MAY // 2024 // ISSUE #5

The Full Plate

The Newsletter for Pace University's
Coordinated MS in Nutrition and Dietetics Program



A Note From the Chair

Greetings Students, Alumni, Preceptors and Colleagues-

As we approach the end of another productive academic year, I am delighted to share the latest updates and achievements within our vibrant Nutrition and Dietetics Department. Our students and faculty continue to excel in research, hands-on practice, and community service, reflecting our commitment to advancing the field. This newsletter highlights our recent initiatives, notable accomplishments, and special events that showcase our dedication to fostering innovation and leadership. Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm as we strive to make impactful contributions throughout our Pace community and beyond!

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Student Happenings

Cohort 5 Exhibits Capstone Research at Pace Pleasantville Scholarship Day 2024

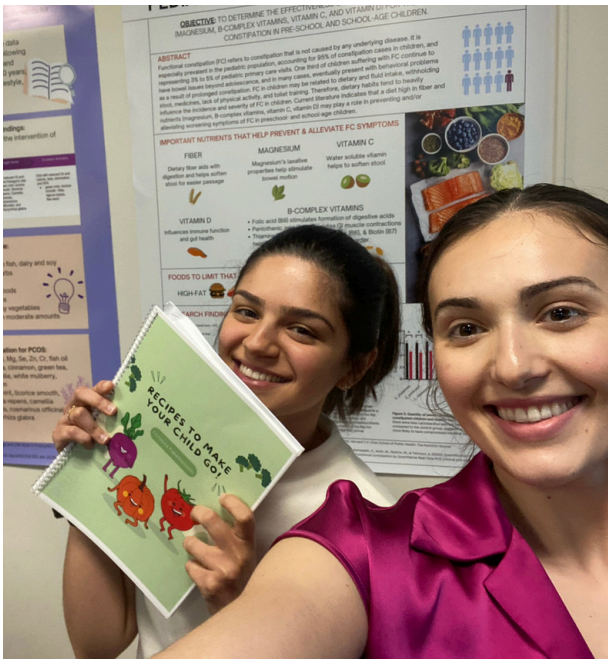


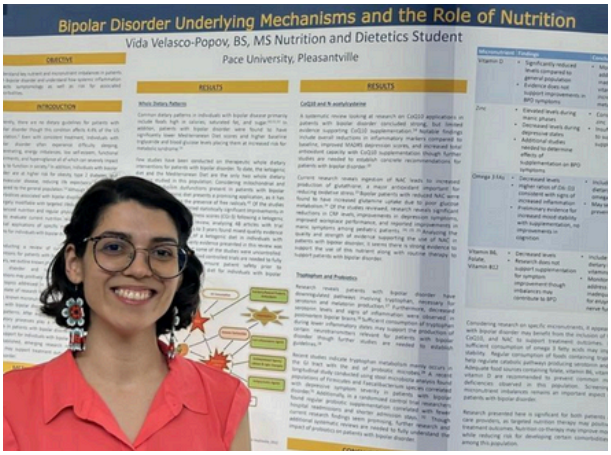
Pictured left to right: Christina Papadopoulos, Sofia Lopez, Hannah Tanzer, Rachel Mirel, Christa Vasile, Alyssa Wengrofsky, Sam Cohen, Holly Woodbury, Ana Sophia Candelot Roman, Isha Patel, and Vida Velasco-Popov.

On May 2nd, Cohort 5 attended the College of Health Professions' (CHP) Annual Scholarship Day in Kessel Hall on the Pleasantville campus. Each year, students from all departments in CHP are encouraged to present posters on their research, either independent or as part of capstone and other projects. Faculty, staff, and members of the Pace community are invited to attend.

Nutrition and Dietetics' Cohort 5 students presented their research completed in their Capstone course taught by Professor Mary Opfer. The students presented on various topics in the world of nutrition. At the center of the project was the production of a cookbook for a specific population and disease state each student researched and wrote about in detail. The posters were a culmination of two semesters of capstone work.

