

## **Consultant Report**

Department of Allied Health Professions  
College of Nursing and Allied Health Professions – University of Louisiana at Lafayette  
March 16-18, 2015  
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### **Introduction**

The dietetics program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette is at a crossroads. The university has two programs: a didactic program in dietetics (DPD) and a dietetic internship (DI) which has been suspended for 2 years due to low pass rate on the RD exam. The charge given to this consultant was to assess the current situation to determine the viability merging the current DPD and suspended DI and moving forward with a coordinated program in dietetics.

During her visit, the consultant met with the dean, associate dean, department head, the dietetics program director, a dietetics faculty member, junior dietetics students and senior dietetics students. Based on materials provided and discussions, the following analysis is provided.

### **Program Strengths**

- The program is located in the midst of multiple sites for supervised practice.
- The program in the past has produced graduates who have remained in the area and are providing nutrition services for the region.
- Students want the program to succeed and stated that they felt they were obtaining a quality education in dietetics.
- Supportive administration who want the program to be successful.
- Dr. Rachel Fournet, the DPD director, has practitioner experience, albeit somewhat dated and seems well qualified to teach medical nutrition therapy.

### **Program Weaknesses**

- Faculty issues – Three faculty members are too few to provide the coverage and diversity needed for a comprehensive dietetics education program. The consultant spent time with two of the three faculty members. The third faculty member, Ashley Roberts, was on maternity leave. The two faculty members interviewed (both tenured, associate professors) exuded a sense of frustration and fatigue.

The program director, Dr. Rachel Fournet, cares deeply about the program, but does not feel supported by administration. She particularly voiced concern over a lack of transparency in how decisions were made regarding suspension of the program.

Dr. Bernice Adeleye, who teaches food science, experimental foods, and community nutrition, is a food scientist with research, rather than practitioner, background. However, she has not recently procured any grants nor has she conducted research. Teaching evaluations for Dr. Adeleye are not strong and she does not seem well-suited for her teaching assignments in the program.

- The curriculum was reviewed for compliance with current ACEND standards and relevancy to dietetics practice. It appears from review of materials and discussions with students that sequencing of courses needs to be adjusted so students can build understanding and competence.
- Program admission standards are too low. There is a correlation between success on the RD exam and GPA of students. Standards for admission need to be elevated and more rigor injected into the application process. The focus needs to be on quality, not quantity, of students.

### **Review of Curriculum for Development of a Coordinated Program**

The consultant reviewed the curriculum and made the following recommendations:

#### **Courses recommended for elimination:**

UNIV 200 Information Literacy  
 BIOL 261 General Microbiology  
 DIET 270 Evidence-Based Components of Dietetics  
 ECON 300 Fundamentals of Economics  
 HMGT 408 Facility Management

#### **Course changes:**

- Change PSYC 220 Educational Psychology to PSYC 110 Intro to Psychology. PSYC 110 is a general introduction to psychology and is more likely to be transferable to other majors should a student decide to change out of dietetics to another major.
- In lieu of ECON 300, provide students a choice between SOCI 100 General Sociology OR POLS 110 American National Government.
- Move DIET 451 Macronutrients and DIET 452 Micronutrients earlier in the program rather than in the last two semesters.
- Combine DIET 270 Evidence-Based Components of Dietetics into DIET 314, 315, and 434 (Medical Nutrition Therapy I, II, and III).
- Combine DIET 310 Nutrition Assessment with DIET 314 Medical Nutrition Therapy I.
- Change DIET 401 Foodservice Systems Management to Management in Dietetics and cover concepts of management across dietetics practice (foodservice, clinical management, management in public health settings, etc.) in this class.
- DIET 430 Topics in Dietetics Practice to become a final capstone course to prepare students for entry into practice, review for the RD exam, etc.

#### **Existing course to be added:**

HAS 200 Contemporary Issues in Healthcare

**New courses which need to be developed:**

Counseling and Education Strategies in Dietetics 3 credits (Could be taught by an adjunct – online.)

