

History of the Department of Nutrition and Food Science

The Department of Nutrition and Food Science, like many such in this county, has its roots in Home Economics, which historically was established through USDA's Cooperative Extension Program. The Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant universities to educate citizens in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts, and other practical professions. Extension was formalized in 1914, with the Smith-Lever Act. At that time, 50% of people in the US lived in rural areas. Cooperative Extension agents were set up at land-grant Universities throughout the country. Extension meant "reaching out," and these educated agents helped farmers and their families raise better crops and become more efficient in their daily lives.

Home Economics at Chico State College began in the 1950's with classes held in the historic Bidwell Mansion. Both Nutrition and Food Science classes have always been part of the core curriculum of any Home Economics program, along with Clothing and Textiles, Interior Design, Home Management and Child Development.

Dietetics

In 1968, Evelyn Mar, who had completed a PhD in Nutritional Sciences, began teaching in the Home Economics Department. She soon wrote the curriculum for an Option in Home Economics for Dietetics. The courses therein followed the courses prescribed by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) for the education of dietitians. Students who completed this major were awarded a B.S. Degree in Home Economics with an Option in Dietetics. These students were eligible to complete a one-year post-baccalaureate training program, known as a Dietetic Internship, in a teaching hospital in the US and become recognized as Dietitians. The credential "Registered Dietitian" was not used until 1969. At that time the National Registration Exam began, and in order to take the exam, one must have completed an Approved Undergraduate Program in Dietetics, such as that at CSU, Chico, as well as an Approved Dietetic Internship as recognized by the AND.

For many years the Option in Dietetics was updated according to changes in education requirements as required by the AND, with increases in the number of courses. In 1985, it was decided by the nutrition and food science faculty to write a separate B.S. Degree in Dietetics that would accurately prepare students to better compete for Dietetic Internships to become Registered Dietitians. This degree was further expanded in two separate Options to allow students depth of study in either traditional dietetics or food administration. The degree was approved by the CSU Chancellor's Office in 1986 and implemented in 1987.

The Master's Degree and Dietetic Training Programs

For several years, students had been requesting a Master's degree program in nutrition. This was difficult for the faculty to provide, due to the lack of laboratory space for research. Dr. Barbara Kirks had recently completed a doctorate in Nutrition Education, and wrote an M.S. Program with two Options: one in Nutritional Science, but also one in Nutrition Education, which was the path that most graduating dietetics students chose. This complemented their undergraduate education and enhanced their ability to work with human behavior change in their patients and clients. This program was approved by CSU Chancellor's office in 1988 and implemented in 1989.

In 1989 the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics provided another option for training dietitians. Those who completed a B.S. in Dietetics and a Master's degree program in Nutrition or related discipline would be allowed to sit for the RD exam. Within a few years, AND set up practice objectives that MS graduates could complete in local hospitals. The advantage this had for Chico students was that they could complete their education as well as training requirements without leaving Northern California. In a reciprocal way, preparing dietitians locally meant that they would stay and practice in the area, which previously local facilities had a difficult time recruiting Registered Dietitians.

Faculty worked with several graduate students, helping them access clinical sites for this work. However, within a few years, AND announced that this post-graduate type of training needed national standardization. Thus AND established a set of competences for students to complete under the direction of a University coordinator working with clinical sites. This program was to be called the "Approved Pre-Practice Professional Program (AP4)." This was a large undertaking, but the faculty believed it was necessary to do this in order to keep students at Chico for the MS Program. Dr. Kirks worked with clinical and foodservice facilities for two years to develop this program, which received approval from AND in 1991.

Within a few years, the Council on Education of the AND told all AP4 Program Directors that, in order to have consistency in the training of Registered Dietitians that all AP4 Programs would need to be changed to Dietetic Internships. The latter were traditionally done in hospitals throughout the country. It made sense logically that Universities follow the same guidelines as the traditional hospital Dietetic Internships.

Thus, work began to make this conversion, which was completed in 1995. The "approved" programs were known as "Developmentally Accredited Dietetic Internships." The CSU, Chico program functioned as such for three years, and then applied for full Accreditation in 1998. A site-visit by a team of reviewers was required for this step, which was completed in 1999. The program finally was a fully-accredited Dietetic Internship.

Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD)

The Bachelor's program in Dietetics also underwent many changes. Originally an Option in Home Economics, it became a separate degree in 1987.

