

Dietetics at Deakin

40 years at the forefront of
nutrition and dietetics education

Celebrating **40** years
of Dietetics
1977-2017





Celebrating 40 years

of dietetics at Deakin University



Foreword

Deakin University has a long and proud tradition of nutrition and dietetic education in Australia. It provided the first university-based dietetic program in Victoria and was among the first in Australia, beginning in 1977.

Dietetic training at Deakin has undergone many transitions and changes over 40 years. The course moved from its original location in Geelong to the Stonington campus in Toorak, and then finally to the Melbourne Burwood Campus in 1998. Initially, training was provided as a Graduate Diploma of Dietetics, and transitioned to a two-year Master of Nutrition and Dietetics, a four-year Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics and finally to the current program, an 18-month Master of Dietetics, which commenced in 2006.

Dietetic training continues into the future with our Master of Dietetics accredited by the Dietitians Association of Australia until 2020, and our program has now grown to enrol 55 students each year. It is a three-semester professional training program that builds on undergraduate knowledge in nutrition, physiology and biochemistry, to develop skills in dietary management of individuals and groups in both health and disease. Full-time professional practice placements provide students with hands-on experience in clinical, community and food service settings.

Students develop research and communication skills through group projects and undertake professional and career development through a dietetics specific professional practice unit.

To celebrate our 40 years, we have profiled the career paths and memories of one graduate from each year. Careers in dietetics provide amazing diversity and flexibility and our 40 graduates celebrate this diversity. Dietitians work in a variety of sectors, and career opportunities for graduates include clinical dietetic practice and medical nutrition therapy, community and public health nutrition, food service, private practice, food industry, sports nutrition, research, marketing, communications, media, health promotion and policy development to name a few.

We hope you enjoy reading the stories of our graduates, and we look forward to celebrating this milestone with you.

Dr Claire Margerison
Course Director

Associate Professor Sarah McNaughton
Discipline Leader

Our story

1977

First cohort of students enrolled for the Graduate Diploma of Dietetics at the Geelong Waterfront Campus. The course was based primarily in Geelong with placements in Melbourne.

Professor Mark Wahlqvist appointed as the first Chair of Human Nutrition at an Australian university.

Delia Flint-Richter and Pat Crotty lead the Graduate Diploma of Dietetics.

1978

First graduates from the Graduate Diploma of Dietetics, Geelong Waterfront Campus.

Deakin Advisory Committee for Dietetics established with representation from the Dietetic Association of Victoria, Dietitians Registration Board of Victoria, practising dietitians and student representatives.



1987

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics class of 1986 graduation.

1988

Fiona Cumming appointed as Course Coordinator.

1990

First cohort of students enrolled in the two-year Master of Nutrition and Dietetics.

1992

Final graduates from the Graduate Diploma of Dietetics.

1993

First graduates from the two-year Master of Nutrition and Dietetics.

1995

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics moves to the Stonington campus in Toorak.



1997

First year Master of Nutrition and Dietetics students at Melbourne Burwood Campus.

1998

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics moves to Building J at Melbourne Burwood Campus.

Caryl Nowson appointed as Course Coordinator.

2000

First cohort of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics/ Bachelor of Applied Science (Health Sciences).

Implemented the first problem-based learning program in dietetics in Australia.

2002

Sue Milner appointed as Course Coordinator.

2003

Program changes to the Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics.

2004

First graduates from the Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics/Bachelor of Applied Science (Health Sciences) combines courses.

Caryl Nowson, Jane Winter and Helen Matters are finalists in the Australian Awards for University Teaching Award for Biological Sciences, Health and Related Studies, and attend Parliament House in Canberra.



2005

Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics class of 2005.

Tim Crowe appointed as Course Coordinator.

2006

First cohort of students enrolled in the 18-month Master of Dietetics.

2007

First graduates from the Master of Dietetics.



2010

Final graduates from the four-year Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics.

2013

Claire Margerison appointed as Course Director.



2015

International Dietitian's Day March 2015. Community Nutrition cohort, Master of Dietetics class of 2015.



2017

Master of Dietetics class of 2017. Last day on campus.

40 years of dietetics at Deakin University.

1977

Aranka Nenov

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics



What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

My career began 40 years ago at the Williamstown Hospital in January 1978. In 1978 Williamstown Hospital provided a range of health care services including a children's ward, general medical/surgical wards, midwifery, rehab and a casualty department. **Aranka Nenov**

As a new graduate, I was provided the challenging opportunity to set up the Nutrition department in a hospital that had not previously employed a dietitian.

Today Williamstown Hospital continues to evolve to meet the needs of the community and in 2000 became an integral part of Western Health.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

The Williamstown Hospital has provided the opportunity for me to develop in many areas of dietetics.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working closely with the Food Service department in implementing a healthy patient menu. I commenced an outpatient nutrition service for the referral of patients from the local general practitioners.

Additional career opportunities were presented in 2000 when Williamstown Hospital joined Sunshine and Western Hospital to form the Western Healthcare Network. I was given the opportunity to supervise final year Deakin University dietetics students and undertake multidisciplinary research.

'A Deakin dietetic graduate today has no limits to their career opportunities and the sky is their limit.'

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

I have many fond memories of studying dietetics at Deakin University. Many of my fellow students became my close friends as we shared countless moments in the classroom and in the cafes. There were many unforgettable personalities among our lecturers and they were pivotal to our learning, some of which I still remember to this day.

My generation was also fortunate in that we had access to a free tertiary education.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Dietetics has certainly undergone large changes.

There are many more career opportunities at present than in the late 1970s. Working in a hospital was considered the only path to follow after a dietitian graduated. However today Dietitians are more entrepreneurial. They have the opportunity to work in private practices, specialise in areas such as sport and can be hired by food companies. A Deakin dietetic graduate today has no limits to their career opportunities and the sky is the limit.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I believe the dietetic profession will experience healthy growth for the foreseeable future.

Many jobs may not be in the traditional avenues of clinical nutrition and food service. The market for mobile health apps has skyrocketed in the recent years and one of the top requests for these services is diet coaching – having a dietitian just a swipe away is fast becoming common place.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

I would provide two career tips to Deakin dietetic students graduating today.

One is to volunteer with a nutrition organisation, as this is an important way to get experience and references to add to your CV. While most volunteer work is free, this can at times lead on to paid opportunities.

Second is to find a mentor to provide ongoing support and guidance to help become a better and more confident dietitian.



1978

Amanda Lee

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

'My greatest privilege has been to work with and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians – particularly the people of Minjilang who, in the early 1990s, showed the way to tackle diet-related chronic diseases.'

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Sole Dietitian, Mildura Base Hospital, Victoria

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

My greatest privilege has been to work with and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians – particularly the people of Minjilang who, in the early 1990s, showed the way to tackle diet-related chronic diseases.

Other highlights include roles as Chair of the NHMRC Dietary Guidelines Working Committee and other national advisory groups, leading a strategic approach to improve health as the Director of Nutrition and Physical Activity in Queensland Health and as lead of the food price and affordability domain of the International Network for Food and Obesity/Non-Communicable Diseases Research Monitoring and Action Support (INFORMAS).

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

The collegiate and supportive nature of the course. The wonderful community nutrition tutorials with Pat Crotty and guest lectures by public health leaders such as Dr Beverley Wood – very inspiring insights into what was a new field within dietetics at the time.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

The emergence of public health nutrition and expansion of community nutrition as areas of discipline expertise.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I trust there will be increasing awareness of the leading contribution of poor diet to disease burden in Australia and globally – with greater investment in primary prevention of diet-related disease. This will require greater inter-sectoral action, promotion of science literacy and tackling vested interests and nutrition misinformation – to produce evidence-informed food and nutrition policy that addresses health inequities and sustainability.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Apply an empirical scientific approach to all aspects of your work – be ethical, professional, trust that you have the knowledge and skills to help make the world a better place – and keep applying for positions!

