

Fairmont State University Case Study

Fairmont State University Dining Sees 10% Increase in Check Averages with SICOM Encounter™ Kiosk

Executive Summary

Fairmont State University, along with its sister institution Pierpont Community and Technical College, decided it was time to transition the way they serve students & faculty from a grab-and-go system to made-to-order service. Together with their dining services partner, Aladdin Food Management Services, member of Eloor North America, they selected SICOM Encounter™ Kiosk to help them improve customer service and promote future growth.

Learn how Aladdin Food Management at Fairmont State University uses SICOM to:

- Eliminate lines and help an average of 600 lunch-rush customers order food quickly
- Empower students to order and pay their way
- Increase check averages by 10% and customer traffic by 5%

Fairmont State University offers 4,500 students over 80 programs of study & 5 graduate degree programs. The University's main campus, located in Fairmont, West Virginia, is home to the Falcon Center, home of the student dining hall, food court, and convenience store where hundreds of students meet to grab a quick lunch every day.

SICOM Encounter™ Kiosk increases check averages & sales, eliminates lines, and boosts lunch-time traffic by 5%.

The Challenges

Challenge 1: Put Customers First

After a full renovation of the space with their design partners at TriMark SS Kemp and Aster Industries, Fairmont State Dining Services wanted to focus on the guest experience: it was a top priority to make sure students and faculty could order exactly what they wanted the way they wanted it. And, with about 300 customers ordering an hour during lunch rush, they didn't want to see their customers waiting in long lines.

Serving many generations across students and faculty, dining services wanted to make sure they could support the ways their customers preferred to place their orders. Students coming from around the world were already accustomed to self-order solutions, and younger generations were immediately comfortable using the touchscreen technology. They needed ordering technology with an emphasis on intuitive menu flows to assuage any concerns about older customers adapting to the new order method.

"We wanted our students and faculty to be able to place their orders faster, get the food they want and have it be as fresh as possible," said Joe DeSalvo, Aladdin Food District Manager.

University Dining Services knew self-order kiosks were the answer to eliminating lines and improving customer service.

Challenge 2: Leverage Cashless Payments

Instead of carrying cash or credit cards, students rely on 'Falcon Dollars' pre-loaded on to Heartland OneCard student IDs to pay for retail purchases across campus. Dining services knew that a cashless POS solution was key to keeping average order times low and lines to a minimum.

They wanted to make sure their new system and kiosks allowed students to pay for food using their Falcon Dollars in order to make ordering as seamless as possible and to continue to leverage the investment the University has made in the Heartland system across campus.

Challenge 3: Promote Growth and Increase the Bottom Line

Dining services hoped that by speeding up the ordering process and using kiosks to suggest add-ons & upsell, they would see an increase in sales and check averages.

They also knew they needed a technology partner with solutions that would grow alongside them as they grow. They were looking for a partner that would keep them on the cutting edge of technology so that they could offer the best experience to their customers now, and going forward.



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The Solution

The SICOM team implemented 6 SICOM Encounter™ Kiosks, 3 SICOM Display™ systems, 2 SICOM Expeditor™ screens, and an order status monitor. They also partnered with Heartland OneCard to develop an interface that allowed students to pay using their meal plans at the Encounter Kiosks.

The Results

Faster Ordering and Better Service

SICOM Encounter Kiosks have eliminated lines at Fairmont State University's dining hall. Now customers walk up to the Encounter Kiosk to place their order, pay for their food there or print a ticket to pay at the cashier later, visit the cashier for beverages, and then, can go about their business waiting for their fresh-made food.

The students enjoy customizing their orders at the Encounter Kiosk. They feel they are being offered more variety and are suddenly more aware of all of the add-on options available to them. Before the dining hall installed Encounter Kiosks, students tended to order sandwiches as they were listed on the menu. Now, with choices at their fingertips, the majority of students are adding and substituting toppings.

"The students love it," said Robert Lemon, Fairmont State Retail Sales Manager. "They are enjoying the flexibility and the ease of use."

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Seamless Integration

Students can now pay for their food at the SICOM Encounter™ Kiosks using Falcon Dollars on their student IDs thanks to a new integration between SICOM and the Heartland OneCard system. To pay at the Encounter Kiosk with Falcon Dollars, a student simply selects the Falcon Card icon on the screen and swipes their card. The amount spent is automatically deducted from their balance within the Heartland system.

"This was the first time SICOM has integrated with Heartland, and it's been a seamless transition," said Lemon. "Students are using their cards at the [Encounter Kiosks] without a problem."

More Sales and More Customers

Dining services staff is shocked by how much the new system has changed student buying habits. They hoped for an increase in upsell, but they never imagined the giant leap forward they have experienced with the Encounter Kiosk. Students now order items they never used to before and customize their meals with multiple add-ons.

Since implementing SICOM Solutions, University Dining has seen an increase in food check averages of 10%.

In addition to increased upsell, SICOM Encounter Kiosks have also eliminated human error, for example, making sure customers are always charged for additional items.

"It's a remarkable system, and the customer gets exactly what they want," said DeSalvo. "The [Encounter Kiosk] puts everything in front of the customer and helps them make better decisions. In the past, everything was spread out. Now, the [Encounter Kiosk] brings all of the options together with a suggestive flow that works."

SICOM Solutions have allowed dining services to be more flexible with staffing, but hasn't given them reason to eliminate any labor. The tech-savvy students like the new ordering option so much that word has gotten out and made this an even more popular lunchtime spot.

Thanks to self-order, dining services at Fairmont State have seen a 5% increase in customer traffic, and the staff is doing all they can to serve the influx of customers quickly.

Fairmont State Dining Services is adjusting to the many positive developments brought on by the success of implementing SICOM Solutions. They have made adjustments to kitchen operations: for example, they've changed inventory practices to keep up with demand, and they've even changed how they prep certain food that has recently become more popular for faster service. In the long-term, the University is looking forward to expanding the solution to other locations across campus and maybe adding new features for their eager customers, too.

"When we were evaluating solutions, we found [SICOM] had the most features and the most potential to support future growth," said Lemon. "The transition has been great, and [SICOMSERV] has been very good."



About SICOM Systems

Through one powerful platform, SICOM delivers an end-to-end suite of purpose-built solutions for quick service, fast casual, and food service to effectively manage, control, and standardize processes—all while capturing data insights needed to drive continuous improvement and greater profitability. Today, SICOM's enterprise solutions are implemented in more than 30,000 restaurant locations worldwide.



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