



EATING CLUB ACCESSIBILITY REPORT

2014-2015

Fall 2014

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....2

- *Purpose of the EAC Project*
- *Methodology*

Highlights of Major Findings.....3

- *Underclassmen Engagement w/ Eating Clubs*
- *Underclassmen knowledge of Eating Clubs*
- *Financial Aid & The Eating Clubs*

Conclusion.....12

- *Next Steps*
- *Recommendations*
- *Updates*
- *Acknowledgements*

Contact.....15



INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Eating Club Accessibility Project

The purpose of this USG Senate project is to identify barriers to information for Princeton students to make decisions of their upperclassmen eating options and to make sure the eating clubs as dining options and social spaces are accessible to everyone.

Methodology

Two means of student feedback were available in the fall 2014: a survey and a town hall. The Eating Club Accessibility Survey was designed to gather student feedback and suggestions of the eating clubs as a social venue and upperclassmen eating option. The survey collected background information of class year and meal option along with campus experiences such as access to university resources, eating club membership, and social life at Princeton. The survey was sent out in a school-wide email by USG President Shawon Jackson and had 1520 total responses and only 328 partial responses. The survey was open to all members of the Class of 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. A town hall was hosted on December 7th in Frist MPR B on eating club accessibility. The town hall was publicized at the same time as the survey was released.

Given the wealth of information and feedback collected from the survey and the town hall, this report only highlights important areas of improvement that the project, the eating clubs, the Inter-Club Council, and the University should pursue to make the eating clubs more accessible.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Underclassmen & The Eating Clubs

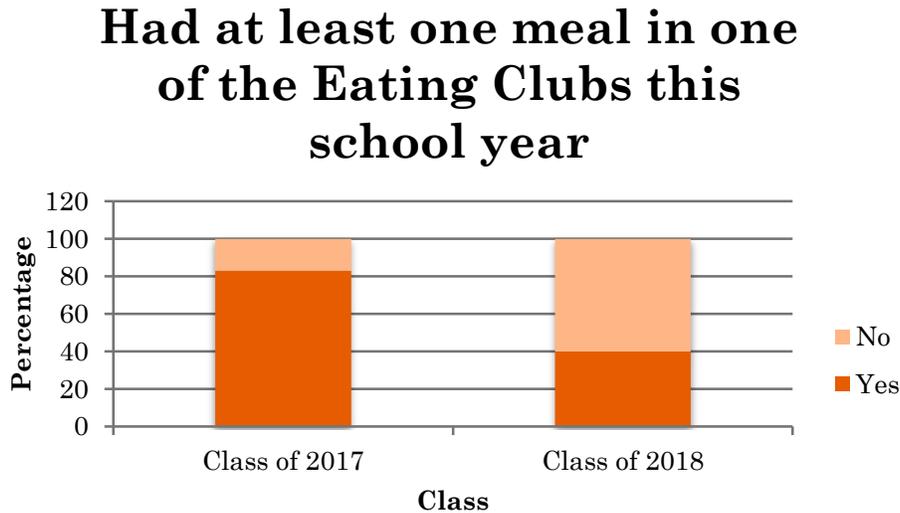


Figure 1. This chart demonstrates that most members of the Class of 2018 (freshmen) have not eaten a meal in an eating club during the 2014-15 school year. However, most students in the Class of 2018 (sophomores) have eaten at least one meal in an eating club during the 2014-15 school year.

The use of the eating clubs as a dining space is limited for underclassmen. Less than forty percent of freshmen had a meal in one of the eating clubs. In contrast, more than eighty percent of sophomores had at least one meal in the eating clubs, but they still expressed a desire for more opportunities to have a meal in the eating clubs before the bicker process begins. Suggestions for improvement included making “it easier for meal exchange programs to work with Late Meal” and greater visibility of sophomore meals in the Eating Clubs.



Figure 2. This chart summarizes the feelings of underclassmen regarding the balance of alcoholic and non-alcoholic social events in the eating clubs. Levels of satisfaction were relatively similar for both freshmen (Class of 2018) and sophomores (Class of 2017).

