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2021 Honors Portfolio

Mary Beers

Fontbonne University

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INTRODUCTION

And just like that, it's over. Four years later and I have come out the other side. My time at Fontbonne has been some of the most formative years of my life. When I first stepped foot on campus, I had not idea the impact it would have on my life. Reflecting on my experiences gives them a news sense of meaning.

College is fast paced. It's filled with late nights, long weeks, countless papers, projects, and presentations. Many times, we are in survival mode, just trying to make it through the day. Rarely do we actually sit down and reflect on the experiences we've had. Usually, the only time I would reflect is when it was required for a class. But the impact that the simple act of reflecting can have on our lives is profound. Connecting my experiences back to the pillars of TELOS (Transformation, Exploration, Leadership, Occupation, Service & Social Justice) has given them more value. Events, accomplishments, or projects that I may have brushed off turned out to be the things that shape me into the person I am today.

This group of reflections represents some of the most important aspects of my college career. It includes my transformation as a student and a person. It showcases the incredible impact that soccer has and how it has defined my most prominent qualities. It includes courses that challenged me to think beyond what I knew about the world and myself. One class allowed me to learn about Borders and Borderlands, and another prompted me to define the most important values in my life. I defined leadership and how I transitioned into a leader in various aspects of soccer, classes, and work. This reflection also showcases how I define my future career and what it means to me to be a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. Overall, this portfolio is me. The good, the bad, and the ugly. Reliving these moments has only made them sweeter and I hope you enjoy them as much as I did when writing them.

TRANSFORMATION

A Whole New World

When I envisioned myself graduating college, I imagined a poised, refined, and well-suited woman ready to head out into the world to make my mark. I imagined I would have everything together and there'd be nothing stopping me. Boy was I wrong.

Growing up is hard. Transitioning from youth to adulthood is not as pretty as the John Hughes movies make it out to be. Coming into Fontbonne, I was a wide-eyed 18-year-old who had never truly been on my own. I was ready to explore the liberties that college provided and find a true sense of independence. Although I moved only thirty minutes away from my family, to me it felt like light years. Being away from home allowed to try new things and truly take responsibility of my life. Of course, I got caught up in the late nights and parties because that's what you do when you're a freshman in college right? But all of these experiences have taught me so much about being accountable for myself.

Into my sophomore year, I had a slight existential crisis: who was I and dear god what am I supposed to be doing on this earth? I entered Fontbonne as a Speech Language Pathology major, but for some reason things weren't clicking. I couldn't envision myself working as an SLP and I didn't truly love the learning. Hence, where the dread and doom of how I fit into this world came about. For months I was in turmoil over what to do. Computer science majors make great money, but I hate computers with a passion. Sure, I was good at math, but what would I do with that? It wasn't until my mom mentioned dietetics, that I heard the angels singing.

I switched my major and it felt like I had finally found a home. My dietetics courses had just enough science to entertain me, but not enough to scare me. I fell in love with learning how the food we consume impacts how our bodies function. I loved keeping a three-day dietary record and then analyzing my nutrient intake. I loved growing and running tests on cultures in a microbiology lab. I even loved the challenging experimental foods labs. I grew to appreciate the coursework and began to truly see this as my future profession.

I was accepted into the Coordinated Program in Nutrition and Dietetics my junior year and this eradicated any doubtful thoughts about my future. It was a relief to move forward in my academic career. I finally found my footing and my future almost felt tactile. I realized that since starting at Fontbonne I finally found direction in my life. I took more advanced classes and explored complicated topics. I was learning about concepts that not only advanced my academic career, but also me personally. I found confidence in my studies, but also in myself. I realized that I do belong here, and all of my struggles have been worth it

As I've grown into my last semester at Fontbonne, I am grateful for everything I've experienced. Analyzing who I was as a freshman, and who I am now; we are not the same. And I never expected us to be. The things I was initially dying to get away from, like my family, have become the backbone of my existence today. I've realized that I succeed when I surround myself with the most important people in my life. If I didn't take the windy route that I did, I may not have reached the same conclusion of where I am at today.

