

This handout was given at the recent FNCE ACEND Forum presentation as a summary of ACEND's work on the 2017 and the future education model standards

Current Accreditation under the 2012 Standards:

- All currently accredited nutrition and dietetics programs are accredited under the 2012 Standards
- ACEND is required by the US Department of Education to review and revise standards as needed as least every 5 years. Just as the 2008 Standards were replaced with the 2012 Standards, the 2012 Standards will be replaced with the 2017 Standards.
- ACEND Standards Committee is currently reviewing data collected from stakeholders last spring about revisions needed in the 2012 Standards and working on the revisions of the 2012 Standards.
- ACEND expects to release a draft of the 2017 Standards for public comment in spring 2016 and expects to finalize them by fall 2016.
- All programs will be expected to be compliant with the 2017 Standards to remain accredited; a date for implementation of the 2017 Standards has not yet been determined but will be sometime in 2017.

Future Education Model Accreditation:

- ACEND has recommended a future model of education that includes practitioners at the associate's, bachelor's and master's degree levels. Complete information about these recommendations and the data that support the recommendations can be found in the *Rationale Document*, which is updated routinely as new information becomes available. It is located on the ACEND Standards website www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards.
- ACEND currently is developing the standards and competencies for these future education programs. Updates on ACEND's work on the standards is being posted monthly on the ACEND Standards website www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards. The website includes an FAQ information sheet, webinar presentations, monthly updates on the standards work, and the *Rationale Document*, which is updated as new information becomes available.
- The draft standards and competencies for the future education model are expected to be released for public comment in fall 2016. After revisions based on public comments, the final standards for the future education model programs also are expected to be released in 2017.
- Existing accredited programs will not be required to adopt the future education model standards at this time.
 - Programs will be given the option to voluntarily adopt the future education model standards and serve as pilot programs. ACEND hopes to have pilot programs admitting students in 2018. Graduates of the master's degree program will be eligible to take the registration exam for dietitian nutritionists; graduates of the bachelor's degree will be eligible to take the registration exam for nutritionist and dietetics technicians.
 - ACEND will collect and analyze data from pilot programs and graduates (likely 4 – 6 years after program adoption) before making a decision about implementation of the future model for all programs.
 - If a decision is made to implement the recommended future model for all programs, sufficient time (likely 10 years or more) would be given for programs to make the changes needed.

For Further Information:

- Go to the ACEND Standards Committee website for more information about ACEND Standards work and for directions to participate in a monthly ACEND virtual town hall on the 2nd Thursday of month starting November 12 at 11:30 CT: www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards
- Contact ACEND to answer questions (acend@eatright.org; 312-899-4872)

Questions That Have Come to ACEND and ACEND Response

Question: What will be done with the information that was collected from the FNCE® round table discussions?

ACEND Response: ACEND thanks the 200+ individuals who participated in the educator round table discussions at FNCE. The discussions provided important information for ACEND about the future education model including criteria for pilot programs, outcomes data to collect, experiential learning options, concerns about implementation and questions about the future standards and competencies. All of the information has been shared with the ACEND Standards/Expanded Standards Group. Responses to questions and concerns will be shared in future editions of the monthly update.

Question: How will the role of the future education model bachelor's degree graduate change from the current associate's degree graduate?

ACEND Response: ACEND is still finalizing the competencies expected of the future bachelor's degree graduate who will be eligible to take the nutrition and dietetics technician registration exam. The October Standards Update (available at www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards) provided a vision for the bachelor's prepared graduate. These graduates are expected to be better prepared than the current associate's degree graduates for emerging roles in community nutrition and health, wellness, business and industry and management. They are expected to work under the supervision of the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) when providing direct patient/client nutrition and work independently providing general nutrition education to healthy populations, managing foodservice operations, and working with foodservice, business and industry.

Question: Why is the graduate degree not in a specific areas such as nutrition, community, or foodservice?

ACEND Response: ACEND has recommended preparation at the master's level to allow sufficient time to prepare graduates with the complex set of skills, more in-depth level of understanding and higher levels of critical thinking expected of practitioners in the future. As documented in the ACEND *Rationale Document* (available at www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards), stakeholders expressed the importance for future nutrition and dietetics practitioners being prepared with a broad spectrum of skills as evidenced by mean ratings greater than 3 on a 4-point importance scale (4=very important): teamwork and communication skills (m=3.6 on 4-pt scale); clinical client care skills (m=3.5 on 4-pt scale); professional research and practice skills (m=3.4 on 4-pt scale); community and population health skills (m=3.4 on 4-pt scale); food and foodservice systems (m=3.3 on 4-pt scale); and leadership, management and organization skills (m=3.2 on 4-pt scale). As a result, ACEND is developing competencies to address these core skills and expects to have them ready for public comment in 2016. ACEND currently does not specify the focus of the degree; the standards identify the knowledge and competencies expected of graduates. Although the standards for the master's level program have not yet been identified, ACEND does not anticipate specifying a focus for the master's degree. This would mean that programs could have a special focus for their master's degree program such as nutrition, community, foodservice, etc. and the degree could be in any field, as long as, graduates demonstrate the competencies required. Further, professions, like nutrition and dietetics, have distinct bodies of knowledge that the public can associate with the individual professional that differentiates them from other professions, vocations and trades. Pre-professional specialization could produce confusion among the public and other health care providers.

