Cornell DPD Handbook
DIVISION OF NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES

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Preparing for a Dietetic Internship

The Dietetic Internship is the supervised practice component of dietetics education. All accredited Dietetic Internship programs must provide at least 1200 hours of supervised learning experiences that allow students to achieve the competencies and learning outcomes for entry-level dietetics practice. See link to dietetics education competencies/learning outcomes on the DPD website. Access the list of supervised practice programs on the ACEND website (link provided on DPD website).

Dietetic Internships are located primarily in hospitals, universities and public health programs. All internships offer experiences in clinical, management and community dietetics but the percentage of time spent in each area of practice varies from program to program.

Acceptance into a DI has historically been competitive. In recent years, the competition for DI positions has increased. Data on the April 2016 first-round match reported 5200 applicants for 2992 DI positions (ACEND Update, May 2016). 49% of applicants were unmatched. This outcome reflects a growing increase in applicants for a fairly stable number of DI positions. Please see the “Availability of DI Positions” summary included in the DPD Handbook for more information. Completion of DPD requirements does not guarantee placement in a supervised practice program.

To position yourself to compete successfully for an internship, you need to have strong academic performance, strong, supportive letters of recommendation and nutrition-related work or volunteer experience. Gaining nutrition-related experience, paid or unpaid, is very important. Experience will help confirm the desire to become a Registered Dietitian and will also add to preparation for the dietetic internship. Examples of nutrition-related experiences include volunteer or paid positions in the nutrition department of a hospital, WIC Program, Cooperative Extension office, school lunch or Meals on Wheels program. Also consider health promotion programs offered by county health departments where volunteers are welcome. Look for internships offered by food companies or food service related businesses. The National Association of College and University Food Service (NACUFS) and the contract foodservice organizations, Sodexo, Morrison and ARAMARK often have summer internships. Political, public relations and marketing experiences also are considered transferable skills to dietetics and would be worthwhile experiences to round out preparation for an internship. Volunteering in a soup kitchen or a food pantry or with an after-school program are other opportunities to consider as well. Volunteer positions may even lead to paid positions. The professional contacts you make along the way are invaluable. In addition, supervisors from such experiences may be willing to write letters of recommendation when it’s time to apply to internships or graduate programs.

It is wise to join the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as a Student Member. This shows commitment to the profession of dietetics. Joining confers many benefits, including the Journal
of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, a research journal, access to the online student newsletter and free access to Academy’s Evidence Analysis Library. Membership also offers free subscriptions resources such as “On the Pulse,” an e-mail newsletter about legislative issues important to dietetics. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation has many scholarships that are awarded to students in dietetics programs every year. Only Academy members are eligible for these scholarships. Paid membership fees also covers membership to an affiliate (typically state) of the Academy. Typically students choose state dietetic association membership where they live or go to school. For membership forms and information go to www.eatright.org and click on “Join Academy.”

The Academy website also provides excellent information pertaining to preparation for supervised practice and applying to dietetic internships. Visit www.eatright.org/ACEND and select “computer matching” under “student resources” for links to these helpful topics:

- Programs Participating in Dietetic Internship Centralized Application System
- FAQ: Top 10 Questions about Computer Matching for Dietetic Internships (DIs)
- Availability of Dietetic Internship Positions
- Suggestions to Improve Your Chances at Getting a Dietetic-Internship Position
- Computer Matching: Applicant Responsibilities
- Video for Dietetic Internship Centralized Application System

For more information on the field of dietetics, it is recommended that you read Winterfeldt, E., Bogle, M., Ebro, L. Dietetics: Practice and Future Trends, 3rd edition, 2011, Jones and Bartlett, Inc. This book provides an excellent overview on the history and current issues and opportunities in the field of dietetics.
Determining Where to Apply

One of the hardest tasks is deciding where to apply to from among the approximately 220+ available supervised practice programs.

Start by examining the list of dietetic internships and coordinated programs under the “Accredited Education Programs” link at http://www.eatright.org/ACEND. This directory lists all accredited programs and reports the length and cost of a program, start dates, number of students, whether a graduate degree is optional or required and contact information for the program and Program Director. (See also “Tips for Using the Online Directory” posted on the DPD website under “Resources.”)

Things to consider

Do you need to start a program on a certain date?
Do you have constraints on where you can live?
Do you have financial constraints?
Do you want to complete a graduate degree at the same time?

