

# The Full Plate

The Newsletter for [Pace University's](#)  
Coordinated MS in Nutrition and Dietetics Program

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## A Note From the Chair

Greetings Students, Alumni, Preceptors and Colleagues-

As we wrap up another dynamic and rewarding semester, I'm excited to share the latest highlights from the Nutrition and Dietetics Department. Our students and faculty have been busy with impactful research, immersive learning experiences, and meaningful community engagement. This newsletter showcases some of the exciting accomplishments, events, and initiatives that reflect the energy and dedication driving our department forward. We're grateful to our students, alumni, preceptors, and partners for your continued support and involvement—you play a vital role in helping us grow and make a lasting difference in the field, at Pace, and beyond.

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## Cohort 6 in the Teaching Kitchen



## Body Composition Analysis with Cohort 7



## Feeding Westchester Mobile Market at Pace





# Student Happenings

## College of Health Professions Awards Ceremony

Congratulations to our 2025 University and Nutrition and Dietetics award recipients!

Outstanding Student of the Year in Nutrition and Dietetics: Kasia Lopez-Gos

Outstanding Academic Achievement in Nutrition and Dietetics: Cathleen Doyle

Opportunitas in Nutrition and Dietetics: David Ehrenberg



## College of Health Professions Scholarship Day





# Student Happenings

## Connecting Through Food: Cooking and Eating on a Budget

By Madison Jacobs, Cohort 6

Connecting Through Food is a hands-on cooking class designed to help students learn how to prepare quick, easy, and budget-friendly meals right in their dorm kitchens. Made possible by a mini-grant from the Center for Wellbeing, this engaging workshop is a collaborative effort between the Nutrition and Dietetics Program and the Health Science Department. The series provides students with an opportunity to build cooking confidence while exploring delicious, affordable recipes. Each session features a different theme—such as Meatless Mondays, Taco Tuesdays, and Wellness Wednesdays—offering creative and practical meal ideas that fit a busy college lifestyle.

Volunteering for the Connecting Through Food event at Pace has been an incredibly rewarding experience, both personally and academically. Working alongside Professor Mary Opfer to guide undergraduate students through the basics of healthy meal preparation and nutrition principles has enhanced my ability to present on various nutrition topics and allowed me to see firsthand how education can empower students to make better food choices. The students often come in with limited cooking experience, and it's exciting to see their skills improve as they learn to prepare meals that are both nutritious and affordable. For one of the classes, I led a "Healthy Taco Tuesday" session where I taught students how to prepare balanced tacos using fresh, colorful, and nutritious ingredients. In another class, I educated them on identifying added sugars and how to read a nutrition facts label effectively. Overall, collaborating with my professor has not only strengthened my mentorship skills but also shown me the value of hands-on learning in promoting long-term health habits. This opportunity has reinforced my passion for public health and nutrition education, and it's been amazing to contribute to a program that can truly make a difference in students' lives.





# Student Happenings

## Wellness Fair at Pace University

By Carly Martone, Cohort 7

Pace University recently hosted its 3rd Annual Wellbeing Fair, bringing together faculty, staff, students, and community members for a day dedicated to health, happiness, and holistic living! Campus departments, student clubs, and community organizations united to promote overall well-being and share valuable resources. Embracing the eight dimensions of wellness—emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual—the event featured engaging activities, informational booths, interactive demonstrations, and exciting giveaways, all designed to support a healthier, more balanced lifestyle.

The Nutrition and Dietetics Department focused on quick, no-bake healthy snacks for students and staff. Professor Mary Opfer, my peer Emily, and I prepared trail mix energy balls, packed with protein, fiber, healthy fats, and essential vitamins and minerals—a perfect, nutritious snack for busy students and staff on the go! Volunteering at the fair was a great opportunity to collaborate with other health professionals, community members, and students. The event was a rewarding experience and contributed to a vibrant community dedicated to supporting healthier lifestyles for all.