As I continue my journey, I look forward to the opportunities ahead of me. Do I have it all figured out: no, absolutely not! In some ways, I am almost a freshman again, ready for a new endeavor. I'm not exactly sure where I go next from here or how it will look. Nevertheless, I've realized that it's completely fine to not have it all together; you just have to take the next step forward.

May 15, 2019

Department of Family & Consumer Sciences

Dear Ms. Mary Beers,

It is the policy of Fontbonne University that students apply to their college or department for acceptance into a major in the spring of their resident sophomore year or after one full semester (or minimum 12 credit hours at Fontbonne) if transferring in or seeking a second degree. At that time, it is determined whether or not the student has shown an aptitude for the chosen discipline.

Although the minimum required professional GPA of 3.20 for dietetics is the main criterion for this determination as outlined in the University Catalog, many other factors from the application are taken into consideration. A student who does not meet or maintain the requirements for major approval may 1) be accepted into or remain in the major with qualifications that must be met as specified by the college dean/department chair or 2) become ineligible to complete the respective program requirements. No college or department is obligated to approve a request for major approval merely because a student has accumulated the specified minimum number of credit hours in that area.

After thoroughly reviewing your academic record and any supporting evidence for your potential success, it is the decision of the Department of Family & Consumer Sciences to accept you into the dietetics major without additional qualifications. Remaining in the major is contingent upon preserving a minimum GPA and/or other major requirements as set forth by the college/department.

Congratulations on this important achievement!

Mary Beth Ohlms

Mary Beth Ohlms, MEd, RD, LD
Chair, Department of Family & Consumer Sciences

On & off the field

I have taken two dance lessons in my entire life. I made it through the first one wearing a little black leotard, but by the second lesson, I promptly walked out of the studio and joined my brother's soccer practice on the field. I had clearly found my passion but at three years old, I had no idea where soccer could take me. I had no idea the profound impact it would have on my life; I just knew it made me happy.

I started playing soccer nineteen years ago. It's hard to believe that I've played this sport for the majority of my life. Soccer has touched every aspect of my life and has shaped me into the person I am today. It all started with peewee soccer. You know the games where you see a herd of kids running after the ball? Well, that's where I started. Somehow today I continue to play the sport I love at the collegiate level. I won't bore you with the minute details of my entire soccer career, but just know that over the years, soccer has challenged me physically, mentally, and emotionally.

When looking at colleges, my deciding factor was where I could continue my soccer career. It just so happens Fontbonne was that place. Transitioning from high school to college can be tough in general, add in playing a sport at a higher-level, well it makes college even more challenging. It was at Fontbonne though that I grew the most as a leader, teammate, and overall, as a person. Coming in as a freshman, you're scared. You're not sure how you should behave and are very timid. You're simply in survival mode trying to do your best on the field. As my role on the team changed, I could feel myself shaping up to be a leader. Whether this meant being the first one in at practices and the last one out, or staying after to do extra repetitions, or squeezing in extra fitness, I strived to lead by example.

The thing about soccer is that you can be the greatest individual player in the world, but it doesn't make a bit of difference if you can't play with the ten other people of the field. Learning to mesh with other people is something that translates into my real life. I learned to set aside differences and simply put our objective as the top priority. Teamwork truly does make the dream work.

My favorite thing about the sport is that when you're on the field, you're simply an athlete. My duties as a daughter, friend, sister, and student fade away and my only focus is the game. When you step across that white line and onto the pitch, you leave everything from the real world on the sideline. This release from reality is what keeps me coming back. It keeps me holding onto the dream to keep playing. Today I live with a broken-down body, no doubt due to the years of abuse I put it through. But not for a second would I trade it back and give up soccer. This sport has given so much to me and allowed me to thrive. I dedicate my strongest assets, dedication, perseverance, and leadership all to the sport of soccer. Who knew something that started out simply as fun could shape me into the person I am today?

When my playing days end, I strive to keep this sport interaced in my life. It may look a little different or a little less official, but it is still the sport that I love. For so long being an athlete has been my identity. It has been a source of confidence and validation for many years of my life. However, I look forward to diversifying my experiences and interests while still drawing upon the skills that soccer has provided me.



