

The Viking News

Campus Food Complaints on the Rise JONAS BARR

The Viking Café in the student center is a hive of activity nearly every weekday. It's one of three cafes where students from all across campus gather to partake in eating and socializing with friends. Lately, however, students have been expressing their concerns about the price, quality, and variety of food available on campus.

The Faculty-Student Association (FSA) is the entity which oversees the food services on campus. Working in tandem with the Dining Services department, their responsibilities include determining the pricing, acquisition, and preparation of food and beverage items for the three restaurants on campus: The Viking Café and the Crema Café in the Student Center and the Siegel Café in the Gateway Center. Many students use the main cafeteria—the Viking Café—most frequently because, in the words of WCC student Christian Neves, it is a “convenient location to eat on campus.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FSA was deeply affected by the closure of the main WCC campus as well as its extension sites. Remnants of this are still being felt as the FSA begins operations for this coming year.

“We’re trying to get back into the swing of things after COVID,” said Iman Mims, Assistant Director of the FSA. “We want to make sure that the student’s and the campus community’s needs are met by ensuring prices are affordable without compromising on quality.”

Staffing shortages and rising food costs related to inflationary pressures on the economy have not spared SUNY WCC. There is a delicate balancing act between the services which the FSA provides to students and managing the costs associated with running food services on college campuses. Occasionally, the prices which students pay for food products will be affected.

“We want to make sure we stay mindful we’re not raising prices to the point where people cannot afford to buy food here, while still looking at our bottom line,” Mims said.

The Dining Services department was unable to respond to requests for an interview regarding the pricing of food and beverages on campus.

In addition, there seems to be concern among students about the variety of food options.

“They make the same thing over and over. Try something different,” said Omar Gomez, a cyber technology student. “I wish there were more options.”

There have been a few additions to the cafés, however, such as the Viking Bowls where each week the ingredients are inspired by various international cuisines. There is also the BLEND Smoothie and Salad Bar and Coffee Labs as well as the Culinary Arts Café where “student chefs and managers, under the direction of experienced faculty, develop the unique themed dining experience,” according to the WCC website.

“A lot of students don’t know about our culinary dining experience. It’s good, I like it,” said Lotus Taylor, President of the Student Government Association (SGA).

Culinary Arts serves luncheons on Thursdays. It is open to students and faculty via reservation and a waitlist and there is a cost of \$12.00.

Some students have been addressing their concerns about dietary restrictions to Taylor.

“I had a student reach out to me recently saying that—because she has a lot of allergies—not a lot of the foods available meet her dietary restrictions,” said Taylor.

Taylor has expressed her desire to establish a dining committee within the SGA to be able to focus their efforts on addressing student’s concerns and ideas in conjunction with the FSA.

Prior to the pandemic in 2020, the FSA was in the early process of formulating plans to introduce halal certified food to the Viking Café due to a sustained interest among students on campus.

“We have [since] revisited that conversation but we wanted to get things up and running with what we have [while] making sure we’re mindful of those students that have dietary restrictions,” said Mims.

It remains to be seen whether such plans will come to fruition in the near-term, although it does seem that student voices will be critical in guiding such changes.



Students pay at the Viking Café in the Student Center. Photo by Jonas Barr



Geese keep watch from the Technology Building. Photo by Sorelle Marsh

Geese Ecology at WCC: Understanding the Lives of Our Feathered Neighbors SORELLE MARSH

The Valhalla campus is home to a diverse ecosystem and is a refuge for many native species, fostering a rich and thriving natural environment. Among these species, one notable presence that calls this campus home is the Canadian goose (*branta canadensis*). These iconic waterfowl have established themselves as a vital and fascinating component of the ecological tapestry, adding both beauty and complexity to the local environment.

As these birds have increasingly made the campus their year-round home, their permanent residency reflects remarkable adaptation and resilience to the unique ecological niche that is the WCC campus. The presence of resident geese in the area the entire year, however, can lead to various issues, including, overgrazing, water pollution, erosion, and the transmission of diseases. Some locals even view birds as “urban pests” because these particular geese have much more environmental impacts, affecting grazing patterns and feces distribution, according to CTV News.

To grasp the environmental impacts caused by geese, it is imperative to explore their population dynamics and their relationship with the surrounding ecosystems.

A century ago, there were almost no resident geese in New York due to their near extinction. During the 1950s and 1960s, the population of geese experienced a remarkable growth. This was largely due to the efforts of the NYS Conservation Department, which released these birds in upstate areas where populations thrived. Currently, New York hosts nearly 200,000 Canadian geese according to the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation. Efforts to re-establish these species in southern areas led to migratory habitat loss, as the newer populations have no “childhood memories” of returning to northern territories where they hatched. Expansion teams have exceeded expectations and have sometimes led to an

overabundance, according to The New York Times.

With the exponential goose population growth and climate change, complex ecological dynamics with far-reaching implications are unfolding.

As the climate warms, the New York region is likely to expand, creating more opportunities and less of a reason for these geese to fly south for winter. As more of the country becomes habitable year-round, the decreasing number of migratory geese in the southern regions will result in population surges in the seasonal regions. Likewise, human development has been greatly impacted as geese typically lack natural predators and there is an abundance of ponds and lakes for these birds to utilize. These opportunistic vegetarians will readily consume crops, gardens, and even plain grass, making city parks and well-manicured landscapes ideal habitats for geese according to ABELL Pest Control.

