

NDEP-Line

Summer 2026

NDEP's mission is to advocate for and empower educators and preceptors to lead the profession of nutrition and dietetics

On behalf of NDEP Council ...

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First, on behalf of our NDEP Leadership Council, thank you for all that each of you have done and continue to do for the education and training of our future colleagues in the profession of nutrition and dietetics. The myriad roles that you play as educators, faculty members, program directors, and preceptors are critical to our profession, to say the least. Our mission as NDEP to advocate for and empower educators, preceptors, and dietetic programs to lead the profession of nutrition and dietetics has never been more vital to effectively shepherd our members and colleagues through many challenges to effectively protect the public with quality and integrity based on evidence-based science and ethical practice.

Following is an overview of what we've been doing over the past few months, including current and planned work and initiatives. All of these help achieve our goals and mission through the dedicated work and expertise of our colleagues and networks in concert with our NDEP Council and each of our NDEP Committees.

NDEP 2026 Annual Meeting and plans for NDEP 2027 Annual Meeting

NDEP successfully held its Annual Meeting on March 12-14, 2026, in Asilomar, California. Based on participant evaluations and input from the annual meeting planning committee, NDEP Council members, and NDEP members at large, the 2027 NDEP Annual Meeting will be held at Virginia Tech on March 11-12 in Alexandria, Virginia. Plans to identify speakers and presentations along with all other meeting details are underway under the direction of the NDEP Regional Directors, with updated information to be provided to all NDEP members and colleagues including all educators and preceptors with the assistance of ACEND and other professional networks.

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Empowerment and Advancement Committee (EAC) Gazette and Calendar

The Empowerment and Advancement Committee Gazette continues to be published monthly and contains its comprehensive listing of Events, Holidays, and Observances (EHO) calendar. In addition to its monthly Gazette, the EAC Committee continues to maintain a list of resources for use by all NDEP members and colleagues. It is with tremendous gratitude that we recognize the dedicated and compassionate work, expertise, and leadership of EAC Chair Michael Holik over the past three years. Thank you, Mike, for all your guidance along the way, including leading us to the appointment of our incoming EAC Chair Chrissy Riccardo.

Food & Supplement Medication Interactions Resource

The Food and Supplement Medication Interactions resource has been completed by its editors Lauren Roberson, PhD, RDN, LD and Avani Patel, PharmD, RDN, MDN, LD under the auspices of NDEP. It was published by the Academy's Practice Publications department and is now available through the EatRight Store at <https://www.eatrightstore.org/product-type/ebooks/food-supplement-medication-interactions-ebook>

Applicant Guide to Supervised Practice (AGSP)

After NDEP Council discussion and review of the responses to a survey of educators and preceptors, NDEP is proceeding with reinstating the publication of the Applicant Guide to Supervised Practice (AGSP). Our NDEP Resource Committee will be overseeing the update all components of the AGSP as well as deadlines and timelines for its publication and availability to all educators, preceptors, students/interns, and others involved in the education and training of future practitioners in the profession of nutrition and dietetics.

NDEP Portal, Website, and Listserv/Discussion Board Update

Given the significant importance of NDEP to all those who are responsible for the education and training of future dietetics practitioners, updating the critical sources of information, resources, and professional discussion provided by the NDEP portal, website, and listserv/discussion board is underway. Utilizing the template provided to and being used by current DPGs and MIGs, a task force is being formed to address all the components involved and ensure both accessibility and quality of each component for all NDEP members and colleagues.

NDEP Discussion Groups regarding Proposed 2027 ACEND Standards

NDEP Regional Directors and other Council members organized and held three (3) meetings during the last week of January 2026 to provide forums for educators and preceptors to discuss the proposed 2027 ACEND Standards and encourage participation in the survey regarding the proposed standards provided by ACEND. These meetings were held via Zoom and were attended by ~275 educators, preceptors, and program stakeholders. Questions and responses were summarized for each meeting discussion and provided to ACEND for the ACEND Standards Board review and discussion as 2027 ACEND Standards were being finalized.

ACEND subsequently announced the approved 2027 ACEND Standards on June 1, 2026. Following is a list of links to recent and upcoming webinars and town halls with information that you may find helpful. If you have any questions at all, direct them to ACEND@eatright.org

ACEND 2027 Accreditation Standards

Date of ACEND Webinar/Town Hall	Title of Webinar/Town Hall	Recording Link
September 16, 2025	Draft 2027 Accreditation Standards Rationale	https://vimeo.com/1119793459
September 24, 2025	Draft 2027 Accreditation Standards for DIs	https://vimeo.com/1122203295
December 16 and 18, 2025	2027 Accreditation Standards for All Program Types	https://vimeo.com/1147816823
May 12, 2026	2027 Accreditation Standards for DI Programs	https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1191932382
June 3 and 4, 2026	2027 Accreditation Standards	https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1198548608
June 23, 2026	Introduction to ACEND Bridges and Review Process	Will be emailed to program directors post webinar
September 15, 2026	Competencies and Performance Indicators Overview	Will be posted on the ACEND website post webinar

