

I was only twelve when I first encountered a dietitian after I endured accidental third-degree burns. During my fast and full recovery, I discovered the integral role that nutrition plays in healthcare. I can still feel the tremendous relief rolling down my cheeks when I learned that I avoided a skin graft procedure because I had adhered to the ICU dietitian's guidance. This early experience fueled a passion for nutrition which led me to earn a Bachelor of Science in Clinical Nutrition from UC Davis. Since graduating in 2019, I have earned my NDTR credential, and my goal is to become a community education dietitian focusing on disease prevention and health promotion.

During my DPD program and after graduation, I have sought opportunities that align with my goals. While working as a peer nutrition counselor at UC Davis, I organized and co-facilitated health promotion and nutrition education workshops with the recreational facilities dietitian. During the planning of a "healthy campus living" seminar for students, our largest event of the year, I discovered that I would be leading the workshop independently. This decision surprised me because I was still an undergraduate, but I was elated for the opportunity. I spoke in front of a packed audience, and I led the workshop in a comprehensive yet relatable manner, receiving positive feedback from the event surveys. This experience strengthened my confidence presenting in group settings and confirmed my interest in health promotion and education.

While finishing my nutrition degree at UC Davis, I began working in the produce department at a local community food cooperative. In this humble position, I discovered my interest in working in the community. I assisted with organizational health promotion and outreach, later earning the title of "Education Specialist." In this role, I conducted grocery store tours and taught cooking classes. I also helped initiate efforts to divert waste and combat food insecurity by providing food donations to the local food bank and UC Davis basic needs center. Unfortunately, due to the limited space all food was required to be picked up, which often allowed many perishable donations to spoil. As a solution, I helped establish a community fridge which allowed fresh food donations to be accessible and kept temperature safe. The fridge project was a huge success, featuring a daily selection of local, fresh fruits and vegetables, and even leftovers from nearby restaurants for those in need. This accomplishment reinforced my desire to become a dietitian that works in community education.

Additionally, as a dietetic technician, I've spent the past year and a half working at two Center for Discovery outpatient eating disorder treatment clinics in Temecula and Sacramento, California. During my time at the Temecula facility, I gained an immense amount of nutrition knowledge on eating disorder pathophysiology and treatment as well as hands-on experience working with intensive outpatient and partially hospitalized patients. After working at that location for six months, I was offered a position at a brand-new facility in Sacramento to assist with program start-up. At this new treatment center, I was one of the only staff members with previous eating disorder experience, which led me to take on extra responsibilities providing instruction to fellow staff and communicating needs for optimal patient care. I was involved in higher management dietary training and worked with new staff to demonstrate effective settings in groups and mealtimes. I shared situational experiences, articulated potential challenges, and guided patient behavior modification. One year later the Sacramento clinic became recognized for having the third greatest patient attendance out of the thirty outpatient eating disorder facilities across the nation. My enthusiasm for counseling education became reinforced

by working in this environment, and I have enjoyed the unique role that includes leadership and team involvement.

It is through these varied experiences that I've established my future goals. In the short term, I intend to continue to build upon the health promotion efforts I've started in my community and enhance nutrition education within healthcare settings. I believe that dietitians have a unique role in providing nutrition education to the public and fellow clinicians. Increasing awareness among healthcare providers allows for better team collaboration and patient care. Long term, I envision being involved with local dietetic organizations to strengthen the importance of education in the dietetics profession.

One of my biggest strengths is perseverance, and this attribute helps me meet my goals. Determination has carried me through every challenge and has been the greatest asset in my journey to become a dietitian. I did not get matched to a program when I first applied three years ago, but I did not let this stop me from continuing to pursue my dream. Instead, I used it as an opportunity to strengthen my application and skills, and I earned the NDTR credential and sought out additional clinical experience. While my determination has proven to be a leading force in accomplishing my goals, it has also led me to discover my weakness of being a people pleaser. While I'm not fond of declining opportunities, I've noticed that when I take on too much, I cannot reach my full potential on every project. This realization has helped me prioritize appropriately to put the best quality forward in every project I execute.