# Student Happenings

## Celebrating National Nutrition Month at Pace University



National Nutrition Month was packed with exciting events, including our Healthy Snack Demo—a fun and interactive way to explore easy, delicious, and nutritious snack ideas to keep you energized throughout the day! During the demo, attendees learned how to create quick and wholesome snacks using simple ingredients, perfect for a mid-day energy boost or a satisfying post-workout bite. Participants left not only full of inspiration but also with practical ideas to fuel their busy lifestyles.

In celebration of National Nutrition Month, Cohort 7 students Kendra Mayers, Izzy Eide, and Carly Martone worked with Professor Mary Opfer to demonstrate healthy snack making for Dr. Cooper's undergraduate "Introduction to Nutrition" course on March 27, 2025. The participants learned to make energy balls, with nuts, seeds, nut butter, honey, chocolate and oats. The ND students demonstrated the process and discussed the benefits of each ingredient. They also discussed diet trends on TikTok, addressing the importance of balance in the diet as opposed to cutting out whole food groups or focusing on singular "miracle" foods or supplements.



Additionally, our Pace University Dietetic Interns, Maddie Trontz and Madison Jacobs, did a fantastic job greeting Westchester Medical Center staff and visitors at the National Nutrition Month table! This year's NNM theme, "Food Connects Us," emphasized the power of nutrition in bringing people together. At the table, visitors received valuable information on eating more fruits and vegetables, tips for starting their own garden, where to find local farmers' markets, and how to eat well on a budget. It was a fantastic way to engage the community and celebrate the role of food in our lives. Here's to another successful National Nutrition Month at Pace!





# Student Happenings



## Clinical Update: Westchester Rockland Dietetic Association

By Emily Bruzzese, Cohort 7

As a Nutrition and Dietetics student at Pace University and a member of WRDA, I've had the chance to explore incredible opportunities that connect me to the nutrition community and the latest health research in our field. One of the highlights this semester was attending the 2025 WRDA Clinical Update: Inflammation and Dietary Management hosted by WRDA on campus this past March. It was such a valuable experience to hear directly from practicing dietitians about their research and real-world patient experiences.

Inflammatory disease processes continue to affect millions of Americans, and staying informed is essential—thanks to WRDA, we can do just that! The topics discussed were incredibly relevant to what I've been learning in class, and it was exciting to see everything come together in such a meaningful way.

Events like this also give us the opportunity to connect with professionals in the field, ask questions, and gain valuable insight from their expertise. I'm especially grateful to Professor Jessica Tosto for always encouraging and involving her students in these opportunities. It was also a proud moment to see our own Professor Sharon Puello speak—she's such an inspiring mentor to all of us!

## Career Panel at Pace

This spring, Pace University hosted a dynamic Career Panel featuring Registered Dietitian Nutritionists from a variety of professional backgrounds, co-sponsored by the Westchester Rockland Dietetic Association. Panelists shared their experiences, insights, and valuable advice for current students and aspiring RDNs. Students from across the Westchester and Rockland communities were invited to attend and enjoyed the opportunity to network with panelists and peers after the event. The panel showcased RDNs working in diverse areas such as clinical nutrition management, private practice, retail nutrition, diabetes care, sales and nutraceuticals, sports nutrition, and foodservice management. Several Pace alumni were among the speakers, making the event especially meaningful for attendees. The panel served as a powerful reminder of the impact RDNs can have across diverse industries, leaving students both motivated and prepared to shape their own career journeys.





# Notes From the Field

## Jacobi Medical Center - Clinical Rotation

By David Ehrenberg, Cohort 6



In the fall of 2024, I completed my clinical rotation at Jacobi Hospital in the Bronx, a major trauma center and public hospital. This unique setting, serving a highly diverse and underserved population, exposed me to a wide range of complex medical cases, including severe trauma, chronic diseases, and infectious diseases. Each day presented unique challenges that tested my clinical knowledge, adaptability, and emotional resilience, significantly expanding my understanding of the medical field.

