

DIDACTIC PROGRAM IN DIETETICS

University of Wisconsin - Madison
Department of Nutritional Sciences

LOOKING AHEAD

Improving Your Chances for a
Dietetic Internship

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The Didactic Program in Dietetics, Department of Nutritional Sciences, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, is currently granted “*developmental accreditation*” status by the Commission of Accreditation/Approval for Dietetics Education (CAADE) of the American Dietetic Association, 120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000, Chicago, IL 60606-6995, 312/899-5400.

This manual will outline the process involved in applying to supervised practice programs that follow the B.S. degree and improving your chances of obtaining an appointment. It is also available on-line at <http://www.nutrisci.wisc.edu>.

APPLICATION PROCESS

For programs, which follow the academic component, there is a national application process that is made available through The American Dietetic Association (ADA). This process is completed twice each year as follows:

<u>Apply</u>	<u>Notification of Applicants</u>	<u>Begin Program</u>
September	November	January or February
February	April	July - September

There are approximately 2500 openings offered by 250 Dietetic Internship programs. Five DI programs are located in Wisconsin. Although some programs provide a stipend, many charge tuition ranging from \$2,500 to \$8,000+. Each program is unique and applicants should explore a variety of programs, then apply to those which best meet interests and needs.

1. 900 – 1200 hours (minimum) supervised practice experience (9-12 months full-time; 12-24 months part-time)
2. Include: Management, clinical nutrition and community nutrition
3. Some are combined with graduate work and lead to a Master's degree.

Competition for post-baccalaureate supervised practice programs is keen and approximately 50% of applicants nationwide do not receive appointments. **It is essential that, beginning early in their dietetics course work, students plan for developing a strong record of academic progress, experiences and relationships that will support a successful application.** Although programs have varying selection criteria, successful applicants usually have a 3.0 GPA, more than one year of paid work experience in dietetics, and strong recommendations from employers and faculty. In addition, they are willing to relocate, take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and apply to numerous programs.

ACTION NOW: DEVELOP YOUR RESUME

Begin NOW establishing relationships, experiences and an information base needed to successfully apply for the professional experience. Will you be able to write an impressive letter of application? What would/could employers/faculty honestly say about you as an emerging professional? Considerations include attributes discussed below.

A. Knowledge

1. Overall GPA – Many programs require a GPA of 3.0 or higher for consideration for admission. While some programs have a minimum requirement of 2.5, national competition and experience strongly suggest that a 3.0 or higher is needed for acceptance. (Students with GPA <3.0 may receive appointments, depending on overall quality of application.) Grade points are reviewed as cumulative, science GPA and GPA in major requirements and are a basis for determining whether a person will be considered for the program. Additional considerations are necessary for program acceptance, and a balanced portfolio is essential. All higher education grades are reviewed, but particular consideration is given to most recent academic experience and to the grades in courses required to meet the dietetic program requirements.
2. GPA in professional sciences (foods, nutrition, management) – grades in these courses should be no lower than “B”. **NOTE:** You **MUST** receive a grade of C or better in NS 332 and Physiology 335 before you can enroll in NS 431. This is strictly enforced.
3. GPA in physical, biological sciences (chemistry, microbiology, etc.) – grades in these courses should be no lower than “B”.

NOTE: Students receiving less than “C” in biochemistry or “professional” courses should consider retaking these courses. Although the original grade will still appear on the transcript, retaking the course and receiving a good grade indicates to supervised practice programs you have the knowledge needed.

4. GPA in behavioral, social sciences (psychology, economics, sociology, etc.).
5. GPA in communication (writing, education, speech).
6. GPA in elective courses; selection of electives.
7. Achievement scholarships.
8. Honors, honor sororities/fraternities.
9. Awards.

B. Work Experience

Evidence that the student is a productive, reliable, and competent worker is critical. Work experience in nutrition and foodservice is very helpful, and many hospital-based dietetic internships look for some hospital work experience as evidence that applicants will be prepared for and comfortable with the internship environment.

The student should have 900 hours of good, applicable work experience. Consider the following when seeking work experience:

1. Health care settings are best (ex. hospitals, nursing homes).
2. Foodservice experience, especially in healthcare is valuable. The following campus-area healthcare organizations hire students and recruit throughout the year:
 - UW Hospital and Clinics
 - St. Mary's Hospital
 - Meriter Hosopital
3. Residence halls/unions provide good experience and can add to your application, however, many supervised practice programs emphasize healthcare.

WARNING: Do not work too many hours and jeopardize your GPA! Find a balance that works for you.

4. Aim to obtain a variety of experiences - community and clinical and foodservice.
5. Work experience not directly related to dietetics (for example, retail) may not be preferred, but does help to develop professional qualities and skills (i.e. interpersonal skills).