Each student's unique presentation brought viewers a deeper understanding of how to incorporate culinary skills into health, and particularly, nutrition and dietetics education. Along with the research posters, students presented attendees with samples of original recipes they produced as part of their capstone work, thereby demonstrating the department's dedication to hands-on learning. The winning poster, selected by the sponsors of the event, the CHP Center for Strategic Initiatives and Grants, was that of Vida Velasco-Popov whose poster topic was nutrition and bipolar disorder.





Vida Velasco-Popov, CHP Scholarship Day Best Nutrition and Dietetics Research Poster Award Recipient

Student Happenings

An Evening on the Market

By Vida Velasco-Popov, Cohort 5

This past semester, I had the incredible opportunity to participate in 'Evening at the Market: Cooking and Eating on a Budget,' an interprofessional collaboration in CHP between Nursing, Health Science, and Nutrition and Dietetics that addresses several different pillars of the wellness wheel. As part of this event, I, along with a few of my classmates from Cohort 5, worked with students to hone essential culinary skills—from knife techniques to the basics of cooking. Participants enjoyed a fun and interactive night of learning how to make healthy, delicious meals they could prepare in the residence halls (or wherever they may live) that doesn't cost a fortune! It was so interesting talking to other students and learning about the diverse range of experiences; some students had never cooked before, while others had rich stories of kitchen adventures or parents who were chefs. While you might not expect lentil marinara sauce to taste good as a meat sauce substitute for pasta, the students thoroughly enjoyed the food we cooked together and commented on how fun the experience was. As the months of February, March, and April unfolded, students not only left with a collection of spices and recipes but also with various cooking essentials. 'Evening at the Market' isn't just about food; it's about community, nutrition, learning, and the joy of cooking and eating together. We thank the Pace University Center for Wellbeing for the generous mini-grant that made this experience possible!









Student Happenings

Nutrition Assessment Body Composition Analysis

By David Ehrenberg, Cohort 6





This semester, our cohort participated in the BIA Simulation Lab to experience using the BIA machine and analyzing body composition results with some of our fellow Pace athletes and students. The BIA machine is a cutting-edge device with advanced bioelectrical impedance technology that allows us to get a closer look at fat-free mass, total body water, percent fat, body cell mass, intracellular water, and extracellular water. A few classmates and I were able to perform on a variety of people and uncovered some remarkable findings! This experience allowed us to get hands-on experience with a machine that is not typically seen at many clinics and apply these findings to our knowledge of nutrition. We also got to experience having the BIA analysis done on ourselves, which gave us a better insight into our bodies and overall health. The firsthand experience with the BIA machine provided a fun and engaging learning process that helped us practice interviewing and counseling skills, allowing us to feel more comfortable with “clients.” This made me look forward to working with my classmates and other Pace students in the future to enhance my clinical skills as a future RD!





Student Happenings

Nutrition Education and Counseling

By Zoe Noyes, Cohort 6

As I started my first live client counseling sessions through my required class of *Nutrition Education and Counseling*, I felt adequately prepared. Professor Opfer had done a fantastic job of teaching the cohort about the components of motivational interviewing, and we had practiced several skills in class with each other, switching between the roles of patient and dietitian.

Although I felt equipped to take on my live counseling sessions, I did not expect to encounter the harsh reality that not every person is going to be excited about nutrition immediately, and, even if they are, they may not express that in a textbook manner. During my first session, I was able to connect with my client about some shared medical issues and discuss his nutritional goals. However, I noticed some elements of the conversion/body language that indicated that my client was not ready for change. At this point, I finished the education quickly and tried to redirect the conversation to the scheduling of the next session. Then it was over. I had talked to my first client as a grad student...and...I felt deflated.