Financial Management in Dietetics 3 credits (Taught by adjunct online)

Revised DIET 401 Management in Dietetics (Taught by adjunct online)

Medical Nutrition Therapy I Practicum 2 credits

Medical Nutrition Therapy II Practicum 2 credits

Medical Nutrition Therapy III Practicum 3 credits

Nutrition in Life Span Practicum 2 credits

Foodservice Systems Management Practicum 3 credits

Community Nutrition Practicum 3 credits

A proposed sequence of courses with accompanying practica are presented in Appendix A. This sequence meets the university requirement for a degree program of 120 credit hours and meets the ACEND requirements for 1200 hours of supervised practice. Students would be able to finish the program in 8 semesters and be eligible to sit for the RD exam upon graduation.

**Recommendations:**

1. Discuss the idea of moving to a coordinated program with constituencies affected: facilities and preceptors, students, program advisory committee and others identified by program faculty.
2. The department head and key faculty should visit other coordinated programs in the country to see how such programs can be structured and managed.
3. Faculty and department head should verify with ACEND the anticipated rollout of the standards of education for graduate programs in dietetics. This hopefully will occur at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Exhibition (FNCE) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in Nashville, TN, October 3-6, 2015.
4. Once ACEND makes clear their requirements for graduate programs in dietetics and the move to the requirement for a master's degree to sit for the RD exam by 2024, the program needs to make decisions about whether to move to a coordinated master's program format or maintain a baccalaureate degree program in dietetics to produce dietetic technicians who could then apply to a dietetic internship if they so desire (either a resurrected ULL internship or internships elsewhere).
5. If a coordinated program is instituted, facilities and preceptors need to be oriented to this new educational process and how it is different from the program's previous interns. Explicit guidelines for practicum experiences need to be planned to include objectives, activities, and evaluation rubrics.
6. Faculty to oversee the practicum experiences and keep in close touch with preceptors need to be identified and their responsibilities clarified.
7. Plans for preparing students for the RD exam need to be formulated and implemented throughout the program.
8. At minimum, at least one new faculty member needs to be hired for the program. A PhD, RD would be preferred. Candidates with strengths in either community nutrition or

management should be actively sought. The new faculty member should come from outside the ULL network in order to provide new vision and ideas. Consideration should be given to making this new faculty member the program director and allow Dr. Fournet to focus on teaching Intro to Dietetics and Medical Nutrition Therapy I, II, and III (and supervising accompanying practica). The new program director could assume responsibility for the capstone Topics in Dietetics Practice course as well as orchestrating the major program revision.

9. Realignment of current tenured faculty needs to occur so that the faculty members can function in each person's area of strength.
10. If possible, new preceptors who received their training at other institutions besides ULL should be added to the program's extended faculty.
11. The program advisory committee needs to be refreshed with members other than ULL dietetics graduates and preceptors in order to bring new ideas and perspectives. Use of technology to bring in advisory board members from elsewhere in the country might be considered.
12. To repeat the recommendation of the previous review team, "Faculty members need to improve outcomes in each of their courses. The faculty members need to improve their teaching, take responsibility for outcomes of the courses they teach, and evaluate how to improve transitioning students from knowledge to application and meeting the required dietetics competencies. Further, they need to look at the entire curriculum as an integrated whole rather than as individual topics."
13. Students also need to view the curriculum as a whole and understand the rationale for course sequencing and reinforcement of concepts to build critical thinking skills.

#### **Development of MS/CP program by 2024**

If the program opts to move to a MS/CP, the 15 credit hours of practicum courses would be moved into the graduate program. Whether or not any of these credits could count toward the MS degree depends on Graduate School policies. Graduate level didactic courses would need to be developed to accompany each practicum experience.

The remaining undergraduate program could be revamped to remain as a BS degree in dietetics. The removal of the 15 credits of practicum would allow the undergraduate program to diversify the curriculum to develop new courses or add existing already developed courses. Students particularly expressed interest in adding courses in kinesiology, as the combination of exercise and nutrition is a very attractive option.

If the ULL MS/CP becomes a reality, ULL could structure its program to only accept its own graduates from the newly renovated undergraduate dietetics program.

