

DPD Newsletter

UW Madison Didactic Program in Dietetics



**2021
Edition**

A farewell note from DPD Director, Denise M Ney, PhD, RDN, Professor of Nutritional Sciences

Hello friends, students, and supporters of the UW-Madison Didactic Program in Dietetics.

In July, Dr. Adam Kuchnia, PhD, RDN and Assistant Professor of Nutritional Sciences (page 3), will become Director of the DPD as I return full time to teaching and research. It has been a privilege to lead our successful and evolving program to educate future RDNs over these 23 years (1989-2008 and 2017-2021). We are in good shape – enthusiastic and talented students, highly competent and dedicated faculty, an expanded curriculum in clinical nutrition with experiential learning (see page 4), an online pathway to a MS Clinical Nutrition degree, a relationship with UW Hospitals and Clinics Dietetic Internship program that facilitates student placements, and adequate administrative support from the Department of Nutritional Sciences and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. This year we congratulate and thank Monica Theis as she retires (see page 6) and welcome Dr. Yaa Klu who will teach food chemistry and food service management courses for our DPD students (page 3).

We rose to the challenge of 100% online teaching for the 2020-2021 academic year – it was often tough, and we missed the energy and fun being with our students in the classroom. I believe our students have gained resilience and a greater appreciation for others and the earth during the COVID challenge. We are excited to teach “live” this fall.

A May graduation party for seniors (all 34 matched to Dietetic Internship this year) was a highlight – look at those happy faces! Be well and stay in touch.

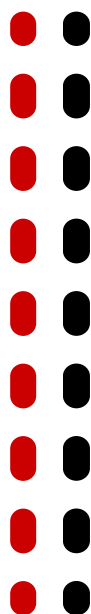
Denise M. Ney





Dr. Adam Kuchnia, PhD, RDN

Director DPD July 2021-present



Dr. Yaa Klu, PhD, MPH, CPH

New Food Science Instructor for
437/438 Food Service Operations and
Lab.



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DPD PROGRAM LAUNCHES NEW LABORATORY COURSES



During the 2020-2021 academic year, the DPD program launched two new laboratory courses, NS 641/NS 642: Applications in Clinical Nutrition I & II. These laboratory courses replaced the 3-credit course, NS 520: Applications in Clinical Nutrition, which was always taken during the DPD student's final semester in the program. The new laboratory courses are taken concurrently with the fall and spring MNT lecture courses, NS 631/632. These changes were made based on student feedback in which they often requested to complete the application activities at the same time they received the lectures. The new courses are co-taught by all DPD instructors so the same instructor who teaches the

lecture portion of a topic will also lead the application portion. The lab sections include case studies, hands-on experiences such as training in the Nutrition Focused Physical Exam, motivational interviewing practice and a variety of guest speakers. Due to COVID-19, we needed to begin these courses in the online format. While not ideal for the hands-on training, we were fortunate to invite several guest speakers through the virtual learning platform. Some of the new topics and invited guest speakers included the following. We look forward to offering these labs in-person during the 2021-2022 academic year:

USE OF KETOGENIC DIET IN NEUROLOGY PATIENTS

- Kelly Faltersack MS, RDN, CD – UW-Health Outpatient Ketogenic Clinic Dietitian
- Megan Grassl MS, RDN, CD – UW-Health Neurocritical Care Dietitian

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE & HEATH AT EVERY SIZE – A CASE STUDY PRESENTATION

- Katie Lagatzke – UW-Health Dietetic Intern

LGBTQ+ NUTRITION CARE

- Jay Patruno, RD, LDN, CPT – Walden Behavioral Care Dietitian, Waltham, MA
- Heidi Lochen, MS, RDN, LDN - Pediatric Clinical Nutrition Specialist, Johns Hopkins

SURGICAL NUTRITION SUPPORT TEAM

- Susan Stone, PharmD, BCPS – UW-Health Clinical Pharmacist

INBORN ERRORS OF METABOLISM

- Lisa Obernolte, MS, RD, CD – Waisman Center Metabolic Dietitian
- Nicoletta Drilias, RD, CD - Waisman Center Metabolic Dietitian

MEDICAL MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 PATIENTS

- Heather Breen, RDN, MD – Hospitalist, Beloit Health System
-

A TRIBUTE TO MONICA L. THEIS, MS, RDN

Celebrating the Retirement of a Foundational Member of the
Didactic Program in Dietetics

“Monica treated us like we were already professionals working alongside her. It was empowering.” - Dietetics Program Alum



As the world adjusts to a new normal brought about by a global pandemic, the Dietetics Program is adjusting to a new normal, sans one of its cornerstone members.

