



Transformation

TELOS: Transformation

Growing Through Discomfort

When I look back on my educational experiences here at Fontbonne, one that stands out as being more transformative involved the creation and execution of a lesson plan about mental health at a Youth & Family Center as part of the required coursework for EDU313: Methods & Practicum for Middle, Secondary, & Community Education. I remember my distaste for the entire project due to fears of public speaking and having to interact with teenagers. However, if there is one thing that time has taught me, it is to view everything as a learning experience. I had a lot of anxiety about the lesson plan project simply because of the target audience which included a group of twelve teenage boys between the ages of 11-14. Not only could I not relate to this group, but my overall experience on working with younger populations was little to none. In general, I have struggled with classroom management techniques before, and I really dislike confronting and disciplining students, so I felt like I was in a state of unease from day one in the class. It also did not help that the project was collaborative and that to be honest, sometimes I prefer to work alone, relying on my own skills to produce high quality work.

There were a couple positive factors that helped me get through the experience such as my amazing partner. I wasn't sure if we would work well together because I barely knew her other than she was younger and quieter than myself. After picking a date to work on the project together in the library, we ended up talking for 80% of the time and worked only the other 20%. It was fine though! Definitely not a waste of time. I learned a lot about her educational interests and admired her desire to be a dietician which stemmed from a need to care for her family. My partner had several previous experiences working with students similar to our target population. She set some time aside so that we could sit in an empty classroom and run through the lesson plan together while she pretended to be a participant. Initially I thought it was silly to be

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pretending that my 20-year-old partner was actually a 13-year-old teenage male, however, practicing mannerisms came in handy during the actual presentation. She made me realize that there was room to grow and areas I could improve as long as I was willing to accept the knowledge that she brought to the table. For example, we were playing the teacher role, so it's appropriate to use a stern commanding voice to gain control over the room to maintain attention. It was also fascinating to see how my partner did this because I was so used to seeing her be timid and quiet during class time.

The actual execution of the lesson plan at the Youth & Family Center was nerve-wrecking but also the most transformative part. I realized that flexibility and adaptability is key in being successful no matter the task. Since the audience was not aware of the contents on the lesson plan, my few mistakes went unnoticed. I just had to recover and keep moving on to the best of my ability. The dreaded classroom management portion went over with ease since I applied my partner's tips during practice and knowledge learned in class. I fumbled my words during my presentation portion and ended up skipping a procedure due to time limit, but it was not at all as bad as I expected. Regardless, my dislike of classroom management and teaching below high school level did not change as a result of this experience, but I realized that I learned, adapted, and made strides towards overcoming my fears and achieving a task outside my comfort zone and that was the transformative experience. Not all tasks in life will be pleasant, easy, or enjoyable to complete, however, they still need to be completed. I learned that it is important to still put forth my best effort, use the resources available and to learn from the situation at hand. These are all crucial lessons to learn regardless of the profession.

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Netflix & Nutrition

By far one of the earliest transformative assignments I conducted throughout my nutrition undergraduate work was a group assignment on a nutrition documentary. A significant component of dietetics is understanding where the consumer is getting their information and the credibility of the source. I knew to a certain degree where to find credible sources, but this assignment made me reevaluate that knowledge which also triggered a cascade of reflections. Television is one of the many ways that people disseminate information. This communication medium includes everything from children shows, the latest local, national, global news, reality shows, documentaries, and talk shows. Weaved into many of these programs includes “education” material that hypes up “healthy” food trends. We all have to eat every day, several times so food is important and there is always something new being said about it. My group was tasked with finding a nutrition documentary on Netflix and evaluating the message that the director is trying to get across. Needless to say, I originally thought documentaries on Netflix would be a source of credible information. I mean, it must be credible enough to get produced right? At least that’s what thought.