1979

Karen Peters

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics



What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I started as a locum Dietitian at St Vincent's Hospital. Shortly after, I obtained a full-time position at Southern Memorial Hospital (now Caulfield Hospital).

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

My work at the Diabetes Institute enabled me to take a field trip with a World Health Organisation group to Nauru and attend a Koori camp in outer Melbourne, where I had the privilege of meeting, working with and learning about life, perspectives and health challenges of many different people. My work for the RAAF and in private practice enabled me the flexibility to work part-time with young children. My career has been ever changing and evolving but has enabled me to do meaningful and rewarding work. It is such a blessing to be able to journey with people facing diverse health and personal challenges. To make a difference, whether that be to help reduce anxiety, improve insight and understanding, or to enable someone to make independent, informed choices for self-care is so very rewarding. This is the highlight for me.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

My favourite memory was of watching outstanding dietitians in action and feeling so inspired by them. In particular, Bev Wood, for her vision and wisdom and Judy Appleton, for her compassionate patient care.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

There are now more dietitians trained but fewer opportunities to work in clinical settings. This has created greater diversification of roles and thus more diverse training. This reduces the clinical training time and can increase the intensity and pressure on many during clinical placements.

Many previously held beliefs about nutrition have now been challenged, demanding greater reliance on evidence based practice, avid and ongoing reading to stay current and greater advocacy to compete against self-appointed experts.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I see a necessity for greater collaboration with medical research to explore controversies and uncertainties, as current principles continue to be challenged. I see an expanding role for tailoring nutritional advice based on nutrigenomic tests, to assist dietitians in private practice. I see increased prescribing rights and clinical accreditation in specialty areas to assist dietitians to expedite patient care in areas that were previously the domain of doctors, much like the evolving role of clinical specialty nurses.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

A mentor is essential, to help guide, support and challenge you, regardless of your first position. Don't be discouraged if your first job is not what you intended. Volunteer work or working in a related field is still an opportunity for learning. Keep reading, food shopping, label reading, cooking and talking with dietitians, as all experience is invaluable.

'I see increased prescribing rights and clinical accreditation in specialty areas to assist dietitians to expedite patient care in areas that were previously the domain of doctors, much like the evolving role of clinical specialty nurses.'



1980

Wendy Swan

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

My first job was a long time ago! After university, I went to Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton as a sole dietitian. I graduated at a time when hospitals had difficulty recruiting allied health professionals to regional areas (yes hard to believe). I applied for and was granted a bursary which paid for accommodation and books. At that time, there were no university fees (more amazing stories). In return I had to work for the organization for two years. After that I was going back to the city, however that just never happened. I have continued to work in a regional area since that time, and have been lucky to work in a range of different roles.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Dietetics as a profession has offered me a great amount of flexibility. I have been able to work in different clinical positions with great job satisfaction, plus have been able to work reduced hours when raising a family (a life highlight). In addition to the public sector I have been able to build a solid consultancy practice in the private sector. My career highlights include completing my Master of Rural Health in 2008, which involved going back to study after many years (daunting), and then being awarded Advanced Accredited Practice status in 2012. I am very proud to hold this title as the majority of AdvAPDs tend to work in a specialist or academic field. Meeting the criteria for AdvAPD highlights and validates that there are skills and value in working in a generalist area. Hopefully this will encourage more rural and regional dietitians to apply for advanced status.

Personally, I find the most rewarding part of my job to be working with and mentoring young dietitians at the start of their journey. Perhaps this is because I worked for many years in a sole position and as a result highly value the benefits of working in a team and the opportunity to support clinicians in their early learning phase.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Deakin University (Wauran Ponds) had the best lentil burgers I have ever tasted. My fondest memories of studying at Deakin are actually of the student accommodation at the Wauran Ponds campus where dietetics was located at the time. Living on campus gave me a great opportunity to meet lots of different students both from within dietetics but also from other courses. Both the university and the accommodation were 'in the country' and I think this helped my transition from leaving home to university life. Dietetics has always excited me but most exciting is the science part of dietetics. I think that is what sets us apart from other professions/pseudo professions that delve into nutrition. I have very fond memories of our food science practicals. Also, I think we were lucky in that there was a lot more clinical placement built into the course. If I remember correctly we had eight-week major placement, four-week Peter Mac, two weeks Royal Children's Hospital and four weeks final placement – all up this is 18 weeks of placement – way more than now, and this really helped to build confidence. Mind you in my memory there were some very stern dietetic managers and very stern nursing matrons on some of those placements but I think I have tried to block that out.

‘Personally, I find the most rewarding part of my job to be working with and mentoring young dietitians at the start of their journey.’

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Where do I start? It has to be computers/IT/communication. We learnt not how to use computers but how to write computer programs! I am not sure why as I have never ever written a computer program (I mean we learnt to physically colour in the little boxes to write a series of ‘instructions for the computer’). IT has been the biggest change to practice both at university and in the workplace as now computers are such an integral part of our practice both in terms of process and communication. Back in the day no one even had mobile phones. (I hear you gasp). As a sole practitioner in a new role I had to write my own diet sheets and photocopy them to give to patients, deliver education programs using an overhead projector with hand written plastic sheets and manually keep statistics/appointments. Some may say a simpler life but there is no doubt IT has made a huge difference to how we practice.

How we seek ongoing education has also changed dramatically. The only time I ever saw another dietitian was at our regional meetings when I am sure we didn’t stop talking from the minute we met until the time we left as we were so starved of professional contact! Now we can video conference, Skype, train it to a meeting in Melbourne or watch a webinar. This technology has certainly reduced the isolation of working rurally.

And the other big change is that dietitians no longer wear white coats! A good white coat was an expectation of many organisations. There are many benefits to working on your own and one of them is the ability to autonomously make decisions and the decision to ditch the white coat was a good one.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I feel a little nervous about the future of dietetics. The job market is so tough and unfortunately good dietetic graduates end up either unemployed or taking positions that lead them to work in a compromised and unsupported position. I would love there to be enough graduate positions available so that every graduate dietitian has the opportunity to feel supported as they learn their trade. Aside from no jobs there are so many nutrition competitors out there in the market and on social media. Everyone thinks they are an expert on food and much of the food information discussed is, as we know, nothing more than rubbish. Our messages of moderation unfortunately are a little bland compared to the strong statements of ‘sugar is poison’ or ‘the diet to cure cancer’. Over the years I have become less confident about how much impact we as a small profession can have. But then I remind myself that is where the enthusiasm of our young dietitians comes in; so ‘go forth and advocate’ for the simple messages of healthy eating and moderation

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

After all your hard work don’t take job rejections personally. Your CV needs to jump out from the crowd. Keep applying and be innovative – do whatever volunteering you can, particularly if you can get some opportunity to practice the many skills you have just finished learning. Practice on your family and friends if you must. Keep yourself focused and interested in the profession, continue learning and be prepared to move out of the city and embrace a new rural/regional lifestyle even if it is only for a few years.



1981

Karen Campbell

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Dietitian, Ballarat Base Hospital, Victoria

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Dietetics took me to health promotion and in turn public health. It also took me to management and to media – TV and print in particular. In 1991, I appeared three times a week on Gabriel Gate’s ‘What’s Cooking’ on Channel 9, while working also as the Deputy Chief Dietitian at the Austin Hospital. I then moved to working for Deakin’s State Government-supported Food and Nutrition Program, and in turn was employed to lead the federally-funded Public Health Education and Research Program (PHERP) in public health nutrition. In this role, I initiated the Public Health Association of Australia’s Food and Nutrition Special Interest Group which has gone from strength to strength and is a magnet for public health nutritionists around Australia. It is one of the most active groups within PHAA. An important highlight is that dietetics brought me back to Deakin. After having done a Graduate Diploma in Health Education at La Trobe, and a Master of Public Health at Monash, I commenced my PhD at Deakin in 2000. This has led me to a 20-year career in research and teaching.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Dietetics at Deakin comprised a small band – 20, I think – of very intelligent, competitive young women and two men in my year (both now professors).