EXPLORATION

Borders

In the spring semester of my junior year, I needed of an honors credit course. Looking through the catalog, I saw a “Special Topics: Borders and Borderlands” class. I thought to myself, “Sure, looks interesting. How bad could it be?” Little did I know it would be one of the most impactful courses I have taken at Fontbonne. It was a special topics course that covered the concepts of palpable and impalpable borders. Specifically, we focused on the US – Mexico border and borders within ourselves.

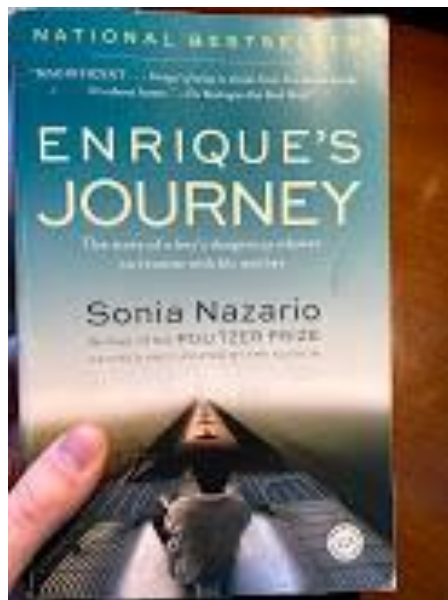
Borders are all around us. They are not just defined as a simple geographical boundary between two places. Rather, borders are integrated into society in a more abstract way. Borders create separation. They define who is allowed in and who is kept out. The meaning of a border varies depending on the point of view. For those living within a border, it can offer protection. Protection from the outside, protection from the unknown, protection from the unwanted. There has always been a strong presence of the US – Mexico border and it takes a fine-toothed comb to decipher it. No matter your stance on it, we can all agree it’s a labyrinth to navigate.

This class gave me an abundance of perspective. Reading, listening, and exploring the stories of migrants crossing the border tugged at my heartstrings. For the first time, I saw these “illegal immigrants” as humans. Humans who are just trying to do better in life and find a sense of security. One of the most impactful assignments was reading the book, *Enrique’s Journey*. This novel entails the story of a Honduran boy looking for his mother, eleven years after she is forced to leave her starving family to find work in the United States. Enrique must traverse over 12,000 miles through Guatemala, up Mexico, and into the US to reach his mom. He faces bandits, gangsters, immigration officers, and corrupt police, as well as physically barriers such as rivers and deserts. In the end, Enrique reunites with his mother and begins to build a life.

What I couldn’t grapple with was how did I get so lucky in life? Never once have I had to migrate to an entirely different country where I don’t speak the language just for basic survival. I’ve never been separated from my parents because they had to find work in another country.

I've never had my status as a citizen questioned or worry about being caught undocumented. My life in comparison has been a walk in the park. So, then I found myself asking, what is my role in this? Here is where I think the value of empathy comes into play. This involves acknowledging the underlying human similarities and using them to transcend the borders that reside within our world, country, state, and community. I have learned to pay more attention to issues that involve migration and see it in an entirely new light. It stops becoming an "us" vs "them" problem, but rather the issue can be tackled as a community.

Did I solve the problem of borders by the end of the semester? Well, no. However, what I did do was start a conversation with myself and those around me. I learned to see this crazy world from different perspectives and understand that life isn't always black and white. Instead, there is a million shades of grey and it's up to us to decide what picture we paint with it.



An Articulation of Me

In one of my first dietetics classes, we were given a “Values Identification” assignment. It was fairly straightforward; rate your top ten values and explain what they mean to you. I thought this would be a walk in the park, all I had to do was write down a couple ideas and I’d be done. Easy twenty points for me, right? After a couple hours staring at an empty word document and nothing to show for it, I realized that this assignment was more challenging than I thought.

Values gives us a sense of right and wrong. They help us grow and develop. They guide the decisions we make in our lives. How have I advanced this far in my life, without knowing the baseline of my moral compass? I struggled to articulate what I valued. This may be because today’s society does not practice many values. I look around and I see greed, discrimination, vanity, egotism, materialism, and selfishness. I recognize that what I am surrounded by does not dictate my own personal values. Yet it was still difficult to set and define my personal beliefs.