The film was titled *In Defense of Food* by the journalist Michael Pollan who initially wrote a book about the same topic which was ranked #1 on the New York Times non-fiction best seller list for six weeks. Both the book and film were successful. Yet after watching the film, I noticed that no dietitian was interviewed, only physicians, professors, and other professionals provided a positive statement that reinforced Pollan’s message of “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants”. I was curious to figure out why this was the case since his message sounded correct to me. Was there something Mr. Pollan said that did not add up? Was the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics not supportive of the message for some reason? I learned that there is

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actually more misinformation about nutrition than there are truths available to the public which led me to an ‘ah-ha’ moment. Although his overall message was sound, Mr. Pollan disapproves of processed foods, canned items, and eating things that your grandmother would not recognize. It is important to understand that not all people have the financial means to adhere to Pollan’s message. Additionally, not all canned items are unhealthy and not all processed foods are harmful (fortified cereals are nutritious). Plus, significant improvements to food have been made since any grandmothers’ time. It is no wonder that the public is so confused about nutrition. I learned that most people source their nutrition information from their family members, physicians, TV shows, supposedly informative documentaries, basically everything except a dietitian. Unfortunately, people don’t realize that other healthcare professionals take roughly six credit hours-worth of basic nutrition classes, whereas a dietitian studies nutrition for at least four years, plus 1200 hours of supervised practice. It’s important to have dietitians support the correct messages Mr. Pollan was promoting. Nutrition can be very individualized depending on a client’s health status. I realized why it is important that there are dietitians around to address individual concerns especially as the nation’s overall health seems to only get worse. The assignment got me thinking more deeply about the credibility of publicized nutritional messages. I want to right the wrongs. I want to educate people so that their health may prosper without falling for some gimmicky media trends. It was a very simple group project in one of the beginner nutrition courses, but it made me realize how dieticians can serve the public good by educating citizens, whether that be through nutrition classes, or having a stronger media presence to comment on food related topics.

In Defense of Food



Exploration

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Sprouting Serenity

The world of gardening has been foreign to me for the past 27 years, yet I never would have guessed that nutrition would introduce me to this great hobby. It all began with a three-day rotation at a local community site with an amazing supervisor named Millie Mattfeldt-Beman, Professor Emerita from Saint Louis University and Project Coordinator for the North City Food Hub. She tasked my group with the creation of four lesson plans around the theme of microgreens that would be taught to the local community, as well as a presentation for National Nutrition Month. The ironic part of our group of three was that even though we were all dietetic students, none of us knew anything, and I mean anything about growing food. This was fine for the most part since we had the nutrition and culinary portions down, but Millie was so determined on making us do the gardening portion as well that it made our team crazy.

So, it was time for gardening 101 with Millie. She sat us down in her home and took out this bowl filled with all kinds of seeds. Next, she grabbed an empty container that once held some type of berries and she brought over these orange discs, which were apparently coconut hair? She said that's all we will need to grow microgreens. We all looked at her with bewildered expressions. She laughed and reassured us that we could do this. Millie taught us that learning about how to grow food was just as important as learning about the nutrition behind it. Fast-forward four weeks, three of which were team-procrastination since none of us wanted to grow them. My team member who was specifically in charge of the gardening portion eventually did it! She grew the microgreens successfully! I remember seeing her picture in the group message of the broccoli microgreens popping up vibrantly through the soil. Finally, it was the day of our National Nutrition Month presentation, and it all went over smoothly. My first team member made delicious Asian lettuce wraps that featured the microgreens as a garnish, I was the nutrition

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expert that delivered facts that amazed the crowd, and my other teammate flawlessly guided people through making their own little microgreen garden to take with them.

At the end of the day, I was able to make my own container of red cabbage microgreens and I took it home and followed every instruction. I checked every day for a week, and sure enough, they sprouted! I was beyond delighted! This was an achievement for me in an area I never thought was possible. Even my co-worker at Mercy was so proud of me taking my first steps in gardening that she asked if I wanted a baby aloe vera plant and gifted it to me. I'll admit, I was nervous. I tried to take care of a basil plant before and it failed quickly. However, this time was going to be different, I felt determined. I naturally found myself looking at websites and watching videos on aloe vera care treatments and felt my confidence building. I went to Home Depot by myself and bought the proper food, soil, and a simple yet functional pot. I carefully repotted the aloe into its new home and named him like my coworker suggested. His name was Bartholomew and he was going to be my first real foray into the world of gardening. Fast-forward to today, he's growing well and still looking super healthy. I spend at least 30 minutes every other day by his side eating dinner or working on my homework. He brings me joy and serenity.

