

University of Northern Colorado
Dietetic Internship
Preceptor Training



UNC

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What is a preceptor?

- You are an expert, such as a Registered Dietitian, who provides guidance, practical experience and training to an intern.
- You must have adequate time to provide supervision.
- You are a planner, role model, provider of information, facilitator of learning, and a guide.
- You will be all of these, and more to a dietetic intern. THANK YOU!

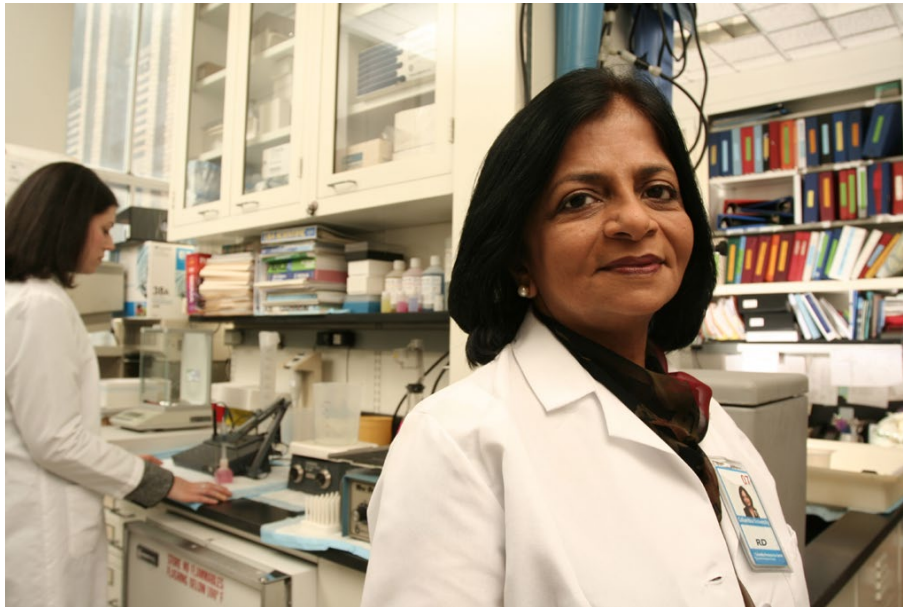


Image: Used with permission by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Characteristics of a Great Preceptor:

- Demonstrates enthusiasm and patience; shows respect for people of all backgrounds.
- Remembers interns are preparing for *entry-level* work; participates in own professional enhancement regularly.
- Is honest, self-confident & willing to demonstrate skills for the intern.
- Challenges intern performance by giving them responsibility.
- Is specific with praise and appropriate feedback.
- Honors the interns' efforts.

What Do Interns Need to Learn?

The CORE COMPETENCIES (CRDN):

- Interns are required to complete a list of competencies throughout the internship in the form of activities/experiences, and written assignments
- They are to guide the intern and preceptor in the learning experience
- The Competencies form the backbone of the Rotation Evaluations and Progress Reports
- The assignments that correspond to the CRDNs will further learning for an intern



Limitations and Strengths of Interns:

- They have different modes of learning: visual, auditory, practical.
- They have an untested work ethic; they may not know how to prioritize work or manage time; they may be unsure of their abilities.
- They may not understand the limitations imposed by reality; they are idealistic.
- They may have limited client/patient contact; limited management and foodservice experience; limited team experiences, therefore limited skills; limited communication skills.
- Please do not assume a MS or PhD intern has more advanced clinical or administrative skills.



Strategies to be Successful with an Intern



Positive learning environment:

- Interns can make a mistake without fear of reprisal.
- Allow interns to solve problems and receive feedback for their efforts.
- You as the Preceptor know the difference between “need to know” vs. “nice to know” for the intern to truly be at entry-level.



Clear Communication:

- Provide orientation
- Ground rules
- Explain the norms for work
- Learn who you are working with
- Model professional characteristics
- Be focused and enthusiastic



Evaluation:

- Should be ongoing and frequent to help modify skills and behaviors.
- Should be used at the end of the rotation experience to determine what expectations have been met and what skills and behaviors need to be strengthened in future activities.

Handling difficult situations

- **Problems/Causes**

- Inadequate knowledge prior to the rotation.
- Skill deficiencies (unable to translate theories to treatment).
- Personality difficulties (poor communication and interpersonal relationships).
- Situational difficulties (ex: intern has had a family member suffer from cancer, therefore intern avoids working with cancer patients).



Handling Difficult Situations

- **Strategies**

- First, remember that rotations can be adapted as long as the intern learns the desired competency.
- Be realistic about expectations of intern.
- Identify problems early in order to promptly address them.
- Interns need to understand that there are consequences of their actions.



Handling difficult situations

- **Strategies**

- Frequent, ongoing evaluation provides the forum for discussion of problems as well as positive feedback.
- In a discussion, be specific, professional and to the point.
- Clearly state policies and expectations.
- Try to identify the positive in an intern in order to provide a foundation on which to build improvement.
- Talk with the intern about situations that make them apprehensive.
- Provide sources of additional information outside of the rotation.
- Please remember: Without you as a preceptor there would not be dietetic internship programs. You have an enormous impact on the education of aspiring practitioners. Your efforts are appreciated!



A stack of books with various colored spines (yellow, red, blue, white) is visible on the right side of the image. A large white circle is overlaid on the left side, containing the title and list. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

Preceptor Resources and Benefits

- Can be found on the UNCO Dietetic Internship website: [For Preceptors \(unco.edu\)](https://unco.edu)
 - Preceptor Manual
 - DEI resources
 - Continuing Education information
- The Commission on Dietetic Registration offers a Preceptor Training Program
- CPE credit can be earned for precepting

Last, But Not Least

- Use the Internship Director and the Program Coordinator Specialist as a resource for yourself.
- We will do our best to clarify the internship process.
- We are here to support your efforts and advocate for both you and the intern.
- The goal is success for *everyone* involved in the program. Your efforts should pay off for you too.



Thank you!