Feelings about the balance of alcoholic and non-alcoholic events were varied amongst underclassmen. Some students are satisfied, but a significant number remain neutral on the subject and even more expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the balance. Furthermore, levels of satisfaction were similar between sophomores and freshman. Students repeatedly called for more non-alcoholic events as a method for (1) allowing underclassmen to gain a better understanding of the clubs before making decisions about their junior-year meal plans and (2) reinforcing the clubs' status as a center of social life at Princeton. Specifically, students recommended increasing the number of non-alcoholic events open to the general student body, increasing interclub interaction, and offering more opportunities for meal exchanges.



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Did you attend a non-alcoholic event at an Eating Club in the past year?

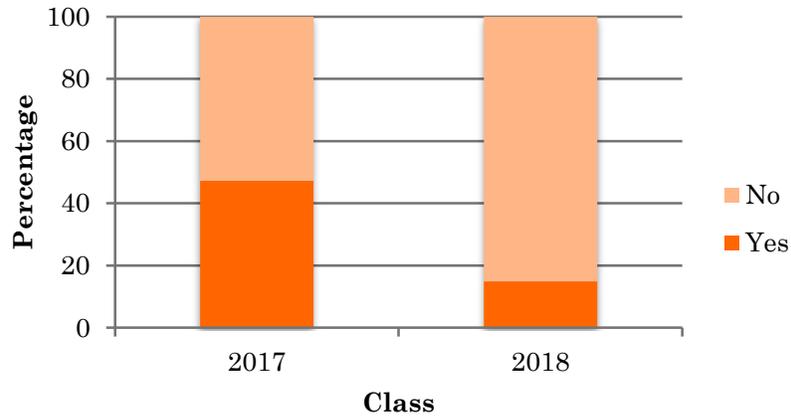


Figure 1. As the graph shows, most underclassmen have only interacted with the eating clubs in an alcoholic setting. 318 members of the Class of 2017 (sophomores) responded, as well as 295 members of the Class of 2018 (freshmen).

The majority of both freshmen and sophomores in December 2014 reported that they had only interacted with the eating clubs at events including alcohol. This majority was much greater amongst freshmen, with nearly ninety percent reporting that they had not attended a non-alcoholic event at an eating club. Slightly more than fifty percent of sophomores, meanwhile, had not attended a non-alcoholic event. In comments and at the town hall, students mentioned that many underclassmen do not have the opportunity to have a meal at the eating clubs or attend a non-alcoholic event with club members.

Does the University present information on Eating Clubs effectively during the admissions process?

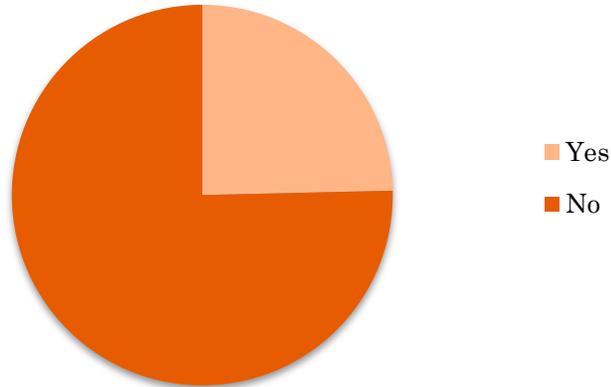


Figure 2. The pie chart indicates that members of the Class of 2018 (freshmen) feel that the University does not adequately present information about eating clubs effectively during the admissions process.

For many students, the application and admissions processes do not provide substantial information about the eating clubs. Entering Princeton in the fall is the first time students truly begin to understand the eating clubs as social venues and as upperclassmen meal options. Many students commented that, during the admissions process, the University does not offer sufficient information about the bicker process or social opportunities at the eating clubs.

