About the school

Established in 1969, The University of Texas School of Public Health improves and sustains human health by providing education in the basic disciplines and practices of public health, extending knowledge of these disciplines and assisting public health practitioners in Texas, the nation and beyond. One of the six schools of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, with regional campuses in Austin, Brownsville, Dallas, El Paso and San Antonio, the school is the oldest and largest school of public health in Texas as well as an important health resource state-wide. The school has experienced a steady increase in student enrollment as the importance of public health is increasingly recognized as a critical component of health care. Because the School serves diverse populations and deals with a wide range of health issues in Houston and our regional campus communities, our educational, research and intervention programs have timeliness and relevance for the U.S. as a whole. Our graduates are expanding the mission of disease prevention and health promotion in every U.S. state and 45 foreign countries.

Quick Facts

Dietetic Internship Program
The University of Texas School of Public Health

- Led by faculty at the forefront of research and practice in the field of dietetics.
- One of only nine Master of Public Health-Registered Dietitian (MPH-RD) programs in the United States.
- The program is within in Houston and is part of the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living. The School of Public Health is part of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) in the Texas Medical Center.
- Dietetics interns learn through didactic work, supervised practice and their final Specialty Practice rotation with staff relief in an area of Public Health Nutrition selected by the intern.
- Requires a minimum of 1,271 hours of supervised practice in four areas of dietetics: Community Nutrition, Food Service Systems Management, Medical Nutrition therapy, and Specialty Practice in Public Health Nutrition.
- Takes 22 to 24 months to complete.
- Graduates are prepared to practice as dietitians with a graduate degree, and meet requirements for active membership in the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. After completion of the program, interns are eligible to take the dietitians registration examination through the Commission on Dietetic Registration Exam, and are qualified to apply for dietetic licensure through the Texas Department of State Health Services.
Our mission

To advance health and healthy living for children and families through innovative research, cutting-edge, community-based programs and the dissemination of evidence-based practices.

Admission information

Admission to the Dietetic Internship Program is contingent upon first being admitted to the graduate program at The University of Texas School of Public Health. Admission to the school does not automatically ensure admission to the internship, as the two processes are separate. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Complete application materials for the graduate program are due to SOPHAS (sophas.org) on or before December 14 of each year. Complete Dietetic Internship Program application materials are to be postmarked on or before February 15 of each year.

The Laura S. Moore & Don Sanders Scholarship for the Dietetic Internship Scholarship is $1,500 each year for one resident and one non-resident intern.

Contact information:

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A vital program

Forty-four percent of Americans—including children—are poorly nourished and facing obesity, hypertension, diabetes and other life-changing medical conditions. The cost is great, in both human terms and dollars. Healthcare practitioners—including physicians, nurses and dentists—need to be equipped with the education and resources to address these issues with their patients.

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health has taken a leading role in helping Texans understand the importance of good nutrition while acquiring boots-on-the-ground training in the easier-said-than-done job of eating right.

The School of Public Health Dietetic Internship Program prepares students to educate communities, families and individuals about food that is good for us and our families—from the garden and market to the kitchen table—and become community leaders in health.

Moving to the next level

Understanding what the difference is between eating well and eating what is convenient is the first step in improving health. The next step is putting that knowledge into practice. Many of today’s urban families have little exposure or access to healthy food at its source or experience with preparing nutritious meals.

The School of Public Health Dietetic Internship Program is poised to lead a preventive health initiative in nutrition that will both serve the UTHealth community and prepare students to work expertly in the settings where they will be teaching healthy eating and where it is easy to demonstrate what good nutrition involves.

Programs will benefit all five regional campuses of the School of Public Health as well as the Houston main campus, and will also serve local communities and school educators.

“Our Dietetic Internship / Master of Public Health (MPH) program is one of only a few Coordinated Programs in Dietetics accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education and Nutrition in Dietetics (ACEND) in the nation with a central mission to educate and train future health professionals to address preventive nutritional health initiatives. Having the complete package of a community garden, demonstration/teaching kitchen and Medical Nutrition Therapy simulation classroom is a real home run in nutrition education.”

—Laura S. Moore, Director of Dietetic Internship
State-of-the-art facilities

The Demonstration Kitchen:
Available to the community for educational and research purposes, the kitchen will enable our faculty to teach healthy cooking techniques. Plans are underway for a concentration in nutrition and to educate students in medical nutrition therapy, and for interns themselves to lead classes on disease-specific diets for diabetes, heart disease and other diet-related medical issues. Kitchen courses will also be open to patients from UT clinics and other healthcare facilities, and will serve as a training kitchen for school educators.