Our smallness meant we were surrounded by people we knew well and this was fun. I remember I felt suddenly very grown up when we had to move from our undergraduate jeans and desert boots (note that our Julie Woods wore A-line skirts and espadrilles!) to ‘good clothes’. I enjoyed feeling part of the workforce and being exposed to great dietitians including Dr Beverly Woods and Kay Gibbons.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

I’d be guessing here but one of my observations might be that dietitians have more opportunities to diversify than they may have done in the 80s. Over the past 40 years the popularity of nutrition, the recognition of the central role food plays in health means, I think, that there are many more places where our skills are seen as relevant.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I imagine the profession of dietetics will continue to grow and diversify. This is a profession filled with high achieving, highly intelligent people who will make their mark on the world in ways we may not yet have imagined. Dietitians are already filling many of the most senior and influential roles in Departments of Health and I’m sure in many other environments. I suspect this movement to places of influence will continue providing opportunities for nutrition and health to find a place across a wide range of systems.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Think big, pursue your dreams. What you do is exciting and important.

'Over the past 40 years the popularity of nutrition, the recognition of the central role food plays in health means ... that there are many more places where our skills are seen as relevant.'



Graduate Diploma of Dietetics class of 1979.

Back (left to right): Janice McKeown, Dr Boyd Strauss, Jill Martin, Kerry Sanders, Pauline Cooper, Sheryl Hunt, Penny Carlyle, Karen Peters, Virginia Fazio, Alison Joliffe, Delia Flint, Kay Silvester.
Front (left to right): Fiona Cumming, Jane Cairns, Jenny Foreman, Hargita Kiss, Mandy Sargood, Anne Kenez, Narelle Box, Elizabeth Burns, Pat Crotty, Judy Robbins (absent: Linda Wilson).



1982

Steven Crowley

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

After a short-term locum position at Toowoomba Hospital in Queensland, I went straight into private practice – working in a range of areas including private hospitals, consulting rooms, defence force and health clubs. Eventually my wife Jennie (nee Taylor) – also a dietetic graduate of 1983 – joined the private practice consultancy.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

After working in private practice for a number of years, I decided to have a career change and went back to university to study economics. I completed a Master of Business Administration at Monash University then went to York University in the UK to undertake a Master of Science in Health Economics. After my return from the UK, I had a number of interesting jobs including working at the Australian Council of Healthcare Standards (hospital outcome measurement as part of hospital accreditation), a Research Fellow at the NHMRC National Centre for Health Program Evaluation (focusing on the economics of public health including nutrition programs), as well as working for the Food and Nutrition Program in Victoria helping to set up GutBusters.

In 1997 I joined the pharmaceutical industry as a health economist and after almost 20 years in senior managerial roles in both Australia and Asia-Pacific, I decided to (semi) retire in 2015 and set up a consultancy business, LUCID Health Consulting, with two colleagues.

We provide health technology assessment support to a range of industries and agencies in both Australia and Asia-Pacific. As well as working in industry, I have been fortunate to have had a part-time academic career and until 2013 I was a senior lecturer at The University of Melbourne teaching subjects in economic evaluation for Master of Public Health students. I am currently an honorary Associate Professor in the School of Health and Social Development, Faculty of Health at Deakin University.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Most importantly, I met my wife Jennie who was doing the same course. The great part of the course was the combination of theory and practice with student placements at hospitals and community health centres. The counselling skills and the evidence-based approach that was a key foundation of the courses helped prepare me for both my dietetic career and later career in managing health technology assessment projects.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Over the last 25 years, I have had little contact with the profession, but it would appear that there are more courses and an increased number of graduates each year and the role of nutrition in clinical dietetics, public health, sports nutrition and everyday life has become more recognised. Thus, it would appear that there are more career opportunities today than there were when I graduated.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

From an outsider (to the profession now), it would appear that dietetics as a profession still has the opportunity to become the number one trusted source of information on nutrition to the general community, as other interests with less knowledge and skills currently have a prominent public voice. There is a large role that dietitians can play with conveying sensible messages regarding nutrition and well being using social media tools, as this has the potential to reach and influence a broader population.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Embrace the profession as the skills and scientific rigour gained in both formal training and in working as a dietitian can open up tremendous opportunities both within the profession and in other areas of work.

Also, put into the profession by engaging in both state and national committees and events as it can really provide dividends in terms of long-term career development.

‘Embrace the profession as the skills and scientific rigour gained in both formal training and in working as a dietitian can open up tremendous opportunities both within the profession and in other areas of work.’



1983

Tracie McRorie

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

In 1984, I was surprised to obtain the one year new graduate position at Royal Melbourne Hospital when Kay Gibbons was the Manager. I worked in the acute hospital in the general medical and surgical areas. My specialty area was in gastric stapling for weight loss where I managed to start up a support group for people who had undergone this surgery.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

From Royal Melbourne I had to look for another job at the end of my first year, and as jobs were scarce I followed a trend of Victorian dietitians and moved to Brisbane to work at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. This provided me with a broader clinical experience in a different health system.

After a year, I successfully obtained a position at Austin Hospital and moved back to Melbourne. I spent five great years at the Austin Hospital. We were a small team of dietitians then, covering the whole hospital and all the clinical units. I loved working in the gastroenterology unit as it was the start of the liver transplant unit and the doctors were very supportive of dietitians. I also developed an interest in eating disorders and worked in the adult and paediatric area of the service.

One of the highlights working there was when I was given the opportunity to manage the 'Diet Kitchen' which included all the staff, including cooks, kitchen hand and diet monitors plus the running of the food preparation and plating. During this time, a decision was made to integrate the 'Diet Kitchen' into the main kitchen and

I worked to develop the new menu to cater for all diets and to develop the work flows and job descriptions for the changing roles of the staff. I then had the opportunity to work in the food services department as Patient Food Services Manager under the guidance of Guy Chatain.

I then obtained a position at Caulfield General Medical Centre as Deputy Chief Dietitian, a role that I found challenging with a steep learning curve. At Caulfield General Medical Centre, there was one of the first community health centres in Victoria and I had the opportunity to work in this area as part of my role. We ran an amazing range of programs, including healthy weight cooking groups, label-reading groups and diabetes groups, and it felt like wherever we wanted to work or to develop a program in, we were able to do it. It was here I developed an interest in working with people with an intellectual disability and we commenced working with clients in group homes and conducting educational programs for them which was very rewarding. I also developed a service for community mental health clients and saw people at the mental health outreach service, individually and running cooking groups. This led to a specific position as a dietitian in the Department of Human Services, Disability Services where I visited people in group homes and in their own homes.

I also had the opportunity to work on a special project to identify people at risk of swallowing and nutrition problems by developing of a checklist and educating staff on nutrition and swallowing issues.

At the same time, I worked with a mental health community program in the inner city through a Home and Community Care Program (HACC)

'I have so far trained more than 100 students and have been given the opportunity to be innovative in our program design and implementation, with a collaborative learning model for students and greater involvement of the clinical educator.'

project to develop and implement a Café Meals program for homeless people. I worked with many mental health outreach workers and a highlight was to obtain ongoing funding for the program, which is still running today.

I was looking to consolidate my roles and was hired by Leonie Pearce, Manager of Nutrition and Dietetics in a maternity-leave position, working in the HACC program at Austin Health, where I have been working for 11 years.

