The Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD)

Should you consider completing DPD requirements?

Human Biology, Health & Society (HBHS)
Nutritional Sciences - CHE (NS-CHE)
Nutritional Sciences - CALS (NS-CALS)
Global & Public Health Sciences – CHE (GPHS)

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<td>Corporate Wellness</td>
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If these career opportunities interest you, consider becoming a registered dietitian (RD). Job markets demand and many states require that anyone who advises others about nutrition or diet must be a registered dietitian (RD). For pre-med students, completing the dietetics program provides valuable preparation in health, disease and clinical nutrition for practicing medicine and alternative career options in healthcare in addition to medicine.

Dietitians work in a wide variety of settings and some dietitians practice in highly specialized areas. Some key job trends include:

- Increased demand for dietitians in community settings such as in programs that promote maternal and child health, adult fitness and wellness, and diabetes education.
- Increased demand for dietitians with specialized expertise in the management of complex health conditions and diseases such as cancer, AIDS, newborn intensive care, eating disorders, burns, and diabetes.
- Increased demand for dietitians by private industry such as food manufacturers, supermarket chains, food service corporations, restaurants, software companies, health clubs, and print and broadcast media.

In addition, academic training and work experience in dietetics opens doors to advancement in many directions including management positions and not-for-profit organizations, consulting or counseling practices, and opportunities to combine dietetics with other health care specialties.

For examples of current job opportunities in dietetics see Jobs in Dietetics, a job list service for nutrition and dietetic professionals at www.healthecareers.com and http://www.eatrightpro.org/resources/career/become-an-rdn-or-dtr.

How to Become a Registered Dietitian

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the largest professional organization for dietetics professionals and sets the standards for dietetics education through the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and for credentialing as a registered dietitian through the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). To become a registered dietitian, you must:

- Complete the required courses of an academic program that is accredited by ACEND. Complete an ACEND-accredited supervised practice program (see below) prior to taking the registration exam
- Pass the national registration exam given by the CDR to earn the Registered Dietitian (RD) credential.
Admission to supervised practice programs:
• Is highly competitive with the national placement rate into supervised practice programs at approximately 50%. (see below)
• Requires prior completion of an undergraduate degree including the required courses in the didactic program
• Requires relevant and adequate field experience (paid or volunteer) in clinical, community, management and/or research settings.

Programs are located throughout the U.S. and typically range from 9 to 12 months in duration to provide a minimum of 1200 hours of supervised learning experience. Some programs also offer advanced degrees. Interns receive supervised experience in clinical nutrition, community nutrition, and food and nutrition service management as well as a concentration area specific to an internship.

The Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) at Cornell

The Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University offers an ACEND accredited DPD. The mission of the DPD is to prepare critical thinking graduates ready for supervised evidence-based practice to become registered dietitians or entry-level practice as diet technicians, registered and for leadership in their careers in nutrition and dietetics. Although many of the course requirements in the ACEND-accredited dietetics program are met by courses required in the NS, G&PHS and HBHS majors, there are additional course requirements unique to the DPD. Approximately 20% of DNS students opt to pursue the DPD. Students who wish to complete the dietetics program must plan their course schedules carefully to assure that they have all the prerequisites needed for advanced courses. Summaries of the course requirements for dietetics and the important course sequences for this curriculum are included in the Advising Notes for the DPD in the blue pages.

Students pursuing dietetics education work closely with their faculty advisors and with the Dietetics Program faculty to prepare their course schedules and to acquire field experience in dietetics, and research experiences that enhance their classroom learning. Such efforts increase the likelihood of acceptance into the DPD and ultimately placement into supervised practice programs. The placement rate of Cornell DPD students who apply to supervised practice programs over the past five years is, on average, 89%. The Cornell DPD placement rate is notably higher than the national placement rate of approximately 50%. Find more information on program goals, objectives and outcomes at http://www.human.cornell.edu/dns/academic/dietetics/dpd/index.cfm.

