

RUSA

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
STUDENT ASSEMBLY

MidKnight Snacks

*A Report on the Health and Wellness
Committee's MidKnight Snacks Initiative*

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Preface

The Health and Wellness Committee, as per the Rutgers University Student Assembly Standing Rules, is “charged to investigate and advocate on behalf of issues affecting the general health and wellness of students at Rutgers University--New Brunswick”.¹ Towards this end, it has three subcommittees which fall under its jurisdiction: the Physical Health Subcommittee, the Mental Health Subcommittee, and the Alcohol & Drugs Subcommittee. And as per the Standing Rules, it is the duty of the chairs of these various subcommittees to “report on the activities of their respective subcommittees”.²

Though it is not explicitly said to whom or how these subcommittee chairpeople should report, it was the view of the chair of the Health and Wellness Committee that a general overview of each major initiative undertaken by each subcommittee should be prepared in order to best inform the Assembly’s Executive Board and the Assembly of why and how certain initiatives are carried out. Additionally, many members of the Assembly have expressed concern to the chair and various members of the Committee that the purpose of certain initiatives -- in particular, MidKnight Snacks -- was unclear, and that there was a lack of transparency regarding how they were executed. This is of notable concern given that MidKnight Snacks is given explicit mention in the Student Assembly’s budget under “Safety Initiatives”.³ This provides the underlying reasoning for the creation of this report: that it was, in the view of the Chairman of the Health and Wellness Committee, an appropriate time to properly dictate *why* MidKnight Snacks is done and *how* the Committee plans and prepares for MidKnight Snacks.

The Purpose of MidKnight Snacks

The Rutgers University Student Assembly does not condone or endorse binge-drinking or unsafe party behavior in any way, shape, or form. However, there are three things that the Assembly and Committee acknowledge:

- a) Rutgers University is an institution that has gained a reputation as a “party school”;
- b) The University, Assembly, and Committee have taken strong and thorough action, both in coordination and independently, in order to reduce binge-drinking and unsafe party behavior on campus;
- c) And, though the University and the Assembly have both taken strong and thorough action against binge-drinking and unsafe party behavior, the Assembly still understands that partying has become, for many, an important part of life at Rutgers.

MidKnight Snacks derives standing on powers granted to the Health and Wellness Committee and Alcohol & Drugs Subcommittee. Under the Standing Rules, the Subcommittee is charged with “collaborating with campus organizations on alcohol and drug initiatives”, which allows for the creation of MidKnight Snacks.⁴ Through our work with other on-campus organizations, offices, and parts of the University, the Committee tries to host at least one MidKnight Snacks program a year. The Health and Wellness Committee notes that we cannot remove party culture from the University. What we can do, however, is to try and take action to mitigate potential risks associated with binge-drinking and unsafe

¹ Art. XIII § 2 of the Rutgers University Student Assembly Standing Rules

² Art. XIII § 7 of the Rutgers University Student Assembly Standing Rules

³ [FY 2019-2020 RUSA Budget 4/30](#) (the budget for the Rutgers University Student Assembly, FY 2019-2020)

⁴ Art. XIII § 6(a)(ii) of the Rutgers University Student Assembly Standing Rules

party behavior. One of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of alcohol poisoning and related consequences of excessive drinking is to eat *before* going out to drink, and “will help slow down the rate at which alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream resulting in a lower BAC”.⁵ Eating *after* alcohol has been consumed in large quantities will “not help since the alcohol is already in the bloodstream”.⁶ Therefore, by distributing free food and water as part of MidKnight Snacks beginning at 10 P.M., we are reducing the risk that students with high blood alcohol levels will suffer from alcohol poisoning. The aim is to get as many people fed *before* they go out to drink as possible, as that is what yields the most positive results in countering the effects of binge-drinking. Not only are we reducing risks, but we are also making sure that people that come to MidKnight Snacks -- many of whom are freshmen students, who may only be starting to experience university-style partying -- are aware of potential risks associated with binge-drinking. This is done by discussing what organization(s) the volunteers are affiliated with, why we are conducting MidKnight Snacks, and different ways of staying safe throughout the night.

Once again, it should be reiterated: the University and Assembly, in no uncertain terms, does not condone or endorse binge-drinking and unsafe party behavior. What MidKnight Snacks does is ensure that students, if they decide to go partying of their own accord, are doing so safely.

Outlining How MidKnight Snacks Works

The Health and Wellness Committee tries to conduct at least one MidKnight Snacks Program per year. Planning can generally be broken up into four parts: budgeting, coordination, reservations and contacts, and volunteer recruitment.

Budgeting for MidKnight Snacks

For the Assembly budget of the 2019-2020 fiscal year, Safety Initiatives was allocated \$6000.⁷ This line-item is broken up into two separate parts: Knight’s Watch and MidKnight Snacks. Decisions regarding both of these programs fall under the jurisdiction of the Health and Wellness Committee. The Health and Wellness Committee opted to use the entirety of the \$6000 budget in order to fund MidKnight Snacks. It costs \$6000 to conduct two nights of the program, with King Pita being the long-standing vendor of the program.

Coordination with groups on campus and administration

Various organizations and groups have shown interest in cosponsoring MidKnight Snacks. As part of the Assembly’s belief that working with as many groups as possible expands our ability to positively influence the student environment at the University, the Committee should welcome and encourage groups, organizations, and administrative offices that share the Committee’s values and views to participate in MidKnight Snacks. Some past organizations which have worked with the Committee for

⁵ “Factors Affecting Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC).” University Health Center | AOD | Factors Affecting Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) University Health Center | University of Georgia, University Health Center. University Health Center of the University of Georgia. Accessed November 1, 2019. <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/aod/BAC>.