Obviously additional faculty would need to be added for the renovated undergraduate program and new MS/CP program to become a reality. Someone would need to develop the new graduate level courses to accompany the practicum experiences at the graduate level.

## Summary of Review - Didactic Program in Dietetics

Department of Allied Health Professions

College of Nursing and Allied Health Professions – University of Louisiana at Lafayette

October 29-31, 2014

Nora Kerr, PhD RD CD

Alice Jo Rainville, PhD RD CHE SNS FAND

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### Part I: General

#### Overview

The dietetic program is housed in the Department of Allied Health in the College of Nursing and Allied Health Professions. The mission for the program is “to prepare students who will become leaders in the field of dietetics with a focus on scientific and evidence base of practice, clinical healthcare, management resources and community research.”

#### Faculty

Three faculty members contribute to the program. Two of the faculty members are tenured and one member is an instructor. The two tenured faculty members are associate professors and have worked at the University for greater than 25 years. The instructor was hired in 2007 and completed a Masters Degree and the Dietetic Internship from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Table 1: Faculty Course Assignments and Text Books

Class	Course Title	Instructor	Text
Diet 314	MNT I	Fournet	Mahan, Escott Stump
Diet 315	MNT II	Fournet	Mahan, Escott- Stump
Diet 439	MNT III	Fournet	Mahan, Escott Stump
Diet 430	Legal & Ethical Issues	Fournet	No book
Diet 333	Food Science	Adeleye	Brown Understanding Food
Diet 310	Assessment	Adeleye	Lee Robert & Nieman
Diet 415	Food Science	Adeleye	McWillaims
Diet 425	Community	Adeleye	Boyle & Holben
Diet 455	Practicum	Adelye	

Table 1 continued...

Class	Course Title	Instructor	Text
Diet 200	Basic Nutrition	Roberts	Whitney & Rolfes
Diet 202	Human Nutrition	Roberts	Whitney & Rolfes
Diet 204	Life Span	Roberts	B Nutrition through Life Cycle 4 <sup>th</sup> edition
Diet 401	Foodservice Org	Roberts	Gregoire
Diet 270	Evidence Based Components of Dietetics	Eckert	Nutrition Counseling - Bauer

### Students

Over the past five years, approximately 101 to 133 students per year were enrolled in the program. The number of graduates is significantly lower than 25% of students enrolled, indicating a retention concern.

Recruitment and retention appear to be a consistent dilemma of the program. The advisor noted that the changing science course sequence caused students to not be prepared to enter dietetics courses and therefore students have transferred to other majors.

Dietetics and nutrition are very popular topics and many universities are having an increased enrollment of students entering their programs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports, "Employment of dietitians and nutritionists is expected to grow 21 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations, In recent years, interest in the role of food in promoting health and wellness has increased particularly as a part of preventative health care in medical settings." The Council on Future Practice for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics reports an anticipated high percentage of dietitians retiring during the next ten years. Dietitians work in community settings (WIC, extension, health departments), schools (both wellness initiatives and food service management), businesses (grocery chains, pharmaceutical, food companies), as well as health care settings. There are an abundance of positions, an interest in nutrition, and therefore dietetics should be an excellent major to recruit students.

### Graduates

Seventy-five students have graduated in the previous five years. Of the 55 students graduating from 2009 to 2011, 37 (67%) of the graduates completed the registration exam and 21 (57% of those who completed the exam) passed. Note that the number of graduates completing the exam is based upon those graduates reported to take the exam on year post graduation, an estimate of the time for graduates to complete a dietetic internship.

For the previous five graduation years (2010-2014), of the 61 graduates applying for an internship, 50 (82% of those applying; 67% of graduates) received an internship. The vast majority completed the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL) internship.

