

Proposal for Installation of Swipe Machines in all Vending Machines in Residence Halls

To: Honey Fishman, Director of Administration and Contract Services,
Business Services

CC: Scott Wright, Director, Business Services; Ross Fraser, Executive
Director, University Residence Halls; Lisa Hogarty, Vice President for
Student Services; Dean Chris Colombo, Dean of Student Affairs; Dean Austin
Quigley, Dean of Columbia College

Subject: Proposal for Installation of Swipe Machines in all Vending
Machines in Residence Halls

From: Columbia College Student Council & Engineering Student Council

Observations:

A significant number of undergraduates use the ninety-four vending machines on campus, particularly on the way to and from class. Not all of these students carry small bills or change with them and, for this reason, are unable to buy snacks or drinks from vending machines that accept only these forms of payment. On the other hand, all Columbia undergraduates carry their Columbia ID cards with them and are able to use vending machines equipped to debit FLEX accounts regardless of the amount of cash or change they have on hand. However, not all vending machines on the Morningside campus are equipped to debit FLEX accounts; in the sixteen residence halls in which undergraduates live, thirty machines accept only cash or change. While equipped machines tend to need constant restocking, these unequipped machines tend to be used less frequently.

Proposal:

We, the Columbia College Student Council and the Engineering Student Council, propose that all vending machines in undergraduate residence halls be equipped with swipe machines that debit FLEX accounts and enable undergraduates to use vending machines without cash or change by February 21, 2003, one month after the first day of classes for the spring semester.

Argument:

As is true of any other business, Columbia University Business Services aims to make a profit. Yet, given that it operates within the confines of

a University, Business Services faces a second, equally significant pressure: it should cater to and accommodate the needs of its clientele, the students of Columbia University. We believe that the lack of FLEX-equipped vending machines in university residence halls poses a significant inconvenience to students. For this reason, equipping vending machines with the machinery that will make it possible to debit FLEX accounts will provide to students an important service they now lack. Although there are a significant number of unequipped vending machines in academic buildings on campus, equipping the thirteen unequipped vending machines in residence halls should be a priority. Since residence halls are the epicenter of student life, it is essential that these machines are the first to be equipped. Most of the vending machines without swipe readers are in residence halls located a few blocks away from the South Field Area of campus. If a student does not have the appropriate amount of change at hand, this student will be unable to access the snacks and drinks sold in the vending machines. The nearest stores or ATM machines are a few minutes away from these residence halls. Thus, when students are not able to use their Columbia Card to purchase snacks, they face a great inconvenience. Furthermore, because only some of the residence halls have swipe readers on vending machines, this increases the disparity between the residence halls. For these reasons, we strongly encourage the installation of swipe readers in the thirteen vending machines that do not currently contain swipe readers.

We believe Business Services will benefit from the equipping of all vending machines in undergraduate residence halls with FLEX enabled machinery. As students, we can attest to the fact that machines that make it possible to purchase snacks and drinks without cash or change are used significantly, and make up approximately one quarter of all sales. The provision of more FLEX equipped machines will issue in a greater volume of vending sales. For this reason, we see the equipping of all vending machines in undergraduate residence halls as a mutually-agreeable proposition.