Plan Equipment Key

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Dry storage shelving unit | 5f. Work counter with prep sink | 7c. Dry goods display | 11a. Heated holding cabinet | 16. Worktable, bakers top |
| 1a. Wall shelf | 5g. International serving counter | 7d. Dessert display | 11b. Proofing cabinet | 16a. Worktable |
| 1b. Drop-in heated shelf | | 8. POS stations | 11c. Pass-through heated cabinet | 17. Ingredient bin |
| 1c. Kitchen shelving unit | 5h. Beverage counter with dump sink | 8a. POS system | 12. Convertible breath guard with light and heat | 18. Dough sheeter |
| 2. Slat wall display | 5i. Fresh food serving counter | 9. Wall-mount hand sink | 12a. Food protector | 19. Planetary mixer |
| 3. Ice maker | | 9a. Pot filler | 12b. Self-serve breath guard with light | 20. 13-inch hood and exhaust system |
| 4. Beverage dispenser | 5j. Center island counter | 9b. Deck-mount faucet | 13. Drop-in hot food well unit | 20a. Exhaust hood |
| 4a. Juice dispenser | 5k. Breakfast/sweets counter | 9c. Undercounter faucet | 13a. Drop-in cold food well | 21. Countertop charbroiler |
| 4b. Soda dispenser | | 10. Refrigerated worktop | 13b. Drop-in soup well | 22. Fryer |
| 4c. Batter dispenser | 6. Shake machine | 10a. Pizza prep refrigerator | 14. Wood-fired oven | 23. Wok range |
| 4d. Syrup dispenser | 6a. Soft-serve machine | 10b. Refrigerated stand | 14a. Combi oven | 23a. Drop-in induction range |
| 5. Serving counter | 7. Freezer merchandiser | 10c. Reach-in freezer | 14b. Waffle maker | 24. Coffee brewer |
| 5a. Homestyle serving counter | 7a. Heated shelf merchandiser | 10d. Pass-through refrigerator | 15. Decorative lamp | 25. Air filter system |
| 5b. Open number | 7b. Refrigerated merchandiser | 10e. Prep refrigerator | | |
| 5c. Wood oven serving counter | | 10f. Undercounter refrigerator | | |
| 5d. Grill serving counter | | 11. 2-door, reach-in heated cabinet | | |
| 5e. Island work counter | | | | |



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school's greyhound mascot, Grady, depicted mid-run.

"We introduced ceramic flooring to the servery area and parts of the dining room, mixing wood-look plank with hexagon tiles that play off of each other to create interest and texture," explains Arthur Oudmayer, president of Matthews, N.C.-based designSMART. "A blend of quartz countertops paired with counter fronts dressed in various laminates and tile promotes an eclectic collection of food concept-themed platforms. Curated accent lighting and a central floating bulkhead wrap up the servery destination."

Names of stations convey the menu items available at each but remain open enough to allow for future flexibility as the menus evolve. Station signage allows the names to be updated with minimal effort and cost. "The overall thrust of the new restaurant is that of any airy, contemporary space that maintains the food as the star attraction while ensuring

the environment is relevant and yet a little whimsical," says Oudmayer. "It is a venue curated for the young and energetic daily patrons."

Large wall graphics frame a dining area with a selection of types of seating, including booths, high-tops and casual seats, as well as different chair and table styles, in a multitude of colors and textures. "This gives the regular diner a chance to enjoy a new experience with each visit," Oudmayer says.

The design team faced a daunting challenge. "We started talking about the design concept for the food hall in 2020, firmed up the design in October 2022, and bids were approved in February 2023. But demolition couldn't start until the first week in May 2023, and the facility had to open in August," says Chris Wair, design principal, Reitano Design Group.

During this speed-of-light project completion, stellar communication among team members was essential. "Everyone at this school had to have a

voice, and approval was needed by university leaders," Reitano says. "Levels of trust had to be developed, which was complicated when the university's leadership changed in 2022 and early 2023. If it wasn't for the united effort of all the team members, this would have been impossible. As our project manager, Don Kehrt coordinated on a real-time basis the work of the contractor and trades. He and Austin Leger of Leger Corp., who served as on-site project manager, played a vital role in getting us through this successfully."