Underclassmen Knowledge of Eating Clubs

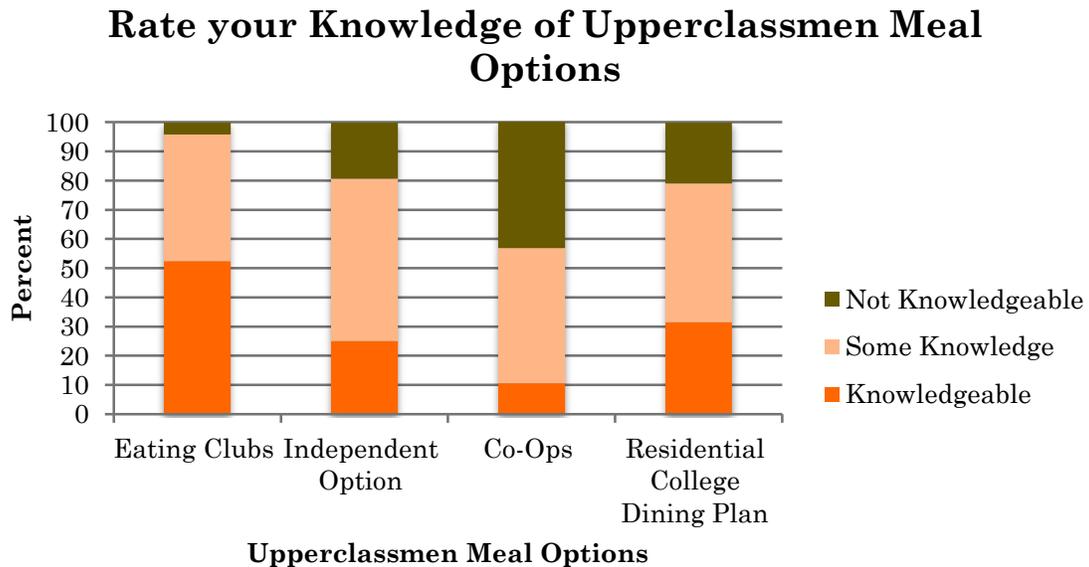


Figure 3. The chart shows how students in the Class of 2017 (sophomores) rank their knowledge of upperclassmen meal options.

This question highlights how the Class of 2017, sophomores in December 2014, ranked their knowledge of upperclassmen meal options when they will make their decisions of whether to join an eating club in the next few months. Sophomores show to have more knowledge about eating clubs as upperclassmen meal options than co-ops.

Financial Aid & the Eating Clubs

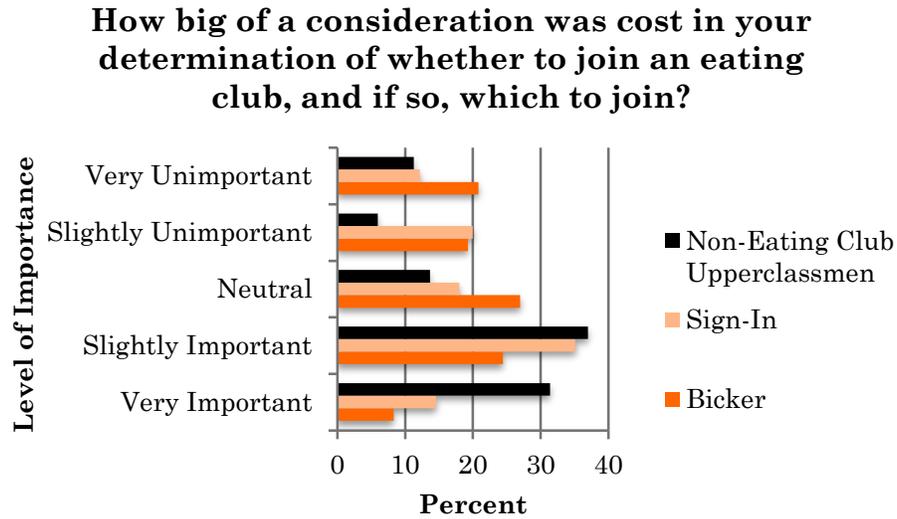


Figure 4. The graph shows how important of a consideration cost was in the determination of whether to join an eating club for upperclassmen (Classes of 2016 and 2015).