I spent the next two weeks racking my brain for ways to meet my client on their level. Finally, it was time for a second session. We had a very natural, engaged session discussing several different areas of diet education. I ended the session and realized that nutritional counseling is like the seasons. In the winter, there is snow and signs of life are hidden, but in the spring the buried seeds begin to sprout and grow. The rushed and awkward education of the first session was the seed necessary to spark interest in my client and promote behavior-change. While this outcome was amazing, and a high point in the semester for me, I realize that seasons change. What may be signs of motivation in my client during this session, may fade as life gets in the way. This experience allowed me to realize that I can study scripts and make educated predictions about my client's behavior, but at the end of the day the person who oversees making lifestyle changes is my client. I cannot allow how I feel about their engagement to diminish my commitment to help my clients achieve their nutrition goals. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to counsel a real client before my rotations!



Congratulations to our amazing CHP award recipients this year! We are so proud of all your hard work and excited to see the amazing things you accomplish going forward.

Outstanding Student of the Year - Vida Velasco-Popov
Opportunitas - Christa Vasile
Outstanding Academic Achievement - Alyssa Wengrofsky (not pictured)

Student Happenings

NYSAND AME Conference

By Madison Jacobs, Cohort 6

In April this year, four Pace MS Nutrition and Dietetics students attended and presented literature review posters at the New York State Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics Annual Meeting & Expo in Syracuse, NY. The NYSAND AME conference is dedicated to empowering nutrition and dietetics professionals through education, advocacy, and collaboration, ultimately aiming to improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities across New York State. It is one of the most prestigious and thought-provoking opportunities students can participate in during our master's program. Students attended lectures by experienced registered dietitians who presented on topics including mitigating menopause with nutrition, food allergy prevention in infancy, digital health wearables, food science vs. food philosophy, a guide to finding the best available evidence, and other current topics. In addition, students were accepted as research poster presenters and were awarded the Amelia Gould Scholarships from Pace to present their work, which represented the culminating projects from Research in Nutrition and the Capstone classes.



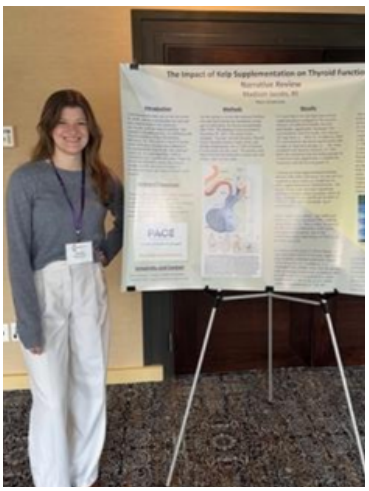
Personally, presenting my poster in front of so many established professionals was daunting; however, after standing by my poster and explaining my research for the first time, I knew I was meant to be there. The knowledge I gained from the speakers and attendees has motivated me to attend more conferences in the future and encourage other students to attend as well. The diverse topics explored throughout this experience have sparked my interest in the nutrition field even more than I thought possible, ultimately grounding me and my decision to pursue this degree even more. I am so thankful to the Amelia Gould Foundation for providing us with a grant for our overnight stay, and for Pace University who covered our admission fee. This was truly an experience I won't forget!



Zoe Noyes - *Cardiovascular Risks of Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy*



Vida Velasco-Popov - *Bipolar Disorders: Underlying Mechanisms and the Role of Nutrition*



Madison Jacobs - *The Impact of Kelp Supplementation on Thyroid Function*



Isha Patel - *The Power of Foods That Improve the Gut Microbiome*

Student Happenings

WRDA Student Career Panel

By Christina Papadopoulos, Cohort 5

Once again, Pace University hosted the annual WRDA Career Panel in Nutrition and Dietetics Careers at its Pleasantville Campus. Cohort 5 had the opportunity to plan this event as a class assignment to enhance leadership and team coordination skills. We were all assigned to oversee different aspects of the event, such as sending invitations, creating a registration flier, ordering food and beverages, and monitoring the budget. It was a group effort that challenged us to step outside our comfort zones, but it was worth it in the end because we were able to connect with several experienced RDs in the Westchester-Rockland area.

We invited students from other schools and put together a list of questions for all the panelists to learn more about what they do on a regular basis as RDs. It was a valuable experience because we had such a diverse group of panelists, including RDs from all areas of the field. They shared personal experiences, helpful tips for future RDs, and reinforced that our shared passion for nutrition and preventative care is what makes the dietetic community so strong. I am thankful to Pace and our professors for giving us the opportunity to host and plan this networking event!