On this campus, you’ll likely encounter a flock foraging in the numerous lawn areas that abound.

To combat the problems caused by these birds, Carol Capobianco, Director of The Native Plant Center, suggested altering the campus habitat to make it less appealing for geese; perhaps by shrinking the size of lawn areas by shrub and tree planting, letting the grass grow taller by being cut less frequently. The campus has already tried other methods such as coyote decoys, which haven’t had long-term success.

Capobianco proposed studying the geese’s preferred and avoided areas on campus, with the aim of replicating them elsewhere. To date, the school has yet to discover a working solution to alleviate the harm caused by these birds. Through a combination of responsible wildlife management, habitat restoration, and public awareness we can strike a balance that allows both humans and geese to coexist harmoniously while preserving the delicate equilibrium of our ecosystems.

Local Artist’s Work on Display at WCC Gallery

RAY KATZ

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Hip Hop, and with it, the entry of graffiti into contemporary art discourse.

“It is a worldwide phenomenon, with roots in America, like jazz, rock and roll, and comic book art,” said artist Daina Higgins. “Graffiti in its highest forms has very elaborate expressions, but it always starts with a simple ‘tag.’”

In Higgins’ latest exhibition of paintings, “Uncertain Belonging: Places Lost, Remembered, and Reclaimed,” currently showing at the WCC gallery in the Hankin Academic Arts Building, street art is combined with a more classical art style.

pandemic and the emotional impact caused by the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. It features paintings of several different statues of Confederate and Colonialist figures covered in graffiti.

One of the paintings, titled “John Breckinridge Castleman, Louisville, KY,” features a horse with a rider defaced with spray paint. Oh the horse’s side the words “house homeless” have been splashed.

“I understand that it is challenging for people to see graffiti on a statue, but we must consider the reasons for the statue being there in the first place, and how the addition of graffiti pushes against it,” said Higgins.



“Triangle of Sadness,” oil and spray paint on canvas.

Photo by Ray Katz

“I used my formal art training to improve and advance my graffiti, and conceptually, graffiti art caused me to learn about the politics of public space, and how space is used and for whose benefit,” Higgins said.

These themes are seen continuously throughout her art.

Higgins’ 2018 collection, titled “Ridge Avenue,” focuses on the urban landscape of Philadelphia. One painting, titled “Ivy Ridge at Night,” is set in a strip mall parking lot, with Target being easily identifiable. The reds and purples in the dusky skies, the incorporation of greens and blues that create wisps of clouds, and the halos that surround the lights in the parking lot demonstrates Higgins’ formal art training.

Of the three collections, “Pandemic/Protest” is Higgins’ favorite. Started in 2020, this collection combines the feelings of loneliness occasioned by the COVID-19

In her newest collection, “Letters to Home,” Higgins draws from her experience of being forced to move out of Philadelphia. This collection mainly focuses on feelings of estrangement from one’s home. One painting, entitled “Triangle of Sadness,” stood out from others. The orange of the cigarette, alarm clock, and sun contrasts the blue hues that fill the majority of the painting. The background, full of drawings of trees, vines, birds, and monkeys, is reminiscent of wallpaper.

“Making a domestic life in a chaotic world is the theme of many of my recent paintings, and many have domestic scenes or wallpaper patterns in them,” Higgins said.

Students can see Daina Higgins’ work in the WCC Art Gallery in the Hankin Academic Arts Building through November 11. Gallery hours can be found on the SUNY WCC website. To see more of Higgins’ works, visit her website at <https://dainahiggins.com>.

VIKING VISIONARY

An open letter to the one who broke my heart

CAROL MARTINS

You have many names, and it seems the list keeps growing

I thought I’d be able to call you “the one”

But the one has turned into two, three, four

I hoped the numbers wouldn’t keep growing

I promised the tally would stop at three

At times I wonder if I’m the one breaking my own heart

By allowing people in, I bring myself the misery I strive so hard to stay away from

By allowing people in, I indulge in the bliss of a few months or a couple years

Knowing there will be an end

Anticipating the heartbreak and the solitude and the regret

Acknowledging that it was a mistake and I shouldn’t have done it again

I tell myself it won’t hurt if I know it’s coming

I tell myself not to trust, not to believe, not to let them in

I keep an arm’s distance in all directions and somehow I still get struck

Somehow I still lose

And everytime I tell myself “not again”

When I feel you getting closer, I hold the reins

I say no

I fight tooth and nail not to open the door

Funny how people can waltz in without permission

I didn’t let you in but you’ve made yourself at home

I didn’t let you in and still you’ve consumed my life

I didn’t let you in but I don’t want to let you go

And when you inevitably do, you’ll be another tally mark

Another “never again”

Another “I’ve learned the lesson this time”

Another “the one” who has become number five or six or seven

Right below my own name

For being a fool and thinking it could be different

For being naive and hoping it would be different

To the one who broke my heart

I hope you enjoy the company

Amongst all the other ones who have done it as well

It’s one hell of a party down here

And the list keeps growing