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By Jay Blanton

Third Public Forum Being Held to Discuss Dining Services

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LEXINGTON, Ky. (Nov. 5, 2013) — University of Kentucky officials announced that a public campus forum will be held from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 6, in the Worsham Theater to continue discussions about the revitalization of UK's Dining Services.

The public forum will be the third held in the last several months, aimed at providing information and asking questions about the process underway to determine the future of dining services.

"Public forums and the dialogue we've had with stakeholders on campus and in the community have been a vital part of this process," said Eric N. Monday, UK's executive vice president for finance and administration. "As a result of this dialogue, we've listened and we've made improvements to our process, which will lead to a better result no matter which direction we take. Our ultimate goal, though, has remained consistent throughout the process — creating the best possible dining service for our campus community and others who use this critical service."

A formal Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued earlier this month. Review of those proposals, when they are returned, is expected to begin in mid-November. An RFP committee — composed of faculty, staff and student representation — will consider these proposals. A final decision as to whether or not to outsource will be made within the next few months by UK President Eli Capilouto.

Responding to concerns and questions previously raised by students, university and local community groups interested in sustainability and other issues, the committee recommended that certain commitments be included in the RFP, including:

- Ensuring that current full-time UK dining employees as of February 2013 will have employment opportunities with either the university or the selected business partner, if the university administration ultimately takes that path. The university will also require that student workers continue to be employed.
- Continuing a strong sustainability program by purchasing local food produce and the strong partnership UK has with the Kentucky Proud Program.
- Expanding options, healthier food choices and responsiveness to the many constituencies that comprise the university community.

Several dining facilities across campus will be de-commissioned as part of the revitalization of the university's residence hall system. UK hopes to build up to 9,000 residence hall beds over the next five to seven years as part of a dramatic transformation of its campus core. Improvements and expansion of the Student Center also are long-term interests of the university as well as students, faculty and staff.

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