This may not seem like a big deal. Okay, I took care of some plants, so what? Well, it was a challenge for me. I utilized skills such as proper research, troubleshooting, setting a plan into motion, and exercising patience. My initial interest was connected to nutrition because I started learning about and growing microgreens, but it grew into something much more. I realized that gardening helped to balance out my hectic schedule and provided a chunk of time dedicated to serenity. Looking back, a class on gardening would benefit the dietetics department

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since it helps to learn and visualize the planting, harvesting, consumption, and sustainability of food in a realistic setting.

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Taking Steps Towards Being Trauma-Informed

Trauma...such a fascinating yet fearful word. As part of my Honors coursework, I took a course called Trauma and Literature: The Search for Meaning in the Fall 2018. I learned quickly that I knew very little about the word trauma, or that I had in fact been experiencing it for several years with invisible wounds that have yet to heal. The Center for Treatment of Anxiety and Mood Disorders defines trauma as a psychological and emotional response to an event or an experience that is deeply distressing or disturbing. It could be something like getting into an accident and going to the hospital to heal from the physical wounds; which was what I generally thought of it as. Or, it could be as complicated as recovering mentally from the fear of now being in a car, or driving again, or possibly endangering the life of another who was also involved in the accident.

For many, the manifestation of trauma cripples their mind and locks away part of their humanity. This aspect became particularly clear when my class read a memoir titled *Wave* by Sonali Deraniyagala and her experience with the 2004 earthquake and tsunami that hit the Indian Ocean. This triggered a traumatic memory of my own, however, a much different experience than the author's. Sonali lost her husband along with two sons, which nearly took her own will to live away. I thankfully did not lose any extended family members, however, the dreadfully long time it took to confirm that statement was traumatic enough for my whole family that Christmas. Revisiting that experience brought up many questions that I did not expect. Why did I not talk to anyone about how I felt back then? Why did I cry reading the memoir? Why am I still hesitant to talk about it?

There were moments in class where my peers struggled to attach words to feelings, or where some would have to step out because the topic discussed was too painful to hear. I

Reflection: Wave

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learned just how vulnerable a person had to be in order to face their traumas, let alone, expose it to others. I also learned that trauma is very individualized and what seems harmless to me, can appear traumatic to another person. For example, somedays I skip meals, but I would not call this traumatizing because I forgot my money or did not have time. Some people are forced to skip meals repeatedly due to a lack of resources and that stomach growl now becomes a constant signal of the trauma they must deal with. It taught me to be more sensitive of the people around me and especially those whom I will interact with in my future profession.

Being food insecure can be a very traumatic experience and one that must be approached with caution. People often have difficulty utilizing resources in hard times because they experience a sense of shame or they are unaware of how to address their trauma. This made me realize that when interacting with clients, I need to rephrase questions; instead of asking “are you okay?” ask instead, “what happened to you, and how can I help?” in order to understand the reason why and provide maximum support. An example that comes to mind is a story my professor told our about troubled teenager who got into a fight at school one morning. After a conversation with the student to learn about what the cause of the fight was, my professor realized that the student’s mood may have been irascible because they had not eaten at all that day. After providing the student with a meal, their mood had significantly improved.

I never would have imagined how closely trauma and food could be woven together. I learned how to be sensitive to trauma as a future health care professional by rephrasing questions that open up important dialog with people so that I may better understand their situation to provide the best help.

Reflection: Wave

A decorative border of purple dots surrounds the word "Leadership". The dots are arranged in a rectangular shape with rounded corners, with a slightly larger gap on the left side. The word "Leadership" is written in a light blue, cursive script font in the center of the image.

Leadership

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Serving Up Self-Efficacy

Ever since I was young, leadership was a concept and a skill that I feared. I feared it because I felt I did not possess it. I was never the leader but would always volunteer to be the follower; never the president, but always a loyal member. I felt as though an overwhelming amount of responsibility fell on any leadership role and I did not have the heart to deal with potentially disappointing others. I never once took charge of anything until I decided to join a sorority at the University of Missouri-Columbia at the age of 20. It was a whirlwind of a decision to join because it was the first decision I made on my own, for my own sake, and it came with multiple responsibilities. I quickly learned how to effectively and efficiently divide my time to attend classes, attend meetings with other organizations on campus to plan collaborative events, and fulfill my responsibilities as chair for fundraising and webmaster for my chapter. I believe the sorority played a major role in cracking my protective barrier to reveal a potential leader.