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ [FY 2019-2020 RUSA Budget 4/30](#) (the budget for the Rutgers University Student Assembly, FY 2019-2020)

MidKnight Snacks include the Interfraternity Council, the Panhellenic Council, the Office of Student Conduct, Off-Campus Living and Community Partnerships, and the Scarlet Honor Council. These groups should be contacted as early as possible in order to determine whether or not they would be able to co-sponsor the event.

Necessary reservations and who to contact

As with the vast majority of events of this type, there are a variety of reservations and groups to contact which need to be done before the event can be hosted. These include the following: reserving Morrell Street, reserving the vendor, and contacting the Rutgers University Police Department.

- Morrell Street reservation: This should be done as early as possible. Optimally, the Street should be reserved at least five to six weeks before MidKnight Snacks is conducted. Reservations should be made through the Parliamentarian. Reservations should generally be from 10 P.M. to 2 A.M. For instance, if a MidKnight Snacks were to be hosted on a Thursday night and Friday night, reservations should be made for it to last from 10 P.M. Thursday night to 2 A.M. Friday morning, and from 10 P.M. Friday to 2 A.M. Saturday. Early / late access fees cost approximately \$75.00 per night of the program.
- Vendor reservation: This should be done once Morrell Street has been reserved. Historically, each MidKnight Snacks has had King Pita as the vendor. It is recommended that, given the quality of the food and how passionate the owner of King Pita is for the Initiative, the Committee should continue to have King Pita as the MidKnight Snacks vendor for the foreseeable future. What is generally served by King Pita is chicken tenders, hot dogs (with a vegetarian hot dog option), stuffed grape leaves, hummus and pita, and mozzarella sticks. Water bottles are also distributed. When using King Pita as the vendor, both nights cost \$6000.
- Contact the Rutgers University Police Department: This should be done once Morrell Street and the vendor have been reserved. As a precautionary measure, the University police department is contacted in order to make them aware of the when and where of MidKnight Snacks. Contact can be done within the week before MidKnight Snacks.

Making sure that these three parts of the reservation process are done in a timely manner are fundamental to having a successful MidKnight Snacks. If there are any concerns or confusions regarding how any individual aspect should be done, the Chief of Staff, the Parliamentarian, the Treasurer, and the Assembly advisors are recommended as contact points.

Recruiting volunteers for the program

This is generally one of the last things that needs to be done for MidKnight Snacks. Two to three weeks before a MidKnight Snacks program, volunteers should be recruited from the Committee, the Assembly, and any student organizations which have decided to cosponsor. Each night requires, at a minimum, four volunteers are needed; the program runs best when there are five to six. Volunteers should sign up using a spreadsheet which should contain the name of the volunteers and their phone numbers. It is recommended that, after this report is formally given to the Assembly, a volunteer should not be able to cancel less than

forty-eight hours before a MidKnight Snacks program without it counting as an absence towards Assembly attendance.⁸

Timeline for MidKnight Snacks Preparation

Periodically	<i>The Committee should discuss potential times for MidKnight Snacks</i>
6 weeks before event	<i>The Committee should finalize dates for a MidKnight Snacks program</i>
5 to 6 weeks before event	<i>Parliamentarian should be contacted to reserve Morrell Street; contact potential co-sponsors</i>
3 to 4 weeks before event	<i>University-approved vendor, recommended to be King Pita, should be reserved</i>
2 to 3 weeks before event	<i>The Committee should recruit volunteers to staff the event</i>
1 week before event	<i>Rutgers University Police Department should be contacted to inform them of the timing and place</i>
2 to 3 days before event	<i>Volunteers should be confirmed and a group chat created for each night's volunteers to facilitate communication</i>

Messaging and Marketing of MidKnight Snacks

As aforementioned, the does not condone or endorse binge-drinking and unsafe party behavior; further, what MidKnight Snacks does is ensure that students, if they decide to go partying of their own accord, are doing so safely. Consequently, the Committee does not allow for any marketing materials for MidKnight Snacks to be produced or distributed before the event. Were the Committee to do so, it could be mistaken that we are encouraging members of the Rutgers community to binge-drink and/or engage in unsafe party behavior. Those organizations and groups which work with the Committee to host a MidKnight Snacks are assenting to the same restriction of not marketing or advertising the event before it occurs.

During the event itself, volunteers should emphasize how the program is meant to reduce the risk of alcohol poisoning by providing people with free food and water. Some good ways to frame this goal when discussing with attendees include:

- a) “We understand people are going to be drinking tonight, so we want to reduce the risk of alcohol poisoning”;
- b) “Food is the best way to combat the risks of binge-drinking”;
- c) “The Assembly wants to make sure people are staying safe tonight by giving them food and water”;

⁸ This recommendation will be formally presented in the bill submitted with this bill.

d) And other lines and phrases which achieve the same affecting and messaging as these.⁹
As with marketing, those organizations and groups which work with the Committee to host a MidKnight Snacks should make sure to follow the same messaging guidelines.

Recommendation for the Assembly and the Committee

The main recommendation which is hereby presented by this Committee is that a volunteer should not be able to cancel less than forty-eight hours before a MidKnight Snacks program without it counting as an absence towards Assembly attendance. These recommendations have been formally presented to the Assembly through the bill presented with this report.

⁹ MidKnight Snacks has become closely associated with what is colloquially known as “Halloweekened”, or “Halloweek”. The Committee and the Assembly do not endorse any characterization which would present MidKnight Snacks as promoting, condoning, or endorsing “Halloweekend” / “Halloweek”. Further. Discussion between volunteers and attendees of MidKnight Snacks should have volunteers refraining from mentioning, explicitly, “Halloweekend” / “Halloweek”.