C. Volunteer/Internship Experiences

One or more volunteer and/or internship/independent study experiences will further the student's networking system and broaden their experiences. Discuss ideas you may have for completing an independent study (NS/FS 299) or coordinative internship (NS/FS 399) with your advisor. Opportunities vary each semester and are often the result of students taking the initiative to contact professionals working in an area of their interest.

Examples of special summer internships/field experiences appropriate for dietetics students follow. Students are encouraged to explore other possibilities, as well.

1. The Marriott Management Services Food Service Intern Program. Contact:
Marriott Management Services
7480 West 78th Street
Bloomington, MN 55439
612/943-1013; Fax 612/943-1727
2. The National Association of College and University Food Services - A food service management internship that offers summer employment and learning in a college setting. Applications are available in October and due in January; notification is during March. See the following websites for further information:
www.nacufs.org
www.acuho-i.org
3. Go to Rm. 116 Ag Hall (Undergraduate Programs and Services) for more information on internships.

D. Organizations and Activities

Students are strongly advised to participate in University, college, community and professionally related activities. Participation in a variety of activities and a clear, identified leadership role in one or more groups are an essential part of their preparation as a professional. It will enhance their opportunities for scholarships and awards, placement in supervised practice programs and in future employment. Professional experience programs look for students whose activities suggest they are committed to becoming registered and contributing to the profession. Some ideas follow.

1. **The Dietetics and Nutrition Club (DNC)** - For students to share their ideas and experiences in nutrition and dietetics, to enhance and extend their education in the field, and develop awareness of career opportunities. The DNC maintains a bulletin board near the Linden Drive entrance of the Nutritional Sciences Bldg. Their website is: <http://dnc.rso.wisc.edu> Advisor: Monica Theis, Dept. of Food Sci.
2. **The American Dietetic Association (ADA)** - The ADA has as its purpose direction and leadership for quality dietetic practice, education and research and to promote optimal health and improve the nutrition of human beings. Dietetics students are encouraged to join the ADA as affiliate members. As a member, students receive the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, published monthly. Other benefits are described in their membership brochure. Further information may be found on the ADA Website: <http://www.eatright.org>. Application forms and membership brochures are available from Lynette Karls, 274 Nutritional Sciences Bldg. The current membership cost for students is \$49.00/year and students must have the signature of the Program Director on the application.
3. **The Wisconsin Dietetic Association (WDA)** - Student membership in the national association results in automatic membership in the state association. Students receive a periodic newsletter and are strongly encouraged to be knowledgeable about association issues and concerns. WDA has an annual fall meeting and students are encouraged to attend. A discount on the registration fee for this meeting is given to students. Further information may be found at: <http://www.eatrightwisc.org>.
4. **The Madison District Dietetic Association (MDDA)** - This local association of dietitians usually meets 6-9 times during the school year. Notices of meeting dates/topics/locations will be posted on the Dietetics Bulletin Board (outside Rm 290 Nutr Sci Bldg). Students may attend meetings without becoming members. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm. It is advantageous for students to participate, hear issues and content, and to network with dietitians in the area. They may also volunteer to work on a committee.

5. **CALS Ambassadors** - A service, educational, and social organization. Purpose: promote agriculture, life sciences, and natural resources; and have a desire to service the college, improve communication skills and enhance leadership qualities. Members serve as representatives of the CALS, participating in public relations, recruitment activities, and alumni events. Ambassadors are involved in high school visits, telemarketing, preview days, alumni activities, panel presentations, tours of the CALS campus, staffing exhibits, and various conferences.

E. References

Professional programs and employers usually require references as a part of the application process. Dietetic programs often require references in the following categories: professors and academic advisor, employer, and personal. Obtaining good references should not be the sole basis for decisions, but it is important that the student develop relationships over time with people who may serve as references in the future. This may include a variety of interactions so that the reference writer has an adequate basis for providing a strong reference when needed. Your letters of reference should be detailed and give an accurate picture of who you are. Many programs will provide a standardized reference form in their application packet.

Students should consider the following:

1. Review the Dietetic Recommendation form (attached to this document). How would you evaluate yourself on the qualities listed on the grid? What are your strengths? What qualities require further development? Will your reference writer be able to evaluate these attributes?
2. Reference writers should be able to “cite examples”. What evidence do you have that you possess these qualities and to what degree (outstanding, more than satisfactory, satisfactory, needs improvement, unsatisfactory)? Pay attention to the details expected by your reference writers. Something as simple as making a concerted effort to get to class everyday on time can say volumes to a professor about your sense of responsibility.
3. DI directors look specifically for “highly recommended” candidates; applicants who possess “outstanding” qualities!