NDEP at FNCE 2026

More information and details will be coming, but here is a quick overview of our NDEP sessions planned for FNCE 2026 in San Antonio, Texas. Following is what is being planned as we await specific locations for each event:

Saturday, October 24

- No planned NDEP meetings or events

Sunday, October 25

- 7:00 AM - 8:30 AM: NDEP Member Meeting/Breakfast (*location TBD*)
- NDEP Roundtable Discussions (*sometime between 9 AM - 3:00 PM - specific time frame and location TBD*). The NDEP Professional Development Committee is planning this session – watch for more information soon.
- 4:00 PM - 6:30/7:00 PM: Dietetic Supervised Practice Program (DSPP) Fair (*location TBD*)
For specific information and details, contact Corrie Marion, NDEP Vice Chair at cmarion@umn.edu

Monday, October 26

No planned NDEP meetings or events (*unless the NDEP Roundtable Discussions are moved or split into two smaller, separate sessions on 10/25 and/or 10/26*) ... we will not know this until we're informed by the Academy's FNCE meeting planning group, and will keep you posted)

Tuesday, October 27

- No planned NDEP meetings or events

And, as always, there's more! Please watch your email and/or our NDEP portal listserv/discussion board for announcements and important information in the coming weeks and months, and don't hesitate to share information widely. Your Regional Director will also be providing you with updates and additional information via emails to help keep you up to date. You can determine which NDEP region you're in via our website at <https://www.eatrightpro.org/ndep/about-ndep/ndep-council>

If you have any questions or need more information, don't hesitate to reach out personally or via ndep@eatright.org.

Thank you again for all that you do for all of us, and enjoy the summer months with as much rest and relation as you can. Looking forward to hearing from you along the way!

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Kinley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "With warm regards," text.

2026-2027 NDEP Chairs and Council Members

Chair: Victoria Fischer, PhD, MS, RDN, CDN

Vice Chair: Corrie Marion, MS, RDN

Past Chair: Patricia (Pat) M. Knisley, RD, MS

NDEP Delegate to Academy House of Delegates: Traci Grgich, MS, RD, SNS, SP-FS

Preceptor Director: Cyndia (Cindy) Kanarek Culver, MS, RDN, LD

Public Member: Jay Whelan, PhD, MPH

Graduate Student Representative: Kayleen Whitley, MS, RD, LD

Empowerment and Advancement Committee (EAC) Chair: Christina (Chrissy) Riccardo, EdD, RD, LDN

Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Liaison: Erin McKinley, PhD, RD, LDN, CLC, MCHES, FAND

NDEP-Line Newsletter Editor: Hillary Roberts, EdD, RDN, LD

ACEND Liaison: Kendra Kattelman, PhD, RDN, LN

Board of Directors Liaison: TBD

CDR Liaison: Emily Patten, PhD, RDN, CD

NDEP Administrative Liaison: Anne Coltman, MSHA, MS, RDN, LDN, FAND, FACHE

2026-2027 Regional Directors

North East Regional Director: Josephine Connolly-Schoonen, PhD, RD

South East Regional Director: Michael Kirtsos, MS, RDN, CSSD, LDN

North Central Regional Director: Jamie Weber, MS, RDN

South Central Regional Director: Justine Karduck, PhD, RDN, LDN, CDCES, FAND

West Central Regional Director: Lauren Tilford Amaya, MS, RD, LD

West Coast Regional Director: Dorothy Chen-Maynard, PhD, RDN

2026 Outstanding Preceptor Awards

Every year, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation funds six awards on behalf of the Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Preceptors (NDEP) group and ACEND® to recognize preceptors who are exemplary educators and mentors. The NDEP Preceptor Committee has the honor of selecting six outstanding preceptors representing NDEP's six geographic member regions in the United States. Outstanding Preceptor Award (OPA) nominations are accepted and evaluated using a rubric to score the applications received. Each nomination is a window into the dedication, talents, and mentoring that each of our preceptors brings to the many interns and students with whom they work in a wide variety of practice settings. These relationships provide a valuable foundation for the many future practitioners in the profession of nutrition and dietetics. Each award recipient receives a \$1,000 award, funded by the Academy Foundation.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2026 Outstanding Preceptor Award!

North Central

Calla Ziegler, MS, RDN, LDN

Lt. Col. Luke Weathers, Jr. VA Medical Center

Nominated by:

Jyotsna Sharman, PhD, MS, MBA, RDN, LDN, FAND

Lt. Col. Luke Weathers, Jr. VA Medical Center

North East

Jennifer Salt Taylor, MS, RDN, CHES

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County

Nominated by:

Jane Pilanski, MS, RDN

Montclair State University

South Central

Kasey Spilman, MS, RD, CNSC, LD

Northside Hospital

Nominated by:

Sunitha Zechariah PhD, RD, LD, CNSC, FAND

Morrison Healthcare Dietetic Internship

South East

Mallory Foster, RD, CNSC, CCTD

UVA Health

Nominated by:

Angie Hasemann Bayliss, MS, RDN

UVA Health

West Central

Roaxana Poskey, MS, RDN, CNSC, FAND

Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center Dietetic Internship Program

Nominated by:

Kristy Becker, MS, RDN, LD, FAND

Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center Dietetic Internship Program

West Coast

Kristina Brown, RDN, MPH

Vista Manor Nursing Center

Nominated by:

Kasuen Mauldin, PhD, RDN

San Jose State University

The NDEP Preceptor Committee expresses a sincere thank you to those who completed the nomination process to highlight a preceptor you believe should be recognized.

