

Official University Centers Advisory Board Statement on the Decision to Begin an RFP (Request for Proposals) Process for the Round Table Space

On May 3, 2016, the students of the University Centers Advisory Board unanimously voted to not renew the lease for Round Table Pizza at the Price Center. Round Table is currently in a lease which expires on June 30, 2017.

As a student-run, student-majority advisory board, the University Centers Advisory Board (UCAB) is tasked with evaluating all potential retail renewals, considering a variety of criteria in determining whether to recommend either a renewal of the lease, or a request for proposals (RFP). Annual sales and retail trends, customer feedback, analysis of vendor operations, as well as input from students and student organizations are all taken into account when a vendor is being evaluated.

In evaluating whether or not to renew Round Table Pizza's lease, UCAB considered several factors, including the vendor's food sales, which have experienced a decrease over the past five years.

Although the whole of vendor sales at University Centers have continually trended upwards, Round Table's sales have annually decreased since 2011. Student reception to the vendor has been lukewarm, despite Round Table's efforts to address the downward trend in sales by offering daily specials, introducing pasta and flatbreads to the menu, and offering delivery on campus.

The University Centers Advisory Board, in which 14 of 17 voting members are students, votes on all leases which are up for renewal at University Centers. In December 2011, Round Table's lease was renewed for 2 years. In April 2013, Round Table's lease was renewed by 1 year. In April 2014, Round Table's lease was renewed by 1 year. In April 2015, Round Table's lease was renewed for 2 years.

In discussions of the vendor's lease which happened over the course of the last five years, the student-led UCAB repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the lower volume restaurant. UCAB discussions considered lower sales, food quality, low use of the dining space, and emerging student interests and food trends. In deciding to extend the lease by shorter terms, UCAB took into account other closures at University Centers, and the use of the Round Table dining space by student organizations. Each short-term lease renewal was made with strong consideration of the impact which an RFP would have on student life at University Centers.

Students and student organizations have enjoyed activities in the space such as DJ Fridays, announcing of the AS Election results, and gatherings around sports events. It should be clarified that the programming is coordinated through University Centers and the television sets and cable channels are funded by University Centers. UCAB intends to maintain these amenities in the future RFP.

During the period of time between the closure of Round Table and the opening of a new vendor in that space, University Centers will maintain the operation of the patio space outside of Round Table for dining, events and programming.

With these concerns in mind, UCAB decided that continuing to issue short-term extensions to Round Table no longer represents a fiscally responsible decision, and voted to move into a Request for Proposals (RFP) Process. This public and competitive process allows the students to compare and choose from a variety of vendors.

The decision to not renew the lease was made with a strong belief that a competitive RFP process will address current student interests and social needs of the campus. The move into a RFP process, and initiation of a search for a new vendor, provides an opportunity for a new vendor who will update the space and work with student organizations to provide an even more lively social atmosphere at the Price Center.

The vendor's lease expires at the end of 2017, and in the meantime a concept statement will be drafted to find a new vendor for the Round Table space. As a student-run, student-led, student-majority advisory Board, UCAB will prioritize the input and interests of students at all points of the RFP process.

Respectfully submitted,
Claire B. Maniti
2015-2016 Chair, University Centers Advisory Board