Of upperclassmen who opted not to join an eating club, most reported that financial cost was an important factor, with more than 30% reporting that it was a very important factor. This suggests that cost plays a central role in discouraging many students from ultimately joining a club. Additionally, in comments and at the town hall, many students voiced concerns that the University's \$2,000 increase in financial aid for upperclassmen was insufficient for supporting eating club membership.

Do you feel that the augmented financial aid (approx. \$2,000 increase) during junior and senior years (will) sufficiently support(ed) your upperclassmen option?

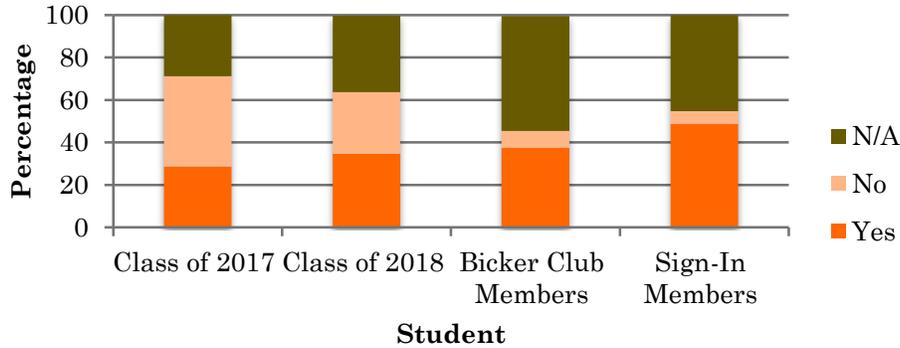


Figure 5. The graph displays students' feelings about the quality of financial aid increases for junior and senior years. In particular, the graph indicates if students feel that the traditional \$2,000 is sufficient for supporting upperclassmen dining options.

A large proportion of students did not offer a “yes-or-no” answer to the question of the financial aid increase—between ~25% and ~55% depending on class year and dining option. This potentially indicates that students did not have a strong opinion either way, and therefore did not feel confident that the \$2,000 increase was sufficient for supporting their dining option. Of the upperclassmen eating club members who answered, the vast majority felt that the \$2,000 increase was sufficient for supporting their upperclassmen dining option. About half of the freshmen (Class of 2018) who answered felt that the increase *would* be sufficient. Slightly more than half of the sophomores (Class of 2017) who answered felt that the increase *would not* be sufficient.

If receiving financial aid, did the increased aid received as a junior and senior positively influence your decision to join an Eating Club?

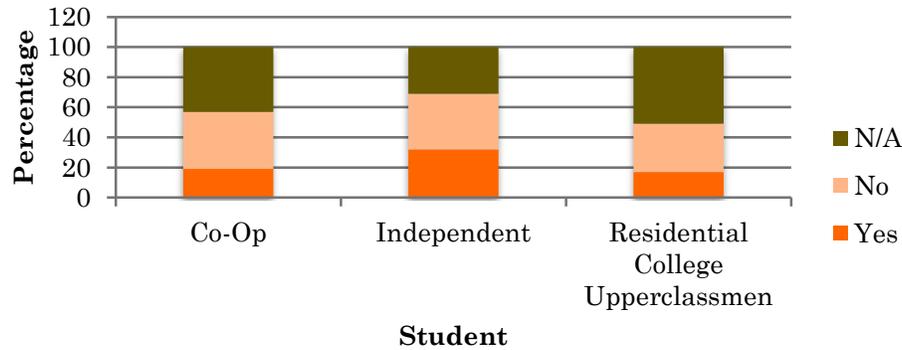


Figure 6. The graph indicates how the University’s policy of providing a financial aid increase for upperclassmen influenced upperclassmen’s decision to join (or not join) an eating club.

