

On graduation day my cap read, “first we eat, then we do everything else,” a quote from author MFK Fisher. This importance MFK Fisher placed on food before other aspects of life, I also place on my dietetics education. Now having obtained a dietetics degree, I can further expand my knowledge through a dietetic internship. My dietetics interest began with my Crohn’s disease diagnosis. I met a dietitian who also had Crohn’s and used food to manage her symptoms. This interaction elucidated the benefits of food beyond taste. This passion for dietetics deepened during my undergraduate education through community volunteering, clinical nutrition employment, and rigorous nutrition coursework. As a dietetics professional I hope to improve the nutritional status and decrease the risk of chronic disease for individuals and groups through nutrition research and education. My professional strengths and dietetics experiences will lead to the attainment of this vision and match well with the program goals and curriculum at California Polytechnic University San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly).

During my undergraduate education I joined the Community Kitchen team. This program provided limited-income populations a space to cook healthy, seasonal meals alongside current nutrition students. On kitchen night participants practiced cooking techniques while experiencing new foods and learning their benefits. Similar to the foodservice management rotation at Cal Poly, roles included conducting recipe nutrient analyses and scaling them to the proper size, personally inviting participants from local communities, and managing kitchen communications.

Completing these tasks required varying skills. For the outreach position, my interpersonal skills represented the program in a positive, welcoming manner. As kitchen communications manager, organization was essential to creating a reservation list and cataloging participant data. When leading participants through recipes, task delegation and small group management ensured proper food safety and timely recipe completion. My time as a team member resulted in approximately two hundred hours of service and ten kitchen nights. After the first event of the year, my peers voted me the most valuable team member. Apart from interpersonal skills, organization, and group management, leadership was also fostered during my didactic education.

The Food and Nutrition Club further developed my leadership abilities when I became treasurer. In collaboration with the other club leaders, I planned and executed a bi-monthly meeting focused on nutrition lessons. My role in particular managed the club’s allotted funds and purchased meeting supplies. To do so, I demonstrated strong leadership and effective team work. As a leader, I guided students through planned activities. As a team member, I listened to other’s ideas and decided collectively which would yield positive results. During my term I helped plan and shop for ten club meetings over the course of one academic year. Nutrition club was one of many opportunities that used my nutrition education to serve others.

To provide more breadth to my experiences, I have benefited from opportunities not associated with my undergraduate college. To improve variety I have spent time volunteering in food banks. While in school I dedicated one day every few months to volunteering, I now dedicate my time monthly. In addition I have become involved in the nutrition research program at the hospital where I currently work. Completing my internship through Cal Poly further expands this breadth including rotations at hospitals, WIC programs, and research organizations.

Working as a dietetic technician has increased my interest in nutrition research and education. In this role I assess, educate, and manage nutrition care for patients at the top rated hospital in Washington. This position requires many skills but critical thinking is most beneficial. A large portion of the patients I oversee have undergone surgery and report low appetites. With optimal nutrition being crucial for proper healing, I plan personalized nutrition education and meal patterns that best suit each patient’s needs. Thinking critically and providing on the spot problem solving are essential to ensuring adequate nutrition regardless of barriers present. Although I have not been in this position long, I have received praise from my coworkers and the clinical nutrition manager. This confirmation reaffirms my vision of the nutritional professional I hope to become.

With my initial nutrition interest coming from my own health, I hope to use my education to promote positive changes in treatment and prevention of chronic disease. My short term goal is to become a clinical dietitian working specifically with those affected by chronic disease. Already having experience in clinical settings, I predict a smooth assimilation from my internship back into this role. My long term goal is to use nutrition education and clinical research to promote overall wellness through food fueling and healing the body. Additionally, I hope to become a leader in the field by assuming roles in organizations like the Greater Seattle Dietetic Association while exemplifying the core values of a registered dietitian outlined by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. I feel Cal Poly's program will build on my current dietetics foundation and help prepare me for these goals.

Personal research in addition to my own interactions with current interns and the program director make me confident Cal Poly is my top internship choice. I am a good match for this program because I have experience fostering the strong relationships discussed in phone conversations and blog posts. Having a supportive network of peers is something I greatly value. I had the benefit of attending a small university where nutrition students became close through weekly study groups and collaborative outlets. I hope to continue this environment in my internship. The wellness concentration also aligns with my passion and vision for my role as a nutrition professional. Along with this passion comes my solid leadership foundation. In my discussion with the program director she highlighted the importance of leadership. I have proven to be an effective leader whether guiding others through recipes during Community Kitchen nights or training new employees at work. My passion for wellness promotion and the exact alignment of Cal Poly's goals with my own, make me an ideal candidate for this dietetic internship.