

## Dietetic Internship Program

This program, accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education of the American Dietetic Association, is designed for students who hold an undergraduate degree and meet the requirements for the Didactic Programs in Dietetics as approved by the American Dietetic Association. For more information on the Didactic Program in Dietetics at Simmons College, please see the undergraduate website at <http://www.simmons.edu/academics/undergraduate/nutrition/programs/dietetics.shtml>, and for more information regarding the process of becoming a registered dietitian, please see the Nutrition Frequently Asked Questions page on the graduate website at <http://www.simmons.edu/shs/academics/nutrition/faq.shtml>.

### Mission

It is the intention of the Dietetic Internship at Simmons College to develop outstanding future oriented dietitians for the profession and society. The Simmons College Dietetic Internship Program and the Nutrition Program are dedicated to upholding the mission, goals and objectives of the College. The Dietetic Internship Program is equally dedicated to providing quality hands-on education as it relates to the interdisciplinary science of nutrition. The program recognizes that the education of dietitians in health care settings has taken on more significance with the need for cost containment and the advent of preventive medicine. As a result, the program curriculum supports the current trend towards health promotion and disease prevention. Upon completion of this program, the student is prepared to take the Commission on Dietetic Registration exam.

The following statements support the mission of the Simmons College Dietetic Internship Program:

- To foster the development of skills in critical analysis.
- To foster a creative and effective approach to problem solving.
- To provide opportunity for the direct application of didactic material.
- To encourage students to recognize the importance of continuous learning for enrichment of their personal and professional lives.
- To provide a strong scientific base for the study and application of the discipline of nutrition.
- To develop thorough understanding of the nature and composition of foods, the technology of food production and preservation, and the factors relating to the maintenance of a nutritious and safe food supply.
- To provide food service management skills that involve the integration of financial, human, physical, and material resources and services.
- To provide an environment which encourages and contributes to an understanding of the psychological, social, cultural, and economic factors that influence food consumption in various populations.
- To provide students with the skills which will enable an objective and competent interpretation of the scientific literature in order to better understand the relationship of nutrition to health and disease, and the involvement of adequate nutrition in human development and in the aging processes.
- To assist students in successfully completing their internship experience so that they are prepared for the Registration Examination for Dietitians and are able to function as entry-level practitioners in clinical, food service, and community dietetic roles.

Upon acceptance into the internship program, distance option students and preceptors will be provided with a copy of the internship curriculum to use in completion of the program in their local sites. Distance option applicants will be required to locate their own preceptors and facilities, subject to approval by the Simmons College faculty.

The internship's distance-learning curriculum is designed to create an environment where students develop the intellectual and clinical skills of an entry-level community nutrition practitioner. The acquisition of these skills will be made possible by completion of the planned learning experiences that have been developed to meet the American Dietetic Association's 47 core and 9 community emphasis competencies. In addition to meeting the core and community emphasis competencies, two separate didactic components have been incorporated into the internship curriculum, including a weekly graduate level nutrition course and a monthly joint dietetic intern lecture series. The graduate level course and joint dietetic intern lecture series is required for both the in-house and distance education students.

The Simmons College Dietetic Internship Program also participates in a joint dietetic internship lecture series with the internship programs at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, Beth Israel-Deaconess Medical Center, Tufts University Frances Stern Nutrition Program based at Tuft's-New England Medical Center and Mount Auburn Hospital. Each month one of the internship programs sponsors a full day lecture series. Topics include: 'Legislative Update: Nutrition Issues,' 'Nutrition and Aging,' 'Pediatric Nutrition Workshop,' 'Nutrition Support and Alternative Medicine,' 'Eating Disorder Symposium,' 'Fitness Day,' "Establishing a Private Nutrition Practice." Distance education students will be required to attend whenever possible due to the valuable educational content of the lectures.

The program curriculum will enable students to obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to:

- assess, plan, develop, implement and evaluate community-based nutrition programs.
- provide nutrition counseling and education to a wide variety of clients in terms of age, culture and religion.
- screen, assess, and provide accurate medical nutrition therapy recommendations for individuals, groups and populations.
- demonstrate competence in food service management, including management of safety and sanitation issues, facility management, food production, and recipe and menu development.
- take the registration exam.