Once you have a shorter list of programs to consider, you should take a closer look at each program to determine if you’re a good fit. Consult The Applicant’s Guide to Supervised Practice (link available on the DPD website) which provides more detailed information on most programs. The guide reports the percentage of the program that is spent in clinical, community and management rotations and information about specialty rotations. It also includes information on competitiveness of the program by noting the number of applicants compared to the number of positions available, the minimum GPA considered and the average or range of GPAs of current students. Each program also ranks the criteria considered regarding applicants to their program.

All of the programs have information on their website. You can also access the program website from the ACEND accredited programs list. Program director emails are also provided, but be sure to review all information on the program website first before reaching out with questions.

Visiting programs before you apply is very beneficial. It can be very informative to meet the Program Director, dietitians you’ll be working with and interns who are currently in the program. Some programs have days when they give tours. Many programs offer an open house in the fall/winter. When contacting DI Directors, you may ask them if they hold an open house. Information on open houses will be forwarded to you via email by your DPD Director as it becomes available. Some programs also allow you to visit at other times if you make arrangements in advance. If you are interested in programs in New York City and nearby states, plan to attend the annual GNYDA DI Fair, typically in November. The Massachusetts Dietetic Association also typically holds a DI Fair in Boston. Check with your DPD Director for more information.
Keep in mind that an open house opportunity is not an interview, but it may be the only face-to-face contact you have with the DI Director. Being prepared, courteous and professional at the open house will serve you well. Be sure to dress professionally, wear only understated jewelry (no eyebrow rings, etc) and be prepared for your visit. This means knowing the information that is in the promotional materials and on the program website so that you don’t ask questions that you should already know the answers to. Always speak politely, with enthusiasm and interest.

If you cannot visit a program, you might consider calling the Program Director and asking if you could speak to some of the current interns. They are the experts on the student experience in the program.

Most of our graduates are very successful in their internships and programs welcome well-prepared applicants from Cornell. A list of the internships attended by our graduates over in recent years is included in the DPD Handbook.

Programs prefer diversity in their interns so it is unlikely that more than two Cornell students will be accepted into a program during the same program year (although on occasion several of our students have been accepted to the same program). To help you know how many classmates will be applying to various internships, throughout the semester we will ask students to tell us where they intend to apply. This list will be compiled by the DPD Director who will remove student names and tally the number of students planning to apply to each program, including number one choices. The compiled list will be shared with Cornell students applying to internships. If you have a GPA on the lower end and have little work experience, you should consider programs that other Cornell students are not applying to.

**Should I Earn a Master's Degree at the Same Time as Doing an Internship?**

The answer to this question depends upon your personal circumstances. If you are really tired of going to school and would like a break, it would be best to put off graduate school. If you really aren’t sure what you want to do for work, it might also be best to wait. An internship offers the opportunity to explore many areas of dietetics practice and might provide you with a clearer idea of what activities are most interesting and satisfying to you. In today’s job climate, there is much less job security than there used to be. People change jobs many times in their careers and even change careers entirely. If you plan to do nutrition research and teaching, or advanced clinical nutrition practice, a graduate degree in nutrition can be helpful. There is a shortage of PhD, RD’s for academic and research positions. Many practitioners would also benefit from obtaining a graduate degree in some field other than nutrition such as a Master of Public Health (MPH), a Master of Business Administration (MBA), a Masters in Health Administration, a Masters in Communication, Education, Psychology, Food Science, etc. This kind of degree will expand your skills, provide cross-functional skills and make you more versatile and valuable to your future employers.

These facts argue for waiting to get a Master's degree until after you have worked for a while and learned about what field of study would help you most in your career. On the other hand, it is much easier to do your graduate degree before you are used to having a full-time salary and
before you take on other commitments. Also consider that beginning in January 2024, candidates for the RD examination must have at least a master’s degree in order to sit for the RD exam.

If you are concerned you will not be competitive for the internships that you are most interested in, it pays to have a back-up plan. Consider concurrently applying to graduate schools. Some internships are available only to students who are attending the graduate program at that same university.
The Application Process

About the Standard Application

Applicants applying in 2010-2011 became the first to use the new centralized on-line application service referred to as “DICAS.” Most but not all Dietetic Internship programs participate in this service, so it is imperative that you check with the program to see whether they require the standard application in paper or submitted via DICAS. DICAS may be accessed at https://portal.dicas.org. You are encouraged to review the video overview of the centralized online application.

