

How-To Guide: Partnering with Dietetic Programs

Who are dietetic interns?

Dietetic interns are completing a graduate degree in dietetics. Dietetic internships are intense, post-undergraduate, supervised learning experiences that are a required step to earn the registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) credential.

What benefits would we get from partnering?

Senior students and interns' expertise in health and nutrition allows them to create and manage nutrition activities with less supervision. Their studies cover food service management, community nutrition, clinical nutrition, and nutrition research and they need opportunities to practice real-world skills. This can look like providing lunchtime nutrition education, developing nutrition social media campaigns, or designing holiday plating. They can offer new perspectives and access to knowledge and research on their campus.

What should we consider in a partnership?

A good community/campus partnership can meet mutually determined short-term goals and contribute to long-term goals. The partnership is characterized by careful preparation, shared responsibility, and thoughtful follow-through. Important aspects of this include:

- Benefits to both sides: Do you have projects that would benefit you and provide learning and growth for students?

- Mutual support: What roles and responsibilities should be assigned to which group, based on each partner's capacities and resources?
- Timing: How far in the future do you need to plan? Will this be a repeated project? Many students are limited to a certain number of weeks (e.g., an eight-week rotation); this could be a factor in the type of project they work on.

Where do we start?

First, outline a plan with projects and goals. Find a dietetic program or dietetic internship near you using the [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website](#). Introduce yourself and your organization to the program staff and offer to act as a resource. In your first meeting, come ready to discuss potential plans and partnerships!

Where can we find more resources?

The paper "[Campus-Community Partnerships: The Terms of Engagement](#)" has more detailed strategizing and thoughts on planning a successful dietetic program partnership.

This project was supported in part by grant number 90PPNU0002 from the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.

Created in partnership with the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs. For more information on NANASP, visit nanasp.org.