Pictured left to right:
Alicia Blittner MS, RDN - Employee Wellness Dietitian at Orange & Rockland Utilities
Hannah Reilly MS, RDN, LDN - Regional Dietitian at NutraCo
Lisa Ellis MS, RDN, CDN, LCSW, CEDS-C - Eating Disorder Registered Dietitian and Social Worker at Integrating Nutrition, INC
Stephanie Noto Ceglia RD, CDN, SNS - School Nutrition & Food Service Consultant; Owner of Noto Nutrition Consulting; Partners with school districts to evaluate and enhance Child Nutrition Programs
Shari Keats MS, RDN, CDN - Registered Dietitian Nutritionist at Keats Nutrition; Clinical Dietitian at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital's Center for Advanced Digestive Care
Toni Marinucci MS, RDN - Registered Dietitian, podcast host, and business owner of Tips With Toni
Susan Juechter MS, RDN, CDN, CDCES - Senior Registered Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist at Phelps Hospital Northwell Health

Student Happenings

Trip to Italy with Foodcultureology





This spring, Pace Nutrition and Dietetics students traveled to Florence, Italy with Foodcultureology for the first time! Foodcultureology is a unique educational program that provides immersive professional development food and culture experiences abroad for registered dietitians, dietetic interns, and students. While in Italy, students participated in engaging expert-led presentations and conversations about the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle, chef-led culinary workshops, and day trips to the Tuscan countryside, where they visited local pasta, olive oil, cheese, and wine producers. Through this hands-on, immersive trip, students were exposed to diverse food cultures and sustainable production methods, allowing them to broaden their dietary knowledge and cultural humility, and enhance communication and networking skills. We are thankful to Foodcultureology for providing such a valuable and unparalleled learning experience to our students on their professional journeys!







Notes From the Field

Putnam Hospital & Vassar Brothers Hospital - Clinical Rotation

By Rachel Mirel, Cohort 5

This semester I completed my clinical rotations at two different sites, Putnam Hospital in Carmel, NY and Vassar Brothers Hospital in Poughkeepsie, NY. I spent roughly 2.5 months at PHC and 1 month at VBH. Over the total 3-month span, I've helped care for numerous patients with diverse backgrounds, disease states, and nutritional needs and/or limitations.

At Putnam hospital, I had the pleasure of working with 3 amazing RDs, all of whom contributed to my overall experience by teaching me about the basics of clinical nutrition. Although the foundation of medical nutrition therapy was laid out for me during my time spent in the classroom at Pace, being in the hospital setting daily was transformative for my clinical skills.

The nutrition care manager from PHC supplied me with helpful study material before I saw any patients during the beginning stages of my rotation. As time progressed, my days consisted of reviewing the EMR and shadowing my preceptors during their patient assessments. PHC is a smaller hospital that consists of an ICU, two medical/surgical floors, and a behavioral health unit. Some of the patients I worked with required diet intervention and/or education for injuries, kidney dysfunction, mental illness, cancer, heart issues, neurological problems, respiratory problems, and GI issues. The highlight of this experience was participating in patient rounds and mastering the art of writing a detailed nutrition assessment note.

I truly accelerated my learning toward the end of my time at PHC and all throughout my experience at Vassar. During my time at VBH, my preceptors reinforced a lot of what I already learned at Putnam and also opened me to areas I had not yet been exposed to, further contributing to my growth as a clinical dietetic intern. I especially enjoyed my time spent in the NICU, as I did not have much prior knowledge about nutrition support and recommendations for infants under intensive care. Overall, I am so pleased that I had the opportunity to learn from such experienced and enthusiastic preceptors from not only one- but two- amazing facilities!

