

From: [Leah D. Nixon](#)
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Subject: Ferris Cuts Ribbon for New Dining Facility
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Included below is a press release regarding the grand opening, ribbon cutting ceremony of the Rock Café, Ferris State University's newly renovated student dining facility. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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Rock Café Keeps Mouths Watering, Stomachs Full

BIG RAPIDS – What is “just so darn good” and keeps people coming back for seconds at Ferris State University? It's the newly renovated Rock Café.

Averaging 5,000 patrons per day, and serving more than 177,000 customers since re-opening for business six weeks ago, the Rock Café has become the talk of the town, and it's no wonder why.

Just take a look at some of the options circulating through the menu: Prime rib and roasted baby potatoes with rosemary and thyme seasoning, along with fresh-cut green beans; salad greens tossed in white wine vinaigrette with walnuts, blue cheese crumbles, bacon crisps, and wedges of strawberry and green apple; Hawaiian pizza from a woodfire oven; stir fry prepared on a Mongolian grill with enough meat, sauce, spice and vegetable options to create just about any Asian cuisine creation the imagination can dream up.

Even if your taste buds prefer something more traditional from a turkey sandwich to a burger and fries, you'll find it at the Rock Café. So, the ribbon-cutting ceremony held Friday, Oct. 9, was just icing on the cake for Dining Services Director Lori Helmer and her staff.

“The positive feedback we've received from students, and faculty and staff, has been great,” Helmer said. “It's so rewarding to have worked with such a great team to make this renovation happen, and in five months, is tremendous.”

Students today want an element of entertainment with their dining experience, a concept we call “eatertainment,” Helmer added. The Rock Café was designed with the marketplace concept in mind, which offers this type of dining experience as food becomes the star and the staff is on stage.

“We've created a state-of-the-art social gathering space that's warm and inviting yet contemporary in style,” she said. “Different eating areas were purposely created to provide flexible dining.”

The latest trend in student dining is the marketplace concept, which provides an integrated food production and dining experience with an emphasis on fresh ingredients and made-to-order preparation, she explained. It is characterized by exhibition cooking at several distinct

food platforms, with the majority of the existing back-of-the-house production having been moved to several self-contained display cooking venues inside the dining area. This concept incorporates European-style marketplace décor, where cooking aromas, product freshness and abundance are prevalent, Helmer said. An emphasis is placed on food merchandising, and it also includes casual Café-style seating.

“This has been a big hit for students,” Student Government President Claire Gould said, adding her favorite spot in the Rock Café is the “Comfort Food” station where she can get the foods that remind her of home.

The facility is open 7 a.m. to midnight seven days a week and is open to the public.

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Rock Ribbon Cutting.jpg

CAPTION – Pictured are: Vice President for Administration and Finance Jerry Scoby, Associate Vice President for Auxiliary Enterprises Ed Shepard, Dining Services Director Lori Helmer, Student Government President Claire Gould, Board of Trustees Chair R. Thomas Cook and President David L. Eisler.

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