



The Rules of Engagement:

Relationship Building between Program Directors and Experiential Learning
Site Leaders

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Engagement Rules for this Meeting



- This presentation will be recorded.
- All participants will be muted upon joining the session.
- Questions will be answered at the end of the presentation. Please write your questions in the chat box and the moderator will read the questions to the presenters during the Q&A session.
- The presenters politely request that we all approach one another with kindness and empathy in the Chat. We are all here to support our students, preceptors, and one another as we develop the future of our profession.

Disclaimers About the Speakers



Cindy Kanarek Culver is the Director of School Nutrition at Marietta City Schools in Marietta, GA and a preceptor to various local and distance dietetic internship programs.

- Cindy serves on the NDEP Preceptor Committee.

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- No disclosures that impact the information contained in this presentation.

Gena Seraita is the Program Director for New York University's Dietetic Internship Program, which is an MS/DI Program.

- Gena serves on the NDEP Preceptor Committee and is a co-author of the NDEP Preceptor Toolkit.

Meet Us on the Mood Elevator



Larry Senn, *The Mood Elevator*, <https://themoodelevator.com/>

Learning Objectives



- ❑ Illustrate strategies to promote preceptor leadership and engagement.
- ❑ Describe benefits to Registered Dietitians for serving as preceptors.
- ❑ Define strategies to solving complex situations that arise between preceptors and students through case scenarios.

A celebratory banner for National Preceptor Month. It features a central purple rectangle with the text "April is National Preceptor Month!" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background of the banner is a vibrant yellow-green, decorated with numerous colorful streaks (purple, pink, yellow, and white) radiating from the center, resembling fireworks or confetti. Small stars in purple, pink, and white are scattered throughout the background. In the top right corner of the banner, the logo for the "eat right. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics" is displayed, with "eat right." in a stylized font and "Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

April is National Preceptor Month!

eat right. Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics

Agenda



- Background for importance of engagement
- Engagement of preceptors from the program director perspective
- Benefits for RD preceptors at a large clinical site
- Engagement opportunities for preceptors at a community site
- Highlight relationship and engagement through real-world case scenarios

Poll:
Who do we have in the audience?

A Tale of Two Dietetic Interns

Dietetic Intern A

- Program Director sets clear expectations for what to expect during their dietetic internship program. Professionalism and its importance are reviewed during program orientation.
- When issues arise during the program, the Program Director listens and provides meaningful feedback and guidance, while allowing the dietetic intern to remain in the driver's seat of their experience.
- Engaging and supportive preceptors find meaningful learning experiences for the intern that develop their competence.

Dietetic Intern B

- Program Director tells them during orientation “how lucky they are” to be in their program.
- The importance of professionalism is stressed, but the onus is on the intern to figure out what that means in their various rotation settings.
- Preceptors who are disengaged and make it clear that the interns are not welcome and a burden.
- When the dietetic intern reports this to their program director, they are told, “Well, you signed up for this, just deal with it until it passes” and “It’s part of the experience”.

A Tale of Two Dietetic Interns: Where are they Now?

Dietetic Intern A

- Dietetic Intern A found themselves in a role where they could precept about 1 year after finishing their internship.
- They think fondly of their preceptors and look to pay it forward whenever possible, taking on additional students and precepting responsibilities because they find great value in it.
- This eventually shapes their career as an educator and leader.

Dietetic Intern B

- Dietetic Intern B finds themselves in a role at a hospital where they take on 1-2 interns a year out of obligation.
- They avoid precepting and act coldly towards the students because “that is part of the process” and “no one held my hand when I was an intern”. They push back when their CNM suggests taking on more interns for additional rotations.
- They do not seek to mentor students or newer RDs who are interested in this area of practice. They frequently complain about being understaffed as there is high turnover at their site.

A Tale of Two Dietetic Interns: What Can We Learn from these two?



- Will every dietetic intern in these respective situations have the same outcome?
 - No, but what we can learn from them is that there is great importance in how preceptors treat dietetic interns.
- Engaged preceptors stem from their own experiences as dietetic interns and supportive Program Directors and site Leadership.
- Program Directors have a pivotal role to play in supporting and engaging their rotation sites and preceptors.

Why engagement matters?

- In 2022, only 31% of employees were engaged at work.
 - Highest level since 2009
- Disengagement has costs to the organizations
 - Miss an average of 3.5 more days per year
 - 18% lower productivity
 - High turnover rates
 - Reduces innovation



Connection: Strategies for Program Directors to Engage Precepting Sites



- Set clear expectations to build trust.
- Have clearly defined policies and procedures in place if a dietetic intern is not meeting competence and/or having behavioral concerns.
- Engage preceptors in the application review process, when possible.
- Allow forums for preceptors to provide feedback and follow-up with meaningful action.
- Provide training opportunities, when possible.
- Share non-precepting, programmatic opportunities with preceptors first. Examples may include:
 - Guest speaker opportunities
 - Adjunct Faculty opportunities
 - Continuing education opportunities
 - Preceptor-specific benefits, as able

Case Study: Lack of Professionalism in Action



After observing the dietetic intern perform well in pre-internship coursework and seeming professional during one-to-one interactions, the Program Director assigns the dietetic intern to an acute care, academic medical center for their Clinical Rotations.

