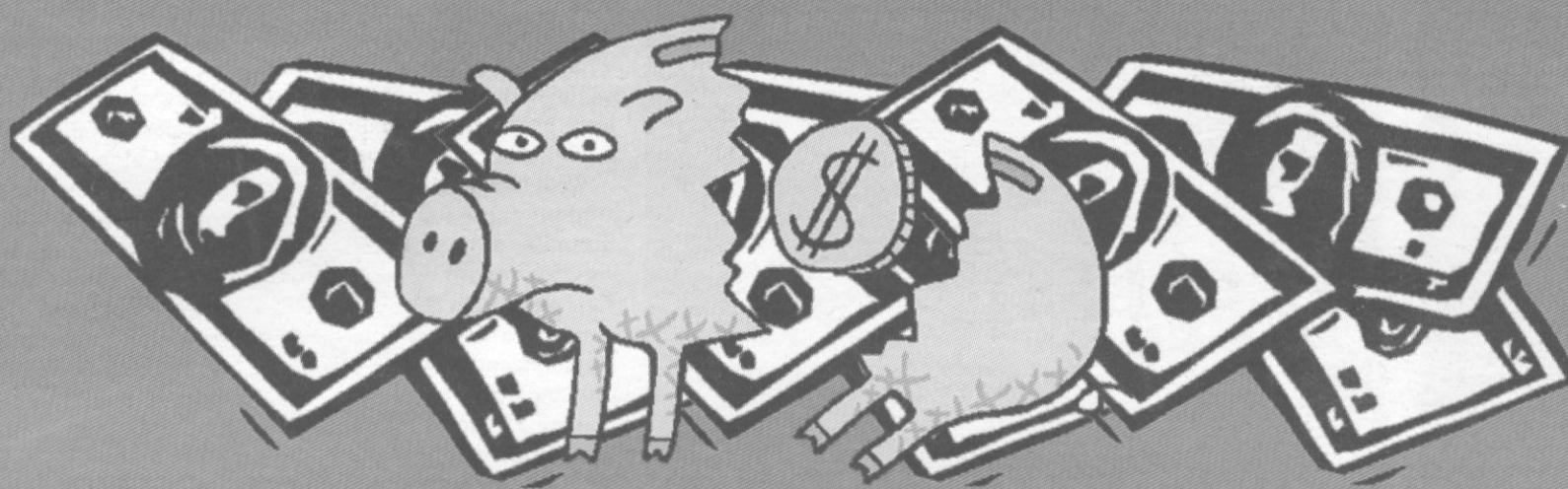
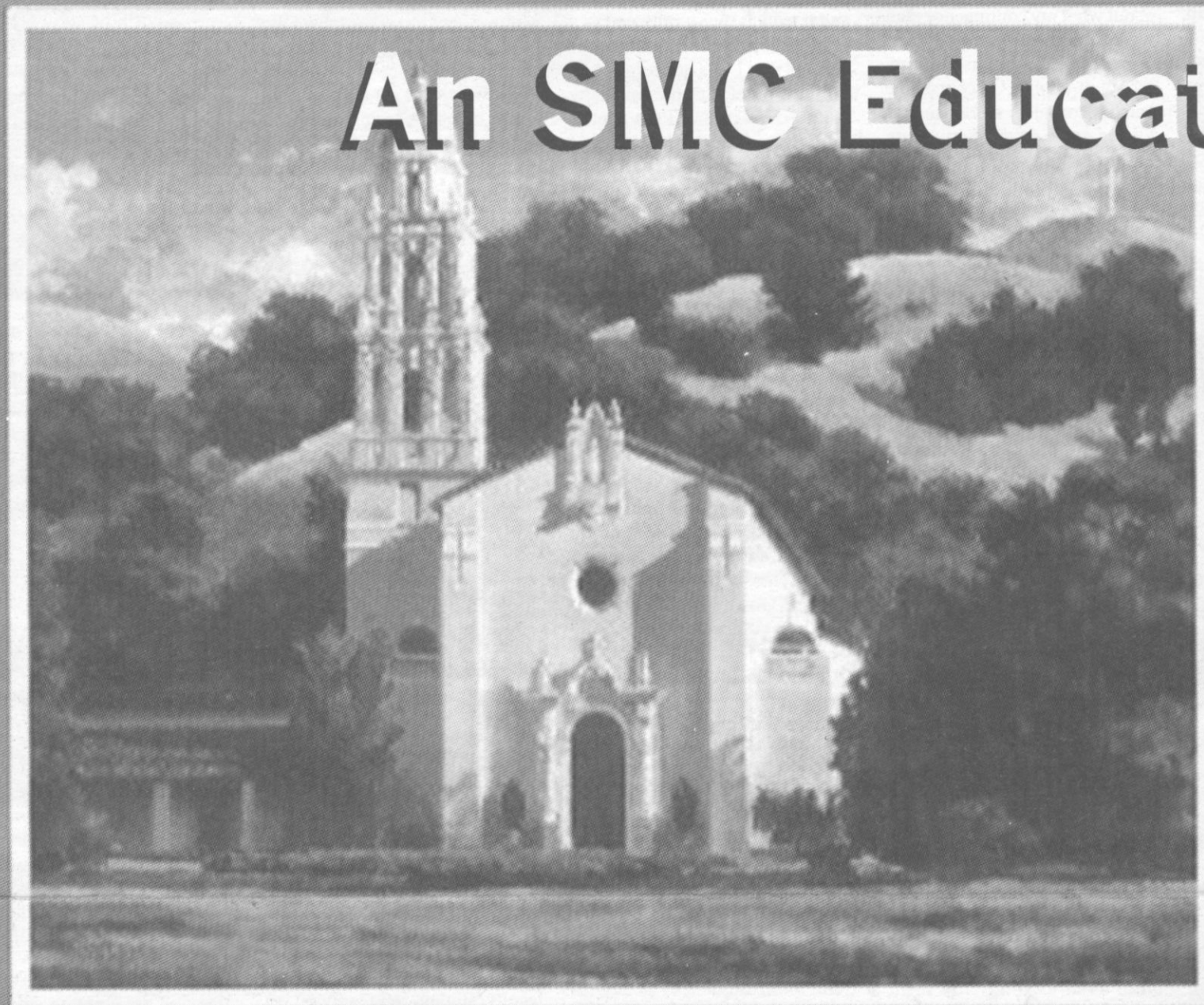


