The University of Wisconsin-Madison is 10th among public institutions in U.S. News & World Report’s latest college rankings and we are also proud to be one of the best graduate programs in the nation!

Please help us keep in touch with our alumni and friends by passing this newsletter along to others who may be interested in our work. We also encourage you to share news about your career status or update your contact information by sending an email to: student-staff@nutrisci.wisc.edu

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Note from the Chair: Dr. David Eide

Greetings from the Department of Nutritional Sciences. I’m writing this in early April and with a bit of spring in the air, our attention turns to the completion of the semester, and for our senior undergraduates, graduation. One of the great things about working in higher education is the excitement that comes when our students successfully complete their college careers and then move on to the next stage of their lives. For some students, this transition can mean a bit more time in school—e.g., medical school, dental school, or graduate school. For others, it means entering the work force with a strong knowledge base in the nutritional sciences. For many of our dietetics majors, graduation means going on to dietetics internships as their next step on the path to becoming Registered Dietitians.

It is in this regard that we have much to celebrate this spring. Placement of students into dietetics internships is a very competitive process and the national placement rate is approximately 50%. I’m happy to report that the placement rate this year for our UW-Madison graduates was an astounding 100%! This is even better than our placement rate last year of 88%. Needless to say, we are very proud of these and all of our students and wish them the very best of success in their future careers, whatever that future may hold for them. But alas, the semester is not quite over yet and I’ve got to get my lecture prepared for tomorrow morning’s class. So, I’ll wish you all a happy spring while I get back to it. Best regards to all of our alumni and other friends.
Strada, one of the new dining spots in the Memorial Union

Notable Alumna: Allison Berris

Allison Berris graduated with a degree in Dietetics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in December 2009. After graduation, she attended culinary school at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. Upon graduation, Allison lived in New York City where she worked with season 3 winner of Top Chef Masters, chef Floyd Cardoz at North End Grill. She also worked part-time at Morimoto, the restaurant of Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto. Now, she is back in Madison working as the new executive chef for the dining spots at Memorial Union.

Discuss your time here at UW-Madison—Any favorite classes or professors? Favorite memories on campus? My favorite professor while at UW-Madison was Monica Theis. I took a few classes taught by her. Her classes were not easy, but she really tries to prepare you for your future in the field. She was always there for help when I needed it, whether it was class related or not. I knew she really cared about me as a student, and as a person.

Why did you choose the dietetics field? I chose dietetics because I had always wanted to be in the food industry, and at UW-Madison, that was the closest I could come to achieving that dream.

Why did you choose the culinary pathway after you graduated from UW-Madison? I grew up around food, my father is a chef. He taught me the first things I ever learned about cooking. I can remember being about 10 and he taught me the proper way to hold a knife and to sharpen a knife, how to make gazpacho, hollandaise sauce, and how to cook eggs. My first job was when I was 12 years old, I went to work with my father when he was the food and beverage director at McCormick Place in Chicago, and I scooped ice cream for a food cart.

How does your dietetics background affect your culinary choices in your current position? It affects how I make certain menu items...there are a number of people these days who have a variety of food allergies and/or intolerances, which affects how I make my soups, for example. All of our soups that are served in the Rathskeller and in Carte are made from scratch in-house. If I can use olive or canola oil in a soup instead of butter, that allows a dairy free individual to eat that soup. There is also a large portion of our population who are gluten free, whether for health or personal reasons. I use an ingredient called xanthan gum when thickening most of soups, instead of making a roux with flour and butter. This allows these individuals who are gluten free to be able to eat the soups.

What advice do you have for students just starting on the dietetics path? There are many ways to utilize your degree. Although it is the preferred path for most studying dietetics, you do not have to become an RD to use your degree. I am a very hands on, visual learner; I am not good at sitting down, reading a few hundred pages in a book and taking a multiple choice exam. If you do not have the GPA to get an internship, do not get discouraged (I wish someone had told me this before I decided to go to culinary school), there are still many paths you can take.

Any more advice you’d like to share? If you love to cook or simply enjoy good food, take advantage of the farmers market! We have so many great farmers in our area, who provide a myriad of great produce, breads, meats, etc. We are so lucky to have that at our fingertips. During the summertime, I never buy produce at the grocery store. I would rather get it fresh and straight from the source at the market. One of my favorite summertime meals is over easy duck eggs from the market. I make a simple green salad to go with it, maybe some baby arugula, pea shoots, radishes, purple carrots...that and a little oil and vinegar, maybe some fresh bread from Stella’s Bakery, and you have a simple, yet amazingly delicious meal.

