

## **Nutrition Program's Response to Final Review Team Report**

The Nutrition faculty members have reviewed the Final Review Team Report and discussed the Program's response to each of the recommendations provided by the Review Team. Overall, the faculty are very pleased with the process of self-study and the opportunity for input from reviewers. The outcome of the review and the recommendations will foster Program growth and continued improvement.

Each of the Review Team's recommendations is listed below with the Nutrition Program's response. This report concludes with a restatement of the Program's future direction. The response to the recommendations and the restatement of the future direction should be used for the development of an action plan by the Accreditation Director in consultation with Dean Florez, Vice Provost Wohlert, and other campus constituencies, as outlined in the Academic Program Review Manual.

### **Recommendation 1. Clarify the identity of the graduate program.**

The lack of a vision or goal for the graduate program is a problem that the Nutrition faculty members have recognized for several years. The Review Team emphasized the need to make the Dietetic Internship one factor, rather than the main focus of the graduate program, and that thesis research should be encouraged. Input from the Review Team has helped the faculty recognize that tenured or tenure-track faculty members must place a priority on focusing their research interests to be able to present graduate students with specific opportunities for thesis research. Prospective students would thus be able to envision themselves as productive members of a research team and current students would gain valuable experience while contributing to faculty research productivity. This process of identifying focused research agendas can be accomplished within a relatively short period of time and can lead to a research-based graduate program known for specific areas of expertise aligned with each faculty member's research.

### **Recommendation 2. Reallocate efforts towards the graduate program.**

The Review Team recognized that faculty members provide a disproportional amount of effort to the undergraduate program. Several steps to reallocate efforts toward the graduate program have been taken since the site visit by the Review Team in November. To provide the time for defining focused research and mentoring/advising graduate students, the task of academic advisement for undergraduate students has been turned over to the College of Education Advisement Center. This one step has already resulted in considerable time saving as there are more than eighty undergraduates who need academic advising each semester before reenrollment. In addition to research mentoring of graduate students, the faculty plan to institute a formal process of graduate advisement to ensure students are advised on their Program of Studies and the process for the comprehensive Master's examination early in their program. This can be accomplished by the 2007-2008 academic year.

As the Nutrition faculty make a commitment to allocating more effort toward the graduate program, they hope to develop a more cohesive graduate student body. In the past, attempts to organize graduate student clubs or social events have not been well received due to the outside time constraints of the students. Most students take only one course per semester and have full-time jobs with extensive family responsibilities that make additional time commitments difficult. As the faculty work to align research teams of graduate students, supporting student efforts with grants, students will be able to have more time on campus and will recognize the value of shared experiences. Initially, the faculty will discuss strategies for encouraging more of a shared student culture with other programs and departments in the College of Education that have been successful in fostering a graduate student culture.

Another important reallocation of efforts needs to be the shift of administrative and routine clerical tasks from the faculty to support personnel. As noted by the Review Team, if this support staff were trained to be familiar with the needs of the Nutrition Program and the usual tasks associated with maintaining accreditation files, it would allow faculty to use their time for higher priority responsibilities. Specifically, this would lead to more time available for enhancement of the graduate program.

**Recommendation 3. Broaden the offering of specific undergraduate concentrations by realigning existing nutrition courses.**

Currently, all undergraduate students with a major in Nutrition complete the course requirements for the accredited Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD), which is designed to prepare students to pursue a post-graduate Dietetic Internship. Completion of a Dietetic Internship is required to achieve the Registered Dietitian (RD) credential. The recommendation to offer other undergraduate concentrations besides the DPD would allow students who are not intending to become RDs to follow a curriculum more closely tailored to their career goals. As a first step, it is possible to make small curriculum changes and offer a concentration in Nutrition Sciences for students who intend to pursue careers in health professions other than dietetics. Examples of students who would be interested in this concentration are those who intend to become pharmacists, physicians, physician's assistants, physical therapists or biomedical scientists. This change could be accomplished within one academic year.

Other concentrations for Nutrition majors that are offered at other universities across the country include Sports Nutrition (aligned with Exercise Science), Community Nutrition (aligned with Health Education and Public Health), Early Childhood Nutrition (aligned with Early Childhood Education), and Nutrition and Disabilities (aligned with Special Education). Developing curricula for these concentrations will take coordination with faculty in the aligned programs and could be accomplished within a few years.

**Recommendation 4. Increase the internal and external visibility of the program.**

Increased visibility for the Nutrition Program could be very beneficial if this visibility leads to increased collaborations and opportunities for increased funding. Internal

visibility might be improved with a better system for announcing faculty and graduate student presentations. For example, currently graduate students all present a one-hour seminar on the topic they select for their final project and paper. Announcements are posted on doorways in the buildings in the College of Education but the placement is haphazard and few individuals attend these presentations. Announcements could be coordinated with the Office of Graduate Studies with publication in the LOBO campus newspaper and a more formal system of announcements in classes and for posting of flyers.

Brown bag lunches or other informal gatherings could also be used to share expertise of the Nutrition Program if these gatherings were well publicized. Faculty members acknowledge the importance of establishing contacts with programs across campus that might have similar research interests. This would help establish a network of colleagues familiar with the strengths of the Nutrition Program.