There have been many highlights working at Austin Health, which felt like coming home to a very supportive, innovative department with amazing dietitians. One has been the opportunity to work as a clinical educator for student dietitians from Deakin University, now in my eighth year in the job, I have so far trained more than 100 students and have been given the opportunity to be innovative in our program design and implementation, with a collaborative learning model for students and greater involvement of the clinical educator. It is a very rewarding position and I feel I am giving back to the profession and I really enjoy working with the staff in the Master of Dietetics, who have been very supportive of our evolving student placement models.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Working with other dietetic students on projects/course work at Deakin in Geelong and then studying the final year in Melbourne, where we had lectures at the Melbourne TAFE College. I particularly loved my community placement at Queenscliff Community Health Service which was a six-week placement, living by the beach and doing some great work in the community.

I loved the atmosphere at Deakin in Geelong and living in the college dormitory and house on the campus. Also memorable, was my food service placement at the Mercy Private Hospital, where I met some wonderful people from different cultural backgrounds and enjoyed eating the homemade ice cream, a different flavour every day.

Also my clinical placement at Royal Melbourne Hospital was wonderful and my supervisor was inspiring, leading me towards clinical dietetics.

I remember all the staff at Deakin and on my placements as being very supportive and friendly.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

So many things, scientific knowledge in nutrition has expanded and dietitians have had to interpret and translate all these changes in knowledge into practice for their clients. There are more dietitians being trained now. When I graduated there was one course in Victoria training 20 dietitians. Now there are many universities training dietitians.

Dietitians are working in a wider variety of areas and have to be more entrepreneurial to get jobs in a very competitive environment.

There are fewer jobs in the traditional clinical roles in hospitals and community health with many dietitians now working in private practice and developing their own practices, utilising technology in their practice and becoming media savvy.

When I graduated, there were books promoting different diets and now there is an explosion of nutrition information in many different media forms, promoted by different people, including celebrities, which means dietitians have to compete to get evidence based good nutrition messages out to the population.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Dietitians have many skills and qualities which are very valuable in a changing health environment. I think the possibilities are endless for dietitians, in many different areas of work. I think the future is very bright for dietitians and the possibilities are only limited by imagination and opportunities.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Get a good mentor or several who you can get advice from along the journey of your career. Try a variety of workplaces, roles before you decide to specialise in a particular area and be flexible, taking up opportunities as they present themselves. Get assistance with job applications and interview skills so that this does not hold you back in this very competitive environment.



1984

Melissa Tinney

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I moved to South Australia and had a choice of three positions, and chose a sole dietitian position in the Adelaide Hills at Mt Barker Hospital. They had not had a dietitian before so this was a challenging and exciting way to start my career. I came back to Melbourne two years later and worked as a locum at St Vincent's hospital and Mt Alverna Hospital in Bendigo. I learnt about renal dietetics at St Vincent's and this has helped me throughout my career. I returned to South Australia and worked at Flinders Medical Centre, where they had a great team and a process to upskill new(ish) grads where we were allotted a time period under a senior dietitian in each respective unit including the psych ward. I learnt a lot and gained confidence during this five-year time with Flinders Medical Centre, and then moved on to private practice in food intolerance and in a private hospital.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

I then started working in community health at Tea Tree Gully Community Health Service and Port Adelaide Community Health where I worked with a great team and was able to develop and implement several larger community healthy eating and also body image and non-diet programs for the community.

Following a stint of four years in my own business making organic pasta, I returned to community health and moved into working with healthy eating in the school environment with South Australia Health and Health Promotion Branch. Here I worked with a great team again and under the wonderful initiatives of Patricia Carter for a period of five to six years, mainly the nutrition adviser for the Right Bite Healthy School food project. This work was exciting and satisfying particularly as the schools across South Australia were required to implement the Right Bite guidelines and we had around 85 per cent attendance at our workshops around the state and school canteens increasing their profits over this training time.

After moving back to Victoria in 2010, I worked for the Café Meals project at Time for Youth in Geelong. This involved research and working with homeless or at risk of homelessness, young people. My next role was with City of Greater Geelong in the Healthy Together Victoria initiative for four years and I am continuing to work with some members of this team at City of Greater Geelong now in the Healthy Communities unit.

I had a stint travelling to Melbourne for a year in 2016 as the Nutrition Adviser to the Heart Foundation Victorian Division. This was a good experience in working in the non-government advocacy area, although the travel and the politics were a bit much for me and I was happy to be offered a contract with City of Greater Geelong working in the area of improving healthy choices across council facilities, particularly reducing soft drinks. I also provided a private practise during this year in a bulk bill setting and enjoyed a return to individual consultations and support in a low socio-economic status area, lots of diabetes and IBS and FODMAPs.

In summary, I have enjoyed a wide range of experiences across all areas of dietetics in hospital, community and public health and advocacy settings. I enjoy working where I can attempt to have an influence on changing the environment as well as keeping my toe in the area of providing consultations in private practise and I am now finishing a counselling diploma with the intention of providing a counselling dietitian private practise from my home in Drysdale part time as well as continuing my work with council in the improving access to healthy choices for the community.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Living in Torquay and riding pillion on a motorbike to Deakin University, petri dishes in the lab and developing the first low-fat margarine spread as my project, the gum trees and lots of laughs in the cafeteria in summer.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

There are so many more courses available now. Deakin at Waurm Ponds had the only course back then, and Adelaide only had one graduation every two years so I had a choice of jobs in my graduating year. Education was free!

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I am enjoying working in public health and see a role for dietitians to continue and strengthen our presence in this area of work. We have a broad skill base that is very suitable for public health nutrition work and need to promote our profession in this area.

Also I see private practice and dietitian services more and more required with so much misinformation available. We need to continue to promote our knowledge and skills and position in the market place for the consumer as the experts in nutrition.

I would love to see community health dietitians return to a practice load spread as it was in my time in community health in the 1990s. During this period dietitians worked in community health with a spread of a third in one-to-one clinical consults, a third in group programs, for example, diabetes or weight management, and a third in community development sustainable system change programs. This made good use of our skills and made for a varied and interesting workload with the possibility for better outcomes for the community.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Keep pushing for dietitians to be working across a broad range of areas of work and not limited to clinical practice alone. Realise that not many people are happy when you try to change the environment or system to reduce energy-dense, nutrient-poor food choices but that we are fighting in a field where funds available are much greater for marketing from food companies and where our best weapon is persistence and understanding for the consumer.

'I am enjoying working in public health and see a role for dietitians to continue and strengthen our presence in this area of work. We have a broad skill base that is very suitable for public health nutrition work and need to promote our profession in this area.'

1985

Robyn Perlstein

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics



What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Wodonga District Hospital in 1985 – sole dietitian and such a great experience!

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

I have worked in general practice and in specialist centres such as Diabetes UK and Baker IDI, as well as doing research at Deakin in the areas of infant health, obesity prevention and nutrition in medical education.

I have been involved with publishing in health promotion journals and been fortunate to attend overseas conferences on over ten occasions.

I have also worked as a drug representative and did not like selling at all!

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

The people I studied with. They are still my best friends today. Additionally, and comically, learning how to crack eggs one-handed at Royal Southern Memorial Hospital in Caulfield, Victoria and a two-week intensive large-scale cookery course at Deakin prior to starting the Graduate Diploma of Dietetics.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

There is now more diversity in the types of jobs available and more focus on evidence-based practice.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I think there will be more nutrition-focused therapy based on genetic profiles, gut bacteria and health/chronic disease, inflammatory processes and diet. Dietitians in corporate health will have a higher profile as well.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

A solid career in clinical dietetics will stand you in good stead no matter where your career takes you, and make sure you always follow evidence-based practice but keep an open mind.

'A solid career in clinical dietetics
will stand you in good stead no
matter where your career takes you.'



Graduate Diploma of Dietetics class of 1986.