NDEP looks forward to presenting OPA awards in person at FNCE 2026 in San Antonio, Texas during the NDEP Member Meeting on Sunday, October 25.

2026 NDEP Outstanding Dietetic Educator Awards

The purpose of the Outstanding Dietetics Educator Award (OEDA) is to recognize the teaching, mentoring, and leadership activities of faculty in ACEND[®]-accredited dietetics education programs. Each year, eligible educators are nominated and selected as recipients of this award in recognition of their outstanding achievements as dietetics educators, teachers, mentors, and leaders of students during the NDEP Annual Meeting.

The following recipients of the 2026 OEDA were recognized during the 2026 NDEP Annual Meeting on March 13, 2026, at Asilomar in Pacific Grove, California.

Congratulations!

South East Region

- **Graduate Program:** Jamisha Leftwich, DCN, RDN, LDN, CLC, FAND
 - University of North Florida - Jacksonville, FL
- **Didactic Program in Dietetics:** Jen Fleming, PhD, MS, RDN, LDN
 - The Pennsylvania State University - University Park, PA

North Central Region

- **Coordinated Program in Dietetics:** Jennifer Ford, EdD, MA, RDN
 - Grand Valley State University - Grand Rapids, MI
- **Dietetic Internship Program:** Tracy Bruen, DCN, RDN, LDN
 - University of Memphis - Memphis, TN
- **Didactic Program in Dietetics:** Catherine McManus, PhD, RDN, LD
 - Case Western University - Cleveland, OH

South Central Region

- **Coordinated Program in Dietetics:** Patricia Petitt, MS, RD
 - University of Montevallo - Montevallo, AL
- **Didactic Program in Dietetics:** Daniela Novotny, DHSc, RDN, LD, CHES
 - Missouri State University - Springfield, MO

West Central Region

- **Coordinated Program in Dietetics:** Amy Pleimling, MPH, RD, LD
 - University of Minnesota - Minneapolis, MN
- **Didactic Program in Dietetics:** Raul Palacios, MS, RDN, LD
 - Texas Tech University - Lubbock, TX

West Coast Region

- **Dietetic Internship Program:** Lisa Clarke, MS, RD, CNSC
 - Maricopa County Department of Public Health - Phoenix, AZ
- **Didactic Program in Dietetics:** Maryann Schneider, MEd, RD, CD
 - Utah State University - Logan, UT

NDEP

Nutrition and Dietetic
Educators and Preceptors

SAVE *the* DATE

2027 NDEP ANNUAL MEETING

CONNECT • COLLABORATE • INSPIRE

*Advancing Nutrition
and Dietetic Education
Together*



Virginia Tech
Academic Building
Alexandria, VA




MARCH 11TH & 12TH
2027

Day 1 - Full Day | Day 2 - Half Day

ENGAGE • LEARN • BE INSPIRED



Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics

More details coming soon 

We look forward to seeing you!

Application of a Book Club in Dietetics Education

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Introduction

Books clubs are more than a time to socialize. Benefits of book clubs are commonly recognized in secondary classrooms to support literacy and self-efficacy. Current research describes implementation in healthcare to enhance interdisciplinary communication¹ and cultural sensitivity² and among faculty for professional development.^{3,4} While gathering to chat about a good read in the college classroom can build peer relationships, participation in a book club assignment enhances development of multiple skills for the future nutrition and dietetics professional.

Book clubs within dietetics coursework are relevant to multiple areas of Knowledge for Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (KRDNs) including critical thinking, communication, and leadership. When incorporated in the in-person class setting, book clubs allow time to share ideas, apply nutrition content to broader contexts, practice oral communication, and develop professional skills for supervised practice and work in the field. Instructors have flexibility with book selection and assignment organization to foster course specific skills or apply varied KRDNs. The following highlights outcomes of an eight-week book club experience integrated in a 16-week, nutrition research course.

Assignment Purpose

The purpose of this book club assignment was to help dietetic students identify how research relates to daily practice as a registered dietitian nutritionist, from food marketing to government guidelines and evidence-based patient care protocols to recommendations reflective of emerging research. Emended within a senior-level nutrition research course, the instructor's intent was to enhance students' critical thinking on nutrition research applications by reading a

non-academic nutrition-related book. In addition, the assignment was structured to foster skills in time management, decision making, and professional communication. While numerous KRDNs were applicable, the most relevant to the book club described in this article were:

1.3 Apply critical thinking skills.

2.1 Demonstrate effective and professional oral and written communication and documentation.

2.9 Defend a position on issues impacting the nutrition and dietetics profession.

3.2 Develop an educational session or program/educational strategy for a target population.

5.4 Practice resolving differences or dealing with conflict.

Assignment Description

Dietetic students in a senior-level nutrition research course participated in the in-class book club as a graded course assignment. The book, *Unsavory Truth*⁵ by Marion Nestle, was selected by the instructor and included as a required text for the course. In addition to reading the book, student specific tasks included: 1) identifying preferred chapters for serving as discussion facilitator; 2) participating in discussions; 3) developing discussion questions; 4) facilitating a discussion; and 5) reflecting on the experience.