Notes From the Field

Dr. Christen Cooper Awarded the Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors (NDEP) 2024 Outstanding Dietetic Educator Award



In January, Dr. Christen Cooper was selected as the 2024 recipient of the Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors Dietetic Practice Group (NDEP) as Outstanding Dietetic Educator Award for the North East Region. NDEP is a 1,350-member group within the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that recognizes educators and preceptors as leaders of the profession, supports and advances nutrition and dietetic education programs, and supports the purposes and goals of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Dr. Cooper will travel to Seattle in April to receive the award and participate in NDEP's annual national meeting representing Pace. Dr. Cooper said: "I am delighted to accept this award and acknowledge the fantastic faculty teamwork and student excellence that helped make it possible. It is a joy to have the opportunity to educate tomorrow's leaders in nutrition and dietetics. I am so very proud of all of my students and graduates."

Dr. Sue Maxam, Assistant Provost for Wellness at Pace, nominated Dr. Cooper for the award. She stated: "Of the 1,000+ faculty members at Pace University, I am convinced Dr. Cooper is among the most innovative, engaging and impactful, due to her contagious passion for the field; a deep understanding of nutrition and dietetics and how they intersect with seemingly countless other areas; her creative teaching practices; and the genuine interest she shows her students. She literally gets to know and support each and every one of her students, connecting them with mentors and other key contacts and opportunities within and outside of the University, while mentoring many of them herself."

Cohort 5 student Vida Velasco-Popov supported Dr. Cooper's nomination with a letter that included: "Dr. Cooper's enthusiasm and passion for teaching nutrition and its applications to public health, food equity, research, advocacy, and wellness is infectious. Her classes are unlike anything I've ever experienced: extremely interesting and engaging, as she uses various methods such as interactive activities, multimedia presentations, guest speakers, and meaningful class discussions. She is approachable, supportive, and responsive, and always gives constructive feedback and guidance. Dr. Cooper has a way of leading discussions that challenges us to think differently and to question our assumptions while exploring different perspectives we might not have considered. She brings inspiration to all of us future dietitians, helping us see the value of the field and the profound impact we can make on society." Dr. Cooper hopes that this honor will help drive the program forward and underscore the commitment to students and advancement in nutrition and dietetics education to which Pace is strongly committed.

Alumni Highlights



Deanna Ellison

Cohort 2, Class of 2021

1. It has been about 3 years since you graduated from Pace. How does it feel to be back, but in a completely new role?

I am delighted to be back at Pace, this time in a staff position. As a student, I enjoyed working closely with the faculty and continued to keep in touch with them after graduating. Dr. Cooper, Professor Tosto, and Professor Opfer all have different expertise in the field of nutrition and are excellent mentors to current and past students. It was a pleasure working with them as a student and they are the reason I was so excited to return to Pace.

2. Tell us a bit about what you have been doing since you graduated.

Since graduating, I have been working in an acute care setting. I work primarily on a mixed medical oncology unit in a local hospital. I have loved working in this setting and being exposed to a variety of different clinical cases. I get to see many different GI cases in addition to oncology.

Everyday can be something different and it is special to be able to help patients in their lowest moments. I have also enjoyed working as part of an interdisciplinary team and collaborating with my colleagues to support the best clinical outcomes for our patients.