After much deliberation, I was finally able to rank my top ten values with my top three being family, love, and loyalty. My top value is family because they are the strongest support network I have. My parents have shaped me into who I am now and have given me the values I embody. My immediate and extended family are the most consistent thing in my life. We have shared similar experiences, whether good or bad. It ties into the love we have for each other, which is my next value. Love bonds us and gives us a connection to people. I love different people for many distinct reasons, and they all know how much I care for them. I give my loyalty to them. Loyalty allows me to stay true to those people. I pledge my time and companionship to them.

The exploration of my values had allowed me to become a more well-defined person. Understanding that because I have high regards for these values helps me understand how I interact with the world around me. Being able to define these values allows me make decisions, take action, and incorporate them into the life that I want to live.

VALUES IDENTIFICATION

My Top Ten Personal Values

1) Family

- a) Family consists of the people who love and support you. It allows me to feel safe and secure. I can live joyously when in harmony with my family.

2) Love

- a) Love is the deep caring and dedication you have for a person or thing. Love allows me to maintain relationships among friends and family. I live to share my love with others.

3) Loyalty

- a) Loyalty is showing faithfulness and allegiance. It allows me to show my love to others. Loyalty glues my relationships together.

4) Knowledge

- a) Knowledge is the condition of understanding facts, situations, and skills. It is the key to success and drives me forward. I pursue knowledge in every facet of my life.

5) Adventure

- a) Adventure is the exploration of the unknown. It allows me to seek beyond the things I know. I live courageously and freely because of adventure.

6) Fun

- a) Fun is enjoyment or amusement. It makes my life happier and healthier. My friends and family contribute to the fun in my life.

7) Respect

- a) Respect is admiration and reverence. I show respect in all my relationships. I show my acceptance and trust with respect.

8) Responsibility

VALUES IDENTIFICATION

- a) Responsibility is duty. I have responsibilities to my family, friends, team, work, and school. It allows me to have a sense of belonging.

9) Friendship

- a) Friends are a support network; those who we share our life with. My friendships make me feel happy and fulfilled. It gives me joy to be surrounded by these people.

10) Independence

- a) Independence is the state of being free and ungoverned. It allows me to grow and succeed on my own. I feel strong and capable with independence.

LEADERSHIP

Camp FRESH!

One of the most impactful leadership opportunities that I had was working Camp FRESH at Fontbonne the summer of my junior year. Camp FRESH is a summer camp for kids aged 4th through 7th grade. This camp takes kids on an interactive, hands-on journey toward better health through activities emphasizing culinary experiences, nutrition, health and wellness, physical exercise, and creativity. Each weeklong day camp features a different continent, from Antarctica to South America, with stops along the way to learn about different cultures across the globe. This camp allowed kids to travel the world without leaving St. Louis.

For anyone who has ever worked a summer camp knows that it is seriously hard work. Wrangling a bunch of kids together to keep them safe and entertained took every ounce of leadership I had in me. To say the least, I had my work cut out for me that summer. The focus of Camp FRESH was providing culinary experiences for the campers. This means we were in the kitchen preparing recipes from all around the globe. We would then get to enjoy our yummy creations every day for lunch. As a dietetics student, I took special interest in igniting a passion for culinary arts in these kids. It was amazing to see how excited they were to learn the simplest tasks, such as learning how to cut and peel carrots. It was a great experience to see food through the lens of a child. Many times, our relationship with food becomes overly complicated as we age. We get lost in convenience, calories, or brand. After leading the campers in the kitchen, I feel more inspired to cook my own meals. It is rewarding to help kids learn how to make food from scratch and truly enjoy it.

After working at this camp, I learned more about myself, how to work with kids, and teaching others about nutrition. I found that I was in the same mindset as the kids when trying new foods. I would get scared or say, "that's gross." But after watching the kids be so open to cooking and eating new flavors, I opened up too. Some of the foods I had never tried before, and ended up enjoying many of them! Having this opportunity to lead kids in their health journey allowed me to feel more confident in my future role as a dietitian. I could see that my

knowledge and skills were able to help others in their quest for better health. Practicing leadership in a nutrition setting made my future role as a dietitian feel tangible.