Application. Students interested in pursuing a career as a Registered Dietitian must apply for admission into the DPD, typically at the beginning of the junior year. Admission into the DPD is a competitive and selective process with a limited number of placements. Completing DPD requirements should be an option pursued as part of a thoughtful plan by students serious in pursuing dietetics and health careers. Admissions reflect an overall competitiveness for successful placement into supervised practice and commitment to a career in dietetics and health. Selection will be based on successful academic progress, committed intention to pursue a career in dietetics and health, potential for excellence or leadership in the field of dietetics and a high likelihood for successful placement into an accredited internship post-baccalaureate. Students who determine that becoming a Registered Dietitian is a good fit with their professional goals after thoughtful consideration and career exploration should apply to the DPD program at Cornell. Refer to additional information regarding the application process on the DNS undergraduate dietetics website.

Pre-dietetics Registration. Students who are interested in completing dietetics at Cornell should register as a "pre-dietetics" student and begin taking dietetics courses as well as seek dietetics-related experiences prior to their application to the DPD program. A meeting with the DPD Director is also strongly advised. Please refer to the undergraduate dietetics website at www.nutrition.cornell.edu for more information on how to register as a "pre-dietetics" student and to review the Dietetics Pathway checklist as well as other resources.

What Does a Strong Applicant for the DPD Look Like?
Acceptance into supervised practice programs is highly competitive. Strong applicants have the most potential for success at gaining acceptance into internship programs and exhibit the following:
• is completing DPD coursework and degree requirements with an overall GPA of 3.0 or better.
• has strong letters of support (from advisors, instructors, an RD practitioner, coaches, employers, etc) to practice in the field of dietetics.
• has gained relevant and adequate dietetics related experiences through work, volunteer, lab and field experiences.
• is mature and capable of balancing the rigors of work and study during the internship experience.
• has developed leadership skills through involvement with clubs, organizations, sports, work, volunteer and other extracurricular experiences and exhibits potential for excellence or leadership in the field of dietetics.
• is passionate about food, nutrition and health and practicing in the field of dietetics.
• is committed to pursuing a career in dietetics and health.

What Will You Learn in The Dietetics Program?

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<td>Management</td>
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Translating the science of nutrition into healthy food choices for individuals and groups or appropriate nutritional therapy for those with illness requires the integration of many different disciplines. The Dietetics curriculum provides a broad and integrated academic program that is strongly grounded in the physical, biological, social and behavioral sciences. The program emphasizes critical thinking, communication skills, quantitative literacy, and the application of theory to practice.

Students begin with basic courses in biology, chemistry, social sciences and introduction to food, nutrition, and health issues and nutrition and the life cycle. In the second year students progress to organic chemistry, physiology and courses that examine the social and behavioral science aspects of food and nutrition, and the nutritional and physicochemical properties of foods. Advanced courses taken in the junior and senior years apply biochemistry, physiology, social, and behavioral sciences to problems in clinical nutrition, counseling, communications, public health, and food and nutrition management. Throughout the program students develop skills that will foster personal and professional growth as life-long learners and as leaders and team members in the dietetics profession.

For further information about the undergraduate Dietetics Program, you should contact the DPD Director: Emily Gier, MBA, RD, CDN, 416 Savage Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-4401. Tel: (607) 255-2638, email: eg47@cornell.edu.

Specific information about dietetics programs at other universities may be obtained from: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000, Chicago, IL 60606-6995 Telephone: (800) 877-1600 and at www.eatright.org.

For more information, see the following web sites:

Academy web site:  http://www.eatright.org

DNS web site (dietetic program requirements):  http://www.human.cornell.edu/dns/academic/dietetics/index.cfm

Division of Nutritional Sciences, Office of Academic Affairs, Cornell University.
B21 Savage Hall, (607) 255-4410, aadns@cornell.edu, 07/15