An SMC Education:



We break the bank to go here, but is it worth it?

This month, In-Depth looks at the value of an SMC education

Ain't life grand?

..... Going to SMC on a scholarship makes college dream come true

by **Melanie Linney**
Photo Editor

I once lived in limbo. No, I am not Catholic, but yes, there was a time where I was stuck in a place not knowing where I was headed. Would I be heading up toward a coveted 4-year university, or down to the only thing my dad and I could afford, community college? The problem was money. To be more specific, the problem was our lack of money. When I started getting acceptance letters back that included tuition and room and board costs my heart sank. I knew there was no way I could

go to any of these schools unless I sold some of my vital organs on the black market. It was a horrible feeling knowing that I was good enough to be accepted into these schools, but not good enough to actually go. My father and I would have serious talks about what my contingency plan would be if I was not offered some amazing scholarship to my school of choice. Of course, me being a complete school-snob, I looked down on the community college option. I felt it was beneath me. (To all of those who transferred from community colleges, I now know that that was an immature outlook and have since rectified my feelings

toward community schools, and now go to them every summer). I was completely devastated when I found out that my choice school was not giving me a scholarship, and that I also was only going to receive a small Cal Grant. Now, to some that may seem like a lot, and it truly is, but it only makes a small dent in the total cost. It was decided that I was not going to go to that school, or any university in fact. That is until I got a letter from Saint Mary's, the college I applied to on a whim. I had never even seen the campus before I filled out my application and did not even know where Moraga was. I was shocked to see that they were willing to give me a schol-