A large portion of upperclassmen students did not offer a “yes-or-no” answer to the question—between ~15% and ~25% depending on the dining option. This potentially indicates that they did not have a strong opinion either way, and therefore did not confidently feel that the \$2,000 increase positively influenced their decision to join (or not join) an eating club. Of upperclassmen in a Co-Op who answered, less than 20% indicated that the increase positively affected their decision to join an eating club. For independent upperclassmen who answered, ~30% indicated that the increase positively affected their decision. And for upperclassmen living in a residential college, less than 20% indicated that the increase positively affected their decision.

CONCLUSION

Next Steps

Current and future project teams will focus on four key areas. Underclassmen & the Eating Clubs, Independent Students and Co-Ops & the Eating Clubs, Financial Aid & the Eating clubs, and working to help students have a greater access to information about different meal options, financial aid, and the Inter-Club Council when making their decision about upperclassmen meal options.

Recommendations

Improve Interaction Between Underclassmen and Eating Clubs

- Increased access to information regarding all eating option
 - Publicize information about the ICC and club leadership so students are able to contact them with relevant questions
 - Create and improve websites for independent students and Co-Ops
- Increase the amount of non-alcoholic events open to freshmen and sophomores
 - Encourage the eating clubs to rent out their facilities to student groups and other organizations
 - Work between the eating clubs, USG, and the University administration to potentially secure outside funding for non-alcoholic eating club events
- Promote more PUID Nights
 - Encourage the eating clubs to coordinate who will be PUID on what night to increase accessibility to the eating clubs rather than increase competition amongst the clubs
- Re-institute Taste of Prospect/Princeton program
 - Launch in the spring semester for freshmen
 - Encourage clubs to host smaller-scale programs on an individual club basis

Relationship between Eating Clubs and Other Eating Options

- Create electronic meal exchanges
 - Coordinate with dining services to create a simple and quick system
- Expand eating club meal exchanges to co-op and independent students

- Publicize the system to students through University-wide emails, USG listserv

Transparency of Information Regarding Eating Clubs

- Transparency of information on which clubs are open, themes and passes/lists
 - Create a TigerApp similar to the old Prospect Avenue Map app
- Expand helpful information about eating clubs on princetoneatingclub.org website
 - Clarify guest meal/meal exchange policies
 - Transparency of bicker process
 - Increased visibility of sophomore related club events
- ICC Transparency
 - The Inter-Club Council (ICC) is a body that includes the presidents of the 11 eating clubs, a liaison from the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students (ODUS), and an advisor from the Graduate Inter-Club Council (GICC). We recommend greater visibility of what the ICC is, who is on the ICC, meeting times and locations, and contact information for the ICC.
- Better presentation of information about eating clubs during admissions
 - Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of freshmen who responded to the survey believe that the University does not present information on the Eating Clubs effectively during the admissions process. The University should work with the ICC, RCAs, and other groups on campus to better present information about the eating clubs as a social and dining option.

Financial Aid

- Increase access to information regarding the connection between the University's financial aid practices and eating club costs
 - Students send in their eating club selections for sign-in and bicker clubs in January. During the same month, the Class Government for the sophomore class hosts an Eating & Housing Information Session. We recommend that students receive information about eating clubs and financial aid possibilities prior to winter break. This gives students and their families more time to understand and ask questions about eating clubs and their dues.
- Consider the sufficiency of current financial aid granted for upperclassmen eating options
 - Currently, upperclassmen who are on financial aid, regardless of their upperclassmen meal option, receive a \$2,000 increase in their financial aid. From meetings with the ICC, which include Eating Club

presidents, and from student comments submitted in the survey, many students feel that this increase is not sufficient and affects their decision to join an eating club. We urge the university and Office of Financial to evaluate the sufficiency and success of the \$2,000 increase along with other resources from the Office of Financial Aid.

Updates

Updates on this project will be available on the USG website at www.princetonusg.com.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Inter-Club Council (ICC), students who took our survey, and students who participated in our town hall for their help with this project. This project team also consulted with Dean Bryant Blount '08, former University President Shirley Tilghman, and former USG President and member of the University's Eating Clubs Task Force Connor Diemand- Yauman '10

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