During the first few weeks of the course, students were encouraged to, at minimum, peruse the book for identification of preferred chapters for which they may later serve as discussion facilitator. Approximately two weeks before beginning the book club, students' chapter preferences were reviewed by the instructor, and a schedule was disseminated with individual chapter assignments. Students were instructed to read their assigned chapter allowing time for reflection prior to development of discussion questions. At least one week prior to their assigned date as facilitator, the student was required to submit proposed questions for the discussion. Generally, within 24 hours, the instructor provided feedback on the proposed questions so they could be finalized and disseminated to all students three to five days before the chapter discussion. Expectations for leading the 15 to 20-minute discussions were outlined and modeled by the instructor during week one. Then, students independently led discussion their assigned chapters during weeks two through seven, and week eight culminated with general book discussion and reflection.

Additional elements of process taken into consideration by the instructor included room set-up, potential distractions, and overall atmosphere. Logistically, the book club experience was easy to set up since the classroom had free moving desks and chairs and a large space for forming a

circle. No screens (laptops, tablets, or phones) were permitted during the discussions to support attention and focus. The one exception was the projection screen on which the discussion questions were displayed. To promote a casual, conversational atmosphere the instructor brought a light snack each week.

Applications to Student Learning Outcomes

The assignment tasks required students to manage time and self along with making decisions on key topics for discussion. Students were encouraged to integrate nutrition research course concepts during discussions; these included study design, interpretation of results, conflicts of interest, publication bias, and, most importantly, the evidence analysis process. Submitting preferred chapters, along with other assignment components, specifically the discussion questions, simulated meeting deadlines and responding to supervisor feedback. Facilitating the discussion included practice of the motivational interviewing behaviors of asking open-end questions, affirming classmates, listening reflectively, and summarizing discussion points. As the designated leader, students prompted classmate engagement, contributed ideas, responded to questions, and navigated differences of opinion. The communication skills practiced foster the ability to work in teams, build trust, and guide productive communication which are all important for individual and group education and counseling.

The students enjoyed the book, and it appeared to be a good selection for promoting critical thinking and application of course content. References to topics previously covered in the course and remarks about the book as new topics were introduced during the semester demonstrated enhanced engagement in nutrition research course content. While discussions were planned for 15 to 20 minutes per chapter, they often lasted longer. Self-efficacy in articulating information and confidence for contributing different viewpoints improve among students with observation and practice. As students gained confidence, they not only became better contributors, but also better listeners.

Instructional Considerations

Identifying an engaging book allows both instructor and students to reflect on nutrition content in novel ways. While book selection is significant, especially when the intent is to foster critical thinking in a specific content area, any relevant reading may elicit curiosity and provide opportunity for students to convey ideas and perspectives to others. The environment fostered by a book club has the potential to improve students' comfort in all class discussions.

As dietitians and leaders in the nutrition profession, clear articulation of specialized knowledge

and skills is important. Book discussions provide ample opportunity for instructors to model application of discipline specific language. Hearing this language in a conversational context, in addition to the traditional instructional context, further promotes student application within and outside of class. In this experience, students shared that they talked about the book with friends and family and expressed feeling more confident in their nutrition knowledge because of these conversations.

The practical skills acquired across the assignment may be applied in numerous settings. Students gained experience to coordinate and lead a book club, which could be applied with professional peers for team building or continuing education or with a community group or a support group. They can assess a location, establish timelines, develop questions, and lead discussions. More specifically, the practice of verbal and non-verbal communication skills, such as attending, probing, clarifying, and summarizing in non-scripted interactions helped to build skills for professional interactions in interdisciplinary teams, management positions, and education and counseling. Overall, book clubs are a versatile instructional tool with the potential to produce rewarding outcomes for dietetic students and instructors.

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From Classroom to Clinic: Adapting the Modified Triple Jump Case Study for Online Graduate Dietetics Education

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Introduction

The transition to online graduate education in nutrition and dietetics presents a persistent challenge of preserving the richness of clinical reasoning and patient-centered thinking for competency-based education in an online asynchronous format.^{1,2} Traditional active learning strategies, including problem-based learning and case-based instruction, were largely designed for face-to-face settings where real-time interaction and feedback supports the iterative, reflective process that clinical training demands. At SUNY Buffalo State University, faculty in the Dietetics Combined Pathway (B.S. and M.S.), a Future Education Model (FEM) program, have navigated this challenge successfully with use of an online adaptation of the Modified Triple Jump (MTJ)^{3,4} case study experiential learning activity.

This article describes the structure, implementation, and outcomes of the MTJ utilized in online graduate-level courses, including courses in Experiential Learning in Advanced Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT), Advanced Nutrition Counseling, and Experiential Learning in Weight Management and Diabetes.