Table 2: Graduate DI matching and RD exam rates

	Number of Students - Spring	Number of Graduates	Number of Students applying to Internships	Number of Students Receiving Internships	Number Completing RD Exam*	Number Passing RD Exam on First Try*
2010	119	17	13	12	10 (2011)	7 (2011)
2011	131	20	18	13	10 (2012)	6(2012)
2012	129	18	15	11	17 (2013)	8(2013)
2013	111	10	8	7	2 (2014)	2(2014)
2014	101	10	7	7		

\*One year post graduation date used for estimating number completing RD exam

### RD Exam Pass Rate

From 2009 to 2013, the percentage of DPD graduates passing the RD Exam on the first try was 60% (31 of 52), falling in the 8<sup>th</sup> percentile for all programs who have students completing the Registration Examination (Commission on Dietetics Registration Five Year Summary Report). The Registration Examination for Dietitians five year summary report provides a total mean score as well as nutrition and foodservice subscores. For all five years, both the total and subscore means were consistently lower than the national mean scores. During this same time period, first-time repeaters passing the exam was 50% (8 of 16). There appears to a relationship between the DPD and DI pass rates due to the vast majority of UL DPD graduates who enter the ULL internship. During the past five years, the internship has had a 59% pass rate.

### Curriculum

The required curriculum for the program is 120 credit hours. The program previously decreased the number of credit hours for chemistry and biochemistry from 9 to 3. When students reported that they were not prepared for the dietetic internship or the registration examination and faculty reported that students were not prepared for advanced nutrition courses, the program reinstated the three course sequence. The dietetics advisor noted that it is taking a few years for students to be in the correct science sequence to finish in a four year timeframe. She is assisting students by using multiple initial chemistry courses to allow students to finish in a timely manner. The chemistry department reported that it would assist students to begin with Chemistry 107 or Chemistry 123, rather than Chemistry 101, and then enter Chemistry 240 (Organic Chemistry).

### Facilities, Resources, and Staff Support

The program has a dedicated advisor. The advisor is knowledgeable regarding the dietetics curriculum, very positive toward the degree, and understands the nuances of the changing needs of the program. The availability of a knowledgeable advisor allows faculty members to have greater time for instruction, research and service.

The simulation laboratory is available and utilized by nursing. The program should consider increasing the utilization of this laboratory in the medical nutrition therapy course. Classes could include students from cross-disciplines in nursing and allied health programs.

DIET 202 and DIET 200 are both Human Nutrition courses. For an efficiency purposes, these courses could be combined. Faculty members would then have one preparation and dietetics students could take the course any semester. The course could be taught in multiple sections depending on enrollment. If course maintains large enrollment, assistance with grading may be warranted. The course should be taught at the highest level needed for student achievement and students should be expected to rise to the level.

## **Part II: Acknowledgements**

- **Syllabi**  
The syllabi are aligned with the Accreditation Council for Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) knowledge and competency requirements.
- **Course Textbooks**  
Current textbooks are up-to-date and utilized in multiple programs across the nation.
- **ServSafe Certification**  
Students are certified in HMGT 151.

## **Part III: Suggestions**

- **Campus/Community Opportunities**  
The surrounding area appears to offer multiple sites for students to have meaningful community experiences (Wellness Wednesday and simulation labs with nursing students, the university wellness center, and festivals). Students could enrich their communication and practice skills through these sites. These learning opportunities could also increase interdisciplinary teamwork. The practicum offers opportunity to participate in these areas, but other courses such as the community nutrition course, could also incorporate these events.
- **Curriculum**  
A Careers' course is traditionally taught in a dietetics program during the second semester of the freshman year. The goal of the course is to assist students in understanding the process of becoming a dietitian and the multiple roles of the dietitian. A goal of the course is to assist with retention by preparing students for the program, the internship application process, and the future role of the dietitian.

Teamwork, Collaboration and Patient-Centered Care (Nursing 204-3 credits) is a contemporary topic that dietetics students need and completing this course with nursing students would allow interdisciplinary interaction with nursing students.



Development of a course in counseling and nutrition education could be beneficial to students. This course could incorporate motivational interviewing, group education practices, teaching methods and the opportunity to practice teaching, counseling, and presentations.

Facilities Management (HMGT 408-3 credits) is a course that could be considered for elimination. The objectives of this course are at an in-depth level not needed for a dietetics student.