### **Program of Study**

The Simmons dietetic internship is a twenty-nine week, full-time (40 hours/week) program which begins in September. Supervised practice at six supervised practice rotations such as acute care and long-term care facilities, community health centers, and public health agencies, and private nutrition practices provides students the opportunity to achieve the performance requirements for an entry-level dietitian. The internship is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetic Education of the American Dietetic Association.

Twelve graduate credits are earned upon successful completion of the program. The Simmons Dietetic Internship Program awards 9 credits for the fieldwork component and 3 credits for the didactic graduate course. Simmons accepts the 3 credits for didactic course work into the M.S. program if the student has applied and has been accepted to the M.S. program. Tuition is charged on the basis of twelve semester credit hours.

**There is also an opportunity for students to apply to the Simmons Distance Dietetic Internship. Students who live in the Northeast area may be interested in this option. Students are required to attend campus orientation and attend a class once a week. Clinical rotations must be arranged by the student in their local area. These sites must be approved by the Director of the Program.**

In addition to the features in the regular DIP, the student-proposed distance program:

- Accommodates students who have specific geographical requirements due to pre-existing employment commitments, family and/or financial obligations, entry into the field of dietetics at a later point than the traditional college aged student, and any other considerations that may inhibit a student from acquiring a community-based dietetic internship experience close to home.
- Allows students to choose their own internship rotations close to home.

Simmons College is annually allowed 6 program-arranged dietetic internship placements and 2 student-proposed, distance dietetic internship placements by the American Dietetic Association. **Since the distance-learning students are required to take a graduate level course that meets once a week from September through the beginning of December, we expect, but do not require, that potential applicants live within a two-hour radius of Simmons College (i.e. Massachusetts, northern Rhode Island, Southern New Hampshire, Southern Maine, Eastern Connecticut).**

## Rotation Requirements

The Internship experience begins with a three-day orientation program which occurs at the beginning of September. Orientation is held in Boston, Massachusetts on the campus of Simmons College. All interns accepted to the program, in-house and distance, are required to attend this orientation program. The distance students are responsible for transportation, housing and food during orientation. The purpose of this experience is to help students make the transition between undergraduate education and the professional practice environment, and to orient new students to the program requirements and resources available at Simmons College.

Rotation Requirements:

Requirement	Time
Orientation (September)	3 days
Acute care	8 weeks
Long term care/foodservice	6 weeks
Public health	4 weeks
Community health center	4 weeks
State government-based nutrition initiative program	3 weeks
Private practice nutrition education and counseling	4 weeks
TOTAL	29 weeks

## Competency Requirements and Evaluations

Students accepted to the Simmons College Dietetic Internship Program are required to meet the 47 core competencies and 9 community competencies created by the American Dietetic Association. To ensure students meet the intended competencies, a separate evaluation form has been created for each of the six rotations. Each evaluation form contains the competencies that apply to the particular rotation. Only the competencies with five stars (\*\*\*\*\*) must be met at the given rotations since they cannot be met easily in the other rotations. Otherwise, the competencies can be met in any and all of the rotations.

Formal evaluations by the student's primary preceptor are required at the middle and end of each rotation. Midway evaluations ensure that the student and preceptor agree with the student's performance and acquisition of the competencies prior to the intern's final evaluation.

Students are also required to evaluate each facility that they attended during their 29-week internship experience. These evaluations provide valuable information for the Simmons College internship director and coordinator, the student and the preceptor. The information from these evaluations can then be used to make program modifications, if necessary.

Informal evaluations will occur frequently. The preceptor may inform the intern about observed strengths or deficiencies on a daily or weekly basis. The program director or coordinator will identify problems based on feedback received from preceptors and interns. All are opportunities to gain information about performance before the final evaluation occurs and should be viewed as a positive opportunity to improve. A final exit interview with the Dietetic Internship Program Director and Coordinator is also conducted to provide feedback to and solicit feedback from the dietetic interns after they have participated in their 29-week experience.