2021 marks the retirement of Monica Theis, Distinguished Lecturer within the Department of Food Science.

Throughout her career Monica played a critical role in teaching and management of the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD), an accredited professional degree

program in the allied health sciences, which culminates in a B.S., Nutrition and Dietetics. In fact, in a career spanning over 30 years, Monica's sustained leadership and dedication to student learning has culminated in over 1,000 students achieving careers as Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, teaching interactions with over 3,000 students.

Monica is a skilled educator who values real-world learning. For

"If it weren't for Monica, I wouldn't be in my food science role as a dietitian today! She inspired me to seek out unconventional career paths, and I am forever grateful for it. I'll never forget our lab breakfast she had us put on for FS438 - one of my favorite memories from my dietetics curriculum. Thank you, Monica!"

Anna Gustafson, Class of 2019

decades she demonstrated a passion for empowering and motivating students to be flexible, adaptable, empathetic, and engaged critical thinkers. Acknowledging her outstanding performance, Monica was awarded a College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) teaching award.

Denise Ney, Billings-Bascom Professor of Nutritional Sciences and Director of the DPD noted, "I recall serving on the search committee when Ms. Theis was hired in 1990. During the early 1990's there were 60-100 undergraduate majors in Dietetics, and the Department of Food Science (FS) had one faculty FTE and 3 academic staff with responsibility for teaching the essential Food Science courses (Introductory Food Science and Food Service Management). Over the years with budget contracture, all of these individuals retired and were not replaced leaving Ms. Theis as the sole instructor for FS courses required for accreditation of the DPD (FS 437, FS 438, FS 537, and part of FS 235 which evolved into FS 301). Remarkably, Ms. Theis reorganized teaching methods and successfully accomplished the needed instruction with the additional challenge of an upswing in undergraduate majors in Dietetics to over 200 students!"

My favorite memory was taking Food Science 437/438 in the fall of 2020. Monica was very tough on us as a class, but definitely offered so many real-world experiences and knowledge to us. During those two classes, we had a day where we shared our favorite meals with her in front of the virtual class. I loved Monica's enthusiasm as she showed us how similar yet different our favorite foods were and how food was used to bring people together. She taught me to not just see food as calories, but as a way to bring people together and share experiences with one another."

-Michelle Naragon, Class of 2021

Indeed, Monica worked tirelessly to continuously improve the courses she taught to keep students abreast of the latest in food trends, such as gluten-free, food allergens, food regulations to protect the consumer, and the culinary arts. Throughout her career, Monica maintained scholarly publications in the Journal of the Academy of Dietetics and the Journal of Foodservice and she has also co-authored a textbook. Monica actively engaged in outreach and was frequently invited to speak at events reflecting her diverse interests such as: "Farm to School"

for UW-Madison Wisconsin Ideas Scholars, “Allergies and Allergens” for the Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and “Trends in Food and Nutrition” for the Madison Metropolitan School District to name a few.

Monica’s passion for students went beyond teaching, in 2019 Monica led the process to secure a grant from the American Family Insurance Dreams Foundation to begin a frozen meals food recovery program to address food insecurity on campus. Partnering with Housing, and Dining and Culinary

One memory I have of Monica is being one of the most caring professors that I have had at UW. She did not care about the letter grade a student received, she simply cared about getting to know her students and making sure each and every one of them knew the information that would help them in their future careers as dietitians. Monica is one of the most caring professors there are at UW, and it is sad that future dietetics students are unable to meet her and be taught by her.

**-Tatum Gallenberger,
Class of 2021**

"Monica has been a tremendous professor and mentor to not only myself, but countless other students. She challenges you to think of the bigger picture and the "con-tex-T" (emphasis on the t) of the situation you're in. She has played an instrumental role in shaping my dietetics career and her dedication to both the field and to her students does not go unnoticed. We can't thank you enough, Monica!"