Background: The Triple Jump and Its Applications

The Triple Jump Exercise (TJE) was originally developed as a competency-based assessment tool in medical education, designed to evaluate a learner's ability to identify learning needs, gather new information, and apply that knowledge to a clinical problem across three sequential steps.^{2,3} Its strength lies not in any single correct answer, but in the critical thinking process, as students must reason under uncertainty, adjust as new information becomes available, and demonstrate integration of knowledge across domains.

Competency-based assessment frameworks in the health professions have long utilized this kind of iterative, applied reasoning for teaching and learning.² For dietetics, where entry-level practitioners must navigate complex patient encounters involving nutrition assessment, diagnosis, intervention, monitoring, and counseling, such a format is particularly well suited.² The challenge has been translating this dynamic, often verbal exercise into a modality that works asynchronously and online.

Technology-enhanced learning environments offer significant potential for supporting complex reasoning in the health sciences.² Written exams and discussion boards do not replicate the layered, sequential nature of a patient encounter. A learning activity format that employs intentional structure that unfolds progressively prevents shortcuts and requires students to apply clinical reasoning at each stage before receiving new information.

The Modified Triple Jump: Format and Design

In the Combined Dietetics Pathway at SUNY Buffalo State University, the MTJ Case Study has been embedded into online courses for M.S.-level students. The format is built within the course management system (e.g., Brightspace, Canvas, Blackboard) using the quiz function to replicate a scaffolded clinical simulation.

Each MTJ presents students with a patient scenario that unfolds across 6 to 8 sequential prompts, displayed one per page. The CMS is configured to prevent backward navigation; thus, once a student submits a response and moves to the next prompt, they cannot return to revise earlier answers. Students are explicitly encouraged to take notes throughout, mirroring the kind of real-time documentation that characterizes actual patient care.

The case is designed to mimic a series of patient interactions over time. An initial prompt might introduce a patient with relevant medical and dietary history and ask students to identify nutrition-related problems and prioritize assessment needs. Subsequent prompts release new clinical data (i.e., laboratory values, a 24-hour dietary recall, a follow-up visit note) and ask students to update their nutrition diagnoses, develop or revise an intervention plan, or respond to a change in the patient's condition. The final prompts often ask students to reflect on their counseling approach, address barriers to behavior change using Motivational Interviewing principles, or apply trauma-informed care considerations.⁵

This multi-layered design ensures that students are not simply applying a formula. They must draw on knowledge across the full scope of dietetics practice, including but not limited to: clinical

MNT, evidence-based nutrition care, behavioral counseling, and patient communication, all whilst adapting their reasoning as the clinical picture evolves.¹⁻⁴

Student Outcomes and Feedback

Faculty implementation of the MTJ in the online graduate-level courses has yielded meaningful evidence of improved clinical reasoning among M.S. students. Students' written responses across sequential prompts demonstrate an increasing ability to integrate new clinical information, revise earlier judgments, and articulate a rationale for their nutrition care decisions, skills that are central to dietetic competency and professional practice.

Perhaps most notably, student feedback on the MTJ format has been overwhelmingly positive. Students consistently identify the exercise as among the most valuable learning experiences in the pathway. One student captured the sentiment well when prompted to describe the aspects of the course that were most valuable to [their] professional development: "Probably the MTJ case studies because they kind of simulated what we would experience if we had a patient coming to us in the real world."

Conclusion

The adapted Modified Triple Jump Case Study,²⁻³ as implemented in the Dietetics Combined Pathway B.S. and M.S. Dietetics Program at SUNY Buffalo State University, demonstrates that online graduate education can support deep, authentic clinical reasoning development. By leveraging the structure of the Course Management System quiz format to enforce sequential engagement with an evolving patient scenario, faculty have created a learning experience that mirrors the demands of professional practice. Dietetic educators seeking to strengthen clinical reasoning in online courses are encouraged to explore this format to support enhanced student engagement, critical thinking, and career readiness in online dietetics courses.

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SALUDABLES: Growing the Rural Dietetics Workforce Through Community-Engaged and Culturally Responsive Food-As-Medicine Training in the Southwestern Borderlands

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Lily Y. McNair, PSM, RDN, CCMS, FAND; Arizona Western College

Introduction

Yuma County, Arizona and Imperial County, California are neighboring agricultural communities located in the U.S. Mexico borderlands, where Arizona, California, Mexico, and sovereign Tribal nations intersect. Often referred to as the “Winter Salad Capital of the United States,” Yuma and Imperial counties produce a substantial portion of the nation’s winter vegetables, yet the region simultaneously experiences high rates of food and nutrition insecurity, chronic disease, and limited access to healthcare services.^{1,2} More than half of residents, including college students, identify as Hispanic or Latino and Mexican culture is strongly represented in the region.³ These overlapping social, cultural, and economic dynamics shape both the health needs of the community and the lived experiences of students pursuing higher education in the region, and presents unique demands and opportunities for training dietetics practitioners who are both community-engaged and culturally responsive in their practice. Culturally responsive practice refers to approaches in education and healthcare that intentionally recognize, value, and integrate individuals’ cultural identities, languages, lived experiences, and community contexts into teaching, learning, and service delivery.⁴

Despite the presence of multiple higher education institutions including Arizona Western College (AWC), a well-established community college, and three public state universities, Yuma and Imperial counties face persistent shortages of healthcare professionals, including Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) and Nutrition and Dietetic Technicians Registered (NDTRs).

