

## 1. Introduction

Choosing a dietetic internship program can be an overwhelming task. Your search criteria can consist of many aspects, including location, cost, program emphasis, and more. Most importantly, you want a program that fits your skills, interests, and professional goals.

When examining different dietetic internship programs, you'll find many similarities between them. They all include clinical training, food service experience, and community involvement. The University of Maryland Dietetic Internship Program, however, provides many opportunities above and beyond these core components, giving graduates of the program a diverse skill set to take out in to the professional world.

## 2. Clinical

Do you enjoy helping people? The strong clinical experience provided by the University of Maryland Dietetic Internship Program might be a great fit for you. Interns undergo basic medical surgical training at one of a number of different hospitals in the Baltimore-Washington area. Following this core training, interns spend time in critical care and pediatric facilities, as well as a dialysis center. This variety of clinical settings allows interns to experience different operating and documentation procedures. Many of these sites also use cutting edge computerized medical charting systems.

During the clinical rotation, interns function as clinical dietitians, performing nutrition assessments, recommending appropriate diets, and educating patients. In addition, interns complete case studies of complex patients, including a formal case report and presentation to the hospital staff. In addition, at the end of the clinical experience, interns take over as a clinical dietitian during the staff relief portion of their rotation.

## 3. Food Service Management

Do you have a flair for cooking? The University of Maryland Dietetic Internship looks beyond the traditional hospital tray line to give interns experience in food service environments where future growth is anticipated- in college dining and in continuing care communities. These settings are found on the University of Maryland College Park campus, and at Riderwood Village Retirement Community. Additionally, interns are provided with food safety training by completing the National Restaurant Association ServSafe course and examination.

A variety of projects await the interns in their food service management rotation. Interns independently prepare and serve a complete theme meal at Riderwood Village, including menu development, food preparation and service, staff management, marketing of the meal, and more! At the University of Maryland, interns have the opportunity to use their creative juices to develop new salad and sandwich ideas for convenience stores across campus. Other projects include writing a nutrition article for the campus Web site, development and implementation of training for food service employees, budget management training, scheduling of employee, and much more!

## 4. Community

Do you enjoy working with people of various backgrounds? Community activities in the University of Maryland Dietetic Internship Program allow interns to interact with diverse populations in the Baltimore-Washington area. Settings include WIC clinics, senior nutrition programs, diabetes outpatient care centers, subsidized housing facilities, centers for people living with AIDS, and long term care or rehabilitation facilities.

In these settings, interns are given the opportunity to complete a variety of projects, depending on the needs of the population served. Interns may find themselves developing recipe cards for a meal delivery organization, counseling a young mother on the benefits of breastfeeding, conducting a nutrition class for middle school students, or teaching carb-counting to an individual with diabetes. The dietetic internship class also participates in Food Stamp Nutrition Education presentations, including developing lesson plans, newsletters, games, prizes, and cooking demonstrations.

## 5. **Information Technology**

Do you have a knack for computers? The University of Maryland Dietetic Internship might just be for you. As the only program in the country with an emphasis on Information Technology, interns participate in interactive classroom training in HTML coding and Web site development, and then go on to use these skills later in the program at the Food and Nutrition and Food Safety Information Centers of the National Agricultural Library, at the International Food Information Council (IFIC), and in the development of their own Electronic Portfolio Web site.

Interns get to learn first hand the skills involved in maintaining a Web site of credible nutrition information. They not only apply the Web design techniques learned in class, but sharpen their writing, research, and evaluation skills as they review materials, develop fact sheets, maintain databases of resources, update Web pages, and answer consumer questions. The capstone of their Information Technology experience is the development of an Electronic Portfolio Web site, which serves as a comprehensive guide to their total internship experience.

## 6. **Beyond the Rotations**

Not only does the University of Maryland Dietetic Internship consist of strong clinical, food service, community, and information technology rotations, the program offers several additional learning opportunities. Interns are able to create their own rotation during the elective week of the program, where they can choose to either visit a new facility or organization of interest, or to return to a particular rotation site for continued experience.

Class day lectures and joint learning events with other DC-metro area internship programs provide education on a variety of topics, including nutrition research, weight loss surgery, disordered eating, and alternative careers in nutrition. Networking opportunities abound at the Maryland Dietetic Association Annual Meeting, where interns present posters on a topic of their choice, at the Maryland State Legislature Day, and at other conferences and meetings as they occur.

None of the preceptors in the University of Maryland program are required to take interns- they all participate because they have a sincere interest in the education of future dietitians. Interns in the program are encouraged to re-frame the internship experience as a ten-month job interview, where first impressions always count. Lastly, program applications are due in January so that prospective interns may be interviewed by the program in February. This allows you to get to know us before you have to submit a prioritized list of the internship programs you're interested in for computer matching purposes.

For specific program information, including costs, application procedures, open house dates, and more, please see the [Internship Web site](#).