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This past year, The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND®) collected data from practitioners, educators, and employers on the future skills needed in nutrition and dietetics, which suggested greater complexity of practice and the need for an increased knowledge base. Viewing these data, ACEND's expanded standards committee and visioning group believed that preparation of the dietitian nutritionist should move to the master's degree level but that there were positions and the **need for a practitioner prepared at the bachelor's degree level**. The ACEND Board agreed with these recommendations and released them in the *Rationale Document* in February 2015 (see [www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards](http://www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards)).

- **Vision for future bachelor's prepared nutrition and dietetics practitioner**
  - Prepared for emerging roles in community nutrition and health, wellness, business and industry and management
  - Work under the supervision of the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) when providing direct patient/client nutrition
  - Work independently providing general nutrition education to healthy populations, managing foodservice operations, and working with foodservice business and industry
  - Practice will differ (less complex clients, work on community teams, autonomous practice in foodservice and lower level management positions) from that of the future master's degree prepared registered dietitian nutritionist (more complex clients, expertise in global/population health, higher level of clinical practice, research skills, higher level management)
  - Expected to be credentialed as a Nutrition and Dietetics Technician, Registered (NDTR).
  - Role in the marketplace will be determined by employers who set expectations for education/competence/credentials needed by employees
  
- **Next Steps for the future bachelor's degree program**
  - ACEND is developing competencies for the bachelor's degree graduates using a multi-step process that started this summer with development of draft competencies by subject matter experts; the draft competencies will be reviewed by first line reviewers in late fall 2015 and validated in spring 2016. They will be released for public comment by all stakeholders in summer 2016.
  - The competencies will differentiate the expected future skills of the bachelor's degree prepared nutrition and dietetics practitioner from the master's prepared dietitian nutritionist.
  - From input ACEND has received, ACEND recognizes challenges that maybe faced by current DPD program directors to transition to the future education model bachelor's degree program and will gather data from pilot programs on ways to integrate experiential learning into future programs using innovative strategies for developing competence.
  
- **For additional information**
  - Review the Frequently Asked Questions and the *Rationale Document* on the ACEND Standards Committee Website [www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards](http://www.eatrightacend.org/ACEND/Standards)
  - Contact ACEND (acend@eatright.org; 312-899-4872)

## Questions That Have Come to ACEND and ACEND Response

### **Question: Will the ACEND Forum presentation to be given at FNCE be taped?**

**ACEND Response:** The ACEND Forum at FNCE, which will be held on Tuesday, October 6 at noon in the Convention Center room 103, will be recorded and available at <http://starlibraries.com/fnce> three to four weeks after FNCE. The session will include an update on the work to revise the 2012 Standards and develop the future education model standards by Dr. Sue Leson, chair of the ACEND Standards Committee and a presentation by Dr. Cathy English and Dr. Barbara Woodland on their collaboration to create an integrated dietetic internship distance master's degree program.

### **Question: Have you considered having more conversations with educators to get our input and ideas about the future model?**

**ACEND Response:** ACEND is very interested in gaining input from educators to assist in our continued planning for the future model of education. ACEND is launching a monthly virtual town hall on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month, starting on Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 CT. Details for signing in for the conversations that will be held through WebEx are posted on the ACEND website ([www.eatright.org/acend](http://www.eatright.org/acend)).

### **Question: How will the proposed nutrition health worker differ from the current community health worker?**

**ACEND Response:** ACEND currently is developing the competencies that will be expected of the nutrition health worker and hopes to have them available for public comment next summer (2016). These competencies will make clearer the difference in the skill set between this practitioner and the community health worker. Since the educational preparation for the nutrition health worker is planned as an associate's degree and the competencies will include specific skills in food and nutrition, it is expected that the nutrition health worker will have a more in-depth preparation and more knowledge specifically related to food and nutrition than many community health workers who are prepared with more limited education, typically through a certificate program. There may be some overlap in the skill set between the two practitioners as it relates to health; the preparation that community health workers receive in earning a certificate may be able to be counted to meet some of the competencies required in the associate's degree curriculum for the nutrition health worker.

### **Question: What programs will ACEND accredit in the future?**

**ACEND Response:** ACEND currently accredits 4 types of programs: didactic programs in dietetics (DPD), dietetic internships (DI), coordinated programs (CP), and dietetic technician (DT) programs under the 2012 Accreditation Standards. ACEND is reviewing and revising these standards (as required by USDE every 5 years) and will release the revised standards (in 2016) as the 2017 Accreditation Standards. All currently accredited programs will need to come into compliance with the 2017 Standards to maintain their accreditation; just as the 2008 Standards were revised and released as the 2012 Standards and all programs needed to come into compliance with them.

ACEND has recommended a future model of education in nutrition and dietetics that differs from what it currently accredits. ACEND is working on three new additional sets of accreditation standards and competencies for the future education model associate's degree program for nutrition health workers, bachelor's degree program for nutrition and dietetics technicians, and the master's degree program for dietitian nutritionists. The standards for these future education model programs will specify the competencies that graduates will need to demonstrate; programs will determine the coursework and integrated experiential learning needed to prepare graduates with these competencies. ACEND expects to release these future education model accreditation standards and competencies for public comment in 2016 with a final version released sometime in 2017 for voluntary adoption.

When the future model accreditation standards are released in 2017, ACEND will be accrediting 7 different types of programs for a period of time; the DPD, DI, CP and DT programs will be accredited under the 2017 Standards and the future education model programs will be accredited under the Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's Degree Standards. ACEND will collect data from these future education model programs and their graduates before making a decision on which types of programs to continue to accredit. At the time of that decision, ACEND will announce which program types it will continue to accredit in the future and which program types it will discontinue to accredit. 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 to come into compliance with these standards.