

Ball State University has been a CBORD client since 1988

About Ball State University

Founded in 1899, Ball State University is a public institution in Muncie, Indiana, one hour northeast of Indianapolis. Its 660-acre campus includes sixty-seven academic, administrative, auxiliary, and residential buildings valued at \$1.1 billion. Ball State uses CBORD's Foodservice Suite® (FSS) to manage food service at its ten campus food operations.

Quick Facts

- Enrollment: 18,500
- Students in residence: 5,590
- Students on meal plans: 6,144
- Annual food service sales: \$24 million
- Number of campus food operations: 10
- Average number of meals served per day: 14,081

Foodservice Suite Functionality

Ball State University has been using CBORD's Foodservice Suite for nearly 20 years. Amy Wagner, Systems Coordinator at Ball State, is heavily involved in training other employees on the CBORD® system.



BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY.

"I see the ultimate goal of my position as keeping managers away from their computers whenever possible," explains Wagner. "I want to make sure FSS is a tool for them—a tool that means they don't need to be tied to their computers all day long."

FSS automates many processes that, prior to implementation, employees had to handle manually, leading to many errors and inefficiencies. "We use almost every module of the system for different processes, but I consider its inventory and forecasting functionalities some of the most useful for our operation," says Wagner. "Our units don't place their own orders—they are all processed through the system with weekly orders going out to vendors—so if we are not handling forecasting and inventory correctly, our business suffers and our customer service is not where we expect it to be. Remarkable service is our goal."



The FSS system accomplishes this level of service by using a formula involving customer counts, "shows," and walk-ins to ensure orders are aligned with each unit's needs.

Handheld Inventory Management

Ball State uses the Handheld Inventory Management System, a module of FSS designed to ensure speed and accuracy in inventory tracking. The technology allows food service staff to prepare accurate orders based on actual stock levels by entering inventory counts into the PDA, then simply transferring the data to a computer running FSS.

"Our units using the handhelds for inventory management are noticing far fewer errors than before," notes Wagner. "This is largely due to the simplified process the technology allows us to take advantage of. Employees go into storage facilities, enter data into the PDAs, hit Enter, and never touch the numbers again. The way we used to do it with paper and pencil left much more room for human error."

The PDAs also promote speedy operations by allowing for convenient setup of inventory items. "If the system is set up correctly, all an inventory-taker has to do is scan the first item in the storage room, hit Enter, and continue walking down the aisle—the next item on the shelf pops up on screen."

The PDA functionality also allows managers to step back from managing the little details and focus on higher-level tasks.

"I can't tell you how many times I have heard managers comment, 'Well, I guess I can't be sick that day—it's inventory day!' I don't think they should be limited by that philosophy, and the functionality provided by the PDAs alleviates that stress," says Wagner. "Yes, manage your forecasting, but let a student take care of going back into the storage room with a PDA. Let someone else do the small things for you so you can focus on prep time, your showcase presentation, or other facets of the operation that warrant your attention."

Expert Advice

Wagner has many pieces of advice to offer new FSS users based on her years of experience training others on how best to use the system. Her first piece of advice is to understand business needs before deciding on an implementation plan.

"It's important to understand your business first," advises Wagner. "Depending on what you are looking for, there are many possible configurations that could work. What is the end result you are hoping to achieve? Cost savings on orders? Effective event management? Nutritional accounting? You have to ask these questions, and ask them of the right people—your CBORD project manager, for example. He or she will help you find the best way to get where you want to be."

Equally important to high-tech food service operations are communication and training.

"At Ball State, we have quarterly 'TGIC' meetings, which stands for 'Thank Goodness it's CBORD!'" says Wagner. "We all sit down together to discuss our latest challenges and goals, and decide how we can adjust our use of FSS to accomplish them. Next meeting, for example, we are discussing reporting options."

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Wagner also heads up various training sessions, both to bring new employees up to speed on the system and to help long-time employees maximize its use. These classes include seasonal workshops, FSS overview classes, and a special two-part course for new employees who will need CBORD access.

"Before these employees are given CBORD log-in information, we meet for a system overview," explains Wagner. "Then we meet again to discuss which functionality best suits their particular job duties, and go into more depth on these aspects. I've found it's the best way to introduce them to the tools they will need to perform their tasks without overwhelming them."



Lastly, Wagner encourages FSS users to stay informed on industry trends. "Don't implement and then remain stagnant," she warns. "Keep current. I like to read CBORD's release notes to keep educated on new offerings and determine whether they might fit with our operation. I have to keep an eye on the big picture of where the industry is going so I can predict what will be expected of us in years to come. What can we do differently? What makes the most sense for us?"

Of course, Wagner notes, no single "best practice" applies to every unique application.

"Each implementation is different—that's the beauty of CBORD. I like not being stuck in a box. But I will say that having a project plan and visiting it often helps keep us on track."

CBORD System Overview

Ball State uses the following modules of Foodservice Suite: Menu Management System®, Inventory Management System, Handheld Inventory System, Order Transmission Interface, Nutritional Accounting System, CBORD Master Nutritional Database, POS interface, Bid Analysis System, and EventMaster® PLUS! The school also uses CBORD's CS Gold® campus card system, as well as Webfood®, CBORD's online and kiosk-based ordering system.

Implementation of NetNutrition®, a web-based module of FSS that allows students and staff to view nutritional information of their meals online, is planned for fall 2008.

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