F. Development of Professional Skills

Professional attributes are essential for supervised practice program applicants as listed on the recommendation form. The following examples show how you might develop and demonstrate some of these skills. Simply being a member of a club is not enough; internship directors are looking for what you did for the club

1. Leadership and Self-Motivation: key roles/offices held in extracurricular/volunteer activities, ability to work independently and seek answers/opportunities on own, ability to set and accomplish specific goals, judgement and decision making skills, self-confidence.

2. Management of Multiple Responsibilities: ability to handle school and work and family (if applicable); extracurricular activities; organized, dependable and responsible in all interactions with faculty, employers, peers, and supervised practice programs; adaptable and able to handle stress.
3. Communication Skills: impression of application and letter (as well as all other interactions with the program, i.e. visits, letters, phone calls) including ability to express one's self in a clear, concise manner; excellence in sentence structure, grammar, and spelling are essential; interview (verbal and nonverbal communication); evidence of interpersonal skills.

FUTURE ACTION

A. Graduate Record Examination (GRE)

The GRE is required for programs with graduate work. More information on taking the GRE can be obtained from "Testing and Evaluation Services, located in 366 Educational Sciences. Contact them directly at 262-5863.

You can take the GRE multiple times. (It is good to have a score of over 1,000 total for the verbal and math areas.) Remember, all of your past and current GRE test scores are sent to the designated site(s). Prior to taking the exam, you will be asked what sites you wish to have your scores sent. Four sites can be chosen free of charge. There will be an additional charge per site (approx. \$15.00) if you decide to have your scores sent later.

The computerized GRE is offered through the Prometric Testing Center. The cost is \$130.00 and appointments may be scheduled by calling 231-6270. Exams are scheduled Monday-Saturday from 8 am – 5 pm; evening hours are offered occasionally. The exam takes approximately 3 ½ - 4 ½ hours to complete. Immediately following the exam, the student is shown his/her "preliminary" scores. The computerized GRE can be taken every calendar month. All past and current GRE scores will be sent out, so be well prepared the first time you take the exam. Please be aware that you cannot go back to review previous questions/answers if you take the computerized form of the test.

To prepare for taking the GRE, pick up a GRE Informational Bulletin at the Graduate School (Rm. 228 Bascom Hall). You can purchase GRE practice books found at most bookstores. Review courses are available at the beginning of fall semester and during summer school.

- Call 262-5446 for math review course (cost ~ \$85.00)
- Call 265-3972 for verbal review course (cost ~ \$100.00)

B. Attend Application Workshop Series

Target Audience: Junior and senior dietetics majors planning to apply for a post-baccalaureate supervised practice program. This is a 5 part series offered each semester. Topics include:

- Selecting Internships and the Application Process
- Obtaining Letters of Recommendation
- Writing the Application Letter and Completing the Application
- Interviews

LOOK AHEAD - LEARN ABOUT PROGRAMS

The following publications and resources will be useful to you as you research programs and seek additional information on job openings and volunteer opportunities.

A. Dietetics Bulletin Board

There is a bulletin board specifically for Dietetics majors outside Room 290 Nutritional Sciences Bldg. Students should check this bulletin board twice monthly for scholarship announcements, job openings, volunteer opportunities, supervised practice open house schedules and other important announcements.

B. ADA Website

A listing of ADA-accredited programs may be found at the ADA website: www.eatright.org Advanced degree programs and specialty practice education programs are also listed. Links to specific programs are provided.

C. Applicant Guide to Supervised Practice Programs

Published annually by Dietetic Educators of Practitioners (a practice group of ADA) this guide supplements the Directory of Dietetic Programs by providing more specific details on dietetic programs. For example, it provides information on the average number of applicants, fees/costs, program focus, basic admission requirements and evaluation criteria for each program.

Availability - A printed copy is available in Rm. 230 Nutr. Sci. Bldg. The guide is also loaded on all of the computers in this room.

D. Supervised Practice Program Files

Files are located in Rm. 230 of the Nutr. Sci. Bldg. These files are arranged alphabetically by state and include the most recent written materials sent to us by specific programs. Not all programs send us information. Students find it useful to review these files before sending for current information directly from the program. Information regarding supervised practice programs should be sought during the sophomore or junior year. Once the directory/guidebook/files have been reviewed, a student should select some programs of interest, write for information on the program, review the information, and develop a sense of which program best suits his or her needs.

More specific information on program selection may be obtained at the Application Workshops. The student may also wish to visit programs of interest. Many programs offer open house programs or opportunities for students to visit individually. Dates of open houses may be found at:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~nutrvmg/Dlopenhouses>

Contact the programs directly to schedule visits and register for open houses.

SUMMARY

The dietetics faculty will assist you in assembling your application packet; however, the overall responsibility rests with you. Your letter of application should present an articulate, dynamic picture of who you are. Internship applications should be neat and well written. It is particularly important to be able to state professional goals clearly and concisely. You should make sure that each application is filled out carefully. (Incomplete application packets will not make it past the secretary.) It is your responsibility to make sure that directions are followed, ample time is allowed for references to be received, all materials are submitted, and all deadlines are met! In order to do this, you must look ahead!