If a program does not participate with DICAS the appropriate application is typically provided. See the DPD Director if you have any question about what application to use. Be sure to type or the application. Applications should not be handwritten unless otherwise indicated by individual program instructions. Downloading the files onto your own computer will allow you to easily fill out the application.

Regardless of the application used, be sure to triple-check your application for typos and errors before it is submitted. Many internship directors use the application process to determine how well applicants follow directions.

Program admission committees will review your application according to program standards. Most programs will make an initial determination of your candidacy based on a first look at your application. This may include evaluating your GPA, completeness of your application and appearance of your application. It is imperative that your complete application be received before the due-date. Applications that are not typed (if paper), submitted late, and/or incomplete may be removed from the selection pool. To assist you in putting together the highest quality application possible, review of your application is available. The DPD director will assist you in reviewing your application for completeness and accuracy prior to submitting it to your programs of choice if adequate time is allowed to do so.

On the application you must list most of the courses you have taken throughout your college career and calculate a separate DPD GPA. Follow instructions provided by DICAS when entering coursework. For courses where you used AP credits to fulfill the requirement, list the course title, prefix and number exactly as it appears on the transcript. Put in the appropriate lecture/lab/etc, the appropriate number of credits, the grade type as “letter,” the transcript grade as “CR-CREDIT, and note “Advanced Placement” under special classification. You also must submit a list of DPD coursework for Cornell. Use the “DPD Course List Form for DICAS” found under “resources” on the DPD website.

Proof of Completing Dietetics Requirements
Most students applying for internships have not completed undergraduate course requirements and are not yet eligible to obtain a verification statement (please see policy on “Issuance of Verification Statements”). Students who are currently in the process of completing requirements should complete the transcript evaluation form and a rough draft of the Declaration of Intent to Complete Coursework form and submit these to the Dietetics Office with an unofficial copy of your Cornell transcript and official transcripts from any other schools by November of the academic year you are applying. Using this information, a formal Declaration of Intent form will be prepared for you. Before the Dietetics Office finalizes the version that will go with your application, you will need to submit proof of your fall grades. You may use Just the Facts as proof; please send this information to the Dietetics Office.

For applications submitted via DICAS, an electronic version of the Declaration of Intent form will be completed by the DPD director after you have submitted the appropriate information to the Dietetics Office (please see above). Once the DPD Director has entered the information, the Declaration of Intent form will show up in your DICAS application. You will need to review it and approve it.

Transcripts for Applications

You will need to provide official copies of your transcripts with your DICAS application. You will need transcripts from every school you have attended. For program applications with due dates after the fall semester, be sure that your Cornell transcript shows your fall grades. DICAS requires only one official transcript from each school you attended. Follow the instructions on the DICAS website for sending DICAS your transcripts. If you are applying to programs that require paper applications, be sure to order enough transcripts so that you may submit an original transcript with each application. For example, if you are applying to programs that use DICAS and two programs that don’t, you will need 4 original transcripts from each school: one for your Cornell DPD file, one for DICAS and one each for the two paper applications.

After you graduate, please remember to send the Dietetics Office your official Cornell transcript with degree posted. This is required to complete Verification Statements, whether you intend to attend a dietetic internship or not.

Letters of Reference

Your job is to request letters of recommendation from people who can write a strong letter of support for your acceptance into supervised practice. Most programs require that you provide three letters of reference with your application. Programs differ in their requirements for who should write your letters. Check program application requirements for details, but in general you are likely to need two letters from faculty and one from an employer/work supervisor. At least one of your letter writers should be a Registered Dietitian. You should select letter writers who know you best and can write the strongest letter of support possible for you. You should make your requests and receive confirmation from your letter writers by October 1. To help your writers compose a strong and supportive letter, you should complete and provide your letter writers with your self-evaluation (see DPD website for forms). Provide your letter writers a copy
of the self-evaluation, your resume, and an unofficial copy of your transcript. If a paper application is needed, remember to include a signed waiver form to your letter writer.

If a program you are interested in requires a letter from someone who doesn't know you well, call the program and explain your situation and ask that you be allowed to substitute an alternate letter. Program Directors typically appreciate this kind of initiative.

Letters of reference should address the following items:

- How well the writer knows the applicant and in what capacity
- If the letter is from a job supervisor, the activities and responsibilities of the job
- Intellectual capabilities of the applicant
- Performance on the job or in the classroom
- Personal characteristics
- Potential as a Registered Dietitian

Writing Your Personal Statement

One of the most important parts of your application is your personal statement or essay. This is your opportunity to sell yourself to the program. The more you set yourself apart from the other applicants the stronger a candidate you will be. The self-evaluation that you complete for your letter writers will help you to write your personal statement.

