

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE UNC DIETETIC INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

### BY APPLICANTS:

**1) How many intern / students does the program accept from Colorado each year?**

This program accepts as many students as are suitable candidates, up to 30 per year. Candidates from Colorado apply and are evaluated just as candidates from other states are.

**2) If I had a cumulative undergraduate GPA of less than 2.8, but have since been to Graduate School and had a higher cumulative GPA, can I still be considered a candidate for this internship program?**

Yes. If you have subsequent graduate level work that shows a cumulative GPA higher than 2.8, it would be worthwhile to consider application to this program. We recognize that people grow and change and that academic records may reflect this.

If you do not have a subsequent graduate school GPA to submit, then having an undergraduate GPA of less than 2.8 will not support your application to this program.

**3) How is the UNC application process different from other programs?**

The program is structured on a distance education model. This means that students accepted into the program do not relocate to Greeley for the entire duration of the program. Students come to Greeley for a 3-day orientation, then return to their home locations to complete the supervised practice experience. Consequently, in addition to the standard application, material is submitted that describes the sponsoring sites and sponsoring preceptors who will be working with the student during the practicum experience. The program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND).

**4) If I am in Colorado, do I have to be careful about whom I contact while looking for supporting sites and preceptors?**

Yes, there are other internship programs in the state and we prefer not to be in a position of competition with those programs for site experiences. We do have active affiliation contracts with a variety of sites in Colorado. If these sites also service other internships, that is a decision that they have made and their scheduling is handled out of their facility according to their own needs and restrictions. Guidance from the PD is advised.

**5) Is there financial aid available?**

The Internship Director is able to fill out documentation that the intern is completing an internship program and that it is appropriate to defer school loan repayments during the time period you are in the program.

The internship program is not approved for federally supported loans and grants. There are scholarships available through other organizations, for example, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The internship program has limited scholarships available to alumni of the UNC Didactic program.

**6) What sort of textbooks, technology, and equipment would I need access to for this program?**

If you are newly graduated, your undergraduate texts are probably still useful to you. If it's been "a while" since you've been in school, you may need to invest in some newer text resources, or perhaps one or several of your designated preceptors would have suitable references for you to access. You will also have required texts for your two online graduate courses.

**7) How much time should I spend at each facility?**

When making arrangements for facilities and preceptors, the minimum time spent working at each facility must be at least 80 hours, unless observation for shorter times is part of a longer rotation experience (e.g. observing at meals on wheels or senior nutrition.)

**8) Do you have any special requirements for setting up foodservice rotations?**

Key experiences for foodservice must be obtained in at least one hospital and one non-hospital setting, ex: observe and understand purchasing methods in a Joint Commission facility and a school foodservice.

**E-mail and internet access is required for this program.** An answering machine or voicemail on the telephone is not a requirement but strongly suggested.

**BY POTENTIAL PRECEPTORS:**

**1) How much time would I need to plan to spend with an intern once she/he is accepted to the program?**

The time you spend with an intern is a function of the intern's knowledge and skill level. At a minimum, you would want to meet on a regular basis to make sure the intern is on track with regard to assignments and work to be accomplished. It's important to be available to answer questions and provide opportunities to the intern to learn as well as to complete the required assignments. It helps to be willing to assist the intern in making contacts for further experiences at other sites if the need arises.

The interns are required to log their actual practice hours, to be initialed by the preceptor who has supervised the work. There is a requirement for a mid and end of rotation progress report, compiled by the preceptor currently working with the intern and reviewed together with the intern, with both intern and preceptor signing it.

There is also a requirement for evaluations to be done with regard to the rotations in foodservice, community, clinical and concentration area. It is appropriate for the preceptor actually supervising the intern in a given rotation to be the one who completes the evaluation that is relevant. The rotation evaluation is reviewed and signed by preceptor and intern.