The dietetic intern displays a charismatic personality and, when asked in orientation and class, in front of her peers and Program Director, says that they are excited to begin their rotations and believe there is so much to learn and gain from completing their rotations in a hospital setting. The intern speaks of their passion for collaborative and caring for those less fortunate than themselves.

Case Study: Lack of Professionalism in Action



What the Program Director does not know:

- This dietetic intern believes that they should be able to complete all of their rotations remotely, as she knows former dietetic interns who completed their programs in 2020 and were able to complete rotations in that format due to temporary ACEND exceptions due to extenuating, pandemic-related circumstances.
- The dietetic intern had difficulty managing stress and did not seek resources to assist them with this.
- The dietetic intern displayed a different persona to Program Director than to peers and preceptors.

Case Study: Lack of Professionalism in Action



The Sentinel Event

The Program Director receives a phone call from the dietetic intern, who is extremely tearful. The intern states that their preceptor “yelled” at them because of the intern’s concerns over assessing a patient who tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. The dietetic intern accuses the preceptor of being unprofessional and embarrassing them in front of the other Registered Dietitians in their shared office. The dietetic intern does not know if they can continue their rotation day after feeling so defeated. The dietetic intern claims that the “preceptor is in a position of power and is taking advantage of the intern.”

What should the Program Director do next?

Case Study: Lack of Professionalism in Action



What the Program Director **did** do next:

After listening to the dietetic interns side of the story, the Program Director let the student know they should excuse themselves from the rotation and the Program Director would contact the site director to investigate further.

The program director immediately contacted the site director, who shared that her team, who witnessed the event of their colleague (the preceptor), had a very different experience than what was reported by the intern.

Case Study: Lack of Professionalism in Action



What the Program Director **did** do next (continued):

Per the team, the dietetic intern was adamantly refusing to participate in the care of patients with any infectious disease precautions that required PPE.

The preceptor had calmly explained to the dietetic intern that they understood their apprehension, but that, as healthcare professionals, they cannot discriminate against any patient based on their disease state and they have an obligation to provide care.

The dietetic intern responded by yelling at the preceptor, in front of their colleagues and threatening the preceptor that they were going to “call their Program Director and get them in trouble” and then stormed out of the office, disappearing without sharing when/if they would return.

Case Study: Lack of Professionalism in Action



What the Program Director **did** do next (continued):

The Program Director met again with the dietetic intern and reviewed with them the perspective of the site.

The dietetic intern did not deny their actions, but said that it “shouldn’t matter because they are a student”. The dietetic intern remained defensive of their actions, stating “how could they accuse me of discriminating? I shouldn’t have to see patients if I am afraid, they’re using their power against me.”

The Program Director, though acknowledging these fears may be normal, also reinforced the messaging of the preceptor that it is an expectation to see all patients, with appropriate PPE, regardless of their condition.”

Case Study: Lack of Professionalism in Action



What the Program Director **did** do next (continued):

The Program Director and the Site Director met again to discuss what would be the best option. Because of the policies of the program and the rotation site, both leaders were able to come to the mutual decision that it would be best if the dietetic intern did not continue rotations at this site.

Case Study: Lack of Professionalism in Action



Results for the Program: The dietetic intern was placed on probation until a new rotation site could be found and was provided additional training by the program director to prepare them to re-enter a clinical setting. Eventually, the dietetic intern reflected on this experience and realized the important lesson that was learned from it. The dietetic intern was able to successfully complete their program within a reasonable timeframe and went on to be employed within 12 months of graduating.

Results for the Rotation Site: The preceptors at the rotation site felt relieved and supported, as did the rotation site leader. A break was given to the preceptors before taking on another intern from the program. A new procedure was put in place to allow the preceptors to interview dietetic interns prior to finalizing rotation placements, allowing them to feel ownership of the process and the program. Overtime, this resulted in more engaged preceptors and interns. Many dietetic interns who completed rotations after this event were offered employment opportunities as they were available at the site.

**What do you think is the
GREATEST motivating factor
for dietitians to precept?**

Dietetic Preceptors Perceptions

- Literature search
 - Preceptors AND dietetic interns
 - Published in the past 10 years
 - United States
 - 3 articles

Benefits, Barriers, and Motivators to Training Dietetic Interns in Clinical Settings: A Comparison between Preceptors and Nonpreceptors

Rayane AbuSabbah, PhD, RD; Colette Muller, MS, RD; Jacqueline MacLasco, MS, RD; Mary George, MS, RD; Erica Houghton, MS, RD; Alison Helm, MS, RDN



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BMC Medical Education

RESEARCH

Open Access

Training interns in nutrition and dietetics: a cross-sectional study of the barriers and motivators to being a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist preceptor

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Preceptors' Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes Toward Precepting Dietetic Interns and Training Perceptions A Mixed-Methods Research Study

**Teresa Benoit, MS; Alina Montes, BS;
Somir Shreim, MPH, RDN, LDN;
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Preceptor Perceptions



Barriers:

