

PROJECT CATEGORIES OVERVIEW

Sodexo

# Introduction

Before Sodexo, IMSA’s food provider was a service called Arbor. After Dr. Hernandez terminated the Arbor contract, IMSA joined a bid for service from Sodexo. The new Sodexo staff were quick to collaborate with Student Life, and Dr. Hernandez ensured that Student Council would be involved as well. In the first few years of the new contract, Student Council took student and adult feedback to help Sodexo tailor their menus and adaptations were made quickly. Financial improvements were also made with Sodexo, as it took six years for the Sodexo contract to cost as much as the Arbor contract did in its final year alone: $1 million. At one point during those first six years, IMSA also fell in debt to Sodexo, but instead of terminating the contract, Sodexo stayed on until IMSA finished compensatory payments in the spring of 2013. Student Life generally likes Sodexo staff as they are open and helpful. Additionally, Sodexo staff clean the dining area after mealtimes, which is technically the responsibility of Student Life and the janitors. Sodexo consistently turns to Student Council for help in maintaining this area as well. The general sentiment among Sodexo’s staff is that Student Council is better equipped to handle students’ concerns about Sodexo. Student Life’s efforts to do the same for staff consistently fall short and this has produced a lot of frustration. Between the 2013 and 2014 Student Council cabinet, the partnership between Student Council and Sodexo grew significantly, running more join projects, events, and campaigns. There is now a strong sense of familiarity between the two groups that provides a lot of hope for future. This document provides brief summaries of all relevant projects that Student Council has worked on with Sodexo, roughly in chronological order by initiation time. The section at the end also provides more background on the main adult administrators who work with Sodexo and related projects.

# Notable Projects

## Serving and Dining Area Renovations

Dr. Hernandez has always seen the dining area in Sodexo as a meaningful location to renovate for students. If more money was available, he says he would put in booths and additional stools. On the serving side, Dr. Hernandez wants to purchase new equipment as well as convert the serving lines to have a rotating splashguard. This splashguard would cover the front side of the line during mealtimes so that students drinks or food could not spill onto trays and it could be rotated to the other side to allow for self-serving on weekends.

## Food Committee

In response to dissatisfaction with Arbor, Dr. Hernandez formed the Sodexo Food Committee in the first year of the new contract to keep IMSA’s food service provider accountable and to allow Sodexo to reach out to the different parts of the community. The committee included a Student Life representative, a parent representative, a student representative, and a Residence Counselor representative who work with the General Manager and Head Chef. The committee informed Sodexo of feedback from all relevant groups and also allows Sodexo to request community leaders’ help in calling for better treatment of their staff and the dining area when necessary. The committee split around February 2014 when a new parent representative could not be recruited. This was not a particularly disruptive breakdown because joint project activity with Sodexo peaked between the 2013 and 2014 Student Council cabinets and thus, a strong partnership survived.

## Late Night Snack Bar

Sodexo has often proposed the idea of a late night snack bar to tailor to students who want snacks for studying in the evening and to increase student scans. The idea has never been actively pursued as students have not expressed an active need for the service nor have groups proposed ideas for what the snack bar would provide. Sodexo has offered to host services in the halls, but the general opinion is that vending machines and the class club 10 check carts cover this need.

## Grab & Go

The 2008 Student Council cabinet (under John Koch) was approached by Student Life to see if the student body would be interested in a program, originally called Sodexo-on-the-Go, hosted by Sodexo to allow them to take breakfast outside of the dining area to be eaten in morning classes. It is unclear exactly how, but Student Council assured away Student Life’s main concern, that students would leave the trash from Grab & Go all over the school. Sodexo was willing to expand the program because it increased the volume of student who would scan at breakfast time. While it remains a generally popular service to students, Dr. Hernandez notes that the program has significantly reduced the number of students who eat breakfast inside Sodexo and also helped increase the number of students who sleep In until just before their morning class.

## Outreach Campaigns

Sodexo has always turned to Student Council for help in encouraging students to take care of the dining area and to address issues such as dirty plates and utensils being left behind at tables, cross-contamination of beverage machines, and excessive waste by students and staff. To push these messages, Student Council has hung table signs, held meetings in the residence halls, and, collaborated with Club Terra for an Earth Week demonstration.

