

- Focus on integration, synthesis and application of nutrition knowledge in courses, maintaining good grades, building your resume with dietetic-related experiences, and expanding your portfolio.
- Attend open houses and/or programs you are planning to apply.
- Gain related work, volunteer, and dietitian shadowing experiences in a variety of settings.
- Attend the DI Preparation Workshop (fall semester) and fall and spring DPD meetings.
- Consider attending the Academy Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE) (October)
- Apply for The Texas Academy Foundation (by November), The Academy Foundation (by February) scholarships. Note: you must be a student member of The Academy to apply.
- Apply for DI programs by designated deadlines.
- Attend the Texas Academy Annual Conference and Expo (ACE) (April)

## Preparing to be the Most Qualified Applicant

### Start early

It is critical that students start early in preparation for the DI program application process. Students who follow the ACEND and DPD Director's recommendations as outlined in this handbook for applying to DI programs are more successful in a DI match. The following areas are strongly considered in preparation for a DI match and should be given attention as soon as a student moves into the DPD program. Generally qualified and successful applicants participate in at least one of each of the experience areas listed below.

### Academic performance

Many programs require an overall GPR and DPD GPR of 3.0 or higher to be considered for DI admission. It is essential to confirm that your overall and DPD GPR is above the minimum required by the DI.

- Students who do not meet identified grade requirements in a course can retake it; however, the original grade will still appear on the transcript. Retaking a course and receiving an improved grade may be indicative of motivation and ensure that the student has the knowledge base required for the DI program.
- Participation in the University (<http://honorsprograms.tamu.edu/Home>) or NFSC Honors program (<http://nfs.tamu.edu/students/honors-program-in-nutritional-sciences/>) is recommended for students who meet eligibility requirements.
- All collegiate coursework will be considered when averaging the overall GPR and DPD GPR on the DI application for undergraduate and graduate students. Therefore, students should seek to perform well in all collegiate coursework.
- Note that a strong academic performance is important, but it is **NOT** enough in most cases for a DI match. DI Directors desire a balanced portfolio that includes strong academics, employment and organizational experience and leadership skills.

### Employment Experience

Employment experience is necessary to demonstrate that the student is motivated, productive, reliable, and competent. Work experience in a foodservice, clinical or community environment is relevant and very beneficial. Some DI programs require nutrition-related employment experience, while other programs want to see that the student can multi-task successfully by working (including employment not related to nutrition/dietetics) and achieving academic success. When compared to other applicants, the applicant with **dietetic-related work experience** is going to have a stronger application than the one with non-dietetic work experience. Some DI programs specifically look for certain types of experience including **hospital experience**; it is important to thoroughly identify the requirements of each DI program before applying to make sure you are a good candidate. Some suggested areas for work experience are as follows:

- Healthcare establishments – Local facilities include CHI St. Joseph Hospital, Baylor Scott and White Hospital, The College Station Medical Center, The Physician Center, Crestview Retirement Community, Isle at Watercrest Nursing Home, and CHI St. Joseph Manor;
- Food service establishments – Texas A&M University Dining Services, Epicures Catering, local hospitals and nursing homes mentioned above or restaurants; food handling experience is necessary, and wait staff positions generally do not provide the same experience, but any work outside of school reflects time management skills;
- Women, Infants and Children Clinics (WIC) – 12 credits of nutrition coursework are required to work at WIC;
- Summer camps - There are several summer camps that are designed for special populations and often hire nutrition students. One example is Camp LaJolla Weight Loss Camp in California (<https://www.wellspringcamps.com/>);
- Nutrition research labs – This employment is especially good for students who are applying to combined graduate degree DI programs; and
- NASA Lab – Located in Texas A&M University Research Park; Mickey Speakmon is the contact and his information is [mspeakmon@poultry.tamu.edu](mailto:mspeakmon@poultry.tamu.edu), 979-255-8216.