Initially, efforts to improve external visibility will likely be linked to the faculty's efforts to focus their research agendas. Contacts in the community and contacts from professional organizations nationally will help to build a strong, sustainable research program. As the research programs continue and graduate students contribute to the effort, data will be more regularly available for both students and faculty to present the findings at regional and national meetings and publish the results in highly regarded journals. Such dissemination of data will further increase the visibility of the Nutrition Program at the University of New Mexico.

**Recommendation 5. Increase full-time tenure-track nutrition faculty lines from three to four.**

Currently, the Nutrition faculty members are trying to meet the demands of the rapid program growth of the past few years with one less tenure-track position than when the DPD and Dietetic Internship were accredited in 2000. At that time there were four tenured/tenure-track positions and one Lecturer. Since 2000, credit hour production has increased by more than 40% to over 4100 credit hours in academic year 2005-2006. The number of students enrolled in the undergraduate and graduate programs has increased by more than 68% since 2000 with the number of admitted majors (BS and MS) rising to 128. The Lecturer's position has allowed the program to maintain the quality of the Dietetic Internship but the reduction of the tenure-track positions to three has contributed to the lack of development of the graduate program.

Recommendations 1 through 4 of this report will all require additional efforts by the faculty. Increasing the tenure-track faculty lines from three to four will return the Program to the level it was at the time of accreditation and will allow for the implementation of these recommendations. The most immediate benefit of this will be the strengthening of the graduate program, but the undergraduate program will also benefit from concentrations more closely aligned with student career goals and from improved quality of undergraduate education due to fewer courses being taught by part-time instructors.

## **Plans for the Future**

(Adapted from Section 9 of the Self-Study)

A program with increasing enrollment trends, an explosion of public interest, a demonstrated need for community service in the content area, and a very strong demand for graduates in the workforce, is poised for immediate growth. The implementation of all five recommendations of the Review Team will allow for this growth to be accomplished without sacrificing quality. Program growth will ultimately benefit the College of Education by increased collaboration with other College faculty and programs and with increased student credit hour production. The increase in research productivity will be more likely to attract external funding and increase the status of the College and University.

Of course, additional resources are needed to allow for growth. However, just sustaining the three Nutrition programs (BS, MS and Dietetic Internship) at their current level of operation during this time of increasing enrollment will also require additional resources. Therefore, plans for the program that delineate the additional resources needed for program growth and alternative plans for the additional resources needed to keep the Programs operating at their current level are described below.

### Program Plans – Additional Resources Needed for Program Growth

Program growth will require at least one additional full-time faculty member. Since 2001, the Program has been operating with three tenured/tenure track faculty members and one Lecturer, despite the CADE accreditation in 2000 stating that the return of the fifth faculty member from leave of absence was expected to have adequate faculty for the two accredited programs. The additional faculty member would teach courses that are now relegated to various part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants, thus helping to ensure quality standardization and continuity for students. As a tenure-track faculty member, this person would help to achieve the recommendations of the Review Team by developing a strong research agenda, which will help to clarify the identity of the graduate program as a research-based program with specific areas of expertise. Also, an additional faculty position would provide more personnel to participate in the creation of undergraduate concentrations other than the DPD and would assist with increasing the visibility of the Program.

In addition, faculty currently spend a significant amount of time on clerical and administrative tasks. CADE's accreditation report in 2000 stated that one full-time support person was assigned to the two accredited programs; this level of support is no longer available due to decreased departmental resources and reorganization of the administrative support staff. In planning for program growth, the Nutrition faculty see the need for one support person who reports directly to the Nutrition faculty. This person must be trained to handle routine tasks with little direction, take initiative to prepare

assessment data needed for accreditation files, and become familiar with program policies and procedures so that he/she could accurately respond to inquiries. Faculty would reallocate the time now spent on these tasks toward building a stronger research-based graduate program.

These recommendations for program growth are based on the assumption that current faculty lines are stable and any faculty resignations would be filled with visiting faculty until a permanent hire is accomplished.

#### Program Plans – Additional Resources Needed to Sustain Programs at Current Level

The current level of funding/support is not sufficient to maintain the BS in Nutrition, the Dietetic Internship and the MS in Nutrition as enrollment rises and newly revised accreditation administrative duties require more faculty time. If an additional full-time faculty member is not approved, the remaining four full-time faculty members will only be able to maintain the quality of the programs and accommodate the increasing enrollment if they are provided the assistance of one support person, minimum 0.5 FTE, who reports directly to the Nutrition faculty. Since faculty currently spend approximately 20% of their time doing routine clerical/administrative tasks, having a support person take over these duties would give faculty an additional day per week to mentor the increasing number of students and coordinate the large number of part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants while still remaining productive in research. The support person must have sufficient skills to perform the clerical and administrative tasks with minimal supervision and should be located in close proximity to the Nutrition faculty offices.

The addition of a support person, without addition of another faculty position, should allow for maintenance of the unit but would not allow for growth toward the program goal of building the Master's degree program and having more students participate in research projects. Of course, to maintain the status quo, any resignations would need to be filled with Visiting faculty until a permanent hire is accomplished.