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The Department of Student Affairs ran Highlander Chats which is currently going on as a means for students to sit down and eat with a staff or faculty member over an open discussion. A la carte questioning.

“We call it ‘off-the-books’ advising,” said Sara O’Brien, associate professor of biology, who helped steer the new outreach in an article by Radford Relations. “We want to create a community of inclusion for all of our students and foster a welcoming environment so that we [faculty] are more approachable.” Students will be able to share a complimentary meal at the Dalton Dining Hall with their chosen faculty or staff member to get them out of the classroom, studio, laboratory or office to foster discussion in a welcoming environment over a shared meal.

During the first full week of the month. Students, faculty or staff can obtain a Highlander Chats ticket from the Bonnie at the information desk. Both the student and the faculty or staff member need to complete the ticket information meaning it must be something they both agree upon doing. When December 4-6 comes around, they will present the ticket to a cashier at the Dalton Dining Hall which is where the ticket is only accepted at.

“The Highlander Chats program was born out of a discussion between faculty members and representatives of the Offices of the Dean of Students and University Services who are committed to better serving our students in a manner that fosters inclusive excellence across campus.” as mentioned in an email from the Dean of Student’s Office. “Studies show engaging students through better faculty/staff-student interactions bolsters retention and academic success for a diverse set of students. We can bring you the Highlander Chats pilot program in partnership with RU Dining Services-Chartwells.”

The upcoming dates for this month and future Highlander Chats are as follows: Dec. 4-8, Feb. 5-9, Mar. 12-16, and Apr. 2-6. All Highlander Chats participants will be asked to fill out a brief follow-up survey to help track the success of the program for improvements and adjustments that could

be made. For more information on the program, visit the RU Dining Services website feedback section or call the Dean of Students office at 540-831-6297.