A CLOSER LOOK AT
THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NUTRITION AND DIETETICS
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

The Master of Science (M.S.) degree program at Northern Illinois University provides advanced studies in nutrition and dietetics. It is designed to prepare students interested in community nutrition to work as registered dietitians (becoming a registered dietitian requires completion of a dietetic internship) in a variety of public and private health organizations in county, state, and government agencies or as patient-care dietitians in hospitals and other health-care settings. The program also prepares students to continue their studies in doctoral programs.

Core courses focus on both prevention and treatment of nutrition-related diseases. Some of the courses that students may select from include: Macronutrients, Micronutrients, Intensive Metabolic Nutrition Support, Maternal and Infant Nutrition, Nutrition & Physical Activity, Geriatric Nutrition, Obesity and Eating Disorders, Counseling Skills & Strategies, Strategies for Modifying Behavior Change, and Seminar on Outcome Studies and Public Policy.

In addition to these courses in nutrition and dietetics, students select other courses related to behavior change and the health care system offered by other disciplines. Some of these “elective” courses include: Health Care Delivery in the U.S., Health Economics for Health Services Managers, Behavioral & Social Aspects of Public Health, Principles of Behavior Modification, Health Organizations and Delivery of Services.

Course descriptions for all of these courses are available in the Graduate Catalog, which is available on-line at http://www.grad.niu.edu/.

**Prerequisites.** Prerequisites to the program include completion of a Didactic Program in Dietetics or completion of courses in the following subjects: general chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology or bacteriology, human biology, human physiology, science of nutrition, applied nutrition, two semesters of nutrition in clinical care, principles of food preparation, quantity food production, management and statistics. A minimum 3.00 GPA in these courses is required.

Students whose baccalaureate degree was in an area other than nutrition and dietetics are required to complete the requirements of the Didactic Program in Dietetics for admission to the dietetic internship and M.S. program or, for admission to the M.S. program only.

Although students may be admitted to the program while still in the process of completing the last of the prerequisites, these courses must be completed prior to taking the 500-level graduate courses in nutrition. Dietetic internship students must have completed a Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) at the time of initiating their practicum experiences.

**Structuring the program.** When you are admitted to the graduate program, you will be
assigned to one faculty person who will serve as your academic advisor. Students work with their advisor to individualize the M.S. program and make course selections among requirement options so as to reflect the student's personal and professional goals. Transfer credits of up to 15 hours toward the M.S. is permitted, but the acceptance of specific course work is subject to the advisor's assessment of the contribution to the total program. The M.S. degree program and Dietetic Internship are sequenced for simultaneous completion of both programs. Five semesters of coursework are required to complete both the M.S. degree program and Dietetic Internship. The time required to complete the M.S. degree program without the dietetic internship is variable, but generally a full-time student without deficiencies can complete the M.S. program in four semesters (not including summers).

Thesis or Non-Thesis Option: The M.S. degree program allows students to choose between a thesis or non-thesis option. A thesis is an original research project that each student completes under the supervision of a faculty member in the department. The thesis topic is determined by the interests of the student, the adviser, the resources required, and knowledge needs of the profession. The research interests of the faculty members are described on their respective web pages. Six semester hours of credit is earned for completing a thesis.

Students who select the non-thesis option will be required to take an additional six semester hours of nutrition coursework. This will include a community-based research project participation.

**Program costs.** For up-to-date tuition costs and fees, visit the university website at [http://www.niu.edu/bursar/tuition/graduate.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/bursar/tuition/graduate.shtml).

**Financial Assistance - Graduate Assistantships**
All applicants, especially those who are from out-of-state, are strongly encouraged to apply for a graduate assistantship. A benefit of a graduate assistantship is that it pays for tuition and provides a modest stipend. Graduate assistantships require that a student work for a faculty person for 10 to 20 hours per week assisting with teaching and/or research. Each semester, a limited number of graduate assistantships are available.

**Application and Admission to the M.S. program.**
Criteria for admission include (but are not limited to) grade point average (with special emphasis on the sciences, food service, and nutrition courses), Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, and two letters of recommendation. Applications to the Graduate Program are accepted continuously throughout the year; however, if a student wishes to be considered for financial aid (graduate assistantships, fellowships, or tuition waivers) applications should be received as early as possible. Application forms for the M.S. program are available at [http://www.grad.niu.edu/index.shtml](http://www.grad.niu.edu/index.shtml).

Occasionally a student may begin taking graduate courses as a “student-at-large”, and subsequently apply and be admitted to the graduate program. If you are considering doing that, you will need to meet with a faculty advisor prior to enrolling to discuss which
courses may transfer into the M.S. program. No more than 12 semester hours of graduate work earned as a student-at-large will be counted toward the M.S. degree. Applications for student-at-large status are brief and can be submitted for a given semester as long as registration continues.

Catalogs can be requested directly from the Graduate School (815-753-0395).

**Application to the Dietetic Internship.**

Admission to the M.S. program and the Dietetic Internship are separate, but related processes. Not all students admitted to the M.S. program are interested in or are eligible for the internship. The internship also requires work experience, an interview, and computer matching through D& D Digital Systems. The Dietetic Internship application is available at [http://www.niu.edu/fcns/graduate/pdfs/program_application.pdf](http://www.niu.edu/fcns/graduate/pdfs/program_application.pdf).

Information regarding the computer matching process can be obtained from your DPD director, or

D & D Digital Systems  
Telephone: 515-292-0490  
E-mail dnd@netins.net  

The best candidates are selected on the basis of performance in prerequisite courses, undergraduate grade point average, GRE scores, and in the case of the internship, work experience and interview performance.

Internship applicants must adhere to the computer-match application deadlines. Usually dietetic internship applications are due February 14/15. Because this deadline is well in advance of the deadlines for application to the Graduate School, potential interns may wish to delay their graduate application until they have been informed of their internship match.