Question: What criteria will be used to select the pilot programs?

ACEND Response: The criteria that will be used to select programs who volunteer to serve as pilot programs for the future education model associate's, bachelor's and master's degree programs has not yet been set. ACEND is asking for input from stakeholders on what criteria would be appropriate to use. Please send your ideas for criteria that should be used to acend@eatright.org.

Question: How do I get to the ACEND website from the eatright.org or eatrightpro.org website?

ACEND Response: The easiest way to get to ACEND's website from the eatright.org website is to go to the bottom of the eatright.org homepage and click on either "accreditation info" or "education"; both will take you to the ACEND home page. From the eatrightpro.org website go to the bottom of the homepage and click on "ACEND and Accreditation"; it will take you to the ACEND homepage.

Question: How have educators been involved in your work on the future education model?

ACEND Response: Input from and involvement of nutrition and dietetics educators has occurred and continues to occur throughout ACEND's work on the future education model. The Standards Committee/Expanded Standards Group are leading ACEND's work on the future education model; half of those members are educators. The consultants who performed the extensive environmental scan are educators. The stakeholder survey examining future practice in nutrition and dietetics was completed by nearly 2,200 educators (24% of the total sample). The focus groups that were held to explore gaps in the current competencies included 12 educators (44% of the total sample). A total of 2,150 comments from educators (30% of total sample) about the proposed future model were reviewed. Most (75%) of the 392 individuals who provided input on survey about revisions needed in the 2012 Standards were educators. The work to develop the competencies for the future education model programs has involved educator input as well; 30% of the 15 subject matter experts and 43% of the 180 individuals asked to serve as first line reviewers were educators. Educators are an important stakeholder group and ACEND will continue to gather input from and encourage participation by educators in its work on the future education model.

Question: How do ACEND's accreditation standards align with CDR's January 1, 2024 requirement that applicants taking the dietitian nutritionist registration exam will need a master's degree?

ACEND Response: CDR has released an information sheet about student options for meeting the master's degree requirement for taking the dietitian nutritionist registration exam after January 1, 2024 (see www.cdrnet.org). All of the options include graduation from ACEND accredited programs that provide the didactic and supervised practice preparation to become a registered dietitian nutritionist. Graduates with verification statements from ACEND accredited coordinated programs and dietetic internships that include completion a master's degree and graduates with a verification statement from the future education model master's degree programs will meet the 2024 RDN exam eligibility requirements. Graduates of ACEND accredited programs that do not include a master's degree will need to complete a master's degree in the field of their choice to meet the 2024 RDN exam eligibility requirements.

Question: What impact will the recommended future education model have on the cost of education for future students who want to become a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN)?

ACEND Response: Currently most students spend at least five years to prepare to become an RDN. Approximately 40% of students completing coordinated programs and 20% of students completing dietetic internships currently are paying tuition to complete a concurrent master's degree program, another 25% of internship students are paying tuition to earn some graduate credit with the internship and many go on to complete their graduate degree. Less than 10% of students do not pay at least some tuition/fees to attend their internships. The exact cost of future education is not yet known as pilot programs have not yet been identified, but the cost of requiring a master's degree for entry-level practice may not exceed what students are currently paying to complete a master degree in a coordinated program or dietetic internship.

Question: What impact will the new model have on student diversity in nutrition and dietetics programs?

ACEND Response: Ethnic diversity in student enrollment in ACEND accredited programs has increased over the past 10 years. Most notably, the number of Hispanic students has nearly doubled. ACEND talked with other health profession accreditors (Physical Therapy, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy) who have moved their education requirements to a graduate level and learned that this change did not decrease student diversity in those professions. In pharmacy, for example, under-represented minority students (Black, Hispanic, Native American) were 10.6% of the student population in 1988, prior to implementing their practice doctorate degree requirement, and 11.4% in 2012 after implementation. Diversity of students currently enrolled in dietetic internships combined with a graduate degree (males = 10%; under-represented minorities = 9%) and in coordinated programs at the graduate level (males = 10%; under-represented minorities = 11%) is similar to the diversity of students in dietetic internship programs that do not offer a graduate degree (males = 8%; under-represented minorities = 9%). The recommended future model of education includes preparation for careers in nutrition and dietetics at associate, bachelor and graduate degree levels allowing students many options for entry into future nutrition and dietetics careers and facilitating professional growth and development through subsequent degree levels. ACEND Standards encourage programs to foster diversity in their student selection process. ACEND currently monitors and will continue to monitor student diversity in all accredited programs.