

Personal Statement

My goal is to ultimately develop my own outpatient practice affiliated with a hospital and specialize in Pediatric and Young Adult Obesity and Eating Disorders. I initially became fascinated by nutrition during my sophomore year when I took Abnormal Psychology and a Science of Nutrition course concurrently. In these classes, we learned about eating disorders and the interplay of psychology and food intake. The defining moment, when I knew that dietetics would be my lifelong passion, occurred the following summer at Oakland High School, where I encountered “Joe”.

Joe was an overweight African American student sitting in the back of a twenty-person classroom sipping on the Pepsi that he had bought at lunch. I was there to co-educate an elective summer class on the adverse effects of fast food and soda consumption. My mentor, a dietitian, and I were using an empty bottle, identical to his, to demonstrate the amount of sugar in one soda for our “Soda-Free Summer” campaign. One by one, we dropped a total of 17 sugar cubes into the clear bottle to represent the amount of sugar in one Pepsi. As I dropped the cubes in, I looked up when I heard numerous “Wows.” The whole class sat in awe at this demonstration, and I watched Joe’s mouth drop at the recognition of what he was consuming. He didn’t take another sip of his Pepsi throughout our entire presentation. This moment made me realize the impact nutrition education can have. It was an epiphany for me and validated my overwhelming desire to become a dietitian. My initial goal after completing my dietetic internship is to advance my counseling skills by working as an acute care dietitian. Subsequently, I would like to enhance my capabilities by working with pediatrics and young adults.

I have achieved excellent grades in my upper division DPD professional courses at UC Davis, one of the top undergraduate nutrition programs in the country. This demonstrates that I am able to excel in dynamic, fast-paced environments. Additionally, my many activities as an undergraduate as well as my leadership aptitudes have provided me with the proficiencies necessary to become an extraordinary dietetic intern. My drive to excel in all aspects of my life, however, can sometimes take a toll on my overall health. Thus, I am continuously learning to prioritize and have discovered an increase in my productivity, efficiency, and well-being when I do so.

My determination to gain vast experience in dietetics led me to contact the Alameda County WIC program’s Oakland office in fall of 2009, where I became a volunteer. In my year at WIC, I helped formulate Powerpoint presentations that are used to this day to educate Alameda County mothers and health care practitioners about reading baby cues. Additionally, during World Breastfeeding Week, I co-administered a survey for mothers about their hospital experiences in order to determine which hospitals were the most baby-friendly. This real world experience working with racially and socio-economically diverse clientele allowed me to connect with clients through empathic communication.

I also worked on communicating effectively with children during my time at Alameda County Nutrition Services and especially during a “My Food Journal” research study conducted by UC Berkeley’s Center for Weight and Health. As an assistant for this study, I went to summer camps for elementary school children to review their 24-hour diet recalls with them and assess their food intake. While aiding in the implementation of this study, I practiced neutral probing and

patience to obtain the most accurate information possible from the children.

The counseling skills I learned in this study were further developed as I worked with young adult groups and individuals as a Peer Leader for the Reflections Body Image Program. Reflections is the first nationwide sorority affiliated “evidence-based peer-led body image education and eating disorder prevention program”. As a Peer Leader, I facilitated twenty-person group discussions regarding the media-based societal effects on body image as a means to create and maintain positive body image and health.

I have gained the most leadership development in my sorority position as Sponsor Chair. In this capacity, I presided over the Sponsor Selection Committee to match up over 50 new members with active members and planned important whole house events. Both tasks required excellent organizational skills. I also delivered a speech about the sponsor program to over 400 women. Through my leadership positions in my sorority, I have gained excellent public speaking and team building skills. All of these skills will transfer extremely well to the counseling and educating at the core of Medical Nutrition Therapy.

Additionally, I excel at working independently with little supervision in my job as a Sodexo Nutrition Facts Intern for the UC Davis Dining Commons. This job has enabled me to master recipe analysis by using the software programs Food Co. and Food Processor, and create menu signage for students based on nutrition facts labels. Given that allergens must be included on the nutrition labels for students, this job requires superb attention to detail. Though some may consider my attention to detail one of my greatest strengths, I often consider it a weakness because I may spend more time than necessary on minutia. I am working on establishing a balance between considering both minute details and broader concepts while immersed in my work.

My education, my variety of experiences and skill sets, passion, and determination, will enable me to become an invaluable dietitian. A highly organized dietetic internship will provide me with rigorous clinical training in a dynamic and diverse environment to achieve my goal of becoming a Pediatric and Young Adult Obesity and Eating Disorder specialist. By following this path, I can begin to have a positive impact on the many youth who are just like Joe.