## **Expected Program Outcomes**

Graduates of the Dietetic Internship at Simmons College are expected to be able to function as entry-level practitioners in clinical, food service, and community dietetic roles. Each is expected to operate independently with high levels of professionalism and integrity. Each is expected to be properly prepared to take the registration examination for dietitians.

## **Program Scholarships**

The American Dietetic Association ([eatright.org](http://eatright.org)) and the Massachusetts Dietetic Association ([massnutrition.org](http://massnutrition.org)) award scholarships to outstanding students. Inquiries regarding these scholarships should be directed to these organizations.

## **Choosing a Preceptor and/or Facility for Internship Experiences (for Distance Dietetic Internship students)**

The Simmons College Nutrition Department requires that distance students select affiliations that support the mission and goals of the program. The program director and coordinator will conduct preliminary discussions with all new affiliating preceptors to ensure that students obtain the type of experience expected and supervision required, and to assess the affiliating supervisors willingness to complete written student evaluations.

Recruitment of affiliations is to be based on the ability of the sites to provide a variety of community-oriented experiences that encompass diverse ethnic, cultural, economic, political, and age-specific populations. This will ensure that students are prepared for the multitude of community-based employment opportunities available to dietitians.

The primary preceptor must be employed at the selected facility. He/she may be full-time at the sponsoring facility for full-time interns or part-time for a part-time intern (i.e. if a student splits their time between two sites). Each facility or practice must review and sign an affiliation agreement prior to the initiation of the student's rotation. Each preceptor spending time with the student must submit a resume or curricula vitae. He/she must have appropriate credentials and work experience to mentor the intern in the specified rotation.

The following is a list of acceptable types of facilities:

### **Acute Care Rotation (8 weeks)**

Students will choose a hospital setting, preferably a community teaching hospital. The hospital should offer a variety of services to ensure a well-rounded and varied experience, including inpatient medical, surgical and psychiatric services for pediatrics and adults, emergency, ambulatory and diagnostic services, and/or outpatient nutritional services and clinics. Students should gain experience in nutrition screening, charting, developing nutrition care plans and interacting with patients and health care professionals. Students will work on simpler tasks to the more complex. In addition to a strong inpatient component, it is advantageous to look for a facility that offers a wide variety of outpatient preventive health and educational programs on topics such as weight management, healthy heart, bone health, women's health, pregnancy, lactation and childcare, alternative medicine, etc.

**Preceptor:** The preceptor must be a registered dietitian. The preceptor must be available to the student during the time that they are at the facility. In other words, there must be at least one full time dietitian available to the student at all times. It is also valuable if the facility has diet technicians so the student can supervise their work.

### **Long Term Care/Food Service Rotation (6 weeks)**

Students are required to choose a long-term care facility. During this rotation, students will focus primarily on completing their food service requirements, but will also attempt to gain considerable experience with the consulting dietitian. The students will be provided with two experiences at one site so they can obtain a strong work-

ing knowledge of how food service systems and medical nutrition therapy are coordinated to ensure provision of quality dietary care. Students will learn how a foodservice operation functions and will begin to develop management skills through observation and practice. Students will also become familiar with the nutritional procedures and forms that are required by state and federal mandates in long term care facilities.

**Preceptor:** The preceptor must be a registered dietitian, food service director and/or food service supervisor.

#### **Public Health Rotation (4 weeks)**

Students are to spend time at the local department of public health so that they can observe and participate in policy development, education and training, program development, program implementation and research as it relates to nutrition. The programs should emphasize development of strategies and programs for health promotion and disease prevention for children, adolescents, adults, elderly and families.

**Preceptor:** It is preferred that the main preceptor for this rotation is a registered dietitian. However, it is expected that students will spend time with other health care professionals during this rotation.

