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• <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~dds/>

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Dear Parent,

Very soon, Dartmouth's fall 2009 term will begin, and we hope that so far everything has gone well as your son or daughter prepares to begin college life at Dartmouth. Realizing that you are trying to absorb an abundance of information about Dartmouth; we would like to offer an overview of dining services at Dartmouth. Since what follows is somewhat abridged description of our program, we strongly recommend that you visit our website at www.dartmouth.edu/~dds/ for additional details.

You may already recognize that Dartmouth, unlike most of our peer institutions, does not offer a traditional, "all-you-can-eat" dining program. Rather, we maintain a program that we think better suites the expectations and lifestyles of today's college students. With that in mind, Dartmouth's dining program provides that each student choose from one of our declining balance, debit plans. With the funds available within the chosen plan each student can then make individual and daily dining decisions, selecting from our extensive array of venues or menu choices available during our expanded service hours. We think such a program offers a better match to the typical student's wants, and our surveys of customers' satisfaction indicate that to be the case.

If you have already examined our Fall First-year program, you recognize that although we typically offer a choice of three dining plans, for fall term we automatically assign our entering First Year's the "Green Dining Plan". You have been billed \$1,330 for that plan, and it provides 2 special orientation- event meals plus \$1,270 of debit dollars (declining balance account dollars or "DBA"), \$200 of which can be spent in our Topside convenience store.

We assign this plan to First-Year's for a couple of reasons. First, Dartmouth Dining Services (DDS) offers a program with a much wider range of menus, services, and venues than what is offered by most of our peer institutions. As a result we have concerns about a student's ability to make a wise and informed choice of plans before that student has actually experienced the offerings that make up our program. We think of orientation and fall-term as the 11-week period in which our customers get to know us, and the Green Plan seems to be the right plan for that experience. Second, the dollar amount of spending in a our Green Plan comes very close to the average spending level of last year's Dartmouth students. During the 2008-09 academic year, our students spent an average of \$1,292 per term in our dining units. Keep in mind that the \$1,292 figure includes the spending of our off-campus students - a group that typically spends less with us. For these reasons we take the liberty of assigning our First-year's the Green Plan for fall term, and doing so seems to work well.

The one exception to this rule is that we do allow First-year's the option of changing to our larger plan - the discounted Big Green Plan. If you suspect that your son or daughter would benefit from having a larger plan while enjoying a 10% discount on dining purchases, you should view the "Dining Plans" tab of the Dining Services website for details of the Big Green plan and how to make the change.

Once fall term has ended and during our “dining plan change period”, first year students will have the option of moving to our smaller Mini-green plan. However, over the years we have found that most First-year’s stay with the Green Plan as it seems to offer what most of our customers want. You should expect to receive a letter from us in mid-November suggesting that you discuss these dining choices with your son or daughter during the Thanksgiving holiday break. In that letter we will also outline the easy ways to change to a new plan and the deadlines for doing so. As an additional reminder, near the end of the fall term the Dartmouth Card Office will send to each student an email note with information about his or her winter-term dining plan. That email will also explain how and when to change to a different plan.

One other aspect of dining at Dartmouth is also worth bringing to your attention – “rollover” of unused DBA at the end of a term. If a student ends a term with a balance of Dining DBA (see our website’s “Dining Plans” and “FAQ” tabs for details about Dining DBA and Topside DBA) in his or her account, that amount remains active and available to spend. The amount of Dining DBA in a subsequent term’s plan then gets added to any rollover amount, and the student enjoys the benefit of having more opportunity to spend the assigned amounts. Rollover of unused balances occurs at the end of summer, fall, and winter terms. However, rollover does not occur at the end of spring term – rather on each Commencement Sunday (in June) all accounts are cleared and any unused balances are forfeited to the College. While DDS always recommends that our customers budget their per-term spending to match their chosen dining plan, those students who, for whatever reason, do not spend their dining allocation during a particular term, greatly appreciate the rollover feature of the DDS program.

What if the reverse is true and a student runs out of Dining and Topside DBA? As a parent, you likely appreciate that when that happens (as it often does), students can continue to buy the food they need by charging their purchases (or as our students like to say, “Going negative”). Each month DDS and Card Office systems combine all charged amounts and transfer the total to Student Financial Services for inclusion on the next Dartmouth College (student) bill. This often-appreciated aspect of our dining program is automatically a part of each student’s account structure, and he or she needs to do nothing to begin enjoying this feature.

We think that dining at Dartmouth is special, and we proudly point to national surveys that consistently rank our program among the elite group of the nation’s best college dining programs. However, we recognize that we enjoy such ranking only because we spend each day working to convince our customers that we deserve these accolades. We hope that very soon your son or daughter will come to see the services we provide as one of the high points of Dartmouth life. Toward that end, we always welcome the thoughts, opinions, and suggestions of our customers and their parents. Such constructive input, put forth by an ever-expanding list of satisfied customers, plays a major role in helping us manage a successful program, so never hesitate to let us know how we are doing.

Over the next four years we look forward to serving your son and daughter – and of course, whenever possible, you also!

Dartmouth Dining Services