Leader? Leader.

What does it mean to be a leader? For some, it means holding formal positions in an organization, a team, or club. For me, I've found my most impactful leadership roles when there was no official title. Regardless of whether it is a recognized position or not, I believe all leaders share the same basic qualities. Leaders are dependable, tenacious, motivational, and influential. If you had asked me during my freshman year at Fontbonne if I saw myself as a leader, the answer would have been heck no. It took time, but I eventually developed into one.

I wasn't born a leader. In fact, sometimes in my life I have been quite the opposite. Growing up with a shy personality, I tended to be a follower. I was fine with going with the flow. If everyone is leading, then who is following? Never wanting the attention and responsibilities that come with leadership roles, I was content with being a regular team member. As I got older though, leadership roles fell into my lap and I was confronted with the challenge to step up.

One leadership opportunity occurred during my sophomore year at Fontbonne. I was browsing the internet and discovered a scholarship opportunity from Alliance Credit Union. The application included an essay prompt that asked, "If you had the authority to change your community in a positive way, what specific changes would you make and what steps would you take to make them?" I researched and wrote about the reality of food insecurity in St. Louis and solutions that I thought could be implemented into the community. I was one of four recipients to be selected for the scholarship and was presented with the opportunity to present my essay. I took this as a time to educate others about a topic that may be unknown. It was a great leadership opportunity to illuminate food insecurity and inform the community members about the needs within their own neighborhoods.

I am a self-proclaimed perfectionist. I set extremely high and sometimes unachievable standards for myself in terms of classes, projects, athletic achievements, essentially everything. I don't allow myself to settle if I know I am capable of doing better. This is both a blessing and a curse. It can be unnecessarily stressful completing schoolwork because I hate turning in

nothing but my best work. Yet this trait has been the most influential in becoming a leader. My drive for my own personal perfection has led to also leading those around me to a higher standard. Whether this is staying late after soccer practice to get more touches, or spending an extra fifteen minutes studying material, or picking up extra shifts at work, it forces me to lead by example.

I have come to realize that it is not necessary to hold an official title to be a leader. Leadership looks different in every person and situation. Even sometimes being a good leader is knowing when to follow. Asking myself now as a senior, do I see myself as a leader? I am comfortable with saying yes. Fontbonne has provided me with subtle opportunities in soccer, projects, work, and clubs to step up as a leader. I have developed more time management, communication, and decision-making skills because of it. Looking into my future, I know that I can easily see myself stepping into more leadership positions and I am excited to see where they take me.



OCCUPATION

What do you want to be when you grow up?

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” is the million dollar question every kid is asked. The answers typically include being a veterinarian, astronaut, doctor, or firefighter. Growing up, my own answer to that question changed weekly. Some days I was dead set on being a vet that gets to play with dogs every day. Other days, I was convinced that I could make it as a professional soccer player. As I grew older the harsh reality of life set in and I had to start asking myself the more difficult questions about job salaries, work hours, education requirements, etc.

I distinctly remember the senior seminar course we were required to take in high school. This course was designed to prepare us for the world after graduation. One assignment in particular required us to take a career aptitude test. The test provides insight into your “job personality” based on the Holland Code personality types. You learn what kind of work environments and occupations suit you best and it provides you with a list of professions and occupations that fit your career personality. I must have taken that test at least twenty different times and ended up with jobs ranging from construction site manager to middle school math teacher, to laboratory chemist. This only added to my stress of picking a college. Instead of exploring my options further, I did the next best thing; I randomly declared myself as a Speech Pathology major and hoped it would stick.