Evidence Based Components of Dietetics (DIET 270-2 credits) includes a variety of topics that could be redistributed to other courses. For example, discussion and use of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Evidence Analysis Library could be in Medical Nutrition Therapy. This course could be eliminated.

Fundamentals of Economics (ECON 300-3 credits) could be considered for elimination. Many dietetic programs have eliminated this course to allow credits in other areas.

Topics in Dietetics Practice (DIET 430-1 credit) could be considered for elimination and topics redistributed. If not eliminated, the course should have a title change reflecting the content.

- Program Management

Dietetics faculty meeting minutes should be typed and disseminated to faculty members and the department chair. The minutes need to include attendees and non-attendees.

The website, syllabi and all written materials must be updated to the new terminology for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Accreditation Council on Education for Nutrition and Dietetics. Materials exist with former acronyms and language such as CADE and ADA.

Program directors must maintain ongoing curriculum review, data assessment collecting and analyzing, acting on analysis and written reports. Currently, there appears to be little, if any, analysis of actual program outcomes and targeted improvement within the courses as well as the structure of the program.

Consideration of a pre-dietetics major with its own code and utilizing an admission process to progress to the final two years of the program could assist with monitoring student progress in the major.

- Faculty Development

Due to the low number of faculty members, there may be limited infusion of new concepts into the curriculum. For future hiring, the administration must consider candidates with external education degrees and work experience. Current faculty members need to participate in short (one week to one month) professional update leaves

to increase current practice knowledge and skillsets. Faculty could consider visiting exemplary dietetic programs to better understand how the programs meet the goals of dietetic education and are successful. This could include all three types of programs (coordinated, didactic, and dietetic internships).

- **Consultations**  
Varying key stakeholders discussed the need for consultants for the program. If an opportunity for a consultant occurs, program directors of exemplary dietetics programs should be considered for the role. The current suggested individuals and past individuals are persons who are experts in one area and not dietetics education. The program needs external assistance from individuals with a strong understanding of dietetics education program changes and success.
- **Exam Pass-Rate Improvement**  
Currently the program appears to rely heavily on mock exams and review course materials for exam improvement. An analysis of the current curriculum and outcomes is suggested to determine why students are not prepared to pass the exam. A review's purpose is to focus on what a student knows, not as a teaching tool. Students may be relying on these review activities in place of a deep understanding of the subject. The Chair of the Department provided an excellent example of a means for reviewing current course outcomes by comparing the specific questions missed on the multiple mock exams provided to students and determining where in the coursework the student should learn these concepts. This is one example of targeting outcomes, not just relying on greater test practice for success.

#### **Part IV: Recommendations**

- **Develop a strategic plan.**  
The program has many broad opportunities. A strong strategic plan could provide a more targeted allocation of resources and informing future requests. The strategic plan will drive the following items:
  - **Program Type:** Currently, the dietetics program has a didactic program and a dietetic internship (suspended admissions for two years). Interest exists for a coordinated program, of which there are none in Louisiana. The comparison of the didactic plus a dietetic internship and the coordinated program could be considered. If a coordinated program is considered, it will be important to thoroughly evaluate the resources and potential for student outcomes and graduates' success.
  - **New requirements:** The Commission on Dietetic Registration has written a requirement for dietetics entry programs to be at the masters level by 2024. A review of the current program and potential transition will need to be conducted.

- Recruitment of students: The strategic plan will allow for targeted recruitment. The types of programs, as well as the delivery of the programs, can support targeted audience and the location of recruitment.
- Faculty: Determine the number, type of expertise, and mix (tenured, lecturer, instructor, adjunct) of faculty needed, i.e. hire research faculty who meet the strategic plan outcome. Currently, the faculty members' capacity to complete research is limited due to multiple teaching assignments and administrative assignments.

Faculty members need to improve outcomes in each of their courses. The faculty members need to improve their teaching, take responsibility for outcomes of the courses they teach, and evaluate how to improve transitioning students from knowledge to application and meeting the required dietetics competencies. Further, they need to look at the entire curriculum as an integrated whole rather than as individual topics.

