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Flag Display will Not be Returning to Hirst Lounge, President Mangelsdorf Decides

By MELANIE EARLE
FEATURES EDITOR

After nearly two years of uncertainty, a lengthy proposal, and months of discussion, University President Sarah Mangelsdorf decided this past Wednesday not to return the flag display to Hirst Lounge, SA Campus Life Chair Lillian Hutton revealed to the Campus Times.



HIRST LOUNGE, KNOWN AMONG STUDENTS AS THE FLAG LOUNGE, PICTURED IN 2015 WITH THE FLAGS IN FULL DISPLAY. COURTESY OF CHI HUANG

A new committee will be formed in October to determine an alternative way to represent the diverse community at UR.

The proposal Mangelsdorf reviewed presented two opinions, the first, heavily favored by students, advised that the flags be immediately returned to Hirst Lounge, and that the Students'

Association Government (SA) be the only entity in charge of adding, removing, and organizing them. It also suggested reframing the display as a way to express student identities rather than nationalities, and included 10 pages of student testimonials in support of the flag lounge. The second opinion, which was supported by members of administration and faculty, was to remove the flags in Hirst Lounge indefinitely, and replace them with something else. Mangelsdorf sided with the second opinion to remove the flags.

The flags were initially removed and placed under review in August 2020 in response to numerous disputes over the flag lounge in the past years, including a controversy over the Hong Kong and Taiwan

flags in November 2019 and a suggested removal of the Palestinian flag in October 2019. Following this controversy, months before the flags were removed, a Flag Advisory Committee (FAC) was formed to discuss the future of the display, composed of various staff, students, and faculty from all University schools. The FAC was tasked with creating a proposal for President Mangelsdorf, with the final decision to be made solely by her.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the FAC was disrupted from March 2020 until August 2020. The Committee was not ready to meet online, and was swept up in the transition to online learning. Before the FAC could reconvene, the Hirst Lounge flags were abruptly removed. At the time of the removal, SA leadership was

told that the flags were taken down for a cleaning, according to SA Campus Life Chair and senior Lillian Hutton and Marc Haddad '21, who was SA Vice President in 2020.

"They didn't need to fully come down [for a cleaning]," Hutton said. "And even some of our advisors who work in Wilson Commons and work directly with Student Government and handle the flags, [whose] whole responsibility is Wilson Commons, didn't know or were [not] told this was happening."

The decision to remove the flags was made by President Mangelsdorf and then-Provost Rob Clark, according to both Haddad and an email sent to the undergraduate student body by former SA President Justina Gorka '21 on Aug. 14, 2020.

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Staff Shortages Limit Dining Options for Students on Campus

By ALYSSA KOH
OPINIONS EDITOR

UR dining is suffering from severe staffing shortages, with Dining Services only employing 65% of their scheduled staffing level as compared to the usual 95%. With this drastic shift, hours have shortened at certain dining areas, and more niche options have closed entirely.

'Dining Services is only employing 65% of their scheduled staffing level as compared to the usual 95%.'

Dining Services is currently holding job fairs and working with SA's community engagement team to send out job information to local organizations, as well as expanding student employee roles to all dining locations, however, the process takes weeks.

Thus far, Roots and Shoots, Peet's, the Faculty Club, and Southside Market have closed indefinitely, hours have been shortened at many locations, and the Pit rotates which stations

are open at a given time.

To inform students of what they may see in the coming weeks from dining, Schauf also noted, "With the vaccination mandate deadline taking effect on 9/27, we are contingency planning for an additional loss in staffing. We have been working on several plans for operational changes and other food delivery/production solutions that will be announced later next week. We will continue to communicate through the website, student emails, and @Rochester as soon as new options are available."

"With the vaccination mandate deadline taking effect on 9/27, we are contingency planning for an additional loss in staffing."

The student response to the dining situation has been highly negative, with countless posts against dining administrators blasted across social media. The Instagram account @ur_secretsafe has become a hub for these grievances, and each post has multiple

comments as a result of these changes.

"We paid our bill — we aren't asking for a staffing miracle overnight, but, at least, show some signs from administration that they are addressing staffing issues,"

"I deserve a refund on my dining plan," one anonymous SecretSafe contributor said. "I don't know what happened to the dining halls this year but the food is terrible!!! Like Danforth never even changes [its] offerings anymore," said another.

This anger isn't just expressed anonymously — sophomore Areopl Bai is one of the more vocal UR students who has expressed discontent on social media. "We paid our bill — we aren't asking for a staffing miracle overnight, but, at least, show some signs from administration that they are addressing staffing issues," he posted to Instagram.

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Sorry Professor, I Ate My Homework



HENRY LITSKEY/PHOTO EDITOR

By RACHEL BREINING
STAFF WRITER

I think the peak of my time at UR would probably be characterized by my mornings. Two long years ago, as a little first-year, I was able to leave my dorm 20 minutes before class, walk to Starbucks with my reusable cup (scandalous), have them fill it with coffee, and get to my class still five minutes early to sit annoyingly close to the front row. Gone are the golden ages.

When I sit and reminisce about dining before the bad times, I also remember all the things we're missing. Freaking donuts and pints of ice cream

in the Pit. Three kinds of pizza at all times, AND cheesy bread, AND pasta (sometimes even mac and cheese!). Cups of cereal in the Pit!!! Where did those go? Being able to order a Starbucks sandwich — there was a time when the only thing they ever ran out of was cake pops. We've fallen so far from grace.

By this point, we're all annoyingly aware of the consistent limiting of dining options this semester on campus.

So far we've lost Roots & Shoots, Peet's, and Southside Market, as well as having limited Pit hours and stations.

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