arship for over half the cost of the tuition, and the maximum amount in Cal Grants. I was not sure why I was given this opportunity, but I gladly took it. I was not sure how to write this article when approached with the topic of what it's like to be on a scholarship. I could have said that I am poor and still live at home and commute everyday and I hate it, and every time I get a bad grade I wince in fear of losing my scholarship, and yes, I do all of these things, but there is more. Saint Mary's rescued me from a life that I did not want to lead. It gave me a chance to do something with my life and some may say this is where it gets cheesy, but I need

to say it: even with all its faults, I still like this school. I would not change my situation for anything and I am definitely not going to complain because it could be a lot worse. Some of the people at this school who like to complain do not even know what it's like outside our little community and would be shocked to see how good they have it here.

On average, SMC meets 74% of a student's financial need

The figures depress me

by **Jessica Lee**
Staff Writer

You know the feeling... the creeping fear that haunts your dreams and causes you to wake up in a cold sweat as that time approaches. You don't want it to arrive so you stubbornly avoid the mailbox and "accidentally" lose your checkbook at the bottom of your messiest drawer. And then it comes, that small, innocent looking envelope that contains that one bill: the Saint Mary's College tuition bill. How the heck can a few pieces of paper be so painful? You already know how much it demands, yet you still feel a sick feeling at the bottom of your stomach as you rip it open while secretly longing to burn it.

Although we may think we are paying a lot for this education, we should count our lucky stars that we don't live in 1906 when going to this college cost a whopping \$320! Yup, a bit of quick math says that today we pay more for a semester's worth of textbooks. Now, even taking into account inflation, it is still mighty painful to look at the numbers. So while you read and cringe, I'll go hide myself in my room and scream into a pillow.

Selected years and cost for two semesters (includes tuition, fees, and room & board)

- 1906-1907: \$320
- 1915-1916: \$400
- 1925-1926: \$607
- 1935-1936: \$735
- 1946-1947: \$780
- 1956-1958: \$1,150
- 1966-1968: \$2,017
- 1976-1977: \$4,220
- 1985-1987: \$9,860
- 1995-1997: \$22,007
- 2004-2005: \$34,680
- 2005-2006: \$37,290

Financial figures collected with the assistance of Michael Beseda and Sandy Ruiz.

Is Saint Mary's worth the cost?

An analysis of tuition costs, class sizes, may lead to a counterintuitive conclusion

by **Bettina Adragna**
Staff Writer

Students often complain about the high cost of tuition at Saint Mary's College, and prospective students may look at the figures and say, "I can't afford this place. I should go somewhere else." But there may be other factors to consider besides tuition costs. We will compare Saint Mary's to two other popular schools: University of California at Berkeley, and Santa Clara University.

Tuition for Saint Mary's was \$25,150 in the 2004-2005 school year (www.stmarys-ca.edu). Santa Clara University, on the other hand, cost \$27,135 in tuition and fees, on average (www.scu.edu). There is no tu-

ition for resident undergraduates at UC Berkeley (state schools are not allowed to charge "tuition" to residents, instead they charge "fees"). However, for non-residents (out-of-state students), the figure jumps to \$22,912, a few thousand dollars below the typical Saint Mary's undergraduate's tuition. Also, for all undergraduates at Berkeley, room and board costs \$11,629 per year. At Saint Mary's, this figure is \$9,530—a few thousand dollars cheaper than room and board at UC Berkeley.