Upon making the decision to return to school for a second degree which that in and of itself, required yet more leadership of my own, I decided to make this a personal goal to improve. I attended QUEST leadership program events, applied and got accepted into the TELOS Honors program, and decided to take a more active role across all of my classes. It started with baby steps such as learning to speak up in classes even if my answers were wrong and taking the initiative to get to know my professors. The dietetics program has numerous opportunities to apply learned knowledge, and the catering group project in my Food Quantity class, was one such project.

The project was about meeting with a client and catering a meal that meets their requirements. Our group of four students catered the Dinner with Griffins for twelve students and alums in October 2017. All stages of the project were our responsibility: planning,

Catering Project Reflection

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decorations, theme, budgeting, ordering, standardizing recipes, procuring, workflow sheets, taking pictures along the way, and a final written reflection of the activity. Work was divided amongst the group equally and there was not one specified leader for the group. However, when it came down to the actual implementation of the dinner, I surprisingly fell into the leadership role naturally. There were numerous moving parts to consider and some of my teammates were feeling stressed. However, I felt a sense of motivation, responsibility, and even a little enjoyment! It was like attempting to solve a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle with a time limit, but I saw it as a fun challenge rather than a stressful situation. Thankfully, the dinner went smoothly, and the timing of our service was impeccable. My teammates were less stressed as a result of my cool command and we had a group hug. I took on the role of a problem-solver where I came up with a plan with sequential parts, A B C and D, and implemented it. I realized that having to think through actions prior to executing them was a skill that came more naturally to me. Even though the group did not call for a leader, I took the lead that night, and did it rather effortlessly. Having the ability to step up to a challenge and fill the need takes certain leadership skills, so I was happy to get the chance to practice. I quickly realized that I possessed the skills (being organized, multitasking, management of resources) and possessed the knowledge (food safety, standardizing recipes, menu planning) needed to tackle this situation. In the profession of dietetics, the role of a dietitian is often not seen as a leader, but a valued member of a team that provides collaborative care. However, this project not only enhanced my nutritional knowledge and skill set, but also challenged my viewpoint on being part of a team. I found that leadership was emerging organically throughout my collaborative experiences with others and my self-efficacy in being the leader when it comes to nutrition.

Catering Project Reflection

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Learning to Teach and Teaching to Learn

As long as I have the ability to help others, I shall do so. Advanced Nutrition proved to be one of the most challenging courses I have ever taken, yet I'm grateful for it because it allowed me to help my peers who struggled with the course as well. The grades were primarily based off of exams and these little monsters were all lengthy essay responses. You either knew what you were writing about or you just took a big step closer to disaster. Sure enough, the first exam was a B and that accurately represented my efforts. I decided to revamp the way I studied for the other exams by recording audio for the lecture so I could listen multiple times if needed, looked up videos and diagrams since I am more of a visual learner, and created my own charts and diagrams which proved to be a major success.

While I succeeded, it became clear that many other classmates were struggling. Technically these people were my competitors in getting an internship, however, it was upsetting to see many of them stressed out to the max. I decided to take matters into my own hands and decided to prepare study groups. It was an open invitation to anyone who wanted to study together at any time I was free. I began to meet up with different classmates; sometimes it was only for 15 minutes before a class began, an hour here or there. We even met at 7am on a Saturday morning before I had to go to work at 10. I drew diagram after diagram and pretended to play both the teacher and student role in order to review materials. There were moments when I sacrificed my lunch break just so I could help go over a concept.