Follow your heart when deciding what do with your life and career. I was told most of my life that being a chef and being in the food industry is a hard life. While it is not an easy profession, there is nothing I would rather be doing. Cooking is my passion. I love the feeling when someone eats something I have made and they tell me that it is delicious, or the best thing they’ve ever eaten. That is what makes this all worthwhile. And I absolutely love my position at the Memorial Union. Teaching students how to cook and seeing how truly interested they are in learning about food has proven to be extremely rewarding.
In Memoriam: Alfred Harper

Professor Emeritus Alfred “Alf” E. Harper passed away in late March of 2017 at the age of 94. Harper was affiliated with the Department of Biochemistry and also the Department of Nutritional Sciences. His life and work are emblematic of the rich history of nutritional biochemistry in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Born in 1922, the native of Lethbridge, Alberta began studying at UW–Madison under famed biochemist Conrad Elvehjem in 1949 and received his Ph.D. in 1953. Following postdoctoral studies at UW-Madison and the University of Cambridge (England), he joined the faculty in the Biochemistry Department as an assistant professor in 1956. As an associate professor, he left UW–Madison to serve as professor of nutrition and food science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for four years. After his return in 1965, Harper spent the remainder of his career at UW–Madison, retiring in 1990 to the state of Washington.

In 1968, he was instrumental, along with others, in establishing the Department of Nutritional Sciences, where he was the E.V. McCollum Professor of Nutritional Sciences while continuing as a professor of biochemistry. He served as the first chair of Nutritional Sciences for almost 20 years. His research focused on the nutritional biochemistry of amino acids, particularly the branched-chain amino acids. He was also keenly interested in how animals regulate food intake, particularly how they sense whether their diets have adequate or inadequate levels of amino acids.

He mentored more than 50 graduate students in Biochemistry and Nutritional Sciences and published more than 400 research articles. Alumni of his lab remember him as an excellent mentor, willing to allow students to pursue their own research interests in amino acid metabolism and function.

Harper's work in nutrition spanned not just the university but the nation as a whole. He had a strong interest in national nutrition policy and served on and chaired the Food and Nutrition Board (FNB) of the National Academies of Sciences for many years. Over a period of nearly 15 years, his work on the FNB focused on establishing the nutritional requirements for amino acids and overall recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) and requirements. He also served on many other government groups and panels, including a White House conference on Food, Nutrition and Health and led organizations such as the American Institute of Nutrition and Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) as president, the latter being one of the largest organizations of life scientists in the world.

During his career, he received many recognitions and awards, including the Borden Award (1965), as well as the Conrad Elvehjem Award for Public Service in Nutrition (1987) from the American Institute of Nutrition (now American Society for Nutrition) and the Atwater Award from the USDA in 1990, among others. Harper's long service to the College and UW–Madison was recognized with the Distinguished Service Award from CALS in 1999. His 50 years of contributions broadened and deepened the influence of UW–Madison on improving the health of Americans through optimal nutrition.
Uganda Program Inspires Students to Pursue Health and Service Careers

James Ntambi, professor in the Department of Biochemistry and leading researcher in nutritional biochemistry, bends down in the Ugandan soil outside a primary school. His study abroad students huddle around him. He picks up a stick and begins to work math problems in the dirt.

“He started telling us how he knew they practiced math that way because he went to primary school here,” says Trista Cushman, a biochemistry student who participated in the study abroad course in the summer of 2016. “This course with James was so amazing. He is so humble and is really invested in us getting something beneficial out of the course.”

Ntambi started a study abroad program to Uganda at the University of Wisconsin–Madison 15 years ago, and it has since morphed into several successful parallel initiatives. Students can participate in a program called Agriculture, Health & Nutrition, where they take a seminar during the fall semester and then travel to Uganda in late December. Other students participate in UW Mobile Clinics & Health Care, traveling to Uganda in the summer. Programs also exist where medical students travel to Uganda. These programs have impacted more than 300 students at UW–Madison.

“In courses I’ve taught, students learn about metabolic diseases and some are associated with nutritional deficiencies,” says Ntambi, who grew up and attended university in Uganda before earning a Fulbright to get a Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins. “We learn about them in a textbook but I wanted to start an international program where students could see the impacts of biochemistry in real life.”

The Department of Biochemistry also houses many other study abroad opportunities. Professor Marvin Wickens sends students each summer to work in labs in England, through the SCORE program, and Germany, through the Super G program, to gain valuable research and cultural experiences. The Khorana Program, run by professor Aseem Ansari, is an exchange program with India. On the trips to Uganda, students get a comprehensive view of health impacts by learning about the influences of agriculture, nutrition, health care, and sanitation. They also learn about social factors, such as economics and culture, that impact people’s ability to make decisions about their health and that of their family and community. This holistic approach makes this program unique and beneficial to students.

