

Foodservice equipment & supplies

2008

College & University

ALL STARS

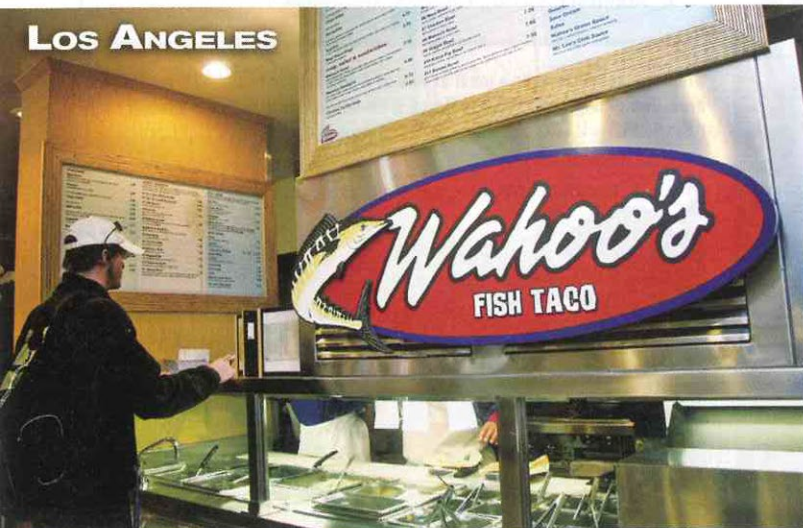




Diversity Is on the Menu at the University of Southern California

By Amelia Levin, Sr. Associate Editor

LOS ANGELES



Using a non-traditional approach that leverages the expertise of a local restaurateur, the cache of some franchised and uniquely developed concepts, and socially conscious practices such as trayless dining, USC's foodservice operation is emerging as the preferred destination for students and faculty.

A student waits in line at Wahoo's Fish Taco, one of the several branded concepts at The Lot marketplace. Wahoo's has been extended the opportunity to operate out of the new campus center once it's completed in 2010, along with some of the other franchises at The Lot.

franchisees, along with a fine-dining restaurant, a gastropub, and an indoor/outdoor café serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, and full banquet facilities accommodating an 800-guest ballroom. The cost of the project totaled, at press time, roughly \$136 million.

"We're providing the dining options, venues, and diversity of cuisine to be sure we have the type of food or program for whatever the students are in the mood for," Shuttleworth says.

To increase the diversity of dining options on and near campus, Shuttleworth's team bought out the Radisson Hotel property located off-campus in order to build three restaurants: McKay's, which opened in

late October as well as Izakaya, an Asian/sushi restaurant and The Lab, a gastropub that will open by the end of this year or early next.

"Across the street is the new Galen center for basketball and volleyball games. This area is easily the busiest," Shuttleworth says.

The idea was to grow the culture of the university and surrounding area through expanding foodservice options. "USC's location is really assimilating into downtown Los Angeles, which is only a couple miles from the convention center," Shuttleworth says. "We had no full-service restaurants. That was really an area of need that we wanted. We wanted to make sure everybody didn't just disperse into downtown for dinner without having our own places for faculty and students to dine and socialize. The goal was to develop a vibrant and dynamic downtown scene to be part of the overall L.A. culture."

With the main campus center construction expected to not be completed for another couple years, the school had to find a way to continue feeding its students outside of residential dining facilities. So, Shuttleworth's team built a 20,000-square-foot tent housing different franchisees, each with complete, permanent kitchens despite this being a temporary space. For meals, students choose among a variety of chain concepts such as Carl's Jr., Wolfgang Puck Express, Submarina, Wahoo's Fish Taco and the more popular Baja Fresh Express, Zao Noodle Bar and Red Mango, a frozen yogurt concept. The university operates all of these franchised units.

"Our team takes great pride in operating these concepts at the highest level, including our self-made ones and branded concepts," Shuttleworth says. The school will extend the opportunity to lease space in the new campus center to the franchisees currently at The Lot, as well as possibly recruit others.

When administrators at the University of Southern California decided it was time to revamp the dining services on campus, they elected to approach the project from a slightly unique angle. Instead of hiring a traditional consultant, they contracted with a talented restaurateur from downtown Los Angeles who not only worked to renovate the student union, but also develop the real estate surrounding the campus and seven other construction projects that include 26 different food concepts. The result is a hipper, more urbanized part of L.A. that is making USC, not just West Hollywood, a place to be for its students, staff and visitors.

As a former restaurant owner and manager, and most recently, director of operations for SBE, a restaurant, hospitality and real estate development firm, Scott Shuttleworth helped run the popular restaurants Katsuya, Abbey, and Michael Mina's XIV, as well as nightclubs and lounges including Area, Hyde and S Bar in L.A. This experience, coupled with SBE's successful track record in real estate development, allowed Shuttleworth to envision and execute the renovation of USC's 200,000-square-foot, Ronald Tutor Campus Center.