1986

Lauren Williams

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I worked at Lismore Base Hospital in Northern New South Wales. I was the only full-time dietitian (with an experienced dietitian who conducted education programs and outpatients one day per week). I was required to attend Head of Department meetings, and was responsible for the 230-bed hospital at the Base, 110-bed hospital 1km away, four subsidiary hospitals, and all outpatient and public health nutrition services for the region (There are now about 10 dietitians covering the same area and they are still understaffed). I narrowly avoided burnout and developed a great love and respect for rural dietetics.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

After leaving Northern New South Wales I took a position at Gosford Hospital, (80km north of Sydney) a department where Bill Shrapnel was implementing Ottawa Charter by reorienting health services, creating a community and public health nutrition team (CPHN) alongside a clinical team. I worked there for five years, eventually leading a team of five in CPHN. Gosford still is the best place I have ever worked and I left it very reluctantly to join the new undergraduate Nutrition and Dietetics program at the University of Newcastle as a lecturer responsible for community placements.

That was 25 years ago, and I have had an often challenging but always interesting career in academia since. I left the University of Newcastle on a positive note in 2011 to take up the inaugural chair of Nutrition and Dietetics at the University of Canberra, I am now Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics at Griffith University in Queensland.

'Know that you can learn more from your failures than your success. You learn about yourself, how much you really want something, you learn what to let go of, and you learn that you have resilience.'

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

My favourite memory is of the group I studied with. I joined the program as an 'external', having done my undergraduate nutrition degree elsewhere. That was an unusual cohort for Deakin in that of the 24 of us, there were equal numbers of 'internals' and 'externals'.

Several of the externals had worked or done honours degrees and were more assertive, which was no doubt challenging for the academic team. The positive thing for us is that the externals and internals all integrated well. We became one big collaborative group that supported each other. Thirty-one years later, I still have friends from this group. We went through the experience together. In those days the Graduate Diploma started in January, finished in December and in all that time we had one week off in July (during which we attended a conference). We had a ten-week lecture block in the city with lectures from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Wednesday, hospital placement on a Thursday, and lectures at Geelong on a Friday. It was a punishing schedule, but we received an excellent level of education.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Dietetics has grown up as a profession. When I graduated, there were five programs around the country (all postgraduate and all lead by male medicos or biochemists), graduating around 90 dietitians per year nationally. Our number, and influence, was small and there were vacant positions all over rural Australia. Private practice was seen as something dietitians did if they didn't want to keep up with the challenging clinical environment, which was synonymous with dietetics. We had high credibility but extremely low visibility.

Now we have a large and still growing workforce, and dietitians work in diverse fields. We have a much higher public profile and public impact through the growing, and now-respected private practice arm of the profession.

Our university programs are led by dietitians as professors and scholarship in dietetic education is burgeoning. We have some key dietitian research leaders and growing grant and publication records.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

We are poised to develop further as a profession provided we can agree upon who we are. The levels of chronic disease in Australia mean that dietitians are needed more than ever to deliver care to the sick, improve health in those at risk and advocate for policies and practices throughout all levels of government and private organisations to create opportunities for all Australians to have fair access to nutritious food and a healthy lifestyle. We will need better advocacy and lobbying skills, and a united voice as a profession if we are to achieve this.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Know that you can learn more from your failures than your success. You learn about yourself, how much you really want something. You learn what to let go of, and you learn that you have resilience.

In a competitive job market, not getting a job you apply for can seem like a failure but learn from it. Then persevere, or change tack and go in a different direction because it's something you feel you can let go of. Just because you don't work in a hospital doesn't mean you aren't a dietitian. Take your profession into totally new areas. You are the leaders of tomorrow – clichéd but true.



1987

Paul Bruhn

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I was hired as a locum for a 12-month maternity leave position as a Grade 1 clinical dietitian at the Geelong Hospital early in 1988. I covered the Paediatric Ward, ICU and primary care. Lucky for me the lady did not return after 12 months and I was offered a permanent position.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

From Geelong Hospital, I ventured overseas and worked as a clinical dietitian in Saudi Arabia in 1991–1992. This was just after the first Gulf War so it was an interesting time to be in the region. I worked in ICU and general wards and found this to be professionally and personally rewarding. My job there took me to Yemen and Jordan.

I returned to Geelong Hospital from 1992–1995 and left for the commercial world, after landing a sales representative position with Novartis Medical Nutrition in 1996, based in Melbourne. There were limited opportunities in the profession at that time so I was lucky to be able to combine my dietetic knowledge and experience with my strong interest for business. I studied an MBA at Melbourne Business School (part time) to help bridge the two.

I was fortunate to be able to progress through various roles within the organisation and was appointed General Manager in 1999.

Novartis then sent me overseas in 2003, first working in Sweden and then in Switzerland in various commercial roles.

In 2007, Nestlé acquired the medical nutrition business from Novartis and after a year with Nestlé I was transferred to Toronto, Canada, as general manager. There, I learnt more about the consumer side of business, as there was a large retail business with a product called Boost.

I then transferred to Singapore in 2012 to take up my latest post.

Dietetics has allowed me to have a career in business and I have been lucky enough to live in some wonderful places with many great (life and work) experiences.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Without a doubt, it was passing! I certainly was not the best student and found myself on the end of a serious conversation with course supervisors after the half-year exams. This served as motivation and I worked hard the second half, and managed to peak at the right time.

During the course, it would have had to have been trying to sneak free meals from hospital canteens during placements and of course performing surgery on a pig.

'One skill that is universal to all roles I have had is communication, as you will always be involved with people no matter what the role.'

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

First there are a lot more courses open to students. There were only 25 places in Victoria (all through Deakin) when I completed the grad year.

With the increase in graduates every year, there has been a need to seek alternative employment streams outside the traditional hospital route.

Dietetic graduates are employed in various fields like sports nutrition (in 1988 it was just Karen Inge and Louise Burke who were in the mainstream), corporate dietitians/nutritionists for a range of food companies (Kellogg's, Unilever, Pepsi, Nestlé), private practice and schools, for example.

Dietitians are far more respected overall within the health care setting, with nutritional support teams the norm, and dietitians playing a key role in the GPs and NDIS segments. There appears to be more government interaction and consultation with dietitians.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

There is an incredible amount of noise out there today regarding nutrition, and most not sound and in some cases dangerous. I see the role of the dietitian becoming more important to bring back science and facts to the volumes of nutrition 'fake news'. Presently, non-qualified people/celebrities/online are providing recommendations and advice on a variety of nutrition-related topics.

Just like doctors, pharmacists, physiotherapists and podiatrists, dietitians/nutritionists need to be the 'legal' communicators, prescribers and cascaders of nutritional advice.

I envisage dietitians/nutritionists being THE source of advice and recommendations and being part of the health care insurance system like other health care professionals

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Find a mentor – someone who can offer career advice and can be there to bounce ideas off.

Develop a network – build your network early and build it wide. Join associations, attend seminars and workshops to help with this.

If jobs are scarce, try to think of where the next job area might be rather than traditional roles. Five years ago, no one had heard of a data scientist and now they are the most sought after graduates.

In the commercial health care and food industries the roles that are currently in demand are medical marketing, medical affairs, regulatory affairs and roles that are government facing that can better shape the regulatory environment or help to drive reimbursement/funding. Health economics relating to nutrition will be an important area going forward

One skill that is universal to all roles I have had is communication, as you will always be involved with people, no matter what the role. Anything you can do to improve in this area would be beneficial. This could be public speaking, presentation skills, facilitation courses, negotiation skills to name a few.