(See next page for suggested time frame)

Applying for an Internship

Suggested Time Frame

Applying for an internship involves extensive research, time and money. It is never too early to start preparing for this stage of your undergraduate education.

- **Freshman to Senior Year:**

It is very important to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better. It is also very important to make the effort to know your department faculty. Often they will be the individuals you will be depending upon to write your letters of recommendations. If you haven't already done so, start developing a resume. Some internship programs require a resume as part of the application process. Give a resume to those who are writing a letter of evaluation for you. The information you provide will enable them to write a more in depth letter on your behalf.

- **Sophomore to Junior Year:**

Research internship programs to which you may want to apply. Ask returning students, faculty and community professionals for their opinions/suggestions. Review the ADA Website, *The Applicant Guide to Supervised Practice*, and the material available in the room 230 files describing internship programs. Visit programs or attend open houses. If a GRE score is required, check into when the exam is offered. You might consider taking the exam in your Junior year in case you need to retake it.

- **Fall Semester - Senior Year:**

Attend the Application Workshop Series. Pick up "Application Procedures for Dietetic Internship Manual" at the workshops or on-line at <http://www.nutrisci.wisc.edu>.

Narrow your choices down to a manageable number of programs for you (usually 5-6). Correspond with these programs and ask for more specific information, but before you do, read the fine print. Check to see if the programs that include a graduate degree require the taking of the GRE. Many DI programs require GRE scores.

Gather your transcripts. Write to each college/university you have attended and request an "official" copy of your transcripts. These transcripts are an important component of the total internship application packet. A transcript must document all college/universities attended.

Ask references for letters of recommendation.

TIPS:

1. A written request is appreciated. Ask your reference providers well in advance. Recommend no later than December 15 for spring; no later than May 15 for fall. It is not wise to wait until you return for the semester to request a letter.
2. Provide recommendation forms and envelopes.
3. Be sure to sign one of the waiver statements on each form.
4. Do not “double side” recommendation forms.

• **Mid-February - Senior Year:**

Applications are due for the selected internship programs. Be sure that all required information is complete. Declaration of Intent to Complete Degree and/or Verification forms must be included in the application packets. These forms are obtained from L. Karls and will be given to you after the first week of spring semester. All application materials for each internship should be sent by certified mail so that you know they have been received.

You must also prioritize internship preferences at this time. The ADA internship selection process includes a computerized system that matches a student’s choices (1, 2, 3... etc.) with the internship programs’ choices for student interns. The matching process is administered by D&D Digital Systems, a private computer firm. L. Karls will give you a packet of information explaining all the directions for submitting the required materials when you pick up your Declaration of Intent or Verification Statement. The cost to you is approximately \$50.

• **Mid-April - Senior Year:**

You will be given access to your personal matching results via the D&D Digital Systems website at: www.dnndigital.com on “Notification Day”. If you received a MATCH, the dietetic internship program will be listed. A MATCH means that using your priority choices and the dietetic internship priority choices, you have been selected to accept an appointment to the program. This dietetic internship is planning on your being a part of their internship program. Only one match can occur. No alternate matches are made.

Dietetic internship program directors will also find the list of applicants matched to their program on the same date (“Notification Day”). They will also receive a list of applicants who DID NOT MATCH and who have indicated by their release card that they wish to be considered for other available internship opportunities should they occur.

“Appointment Day” is always 1 day following the “notification day.” If the applicant was MATCHED to an internship program, she/he must call that program director by 5:00 pm (of the program’s time zone) on “Appointment Day” to confirm her/his appointment.

Please rate the applicant on the qualities you feel you can judge on the grid below. Indicate your perception of the student’s readiness to function in a dietetic internship program at this time. Provide comments of ratings and your signature on next page.

Student’s Name _____ Actual or Expected Date of Graduation _____
 O – Outstanding; MS - More than Satisfactory; SAT – Satisfactory; NI - Needs Improvement, U - unsatisfactory

	O	MS	SAT	NI	U	Unable to Evaluate
Application of Knowledge						
Nutrition Content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical Nutrition Therapy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foodservice Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Analytical Skills/Problem Solving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conceptual Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication Skills						
Oral	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpersonal Skills						
Peers/Co-Workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers/Supervisors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership Potential	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiative/Motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Punctuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adaptability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reaction to Stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perseverance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organizational Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Works Independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Responsibility/Maturity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall Potential as a Dietitian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Relationship to Applicant: Advisor: X Teacher: Work Supervisor: Other:

If Other, please indicate relationship: _____

How long have you known applicant? _____

How well do you know applicant? _____

Do You: Highly Recommend 5 Recommend 3 Not Recommend 1
 (Check appropriate box.) 4 2