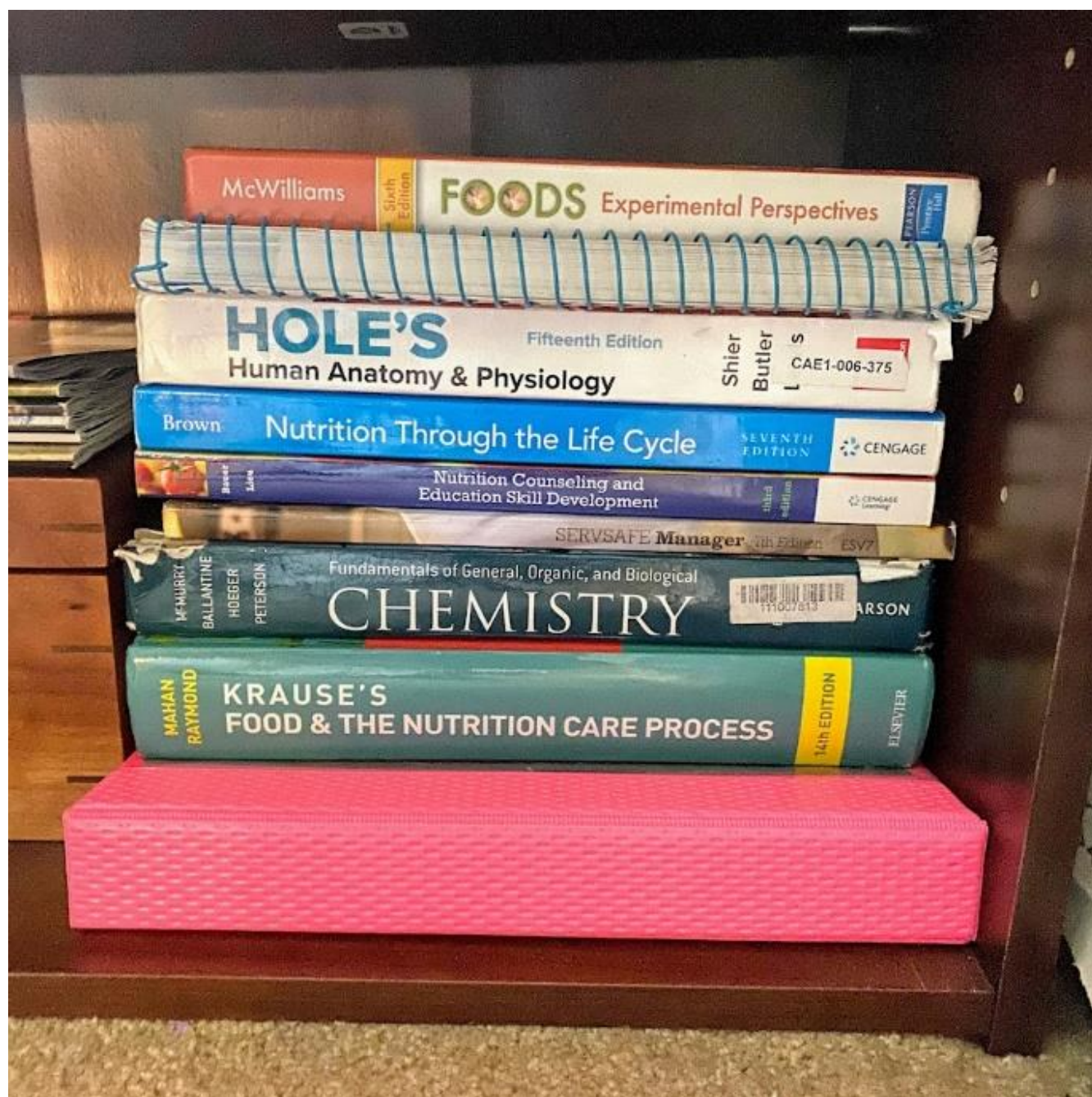
As you can imagine, that didn’t work exactly how I had hoped. I switched my major and decided that dietetics was the best thing for me. Luckily, this is the major that stuck, and I discovered my passion.

Whenever a kid is asked “What do you want to be when you grow up?” not once have I heard their response to be a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. So, I asked myself, how did I know that this is what I want to do with my life. Why was I drawn to this field and how do I fit into it?

