Lafayette shoppers reap lower Whole Foods prices

Whole Foods advertises price drops on staple items such as produce as part of its merge with Amazon.

Darby Bullard Special to The Vermilion

Lower prices and the promised integration of Amazon Prime as their customer rewards program could allow Whole Foods Market to become a more reasonable grocery store option for college students.

The retail giant Amazon recently bought Whole Foods Market for $13.7 billion and immediately cut prices on “a selection of best-selling grocery staples across its stores, with more to come,” Amazon said in an Aug. 24 press release.

Prices of items like Whole Trade organic bananas and organic crunchy peanut butter have been reduced to prices comparable to other grocers like Walmart or Albertsons. Things like organic rotisserie chicken, and animal-welfare-rated 85 percent lean ground beef have been discounted 29 percent and organic Fuji apples as high as 43 percent. This happened on the first day. (This is a repeat of the previous paragraph. Editing error.)

A trip to Whole Foods Market is still almost 30 percent more expensive than Walmart when buying similar products, according to a comparison by Business Insider between 31 grocery items from Walmart and Whole Foods Market, but the price cuts to their popular, high-quality items that have already taken place are promising for students who have previously been deterred by price.

“I love Whole Foods. I think they offer really healthy, organic options,” said Lelia Saucier, a zooy-car-old anthropology major at University of Louisiana at Lafayette. “As a college student, the price is definitely a huge incentive to go somewhere for shopping.”

After a technological integration is complete, Amazon Prime will be the customer rewards program at Whole Foods Market, “providing Prime members with special savings and other in-store benefits,” said their press release. This includes Amazon Prime Student, which allows college students access to Amazon Prime benefits, including Whole Foods Market future savings and benefits, for 50 percent of the usual price per year until graduation.

“Amazon’s strength is using modern technology to serve its customers better,” Larry Light, CEO of marketing consulting

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company Arcature, recently told CNBC. Amazon is currently referring any questions to the Aug. 24 press release. (There has got to be a clearer way of saying this. It sounds awkward to be referring questions to a press release.)

According to Foursquare, foot traffic at Whole Foods Market locations across the country had a 25 percent increase overall in the first two days following the acquisition. Jeff Wilke, CEO of Amazon Worldwide Consumer, stated their vision is “to make healthy and organic food affordable for everyone,” and “everyone” is noticing, including students trying to get the most for their dollar.

“I’ve always wanted to shop at Whole Foods. I just never could afford it,” said 20-year-old broadcasting major Troy Brashear. “It would make me want to go check out some of the prices and see what they’re like now.”

Whole Foods Market has been given the nickname “Whole Paycheck” due to the high prices in the past, but with the “Amazon Effect,” as New York Times writer Kevin Granville dubbed this purchase and innovation, the retailer could move past this nickname.

“If it ended up being in the relative price range of what we spend at Albertsons, even if just a little more, I’d probably shop at Whole Foods a lot more often,” said Saucier. “I would probably be more likely to get a grocery list.”

The purchase of a smaller number of items is more typical of shopping trends at Whole Foods Market stores in the past, which has an average basket size of 8.9 items and an average basket price of $41.01, according to infoscout.co.

These lowered prices and promised deals are not enough for some to push them to spend the extra money needed to buy Whole Foods Market goods over another, generally cheaper competitor.

“I would probably spend the least money as possible, because I am a college student,” said 21-year-old Brent Guilbeau, a junior at UL Lafayette. “I don’t think people would bulk grocery shop there.”