

Whipping up tasty meals, ISU alumna improves Campus Dining

Written by Ariana Taylor, Daily Vidette Staff Writer
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When Tracy Widergren, Campus Dining Service's marketing coordinator, joined the university's staff in 2009, she was not a new face on campus. Widergren, also an ISU alumna who double-majored in English and public relations, found her passion for cooking which led her back home to ISU.

Initially, Widergren spent a few years working for a large insurance company as a technical editor. She then moved on to an agency marketing company, in the Bloomington-Normal area that handled marketing and public relations for other businesses.

Although the ISU alumna has seen the corporate, agency and institutional side of marketing, she believes that Campus Dining is an outstanding place to be.

"My time here as a student was amazing. I had some great mentors both in the English department and in the School of Communication. That was obviously a draw ... when I saw the job opportunity," Widergren said. "I love marketing and communications, that's my career passion, but my personal passion is food. So working for campus dining was it [for me]," Widergren said.

Being able to market and be around food seemed to be a "fantastic" opportunity for Widergren.

"I think all of those pieces, [marketing, being an alumna, and loving food], working together made this role for me," said Widergren.

Similar to many students and staff, Widergren begins her morning with a hot cup of coffee to prepare for another interesting day in the office. She said there is no recurring daily routine for her but every day by 8 a.m. she is in her office tackling assignments for the day.

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Unlike a majority of the university's population, Widergren checks social networks, such as Facebook, in the morning solely for business purposes.

"[Campus Dining Services] always gets emails to our general box and that's probably the first thing I start my day with. Usually [I see] what's happening. Whether it's on our Facebook page or through our email, I'm responding to concerns, questions, and passing ideas along," Widergren said.

In addition to handling all marketing and communications for residential and retail dining, Widergren co-chairs the dining service's advisory council. The board allows students and staff to meet once a month and form new ideas that may improve campus dining services. Widergren explicates the importance of being involved with the student population.

"I like to say my job is to engage and involve our students. It's my job to make the [campus dining] experience enjoyable for them," Widergren said.



Due to the university's cyclical schedule, Widergren's agenda typically depends on the time of the year.

"Right now, we have Freshman Information Nights. [ISU Admissions Department] goes throughout the state and they kind of take the university on a road show. [Campus Dining Services] goes and talks to [prospective students] about our meal plans, what we have to offer here as a dining program, and what they would be experiencing," Widergren added.

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Although a typical work day at ISU ends at 4:30 p.m., Widergren continues more tasks at home as a full-time mother and wife. For Widergren, these duties are more “relaxing” and allow quality time with her husband and 5-year-old son.

“I like to cook what I know people like that I make. So my husband loves Etouffee, so I make him Etouffee,” Widergren added. “My son loves tacos and he would eat them every day if I would let him.”

According to Widergren, Etouffee is a spicy, rice-based mixture of sausage and chicken, which sometimes can additionally contain crawfish and shrimp.

With her passion for ISU and food, she brings her talents to the table.