One of the biggest challenges I faced during my clinical rotation was navigating the complexity of care for patients with multiple comorbidities and limited resources. This experience not only tested my clinical knowledge but also taught me the value of thinking creatively, collaborating closely with social workers and care teams, and ensuring that patients' needs were met even after they left the hospital.

I am grateful and proud to have had the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of individuals at some of their most vulnerable points. Whether it was initiating nutrition support for a patient in the ICU, educating a newly diagnosed diabetic, or finding culturally appropriate food options for patients with specific dietary restrictions, the direct impact of my nutrition interventions on their recovery, comfort, and quality of life was deeply gratifying. It was a reminder of the profound influence that nutrition can have on health outcomes.

My experience at Jacobi Hospital reinforced my passion for clinical nutrition and underscored the importance of compassion and cultural competence. It also highlighted the necessity of persistence in the face of challenges. I left the rotation not only with enhanced clinical skills but also with a more profound commitment to becoming the most well-rounded dietitian I can be, equipped to handle the complexities of patient care.



## National Academies of Practice Inducts Professor Jessica Tosto as a Distinguished Fellow in the Nutrition and Dietetics Academy

The National Academies of Practice (NAP) is pleased to announce the induction of Jessica Tosto, MS, RDN, CDN, CSP as a Distinguished Fellow to the National Academies of Practice, Nutrition and Dietetics Academy. Members of the Class of 2025 were inducted into the National Academies of Practice during the Annual Induction Banquet and Awards Ceremony in Washington, DC, on Saturday, March 15, 2025.

Founded in 1981, the National Academies of Practice advances interprofessional education, scholarship, research, practice, and public policy. We educate and inform our members and others, facilitate collaborative scholarship and research opportunities, recruit, engage, retain, and mentor our network of members, and advocate the value of interprofessional practice and improve healthcare and policy for all.

The NAP Academies include Athletic Training, Audiology, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Oral Health, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Physician, Podiatric Medicine, Psychology, Public Health, Respiratory Care, Social Work, Speech-Language Pathology, and Veterinary Medicine.

Membership in the National Academies of Practice is an honor extended to those who have excelled in their profession and are dedicated to advancing interprofessional education, scholarship, research, practice, and policy in support of interprofessional care. As the alliance of professionals collaborating to transform health and well-being, the NAP is excited to officially welcome the new Class of 2025 inductees.





# Notes From the Field

## New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Meeting Expo (NYSAND AME)

The New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Meeting and Expo (NYSAND AME) is a professional conference designed to bring together dietitians, nutrition students, educators, and industry leaders from across the state. The event offers attendees the chance to explore the latest trends in nutrition, attend expert-led sessions, and network with peers and professionals. This year, several members of Pace University's Nutrition and Dietetics Program attended the AME in Schenectady, NY, to learn, present, and represent the university's growing impact on the field.

First-year student Emily Bruzzese described the event as “an eye-opening experience,” sharing how it exposed her to the many diverse paths a dietitian can take in healthcare. She remarked, “It was wonderful to learn from practicing dietitians about their research, their passions, and their experiences. It gave me a sense of community and belonging.” Emily also emphasized the power dietitians have to influence the healthcare system and bring attention to how often the profession is overlooked. She concluded, “I look forward to attending more conferences during my graduate program and beyond.”

Second-year student Cathy Doyle also found great value in the experience, having presented her capstone research poster on the importance of whole, unprocessed foods for mental health. In addition to presenting, she attended lectures on emerging topics such as AI in dietetics, managing GI conditions like SIBO and IBS, and post-menopausal nutrition. Emphasizing the value of the conference, Cathy noted that, “This experience broadened my understanding of current advancements and enhanced my professional communication and networking skills. I am very much looking forward to attending this conference in the years to come!”

Dr. Christen Cooper, who presented her research on RDNs' knowledge and attitudes about spotting and treating human-trafficked individuals, reflected: “Pace was well-represented at the New York State Dietetic Conference. Our students contributed in meaningful ways—Emily Bruzzese, who assisted in marketing Pace University's Coordinated MS in Nutrition and Dietetics Program, and Cathy Doyle, who presented her research poster.” Here's to a successful AME conference and continued excellence in advancing the field of nutrition and dietetics!