3. Has your work experience out in the field influenced your return to Pace? If yes, how?

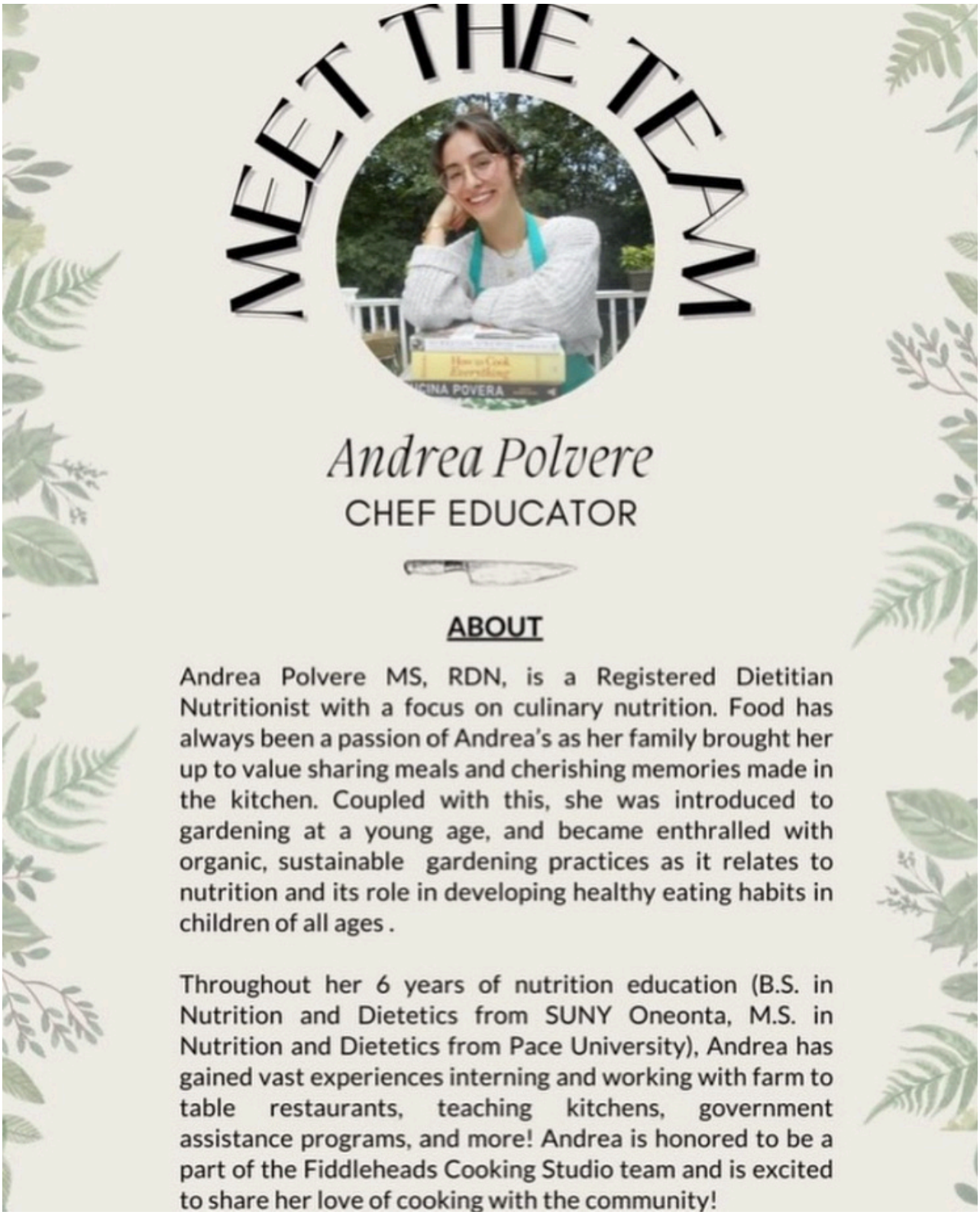
I have always loved being in an academic setting. I used to say if it were an option, I would just go to school for a living. Working in a hospital can often feel like an academic setting. You are constantly learning from the people around you, so my education feels like it never stopped. Returning to Pace was a no-brainer. I am back in academia, in an environment that supports education and research for students and faculty.

4. As a current faculty member and former student of this program, what advice do you have for our students as they are completing their rotations and preparing for the RD exam?

My best piece of advice is to keep an open mind and try to make the most of every experience. Regardless of the site you are placed at, you will learn invaluable skills. The connections you make during your internships can open the door for future career opportunities. Regarding the RD Exam, use your internships to solidify and apply your classroom knowledge. Making the connections between the textbooks and the patients you are seeing is the best way to establish your understanding of the concepts.

Alumni Highlights

Earlier this year, Fiddleheads Cooking Studio shared this story of Cohort 4 graduate Andrea Polvere on their social media. Congratulations, Andrea!



Follow us on Instagram!

