

# Prehealth Programs: Nutrition

CU-Boulder Academic Advising Center, PreProfessional Office

<http://advising.colorado.edu>

**THE PROFESSION:** There has been increased public interest in diet and nutrition in recent years, as the role of nutrition in health has become more understood. Two common careers in nutrition are the dietetic technician - registered (DTR) and the registered dietician (RD). A DTR is a nutrition practitioner with an associate's degree, and a supervised practical experience who has passed the DTR exam. Most DTRs work with RDs in an employment setting. An RD is a food and nutrition expert who has completed a bachelor's degree, 900 hours in a supervised internship and has passed the RD exam. CSU has both a DTR and an RD program, but there is no DTR program at CU, so this informational flyer will focus on how to become an RD after attending CU.

RDs work in a wide variety of settings, including hospitals, health care facilities, food service operations, corporate wellness programs, private practice, community and public health settings, universities, and research institutes. They may be involved more directly in treatment and prevention of disease, work to coordinate food purchasing and preparation, educate clients about the connection between food, fitness and health,

participate in product development, teach and advise the public, or conduct research to answer critical nutrition questions. As you can see, the field of nutrition is very broad and RDs have many potential career options.

## **THE PATHWAYS TO BECOMING A REGISTERED DIETITIAN:**

One pathway to an RD is to enroll in a bachelor's program specifically designed for the RD and then complete an internship and sit for the exam. However, this type of program is not available at CU. Instead, we recommend obtaining a bachelor's degree in whatever major you choose while obtaining the necessary prerequisites for RD programs. Upon completion of the degree, you can enroll in either a didactic program in dietetics or a coordinated program. These will typically lead to a Master's degree, and allow you to complete the required internship before taking the RD exam. As an important note, if you choose to obtain a master's degree, it must be in a CADE accredited program or you will not be able to get an internship or sit for the exam. In addition, some RD programs will allow entrance without the bachelor's degree, and you typically complete the degree as part of the program. However, these types of programs are not as common

and therefore we recommend that you complete your bachelor's degree.

## **DIDACTIC PROGRAMS IN DIETITICS (DPD):**

These programs are typically bachelor's programs, although some offer a master's degree. The coursework in these programs is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) and therefore you will be able to go on to enroll in an accredited dietetics internship. A DPD does not offer the internship as part of the program, but completing the coursework will qualify you to seek an internship. There are approximately 220 DPDs and 250 accredited dietetic internships in the US. For more information on DPDs, go to <http://www.eatright.org>.

## **COORDINATED PROGRAMS (CP):**

These programs can offer either bachelors or master's degrees, but they combine the required coursework with the dietetic internship. Both the courses and the internship are accredited by CADE. These are typically two year programs. There are approximately 50 CPs in the US and these can be found by going to <http://eatright.org>

## **UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR:**

Most of the programs for RD do not specify an

undergraduate major, although some prefer that you choose a science major. A few programs do specify that a major in the natural sciences will be beneficial in gaining admission to their program.

**PREREQUISITES:** The various RD programs vary greatly in their specific requirements. Some offer the opportunity to take the prerequisites as part of an extended program, while others require that all courses are completed before you enroll. Be sure to research the programs you are interested in to determine what courses are required. Although there is a good bit of variation, most require AT LEAST the following courses:

**Biological Sciences (lower level):** EBIO 1210-1230 and 1220-1240 *or* MCDB 1150-1151 and MCDB 2150-2151. **(upper level)** Microbiology EBIO 3400, Human Anatomy IPHY 3410 and 3415, Human Physiology IPHY 3430 and 3435, Biochemistry CHEM 4611.

**Chemistry Courses:** General Chemistry CHEM 1111 and CHEM 1131 and Organic Chemistry CHEM 3311-3321 and 3331-3341.

**Psychology:** one semester of general psychology PSYC 1001

**Food and Nutrition:** many schools require a nutrition course, such as IPHY 3420, however many programs are very specific so be sure to check which courses are

required. Since CU does not offer other nutrition courses, these may need to be taken elsewhere.

### **EXTRACURRICULAR AND NUTRITION-RELATED EXPERIENCES:**

Although there is no requirement for nutrition-related experience before applying to RD programs, we recommend that students spend some time in the field. This will enable you to determine if you are well suited to the field, or if you wish to reconsider your goal. In addition, most programs require letters of recommendation, and a letter from a practicing RD can be beneficial. Some ideas for volunteer opportunities include; local hospitals and medical centers, county health departments, nursing homes, the Headstart program, day care programs, food banks, school food services, food stamp programs, Meals on Wheels, or after school programs such as Boys and Girls Club or YMCA/YWCA.

### **APPLYING TO POSTBACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS IN**

**NUTRITION:** The application process for RD programs begins in your senior year. By this time you should have taken the prerequisite courses for the programs to which you wish to apply. During your senior year, you will need to take the GRE. Most schools require official transcripts, GRE scores, three letters of recommendation, a resume and a personal essay. Deadlines for application vary.

Those schools with rolling admissions recommend applying early, with a suggested deadline of December 1, while for other schools the final deadline is March 1 for students who wish to begin the program in the fall.

### **GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATIONS (GRE):**

The GRE consists of three sections; verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning and analytical writing. The test is computer based and offered at multiple times during the year. For more information on testing services on campus, go to the CU Testing Center website at <http://careerservices.colorado.edu/testing.cs> For more general information go to <http://www.ets.org>

### **LETTERS OF**

**RECOMMENDATION:** All schools require letters of recommendation. Usually you arrange to have these sent with your application. We offer a Committee Letter to CU students and alumni. To be eligible, you must attend a Committee Letter workshop, establish a Preprofessional Credentials File, and meet other requirements and deadlines (see Committee Letter Procedures for the current year on the Pre-Health Advising web site). You will need a minimum of two letters from CU Boulder faculty, one of which must be science. The second can be science or non-science. The third is open, although many nutrition programs prefer a letter from an RD. Our credential service will retain

your letters, assemble them into packets, and transmit them to the RD programs that you request.

### **PREHEALTH STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS:**

**The Student Association for Prehealth Professionals (SAPP)** represents a community of students at CU-Boulder whose goal is to provide an organization in which students interested in all areas of medicine can come together and learn more about the many professions, receive academic or personal guidance, and get detailed advice on applying to health professions programs. Within SAPP there are specialized subgroups for areas such as medicine, nursing, physician assistant, nutrition, optometry, etc. Membership is open to all CU students. SAPP website: [www.colorado.edu/student-groups/prehealth](http://www.colorado.edu/student-groups/prehealth).

**Alpha Epsilon Delta (AED)** is a pre-health honor society for those interested in health careers. AED website: [www.colorado.edu/student-groups/aed](http://www.colorado.edu/student-groups/aed)

**American Dietetic Association:** is the largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. This organization has student memberships available for students from across the country. ADA website: <http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/index.htm>

### **COORDINATED PROGRAMS IN COLORADO AND SURROUNDING STATES:**

Colorado State University  
Coordinated Master's  
Program:  
[www.caahs.colostate.edu/fshn](http://www.caahs.colostate.edu/fshn)

University of Idaho:  
<http://www.uidaho.edu/fcs>

Utah State University:  
<http://www.usu.edu/~dietetic>

University of Utah:  
<http://www.health.utah.edu/nutr>

Kansas State University:  
<http://www.humec.ksu.edu/hri/med/dietetics.php>