

CAREER PROGRAM

Dietetic Technician - Associate in Applied Science

Career Definition

Dietetic technicians are health care professionals who work in consultation with a registered dietitian provide nutritional care services to individuals and groups to achieve optimal client health. They interview clients regarding the foods they eat, perform diet calculations, and plan menus to meet client needs and counsel clients regarding nutritional concerns. In addition, they may perform supervisory functions related to food preparation and service.

Program Overview

The Dietetic Technician Program is a two-year curriculum, which may be pursued on a full or part-time basis. The coursework culminates in an associate of applied science degree (A.A.S.). Included in the program is 450 hours of supervised practice under the direction of registered dietitians, which creates real-world experience for students. Supervised practice settings include hospitals, long term care facilities, as well as community-based programs.

Program Outcomes

1. Utilize effective interviewing skills with clients to obtain diet histories and information pertinent to nutrition care.
2. Perform various phases of nutrition screening and assessment of clients across the lifespan.
3. Calculate nutritional needs of clients.
4. Develop menu patterns to meet the nutritional needs of individuals and groups.
5. Plan and implement appropriate nutritional needs of individuals and groups.
6. Provide nutrition education for a variety of individuals and groups.
7. Utilize acceptable and appropriate guidelines for documentation of nutrition care.
8. Participate in the operation of a food service system including procurement, distribution and service.
9. Identify effective sanitation and safety practices utilized in the food service setting.
10. Identify quality improvement activities utilized in food service systems to assure that the food and nutrition needs of clients are being met.
11. Participate in human resource functions in the food service setting.
12. Comply with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for the Profession of Dietetics.

Opportunities for Employment

There are a variety of options to choose from when working as a dietetic technician. You are able to work in government sponsored programs, food companies, health clubs, restaurants, schools, nutrition education programs, rehabilitation centers, community agencies, fitness and wellness centers, camps, acute-care and long-term care health centers/hospitals.

Many graduates of the Dietetic Technician Program have a position secured before graduation. Although Harper does not guarantee job placement, they do assist graduates in finding one. Assistance is also available for resume writing, interviewing and the job search. Projected growth for jobs in this area, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, is 28% between 2000 and 2010.

Helpful Academic Skills or Experiences

It may be helpful to take as many science and math classes that you are able to take. Both of these areas of study help prepare you for the college coursework that will be given. Communications courses are also helpful to improve skills.

Web Sites to Explore

www.bls.gov.oco
www.wihealthcareers.org
www.ilworkinfo.com
www.dol.gov
www.myfirstday.org

Web Sites to Explore

www.eatright.org
www.eatrightil.org

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the difference between a dietitian and a nutritionist?

A: All dietitians can call themselves nutritionists, however, not all nutritionists can call themselves dietitians. To become a registered dietitian one must follow a prescribed course of study and graduate from an accredited dietetics program.

Q: How do I get started?

A: First, you submit an admission application to Harper. Then you can enroll in class. To start, DIT 100, Introduction to Dietetics, and DIT 101, Basic Nutrition, is recommended. The type of material covered in these classes is basic to what a dietetic Technician will use on the job

There are no entrance requirements for the program. However, many courses need to be taken in sequence. In addition, most of the DIT prefixed courses are only offered once a year. Therefore, students are encouraged to talk with the program coordinator to schedule completion of the program coursework to prevent any delay in finishing. If students have taken courses at other colleges, they should have the transcripts sent to Harper and request that they be evaluated for the Dietetic Technician Program, so as not to repeat courses already taken. Any questions regarding the transfer of classes not accepted should be discussed with the coordinator.

Q: How much does the program cost?

A: Current tuition rates are listed at <http://www.harpercollege.edu/tuition> TUITION AND FEES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. Financial aid is available through the Harper College Office of Scholarships and Financial Assistance and from area hospitals and agencies.

Q: How long does it take to complete the program? When are classes offered?

Can I attend part time?

A: The Dietetic Technician Program culminates in a two-year associate in applied science degree and is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE). The degree requires a minimum of 63 college credit hours. Many students "stretch" completion of the courses to three or more years; however, it is recommended that the student complete the program in no more than five years or they risk the possibility of having to repeat courses taken earlier.

Classes are offered at a variety of times, days, nights, etc. The supervised practice courses are scheduled during the day. Therefore, at present, a student cannot complete the degree going nights only. However, a student does not have to take a full credit load (12 credits or more) to be considered a student in the program.

Q: Are the courses offered at Harper transferable to a four-year program in Dietetics?

A: Yes. Several of the Dietetic Technician Program classes will transfer to a four-year program. However, the four-year dietetic degree requires many more science courses than the dietetic technician curriculum and therefore, additional time will be needed to complete those classes. If a student is thinking of transferring within three to five years of completing the dietetic technician degree, he/she should meet with the program

coordinator or an academic counselor to plan as many transferable courses as possible in their coursework schedule.

Q: Is it possible to complete the courses required at night or online?

A: At the present time, only two DIT classes are offered in a distance-learning format. They are DIT 100, Introduction to Dietetics, and DIT 101, Basic Nutrition. As for the remaining DIT classes, some are offered during the day and some are offered as evening classes. This scheduling allows the student some flexibility when selecting classes. However, in order to complete the degree, daytime availability will be required. This is for the three clinical laboratory classes, which are DIT 150, 200 and 250 (Supervised Practice Experience). At the present time, Harper is not offering any weekend classes in specialized DIT courses.

Q: What does the supervised practice experience cover?

A: The supervised practice experience places students in various health care settings in which they are provided the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to become competent entry-level practitioners. This experience is scheduled for one or two days per week depending on the semester. During this time, students interact with other health care professionals and perform tasks as part of providing total client care. When in the facility students must wear a uniform and follow outlined procedures.