

Service Learning to Develop Culturally Appropriate Nutrition Education

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Equity Issue

- Registered Dietitians (RDs) deliver nutrition care to diverse populations
- Dietary practices are closely connected to cultural influences, so nutrition education must be delivered in a culturally competent way
- Nutrition and dietetics students must be trained in delivering culturally competent care to address health inequities
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has set “Embracing America’s Diversity” as a priority in the 2017 Visioning Report for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession⁸
- Health education materials are more effective if they are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, including use of relevant language, acculturation levels, and cultural practices^{9 10}.

Overview

Background: Diet and culture are inextricably linked, and nutrition education should be culturally appropriate to be effective. Communicating healthy eating principles to a diverse audience is a critical skill for future nutrition professionals.

Methods: For this project, we have partnered with Lutheran Family Services (LFS) in Greeley. We conducted a needs assessment and developed nutrition education materials to be delivered to clients of Lutheran Family Services. Undergraduate Nutrition and Dietetics students in the class FND 452 will be recruited to participate in a nutrition education and cooking demonstration service-learning project.

Undergraduate Nutrition and Dietetics students will be trained in cultural humility before creating materials, and we will measure pre- and post- levels of cultural awareness.

Significance: This program will train students in areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as future health professionals, and provide valuable nutrition education services to the community of Greeley. It is important for nutrition practitioners to have the skills to navigate cultures and backgrounds different from their own when discussing healthy eating behavior and delivering care.

Aim:
The goal of this project is to train students in cultural competency, develop culturally-appropriate nutrition education materials for a diverse audience, and deliver nutrition education to the community of Greeley, CO.

Stakeholders:
KiND department, KiND students, Lutheran Family Services (LFS) in Greeley, CO

Primary Audiences:
Undergraduate nutrition and dietetic students enrolled in FND 452, and LFS clients





Theoretical Model

The transtheoretical model (TTM) is the theoretical foundation. TTM is built on the theory that people move through stages during behavior change. TTM has been used widely in public health interventions³, including interventions aimed at dietary change⁴⁻⁷. A benefit of TTM is its adaptability to different scenarios¹¹. This model will be applied to the cultural competence training for undergraduate students involved in the service-learning project. We will also use TTM to develop nutrition education materials. The project framework has been adapted from [Barrera et al¹](#)

Project outline, adapted from [Barrera et al¹](#)

Student training will include small and large group discussions and self-reflections covering:

- Project orientation
- Health disparities
- The influence of culture on diet
- Sources of bias

Learning Outcomes

- Learn principles of cultural humility
- Apply cultural humility to nutrition education
- Self-reflect on cultural influences/values on dietary choices
- Apply principles of cross-cultural communication to nutrition education

Assessment Protocol and Outcomes

- Qualitative theme analysis of needs assessment
- Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist developed by the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Center² will measure cultural competence of undergrad students pre- and post-service learning project

Project Review process

- Progress will be reviewed quarterly during Nutrition and Dietetics unit meetings
- Assessment results will be submitted as a poster to the Food and Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE)
- Funding for the next two years has been provided by the Faculty Research and Publications Board (FRPB) through a Research, Dissemination and Faculty Development award. A final report will be provided to the FRPB
- Student feedback will be gathered throughout the service learning project and incorporated

Findings from the Needs Assessment

- Translator services are available
- Desired topics include school lunch accommodations, water safety, hypertension, and pre-diabetes
- LFS Staff can incorporate materials during client orientations and grocery store tours
- LFS Staff encourage and facilitate use of SNAP benefits
- An initial nutrition education handout and script have been created

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Next Steps

- Initial implementation of service learning in Fall 2024
- Preliminary analyses in Spring 2025
- Dissemination of results planned for Spring of 2026