In August, students help Ugandan doctors and nurses run mobile clinics that bring health care to villages where residents are unable to get to the country’s hospitals and clinics. Through touring hospitals and clinics, the students learn about the country’s health care system. They spend time working on projects that influence sanitation and access to clean water. Ntambi also hasn’t overlooked the importance of agriculture in health. His students spend time around a large sustainable farm that some village residents use to feed themselves and sell the surplus to support their families.

“I’m pre-med and plan to go to medical school so the focus on global health and the health care system in Uganda was very significant to me,” says Cushman, who received a scholarship from the Department of Biochemistry to help fund her trip. “In the medical field in the U.S. it’s very ‘treat, treat, treat’ and no prevention, but you realize that through the efforts of those working in Uganda that it can be an effective approach to health care. That is something I hope to continue.”

Biochemistry junior Caroline Kreitzer is about to travel to Uganda with Ntambi in late December. She says she’s excited about the trip and learning more about global health, which she plans to pursue as a career. The course offers flexibility so students can pick a specific topic they want to focus on. Kreitzer is interested in women’s health. “Through the seminar this semester, I’ve learned many things about the country,” she says. “The course will be both hands on and reflective, where we think back on our experience and relate it to our futures in an integrated learning experience. I think that’s the benefit of being with someone like James.”

Biochemistry’s study abroad programs have a lasting impact. For example, the Village Health Project is a UW–Madison student organization started in 2005 that sprung out of students’ interest in continuing a relationship with the villages they visited on the trip. Many other students find themselves going back to Uganda, as well.

“Just the other day I was talking to someone in Uganda and learned a previous student from the course got a dental degree in Minnesota and is now going back to provide dental services in these rural communities,” says Ntambi, who is also a faculty member in the Department of Nutritional Sciences. “Isn’t that amazing? They go back on their own because of the relationships they built. And that is what global health is all about.”
The Nutrition Focused Physical Exam (NFPE) is quickly becoming an important and popular tool in the dietetics field. A Nutrition Focused Physical Exam is a systematic head-to-toe examination performed by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN), that examines a patient's physical appearance and function to help determine nutritional status by uncovering any signs of malnutrition, nutrient deficiencies, or nutrient toxicities. Some signs of malnutrition include loss of muscle mass, loss of subcutaneous fat, localized or generalized fluid accumulation, and decreased functional status. All of these signs are best assessed by a physical examination. Research has shown that nutrition intervention of a patient at risk of malnutrition can decrease length of hospital stay, falls, pressure ulcers, infections, complications, readmissions, and overall health care costs. While the NFPE is only one component of this nutrition assessment, it can provide necessary supportive data to identify and diagnose a patient with malnutrition. This has been an area where the department has not been able to adequately provide instruction about.

The Department of Nutritional Science was able to bring in three RDNs from the ThedaCare Regional Medical Center in Appleton WI. These RDNs are experts on the Nutrition Focused Physical Exam and are certified to teach the NFPE to healthcare providers. On January 30th, 2017, Lori Hartz, ThedaCare Hospital Manager who received her BS in Dietetics and MS in Nutrition in 1994 from UW Madison, and her team of Angelica Gronke and Cheryl Shockey, joined the NS 520 Applications in Clinical Nutrition course. This course is a senior level capstone course that every dietetics student must take. The ThedaCare dietitians joined Assistant Faculty Associate Makayla Schuchardt in teaching and demonstrating the NFPE to the undergraduate students. This was extremely beneficial and informative for these students because of the hands on demonstration and explanation from three leaders in education of the NFPE.

Nutritional Sciences Professor Denise Ney and Ph.D. Candidate Bridget Stroup also got involved by collaborating with the ThedaCare Regional Medical Center in a research component involving the NFPE. The ThedaCare RDNs, Lori Hartz and Cheryl Shockey, reached out to Professor Ney and Stroup because together, they had the
background knowledge and resources needed to carry out a large intervention study to evaluate and improve nutrition risk screening in the hospital setting. Consistent with current clinical practice, the Nutrition Risk Screen 2002 is used to screen patients for malnutrition. However, this validated screen misses a lot of patients who have malnutrition. To improve nutrition risk screening, Lori Hartz, Cheryl Shockey and colleagues developed a new nutrition risk screen, called the ThedaCare Nutrition Risk Screen (ThedaCare NRS). They conducted an intervention study with six hundred patients that showed how the ThedaCare NRS was better at identifying patients at risk for malnutrition and required less time to complete than the NRS 2002, as confirmed using the NFPE. Another collaborator that they teamed up with was Tracy Bibelnieks, Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, who has made important contributions to the statistical analysis of this study. This work was recently presented at the 2017 American Society for Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition Conference.