-Monica Starck, Class of 2020

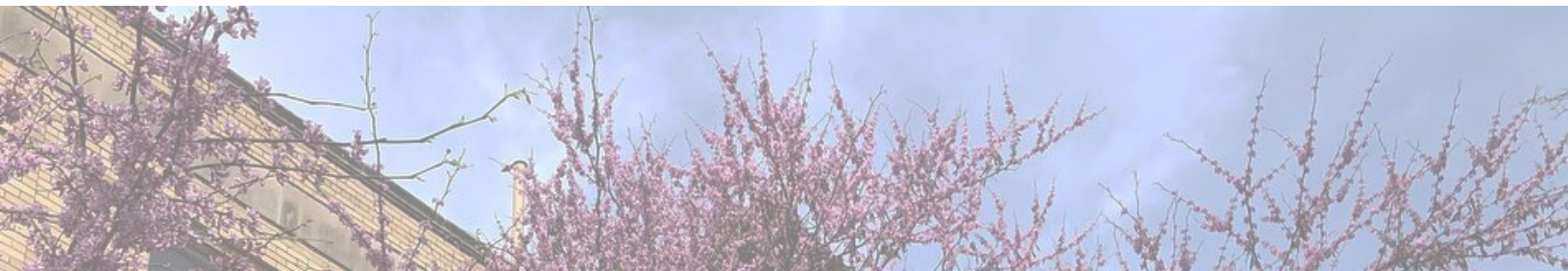
Services, the Food Recovery – Frozen Meals Program expands the reach of food cleaning and recovery initiatives which were already in progress on campus. Meals are available for free on an honor system, and frequently run out (leaving zero waste). The Food Recovery – Frozen Meals Program also examines purchasing, production, distribution, and consumption, identifying opportunities to reduce waste.

Agnes Sherman, Dietitian for UW Housing notes, “Monica played a pivotal role in getting grant funding secured for our Food Recovery – Frozen Meals Program. Without her

guidance, the program would not be as successful as it has been. Our organization is now able to make a big impact for students that experience food insecurity on our campus”.

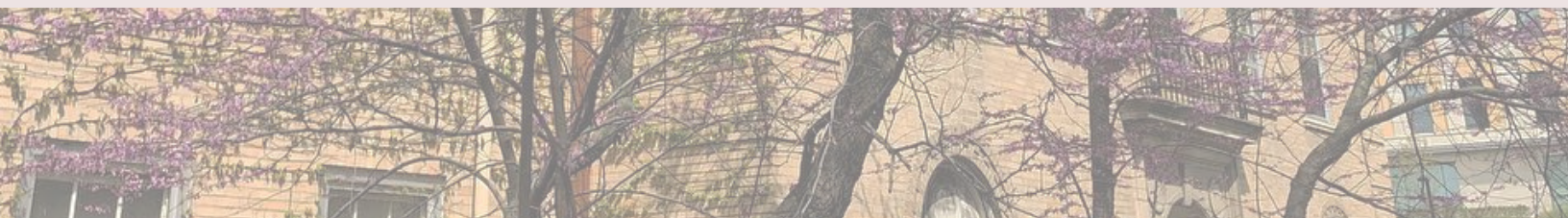
Sherman went on to say, “I have had the honor of working with Monica not only as a Dietetics student at UW – Madison, but also as an employee on this campus. She has been a great mentor to me in this profession and has shown me how to make the most impact as a Dietitian”.

Monica has been a cornerstone within the food and nutrition community at the UW-Madison. She is an expert in her field, a mentor to many, and highly regarded by students, colleagues, and community partners. We wish Monica the best, and share our gratitude for her dedication and passion for expertly and innovatively enriching the UW Campus.



"When most people think of the type of teacher you would want to learn from, both in life and academically, you would likely think of someone who is intellectual, patient, empathetic, passionate about the topic, enthusiastic, and motivated to always do and learn more. Monica Theis is all these things and more. Monica not only taught me how to calculate the exact amount of chicken that needs to be prepped from 323 people and how to convert between from any measurement to another; but she also taught me how to persevere against opposition, think "outside the box", and challenge even my own thinking... I can confidently say that she has made this university a better place by being the type of teacher, mentor, and person we all wanted and needed. Thank you, Monica, for everything!"