In response to these challenges, the University of Arizona (UA) School of Nutritional Sciences and Wellness has been working in collaboration with AWC to develop a regional dietetics education pipeline since 2018. In Yuma County, students can now complete an Associate of Arts (AA) in Exercise, Wellness and Nutrition at AWC, which is structured for seamless transfer into an undergraduate Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) program and a graduate dietetics program offered from UA. While the AA program primarily consists of in-person courses, the UA programs blend asynchronous online coursework with live instruction and experiential learning opportunities. Building dietetics programs in rural locations is resource intensive, and federal grants have been made a major impact in funding instructional activities, lab equipment and supplies, and support for student travel, among others.

About the SALUDABLES Program

One grant funded project, Strengthening Awareness for Living Healthy Using Dietetics Approaches and Boosting Local Educational Success (SALUDABLES) is a multi-year U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Education Grant running from 2022-2027, which supports efforts to recruit, train, and retain students into nutrition and dietetics careers in the regions of Yuma and Imperial counties. It is important to note that HSI grant funding across federal agencies aims to increase capacity for serving students across the institution, independent of the students' racial or ethnic identities. The SALUDABLES program is about building capacity to offer scalable experiential learning, community engagement, and workforce development activities, with the goal of preparing "homegrown" professionals who are equipped to serve their communities, including through culturally responsive practices that attend to the cultural and linguistic needs within the region. The SALUDABLES priorities also align with broader bipartisan national priorities across past and present administrations to strengthen the healthcare workforce in rural and underserved areas.^{5,6}

One innovative approach to training dietetics undergraduate and graduate students we have employed in the SALUDABLES program is the "La Receta" initiative at UA Yuma, which centers regionally tailored food-as-medicine curriculum, recipe development and service-learning opportunities each semester.

About the “La Receta” Initiative

Purpose and Objectives

The goal of the “La Receta” initiative is to strengthen cultural responsiveness among graduate dietetics students in the SALUDABLES program, enhancing their ability to provide culturally relevant, multicultural, and practical community-based education that promotes food as medicine for prevention and intervention. Inherent in the name, *la receta*—which means both “recipe” and “prescription” in Spanish—reflects the use of food as both nourishment and medicine, while honoring multilingualism and multiculturalism as strengths of the greater Yuma and Imperial Valley communities.

To achieve the goal, the initiative focuses on three primary objectives: (1) to provide training in budget-conscious, culturally competent food-based interventions; (2) to develop culturally responsive skills through service-learning experiences, especially in medically underserved communities; and (3) to foster a culturally responsive culture of local nutrition students and professionals through mentorship.

Through this model, a locally trained RDN and UA Yuma alum supervises undergraduate and graduate dietetics students to translate nutrition science into accessible, meaningful food practices that reflect the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts of the communities they will serve.

Approach/Implementation

This initiative is structured as a paired experiential learning model in which dietetic graduate students complete a 250-hour, semester-long supervised experiential learning (SEL) experience alongside undergraduates who complete a 90-hour undergraduate internship for credit. Embedded within both experiences are structured trainings in food demonstration skills, recipe development and adaptation, and culinary medicine, all grounded in culturally responsive practice.

These training components are intentionally designed to support the education and development in different cultural domains (Figure 1), including cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural responsiveness, cultural humility and cultural empathy. Cultural competency training is widely recognized in healthcare education and encompasses experiential, didactic, and hybrid approaches that support equitable care and effective practice.¹ Within the “La Receta” initiative, this concept is expanded as a developmental continuum grounded in cultural humility and empathy. Cultural awareness serves as a foundation that

evolves into cultural competence and ultimately into culturally responsive practice.

Figure 1. Domains of Cultural Education



For example, graduate and undergraduate dietetics students first engaged in a community immersion experience, exploring the cultural landscape of the Yuma/Imperial Valley region—including Hispanic/Latinx, Native American, and European (e.g. Spanish, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean) influences—to better understand the communities they serve. Cultural competence was further developed through service learning with Quechan Elders at the Elder Nutrition Services Center in Winterhaven, California, where students led nutrition classes and prepared meals for the Elders. Cultural responsiveness emerged as students partnered with Elders to adapt traditional recipes and develop cookbooks centered on health benefits, food traditions, and connections to the land—resources requested by and created for the community.

Further, this initiative integrates extensive career mentoring opportunities and ongoing dialogue and advice between undergraduate and graduate students to promote graduate school readiness. Soft skills such as leadership, time management, project management, communication, and teamwork are also developed.

Additionally, this initiative utilizes open education resources in the belief that knowledge is most powerful when it is collaborative, both within the academic and community settings. A key resource we use for developing culturally competent training, building community partnerships, and recipe writing and adaptation lessons for students is the University of Arizona's Culinary Medicine Open Education Resource.