"I'm coming back to my alma mater to help refocus and reinvent hospitality there," Shuttleworth says. "I went to USC, my wife went there, along with my sister, father-in-law, and my uncle. We have a long legacy of USC alumni in our family." SBE's owner Sam Nazarian is also a USC alum.

The new student center, a five-level building expected to be completed in 2010, will include a marketplace similar to a Whole Foods with an organic and farmer's market that will feature three seated dining options: a salad concept, grill, and prepared-to-go area. The facility will include additional dining concepts through area

USC's PLAYERS

★ **Director of Hospitality & Foodservice Consultant:** Scott Shuttleworth

★ **Executive Chef:** TBA

★ **Architects:** A.C. Martin for the campus center; Stephen Wolley & Assoc. for The Lot

★ **Foodservice Dealer:** R.W. Smith for the campus center; Kitchens To Go for The Lot



Photos courtesy of USC

An overhead view of the dining area at The Lot, USC's tented-in dining facility for temporarily feeding students during renovations at the campus's union. The space features full kitchens, five flat-screen TVs, ATMs and Wi-Fi.

"We're also bringing in the \$180 million Coffee Bean Tea & Leaf to the cinematic arts building," Shuttleworth says. In addition, the school built a new, retail coffee café, Kean Coffee, in the school of architecture with a "really creative design element to it," he says. The organic-focused coffeehouse has operated its original Newport Beach store with a successful track record for several years. The company also claims to have a zero carbon-footprint for that store.

"We have a lot of projects going on," Shuttleworth says. "Maybe that's why we keep adding coffee."

An undertaking like this naturally costs more money than what was within the university's budget. Shuttleworth used his private-sector contacts to not only raise money for some of the larger projects like the campus center, but also the experience of these investors in terms of restaurant and hospitality work. "Smaller projects we were able to handle within the university's hospitality department and be self-funded," he says.

In addition, Shuttleworth says the university has been especially stringent about controlling costs. "We've been extremely aggressive in this area," he says. "We've worked to control food costs, which have been rising in the last few years. P&L, better management, better brands. All these things contributed."

To add to these steps of controlling costs, USC last fall also began implementing a program to track its food waste in order to observe patterns and train its staff better. The school also installed three pulpers in its kitchens throughout campus. Due to the relative newness of the program, figures demonstrating savings are not available at the moment.

Tracking food waste is just one of the several green initiatives USC has sought to introduce as part of its dining facilities improvements.

"We're going for LEED certification for our new campus center building," Shuttleworth says. "We also incorporated many of the LEED criteria in our interim dining pavilion, even though it's only a two-year structure."

The Lot, a temporary dining facility while USC's main dining at the union undergoes renovations, houses a number of franchised chains, including Carl's Jr., Wolfgang Puck Express, Baja Fresh Express, Zao Noodle Bar, Red Mango and Wahoo's Fish Taco.



FACTS OF NOTE

- ★ **Size:** The Lot, 20,000-sq.-ft.; the campus center, 180,000-sq.-ft.
- ★ **Kitchen Size:** The Lot, 3,136-sq.-ft.; the campus center, 26,000-sq.-ft.
- ★ **Staff:** 120 FTEs for The Lot; 180 FTEs projected for the campus center
- ★ **Hours:** The Lot: Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., Saturday/Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; the campus center: 24/7
- ★ **Customers/Day:** 9,500
- ★ **Cost of Project:** \$136 million
- ★ **Web Site:** www.usc.edu

In addition, the university purchased all biodegradable utensils and flatware, and like a number of other colleges and universities, introduced trayless dining. "The students have been reacting very positively to this change," Shuttleworth says.

The transition to trayless dining has paid other benefits, too. "This has significantly lessened our dishwashing cycles and use of chemicals." And, speaking of chemicals, the university has purchased "green" cleaning supplies to track down on these toxic materials.

For the temporary tented facility known as The Lot, the school used recycled aluminum and other used materials that will also go back into the supply chain once The Lot is removed upon completion of the campus center. The school is also continuing its recycling program on campus. According to USC statistics, the school recycles 1.04 tons of aluminum cans, annually, along with 16.81 tons of cardboard and 1.68 tons of glass/plastic. Oil and grease waste are also recycled and are converted into bio-diesel and animal feed.

The school also uses 100-percent recycled napkins, restroom supplies and other jan/san paper products. In addition, USC cut back on disposable products and introduced a bring-your-own reusable mug program to receive a \$.10 credit on coffee and other beverages.

Shuttleworth has strove to make hospitality on campus as big a priority as the academics and athletics at USC. "We have a great team and a great university with world-class students, researchers and athletes," he says. "My goal is to position hospitality at that level." With a world-class dining center and hot new restaurants soon to open, and an elaborate setup in the meantime, USC certainly seems on track to accomplishing these goals.