-Sammi Visintainer, Class of 2021



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Derek Anderson, MS, RDN, CSSD, ISAK

B.S. Life Sciences Communication 2010

B.S. Dietetics 2013

1. What is your current position and title? Briefly describe what your job functions are.

I currently serve as the Nutrition Program director for the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, a military unit comprised of 4,300 Soldiers. The nutrition team consists of myself, one other Registered Dietitian, a military diet technician, and a nutrition educator. We work closely with a multidisciplinary team that includes strength-and-condition specialists, rehabilitative professionals, and mental-performance experts to improve Soldier performance. Specifically, the nutrition team does this by teaching basic nutrition and performance nutrition, providing one-on-one appointments, assessing body composition, and working with the dining facility to provide healthier food options



2. Please tell us about yourself. What led you to your interests in Nutrition & Dietetics?

I was always interested in science and knew I wanted to work in healthcare. I

originally started at UW Madison as Life Sciences Communication major and took elective courses in both nutrition and exercise. I enjoyed those classes so much that after completing my LSC degree and working for a while I decided to return to school and pursue becoming a registered dietitian.

3. How did the Didactic Program in Dietetics at UW-Madison prepare you for the challenges and opportunities you face today?

After graduating from UW-Madison I was accepted to the United States Army's Graduate Program in Nutrition (GPN). This program was a combined Master of Science in Nutrition from Baylor University and dietetic internship which I completed at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. The DPD from UW-Madison was extremely rigorous and thoroughly prepared me for success in both graduate school as well as throughout my internship. I attribute my success throughout the program to the strong nutritional science foundation that I left UW-Madison with and the high academic standards that the faculty enforced.

4. What specific skills and knowledge did you gain from the DPD courses at UW-Madison?

The most important skill was how to critically read and interpret scientific studies. This has helped me immensely as a graduate student, clinician, and in my current role and performance dietitian. I also believe they did a great job of instructing the food service management and leadership course within the DPD.

Immediately after completing my graduate degree, I was assigned to small Army Community Hospital in Ft. Benning, GA as the chief of clinical nutrition and I oversaw both inpatient and outpatient operations. I didn't anticipate immediately being thrust into a leadership position so soon, but the classes at UW-Madison prepared me for that.

5. What advice would you give to prospective/current students and early career graduates from the DPD program?

Be open to a variety of jobs within the field, even if it isn't your dream job. Being a registered dietitian in the Army has forced me to work in a variety of practice areas; clinical, food service management, and performance nutrition. This has pushed me outside my comfort zone and made me learn and grow in order to be successful. I never aspired to work in food service management and as new dietitian was not very happy when my boss informed me that I was moving from clinical nutrition to the production side. However, the knowledge that I took away from that job has helped me immensely in my current role as a Performance Dietitian communicating with dining facility leaders who help feed our 4,300 Soldiers.

Laura Isaacson, MS, RDN, FAND, CN

B.S. Dietetics 2000



1. What is your current position and title? Briefly describe what your job functions are.

I am a Clinical Dietetics Senior Lead at Vida Health. Vida is based in San Francisco and provides virtual care for both physical and mental health. Our mission is to transform the lives of millions of people suffering from chronic mental and physical conditions by reversing the symptoms and costs associated with chronic diseases. Our team includes a network of nearly 700 providers, including

Registered Dietitians, Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialists, Health Coaches and Licensed Therapists. We work with employers, such as Boeing, Cisco, Ebay and Visa as well as large health plans like Centene, Humana and Blue Cross Blue Shield. Dietitians at Vida work with our most complex members with chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and congestive heart failure, to provide personalized care to improve outcomes. Dietitians are able to work with members on a virtual platform to conduct telehealth appointments as well as access medical and pharmacy claims, labs, and biometric data. Members utilize the Vida app and devices to track blood sugar, blood pressure, weight, and food logs as well as to message their Registered Dietitian. Personalized virtual care is more effective in achieving stronger outcomes at a lower cost than traditional in-person care. In fact, our members see a 1.5 - 2 point reduction in A1C on average.

As one of two Senior Leads who report to our Department Director, I oversee a group of Clinical Dietetics Leads who each manage a team of providers. I am also able to work cross functionally on projects including: provider efficiency, provider retention, program development, training and development, and sales and marketing campaigns. I continue to maintain a small caseload, and I enjoy being able to meet with members and to use my clinical skills. I appreciate the challenges and opportunities for professional development that Vida has

provided. It's easy to be excited about the work we are doing. The culture is supportive and our providers are aligned with our mission to transform the lives of the millions of people living with chronic health conditions.