#### **Community Health Center Rotation (4 weeks)**

Interns are required to choose a community health center which will provide a multi-ethnic supervised practice-experience. The chosen community health center will generally be a non-profit, community-based organization that provides primary and preventive health care services to their communities, particularly the vulnerable and under served populations. Students will gain proficiency in providing nutrition counseling and education in an outpatient or community setting, with both individuals and groups. During this rotation, students can also work with community hunger agencies such as soup kitchens, food pantries and food banks.

**Preceptor:** It is preferred that the main preceptor for this rotation is a registered dietitian. The preceptor may also be a WIC supervisor. However, it is expected that students will spend time with other health care professionals during this rotation.

#### **State Government-based Nutrition Initiative Program Rotation (3 weeks)**

Students are required to arrange a 3-week experience in which they will observe and participate in various activities involved in a federal and/or state funded nutrition-related programs. Examples of appropriate programs include food banks or kitchens, congregate meal programs, home-delivered meal programs, AIDS clinics, and other nutrition-based programs for the homeless, pregnant women and their families and the elderly. Statewide or local programs focusing on childhood and adult obesity are another possibility. Student should choose a site where they will be involved in observing and participating in key nutrition services including provision of nourishing meals to all individuals across the lifespan, nutrition screening, assessment, education, and counseling to ensure that individuals achieve and maintain optimal nutritional status.

**Preceptor:** It is preferred that the main preceptor for this rotation is a registered dietitian. However, it is expected that students will spend time with other health care professionals during this rotation.

#### **Nutrition Education and Counseling Rotation (4 weeks)**

Students are required to arrange a 4 week experience in which they will observe and participate in client and patient nutrition education and counseling. Students can spend their time with a private practice dietitian, a fitness or wellness facility with a nutrition component run by a registered dietitian, a corporate wellness program, a medical practice, dialysis center, eating disorder program, diabetes management program or any other site that focuses on preventive medicine, disease management, and overall health and wellness. Activities in this rotation include developing educational seminars, writing articles for the lay public, community education programs, and developing educational tools.

**Preceptor:** It is preferred that the main preceptor for this rotation is a registered dietitian. However, it is expected that students will spend time with other health care professionals during this rotation.

### **Preceptor Responsibilities**

The preceptor must:

- Review all informational materials provided by Simmons College. They must have adequate time to supervise, mentor and evaluate the intern.
- Ensure that the intern will be able to accomplish all the learning experiences outlined in the rotation materials.
- Schedule all learning experiences for the intern during the specified rotation.
- Provide feedback to the intern regarding observed strengths and weaknesses on a regular basis. The preceptor will conduct a performance evaluation of the intern and act as the point of contact in the facility with the dietetic internship director and coordinator.
- Agree to fulfill the curriculum and abide by the policies and procedures of the Simmons College Dietetic Internship Program.
- Have a computer with internet access.

### **Simmons College Dietetic Internship Director and Coordinator Responsibilities**

The faculty at Simmons College will:

- Provide curriculum and evaluation materials, and issue a contract between Simmons and the given facility.
- Contact the preceptor and intern periodically to discuss rotation experiences.
- Participate in the joint dietetic internship days where appropriate.
- Interview enrolled dietetic interns at the end of their experience to assess whether program modifications are necessary. Preceptors will also be contacted at the end of their experience with the Simmons College Dietetic Interns to discuss their experience and to elicit suggestions for program modifications.
- Be available for consultation and troubleshooting for issues such as student-preceptor conflicts, communication and scheduling problems, discipline problems, and any other issues that may arise during the various rotations.

The Simmons College internship is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education of the American Dietetic Association. The Commission's address is:

Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education  
The American Dietetic Association  
120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000  
Chicago, IL 60606

The telephone number is 312.899.4876.

Students completing the program are expected to take the registration examination. Upon passing, the faculty anticipates that graduates will be capable of practicing in a variety of settings and participating in professional activities. Above all, the graduate is expected to be a dietitian capable of creating an atmosphere of support and respect for individual rights, thereby fostering quality health care and assurance of honor and dignity.

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### **Required Courses\***

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**NUTR 451**  
**Dietetic Internship**

**NUTR 452**  
**Nutrition Practice: Program Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation**

\*See the Course Descriptions section for full information.