1988

Jane Willcox

Graduate Diploma
of Dietetics



What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I was fortunate to be employed at the Alfred Hospital after Dietetics with two other dietitians from my year, Robyn Walker and Barb Pepin. I was thrown straight into the burns and coronary care units in a baptism of fire. My supervisor for my last clinical placement, Catherine Itsiopoulos, was a remarkable mentor and inspired me to work there. The Alfred was a great training ground and I ended up working there twice with an amazing team of talented and fun-loving dietitians.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

From a heart and lung transplant unit to rubbish tips in the Philippines then returning to Deakin to undertake a PhD, dietetics has taken me to places never would have predicted in 1988. After starting my dietetic career at the Alfred, I left to work at 'Life Be in It' in their corporate health programs. On returning to the Alfred, I worked in the heart and lung transplant unit and respiratory medicine. The International Diabetes Institute (IDI), now Baker Heart and Diabetes, was my next position working with the most awesome dietetic team lead by the incredible Carolyn Hines. Moving from the dietetics team, I transitioned into the commercial projects portfolio. After studying a Master of Business and Marketing, I set up a public health consultancy with Marie Gill and worked across sectors on public health strategy. After living in the Philippines and volunteering on the rubbish tips, I was inspired to return to my first love, nutrition, and have recently completed a PhD focusing on health in pregnancy with Professor Karen Campbell at Deakin University.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

The end of year party at Merrill Bohns' house in North Melbourne was the party to end all parties. After completing a hard 12 months of dietetics, with only a one week holiday, there was much steam let off. Bobby McFerrin's 'Don't worry, be happy' was played on a continuous loop.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

One of the biggest changes, and challenges, to dietetics is the increased number of courses and hence a very competitive market place for jobs. When I graduated, we were the only course in Victoria and even then it was competitive to find employment.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Increasing specialisation and diversification is where I see the dietetic profession heading. As research furthers our understanding of nutrition in wellness and disease, it will cement dietitians as thought leaders and experts in a greater number of specialties. Conversely, the significant number of graduates will force dietitians to work in areas previously untapped.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

See your career in dietetics as a journey and not focus on a single short term destination. As Lao Tzu said, 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.' My career journey has been formed by single steps following each other.

'As research furthers our understanding of nutrition in wellness and disease, it will cement dietitians as thought leaders and experts in a greater number of specialties.'



1989

Kim Tikellis

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Following a successful student placement at Peter MacCallum Cancer institute during my clinical practicum for my final year Dietetics course, I applied and achieved a graduate Dietitian role at Peter MacCallum. This was a terrific role as I was mentored by the Head and Deputy Heads of the Dietetics department plus the senior dietitians. It was like continuing my university studies and getting paid for it! It's also a privilege to work with clients at this stage of life. This role helped me to consolidate the counselling skills we had practiced as student dietitians. I enjoyed working as a member of a para-medical cross functional team and this role taught me resilience in practice, plus that every day above ground is a good day.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

The most enjoyable path of my career has been the diversity of roles I have had from the one professional career base. I have worked in clinical dietetics, for the federal government, in retail, education and the food industry. I have used my clinical dietetic skills, learnt about food regulation, utilise my marketing and business commercial skills, and even food chemistry I enjoyed at Deakin in a paddock to plate approach to the food supply. I am the voice for the consumer inside food industry and can influence food and health outcomes on a broad scale, which is what excites me. Even now I get the opportunity to occasionally lecture the next generation of nutrition students – my tiny way to give back now, for the wisdom that my Deakin lecturers invested in me, all those years ago.

‘Be open, think big, be curious, explore and invent. The world is expanding fast and it needs nimble, quick thinkers who can problem solve and find solutions for nutrition and health that are practical and have relevance to consumers. There has never been a more exciting time to be in nutrition and health.’

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

When we studied dietetics it was very competitive and we were a small cohort, based at Geelong Waurin Ponds Campus. So, we had a terrific camaraderie amongst our small group and all supported one another. Many of us moved out of home to live in Geelong – without telling any secrets, there were some very fun parties in the early years! Later years we were too involved in our placements and intense study. Some of my closest friends are dietitians, who I have either met or studied with, or subsequently worked together with, in my later career. I do recall that the Deakin Dietetics course was new, so our lecturers were very open to being questioned and open discussion. Many years after graduation I met one of my lecturers who told me that the lecturers were always nervous teaching us – as they knew we’d ask the tricky questions! What an amazing environment to challenge your students to be curious and ask the difficult questions.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

The career opportunities are different in more diverse sectors, beyond just clinical nutrition in hospitals or private practice. When I first worked in the food industry there were just two full-time dietitians employed in Victoria. Now our Food Industry Nutrition Group has over 50 members!

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

This is the most exciting part – that it’s a fast moving, changing world and nutrition and health horizons are rapidly expanding. The overlay of information technology for health informatics, and personalised nutrition based on the human genome project, are just a few examples of how nutrition and health intersect with other science and research sectors. Sports nutrition is now a bona fide professional organisation via Sports Dietitians Association. The new paradigms of environmental factors intersecting on human health are fascinating and ‘planetary health’ is on-trend too with the current focus on environment and health for both science research and consumer thinking. Psychology and nutrition in human and consumer behaviour change or mental health are other examples. I almost wish I was a new graduate now with these exciting options open to me to grow and develop.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Be open, think big, be curious, explore and invent. The world is expanding fast and it needs nimble, quick thinkers who can problem solve and find solutions for nutrition and health that are practical and have relevance to consumers. There has never been a more exciting time to be in nutrition and health. Invest and invent your future, as the opportunities are out there for the well-educated, well-rounded thinkers and adventurous doers who can bring new ideas and solutions to life to improve the health of this generation and wellbeing of future populations.

1990

Cathy Cooper

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics



What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I was employed in the Dietitian role at the National Heart Foundation of Australia (Victorian Division), reporting to the Nutrition Manager. My key task was the development of the nutrition component of a primary school nutrition education program called 'Food Smart'. Other tasks included providing general nutrition and catering advice to other staff for their programs and activities, input into consumer education materials, providing nutrition lectures to medical and pharmacy students, working with the media and liaison with other health organisations and the state government.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

I started at the Heart Foundation (Victorian Division) in 1991, and loved it so much I stayed for just over 17 years. I started as the dietitian, moved into the nutrition manager role and then was acting director of cardiovascular health for 12 months filling in for a maternity leave position, while still holding the nutrition manager role. Following that I was offered the opportunity by the Heart Foundation's national office to be the project manager for a national cholesterol education campaign funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. This was a great learning experience working with representatives from the Australian Government, the National Prescribing Service and Consumers Health Forum as well as working with public relations and social marketing consultants.

‘Without a dietetics qualification I would never have been employed at the Heart Foundation and hence would have missed the chance to be involved in public health nutrition in an organisation that had the ability to really influence nutrition in Australia.’

In 2002, I was approached by a colleague at the University of Surrey to undertake a short-term project to develop public health nutrition and health promotion modules for degree programs through distance learning. The Heart Foundation allowed me to take a secondment to do this work, so I went to England for three months in early 2003.

When I returned to the Heart Foundation, I was employed by the National Office to work on national nutrition activities including nutrition program and policy development, and consumer and health professional resources.

My final role at the Heart Foundation was the national program manager, healthy weight strategy, working with staff across the country to implement the Heart Foundation’s healthy weight strategy.

I then moved to Alzheimer’s Australia to manage their national dementia prevention program and then from there to Deakin University as the Executive Officer for what was the Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research (now the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition). Without a dietetics qualification I would never have been employed at the Heart Foundation and hence would have missed the chance to be involved in public health nutrition in an organisation that had the ability to really influence nutrition in Australia. I was also very involved in DAA at both state and national level and through both my employment and voluntary work with DAA I met many fabulous and exceptionally talented people.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

I don’t have a specific favourite memory. I do remember really enjoying all of my placements – clinical, community and food service – and not being sure when I finished my dietetics year which area of dietetics I wanted to work in. I was lucky to have great learning experiences and fantastic supervisors/mentors during my placements.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

When I graduated, in order to practice in Victoria you had to be registered with the Dietitians Board of Victoria. That was replaced when the national Accredited Practising Dietitian Program was introduced. Recognition of the skills and expertise of individuals in the profession is much better now, as there is a mechanism in place for this through the Advanced APD status. I also think that over the years there has been an increasing emphasis on quality of practice, as well as promotion of the profession.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I’m not involved in dietetics now. However, I hope the profession continues to grow and be recognised by consumers, governments and others as the real nutrition experts.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

My advice is to be open to opportunities, be willing to step outside your comfort zone, and make connections with senior peers so you have a network of experience to draw on when needed.