2. Please tell us about yourself. What led you to your interests in Nutrition & Dietetics?

I have to admit that I had no idea what a dietitian was until I was in college. I always liked science courses, and while trying to decide what to major in, I took Pete Anderson's Nutritional Sciences 132 as a Freshman. I absolutely loved the course and decided that I wanted to major in Dietetics. I still didn't completely understand what a Registered Dietitian actually did, but knew that I loved learning about nutrition. During my internship, I realized that I was interested in Clinical Nutrition and nutrition support, and spent the beginning of my career working in that area before moving onto management.

3. How did the Didactic Program in Dietetics at UW-Madison prepare you for the challenges and opportunities you face today?

The Didactic Program at UW-Madison is one of the more challenging programs compared with didactic programs at other schools. Because I was continually challenged, I was very well prepared for Graduate School and for my Dietetic internship. I have served as a preceptor to many interns, and the UW-Madison graduates are always some of the top interns in their class. The program instilled in me the importance of continual learning and professional development.

4. What specific skills and knowledge did you gain from the DPD courses at UW-Madison?

I learned good study skills and work ethic during my undergraduate program. This strong foundation set me up for future academic and professional success. Even after graduation, learning never stops. It's important to continue to be challenged and to be intellectually stimulated.

5. What advice would you give to prospective/current students and early career graduates from the DPD program?

Be open minded to the possibilities that come your way. I have changed my career several times, and the best thing about being a dietitian is that there are so many different possibilities. I have worked in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Neurosurgical Intensive Care Unit, Clinical Dietetics Director, and now at Vida.

Each one of these career changes was scary to me, but taking a risk in learning a new skill was worthwhile. I was in a job that I enjoyed, but when COVID hit, I realized that virtual healthcare was a growing field, so I decided to take a leap of faith and jump on board. At Vida, I progressed from a Dietitian Contractor, to a Clinical Dietetics Lead, and now to a Senior Lead. I was happy at my previous job, but saw an opportunity and am so glad that I did. Don't be afraid to fail. If something doesn't work out, it wasn't meant for you, and there is a better opportunity ahead.

Emma Lankey, RDN

B.S. Dietetics & Life Sciences Communications with
Certificate in Global Health 2017



1. What is your current position and title? Briefly describe what your job functions are.

Presently, I am a second-year medical student. Thus far in addition to classroom studies, I've spent most of my clinical time in the Family Medicine clinics. I have had a unique opportunity to counsel patients on nutrition related concerns, as well as educate my peers and advocate for dietitians on the care teams!

Prior to starting medical school, I worked as a dietitian in a residential level care facility for adolescents with eating disorders in Minneapolis, MN. This role allowed me to conduct 1-on-1 nutrition assessments/follow-ups for adolescent patients suffering from various eating disorders, develop and execute nutrition education sessions to groups of 16 adolescents, therapeutically support meals and snacks, and engage in interdisciplinary care conferences with other dietitians, physicians, therapists, nurses, and more.

2. Please tell us about yourself. What led you to your interests in Nutrition & Dietetics?

I've always been interested in how the human body worked. Coming into UW, I wanted to pursue an undergraduate major/program that fulfilled two criteria: (1) would supplement a medical education if I chose to pursue one and help me have a more well-rounded perspective & (2) would maybe talk me out of going into medical school. I found dietetics and loved it! I loved studying something so directly relevant to my daily life, quizzing myself while eating dinner. Although I never shook the desire to attend medical school, I think the perspective I've gained is invaluable.

3. How did the Didactic Program in Dietetics at UW-Madison prepare you for the challenges and opportunities you face today?

While in the DPD program, I think the most important thing I learned was about community, communication, and connection. I learned the importance of creating relationships with peers and faculty. I learned how to effectively and professionally communicate with them. Finally, I learned the difference connection can make – having a “home base” at UW made all the difference in my confidence, success, and growth. In the middle of the pandemic as a “online medical student”, I often reflect to my time in undergrad and strive to prioritize those same 3 C's.

The DPD program also prepared me for was managing multiple things at once. We were encouraged to get involved and I ended up wearing many hats. This time management, ability to juggle many things, and still prioritize has carried me far.