## Undergraduate Research Experience

The Academy encourages all DPD students to participate in an undergraduate research experience to strengthen their critical thinking skills and prepare them for a DI, graduate school, and the dietetic profession. Suggestions include:

- NFSC 285 or NFSC 485 Directed Studies - Directed study on selected problems in the area of nutrition; Requires approval of instructor; see <https://nfs.tamu.edu/researchprograms> to view researchers and their interests;
- NSFC 291 or NFSC 491 Research - Research conducted under the direction of faculty member in nutrition; Requires approval of instructor; see <https://nfs.tamu.edu/researchprograms> to view researchers and their interests; and
- Undergraduate Research Scholars Program - <http://hur.tamu.edu/Undergraduate-Research/About-Undergraduate-Research>

## Volunteer Experience

Volunteer experience should reflect student commitment; consistent volunteer work with one program is preferred over one or two visits. Volunteering does not replace employment experience and is usually evaluated separately.

Volunteer opportunities include:

- Health care establishments – Local facilities include CHI St. Joseph Hospital, Baylor Scott and White Hospital, The College Station Medical Center, The Physician Center, Crestview Retirement Community, Isle at Watercrest Nursing Home, and CHI St. Joseph Manor;
- Twin City Community Café – 979-822-1492;
- Brazos Valley Food Bank – 979-779-3663;
- Howdy Farm - Student-run organic, sustainable farm on the campus of Texas A&M University. <http://tamuhowdyfarm.weebly.com/>
- WIC – Contact Natie Villar at [nvillar@bvcaa.org](mailto:nvillar@bvcaa.org) or 979-260-2942;
- Texas Lions Camp (Diabetes Med Staff) - [www.lionscamp.com](http://www.lionscamp.com);

- Davita Dialysis (Village Greeter) - [villagegreeter@davita.com](mailto:villagegreeter@davita.com);
- Fork Friendly Program (College Station-based program) – Contact Linda Kapusniak at [ljkrd@yahoo.com](mailto:ljkrd@yahoo.com); and
- The NDA student organization - NDA offers many opportunities for volunteerism in the local community.

### **Internship Experience (Note: These experiences do not replace the ACEND-accredited DI.)**

Paid and unpaid internship experiences are often available in the summer. Some internships are available through the NFSC and/or Texas A&M University, while others are independent of these programs. Examples are as follows:

- Agricultural and Natural Resources Policy (ANRP) Internship Program in Washington, D.C. - Available in the fall, spring and summer semesters. ANRP Internship available in Texas in the spring biannually. Information is available online at <http://agintern.tamu.edu>;
- Camp For All Food Services Internship - Tentative Dates: May-August. Intern will receive room, board, and a bi-weekly stipend. For more information, contact Sterling Nell Leija at [sleija@campforall.org](mailto:sleija@campforall.org);
- Camp Ronald McDonald at Eagle Lake Summer Food Service Internship - Visit <http://www.campronald.org> for job descriptions and application. The traditional application deadline is in February;
- Camp Tejas - Summer Job as Food Service Assistant or Food Service Intern; For more info contact Seth Gordon at [seth@camptejas.org](mailto:seth@camptejas.org) or 979-220-9691. <http://www.camptejas.org>;
- Food Management Internship (FMI) - Sponsored by National Association of College and University Food Services (NACUFS). This program allows student interns the opportunity for a paid eight week summer internship that provides experience in college and university food service settings. Additional information can be found at <http://www.nacufs.org>. The traditional application deadline is in January;
- Frito Lay Summer Internship Position - Internship Dates – mid-May-early August. Application deadline is usually in February;
- International Food Information Council (IFIC) - Sylvia Rowe Fellowship Award: Internship in Nutrition, Food Safety, Risk Communication. The goal of the recipient of this award should be to develop communication skills that he or she can and will apply to communicating nutrition and food safety information to the public in an academic setting, professional situation, or other public venue. The recipient will be awarded a six to 12 week paid internship at the IFIC Foundation offices in Washington, DC. Additional information can be found at <http://www.ific.org>;
- James A. Haley Annual Summer Career Experience Program (SCEP) - Contact Anne Brezina or Melody Chavez for more information: (813) 972-2000, ext. 7234 or ext. 4756 or via email at [melody.chavez@med.va.gov](mailto:melody.chavez@med.va.gov) and/or [anne.brezina@med.va.gov](mailto:anne.brezina@med.va.gov). Application deadline is usually in April.
- Norton Sound Health Corporation Nutrition and Health Summer Internship in Nome, Alaska - Contact Kelly Keyes, CAMP Director at [kkeyes@nshcorp.org](mailto:kkeyes@nshcorp.org) or (907)-443-3480
- Undergraduate Outreach Program in Space Life Sciences Sponsored by Texas A&M University and the National Space Biomedical Research Institute (NSBRI) - See <http://www.nsbri.org/summerapprenticeship/>
- Tarrant County Meals on Wheels - Application deadline is usually at the end of March. Contact Lilly Frawley at [lilly@mealsonwheels.org](mailto:lilly@mealsonwheels.org). See [www.mealsonwheels.org](http://www.mealsonwheels.org)

