



Sea Mar Community Health Centers Dietetic Internship Program Overview

Sea Mar Community Health Centers, founded in 1978, is a non-profit health and human services organization. The Dietetic Internship (DI) offers interns the opportunity to work with clients from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, emphasizing cultural competence, which provides a competitive edge in the job market. The internship spans 39 weeks, including orientation, winter, and spring breaks.

Location and Lifestyle

Located in Seattle, the "Emerald City," interns will experience the vibrant city life with professional sports events, theater, concerts, museums, exceptional restaurants, coffee shops, and numerous food and farmers' markets, including the renowned Pike Place Market. Seattle's proximity to the ocean and mountains offers ample opportunities for hiking, skiing, and biking. Additionally, Seattle is home to top-tier medical centers and community organizations with exceptional dietitians who serve as Preceptors and educators. Despite popular belief, it does not rain every day, and the weather is quite temperate.

Program Structure and Learning Environment

Interns will develop team-building skills and supportive relationships through group activities. Weekly intern seminars, particularly in the Fall and Spring, feature dynamic speakers, discussions on assignments, case study presentations, and nutrition education projects benefiting the Seattle community. Regular check-ins via email, group chat, or video conference foster communication and collaboration among interns. Interns must have a vehicle and the ability to check email daily.

Rotations and Experience

All experiences are based in the Greater Seattle area, with no international experience provided. The program focuses on community nutrition, encouraging dietetic students interested in outpatient clinics, WIC, health clubs, public health, and education to apply. Rotations include clinical and food service administration, long-term care, WIC, eating disorders, community nutrition administration, and services for migrant farm workers and the unhoused. **Interns spend most of the internship with Sea Mar Clinics and programs, working under the supervision of Sea Mar Registered Dietitians and other staff.** Each rotation has specific objectives and required supervised practice hours, involving real-life activities such as role-playing, simulations, and case studies. Interns are expected to engage in these activities to meet the learning objectives.

Program Mission and Goals

Mission: To provide a comprehensive learning environment for those interested in community health, emphasizing service to multicultural and low-income communities while preparing them to become entry-level Registered Dietitians.

Goal #1: To contribute to the development of mature and responsible entry-level Registered Dietitians capable of utilizing knowledge and skills learned to meet the nutrition needs of society

Objectives:

1. At least 80% of interns will complete program requirements within 14 months (150% of the program length) [ACEND Required]
2. When surveyed at their exit interview, the mean rating for the question, the mean rating for the question, “I feel that I have mastered the skills necessary to succeed in entry-level nutrition counseling and education position,” is marked as “Agree” or 1-3 by 85% of program graduates
3. 12 months after completing the internship, employers will rate 85% of program graduates as “Prepared” when surveyed if “the employee is highly capable of meeting the nutrition needs of society.”

Goal #2: To provide quality training that supports the personal development and professional growth of program graduates

Objectives:

1. 80% percent of program graduates take the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists within 12 months of program completion [ACEND Required]
2. The program’s one-year pass rate (graduates who pass the registration exam within one year of first attempt) on the CDR credentialing exam for dietitian nutritionists is at least 80% [ACEND Required]
3. When surveyed at their exit interview, the mean rating for the question “I have felt supported in my attempts to develop personally and to grow professionally” is marked as “Agree” or 1-3 by 85% of program graduates

Goal #3: To prepare program graduates to deliver nutrition services to population groups such as those at Sea Mar or other community healthcare clinics

Objectives:

1. Of graduates who seek employment, 70% percent are employed in nutrition and dietetics or related fields within 12 months of graduation. [ACEND Required]
2. 25% of program graduates secure a position at Sea Mar or other community nutrition position within one year after graduation
3. 12 months after completing the internship, employers will rate 85% of program graduates as “Prepared” when surveyed if “the employee is able to provide nutrition care for individuals from across the lifespan and with diverse cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.”

Program Outcomes

Program outcome data is available upon request. In addition to the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND's) Core Competencies, dietetic interns must meet Sea Mar's Community Concentration Competencies in community nutrition rotations.

Community Concentration Competencies:

CO1. Conduct community-based food and nutrition program outcome assessment/evaluation and research

CO2. Manage nutrition care for diverse population groups across the lifespan by participating in nutrition surveillance and monitoring of communities

CO3. Develop community-based food and nutrition programs and/or a health promotion/disease prevention intervention project

Accreditation

1. The **Sea Mar Dietetic Internship** is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition & Dietetics (ACEND) of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics.
Address: 120 S Riverside Plaza, Suite 2190, Chicago, IL 60606-6995
Phone: 800-877-1600 ext. 5400.
Email: ACEND@eatright.org
Website: www.eatright.org/acend.
2. **Sea Mar Community Health Centers** is accredited by The Joint Commission.
Address: One Renaissance Boulevard, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
Phone: 630.792.5000
Website: www.jointcommission.org

Application Requirements

Applicants must have a Verification Statement from an ACEND-accredited Nutrition and Dietetics Didactic Program (DPD) or Foreign Dietitian Education program (FDE) and a Master's Degree in Nutrition, Public Health or an equivalent program. This program prepares interns for the Registered Dietitian credentialing exam, with eligibility to sit for the exam upon successful completion.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Sea Mar Community Health Centers does not discriminate based on age, race, creed, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, political ideology, marital status, Vietnam veteran status, or disability. Explore Sea Mar's website to learn more about our services.