This class was only the tip of the iceberg that semester. I was taking 18 credit hours of coursework which two classes were writing intensive, working part time in a hospital, and volunteering for different nutrition-related activities. The entire semester was a thorough test of my mentoring skills. I had to be patient, actively listen, multitask, remain positive, provide clear

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feedback, and effectively teach. It was a lot of work, but there were several benefits I experienced as well. Adaptability became my middle name. Each classmate had a different way of learning, so I had to adjust my teaching skills in order to making the learning process more effective for that person(s). I too was learning from my peers by taking their feedback and applying tips and tricks that I could then pass along to others. This could be the sharing of videos or images that reinforced the material. The class also improved my social skills since I studied with almost everyone at one point or another and everyone knew my name. It built a sense of comradery every time we walked into test day. I lost quite a bit of sleep, but it was a small price to pay in the grand scheme of things. It was a sacrifice that ultimately brought joy when my classmates felt confident in their knowledge and their exam scores quickly became living proof of that.

My entire profession is built around educating others on nutrition so understanding how to best present information in an easy to learn manner is key. Most dietitians also become preceptors to dietetic interns which is another mentor-mentee relationship where knowledge must be passed down effectively. I have increased confidence in my ability to teach and mentor others as a result of this learning opportunity.



Occupation

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The Centennial Celebration of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

I never expected I would attend the Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE). Was I qualified enough? Did I have enough money to attend? Could I balance my school work and attend a 3-day trip? According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the annual conference is the world's largest meeting of food and nutrition experts. More than 10,000 registered dietitian nutritionists, nutrition science researchers, policy makers, health-care providers and industry leaders attend to address key issues affecting the health of all Americans. The whole experience was very surreal but eye-opening at the same time.

It was my second semester at Fontbonne and my first real semester of nutrition courses. Some of my classmates were planning to go together. I felt out of place since I did not quite know everyone well enough and I was quite shy so asking if I could join them was difficult. We were all told that the Family and Consumer Sciences Department was giving away two grants to attend FNCE fully paid. I already had a lot of my plate with classes, but I decided within two weeks of the deadline for the application that it was now or never. The worst that could happen was that my application was rejected. I knew I needed some writing help with the essay so I sought out assistance from Dr. Carey Adams, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and my professor for Communications in Everyday Life class, and he gave me some tips which I immediately implemented, and then turned in the application. I knew I wasn't financially capable of attending without this grant, and this was the centennial celebration for the Academy, so it was worth the shot. Within two weeks I was notified that I was the undergraduate student to win the grant and the other recipient was a graduate student. I was super excited to say the least. I couldn't wait to attend.

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Attending FNCE reminds me of more than one area of TELOS, such as transformation, leadership and exploration; but occupation stands out the most. My interest in dietetics was just starting to take root, but this experience caused my passion to bloom. It was scary. I was doing everything by myself, going to the booths and workshops I wanted, exploring and travelling solo. I was alone for a good 80% of the trip! However, I still remember coming up that escalator and being utterly speechless to see the expo hall on my right side filled with a community of liked-minded individuals. I knew in that moment that this path was my destiny. I was made to be dietitian and the world of nutrition was made for me.

Conferences can be boring, especially if the presenter is ill prepared or the execution does not go so well. This major conference was no exception. Some presentations were better than others, but that was okay. I got up early each day and went to as many topics as I could. I learned about new developments in genetics, nutrition screening tools, the world of plant-based nutrition, how to succeed in the field, and the power the circadian rhythm has on nutrition. I loved every minute of it and the conference broadened my perspective on all the interesting pathways that nutrition can provide. I also made some great connections with current professionals in the field that gave me advice on how they figured out their path. Looking back on the event, I wish I would have attended specific networking events that occurred in the evening. I was too tired though, but most of all, still very shy, so I stayed in. I do plan on attending FNCE again perhaps in 2019 or 2020 and the list of things to do is already starting to grow. Overall, this experience was remarkable and one that left an impression in my mind and heart forever.

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Providing Transformative Health Care

I began working at Mercy Hospital in St. Louis in May 2017 as a nutrition assistant and what an amazing experience the job has been so far. The job fulfills two purposes for me: covering all healthcare insurance needs such as medical, dental, vision as a person over the age of 26, and provides dietetics-related work experience. At the start of the job, I had very limited nutrition knowledge since most of my nutrition courses had not begun. In a way, the job taught me more about general nutrition from a clinical perspective before coursework did. This came in very handy throughout different coursework later because I was able to make connections between the concepts I was learning in class and the real-life application of those concepts in a professional setting. I knew dietary restrictions like the back of my hand after talking with thousands of patients. When I learned the reason why those restrictions were in place and what the role of the dietitian was in class, it made offering dietary advice to patients much easier and understandable. It always gave me a heartwarming feeling when I could help a patient order food that was appetizing for them but also fulfilled the guidelines that their physician and dietitian mandated. The patients and their families are also very thankful for any guidance they receive during this time of healing.