- Methodist Hospital, Houston, Texas - Application deadline is usually in February. See <http://www.houstonmethodistcareers.org/students-summer-intern-prog.html>
- Professional Nutrition Therapists, Dallas, Texas (<http://www.foodtherapyrd.com/>) - Contact Carol Ireton-Jones at [cireton-jones@foodtherapyrd.com](mailto:cireton-jones@foodtherapyrd.com)
- Robin Plotkin, Dallas, TX (<http://www.robinplotkin.com/>) - Contact Robin at [robin@robinplotkin.com](mailto:robin@robinplotkin.com)
- Jennifer Neily, Dallas, TX (<http://neilyonnutrition.com>) – Contact Jenn at [Neily@NeilyonNutrition.com](mailto:Neily@NeilyonNutrition.com)

## Organizational Involvement Experience\*

Students are advised to participate in university, college, professional, and community activities. Participation in a variety of organizations and activities with identified leadership involvement is essential in preparation for a DI program and career in the dietetic profession. DI programs look for students who are leaders and display a commitment to the dietetic profession through professional memberships and involvement. Often DI Directors would prefer to see leadership and involvement in one or two organizations rather than membership in every possible one. While students may have memberships in non-professional organizations, it is highly encouraged to consider participation and leadership in professional organizations. Professional organizations that DPD students should consider participation include the following:

- The Academy – <http://www.eatright.org>: additional resources for student membership
  - Student Scoop: <http://www.eatrightpro.org/>;
  - Student Online Community of Interest Message Board: <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resources/membership/student-member-center>
  - Dietetic Practice Groups (DPG's) (professional-interest groups who wish to connect with other members within their areas of interest and/or practice; student memberships available): <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resources/membership/academy-groups/dietetic-practice-groups>
  - Member Interest Groups (MIG's) (groups of Academy members with common interests; focus is on areas other than the practice of dietetics or geographic location): <http://www.eatright.org/migs>
- The Texas Academy: <http://www.eatrighttexas.org/>
- Southeast Region Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: <https://www.eatrighttexas.org/regions/southeast-region>
- American Society of Nutrition (ASN): <http://www.nutrition.org/>
- Collegiate and Professional Sports Dietitians Association: [www.sportsrd.org](http://www.sportsrd.org)
- Society for Nutrition Education (SNE): <https://www.sneb.org/>
- Texas Student Dietetic Association (TSDA): <http://www.eatrighttsda.org/>
- Nutrition and Dietetic Association (NDA)\*: <https://ndatamu.wordpress.com>
- Nutrition Honors Association (NHA): <https://stuaactonline.tamu.edu/app/organization/profile/public/id/1808> (students must be in the Honors Program to participate)
- Gluten Free Aggies: <http://glutenfreeaggies.tamu.edu/>
- Vegetarian/Vegan Aggies: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/veganaggies/>
- Food Recovery Network: <https://www.facebook.com/tamufnrn>
- Food Science Club: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TAMUFSTCC/>
- Maroon & White Leadership Fellows/Society: <http://maroonandwhite.tamu.edu>
- List of all TAMU student organizations: <http://getinvolved.tamu.edu/>

\*NDA is a campus organization composed of Nutritional Science majors and other students with an interest in nutrition. NDA meetings provide opportunities to learn about career possibilities in the nutrition and dietetics field and to hear speakers on current topics in nutrition. The NDA also sponsors philanthropic and social activities, promoting club member interaction. All Nutritional Science majors are strongly urged to join as soon as they enter the major.

## Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are a very important part of DI, graduate school, scholarship, and employment. Generally three letters of recommendation are required for the DI program application. Recommendations