This research and collaboration with the ThedaCare team is an important bridge between our UW-Madison Nutritional Science undergraduate program and staff, and some of the leaders in education of the NFPE. As the NFPE continues to become a useful and important tool in the dietetics community, it is important that our dietetics curriculum is up to date with the latest research. The knowledge gained by the nutritional sciences staff will help future instruction of both undergraduate and graduate students.
Department Launches New Online Master Degree in Clinical Nutrition

The Department of Nutritional Sciences is excited to announce that Fall 2017 enrollment for the new Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition is now open! To remain competitive in the field, and obtain the advanced competencies and skills needed in the job market; completion of a Master’s Degree is becoming essential for registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs). The Commission on Dietetic Registration, the national credentialing body of RDNs, has increased the registration eligibility to the completion of a Master’s Degree beginning in 2024. The new online Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition is not only designed for current and future RDNs but any experienced health professionals such as doctors, nurse practitioners or physician assistants seeking advanced training in Clinical Nutrition.

If you already have the Capstone Certificate in Clinical Nutrition from UW-Madison, you can finish the master’s degree in just two semesters! The degree is completed 100% online and is comprised of three elements that include courses in core nutrition topics, advanced clinical nutrition and professional skills. Although the degree has a clinical focus, students can advance their skills in public health or business by taking electives through the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, or the Department of Engineering Professional Development Certificate program.

For more information please feel free to contact Lynette Karls, MS, RDN, CD or, visit the website as follows:
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Nutritional Sciences Awards and Honors Recipients

Macmillan Uribe Inducted into Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society

Congratulations to Nutritional Science Doctoral Student, Lexi MacMillian Uribe on being named to the Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society! The Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society “commemorates the first African American to earn a doctorate degree from an American university (Physics, Yale University, 1876). The Bouchet Society seeks to develop a network of scholars who exemplify academic and personal excellence, foster environments of support, and serve as examples of scholarship, leadership, character, service, and advocacy for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in the academy—exemplifying the spirit and example of Dr. Bouchet.” Macmillan Uribe attended the UW-Madison Induction Ceremony this past March and the Bouchet National Induction Ceremony and Annual Conference at Yale University in April.

Cheng Receives 2017 Gerber Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship

Graduate Student Adrienne Cheng, an IGPNS student in the Hernandez Lab, has been selected to receive the 2017 Gerber Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship on behalf of the American Society on Nutrition. She is receiving this award for her outstanding effort for her proposed project, “The Role of Peripheral Serotonin in Regulating Early Lactation Outcomes in Mice Fed a High-Fat Diet”. She was recently recognized for this award at the ASN Award Ceremony in Chicago. Cheng also recently won the Endocrine Society’s Presidential Poster Contest in the Reproductive Endocrinology section. She was recognized for her poster titled, “Peripheral Serotonin Deficiency May Assist Early Lactation Outcomes in Mice Fed a High-Fat Diet”.
Awards and Honors Recipients Cont.

DNC Awarded Health and Wellness Bucky Award

Congratulations to the Dietetics and Nutrition Club (DNC) who recently won the Health and Wellness Bucky Award. This award is “given to an ambitious student or student organization that excels in promoting and achieving overall health and wellness on campus”. DNC works hard on campus and in the community to provide valuable insight on the importance of nutrition through numerous events and volunteer projects. Some of DNC’s recent projects include putting on wellness events at the Madison Senior Center, collaborating with the CALS Wellness Committee to put on monthly “Lunch ‘N Learns”, and participating in Saturday Science at the WID to teach kids about the importance of nutrition.

UW-Madison Faculty Senate Honors Dr. Dorothy Pringle

In Early April this year, the UW-Madison Faculty Senate honored Nutritional Sciences Emerita Professor, Dr. Dorothy Pringle’s legacy with a Memorial Resolution. Dorothy’s niece and grandnephew, Dorothy Murphy and Rob Koehler, were able to attend the event as well. Nutritional Sciences professor Dr. Julie Thurlow wrote a personal tribute for Dr. Pringle that described her as “a scholar, an educator and an extraordinary human being”. Dr. Pringle has left a lasting legacy that showed at a recent 30-year reunion of former dietetics and nutrition students, where current professionals expressed their common appreciation of Dr. Pringle’s impact on their careers.