The curriculum underwent several minor changes in course content during the intervening years; as knowledge changed it required that more subject matter be added to the curriculum. The change in the structure was determined by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and Chico's program was recognized as meeting their course requirements. Curriculum included courses in food science, nutritional science, food administration, basic sciences and some behavioral science courses, in addition to the University's general education requirements.

This degree program was required to submit reports every five years for ongoing recognition by the AND. One faculty member was responsible for writing this report, as well as advising students who were applying for post-baccalaureate Dietetic Internships in hospitals. Being accepted to one of these Internships was a very competitive process.

These undergraduate programs, which were earlier called Approved Dietetic Programs, were given the name Didactic Programs in Dietetics or “DPD,” and the faculty member responsible became known as the DPD Director. Within a few years, it was decided by the Accrediting Body of the AND that these programs should also undergo a Site Visit, and the Director would submit an application for such. The first Site Visit for the DPD was in 2010, and is now fully accredited by AND.

Foods and Nutrition and Food Administration

From the time that an Option in Dietetics became available to students wishing to follow that curriculum, another Option was always available to students wanting other career choices. Some would choose a career path in Food Administration, another Option available, or others would simply want to learn about all aspects of food and nutrition in order to become teachers or other nutrition-related professionals. The designation of the Option in the Major other than Dietetics changed over the years; nonetheless an alternative has always been available to students, although the courses included in those Options have changed. In 2009, an option in Food and Nutrition Communication was added to meet the needs of students who did not want to become Registered Dietitians but were interested in careers as nutrition educators. The option in Foodservice Administration has also changed over the years and the Department decided to make major changes to this option in 2014 with the goal of training students for careers as K-12 foodservice directors and dietary supervisors in healthcare settings. Students now earn a degree with an option in Nutrition Management.

Organizational Changes

In the fall of 1990, the Department of Home Economics was designated as the School of Human Environmental Sciences (SHE) under the College of Agriculture, where the BS in Dietetics was flourishing along with several other majors. In 1992, however, due to California’s budget woes, the School was separated from Agriculture, and the SHE was broken into component parts. The Programs in NFSC were moved into the Department of Biological Sciences, College of Natural Sciences, as an Adjunct Program. The Program Director was not officially a Department Chair; support services were less, and thus saved the University money. Over time, the number of students in both the BS and MS majors increased, and the financial situation became such that the Program became a stand-alone Department of Nutrition and Food Science under Dr. Kathryn Silliman in 2007.

Written by Dr. Barbara Kirks-Fischer (2014)

Scholarships in the Department

Doris Woods Lynch Scholarship established in 1974.

After Doris graduated from Chico Normal School, she went into teaching all areas of home economics at Vallejo Junior and Senior High Schools. She had a vibrant outgoing personality and made lifelong impacts on her students and fellow colleagues. She took needy student under her wing and provided them with materials and extras necessary for their education. She was very generous. She retired from teaching in the 1960s.



Florence V. Ritchie Scholarship established in 1996.

Florence V. Ritchie was hired by Chico State Teacher's College in 1926. She received her BS degree in Home Economics from Iowa State College in 1921 and her MS in Home Economics in 1925 from Iowa State College. Florence Ritchie served as a Professor of Home Economics and Family Living for Chico State College for 34 years retiring in 1960. She was a dedicated teacher who had a keen interest in students as individuals, challenging students to develop their own capacity. Besides teaching, she was a housemother to students in Bidwell Hall and adviser to Epsilon Epsilon Epsilon. She was passionate about campus beautification and was well known for her beautiful flower arrangements. She was active in Delta Kappa Gamma, the American Association of University Women and a member of the California Home Economics Association.

Luella Hopton Madsen Scholarship established in 1990.

She established an annual award to be given to an undergraduate student majoring in one of the disciplines of home economics who are graduates of high schools located within Butte County.

Angela Nuzum Scholarship established in 1998.

Angela Nuzum passed away in 1997, just two classes short of her degree in Nutrition and Food Sciences. Angela was passionate about her field of study and was known as being a kind and generous person. She was a friend to all. Professor Faye Johnson was instrumental in having the University award Angela a degree posthumously.

Healthy Futures Nutrition Scholarship established in

Dr. Michelle Morris has generously established and supported this scholarship. It is for students who show great promise in the field with strong preference for first-generation college students.