Besides providing me with a strong clinical foundation of dietary guidelines, I took advantage of the opportunity to shadow dietitians. Since I was already an employee of the hospital, my Clinical Manager would approve of any shadow requests I had as long as availabilities matched up. I shadowed an in-patient dietitian who worked often with the older adult population. This gave me the chance to see individualized patient care for cardiovascular and renal diseases. Many of these older patients were quite ill and it broke my heart to see them in such a state. It takes patience, compassion and persistence to care for the elderly no matter the

Co-Worker of the Month

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field and I realized that maybe I am not that type of person. Plus, I want to be able to see the same person throughout for a long period of time. A lengthy client relationship helps to build the patient's self-efficacy since I would get the chance to adjust their plan of care continually to meet their needs. I want to be there at the start of a client's journey and see them through to a healthy and happy destination.

I also shadowed an administrative dietitian who focused on all of the software utilized for room service, menu planning and ordering, the hiring process of nutrition assistants, and scheduling. Now this may seem boring or tedious to some people, but I was intrigued by her tasks. They were more technical by nature and I tend to be a more logical and technical person. I asked her about her education path and what led her to her current position, which provided some inspiration for a pathway to try myself. The experiences were short in duration, but they provided such valuable insight into the clinical aspect of dietetics and what type of specific jobs are available. The more I learned about the clinical side of the field, the more my nutrition knowledge base expanded, which was what determined the internships I applied to. It made me realize that I enjoyed following up with patients, but I might also enjoy working with nutrition software and menu design.

Regardless of whatever was going on in my personal life, I tried to always walk into work with the mindset of treating all experiences as a learning opportunity. As a result, Mercy has given me the chance to improve my leadership skills, patience, compassionate care, and nutrition knowledge, which has been a personal goal throughout my time at Fontbonne.

Co-Worker of the Month



Service +

Social Justice

TELOS: Service and Social Justice

Cooking Matters

I'll admit it, social justice has not always been a strength of mine. Service, sure, but not social justice. I have always understood the need for it, to work towards achieving fair and equal access to basic societal needs, particularly for historically marginalized groups, however, I lacked the advocacy experience. I've donated my time by volunteering for different organizations, but I did not do much beyond that. I not only felt a lack of skills to do so, but also the drive or reason 'why'. To a certain extent, I kept asking myself, why must I do this? Why should I be responsible of helping others? Why can't they help themselves? As I grew older and entered college, I began to realize that some people were not physically capable of doing so or were at a disadvantage right from birth due to race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and disability.

Throughout my college years, my sense of service only grew as I began to find out the answer for my 'why'. After deciding on the path of dietetics, I soon realized that both service and social justice were emphasized at the university but also specifically in Family and Consumer Sciences and the Dietetics degree itself. The department has instilled several service opportunities (food demonstrations, volunteering at food banks/pantries and providing nutrition counseling) throughout the degree program as well as a capstone course dedicated to social justice and advocacy (FCS485: Public Policy & Advocacy in FCS). I knew that food insecurity was a global problem but did not realize that Missourians also struggled until I took several classes.

I decided to take matters into my own hands one summer by getting involved with a program called Cooking Matters through Operation Food Search, a St. Louis-based non-profit organization dedicated to ending hunger in the greater St. Louis metropolitan area. Cooking

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Matters is a six-session course led by trained nutrition educators on the topics of nutrition, meal preparation, cooking skills and more. I became involved as a classroom assistant to a nutrition educator and helped to teach the nutrition of MyPlate, assist with recipes, and teach knife skills to a group of 12 kids between the ages of 8-10 at the Boys & Girls Club at Adam's Park. There was a good mix of boys and girls, and the majority were African American coming from low-income families.