- Office and research space – Currently faculty members appear to be separated by office space. This may be maintained currently due to personnel issues, but the efficiency and growth of the program may be better served by a more team-oriented operation and physical proximity.
- Curriculum – A review of the curriculum to determine teaching methods, sequencing and reinforcement of concepts and application thereof needs to be conducted. This analysis should include determining if students have the opportunity to build critical thinking skills and the ability to transition from the classroom to the practice setting.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette

B.S. Degree in Dietetics

**PROPOSED COURSE SEQUENCE**

Freshman Year

<b>Fall Semester</b>			
BIOL	110	Fundamentals of Biology I	3
UNIV	100	Cajun Connections	3
ENGL	101	Intro to Academic Writing	3
MATH	105	Applied College Algebra	3
PSYC	110	Intro to Psychology	3
DIET	100	Intro to Dietetics	1
TOTAL			16

<b>Spring Semester</b>			
CHEM	101	Survey of Chemistry I	3
CMCH	100	Human Communication	3
ENGL	102	Writing & Research About Culture	3
HMGT	151	Intro to Food Safety and Prep	2
HMGT	152	Intro to Food Safety and Prep Lab	1
STAT	214	Elementary Statistics	3
TOTAL			15

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## Sophomore Year

<b>Fall Semester</b>			
CHEM	240	Intro Organic Chemistry (FA)	3
DIET	202	Human Nutrition (FA)	3
ACCT	201	Intro to Financial Accounting	3
HIST	XXX	History elective	3
HSA	200	Contemporary Issues in Healthcare	3
TOTAL			15

<b>Spring Semester</b>			
BIOL	220	Anatomy and Physiology	3
BIOL	221	Anatomy and Physiology Lab	1
CHEM	280	Biochemistry (SP)	3
SOCI	100	General Sociology	3
		<b>OR</b>	
POLS	110	American National Govt.	3
Diet	XXX	Counseling and Education Strategies in Dietetics	3
ENGL	XXX	Literature Elective	3
TOTAL			16

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Students must apply and be accepted for CP admission before beginning junior year courses

### Junior Year

Fall Semester			
DIET	333	Food Science (FA)	4
ART	XXX	Art Elective	3
DIET	314	Medical Nutrition Therapy I (includes Nutrition Assessment)	3
<b>DIET</b>	<b>XXX</b>	<b>Medical Nutrition Therapy I Practicum</b>	<b>2 (160) 11 hours per week</b>
DIET	451	Macronutrients	3
TOTAL			15

Spring Semester			
DIET	315	Medical Nutrition Therapy II (SP)	3
<b>DIET</b>	<b>XXX</b>	<b>Medical Nutrition Therapy II Practicum (SP)</b>	<b>2 (160) 11 hours per week</b>
DIET	204	Nutrition in Life Span (SP)	3
<b>DIET</b>	<b>XXX</b>	<b>Nutrition in Life Span Practicum (SP)</b>	<b>2 (160) 11 hours per week</b>
HMG	351	Foodservice Management	3
DIET	452	Micronutrients	3
TOTAL			16

## Senior Year

<b>Fall Semester</b>			
DIET	415	Experimental Food Science	4
DIET	401	Management in Dietetics	3
<b>DIET</b>	<b>XXX</b>	<b>Foodservice Systems Management Practicum</b>	<b>3 (240) 16 hours per week</b>
DIET	XXX	Financial Management in Dietetics Practice	3
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>13</b>

<b>Spring Semester</b>			
DIET	425	Community Nutrition (SP)	3
<b>DIET</b>	<b>XXX</b>	<b>Community Nutrition Practicum (SP)</b>	<b>3 (240) 16 hours per week</b>
DIET	434	Medical Nutrition Therapy III	3
<b>DIET</b>	<b>XXX</b>	<b>Medical Nutrition Therapy III Practicum (SP)</b>	<b>3 (240) 16 hours per week</b>
DIET	430	Topics in Dietetics Practice	2
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>14</b>

**TOTAL 120 credit hours**

**TOTAL 1275 hours of supervised practice (with 1 credit hour = 80 clock hours of experience)**