The Community Garden:
Likewise available to the community as well as to dietetic interns to promote seed-to-plate nutrition education, the Garden will be designed by a landscape architect and feature produce that a UTSPH Garden Club will maintain. A master gardener will teach interns which types of produce thrive in the Houston environment, by season. Produce harvested from the Garden will be prepared in the demonstration kitchen, providing a sustainable farm-to-table model for Dietetics Interns to apply. The Garden will be created in Grant Fay Park on the UTHHealth campus.

The Simulation Classroom:
In this high-tech setting, students will build their skills in the nutrition care process, recognizing the signs of malnutrition and inflammation and responding to medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and other situations. These subjects will be addressed through an array of lectures and hands-on demonstrations to actively engage participation and improve learning while faculty observe and offer guidance.
A nutrition hub

The new facilities will support an increased emphasis on nutrition education within UTHealth. Our Medical School is in the process of adding Nutrition and Physical Activities components to the curriculum. Simulation classes and kitchen courses can be open to these students as well as to our nutrition concentration students, dental students and nursing students.

From seed to table

With enhanced facilities and collaborative opportunities within the Texas Medical Center and within UTHealth, dietetic interns benefit from opportunities that enrich their academic curriculum. The addition of a demonstration kitchen, simulation classroom and community garden will provide our students with hands-on experience and enable faculty to develop cutting-edge curriculum to augment the existing program. The Garden—a visible reminder of where nutrition begins as well as a “farm” where crops are produced—has a unique place in this plan.
Deanna M. Hoelscher, PhD, RD, LD

John P. McGovern Professor in Health Promotion and Director, Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living, The University of Texas School of Public Health Austin Regional Campus

Dr. Hoelscher has always been interested in food, nutrition, science and math. She started studying chemical engineering at Texas A&M, but after touring a chemical plant and visiting with a career counselor, she decided to study food science and technology. While pursuing her master’s in nutrition at UT Austin, she became a registered dietitian and refined her skills for research. After earning her Ph.D. in biological sciences, she worked on the internationally known CATCH project, leading her to a tenure-track job at UTSPH. In 2006, when UTSPH received a grant from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, she moved to Austin and became the center director.

Currently Dr. Hoelscher is working on many projects including: interventions, epidemiologic surveys, and policy–analysis. One of those projects is the Texas Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration (Texas CORD) project.

Shreela V. Sharma, PhD, RD, LD

Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Assistant Director, Dietetic Internship Program, Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living, The University of Texas School of Public Health

Dr. Sharma is a trained dietitian and physical therapist. As a health professional, she strongly felt she was treating preventable diseases stemming from poor lifestyles: heart disease, diabetes and hypertension. She saw the repercussions were devastating the community. Her love for teaching, academics and the community led her to pursue a Ph.D. in public health, focusing on epidemiology. Her interest is in nutrition and physical activity-based interventions to address obesity via school, family and the community, predominantly in low-income minority populations. She cofounded Brighter Bites, a partner program of the Houston Food Bank, and serves on the Mayor of Houston's Go Healthy Houston Task Force.

She is currently working on Healthy Eating Active Living (HE/AL).

R. Sue Day, PhD, MS

Associate Professor of Epidemiology, Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living, The University of Texas School of Public Health

Dr. Day’s journey to public health began in Lubbock, Texas, her hometown. After graduating from pre-med, home economics and secondary education studies at Texas Tech, she worked as a home economist and nutrition educator in Midland and Odessa, Texas. Originally, Dr. Day came to Houston to meet faculty at the medical school, thinking she would go into medicine. She accidentally walked into The University of Texas School of Public Health and a recruiter convinced her to study public health instead. Remembering her time as a nutritionist, she decided she really wanted to understand prevention of disease through nutrition.

Currently, she focuses on overweight and obesity’s effect on cardiovascular disease among firefighters.
For more information

The Dietetic Internship Program admission requirements and procedures, estimated costs and frequently asked questions can be accessed here:

www.msdcenter.org

The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at The University of Texas School of Public Health is an international leader in conducting research and providing programs that promote healthy living for children, their families and communities.

Our mission: to advance health and healthy living for children and families through innovative research, cutting-edge, community-based programs and the dissemination of evidence-based practices.

Stay Connected

Join our network by emailing dellhealthyliving@uth.tmc.edu. You will receive information on our evidence-based programs, community events for healthy living, and annual events.

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