We've looked at the costs. Now, what about the education that these varying institutions provide? Let's look at average class size, which was 20.12 in 2004 (term total). Student to faculty ratio at Berkeley is 16:1 (<http://metrics.vcbf.berkeley.edu/>),

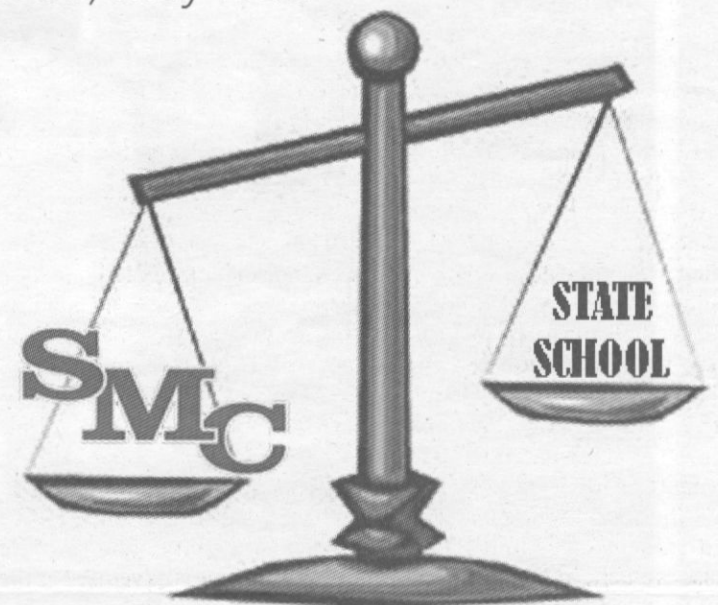


Illustration by Melanie Linney

which sounds good. However, faculty/student ratio is simply an average of the number of students compared to the number of faculty at the whole college. It doesn't tell you the average class size, which could not be found on the Berkeley website. So if you learn best through small classes, Berkeley remains a mystery.

We'll have to do the faculty to student ratio for Santa Clara manually, since this information was not readily available from their website. In September 2004, there were 434 full-time faculty members and 287 part-time faculty members at Santa Clara, making 721 total faculty members. Undergraduate enrollment for the same period was 4,739 students. This makes the faculty to student ratio about 20:3. This means the faculty to student ratio is better than Berkeley's. However, as stated, faculty to student ratio may not say much about actual class size.

Personally, I think it's obvious that you are going to get smaller classes at Saint Mary's than at Berkeley. To me, this is an advantage. Santa Clara probably has small classes too, but it's slightly more expensive than Saint Mary's. Berkeley is much cheaper than Saint Mary's if you live in California, but if you don't, tuition is almost comparable, and room and board is actually more expensive. There are other factors to consider as well—seminar-style classes versus lecture-style classes (one may be preferable to the other) and enrollment figures (more students may mean less attention), as well as other factors.

I'd say it's safe to say that if the main factors that concern you are class size and total costs, that Saint Mary's, despite its high tuition, is a good deal.



Illustration by Melanie Linney

1906:
\$320



Illustration by Melanie Linney

2005:
\$37,290



Photo by Melanie Linney

Sodexo offers varied food, meal plans

by Jesse Radin

Staff Writer

Dining options serve students needs, but students offer opinions about value

Sodexo, the provider of Saint Mary's dining facilities, has been stocking Saint Mary's with food since 1974. Before, they were Marriott and then Saga, and now they are known as the food conglomerate Sodexo USA.

The company usually donates or provides at-cost food for student groups, such as the Vagina Monologues or for an RA to provide some snacks to encourage hungry students to go to an important hall meeting, or just for them to have a get-together for their residence hall. "I donate a lot to student groups, and a lot at cost," said Matt Carroll, general manager of Sodexo. We'll provide the food for student groups and student clubs and RAs because we believe that it is important for the students to build community and that its important to have food at a lot of those events."

Dining options for Saint Mary's students include Oliver Hall,

Café Louis, the 151° Grill, and Subversions. With the exception of those in the townhouses, which are provided with kitchens, students are required to pick from one of four meal plans to meet their needs. There is Carte Blanche (unlimited access to Oliver Hall) the "Classic 14," "Traditional 10," and "Basic 8."