Outcomes/Impact

To date, this initiative has been implemented across two iterations, with two graduate and four undergraduate students participating in Spring 2025, and three graduate and four undergraduate students in Spring 2026.

The “La Receta” initiative resulted in strong student learning outcomes related to culturally responsive practice. All students gained experience working directly with Native American populations and developed increased confidence in creating and delivering culturally relevant nutrition education. Collectively, students reached over thirty Quechan Elders across two years, expanding access to community-based, culturally grounded education.

To support sustainability, students contributed in two key ways. First, they developed open educational resources, including two community-centered cookbooks created in partnership with Quechan and Cocopah Elders, which continue to support both community education and future student training. Second, through the mentorship model, students strengthened leadership and communication skills while supporting the development of future participants. Notably, nearly half of undergraduate participants progressed into the SALUDABLES graduate program, demonstrating the model’s effectiveness in preparing culturally responsive future nutrition professionals.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The findings from the “La Receta” initiative highlight the importance of embedding culturally responsive, community-engaged learning experiences within dietetics education to address workforce gaps in rural and borderland regions. First, programs should prioritize experiential learning models that integrate cultural immersion, service learning, and mentorship, allowing students to apply nutrition science in real-world, community-defined contexts. As demonstrated in this initiative, partnerships with local organizations—such as Tribal Elder Nutrition Services—create meaningful opportunities for students to develop cultural humility, strengthen communication skills, and co-create relevant educational resources. These experiences move beyond traditional didactic instruction and align with evidence suggesting that culturally grounded training improves both competency and readiness for practice.⁷

Second, dietetics programs serving diverse communities should invest in structured mentorship pipelines that connect undergraduate and graduate students, fostering leadership development and supporting progression into advanced training. The success of the paired experiential model in promoting graduate school readiness and professional identity formation suggests that

mentorship is a critical component of workforce development. Additionally, the use of open educational resources, such as culturally adapted cookbooks and culinary medicine materials, supports sustainability and ensures that knowledge generated through community partnerships remains accessible and relevant.⁸

In conclusion, addressing workforce shortages in nutrition and dietetics requires more than increasing enrollment; it demands intentional alignment between educational practices and the cultural, linguistic, and social contexts of the communities served. The “La Receta” initiative demonstrates that training “homegrown” professionals through culturally responsive, food-as-medicine approaches can strengthen both student learning and community health outcomes. By centering community voices, honoring cultural foodways, and preparing students to deliver culturally relevant care, programs like SALUDABLES contribute to building a more diverse, equitable, and locally rooted dietetics workforce capable of addressing persistent health disparities in the Southwestern borderlands.

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Build Your Board

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Years ago, at a conference, I heard a speaker offer wisdom that truly made me pause. The words were, *“Develop your own personal board of directors.”*

In the corporate world, companies rely on boards of directors to guide strategic decisions, ensure accountability, and provide diverse perspectives. Similarly, individuals can benefit tremendously by assembling their own “personal board of directors” — a circle of trusted advisors who offer insight, support, and honest feedback. This concept transforms personal and professional growth into a deliberate, collaborative process, helping individuals navigate complex decisions and achieve long-term goals.

This concept draws inspiration from corporate governance but adapts it to personal leadership in Nutrition and Dietetics. As Harvard Business Review notes, “A personal board of directors isn’t about telling you what to do; it’s about expanding how you think.”¹

So, Why Do You Need a Personal Board of Directors?

1. Diverse Perspectives

No matter how skilled or self-aware you are, your perspective is limited by your experiences. A personal board can broaden your viewpoint, offering insights you may never have considered.

2. Accountability

Your board can keep you honest about your commitments and goals. Knowing that trusted advisors are invested in your growth increases your motivation and follow-through.

3. Emotional and Strategic Support

During pivotal moments, whether pursuing a promotion, considering a career change, or facing personal challenges, your board can provide balanced guidance and encouragement.

4. Accelerated Growth

Drawing on the knowledge and experiences of others can help you avoid pitfalls and learn faster, similar to how companies benefit from experienced directors.

Mentorship can be the first step in building your own board! Just as a board of directors typically includes more than one individual, consider seeking advice from a few mentors that may contribute to your professional and personal well-being. In the Visioning Report of 2017, the Council of Future Practice recommended the need for mentoring new practitioners, which contributes to career advancement and leadership ².

Exploring The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetic's mentoring services, which is available to all members, can help you learn from other nutrition professionals providing practical insights for your role as practitioner, preceptor, educator, faculty member or program director.

The Academy provides many opportunities to make connections in the nutrition and dietetics community including programs that connect mentees with experienced mentors to help students and professionals achieve their goals and prepare for a successful career in the field.

[Mentorship Programs](#)

Targeted mentoring within dietetic practice groups (DPGS) and member interest groups (MIG) are available as well for those interested in looking to grow or change their dietetics career or area of expertise.

[Academy Mentorship Programs.](#)

How do you get connected in NDEP?