**2) Do the full-time employed preceptors have to be employed at the same facility?**

No. They simply have to be employed full-time wherever it is they are employed. In fact, it makes sense that the sponsoring preceptors can be at different facilities, because the intern needs to access different types of facilities in order to arrange the breadth and depth of experiences required for an internship experience.

Also, although the minimum is three RDs, the applicant can have more preceptors in order to piece together the experiences required. A preceptor is defined as someone who supervises the intern through 40 hours of work or more. A sponsoring facility is defined as a facility at which the intern would obtain experience for 40 hours or more. Additional preceptors can be included who by virtue of their experience in the field, are qualified to precept an intern in a specific area, even if they are not an RD.

Any preceptor or facility sponsoring 40 hours or more of practicum experience would need to be represented in the application packet with a preceptor application form or a facility application form.

**3) Who will evaluate the written assignments – the preceptor, the Program Director (PD) at the university, or both?**

The Preceptor, the PD and both, depending on what the assignment is. For example, the PD can evaluate a clinical case study for its overall quality, but since the PD does not have access to the patient files, it is the clinical preceptor on site that has to determine that the case study is on target and well prepared. Likewise, a preceptor specializing in foodservice would not be the one to evaluate the clinical case studies, nor would the clinical preceptor be the one to evaluate the assignment in foodservice.

As another example, the PD requires copies of the community program proposal assignment and can evaluate and comment on it, make suggestions and sometimes request a re-write, or not. In the final analysis, it makes sense that the preceptor involved with a particular assignment would be the one to evaluate that assignment.

**4) What is the timeline for completion of the internship experiences?**

Assignments need to be done in a timely manner. It's not a good idea to leave all the written assignments to do until after the actual rotations. Some of the assignments are a great benefit to the intern if done as pre-preparation to the rotation, some are a great benefit if completed during the rotation activity.

Everything has to be turned in before the PD can "sign off" on the intern, but there are no individual deadline dates for each assignment. The intern and the on-site preceptors need to establish those.

Regardless of the pace of the internship experiences, the intern should complete everything by June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year if full-time and August 31st of the following year if part-time.

**5) The Application packet states that part-time interns have to maintain at least 20 hours/week, and finish within 14 months. Does vacation time off count against this average?**

No. Your schedule is yours to work out with the preceptors on site. We do ask that the interns complete their internship experiences, all assignments and paperwork by August 31st of the following year.

**6) For an intern completing an average of 28 hours/week, completion would happen in just over 11 months, so, could an intern average less than 28 hours/week as long as they are finished by August 31st of the following year?**

Yes, there is some flexibility to the scheduling. The first proposed rotation schedule in the application packet should follow these guidelines. If there is a need to change the "pace" of the activities, the PD can work that out with the intern and preceptors during the program.

**7) There seems to be some flexibility with the schedule of practice. Is there some guideline to use when scheduling practice hours as to how many hours MUST be in each setting, or can experiences be arranged in different settings as long as all of the required experiences are obtained?**

The minimum parameters for assignments of practice hours are that you get 300-400 hours each of clinical, community and foodservice experience. The remaining hours (200 minimum) will be in your chosen concentration area, for a total of 1200 hours for the internship.

Interns must work at least 80 hours at each facility. An intern may observe in a facility for any minimum amount of time.

**8) Could some of the foodservice hours take place in a school lunch or long term care facility setting, rather than a hospital? Could some of the clinical hours take place in a health department, rather than a hospital?**

Yes, however some judgement is required to determine that the experiences are complete as well as varied. The health department is a community setting, yet some experiences there could be considered "clinical". Foodservice experience in the school lunch setting can be counted as "regular" foodservice experience as well as "community" experience. Some of the community assignments are rather involved and are definitely "community", not clinical or foodservice per se.

There is much detail in clinical that does not allow substitution of community experience in place of clinical. Counseling clients at WIC and outreach at a health fair are both community experiences. A dialysis clinic is considered "clinical".

Please note that key experiences for foodservice must be obtained in at least one hospital and one non-hospital setting.