1991

Monica Kelly

Graduate Diploma of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Locum Dietitian at Mount Royal Hospital in Parkville, Victoria.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

My final placement in the Northern Territory set me on a lifelong learning experience with Aboriginal Australians. My clinical career was short lived as I quickly moved into community and public health nutrition. Studying and working in nutrition brought many highlights that have had a profound impact on the direction my career has taken since. After working briefly in Melbourne and then Swan Hill, I took up a role in Tennant Creek as the first nutritionist in the Barkly District of the Northern Territory. This role afforded me the opportunity to be exposed to a community development approach with a community that had strongly advocated for the creation of the position.

Some of my initial work included working with community members who were powerless to the monopoly that store owners had over their money and ultimately limited their food choices. I came to realise early on that the environment and social context had a much bigger impact on people's food choices than their knowledge of healthy food. This set me up for an enduring focus to change the social determinants of people's health and fostered an already strong interest in reducing health inequalities.

While not directly working in dietetics for many years, I have maintained some responsibility for nutrition or the ability to champion nutrition as part of achieving good health outcomes at a population level in the majority of my roles since graduation. The journey to understanding social determinants and the need for advocacy to reduce health inequities and the experience gained through my work was also very good preparation for my role as a mother to Scarlett, my youngest daughter, who has Down syndrome. One thing Aboriginal Australians and people with disability in Australia share is the frequent experience of discrimination in their daily life.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

One of my favourite lecturers was Kerin O’Dea – I was fascinated by her work with Aboriginal Australians. I also loved Pat Crotty’s lectures that really taught me much about social justice and advocacy. I loved that she encouraged us to see things differently. My favourite experience was my final placement in Darwin where I learnt so much about Aboriginal Australians, had amazing opportunities like going bush tucker hunting in the mud flats with Pat, an Aboriginal Nutrition Worker and travelling to Nguiu on the Tiwi Islands to work with Alberta, another Aboriginal Nutrition Worker. I am still thankful to these two amazing women who taught me so much.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

There is greater awareness amongst the population about the importance of nutrition and the role good food can play in supporting people to live healthy and happy lives. As such there is a greater variety of roles for dietitians to play – not just in the health sector or in clinical settings, but in public health and places like local government, having a more direct impact with communities and in the everyday settings where people make choices about food.

While on the surface this can appear like a positive outcome, I’m acutely aware of the competing interests at play and at times find this troubling. Real change can only be achieved taking actions to make positive change, but also pushing back against the competing interests working against you.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

If our primary goal is for food to play a positive role in supporting people’s health, I see it continuing to move more towards a social determinants approach that extends beyond the realm of information provision. I would like to see an increased understanding in the complexity of our environments and communities and a focus on working in different ways that brings about change in the places that people live, learn, work and play. Our society and the role food plays in this is increasingly complex and we need to consider dietetics through a complexity lens.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Be open to learning about more than just what is covered in your course. Allow yourself to learn from the communities around you and the people that you interact with. This will not only broaden your perspective but will ultimately influence the impact you can have. Don’t expect the journey to be linear – be open to the possibilities that might present. And look after yourself, don’t be too tough on yourself!

‘Our society and the role food plays in this is increasingly complex and we need to consider dietetics through a complexity lens.’



1992

Jen Savenake

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

My first dietetics job after graduation was a short stint in an aged care centre in rural Victoria. I learnt a lot about industrial relations and organisational politics that has stood me in good stead throughout my career.

I went to the Canberra Hospital for a four week locum, then a three month contract and ended up staying two years. It was a great grounding in all areas of individual case management and I have many fond memories of coffee and cake in Manuka.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Dietetics has taken me across the country. From the Canberra Hospital to the Blue Lake and Mount Gambier where I spent a number of years at the South East Regional Health Service increasing capacity and starting the first telehealth nutrition services across the region, raising the profile of health promotion and public health nutrition.

A Rotary Foundation Scholarship took me to Canada for a post graduate year in Health Promotion. Returning to Mount Gambier, I helped set up a community and food cooperative. Living near the Coonawarra and Mt Arapiles also held a great appeal.

That further study led to new horizons in Adelaide working for the Centre of Health Promotion at the Women's and Children's Hospital on a food security project. A short course in food policy with John Coveney inspired me to look at this further and soon I was on the boat to Tasmania to take up a two year contract as State Nutrition Officer. The new Manager suggested I read the Politics of Food and Yes Minister as my orientation. I bounced around the Department of Health in Tasmania as Acting Manager of Community Nutrition, Acting Principal Public Health Nutritionist and finally as Senior Public Health Nutritionist. I was working in food policy and regulation and was offered a secondment at Food Standards Australia New Zealand in Canberra for a year. I returned to Tasmania with a stronger understanding of food regulatory processes and a desire to explore the beautiful coastline of Tasmania by sea kayak.

Looking for new challenges, I headed to Darwin for a maternity leave cover at Outback Stores. This role combines food policy, regulation, food supply and training in a retail environment. Three years later, I'm still here enjoying these challenges and travelling across remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

My favourite memories of studying at Deakin centre around a house in Anglesea and living, cooking and studying with four other dietetic students.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

The messages have not changed that much, but how we deliver them certainly has. While there have been advances in the science and evidence, the nutrition space is also much more contested with non-evidence based material much more widely accessible.

While I was studying, there were computer labs, but it was unusual for people to have home computers. The internet was not widely accessible and that meant spending lots of time in the library. The precursor to the laptop came in a suitcase, weighed about five kilograms and was unreliable.

When I graduated, most of my peers would work in a clinical setting. The diversity of roles and settings for Dietitians is now more broadly accepted.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Dietitians are ideally placed to take advantage of advances in individual case management, use of DNA testing and communicating practical information to people.

With more than 40% of food consumed outside the home, there are opportunities for dietitians to influence commercial food service operations.

There is an increasing role for dietitians in food supply across the whole population and linking with other disciplines to address challenges in agriculture, food security and the environment.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

When in doubt, say 'yes' to every opportunity possible.

'With more than 40% of food consumed outside the home, there are opportunities for dietitians to influence commercial food service operations.'



1993

Emma Stirling

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

My boyfriend (now husband Tony) had moved to London before I finished my final year and sent me the London White Pages (telephone directory listings) for 'H' for hospital. It was 1993 after all and the World Wide Web was only just getting going. I snail mailed letters offering to do volunteer work to every, single hospital in London. Thanks to a recommendation by Dorothy Francis at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, I ended up with a reply from Margaret Lawson at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, London. She generously gave me a foodservice assistant job in the diet kitchen for 6 months while my exam results and registration came through.

I worked in the basement Special Diet kitchen making things like low protein biscuits for inpatients with PKU and also working in the specialised infant formula room where we concocted our own feeds weighing and measuring MCT oil and elemental formulas. I wore a white zip up dress, white safety shoes and a hair net and learned my way around the massive, four-city-block hospital delivering to the wards.

I was allowed to sit in on the journal club meetings with the Department and then was offered a few locum days which turned into two-year paediatric dietitian position working across cardiology and oncology including heart and bone marrow transplant cases. I feel incredibly fortunate that my

first job was in one of the leading hospitals in the world where dietitians were highly respected and used cutting edge technology with evidence based practice (at the time). It showed me how powerful nutrition intervention can be when you watch babies go from failing to thrive to robust toddlers in outpatient follow up.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Following early years in paediatric and clinical dietetics in London and Sydney I moved to Hong Kong and worked as a researcher for the BBC News Channel. I kept up my dietetic skills dabbling in private practice but didn't have the Cantonese language skills to work in a hospital, so I embraced the opportunity to do something different and work in TV, while I ate my way around the markets, street stalls and restaurants.