NDEP provides mentoring to new program directors (PD). Information on how to get connected to a PD mentor can be found in the ACEND PD confirmation letter. The NDEP interprofessional education (IPE) committee also provides mentoring for educators, faculty or preceptors who are looking to expand their IPE programs or require assistance in how to meet the ACEND competencies for IPE.

The NDEP IPE committee can help you brainstorm, strategize or just explore ideas for providing IPE activities in your specific program. Once you sign up, the NDEP IPE Committee will pair you

with an experienced IPE educator that is consistent with the program you are aligned with. The time required is variable based on the needs of the mentee, but the amount of time you plan to invest in a mentoring partnership is approximately 1 hour per month. If you are interested please sign up using this link: [NDEP IPE Mentee link](#)

The connections can lead to professional growth and partnership for both the mentor and the mentee. For example, through the IPE mentoring program two educators made a connection. Jennifer Bridenbaugh DCN, RDN, CNSC a member of the IPE committee connected with Karen Harouse-Bell MS, RDN, LDN, CDCES who inquired about mentorship. Karen was a new program director of a graduate program and needed help with creating better management strategies for IPE. Jennifer met with Karen and provided insight on how IPE events were coordinated and integrated at her university. They met virtually 1-2 times over the course of a few months. Due to her interest and motivation for expanding IPE, Karen joined the IPE committee and is now a mentor herself!

“I greatly benefited from Jennifer’s advice and she helped me grow into a more confident and effective program director. It was a wonderful partnership!” K. Harouse-Bell

“There were benefits of sharing my experiences, explaining how to overcome barriers, and also how to integrate IPE into the GP curriculum. Mentoring provides an opportunity to help others but also builds my network and contributes to my own professional growth.”

J. Bridenbaugh

Now It’s Your Turn

Building your own personal board of directors is a powerful strategy for intentional growth. It ensures you aren’t navigating your career and life decisions alone but are supported by a circle of advisors who broaden your vision, hold you accountable, and celebrate your successes. In a rapidly changing world, where challenges are increasingly complex, having such a network isn’t merely a luxury; it’s indispensable.

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For Your Information – NDEP Applications Committee Update



By Heather Cox, MS, RDN; Applications Committee Chair

The NDEP Applications Committee has been working hard over the past year to support upgrades to the 2026-2027 DICAS cycle. Key information related to the application:

- DICAS now stands for Dietetics Centralized Application Service. The new log includes the adjusted name.
- DICAS homepage has a new Dashboard on the left panel that includes a “What’s Next” section to share announcements and missing items.
- A “Continue” button is located on the bottom right of every page for linear application completion.
- The DPD Standing section has additional directions and a link to the ACEND accredited program directory.
- Coursework Entry now allows applicants to label courses as labs, honors, and DPD courses as they add them to DICAS and order transcripts within this section of the application. Additional directions have been added for coursework entry clarification.
- Under the Applicant’s Certification in the Release Statement section of Personal Information, the following statement related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) is new. The committee encourages Program Directors to ask questions in their program materials section about AI if additional information is desired.
 - **“I certify that I understand that all programs have their own requirements and allowances on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for my application. I confirm that I will adhere those requirements for any programs to which I**

submit my application and will provide honest responses to any program specific questions related to AI use.”

[Key dates for the 2026-2027 application cycle:](#)

- DICAS launch date for applicants is August 5, 2026.
- July 15, 2026, is the deadline to submit your application for review and approval if you want your application to be visible on the launch date.
- **Fall Applications due dates:**
 - November 1, 2026 - Applicant notification date (last date to notify applicant of decision)
 - November 10, 2026 - Applicant decision date (earliest date to require an applicant to make decision on offer)
- **Spring Applications due dates:**
 - March 1, 2027- Applicant notification date (last date to notify applicant)
 - March 10, 2027 - Applicant decision date (earliest date to require an applicant to make decision on offer)

The application resources on the ACEND [website](#) have this information.

Program directors should check any location where the program may have details regarding DICAS dates and the name of the platform or logo.

Additional resources will be posted to the ACEND website in July 2026 for DPD Directors and Applicants with screen shots and instructions to match the updated application.

[Application Process for Program Directors](#)



Ryan Hartz, MS, RD
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Kari Sharp, MS, RD
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<https://myrdguide.com/about/>

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Joe Phillip
www.eatrightprep.org

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of nutrition and dietetics through research, education and advocacy. Focused on the future of the profession, the Academy also provides resources for educators, including the eatrightPREP online exam study guides, instructor resource kits, publications and online products.



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- **Text format**

All articles, notices, and information should be in Times New Roman font, 12-point, single-spaced.

- **Tables and illustrations**

Limit to 2 tables/figures or 1 table and 1 figure. Tables should be self-explanatory. All diagrams, charts and figures should be created in Microsoft Word. Each illustration should be accompanied by a brief caption that makes the illustration intelligible by itself.

- **References**

Please cite references in the text using superscript numbers in the order they appear. At the end of the manuscript, list all references in the same numerical order. Reference formatting should follow the AMA Manual of Style, consistent with the guidelines of the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.

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