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Contact: Cassie Vanderwall
Director, UW Health Dietetic Internship Program
cvanderwall@uwhealth.org
608-890-8528

UW Health Dietetic Internship Prepares Students for Work with Vulnerable Populations

(Madison, WI) – April 8, 2019 – Across the country and in Wisconsin, dietetic internship opportunities for college graduates are scarce and competition for available slots is fierce. Unfortunately, insufficient training opportunities for potential Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) has created an impending workforce shortage of RDNS that will lead to diminished nutrition care services.

In 2014, the Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics began efforts to address Wisconsin’s pending RDN workforce shortage and the lack of available dietetic internship opportunities in the state and across the U.S. The result of those efforts was the introduction and passage of legislation to create a new dietetic internship program for nutritionists within Wisconsin’s Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. On March 24, 2016 Governor Scott Walker signed the bill into law as 2015 WI Act 276.

That dietetic internship program has been accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics and is being administered by UW Health in partnership with the University of WI at Madison.

“I am delighted with the new partnership that has been created with our program and the UW Health Dietetic Internship Program,” said State WIC Director Lisa Murphy. “Our program is committed to building a workforce competent in the most up-to-date, evidence based education and counseling practice strategies that will help the families achieve optimal nutrition and health status.”

The UW Health Dietetic Internship Program for WIC Nutritionists is a year-long supervised practice experience concentrated in public health which is combined with graduate coursework to prepare interns to be providers of medical nutrition therapy for our most vulnerable populations- Infants and Mothers.

“The internship program will strengthen Wisconsin’s nutrition workforce and provide greater career opportunities for aspiring RDNs,” said Cassie Vanderwall, Director of the UW Health Dietetic Internship Program. “It ultimately serves to enhance the health status of women and children by equipping and empowering the sole purveyors of Medical Nutrition Therapy.”

The program allocates 20-40 hours each week to supervised practice experiences in the clinical, public health and food system administration domains, with a concentration in Public Health.

The inaugural class of dietetic interns within this new track of the UW Health Dietetic Internship program come from across the state. They are eager to embark on the next step in their professional journey.

"I am passionate about nutrition in early childhood, pregnant and breastfeeding women," says incoming intern Kelly Tuszynski. "The UW Health Dietetic Internship is a great opportunity to fulfill my goal in becoming a Registered Dietitian to advance my knowledge to help others."

The Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in conjunction with UW Health look forward to the positive impact the program is sure to have for Wisconsin's vulnerable populations for years to come.

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