Alternate Career Path Guide for Nutrition & Dietetics Majors

For many nutrition majors choosing a career path can be a daunting task. While some are determined to follow the traditional route of pursuing a dietetic internship and becoming a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN), others wish to explore different career options in which they can utilize their knowledge in the field of nutrition and dietetics. This guide provides information about alternate career opportunities for nutrition majors.

Below is a table which provides a variety of career options, requirements for attaining these positions, and some degree programs that individuals with nutrition degrees can pursue instead of a dietetic internship and RDN license.

**Disclaimer**: These are general guidelines. If you are interested in a particular career path, please do further research on your own to better understand the full requirements needed to pursue that career as well as the possible degree programs.

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| **Career** | **Requirements** | **Local Degree Programs** |
| Food Service/Hospitality Manager | * Have several years of food service work experience * Although a Bachelor’s Degree is not required, it could give you an extra credential for getting the job; WCU’s BS in Nutrition and Dietetics provides good training * Get on-the-job training * Although not required, many seeking this position take an exam to receive the Food Protection Managers Certification (FPMC) | If you have a BS in nutrition, hospitality, or food service: simply start your job search! |
| Physician’s Assistant | * Must have completed at least 2 years of college coursework covering Biology, Chemistry, Anatomy and Physiology, and Microbiology * Bachelor’s Degree * Prior healthcare experience with hands-on patient care documented by number of hours (200 — 2,000 hours depending on the program) * Complete 3 years of PA school and 2,000 hours of clinical rotations * Pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) * Obtain a state license * Maintain your certification | * Drexel University’s PA Program * Marywood University’s PA Program * Penn State University’s PA Program * Temple University’s PA Program * Thomas Jefferson University’s PA Program * Arcadia University’s PA Program |
| Nurse | * Consider where you’d like to work (hospital, nursing home, college campus, correctional facility, etc.) * WCU’s BS in Nutrition and Dietetics provides a strong basis for acceptance to 2nd degree nursing programs * Achieve either a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in nursing * To become a Registered Nurse (RN) you must pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) * Continue your education * Earn an advanced degree such as a Master’s or Doctoral degree if you wish to continue climbing the medical ladder * If you wish to specialize in a particular area, get certified for it | * Bloomsburg University Nursing Program * Indiana University’s Nursing Program * Temple University’s Nursing Program * Drexel University’s Nursing Program * West Chester University’s Nursing Program * Villanova University’s Nursing Program |
| Physical Therapist | * Earning a Bachelor’s degree in Nutrition and Dietetics is good preparation * Complete a Doctor of Physical Therapy Degree Program * Meet your state’s licensing requirements * Pass the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) * Complete a residency (Optional) * Obtain a Board Certification (Optional) | * Arcadia University’s PT Program * Chatham University’s PT Program * Drexel University’s PT Program * Duquesne University’s PT Program * Gannon University’s PT Program * Keystone College’s PT Program |
| WIC Nutritionist | * Possess a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in nutrition from an ACEND-accredited Didactic Program in Dietetics (don’t need the RDN credential) * Register for an online application on WIC’s website * Take an examination (these will vary depending on the job) | If you already have a BS or MS in nutrition, then simply follow the requirements listed. |
| University Nutrition Educator | * Must hold a Doctorate in fields such as Nutrition & Dietetics, Public Health, Food Science, Sports Nutrition, etc. * Be engaged in relevant research topics associated with nutrition * Teach courses in your field of study * Conduct related research * Train/Mentor graduate and postdoctoral students * Advise undergraduate and graduate students * Stay active in your field * Attend professional conferences such as FNCE | * Penn State University’s Doctorate Program * Drexel University’s Doctorate Program * Indiana University of Pennsylvania’s Doctorate Program * La Salle University’s Doctorate Program |
| Food Inspector | * Earn a Bachelor’s degree in a field of study such as food science, food safety, microbiology, nutrition & dietetics, etc. accredited by the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Counsel (NEHSPAC) * Gain experience in food inspection through internships, co-ops, etc. with government agencies such as the USDA or food manufacturers * Earn a Certified Professional-Food Safety (CP-FS) certification through the department of health/agriculture or the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) by passing the respective examinations and payment of a credential fee * Once you’re certified, apply for a position with agencies such as the USDA, food processing/manufacturing plants, grocery stores, etc. | * West Chester University’s BS in Environmental Health Program * Allegheny College’s Environmental Health Program * Penn State University’s BS in Food Science Program |
| Food Marketing | * Earn a Bachelor’s degree in food marketing or agribusiness * Gain experience by working in food retail positions * Earn a ServSafe Certification * Study your state’s food regulations, labeling, safety, and permits | * Ashford University’s BS in Public Relations and Marketing Program * Kaplan University’s BS in Food Marketing Program * Saint Joseph’s University’s BS in Food Marketing Program |
| Food Science & Nutrition Science | * Earn a Bachelor’s degree in food science, nutrition, microbiology, or chemistry * Earn a Master’s degree or Doctorate degree in food science, food chemistry, nutrition, etc. * Earn credentials that will enhance your career advancement such as a CP-FS as well as a ServSafe certification | * Penn State University’s BS, MS, and Doctorate in Food Science Programs * Drexel University’s BS & MS in Food Science Programs * Delaware Valley University’s BS in Food Science Program |
| Food Policy | * Start by finding a local group working towards food policy changes you’re interested in * Complete an internship with an advocacy group based in Washington DC * While not required, having a law degree can be helpful for working in the policy industry and knowing how policy and law-making works | * Drexel University’s Health Law Program * University of Penn’s JD/MPH Program * University of Pittsburgh’s Health Law Program * Yale University’s Food and Agriculture Program |
| Medical School | * Earn a Bachelor’s degree (there are no specific recommended degrees, however some potential majors are pre-medicine, biology, and exercise science to name a few) * Pass the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) * Apply to medical school * Complete your training at medical school (usually takes an additional 4 years after your undergraduate career) * Pass parts I and II of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) * Match with residency * Graduate from medical school and begin your residency (takes at least 3 years to complete training in your selected field) * Pass part III of the USMLE and complete your residency * Earn board certifications * Obtain a state license | * Thomas Jefferson University’s Medical School Program * Drexel University’s Medical School Program * Temple University’s Medical School Program * University of Penn’s Medical School Program * University of Pittsburgh’s Medical School Program * Penn State University’s Medical School Program |
| Nutrition Research | * Earn a Bachelor’s degree in biological science or nutrition * Earn a Master’s or Doctorate in nutritional science * Skills to have for this profession include decision making, clear communication, listening, and analytical skills | * Penn State University’s BS and Doctorate in Agricultural Science Programs * Drexel University’s BS in Environmental Studies Program * Temple University’s Nutrition Research Program |
| Nutrition Epidemiology | * Earn a Bachelor’s degree in health science * Earn a Master’s degree in epidemiology or public health * Earn a Doctoral degree in nutritional epidemiology | * West Chester University’s BS in Health Science or Nutrition & Dietetics programs, and their MPH program * University of Penn’s MS in Clinical Epidemiology and Doctorate in Epidemiology programs * Drexel University’s MS in Epidemiology program * University of Pittsburgh’s MS, MPH, and Doctorate in Epidemiology |