## Advertising Monitors

The 2009 Student Council cabinet (under Mamatha Challa) asked Student Life to purchase two new TV monitors to display important dates and reminders outside of Sodexo and Student Life. In April of 2014, the main monitor was moved to Sodexo for students to see during mealtimes. The monitors became popular as an advertising service for clubs to submit slides to. After a small initial peak, usage of the monitors became almost entirely Student Council-oriented. Though initially skeptical, Dr. Hernandez now recognizes Student Council as having responsibility and control over the monitors. Pending favorable survey data, Dr. Hernandez is prepared to purchase more monitors for use in Sodexo, especially if it will reduce the money spent annually on printing ink-heavy student posters. Sodexo has appreciated the project as it has largely eliminated table trifolds, an advertising tool that Student Council and SCIA brought into wide use, which consume lots of paper and are rarely cleaned up after their use expires.

## Meal Survey

After a few years with few real joint projects with Sodexo, Student Council published a survey listing all of Sodexo’s meals and asking students to rate them. Notes on the data analysis suggest that with the exception of a few very well-known meals, ratings were inconclusive. A copy of the results cannot be recovered; a key reason for Student Council’s shift to Google Forms, and Sodexo suggested that the survey be redone with higher publicity in the future. However, when sample student groups were shown the list of meals to be put in the new survey, many could not connect the name to actual food. Two alternatives have been posed. The first would be to develop a system to allow for daily feedback after each meal, likely to be provided as students leave the dining area. The second would be a comprehensive undertaking to photograph all meals over Sodexo’ four week cycle in preparation for a survey with visual aids. Sodexo also feels that the metrics of a new meal survey would have to be improved, as general Likert scale ratings do not tell Sodexo how to improve the quality of the food.

## Feedback Form

To increase access to and awareness of the Food Committee, a feedback form was added to the Student Council website the summer before the year of the 2013 cabinet. On average, it collected 2-5 responses per month. However, most of the students who used the form were the students who were aware of the food committee and interacted with Sodexo’s staff on a regular basis. Because of this, roughly half of the feedback that came through was positive and ended up being a positive token of Sodexo’s relationship with students and Student Council. After a long period with few truly substantial submissions, the feedback form was removed from the Student Council website in 2015.

## Reusable Meal Ware

Until 2013, Sodexo gave staff taking food out of the dining area disposable containers. This practice was driving up costs and as part of the “Go Green!” Initiative at IMSA, Sodexo wanted to switch to a reusable system. The fear with making such a switch was that Sodexo’s utensils and plates were already being taken from the dining area, most notoriously by residence counselors who kept them as kitchen supplies. Through most of the 2013 cabinet year, the food committee debated over different systems to ensure that the containers would be returned to Sodexo. This debate is significant because Student Council tried to have a takeout system for students with exceptionally short lunch breaks using reusable containers. Containers had to be returned. Student Council considered setting up a barcode system, or charging harsher, more frequent obligation fees if the containers were not returned. The current system for staff is that staff are charged an obligation fee when they fail to return a container, but because obligations can be cleared at the end of the year without returning the container, Sodexo went long periods of time with low supplies of containers. Student Life compensated by purchasing more containers, but those were absorbed by staff usage as well. Dr. Hernandez estimates that if students were even half as inconsistent as staff in returning containers, the system would be completely unsustainable. Currently, the plates, utensils, and cups are reusable. However, the takeout containers are now disposable.

## Random Introduction Tables

During the summer between the 2013 and 2014 cabinets, this idea was proposed to increase bonding between new sophomores. During the first few days after move-in, sophomores at Sodexo would be given a random number corresponding to a table in the dining area. Through this process, the hope was that students would meet other classmates when they would otherwise stay with initial friend groups. The project was never actively pursued.

## Moonlight Grab & Go

Another project devised during the summer between the 2013 and 2014 cabinets had to goal of providing Grab & Go for students whose schedules did not start early enough for them to get normal Grab & Go. Under the program, Student Council members would go around the halls after ten check to deliver stored Grab & Go supplies while scanning student IDs. In the morning, they would return leftovers to Sodexo with a list of students who scanned. Students scanned at night would be ineligible for Grab & Go again in the morning. Dr. Hernandez struck down the project out of worry that it would only encourage students with late starts to sleep in incredibly late. Sodexo offered to extend Grab & Go times to accommodate for more students but when an extension was posed to students, only those with very late starts requested it.