ACEND® Standard 10.2i. Policy for Prior Assessed Learning (PAL)

The PAL program grants credit towards supervised practice hours based on previous relevant experiences, not undertaken during undergraduate/graduate education or in earning a DPD Verification Statement. Applicants must submit a portfolio or resume and validate proficiency through supervisor/peer endorsements.

PAL Overview

Sea Mar Community Health Centers Dietetic Internship Program will consider the Prior Assessed Learning (PAL) program recognized by ACEND if an intern chooses to pursue obtaining credit. This program design grants internship credit in specific rotations based on the qualified applicant's previous life experiences, including work, volunteer, achievement, education, or family responsibilities. Typically, the individual qualifying for this credit has significant, relevant work or life experiences.

Criteria for PAL Consideration

For consideration, the applicant must:

1. **Complete a portfolio or submit a resume** (do not submit this until after matching to the SMCHC DI):
 - Provide samples of projects, reports, presentations, and professional practice that demonstrate advanced knowledge and skill in the area of dietetics for which assessment is requested.
 - Have a supervisor/peer validate the samples provided and proficiency in such experiences.
2. **Complete all PAL Information:**
 - The Program Director will provide ACEND's educational competencies for specific rotations in this program.
 - The applicant must adequately show/demonstrate advanced knowledge and skill, not just work history.
 - A current/former supervisor/peer must validate proficiency as well.
3. **Understand the fees:**
 - Fees related to PAL evaluation are equivalent to tuition.
4. **Discuss pursuit of PAL:**
 - Discuss with the Program Director after being accepted to the internship to allow for adequate evaluation.

Requirements

Regardless of the amount of PAL credit qualified for, the following requirements apply:

- The SMCHC Dietetic Internship program is a full-time program; interns must complete any required supervised practice hours as a full-time intern.

- Most interns who receive PAL credit must still complete at least ½ to ¾ of the required hours in the rotation given credit for.
- Omission of specific rotation projects and assignments will be determined by the Program Director with rotation preceptor input based on demonstrated knowledge and skills.
- Tuition does not change if the intern receives PAL credit.

Evaluation Process

The Program Director will:

- Evaluate submitted information in a timely manner.
- Request additional documentation or clarification as deemed appropriate.
- Formulate a decision related to the assessment of an individual intern’s prior learning based on the evaluation of the portfolio provided and any verification of information deemed appropriate.

PAL Credit

To identify the equivalent credit hours for your PAL request, the evaluator will look for the completion of related ACEND competencies in the submission. Not every experience will be worth credit, but that does not devalue the experience. There is a difference between “skill-oriented” learning and “theoretical” learning.

Description of Previous Experience

When describing previous experience, applicants should:

- List the specific job, volunteer position, practicum experience, and job tasks in relation to the rotation applying for PAL.
- Describe the experience from which learning is derived.
- Document the exact learning that occurred, not just list what was done.

Use the same examples for the competencies when appropriate. Include in the discussion what was learned (e.g., using PowerPoint) and a deeper understanding of the knowledge (e.g., measuring the effectiveness of a presentation and audience learning).

Areas for PAL Credit

After evaluating the application, the Program Director may grant credit in the following areas:

- **Community Nutrition (COM):** 1-2 weeks of rotation hours
- **Food Service Management (FSA):** Up to 2 weeks of rotation hours
- **Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT):** 2-3 weeks of rotation hours

Please note: The Sea Mar DI has a policy for assessing prior learning or competence but does not give credit for prior experience internationally.

For questions or concerns, please contact Marisol Thomas at marisolthomas@seamarchc.org for further clarification.

Retention and Remediation Procedures

Interns must meet ACEND core competencies, complete assignments on time, pass supervised practice rotations, and abide by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Code of Ethics. Unsatisfactory performance will be addressed through meetings with preceptors and the Program Director, with a performance improvement plan implemented as needed. If performance issues persist, alternate site placements or program dismissal may occur.

Graduate Requirements

To graduate, interns must complete at least 1000 hours of supervised practice (per current ACEND requirements/standards). These hours include direct supervised practice (minimum 700 hours), simulation, case studies, or role-playing (less than 300 hours). Interns must pass each rotation with a 3.0 average on preceptor evaluations, complete all assignments with at least 80%, and achieve a final grade of at least 800/1000 points. The Program Director conducts mid-internship and final evaluations. Upon completing all requirements, graduates receive Verification Statements.

Virtual Open Houses

Virtual internship open houses are available in the summer, fall and winter. Email Marisol Thomas for dates and times, or other internship-related questions, at marisolthomas@seamarchc.org.

Program Costs

- **Student Liability Insurance:** ~\$25-30
- **AND Student Membership:** ~\$50
- **Washington State Dietetic Association Annual Conference:** \$100
- **Housing:** ~\$500-700/month (with roommate), ~\$1,200-1,800/month (single)
- **Food:** ~\$200-300/month
- **Books & Materials:** ~\$100-200
- **Transportation/Gas:** ~\$150-200/month (a car is necessary, and auto insurance is required)
- **Parking:** \$20-200/rotation (1-2 rotations on average/year)
- **Medical Insurance:** Required (intern's responsibility)
- **Background Check/Drug Screening:** ~\$50/\$25 (for site placement)

Good luck with your internship application process!