

Pioneer steps in

New food service to start in January

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For the second time this year, Brevard College is being forced to make a big change between food service providers. In the beginning of the year BC partnered with Chartwells to revamp Myers Dining Hall; however, both Brevard and Chartwells have mutually agreed to separate in what BC President David Joyce has called “an amicable divorce.” A company called Pioneer College Caterers will be stepping in to fill the gap left by Chartwells starting in the spring semester.

Dean of Students Debbie D’anna actually had experience with Pioneer at her previous college, Union College of Kentucky. “I worked with Pioneer for nine years,” D’anna said. “Every day wasn’t perfect, but when things didn’t go well, they were open to critique. And they’re good at never outright saying no; they offer alternatives when something is hard to do.” She added, “What I like about Pioneer is that they view contracts as relationships with give and take, in addition we will be an important account to them because of our size. For Pioneer we’re right in the middle as far as a student population goes. They are excited to be here, and I’m excited to have them.”

On its website, Pioneer establishes itself as “an organization committed to providing for the food service needs of Christian organizations and universities.” Like BC, Pioneer is a small but strong organization. We will be the 50th college to sign on with Pioneer and we will be an average size school for them; their largest school is around 2,700 students and their smallest college has about 100 students.

When BC went shopping for dining services in the spring of this year, Pioneer was one of the companies that President Joyce and the dining services committee had narrowed

down to towards the end of the search. At that time the Pioneer representatives leveled with BC and said they were not ready to take on a new client; at the time they were opening at least two other dining hall service contracts. Now, however, they are only focused on opening up shop with Brevard.

Chartwells is a massive dining service company with a multi-national business. Compared to some of their other contracts, BC was a small fish in a big pond. Like Brevard College, Pioneer is a small organization and in that regard they relate to us. Pioneer Vice President of Sales Bill Campbell said, “For us, you’re not a small fish in a big pond. Right from the get-go you will find that we will try to make ourselves real accessible.”

When Brevard transitioned from Aramark to Chartwells, there was a lot of concern about members of the cafeteria staff being able to come work for the new company. During this transition period, Pioneer has interviewed cafeteria staff to give them a chance to stay.

Vice President of Operations Tim Wolters said, “I was actually really impressed to learn that two staff members have worked here for more than thirty years. In our organization, those are the stories we love: members who have been with us for long periods of time, the investment and involvement with the community that shows is priceless, and we want to hang on to people with that loyalty. It makes us successful and equips us to serve you.”

Pioneer will be sending one of its Directors of Operations, Todd Gallup, to manage the dining services for BC. Gallup has been working for Pioneer for 27 years and actually started working for the company when he was still a college student.

“I’m looking forward to getting involved with the sports teams and just immersing myself in the campus community,” Gallup said. “I’m going to be enthusiastic, and you will see that every day. I’ll ask, ‘What’s going

on? What do you like, what don’t you like?’ And I’ll listen. I might not always give you the answer you want, but I’m going to say yes when I can. You’re going to see someone who enjoys what they do.”

As an integrative organization, Pioneer is very proud of its ability to present students with job opportunities. Campbell said, “Sooner rather than later, we’re going to seek to employ a lot of students. We want to plug students into the food services as much as we want to immerse ourselves into the college community. Studies show: jobs on campus contribute to retention. We win, the student wins and the school wins.”

Coltrane will also be maintained and Pioneer even intends to improve on the advancements that have already been made this semester by Chartwells. “Not only will we maintain it, we will expand the menu options,” Campbell said. “There’s still a grill and a fryer over there that are unused; it’s a simple thing to add burgers, grilled chicken, brats—whatever students want.”

While Coltrane will see improvements in these regards, the dining hours in the Underground will be cut back to evenings. The cafeteria will close at 7:30 p.m. and Coltrane will open around 7 p.m. and operate until 11 p.m. That said, the hours of the Cafeteria and Coltrane are still subject to change based on the feelings of the community and whether Pioneer feels it can reasonably accommodate those requests. The best news about the Underground staying open is that all of the declining balance policies from before will remain in effect.

As far as dining hall services have gone, BC has had a difficult time. Pioneer, while optimistic, has been up front. “I wish I could say, ‘Every day we have here is going to be great,’” Campbell said. “It won’t, but we will work together and because of that we can forge a strong relationship; a union.” While being realistic and by being honest, Pioneer paints a bright and promising future for Brevard College.