Some programs have specific requirements for your statement so be sure to read program directions carefully. If your application is submitted via DICAS, you are allowed to save different versions of your statement online. This allows you to tailor your essay to individual programs, if desired or required. There is however a 1000 word limit. If there are no specific questions to answer outlined by your program, at a minimum, you should address:

- Why you want to enter the dietetics profession
- Why you want to go to a particular program (you will need to change this in each letter)
- What you have to offer in the way of experiences and qualifications that have helped to prepare you for your career
- Any community services activities you’ve participated in
- What are your short-term and long-term goals
- Explanations for a low GPA of lack of work experience, if appropriate
- What are your strengths and weaknesses or areas needing improvement

If you have an idea about an area of dietetics practice that interests you, talk about that. Programs appreciate applicants who are focused. Commitment to the profession of dietetics is valued. Are you a member of Academy? Have you ever attended a dietetic association meeting? If so, discuss what membership or attendance meant for you.
What is Needed & Provided to Apply to Supervised Practice Programs

What DPD students must provide

- All DPD students are required to meet with the DPD Director before November 1
- Transcripts from each school attended: 1 for your Cornell DPD file, 1 sent to DICAS, and 1 for each DI paper application (if applicable)
- Unofficial CU transcript showing fall grades (send before leaving in Dec.). In May, you will also need to request an official CU transcript, with degree posted, be sent to the CU Dietetics Office.
- GRE scores
- Personal statement
- Letters of reference
- Typed application (Standard Academy application available on-line) and/or electronic DICAS application (determined by the program(s) you are applying to.
- $75 fee to Cornell University for transcript evaluation by November 15 (Please submit to Dietetics Office)
- Completed Transcript Evaluation form and Declaration of Intent form by November 15. These are rough drafts; we’ll use the information to complete the final form on DICAS. (Please submit to Dietetics Office)
- Unofficial Cornell transcript December 1 (please submit to Dietetics Office).
- Postage to mail packets (for programs requiring paper application)
- Fee for computer matching (D & D Digital)
- Fee for centralized DI application service (DICAS)
- Fees for each program you apply to

What Cornell will provide

- Access to Dietetics Computer Lab (3rd floor MVR)
- *Handbook on Applying for a Dietetic Internship* and *Applicants Guide to Supervised Practice Experience*. On-line access on DPD website
- Transcript evaluation
- Declaration of Intent to Complete statement (Official form completed for you in DICAS application after transcript evaluation completed)
- Official Verification Statements for program successfully completed. 6 originals for your personal files. One original will be mailed to your DI Director.
- Program announcements forwarded via e-mail
- Assistance and counseling regarding the application process
- List of DI’s to which CU students plan to apply

Application Packet review – receive professional review (upon request) of your application before submitting it.
Computer Matching to Supervised Practice Programs

Computer matching is a separate step in the application process and requires a separate fee from the application. Please note that completing an application with DICAS does not automatically enroll you in computer matching. The majority of DI programs participate in computer matching to identify the students who will be attending their programs in the coming year. In this process, students register on-line with D&D Digital at www.dnddigital.com and rank the internships that they are applying to in order of preference.

After reviewing all of the applications they receive, the programs indicate the students they would like to attend their programs in their order of preference. D & D Digital then runs the software matching program that matches together applicants and programs.

Instructions for applicants is available on the D&D and Digital website. Be sure to note important deadlines for registering with D&D Digital and for submitting your rankings. Information is also available on how to remove your name from match eligibility should you choose to do so. Keep in mind that if you are matched to a program during the match process, you must accept the match.

Applicants are advised to review information about the match process, DICAS, applicant responsibilities and FAQs on the ACEND website at www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/content.aspx?id=6442485425).
Internships Cornellians Have Attended 2000-2016

(By Program Name)

Aramark
Baptist Health System, TX
Ball State Univ
Bastyr
Baylor Univ Med Center
Benedictine
Beth Israel
Boston Univ/Sargent College
Bowling Green
Buffalo University
Brigham & Womens
Bronx VA
California Polytechnic Univ
Cal Poly State San Luis Obispo
Case Western
Central Washington
Chico State
Cleveland Clinic
Columbia
Cornell
Danbury Hospital
Dominican DI/MBA
Georgia State
Henry Ford Hospital
Hunter
Indiana University
James A Haley VA
James J Peters VA

Johns Hopkins combined
Lehman College
LIU/CW Post
Loyola
Marywood
Mass General
Mayo Clinic
Miami Valley (OH)
Med U of SC
Montclair State
Meredith College
Mount Auburn
Murray State
NIH
North Carolina Central
North Shore/LIJ
NYU
NY Presbyterian
OSF St. Francis
Oregon H & SC
Patton State Hospital
Penrose
Penn State
Queens
Rush University
Sage Colleges
Sea Mar
St Luke’s Mayo
Simmons
Sodexo
Southern Illinois Univ.

