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Kiwibots Delivering Food and Innovation to Lewis University Students

This fall, students at Lewis University saw something new zipping around campus: Kiwibots. These friendly, four wheeled boxes stand roughly two feet high and deliver campus food to students at 18 different drop-off points.

Lewis dining is managed by Sodexo, which started a partnership with the Colombian company Kiwibot. They were looking for some universities to participate in the Kiwibot program and Branislava Jevtic, the General Manager of Sodexo at Lewis, raised her hand. "I'm all about

bringing innovation to the university and Lewis was selected to be one of the few universities in the U.S. to get the Kiwibots. That process started early this spring." The fleet of 15 robots debuted this fall and operate Monday – Friday from 10 am – 10 pm.

If a student is hungry, they open an app on their phone, select the food they want, and choose which drop-off location they want the Kiwibot to deliver to. Once the order is placed, there are four Kiwibot employees on campus who will see the order come in. They will load the robot with the order and send it on its way. When the Kiwibot arrives at the drop-off location, the student will get an alert on their phone that their order has arrived. Maxing out at roughly 5 mph (or slower if there is a beverage on board), food will generally arrive 35 minutes after order is placed. For safety and sanitary reasons, each robot carries only one order. The student will need to go outside to meet the Kiwibot (they cannot open doors after all) and retrieve their food from the compartment.

As exciting as the Kiwibots are, they do have some limitations. A snow clogged sidewalk will not be passable for these little guys. Even if the way is clear, a heavy snow could accumulate on top of the robot and prevent the delivery door from being opened. They also cannot operate in heavy rain or during lightning (for the safety of the Kiwibot workers who may need to check on bots if something goes wrong). If the weather is too bad for you to go out, it's likely too bad for the Kiwibots to go out.

How do the Kiwibots stay safe? They have cameras, a GPS locator, headlights, and a host of sensors. The robots can sense if a vehicle or person is coming at them. In these cases, the bot will stop and can send an alert to the Kiwibot employees if there is danger. "There have been a few close calls with traffic, but there have been no incidents," said Jevtic.



The Kiwibot has an expressive LED face, rotating between various eye shapes and messages of THANK YOU and HAVE A NICE DAY. This, along with the sounds they make, give the little delivery bots their personality. Students have taken notice and often take photos with them. “We’re always looking to see what we can do for the students,” explained Jevtic, “and the Kiwibots are great engagement pieces.” So the next time you are on the Lewis University campus, be on the lookout for a fun, exciting, and innovative robot you may be sharing a path with.