What I love about nutrition and dietetics is the reach it has. Everyone has to eat. This means the job will never become obsolete and I should theoretically always be employed. But more importantly, it means that everyone has a relationship with food, and I have the ability to help strengthen, change, adapt, or educate people's perspectives. Nutrition can be a confusing topic. Juice cleanses, diet lollipops, intermittent fasting, supplements, and keto are all part of the diet trends that surround us. It can be increasingly challenging for the average person to figure out what on earth they are supposed to eat. The ability of dietitians to bring credibility and science into this discussion is something I admire.

Another aspect of the nutrition and dietetics field I like is the wide scope of practice. Maybe unnoticed by the general public, but dietitians can work in a variety of settings such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, private practice, cafeterias, prisons, schools, sports teams, or government and nonprofit agencies. The opportunities are endless. It excites me to know that my role as a dietitian is both flexible and dynamic.

Although I may not have always known that I wanted to become a dietitian, I did know that I wanted my career to be my passion. I never wanted to find myself stuck in a 9 to 5 job, only there because of the paycheck. From the experience that I have learned so far, and the future I foresee, I can confidently say that I won't be stuck and bored. I was able to experience my passion firsthand when I shadowed a dietitian at the hospital I work at. I was able to walk around the floor and interact with the patients. Seeing the connection that this dietitian made with her patients made me realize my interest in dietetics goes far beyond just earning a paycheck. She provides a vital service, nutrition education and nutrition therapy. At the end of the day, that is what I see myself doing when I grow up, providing these essential services to help people. I am lucky enough to have found a career path that also is a passion of mine. I am excited for the opportunities that lie ahead of me and even more excited to be able to share this passion with others.



Room Service, How Can I Help You?

I started working at Mercy Hospital in February 2019. At first, this job was meant to simply be a resume booster. I would show up, do my work, and get some experience. Maybe after a year, I'd move on to a similar job and gain more experience. Never would I have thought I would come to love what I do and who I work with. My job has opened my world to new cultures, foods, medical conditions, patients, and experiences.

As my job requires, I talk on the phone with patients at every meal. They call down and I take their breakfast, lunch, or dinner order and make sure it adheres to their diet. This interaction has taught me so much as a nutrition student and as a human being. Sometimes people call down with no intention of even talking about food. Sometimes they're bored, scared, lonely, or need someone to vent to. These are my favorite kinds of calls. I've heard about patients' newborn babies, their favorite things to do, their past military service, or even just their favorite foods. I often hear about their recent diagnosis or their new treatments. Whatever it is, it feels good to be providing a service to them other than their meal order. I love being able to build a connection with individuals and brighten their day.

One of my favorite calls was from an older gentleman who had been stuck in the hospital for a couple weeks. He called down wanting to order his dinner. One thing led to another and we ended up talking for a half an hour. He told me about his dreams of one day writing a cookbook with all his favorite recipes. I learned about his time he spent serving our country as an Army soldier. I even learned the names of his grandchildren. About a week after that call, I found out that he had passed away. Instead of feeling sadness, I was happy to know that I spent the time talking and getting to know him. I felt comforted that I was able to provide a service to him that wasn't in my job description but was something he needed.

I've gained so much nutrition knowledge by working as a nutrition assistant. I've learned about renal, diabetic, gestational diabetes, cardiac, and tube feed diets. All of this knowledge has directly transferred into my coursework at school. The knowledge I have gained working on

the job does not even compare to the knowledge I can learn in just a textbook. It's given me a taste of what it would be like to be a practicing dietitian in a hospital.

Working in this position has allowed to me grow as person. It has enriched my studies by directly translating coursework into real world applications. I feel one step ahead of the game with the skills that I have built while working at Mercy. It has also taught me the power of human connection. Mercy is very focused on compassionate care. Being part of this organization has taught me the meaning of teamwork. It is gratifying to be part of an organization that is focused on one overarching mission, which is to care for our patients. Even the simplest tasks are integral to the success of the organization as a whole. What started out as simply a resume booster has led to more experiences and opportunities that I could have imagined. I feel well prepared for my future as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and look forward to my future at Mercy.



SERVICE & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Feed My People

A famous quote by Ghandi reads, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." This is exactly what I did my junior year. In dietetics, there is a family management course that requires service hours. At first glance, it's daunting. The project requires 25+ service hours, journal entries after every visit, documentation, a final research paper, and a final research presentation. My first thought was, "how the heck am I supposed to fit this into an already jammed pack semester?" After the initial shock wore off, the opportunity excited me.

