
Application Case 17-1

Campus Food Systems

As part of a master's program in food services management, Cindy Breen has just begun her internship with Campus Food Systems (CFS). CFS is a self-operated university food service department at Cindy's alma mater, Gulfport State College. As a department, CFS reports directly to the vice president of administration, the office generally responsible for nonacademic matters co-funded by the school. Self-operated food service programs try to minimize loss rather than maximize profit. They are operated by employees of the institution, as opposed to contract operations run by professional management companies like Marriott Corporation and ARA Services, profit-making enterprises.

CFS employs about 60 full-time employees. In addition, the staff is supplemented by almost 100 students who provide part-time labor. Thus approximately 160 employees, largely part time, are responsible for providing three distinct dining services to the Gulfport campus: Watkins Dining Hall (traditional cafeteria service for residents); Sea Breeze Cafe (fast-food service for students, faculty, staff, and guests); and Catering (a full range of catering services offered both on and off campus). A fourth function, Stores, orders, receives, inventories, and disburses food and nonfood supplies to the other three operations.

Cindy knows that most self-operated food service programs are located at much larger universities. A small operation like CFS is always vulnerable to a takeover threat from large contractors like Marriott. Smaller schools are easy targets. Also, turnover in the administration makes the threat of a takeover stronger—and Gulfport has just changed presidents. President Sheila Dawes comes from a large university that used ARA to administer dining-room operations. Cindy's supervisor, Jake Platt, has told her that she must help him assure the new college president that CFS should remain self-operated.

Cindy has been working at CFS for only two weeks, and Jake has just assigned her to manage the student help. Her responsibilities include interviewing, selecting, training, scheduling, and disciplining about 100 part-time employees. She also has been charged with preparing a report, Work Accidents in the Food Service Areas, for the previous calendar year. This report will be sent to President Dawes and the Human Resource Department and forwarded to both state and OSHA agencies to comply with state and federal safety and health legislation. Jake has told her to minimize the severity of the reported occupational illness and accidents. He says that CFS can't afford to "inflate" these statistics. They might attract President Dawes's attention. Jake also hinted to Cindy that both her grade in the internship and a favorable job recommendation rest on how she handles the accident report. Some of the accidents Jake has asked her to minimize include the following:

- Bill Black, part-time employee, fractured and cut his right hand when a spring-loaded piston on a food cart snapped back and caught his hand between the cart and a heavy loading cart door. Cindy has learned that Bill's injury has resulted in a permanent partial disability of two fingers.
- Leslie Campbell, Oprah Moses, Cici Potts, Winnie Chung, and George Wilson all cut their hands on the same meat slicer at different times. Each accident was caused when another employee failed to replace the knife guard after cleaning it.
- Winston Knapp received burns on his face, chest, legs, and stomach when hot water splashed out of the steamer into which he had lowered a tray of hot food.

Jake has also asked Cindy to omit any accidents for which reports were not made to Human Resources at the time of the incident. So far, Cindy has documented 46 such

incidents, ranging from a box falling on a student's head to severe cuts from broken glass and knives. But Jake has said not to worry: They were all student employees who used their parents' health insurance to cover medical expenses.

Cindy is distressed by the number of accidents that have occurred during the previous calendar year at CFS. She has just reviewed data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 1995 in her Restaurant Management class. Cindy knows that working in food service can be quite dangerous, but the number of accidents at CFS during the last year is about 20 percent more than in other, comparable small food service operations. In addition, she has found that many accidents were never reported to the state.

Another problem with the incident reports Jake has supplied Cindy to compile her report is the fact that they fail to mention Rick James, a student employee who contracted a severe case of salmonella poisoning from handling diseased seafood. Rick has just returned from a three-month hospital stay. He had been so ill that he had become paralyzed and at first was not expected to live. He missed almost a whole semester of school. Since Rick's illness, CFS has forbidden student employees to handle raw seafood, but that rule has been frequently violated, owing to high absenteeism and turnover of full-time personnel.

Cindy sits contemplating what her sense of values tells her to do next. She has jotted down her alternatives:

1. Prepare the report as Jake has asked, with omissions.
2. Prepare the report, but include the incident reports.
3. Prepare the report including all incident reports, previously unreported accidents, and Rick's serious illness.
4. Go to Fred White, CFS director and Jake's supervisor, and give him a complete report.
5. Send the complete report directly to President Dawes.
6. Call OSHA and ask for someone to inspect CFS.
7. Leak the story to the student newspaper and the local press.

Discussion Question

* What should Cindy do and why? Frame your answer in terms of a safe and healthy workplace.

Source: Written by Jean M. Hanebury, associate professor of management, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Notes

1. Deepthi Ramesh and Ian Young (January 17, 2007), "Tata Boss Proposes Cleanup of Bhopal Site: Survivors Protest," *Chemical Week*, Vol. 169, Iss. 2, p. 13; "Asia: Bhopal's Deadly Legacy in India" (November 27, 2004), *The Economist*, Vol. 373, Iss. 8403, p. 76; Ian Mitroff, Paul Shrivastava, and Firdaus E. Udivaetra (November 1987), *Effective Crisis Management*, pp. 283-91.
2. "Bhopal" (January 28, 1985), *New York Times*, p. 24.
3. Susan Warren (January 27, 2003), "Asbestos Quagmire-Plaintiffs Target Companies Whose Premises Contained Any Form of Deadly Material," *The Wall Street Journal*, p. B1; Cynthia Mitchell (June 1986), "Trustees Named for Manville's Asbestos Fund-Action Puts Concern Closer to Leaving Chapter 11," *The Wall Street Journal*, p. 1.
4. Ibid.