# Notes From the Field

## Dr. Christen Cooper becomes Co-Founder of Foundation for Healthy Schools

Dr. Cooper recently became co-founder of the Foundation for Healthy Schools. The Foundation for Healthy Schools includes healthcare executives, seafood and hydroponics experts, Amazon AWS, CEHORT (a plant cultivation company), educators, and rare crop experts. The Foundation for Healthy Schools is on a mission to transform children's health and well-being by empowering schools and communities with hands-on nutrition education, sustainable food cultivation, and real-world learning experiences. By collaborating with educators, families, community leaders, and industry partners, the Foundation aims to bridge the gap between what children learn, what they eat, and how they thrive. Through science-driven solutions and community-focused programs, they create healthier environments that nurture lifelong habits, stronger communities, and a brighter future for all. The Foundation for Healthy Schools partners with schools, families, community leaders, and industry experts to create customized, scalable programs—including optimized greenhouses—that bring hands-on nutrition education and sustainable food cultivation into schools and community spaces.





# Notes From the Field

## Understanding the Mechanisms and Impact of Food and Nutrition on Gut Health

Graduating student David Ehrenberg (Cohort 6, 2023-25) and Dr. Christen Cooper published “Understanding the Mechanisms and Impact of Food and Nutrition on Gut Health: A Narrative Review” in the peer-reviewed journal Medical Research Archives (Journal of the European Society of Medicine). With a passion for writing for publication, David worked with Professor Cooper to publish a narrative review of gut dysbiosis based on his capstone project completed with Professor Mary Opfer. David will graduate in August as a published author.

Dr. Cooper shared, “Writing is thinking, and David is a master thinker and writer. It is an enormous pleasure to work with students to bring their work to life through refining a paper into a publication. Publishing early in one’s career can place students a cut above other early-career dietitians. Research is so important to the growth of our field, and we RDNs can bring unique insights and accurate information to the academic and popular press.”

### Abstract

This narrative review analyzes the literature on known physiological mechanisms impacting gut dysbiosis and how optimal nutrition, including high-fiber, probiotic-rich foods in a whole food diet may positively impact patient health outcomes. Additional topics include understanding the current state of research regarding: inflammation, immunity, mental health, chronic diseases, and pro-gut dietary patterns. The study in this review explores the intricate relationship between the gut microbiome and systemic health, highlighting the role of nutritional interventions, prebiotics, probiotics, and lifestyle modifications in restoring microbial balance. By synthesizing current evidence, this paper aims to provide insights into personalized nutrition strategies supporting gut health and overall well-being while identifying research gaps warranting further investigation.

Link: [Ehrenberg, D. & Cooper, C.C. \(2025\). Understanding the Mechanisms and Impact of Food and Nutrition on Gut Health: A Narrative Review. Medical Research Archives, 13 \(4\).](#)



# Notes From the Field

## Dr. Christen Cooper Attends Blue Campaign Conference and speaks at Pace's Annual Human Trafficking Conference

The Blue Campaign is a national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking, and how to appropriately respond to possible cases. The Blue Campaign works closely with DHS components to develop general awareness trainings, as well as specific educational resources to help reduce victimization within vulnerable populations.

Reflecting on the conference, Dr. Cooper stated, "I was incredibly honored to represent Pace University at the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign Conference. The Blue Campaign is a nationwide movement that unites survivors, law enforcement, healthcare providers, airline and port authority leaders, educators, and many others behind combating human trafficking. My recent research explores how Registered Dietitian Nutritionists can help spot, treat, and assist victims of this unthinkable crime and violation of human rights. Pace University will be the first higher education partner for the Blue Campaign in New York State. Thank you, @paceuniversity and @chpatpace for your support in bringing this critical campaign to Pace."