Stony Brook
SUNY Buffalo
Syracuse
Tufts
Tulane
U Alaska
U of Arkansas
U of Buffalo
UC Berkeley
UCLA Med
USCF
U of Florida
U of Houston
U Mass Amherst
UMDNJ
U of Kentucky
UNC/Chapel Hill
U of St. Josephs
U of Nevada
U of Pittsburgh
U of Utah
U of Virginia
U of Wisconsin
US Army Dietetic Internship
Vanderbilt
VA San Diego
Wellness Workdays
Westchester Med
West LA Veterans
Western Michigan
Yale New Haven
Internships Attended by Cornell Grads 1995-2016 (by state)

University of Arkansas Medical School, Little Rock, AK
Yavapai County Health Dept, AZ
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA
California State Polytechnic Univ, San Luis Obispo, CA
Chico State, CA
VA Healthcare System, CA
University of California, Berkeley, CA
University of California, San Francisco, CA
ARAMARK Healthcare, CA
Glendale Memorial Hospital, CA
Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, CA
Loma Linda Univ, CA
Penrose-St. Francis Hospital, CO
University of NO. Colorado
Danbury Hospital, CT
Yale New Haven Hospital, CT
University of Connecticut, CT
U.S. Army, Washington, DC
U.S. Air Force, TX
Bay Pines Hospital, FL
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL
Tampa VA Hospital
Emory University, Atlanta, GA
Georgia State University, GA
Benedictine Univ, IL
Dominican Univ, River Forest, IL
Loyola University, Chicago, IL
Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's, IL
OSF St. Francis Peoria, IL
Southern Illinois Univ – Carbondale, IL
University of Iowa, IA
Ball State, Muncie, IN
Indiana University, Indianapolis, IN
University of Kentucky, KY
Spalding University, KY
Tulane Univ, New Orleans, LA
Brigham & Women's Hospital, MA
Boston University, MA
Frances Stern Nutrition Center, MA (Tufts)
Massachusetts General Hospital, MA
Mount Auburn, MA
Simmons College, MA
Beth Israel/Deaconess, MA
St. Luke's Hospital, MA
Wellness Workdays, MA
National Institutes of Health, MD
Univ of Maryland, Eastern Shore, MD
Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, MI
Western Michigan, MI
UNC, Chapel Hill, NC
University of NevAcademy Reno, NV
Keene State College, NH
University of Medicine and Dentistry, NJ
St. Elizabeth's Hospital, NJ
ARAMARK Healthcare, NY
Sodexo, NY
James J Peters/Bronx VA Hospital, NY
Columbia University, NY
Cornell University, NY
Hunter College, NY
Lehman College, NY
Long Island Univ/CW Post, NY
New York Presbyt, NY (Jan and Aug start)
New York Institute of Technology, NY
New York University
North Shore University/LIJ, Long Island, NY
Queens College, NY
Russell Sage, NY
Syracuse University, NY
SUNY Stonybrook, NY
Univ. of Buffalo, NY
United Health Services, NY (program discontinued)
U of North Carolina Chapel Hill, NC
Meredith College, NC
Cleveland VA, OH
Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, OH
Miami Valley Hospital, Dayton, OH
U of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK
University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK
Oregon Health and Science University, Portland, OR
Family Health Council, Pittsburgh, PA
Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, PA
Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Shadyside Hospital, Pittsburgh, PA
Sodexo, Allentown, PA
University of Pittsburgh, PA
Medical Univ of South Carolina, Charleston, SC
Clemson University, SC
University of Tennessee at Knoxville, TN
Vanderbilt University Medical Center, TN
US-Army Dietetic Internship, Fort Sam Houston, TX
Baptist Health System, San Antonio, TX
Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, TX
University of Houston, Houston, TX
University of Utah
Medical College of Virginia, VA
Johns Hopkins University combined program, MD
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA
University of Wisconsin at Madison, WI