- Lack of time (understaffed)
- Added paperwork
- Lack of resources (space, training)
- Unprepared students
- Lack of compensation
- Intern challenges
- Previous bad intern experience

Motivators:

- Professionally rewarding
- Teaching opportunity
- Staying current with knowledge
- Tangible incentives

Institutional Support



- Internship director schedules rotations at convenient times
 - Immediate supervisor understands the preceptor role
 - Immediate supervisor supportive of preceptor role
 - Adequate resources are available to assist with intern training
-
- Workload is appropriate
 - Intern activities highlight department functions
 - Precepting students increases practice area and specialty awareness

The Ripple Effect of Relationship Building



- Association between leadership (institutional support) and employee engagement
 - Influence on fulfilling potential, productivity, and well-being
 - **Connecting meaning to the work; i.e. shared common purpose**
 - Resilience and accountability
- Starts with authentic leadership: Transformational, ethical, participative, positive, empathetic
- Networking opportunities

Site Engagement Strategies: Collaboration & Empowerment



- Preceptors review candidate resumes and applications to the program
- Site placement interviews
- Designate staff member as intern point person outside of CNM/Director
- Group collaboration on intern schedule
- All team members expected to precept
 - Part of job responsibilities
- Preceptors present topics of expertise to dietetic interns

Preceptor Benefits at the Sites



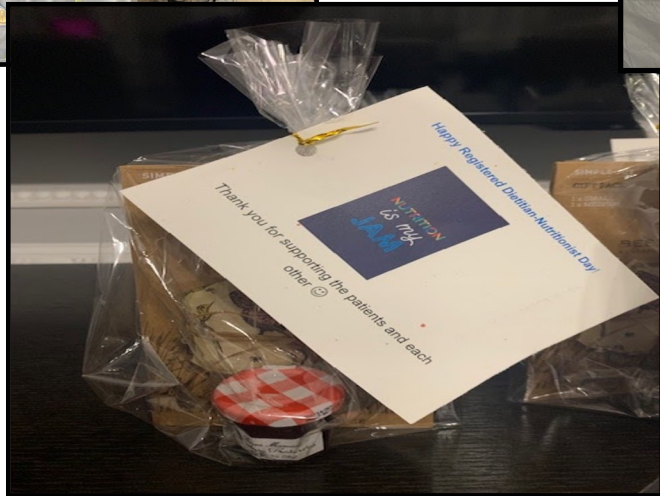
- **Recognition**
 - Celebrating National Preceptor Month (April)
 - Preceptor awards
 - Previous intern gratitude videos
- **CEU Opportunities**
 - ACEND Preceptor Training (8 CEUs)
 - In 2017, 61% of preceptors reported that they did not complete or know this existed
 - Annual CEU from internship program
- **Growth opportunities**
 - Internship responsibilities as part of clinical advancement ladder
 - Development of professional skills

● Time management	● Communication
● Providing feedback	● Recruitment
● Leadership & management	● Networking

Additional Site Benefits to Hosting Dietetic Interns



- “Fresh eyes”
- Ability to assist with projects
 - Label supplement room
 - Excel productivity summary tool
 - Review of intern pre-rotation materials
 - QI metric deep dive
 - Therapeutic Diet in-services for dining associates
 - Journal club, case study, “hot topic”
 - Community health fairs and events
 - Development of nutrition education, marketing materials & social media
 - Ideation of new recipes and menus
- Additional resource during staff relief
- Prepared entry-level practitioners



Site Engagement Strategy Opportunities for Smaller Operations



Marietta City Schools (Marietta, GA)

- 8,900 students
- 63% Free and Reduced
- 12 schools
- Serve ~2,500 breakfasts and 5,000 lunches/day
- 2 RDNs
- 65 employees

Preceptor for Local & Distance Internship Programs

- Local:
 - Georgia State University
 - Emory Healthcare
- Distance Programs:
 - Diversify Dietetics
 - Auburn University
 - Utah State University
 - Georgia Department of Public Health
 - University of Montevallo
 - Keith & Associates, Inc. (KADDI)



Food Service Management & Community Rotations



Food Service Management

Recipe and Menu Development

Equipment Needs and
Procurement

Management & Leadership
Engagement

Human Resource Management

Community Nutrition

Nutrition Education &
Promotions

Classroom Presentations

Social Media & Marketing

Grant Applications



Tips for Distance Learning DI Programs

- Conduct a phone interview with prospective intern
- Schedule meeting with Internship Director to understand the MOU and other expectations that are specific to their program
- Complete necessary MOU paperwork with internal systems (human resources)
- Prepare for the intern(s) arrival and rotation

Site Engagement Strategies:



Identify resources for success

- Welcome & Calendar of Events
- Expectations
- Pre-rotation materials
- Standardized initial and ongoing preceptor training
- Mirror or adopt other site policies regarding students or volunteers

Takeaways



- Experience during internship can impact future desire and motivation to precept.
- Engagement is key for success of both preceptors and dietetic interns.
- Engagement ripples from relationship between site and program leadership. Support and communication is a critical component.
- Working with interns is a unique experience each time and may require unique solutions.

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Thank you!

Questions?