Throughout the project's stages, Quest leaders received feedback from students and other community members about menu choices, which contributes to Ober Dining Hall's popularity. Ober Dining Hall serves approximately 1,200 meals per day. UIndy enrollment includes 3,200 undergraduates and 1,800 graduates. Students are not required to live on campus, though 53% choose this option and then must have a meal plan.





Back-of-the-House Preparation

The design team moved most of the food preparation and cooking from the back of the house to the front of the house. Staff prepare about half of the food served in the front of the house in the back-of-the-house kitchen.

When food and supplies deliveries arrive at the loading dock, staff inspect them and move them to dedicated storage in the main kitchen attached to Ober Dining Hall. This kitchen, which may be renovated in the future, serves as a production space that supports Ober Dining Hall, catering, the food court and coffee shops. Staff also move food and supplies into various campus dining venues as well as a

Crumbs features bagels and other baked goods made in-house daily. The station also contains toasters, waffle makers and a soft-serve ice cream machine.

About the Project

Enrollment: 3,200 undergraduates; 1,800 graduates

Meal plan participation: 1,320

Dining program: All you care to eat

Size: Serving area, 3,400 sq. ft.; seating area, 5,800 sq. ft.

Seats: 350

Average check: \$11

Total annual sales: \$2.8 million

Daily transactions/covers: 1,200 average, weekdays

Hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. All stations remain open during main meal periods. Cravings and Global Fare stay open from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Menu concepts: Greyhound Grill, Global Fare, Chef's Corner (pizza and pasta), Quench (beverages), Crumbs (baked goods), Savor (vegetarian and allergen-free), Crisp (salad bar), Cravings (comfort foods)

Staff: Approximately 100

Equipment investment: Approximately \$1.3 million

lower-level grab-and-go preparation kitchen and bakery that supplement the main kitchen. They place menu

ingredients for Ober Dining Hall in three walk-in coolers, one walk-in freezer and dry storage.

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Chef's Corner features pizza heated in a wood-fired oven (at right), as well as pasta and sauces.

In the cold-prep area, staff use slicers and food processors to prepare salads, mise en place and desserts. A hot-prep area contains two combi ovens, two convection ovens, two kettles, a tilt skillet, a flattop grill and a cooktop range. “We have a very robust food preparation program,” Dugan says. “We scratch-make 90% of our menu output, and it is batch cooked so food is as fresh as possible. It is prepackaged for grab-and-go and served fresh in front-of-the-house stations, as well as made to order at custom stations.”

The design team minimized the amount of menu ingredients coming from the kitchen. “Passageways from the kitchen to the front of the house were very busy,” Wair says. “Now, the front-of-the-house stations are stocked well so there is little need for staff to go to the back of the house to replenish the ingredients at the stations during service. We made sure that the front-of-the-house stations that have display cooking are as close to the kitchen as possible to minimize the need for staff to transport bulky items.”

Front-of-the-House Stations

Menu items offered at all stations follow guidelines of Quest’s food philosophy. Posted on the UIndy website for transparency, the philosophy includes featuring menu items that use seasonal and regionally available ingredients; offering a variety of whole-grain breads, pastas and cereals; using trans-fat-free oils, including non-GMO soy oil; sourcing from local farmers and small producers; and participating in year-round, community-sourced agriculture programs. Juice is fresh, fresh-frozen or packed in 100% juice or water. Proteins are USDA certified, and sustainable seafood follows the Marine Stewardship Council’s guidelines and recommendations. Menus offer a variety of vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options, and the culinary staff accommodate nutritional and dietary requests. MSG is never used. Milk is sourced that is local and free of added growth hormones, and coffee and tea offerings include organic, shade-grown, fair trade and Rainforest Alliance options.

Customers order at the front-of-the-house stations. No mobile ordering is available. “We work on keeping the lines moving by having a lot of variety so customers just go to stations that appeal to them,” Dugan says. Each station offers menu items for customers with and without food allergies. The ingredients and nutritional information are labeled on the menus, which are available online.

Most students and other customers eat on-site. Those who want to take menu items out can purchase reusable containers, which is one of several sustainable features.

The overall design of the food hall is in sharp contrast to the more rigid previous layout in which customers queued up and waited to move through the serving lines. “The central station with three stations (Crisp, Savor and Crumbs) was the driver of the circulation pattern,” Wair says. “We designed this area to feature enough flexibility to be the only area open during times when the student population on campus may be lower, which saves both energy and labor