These plans also come with Flex Dollars that are used to purchase food at the other dining facilities on campus. Carte Blanche and Classic 14 provide students with \$75 worth of flex dollars a year while Traditional 10 and Basic 8 give a student \$50 and \$25 respectively. Food can also be purchased with cash in all four aforementioned places. The Carte Blanche is advertised as the best value because it offers students a chance to visit Oliver Hall as often as they want while the other options force students see FOOD, pg. 4

Why can't tuition just be about education?

A Lasallian education comes with a hefty price tag

by Michael Chin

Sports Editor

Here at Saint Mary's, over half of our student population is on some sort of financial aid. On top of that, many of these students take out student loans which will have to be paid back at some point in their lives. When it takes all of this just to go to Saint Mary's, one needs to ask, "Is this what a 'Lasallian' education is all about, scraping to find the money to pay the institution off?"

At Saint Mary's it is not a matter of the quality of education. The fact is that we do receive a quality education. I mean anyone who reads Plato, Aristotle, Chaucer, and Marx and understands it, is in some way learned. At the core, Saint Mary's is a liberal arts institution. I would have to say that Saint Mary's does an excellent job of giving their students an education based on these standards.

However, does that make our education worth it? It is a question that Gael students face on a day-to-day basis. Remember the time the business office dropped your courses because you were a day late on your tuition, or the time that they wouldn't let you register because the money was not in their hands?" If you've felt this way at one time or another,

don't be alarmed. Hundreds of students are plagued by these things.

As said before, the education here is very good, yet the cost of tuition does not affect simply education. The cost of schooling is also a reflection of books, room and board, and other miscellaneous expenses. It is this area where Saint Mary's does not hold true to its Lasallian principles.

Take, for instance, our book store. On average, I spend about four hundred dollars on books per semester. That is, if I go through our campus book store. However, if I go on the internet, the price is dramatically reduced. Now, I am only a history and politics major, which means I get relatively cheap paperback book lists. I can't even begin to think of the costs for science and math majors who need pretty, yet expensive, hard-back books. "Enter to learn, learn to serve," the Christian Brothers say. In this case all we are serving the book store's desire to make money, not to teach the knowledge held in the books.

This is just one example of the grossly over-priced system of fines, fees, and extra charges that are not mentioned when you enter Saint Mary's. I do not question the education of the Christian Brothers, but I do question its institutions.

The life of a starving student

by Colin De Leon-Horton

Opinion Editor

Having a Saga meal plan, I've found, is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it's food, nourishing life-sustaining food, that has already been paid for so that you can eat your fill during the four mealtimes that occur throughout the day. But this convenience comes at a price, that being, on one hand, price, and on the other the quality of the food. Price-wise, it is actually extremely expensive to possess a prepaid meal plan. I have a friend who cancelled his meal plan and bought flex dollars each week instead. He was quite happy about it.

I might take that same action myself if it wasn't for the quality of the food. In previous issues of *The Collegian*, there have been several articles condemning or defending the meals at Saga. I can't necessarily agree with either side. I'm actually rather appreciative of the attempts that the cooks make to diversify the meals there, and I enjoy the Mediterranean chicken or the various flank steak dishes. My complaint comes a painful half an hour after my meal, when my stomach begins to feel as if I've swallowed an atom bomb. I don't know who or what is responsible for this, and I don't know if it can be fixed. I know that I couldn't and can't handle it. Thus, midway through last year, I cancelled my meal plan, and decided to learn to cook. Unfortunately, this turned out to be easier said than done.

The initial problem turned out to be the fact that I lived in North Claeys with no kitchen. I had to walk to my friend's townhouse instead, which created problems in itself. The second problem is that it turns out that I have no cooking skill. Flash forward to a year later, I still can't cook. Every now and then I can turn out something edible. I can make a mean roast chicken or beef stew. But you can't live on those alone. So, instead of having to eat my garbage constantly, I have to use my wits to gather food.

