

ON-CAMPUS HOSPITALITY

an **ebm** publication

MAY 2016

Around the Campus

Study Delves Into Social Media on Campus

College and university foodservice professionals and full-time student consumers were surveyed about their use of social media related to a wide range of campus venues including: residential dining, convenience stores, quick-service restaurants, vending and catering on campus in a new study from Y-Pulse.

College and university students are heavy users of social media, as it is an important part of their lifestyle, as well as the subject of many research studies. However, the importance of social media specifically related to interaction with campus foodservice venues reveals unique insight. Y-Pulse conducted the first study exclusively focused on social media usage related to campus foodservice in 2010; this new study provides insight into what is trending now and how social media usage compares to five years ago.

Since the 2010 study, Instagram and Snapchat have emerged. Also, the discussion of campus apps was just beginning in 2010, and today 65 percent of the campuses surveyed reported having a unique app for their students. In this new study, 94 percent of college student consumers reported using Facebook, 71 percent Instagram and 69 percent Twitter, followed by Snapchat at 48 percent. Five years ago, 88 percent of college student consumers reported using Facebook and only 21 percent reported using Twitter, while Instagram and Snapchat did not exist.

Today's students want to know more information about the food they eat. In fact, students' desire for nutrition and ingredient information has increased in all campus foodservice venues since the previous study. Students are highly active in seeking out information and posting information on social media sites about foodservice experiences on and off campus. The vast majority (84 percent) of students welcome receiving information from foodservice establishments via social media as opposed to 44 percent in 2010.

Sharon Olson, executive director of Y-Pulse, explained, "College and university foodservice directors were ahead of the curve in using social media related to foodservice on campus in our 2010 study, and are continuing to build their presence and their connections as new social platforms emerge and traditional platforms evolve."

Foodservice directors have not drastically changed their views regarding the importance of social media over the years; however, they have indicated that they are using social media with much greater frequency and facility than they were in 2010. Seventy-five percent of operators surveyed said they have a clear understanding of the technologies their students are using, and more than half said that they have a written social-media policy, while in 2010, 65 percent of operators had a clear understanding of technologies their students were using and only 11 percent had a written social-media policy.