Dr. Christen Cooper also recently spoke on a panel alongside criminal justice and women's justice experts at Pace's Second Annual Human Trafficking Conference, held March 3–4 on Pace's New York City campus. She discussed how food can support the healing of trafficked individuals and the unique opportunity Registered Dietitian Nutritionists have to identify, treat, and guide them on their journey to recovery.





# Alumni Highlights



**Angela Iovine**

Cohort 2, Class of 2021

## **1. What have you been doing since you graduated?**

I passed the RD exam about five weeks after graduation, and then started working as an acute care dietitian at a medical center. I then immediately began working toward meeting the eligibility criteria to take the CDCES exam. After passing the exam, I transitioned to working as an outpatient dietitian for a physicians group.

## **2. Can you describe your current role and what a typical day looks like for you?**

As an outpatient registered dietitian, I work primarily with patients who are managing chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, GI disorders, and obesity. My day typically starts with chart reviews before appointments to understand patients' medical histories and recent labs. I then see patients either in-person or via telehealth for one-on-one nutrition counseling. I spend a good amount of time educating patients, setting goals, and creating individualized nutrition care plans. The rest of the day is spent documenting visits, coordinating with physicians and other providers, and developing educational resources. I am also currently a dietitian on the research team for an obesity medication clinical trial.

## **3. What do you enjoy most about your job, and what challenges have you encountered?**

I most enjoy being a witness to people transforming their lives. It is incredibly powerful to see someone take control of their health—whether it is managing a chronic condition, building a better relationship with food, or simply feeling more energized and confident. Being able to support and guide those transformations is such a privilege. I also really enjoy building long-term relationships with my patients and watching their progress unfold over time. One of the biggest challenges is navigating the complexities of behavior change—motivation can ebb and flow, and factors like limited resources, health literacy, or simply feeling overwhelmed can significantly influence success. A big part of my job is meeting patients where they are and finding realistic, sustainable strategies that work for them.

## **4. What skills or experiences from your time at Pace have been the most valuable in your career?**

Pace gave me a strong foundation in both clinical nutrition and counseling skills. The hands-on learning, case studies, and internships helped me feel prepared for the real world. The emphasis on evidence-based practice and critical thinking has also shaped how I approach patient care today.

# Alumni Highlights

## **1. Can you describe your current role and what a typical day looks like for you?**

After graduation, I have been working as the community nutritionist at Feeding Westchester. I actually completed my elective rotation at FW prior to graduation. My role involves providing nutrition education throughout Westchester County. I lead both direct and indirect workshops using the Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables (JSY) curriculum or Cooking Matters. I visit food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, churches, and senior centers for these workshops. In addition to workshops, I work on recipe development and write for the seniors' newsletter, *The Scoop*. My day varies from week to week—some days I'm in the office handling administrative tasks, while other days I'm out in the field doing back-to-back workshops. I'm always on the go!



**Sofia Lopez**  
Cohort 5, Class of 2024

## **2. What advice would you offer to current students preparing for the RD exam or starting their careers?**

Take as much time as you need to study. Once I graduated, passing the RD exam was my top goal. It was not easy working during the day and studying at night. I wish I had taken more time to study to better understand the material and be able to pass.

## **3. What has been your proudest professional accomplishment so far?**

Being able to do nutrition workshop in Spanish has been my greatest accomplishment. While interning, I saw the need of a bilingual dietitian at Feeding Westchester, since the majority of our clients are Hispanic. Being in a position to deliver education in Spanish is both exciting and nerve-wracking. My public speaking in Spanish was almost nonexistent, and I was afraid I'd mess up. But after surviving my first workshop—I loved it!

## **4. How do you stay current with industry trends and continue growing professionally?**

I'm always online researching trends related to my work. I focus on food recall, food safety, older adult nutrition, and diabetes management. I have also done some professional development programs through Cornell Cooperative and Non-Profit Westchester. Through these two organizations, I've been able to network with future partners who are interested in having me come do workshops.



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