Remote Chocolate Tasting

Offer students an opportunity to learn about chocolate

(Decided: [ Y / N / A ])

Nature of the Situation:

1. GPSA provides programming events to enrich graduate and professional student life and promote a sense of community among graduate and professional students at Penn State.
2. Along with the typical stresses that graduate and professional study incurs, necessary social distancing and remote work caused by COVID-19 have increased the need for social interaction and mental health breaks while decreasing the options available for events and spontaneous experiences. Previously, we have collaborated with the College of Health and Human Development (HHD) to provide a cooking program for the graduate and professional students (c.f. bill 67-10). The events were successful, and many more students have expressed their interests to attend a similar event in the future. However, such an event cannot proceed unchanged while continuing to follow social distancing
In contrast, a chocolate tasting can proceed essentially unaltered, and there are even some advantages to a more-digital format.

Penn State’s College of Food Science hosts one of the world’s premier research programs on cacao, and a doctoral candidate there (Allison Brown) has run and planned chocolate tastings in a remote synchronous format and met various chocolate makers. Using materials provided by soon to be Dr. Brown, we will introduce participants to the world of craft chocolate. We hope to have one or more chocolate makers join the call, but have to finalize our order before that will be a possibility. This will allow us to run the event at a cost of approximately $10 (estimate only, exact product selection may alter this figure slightly) per person. For comparison’s sake, similar experiences are retailing elsewhere for $35-70 (depending on how much chocolate is included in the tasting package), a discrepancy caused in part by:

- the quantity of product provided,
- the retail sales model, and
- the direct participation of chocolate makers in planning and management of the event.

This event provides a multi-sensory exploration of the many facets of chocolate, from labor and wealth inequality (its production in the tropics and the uneven distribution of profits between farmers, middlemen, and chocolate makers) to its production process (9 steps in total), to an in-depth appreciation for the results of that process. Each participant will receive 5 pieces of chocolate totaling approximately 25 grams, access to digital tasting sheets, and a link to join the tasting event. People may only receive free chocolate once, but are welcome to attend multiple tastings if they wish to continue practicing mindful chocolate consumption. Each event will be limited to approximately 40 participants in order to facilitate effective discussion. These events will be advertised via our newswire and GPSA social media accounts.

Bulk purchasing of mini bars (c.f. Askinosie, Raaka, Caputo’s selection, etc. to choose chocolate makers, there are no craft chocolate companies within a 2-hour drive) will save a significant amount of labor and time cutting up and repackaging chocolate bars and is more COVID-safe but costs slightly more per serving.

**Recommended Course of Action:**

- GPSA authorizes the Programming Committee to purchase up to $800 of craft chocolate for the months of March, April, and possibly May. The total amount is chosen to supply tasting kits for graduate and professional students attending each of the events while keeping event size reasonable, for a total of up to 150 kits.
- Up to 2 hours of soon to be Dr. Allison Brown’s time prepping the slides at $25/hour
- $75 for shipping costs of the individual servings to attendees
- **Total: $925**
Respectfully submitted,

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President ________________________________  Affirm  
Veto ________________________________

The Graduate and Professional Student Association