When reviewing the preapproved service sites, one in particular caught my eye. Feed My People, located in Lemay, Missouri. The reason this one is so special is that it is located ten minutes from my house, and I drove past it everyday on my way to high school without batting an eye. Feed My People is a Christian organization established in 1982 to meet the growing needs of the underprivileged in South St. Louis. Their initial goal was to simply provide food. Today they have expanded to serve sixteen zip codes through a food pantry, thrift store, and many programs that assist with job counseling, utility bills, personal care items, clothing assistance, and school supplies.

I started my service hours with the idea that I was only there to cross things off my list. My mentality was to simply do the requirements of the assignment and I would be finished. I did not realize that volunteering there would have such a large impact on my life. My time at Feed My People was spent organizing donations, working in the thrift store, fulfilling pantry orders, and interacting with clients. I came to really enjoy the work and enjoyed being there. Having the opportunity to work at Feed My People allowed me to understand my community better.

Volunteering at Feed My People was a rewarding and eye-opening experience. I learned that I enjoy giving my time to help the clients. Giving back to the community that I grew up in gave me a sense of satisfaction. Before I started volunteering at Feed My People, I did not

recognize the need in my community. I drove past the organization every day and did not comprehend the impact they had in the community. I didn't see the struggles of people who were essentially living next door. During this experience, I developed a sense of responsibility about working with underprivileged individuals. The clients at Feed My People are in need and as a community; we have the responsibility to provide assistance. I also developed a sense of gratitude. I have never had to deal with food insecurity in my own personal life. Seeing how much of a struggle it was for some families to simply buy groceries made me appreciate the food I can afford.

In the end, this assignment turned out to be more than just a grade in the gradebook. It provided me with a tactile experience that I will value for years to come. I learned much more about myself and those around me than I ever could in a textbook.

A slideshow on the service learning project and Feed My People is available as a supplemental file.

Rice and Beans

Food and nutrition is something I am passionate about. My school, work, and personal life revolve around it and it is something that I also love to share with others. However, before I even discovered this passion, I was given the opportunity to understand the reality of food insecurity.

My freshman year at Fontbonne, a friend asked if I wanted to help work the Saint Louis World Food Day. Without truly knowing what it was, I signed myself up and was ready to see what the day entailed. World Food Day is an event that is designed to increase awareness and understanding of food insecurity and promote action to alleviate hunger. This event includes packaging over 370,000 meals in a two-day period. The meals are delivered to individuals in need both within the community and also internationally. Teams from all around Saint Louis come together and package meals in a friendly competition. That day, we loaded up onto a bus and made our way to John Burroughs high school. The energy of this event made everyone feel like they were making an impact on the hunger crisis, no matter how long you worked or how many meals you packaged. It was inspiring to see the community gather together to work

towards a common goal. The volunteers ranged from middle school classes to work groups to retired individuals. Everyone was there to find a way to give back to the community here and communities around the world.

Participating in this event is a reminder that some individuals struggle with meeting their basic needs. The meals we packaged were simple. They contained rice, beans, and dehydrated vegetables. Seeing these meals made me understand the harsh reality of food insecurity. For those living without regular access to enough safe and nutritious food, this can impact normal growth and development. The foods that do they have access to may not be the most nutritious and may not meet their micronutrient and macronutrient needs. Additionally the stress of the not knowing where their next meal will come from can have negative implications on their health. The undernutrition of communities limits the members' ability to lead productive live and contribute to positively to society.

Food insecurity and hunger is a major obstacle in building a future. Volunteering at this event once did not solve world hunger, but it did take a step in the right direction. Events such as the Saint Louis World Food Day do so much more than simple provide food to the hungry. This event also raises awareness of the growing issue of global hunger and educates community members. After volunteering at this event, I found myself more grateful than ever for the food at my table. I also found myself more interested in what I can do to alleviate food insecurity. It opened my eyes to the struggles that other people are silently facing and energized me to help contribute to the solution.

