With a roving eatery, Pitt plans to liven students’ taste buds and enrich their resumés this fall.

Sodexo, an international dining services company that operates at Pitt, partnered with Pitt’s business school to launch a new food truck after students expressed interest in the idea at Student Government Board Food Committee meetings. The unnamed truck, which is set to debut by the end of September, will employ about 10 Pitt students — its location, hours and prices are still being finalized.

The truck will offer grilled panini sandwiches, salads and freshly cut potato chips with a variety of house-made seasonings, as well as Pepsi products. There will also be vegetarian and gluten-free options. The signature item, the H2P sandwich, is top secret, according to Abdou Cole, resident district manager of the University’s dining services.

“We want it to be a surprise, but it’ll be a great sandwich,” Cole said. “The students will love it.”

The truck is going to be contractually operated by Sodexo, but according to Cole, “the goal is to make the food truck [mostly] student-run,” except for the driver and cook, who will be Sodexo employees. Sodexo will also supply the food for the truck.

In addition to the core menu, several items will rotate each semester, including student creations.

“We plan to have a design-your-own-sandwich contest,” Cole said. “The [student-voted] winner will earn a place on the menu for the semester.”

The truck will accept Dining Dollars and Panther Funds, as well as cash, credit and debit cards.

Students enrolled in the business school’s Certificate Program in Leadership and Ethics (CPLE) are driving the project. According to Audrey Murrell, associate dean to the business school, the program involves applying “ethical leadership and social responsibility” to its projects.

Officials said the food truck is meant to be more than just food on wheels — it will be a hands-on learning experience and “part of the educational process,” according to Cole. Those who get involved will be responsible for purchasing products from Sodexo as well as handling the accounting, finance and marketing of the truck.

“It’s a living laboratory for business students to look at analytics,” Murrell said. “There are very interesting markets available on campus. I’m very optimistic about
the demand the truck will have.”

John Keenan, a junior supply chain management and business information systems major, worked on the project this summer, along with another intern, to develop and implement the idea.

“There’s a lot more to starting a food truck than we thought, especially at a big university,” Keenan said. “It’s a lot to get all the rules and regulations [in place]. There’s a big community watching us run a small business.”

While the truck is currently set to operate exclusively on campus, it may expand to the North Shore for tailgating or other special events depending on student demand.

“There’s a great deal of opportunity for the truck to do not only as-needed things, but ... [also] special events,” Murrell said. “We already asked if we can have the truck to be a part of [the business school’s annual] block party.”

Dylan Harr, an undecided first-year student, said the truck could be a chance for Pitt to offer a “fresher” menu, something he’s been looking for since he came to campus.

“I think if [the truck] gives students more options than just going to the dining hall, [being able to] go outside to eat, that’ll bring more satisfaction,” Harr said.