

Mission and Goals
Didactic Program in Dietetics
Department of Nutrition, The University of Tennessee

The mission, goals, and outcome measures of The University of Tennessee Didactic Program in Dietetics (detailed below) guide the program in its quest to provide the best possible education and to develop the future leaders in nutrition research and practice.

Mission: The mission of the Didactic Program in Dietetics is to promote understanding of nutrition through an emphasis on science and research and thereby prepare undergraduate students to successfully attain acceptance to post-baccalaureate programs, i.e. dietetic internship programs and graduate schools, throughout the nation, and to build future leaders in dietetics and nutrition to improve and maintain the nutritional care of diverse individuals, families, and communities within national and global populations.

General Goal: The primary goal of the DPD is to provide the didactic component in the educational pathway that leads to graduates' acceptance into nationally renowned Dietetic Internship Programs which, upon successful completion, ultimately culminates in registration eligibility with the Commission on Dietetic Registration.

Program Goals:

1. The program will prepare graduates to be competent entry-level dietitians.
 - 1.1. *The mean GPA of graduating seniors in nutrition/DPD will exceed 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.* Graduating classes in 2006 and 2007 maintained an average 3.47 GPA.
 - 1.2. *At least 80% of nutrition graduates who apply for dietetic internship programs and/or graduate school will be accepted.* Over the past five years, 86.7% of students applying to dietetic internships were accepted. All but two who were not accepted applied to only one dietetic internship program. All students opting for graduate or professional school were accepted.
 - 1.3. *Program graduates indicate on surveys "satisfactory" (2) or better with respect to how well the curriculum prepared them for dietetics practice.* Graduates rank a majority of items satisfactory or better and upcoming curricular changes will strengthen the program overall.
 - 1.4. *The mean rating of "knowledge base" that dietetic internship directors will give program graduates will meet or exceed satisfactory" on surveys.* Internship directors rank our graduates as "more than satisfactory" on most items.
 - 1.5. *Over a five-year period, at least 90% of nutrition graduates who successfully complete a dietetic internship will pass the registration examination on the first sitting.* Between 2002 and 2006, 98% of program graduates passed the registration examination with 88% passing on the first sitting.
 - 1.6. *Over a five-year period, the average score of program graduates on the registration examination (first sitting) will exceed the national average.* In four of the past five years, our institutional total score has exceeded the national average.

2. The program will provide a curriculum that stresses current and research-based knowledge appropriate to dietetics careers of the future.
 - 2.1. *The undergraduate nutrition curriculum will be rigorous and based on current research.* The curriculum is reevaluated on a continuous basis by the departmental Undergraduate Committee.
 - 2.2. *All graduates will have demonstrated the ability to read, interpret, and apply current published research in nutrition and dietetics via presentations and research papers.* Success in this outcome goal is monitored through evaluation of professional portfolios assembled during the senior year.
 - 2.3. *At least 25% of undergraduate students will take advantage of opportunities to participate in nutrition research outside of the required coursework.* Since 2004, an average of 38% of graduates have participated in a research project in some way. Several have been employed as student research assistants in public health nutrition projects or in clinical obesity research. Others have been awarded summer internships, enrolled in independent study, or volunteered their time toward laboratory research or special projects with a faculty mentor.
 - 2.4. *At least 15% of undergraduate students will present research projects at the UT Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement or at state or national meetings.* Among students graduating between 2004 and 2007, an average of 16% presented their work. Twelve students presented posters at the UT event, with three of the posters garnering top awards. Other students presented at the Tennessee Dietetic Association annual meeting and at the national ADA Sports, Cardiovascular and Wellness Nutritionists (SCAN) conference.
3. Through encouragement, motivation and support, program faculty will increase the number of students who enroll in and complete the dietetics program of study.
 - 3.1. *80% of students who progress in the major will graduate from the program.* Of students beginning junior-level coursework between 2001 and 2004, 88% completed the program within three years.
 - 3.2. *Over a five-year period, the program will graduate, on average, at least 12 students per year.* Over the past five years, the program has graduated an average of 15.2 students/year. With 39 students currently enrolled in senior-level coursework, 43 students in the junior class, and a total major enrollment of 209 students, this average is expected to increase.
 - 3.3. *Graduates indicate on surveys “satisfactory” (2) or better with respect to the level of encouragement, motivation and support provided by program faculty.*
4. The program will prepare students to be leaders in the field of nutrition and dietetics.
 - 4.1. *At least 50% of students enrolled in junior and senior-level coursework will be active members of the Undergraduate Nutrition Student Association.* In 2007, 43% of juniors and seniors are paid members of the student organization and efforts continue to recruit additional participants.
 - 4.2. *Students indicate on surveys “satisfactory” (2) or better with respect to how well the program prepared them for leadership roles in nutrition and dietetics.* A majority of graduates ranked the program satisfactory or higher.

4.3. *At least 50% of graduates who are practicing in nutrition and dietetics and respond to the graduate survey will have some leadership responsibilities within 5 years of graduation.* This is a new outcome measure which is in the early stages of monitoring.