Of course, one solution is to buy tons of ready-made food. I tried this. In fact, armed with a Costco card I bought cans of chili, soup, frozen foods and whatall. My bill was about 150 dollars, which is the wicked and sick thing about Costco. No matter how cheap they make things look, you end up spending more than you ever planned to spend on food outside of going to a five star restaurant. You end up broke.

So here I am, scrimping and pinching to make ends meet. I manage. Sometimes, I have to tighten my belt, but at least my beer gut goes away, so there is a silver lining. Other times I have to lie or get some sort of free hand outs. Obviously they work since I'm writing this. But I'm not telling you my secrets, because I plan to out-eat you all.

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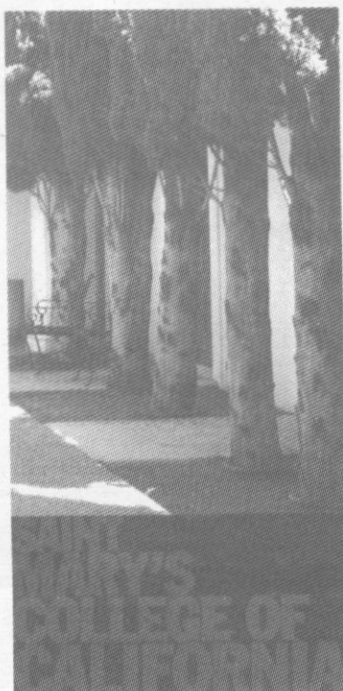
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Voices from around campus...

*"I think it is a fair price since we are receiving many of the benefits a small school has to offer."
-Jessica Lee '07*

*"Although it is a high price to pay, Saint Mary's is a unique institution. I think the personalized education is priceless."
-Loni Kirk '05*

*"I think that we are paying too much for the mistakes of our executives who [were] had by the "donation". Although I enjoy my time here, I had expected much more for the money I am paying for a private education."
- Leilani Nieva '08*

*"I think we should be allowed to take more classes with the money we're spending."
-Kathleen Kolling '06*

*"I think we can get a lot more. Like more class options, better professors and a better library."
-Cristina Sanoval '05*

*"It's possible to get your money's worth, but if you are just going to sit on your [butt] and do nothing then you can't expect it."
-Jeff Kapper '06*

Do you get your money's worth?

Food: students say not enough variety

continued from page 3
to limit their meals per week.

On Wednesdays during the lunch hours (11am-2pm), Sodexo provides students with a free barbeque. Even students without a meal plan can eat a variety of food outside in the quad. Those with a limited plan can get a free meal without having to worry about how much they have left on their card.

The students have varying opinions on whether the money

they spend on their meal plans is worth it or not. Ben Graber '07, who has the Classic 14 feels that he is not getting a fair deal for what he has purchased for the semester. "It's not worth the money I spend on it through my meal plan because I think that the quality and the selection of the food and the cleanliness leaves something to be desired," said Graber.

Graber either plans to quit us-

ing the school's meal plan system or cut down to the Basic 8 when he moves to a townhouse next year because he will be able to cook his own meals that cater more to his tastes and personal preferences. "I believe my food [will be healthy] and [cost-effective] when I provide it for myself," he said.

On the other hand, Markie Lehner '07 finds the food to be worth what he pays for it, though

he believes that it lacks variety and that they should use some of their food options more often. "Yes, I think it's worth my money. I feel that I get a good variety of food though it could be better. I enjoy the food provided but I would put out more varied foods. They put out some items only once in a while. For example, the sushi and the little sandwiches they put by the salad and sandwiches," said Lehner.

Have your voice heard. Write for The Collegian. Meetings Mondays at 6:00 Dante 115