## Care Crates

In the fall of 2013, Student Council supported Sodexo on a project to sell care packages to students that included snacks and beverages to be kept in their rooms. The product’s target segments were athletes, students who did not want to go on trips, and families that live far away from IMSA and cannot normally visit. Logistics and marketing for the Care Crates were put together entirely by Student Council and this project is considered a tipping point in the partnership between Sodexo and Student Council because it was the first project on which the two groups had collaborated extensively without the Food Committee as a proxy. While originally planned to split profit half and half between Sodexo and Student Council, Ms. Jevtic, the past Sodexo manager, decided to give all profit to Student Council. Care Crates sales peaked at Parent’s Day in the fall but then tapered off. The program ended in February 2014 because Student Council Student Representatives, who were assigned to assemble and deliver the packages, did not complete their responsibilities. At closing, roughly a quarter of the total stock ordered for the program was sold. Luckily, Sodexo absorbed the cost of the surplus and the project actually generated revenue for Student Council with no cost to cabinet funds.

## Language Tables

This project was proposed on the Academic Committee during the 2014 Student Council cabinet year. It would allocate specific tables in the dining area where students could only speak in a target language. The table would also include specialty items to fit the language’s and culture and even activities or tutors to help students with their World Language classes. One instance of the project was held but for future events, Student Council has sought the aid of the World Language department to provide extra credit as an incentive for students to attend. If this project is brought back, more coordination with the World Language department and academic tutors via Ms. Keck is necessary. Student Council must also present a plan to record which students actually stay at the tables and those who just pass by for extra credit.

## Cram Jam

Before the finals at the end of the 2013 fall semester, Sodexo and Student Council put on an event to give students personal pizzas and drinks and relieve stress before exams. The original goal was to allow students to use the dining area as a place to do group study, but without chaperones it could not be opened up. Before the spring semester finals, Sodexo and Student Life agreed to open up the dining area for the event. Student Council also switched to an electronic order for the second Cram Jam and this roughly doubled participation. On top of that, Sodexo estimated that an extra 20-30students who did not complete order forms attended the event. Sodexo ordered extra pizzas beforehand to accommodate for such a situation. However, Cram Jam was discontinued due to its high costs.

## Sodexo Forum

As the fourth open forum held during the 2014 Student Council cabinet’s year, Amy Woods (in place of Dr. Hernandez), Ms. Jevtic, and Chef Butera fielded questions and suggestions from students about Sodexo. The event was held in transition between the 2014 cabinet and the 2015 cabinet-elect and done in a format different from the previous forums. The Sodexo forum was in an open house format to try and accommodate for varying student schedules, particularly for athletes, who often complain about Sodexo’s portion sizes. The open house also allowed students to eat their meals while discussing so that they could also provide feedback on the quality of the food. Attendance was sporadic as expected but roughly the same in total as the other forums had garnered. The Sodexo Forum was recreated in the spring of 2018 with Dr. Hernandez, Chef Glenn, and Ms. McDonnell to survey students on their favorite Sodexo foods as well as the possibility of more vegetarian and vegan options. Due to scheduling conflicts with events like Holi or Student Council elections, the attendance at the forum was relatively small. However, feedback was still collected. As a result, Sodexo held a special dinner called, “Mealtime Favorites,” that provided students with onion rings, mac n’ cheese, and chocolate cake.

## Vending Machines

In January 2014, Sodexo was given control over the vending machines on campus and because a new bulk order plan, was able to increase the frequency at which they are restocked. Every year, Dr. Hernandez also allocates a varying percentage of profit to go to Class Club and Student Council. Student Council and Sodexo moved the vending machines to right outside the dining area, so that new shelves and cubbies can be placed in the nook that the machines previously occupied.

## Commons Expansion

In response to the expected increase in volume of students in the main building during the day because of hall closings for the 2014-2015 school years Student Council worked with Dr. Hernandez to enable access to the dining area as extra space for the Old Cafe commons during the entire day. Both groups wanted to pursue a project similar to this in the past but the upcoming changes granted new impetus. However, Dr. Hernandez worried that students would abuse the expansion and that already existing problems, from dirty tables and stolen utensils to students skipping scanning and removing food from Sodexo would grow. Student Council held two open houses in a Sodexo outreach campaign student response was largely mild and fixated on a minor provision: moving the beverage machine to an open area. Regardless, administration opened the side door, allowing students to study and relax within the dining area during both the school day and weekends.