It was a hectic yet enjoyable experience because the kids looked forward to seeing us each week and I knew everyone's names by the end. One day, my table of kids were in charge of making the fruit salad and I helped to make sure everyone got a chance to chop some fresh fruits and measure out some dried fruits and nuts. I noticed that some children were unfamiliar with raisins, so I took this opportunity to educate what a raisin was and gave everyone the chance to try one. I saw some smiles and one kiddo quickly went over to the trash, which was okay. This happened several times throughout the full program as the kids were exposed to different vegetables, fruits, grains, and learning the difference between soda and fruit juices.

Looking back on the program, not only did I volunteer my time, but I also helped to teach vital cooking skills to young children and expanded their knowledge and taste by encouraging them to try new foods. This answered my 'why'. Programs such as Cooking Matters could not exist without the continual help of volunteers and staff, and without such programs, at-risk populations such as low-income families, young children, pregnant women, and older adults would continue to be at a disadvantage. As a future dietitian, I will be equipped with the knowledge and skill set to further help organizations such as Operation Food Search continue to fulfill their mission of providing nutrition education to communities in need. This experience

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helped me to see why I must continue this path of service, and build on my advocacy for social justice, and how it positively impacts communities.

TELOS: Service and Social Justice

Serving the Dear Neighbor

Food. It is something so essential to life and yet many people locally, nationally, and globally - struggle to attain it. In a world of abundance, it can sometimes be hard to imagine that your neighbor worries how they will find their next meal or whether they have enough food to feed their children. Thankfully there are resources and organizations that dedicate their mission to reduce food insecurity. The Harvey Kornblum Jewish food pantry is an organization that serves such a mission. I took the opportunity to volunteer at the food pantry and learned about what helping the community looks like. One task I performed was entering the new client information into the computer system. Through this task, I learned that the majority of the clients that utilize the pantry were African Americans, older adults, and families with multiple young children. In dietetics, the older adults, and children are considered at-risk populations due to the health disparities and exposure to malnutrition they face.

In volunteering there, what struck me was how friendly the staff and volunteers of the pantry were. They had about eight full time employees, but the rest was powered by volunteers. I could really tell that people loved to help the pantry and as a result, the clients always had a good visit. I noticed right away how inclusive the staff were. They accepted all people that used the pantry and those that wanted to help, regardless of race/ethnicity, age, or ability. These inclusive spaces are so important because as a minority, I've been the recipient of discrimination myself, and I've witnessed other minorities experience prejudice.

My primary task was to sort fresh fruits and vegetables alongside regular volunteers who I learned have been coming to help the pantry for numerous years, some over ten. These people were true angels. Many of them were retired lawyers, doctors, engineers, politicians, and nurses. Some were still working their full-time jobs and volunteering. They all had one thing in

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common: compassion for others. No one was watching them, no television station was there to air their good deeds, and none of them were forced to be there. One day, I was washing crates and I observed an elderly woman that came to the pantry with what seemed to be her two young grandchildren. As soon as she entered, one of the volunteers greeted her with a welcoming smile and helped to guide her through the aisles. The children were super excited and specifically wanted some grape jelly, however the shelves did not have any and the children were starting to get upset. A different volunteer asked them to hold on for a moment and went to the storage area to see if we had any containers left. It took a moment but they were able to find a container which brought pure joy to the children and the grandmother could not thank the volunteers enough. It was a simple act of kindness, but to the volunteers, it meant the world if the client could be happy. The world needs more of that care.

Many of the clients already feel a sense of shame when they have to seek out such support but the volunteers do their best in order to make the clients feel comfortable during their time of need. The pantry does not have a huge sign that labels it as a pantry, and all of the bagging, and helping to move the groceries into vehicles is done at the back of the building so that it minimizes exposure. Everyone there really goes the extra mile to care for their community and the mission is visible through these actions.

I learned that there are people that need more help than others in life, and although I don't have policy level powers to make changes, I can still make a significant positive impact by donating the resources I do have control over such as my time and expertise. As a future dietitian, I understand the need for a RDN's involvement in communities. Many communities' nutritional needs are underserved, and as a result, are at risk risk of health problems. After achieving my credentials, I plan to become more involved in the community by working with

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food pantries to provide nutrition education lessons free of charge. It is crucial that more of us set aside time to get involved with community outreach since prevention of diseases using food as medicine is my profession's specialty.