

State and Local

Sbisa offers students forum to present dining opinions

Suggestion board draws varied responses

By Lawson Reilly
Reporter

A small crowd of people in Sbisa Dining Hall is gathered around a bulletin board. Perhaps they want to know when their favorite health-food cereal will be available for breakfast. Maybe they want to know why the fruit is served sliced instead of whole. Or maybe they just want to know if Erica Kane is going to marry Jeremy Hunter on "All My Children."

They are reading the "Ask Sbisa" question-and-answer board, where students can write comments, complaints and questions about Sbisa Dining Hall or anything else and drop them into an envelope on the board.

With a little luck, they'll see their handiwork and a reply posted on the board later in the week.

The board's creators and writers, Sbisa Menu Board members Ashley Glennon and Joe Pickell, say they got the idea for Ask Sbisa after noticing a similar board in the Sterling C. Evans Library.

They presented the idea at a Menu Board meeting as a method of attracting more student input, Pickell says, and it was approved.

"People would come up and talk to us, but it's better to get it in writing," the senior electrical engineering major says. "We can get more opinions, too."

When Ask Sbisa made its debut in Fall '86, Glennon says he and Pickell were getting as many as 30 letters a day. The board initially was placed by the exit on the west side of the dining hall.

Recently, however, it has been moved closer to the entrance because it drew crowds that blocked the exit, he says.

"It was more successful than I thought it would be," Glennon, a junior journalism major, says.

Students' suggestions and complaints addressed to Ask Sbisa re-

sulted in dining hall changes almost immediately, he says.

One student suggested that grapefruit and pineapple juice, previously mixed together, be divided into different containers; it was done.

Another drew a map, illustrating how a "traffic jam" at the milk dispensers could be solved by placing glasses in a different location.

Glennon says two health-food cereals were substituted on the break-

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— Ashley Glennon, menu board member

fast menu after he and Pickell received a lot of requests for whole-grain cereal.

Because of opinions sent to Ask Sbisa, the fall semester's Potato Festival won't be conducted any time soon. Pickell says comments to Ask Sbisa showed many students believed it was a "bomb."

"DG wanted steak with their potatoes," he says.

Glennon says they make a list of all suggestions and opinions they receive each month before they go to a Menu Board meeting, and then they read them to the board.

Pickell says Dining Center Manager Perry Moore and Food Service Manager Dennis Moore are supportive of the suggestion board.

"They were pretty happy to see someone there who has some interest," he says.

Pickell says the managers suggested he and Glennon join the Menu Board because they always were asking questions and placing complaints.

However, a notice on the question-and-answer board states that

the opinions expressed by Glennon and Pickell in their replies are not associated with other dining hall or Menu Board personnel.

Glennon says the managers leave the operation of Ask Sbisa all up to him and Pickell as not all questions are related to the dining hall.

Many are written in a humorous vein, as are the replies.

"One person wanted to go to Ashley and Joe's school of comedic response," Glennon says. "Some people write a novel, man. People are into this. Some people are too into it."

He points out one letter's careful, elongated script, which he describes as "like a bible."

The writer complained about frozen cream pies and said he feared only King Arthur could liberate his fork from his pie.

Other letters express concern for the happiness of Sbisa employees, ask questions about Food Services, criticize or compliment dining hall practices, ask trivia questions or want to know about soap operas.

Glennon says if he and Pickell can't answer the questions, they ask the managers.

One student took advantage of Ask Sbisa and submitted a calculus problem, which Pickell and Glennon posted, along with the solution. Glennon says some people ask questions about personal problems, but their subject matter usually makes them unsuitable for public display.

Ask Sbisa won't display letters if they are obscene, profane or sexually explicit, Glennon says.

Pickell says the writers realize their letters will not be displayed if they use obscenities.

Glennon and Pickell say they now receive about five letters a day and answer about two a day.

Menu Board members serve as long as they like, Pickell says, and he and Glennon intend to continue with Ask Sbisa for "as long as it's worth."

MICHAEL J. FOX



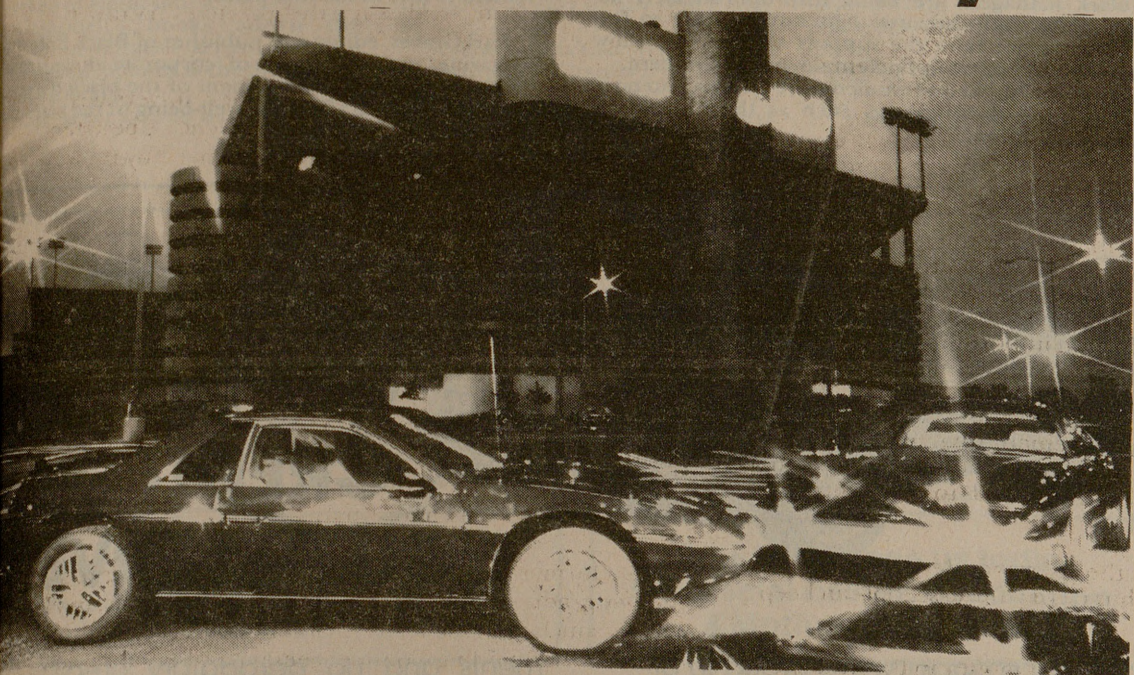
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