## Mealtime and ID Adjustment

The other joint initiative with Sodexo in response to changes for the 2014-2015 school year has to do with access to mealtimes for students. Because a primary goal of the class schedule change was to increase eating time for students, Sodexo was willing to adjust its mealtimes. Scan data was the primary metric for these adjustments. However, Sodexo also relied on Student Council to observe student activity and recommend suitable adjustments that would otherwise not be clear from scans. In particular, Student Council worked with clubs that previously relied on midday for meeting time and coordinated with them and Sodexo to create a schedule that balances meeting and eating time during breaks.

## Sodexo Funtime Party

The 2015 Student Council cabinet created Sodexo Funtime Party as a project under Sodexo Mealtime Feedback. The project aimed to show students the relevance of their feedback, while simultaneously collecting data about Sodexo meals. Students were allowed to vote for their preference of meal, and then that meal would be served at a later date. The project never occurred due to scheduling conflicts; however, it sparked discussion in the cabinet on how to further engage the student body when gathering feedback.

## Midday Takeout

Sodexo Midday Takeout was a project created in 2015 to allow students to eat during midday without having to wait during in the infamously long lines. Students would send in their ID and their sandwich order along with their preference of apples or chips the night before. They would then receive their meal in a bag the following midday. Midday Takeout was running from 2015-2016. However, due to a website malfunction, Midday Takeout was unable to run the following school year of 2016-2017. It was unable to begin running again until midway of the 2017-2018 school year. However, currently, very few students use the midday takeout due to a lack of advertisement, as well the limited food options available for midday takeout. Future improvement to Midday Takeout include a heavy advertisement campaign and the possibility of allowing different food options besides sandwiches.

## Midday Backpack Back Up

Dr. Bob Hernandez and Michael Matozzi approached the 2017-2018 Student Council cabinet after realizing that students frequently left their backpacks in the middle of the Old Café. The buildup of backpacks soon became a fire hazard. However, neither student and administration wanted security to have to remove backpacks that were blocking the floor. Student Council came up with a solution to mark off areas of the floor that students would be able to place their backpacks in. Students generally followed the marked off areas and both student and administration were satisfied.

## Sodexo Committee

In October 2018, Sodexo Committee, a six-person group consisting of members and non-members of Student Council that were passionate about making change in Sodexo. The purpose of this committee was to collect feedback from students regarding food options at Sodexo and work with Sodexo to make dining more inclusive for those with dietary restrictions. The committee met once a week. Throughout the year, members mostly focused on individual complaints about certain dishes and recommendations relayed this information during meetings with Sodexo Manager Kathy McDonnell and former Head Chef Glenn Yehling. In February, Sodexo Committee hosted a focus group of around ten students with dietary restrictions and discussed concerns with Sodexo, as well as gathering possible dish ideas and ingredient substitutions. In March, Sodexo Committee sent out a survey to the student body, asking students to rate dishes and ingredients such as different protein sources and vegetables. There were a few complications with the survey, as there were that students did not know the names of certain dishes and the large number of dishes to rate made the survey unappealing. Since not all dishes required a rating, some dishes had very little data. Additionally, some recipes varied from week to week, so Sodexo employees had a hard time figuring out which particular recipe of a dish was liked or disliked. Despite these issues, Sodexo Committee received 148 responses and was able to compile the data and send the analysis to Kathy Mcdonnell. This project is running again in 2019-20.

# Relevant Administrators

## Mrs. Katie Berger, Associate Director of Student Life

In her role in Student Life, Mrs. Berger puts special emphasis on food service. Ms. Berger often facilitates conversations between Sodexo and Student Council. She is an active member in Sodexo projects, and often joins meetings between Sodexo and Student Council, as well as participating in Sodexo Forums and gaining student and staff feedback as well.

## Ms. Kathy McDonnell, Sodexo General Manager

Ms. McDonnell oversees all of Sodexo’s operations, menus, and staffing. Her office, located in the back of Sodexo, is always available for visiting students. She is very willing to meet with Student Council members. Her and Student Council have worked exclusively together to create Sodexo outreach programs, as well as discuss recipes and possible food options.

## Mr. Glenn Yehling, Sodexo Head Chef

Chef Glenn is a very excitable man who loves working with students. He supervises the Sodexo staff and works to find new products and recipes for Sodexo. He leads preparation of all the meals, so he is the most informative source about any meal that Sodexo offers, but critiques of Sodexo food are better directed to Ms. McDonnell.