Mary Ann Johnson to Serve as American Society for Nutrition President

Mary Ann Johnson, who received her Ph.D. in Nutritional Sciences from UW-Madison in 1983, will serve as the American Society for Nutrition president in 2017-2018. She has served ASN as a National Spokesperson, Scientific Program Committee Member, Medical Nutrition Council Secretary-Treasurer, Public Information Committee Chair, and Public Policy Committee Ex-Officio. Dr. Johnson currently works at the University of Georgia where she is the Bill and June Flatt Professor in Foods and Nutrition in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences. Congratulations Dr. Johnson!

Rachel Fenske receives NIH F31 Award

Congratulations to Graduate Student Rachel Fenske, an IGPNS student in the Kimple lab, who received the NIH F31, Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Individual Predoctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research. Fenske will receive three years of funding for her project titled, “Role of inhibitory G protein signaling in regulating beta-cell function and survival in the type 1 diabetic state”.

Nutritional Sciences Reports Dietetic Internship Match Rate of 100%

Congratulations to the graduates of the department’s Didactic Program in Dietetics who had an Dietetic Internship Match placement rate of 100%. This is even better than the placement rate last year of 88% and well above the national average of around 50%.

Nutritional Sciences Remembers Ethel Drengberg

The Department of Nutritional Sciences former office worker, Ethel Drengberg passed away on December 31st, 2016 at the age of 69. Ethel worked for the UW System for over 30 years working at UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, and UW-Stevens Point. Ethel was extremely active in the community, spending a lot of time as a USO volunteer, President of the Wauzeka Lions Club, part of the Lower Wisconsin Genealogical Society, member of the Greater Wauzeka Enterprise Association, and much more.
DNC Updates

The goal of the Dietetics and Nutrition Club (DNC) is to strengthen the relationship between club members and professionals in the field of dietetics, encourage leadership and initiative, and provide a social network for students with similar interests. While exploring the various opportunities dietetics has to offer, it stands to contribute knowledge, skill, and professionalism to the community through the club activities.

Recently, they have been working on projects such as the monthly “Lunch ’N Learns” in collaboration with the CALS Wellness team. With these events, the club brainstorms hot topics in the media regarding food, work together to research, prepare, and give a presentation on the topic for peers and faculty! There is always a snack involved pertaining to the topic at hand!

Another project DNC is involved in is the Senior Center Project. Here, in collaboration with the Kinesiology Club on campus, they work together to come up with a topic for senior citizens pertaining to both food and movement. The two organizations then prepare a discussion-style presentation to work with the seniors on common misconceptions that people of their age group often have.

The final long-term project of this organization is maintaining a display board at the SERF. The goal of this is to provide relevant information in an artistic and aesthetic way to students. Typically, these include recipes or ideas based on the current season that students can follow. This has been a fun way to get artistic while still exhibiting the knowledge learned in the classroom.

In addition to the three ongoing projects, the DNC participates in many short-term volunteer events. A common example is Saturday Science at the WID where the club works with children, teaching them about MyPlate and what a balanced meal really looks like. They also have done a lot of events with SlowFood UW-Madison, helping prepare the meals served to the local community. The DNC recently worked with the Dane County Farmers Market Taste of the Market event. Here, the students worked with UW Chefs and the Market to create a menu with ingredients almost completely from the market. The students helped in the menu creation, the cooking, and the serving of the breakfast at this event! This was located at the indoor market at the Madison Senior Center (where the DNC participates in the Senior Center Project), and the breakfast was served to the Madison Area Community, including our own Dr. Dave Eide, Makayla Schuchardt, and Monica Theis! Finally, the DNC works to connect professionals with students to network and help members gain experience. At the beginning of March, DNC partnered with WAND to put on a networking event at Varsity Hall with a panel of RDNs and a round-table discussion.

There are always a variety of volunteer and networking events within this organization. They are always looking for and welcoming new members to help out and join in any way! You can email wisc.dnc@gmail.com for more information!
A Semester in Pictures

The graduation cap of Nutritional Science graduate, Carly Edson

Erika Anna, Student Services Coordinator, and Makayla Schuchardt, Assistant Faculty Associate, attending the 2017 WAND conference this past April

NutriSci staff celebrate graduation with the class of 2017 and their families

Recent graduates of the Clinical Nutrition Capstone Certificate & Dietetic Internship

Photo from the 19th annual IGPNS Poster Session

Photo from the 19th annual IGPNS Poster Session

Michelle Cooley (L) & Yirong Wang (R) shared the Alfred E. Harper Poster Presentation Award at the IGPNS Poster Session
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Many of the stories featured in these articles feature activities and research funded through grants, scholarships, and other donations. These opportunities are possible because of our alumni and donors. Thank you for contributing to our continued success!

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