

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

The mission, goals, and outcome measures of the 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. The mean GPA of graduates over the past five years (2005-2009) is 3.37.*
 - 1.2. *Over a five-year period, at least 60% of DPD graduates will apply to supervised practice programs the academic year they complete the program. Over the past five years, 67 of 138 graduates applied for dietetic internships (48.6%).*
 - 1.3. *Over a five-year period, at least 80% of those applying to supervised practice programs the academic year they complete the program will be accepted. Over the period 2005-2009, 58 of 74 dietetic internship applicants were matched to a program (78.4%). This figure includes students who applied one or more years following program completion.*
 - 1.4. *Over a five-year period, At least 50% of nutrition graduates who do NOT apply for a supervised program, will undertake employment and/ or graduate study in a health-related field. This is a new outcome measure and data collection is currently underway.*
 - 1.5. *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.*
 - 1.6. *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.*

- 1.7. *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 2004 and 2008, 96% of program graduates passed the registration examination with 86.5% passing on the first sitting.*
- 1.8. *Over a five-year period, the average score of program graduates on the registration examination (first sitting) will exceed the national average. In three 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. *At least 25% of undergraduate students will take advantage of opportunities to participate in nutrition research outside of the required coursework. Between 2004 and 2007, an average of 38% of graduates 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.*
 - 2.2. *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.*
 - 2.3. *Students indicate on surveys “satisfactory” (2) or better with respect to how well the program prepared them for applying research in dietetics practice. This is a new outcome measure as of 2008.*
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. *At least 80% of students who enroll in third-year DPD courses will complete the program/degree requirements within 150% of the time planned for completion. 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 15 students per year. Over the past five years (2005-2009), the program has graduated an average of 28 students/year. There are currently 40 students enrolled in senior-level coursework.*
 - 3.3. *Graduates indicate on surveys “satisfactory” (2) or better with respect to the level of encouragement, motivation and support provided by program faculty. All survey items pertaining to faculty encouragement, motivation, support had a mean ranking higher than satisfactory.*
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 were paid members of the student organization and efforts continue to recruit additional participants.*
- 4.2. *Program graduates 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.*