4. What specific skills and knowledge did you gain from the DPD courses at UW-Madison?

I think the curriculum is set up really well. In my earlier years I set the foundation to be successful in the later classes. Nutritional Pathophysiology prepared me excellently to be successful at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, where I did my dietetic internship. Having such a thorough understanding of how nutrition plays a role in the various disease processes covered helped me think quick on my feet, have a thorough understanding, and feel confident in my clinical recommendations. Nutri Sci 520 gave me the opportunity to apply what we learned in 631, and I think that helped me know how to connect the textbook to the clinic prior to starting my internship. These skills have carried me into

medical school, knowing about the pathophysiologic processes in clinic before having the opportunity to study them in school. Finally, not only did learning the biochemical processes in 510 help me understand things clinically, but I pulled those notes back out while studying for my med school classes!

5. What advice would you give to prospective/current students and early career graduates from the DPD program?

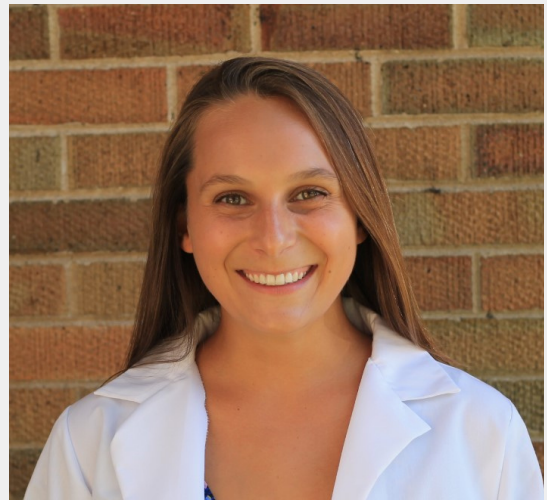
·Work hard, trust your preparation, being nice will get you far, and connections matter.

Melaney VanSpankeren, RDN

B.S. Dietetics 2019

1. What is your current position and title? Briefly describe what your job functions are.

Dietitian II at Cook County Health in Chicago, IL. I currently work as an outpatient dietitian in a general medicine clinic for the hospital. I see patients who require medical nutrition therapy mostly due to chronic conditions like diabetes, cirrhosis and CKD.



2. Please tell us about yourself. What led you to your interests in Nutrition & Dietetics?

I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and have been involved in sports since I can remember. I began swimming at a young age and developed a love for triathlons when my brother and dad began participating in them. This is what started my

interest in nutrition as I explored how to fuel my body for training and events. As I got older, I became exceedingly interested in the ability to work in a medical setting with a focus in nutrition. Dietetics perfectly merged these interests as a way to positively impact people through nutrition through a healthcare lense. Dietetics has afforded me the ability to provide evidence-based nutrition therapy and guide people in their health journeys in so many settings, which I think is an incredible opportunity!

3. How did the Didactic Program in Dietetics at UW-Madison prepare you for the challenges and opportunities you face today?

The breadth of courses at UW Madison prepared me extremely well for the challenges and opportunities I face in a clinical setting. I have developed the ability to assess clinical research and apply it to patient scenarios and provide evidence-based care for the population that I serve. I feel confident to provide care for patients of all ages struggling with a wide variety of conditions and illnesses, which is something that I attribute to the science-based curriculum that the program offered.

4. What specific skills and knowledge did you gain from the DPD courses at UW-Madison?

The Didactic Program in Dietetics at UW-Madison provided me with the ability to evaluate the clinical significance of different approaches to nutrition evaluate their efficacy in practice. This is an invaluable skill as I progress in my career because it affords me the opportunity to learn with current research, adjust my approach and provide the highest quality care for patients. This is something that internships and employers look for in the field of dietetics, so I feel very grateful to have this skill.

5. What advice would you give to prospective/current students and early career graduates from the DPD program?

My advice to prospective students and those who have graduated from the program is to take the opportunities that arise to you, even if it isn't what you envisioned for yourself. My interests varied throughout undergrad and into my internship, but by keeping an open mind I was able to get the most out of each experience and settle into a fulfilling career.

Mentorship Opportunities



Are you interested in sharing your experiences applying to internships, time as an intern, and as an early career RDN?

Consider mentoring a current dietetic student! This low-commitment opportunity will give invaluable perspective to our students that faculty sometimes can't provide.

Contact **Dr. Amber Haroldson** (halvorson@wisc.edu) to express your interest.