Returning to live in Sydney I combined my media skills with nutrition communication and strategy, working for a global PR firm and then launched the first dedicated nutrition consulting business in Australia with a partner dietitian, The Food Group. I could see a niche for food, health and media companies looking for nutrition support and we grew a team that worked across many brands and publications before they had in-house dietitians.

At the time, I penned my first articles for *Family Circle* magazine, thanks to a recommendation from Catherine Saxelby, and went on to write for consumer media for over 15 years with a number of big hair, newsreader style head shots! My media skills morphed into a social media journey and I was incredibly passionate about making the DAA board and the profession see that we had to embrace social media, using our professional practice framework, so I volunteered countless

hours to write guidelines and chair the first Social Media Advisory Committee. My award-winning blog Scoop Nutrition launched in 2010 and provided the outlet to write about topics I loved, promote the diverse roles of dietitians and mentor so many fabulous upcomers in the Sub of the Month program and now Storehouse Blog Directory. Catherine Saxelby and I also had a hugely successful and fun ride with our live twitter chats #eatkit.

Through my own consulting business Scoop Nutrition, I've become a speaker, media commentator and strategic advisor working with our team of dietitians on local and global projects with an emphasis these days on my love, culinary nutrition, including cook books, product development and restaurant and chef consulting.

In the last three years, I have also been growing a new personal direction and moving into academia with Senior Lecturing at La Trobe University in food science and nutrition, gastronomy and consumer behaviour. I've co-written my first textbook Food Science: from molecules to mouthfeel that will launch this year. As an early career researcher, my head is full of opportunity and I am privileged to work with and inspire our next very clever bunch of dietitians.

Volunteering and providing opportunity for new dietitians has been a recurring theme throughout my career and I have held board positions with Deakin University, Bond University and Nutrition Australia.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Deakin was very good at showing diverse practice areas and I really loved it when Karen Inge came and spoke to our class about her (now pioneering) work as a sports dietitian. She explained how hard it had been to drive change and make AFL footy players give up the post-match beer and pies in the locker rooms! It's almost unbelievable to think that went on, when you look at where sports nutrition and elite athletes are at today. She had also recently started working with gymnasts and the Australian Ballet. Karen is a very charismatic speaker and story teller so she kept the audience engaged. However, she also approached these new territories with very, strong dietetic and scientific principles and it really opened our eyes

'When people say there are no dietetics jobs, I say do you really think nutrition problems or needs are going away? Look for the different jobs. Create the new jobs. Make your day job into a dream nutrition job.'

to the idea of forging new fields outside acute care settings. I have been very fortunate to since work with Karen on nutrition consulting projects for over 10 years and we have become very good friends with our like-minded entrepreneurial thinking.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

I hope I can lead by example and show graduates that they have chosen the most rewarding and exciting career with so much growth potential for their next twenty years and beyond, just like I have experienced.

When people say there are no dietetics jobs, I say do you really think nutrition problems or needs are going away? Look for the different jobs. Create the new jobs. Make your day job into a dream nutrition job. Everybody eats. Every school, workplace, home, club and community sub-group needs nutrition, they just may not know it yet.

Volunteer. Pitch an idea. Use your entrepreneurial skills and networks outside dietetics. If you have a friend running circus skill classes, why not offer to run a performance nutrition workshop? If your dad is on the organising committee for a finance conference, pitch a team-building, healthy cooking class idea? Dietetics has grown and changed so much in my twenty plus year career, and believe me, the opportunities are out there.

I am so excited to see where you will take our profession with your high-level competencies, altruistic nature, creative ideas, ethical practice and professionalism. The clock is running. Time waits for no man. Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it is called the present. Make the most of today. And know that everything will truly be okay.



1994

Natalie Simmance

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

It was a six-week locum at the Repatriation Hospital in Heidelberg. After a number of contract extensions, I secured a permanent Grade 1 position, and I have remained in clinical dietetics throughout my career.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Dietetics has kept me in the public hospital sector for over 20 years. I have had the opportunity to work with many different clinical teams within many interesting specialities where the impact of nutrition and dietetic care really makes a difference to patients' health and treatment outcomes and quality of life.

Presenting the findings of patient care improvement initiatives and research has enabled national and international travel opportunities.

Completing postgraduate studies in public health developed my appreciation for the need for system-level interventions with a robust evaluation strategy to enable large scale and sustainable improvements, and also probably facilitated a move into a management role.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

I spent a year commuting from Melbourne to Waurn Ponds to attend lectures and pracs delivered by an inspiring teaching team including Fiona Cumming, Greg Collier, Ingrid Coles-Rutishauser and Kerin O'Dea.

Getting out on clinical placement with support from academic staff including Richard Read and Catherine Itsiopoulos in my final year at Deakin was really exciting.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Working within a hospital setting, I think the role of nutrition as therapy and a key contribution to a patient's successful treatment and recovery is increasingly well recognised.

This has come about in large part due to collaborative research efforts leading to greater awareness of the negative consequences of poor nutrition, and publication of policy and guidelines to guide and promote practice.

Other drivers leading to greater awareness and attention to nutrition care in healthcare settings include the development of specific nutrition and hydration accreditation standards in hospitals and aged care facilities, along with hospital funding models that incentivise the identification and diagnosis of patient malnutrition.

However, many barriers to providing optimal nutrition care to inpatients still exist, including working with limited food service systems, delayed referrals, and patients being subjected to outdated fasting procedures.

Whilst many dietetic departments in hospitals have grown over time, clinical demand for dietetic services has outstripped this growth due to this greater awareness alongside pressures to discharge patients sooner and continue treatment and recovery in the community.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Within hospital settings, our challenge as dietitians is to keep developing and demonstrating our unique role within the multidisciplinary health care team and healthcare system. We have expert food and nutrition knowledge, and we need to apply it both to individual patients and the complex organisations and systems we work in.

Our contribution in influencing hospital food service systems and processes, and improving the quality and appropriateness of patient meals will continue to have a substantial impact on patient experience and clinical outcomes.

There are everyday opportunities for involvement in patient safety initiatives, hospital governance and accreditation activities and service improvement projects with our health care colleagues to promote the role of nutrition care in a quality and safety framework that will lead to large scale and sustainable improvements in patient care.

Measuring and articulating the benefits of our one-on-one patient assessments and medical nutrition therapy interventions will continue to develop and hone our clinical dietetic skills and imbed our role in contributing to optimal patient care.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

It's really important to seek out a mentor to assist you to set some early career goals and identify areas of interest and passion. The provisional APD program provides an excellent framework to track your progress and keep up momentum after you graduate, so don't wait until you find your first job before seeking out your first mentor.

'We have expert food and nutrition knowledge, and we need to apply it both to individual patients and the complex organisations and systems we work in.'



1995

Susan Parker-Simmons

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I had a variety of jobs after graduation. They consisted of Sport Dietitian for Collingwood Football Club, Sport Dietitian at Olympic Park Sports Medicine Centre, and Lecturer at RMIT University (Sport Science Department).

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Prior to completing the master's program at Deakin University I worked in the field of sport science. The dietetics course allowed me to expand my career options to also include the field of sports dietetics. The highlights of my career have been in working and attending six Olympic Games and one Paralympic Games. It has also allowed me to travel the world and as President of PINES (Professional in Nutrition for Exercise and Sport) meet and work with many outstanding people who work in the field of Sports Nutrition.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

My favourite memories are from the fieldwork placements where each day you learnt something new and it also reminded you that you were entering into the profession you wanted to work in.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

I have enjoyed seeing the growth of the profession of Sport Dietetics in Australia, USA and other parts of the world. It is now a full-time profession to many which was not present when I graduated.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I see a greater diversity of career options being available for future graduates. To me the 'world is their oyster' and I have always found it to be a very exciting and rewarding profession to work in.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

I always suggest that graduating Dietetic students should have a life-long mentor, to always listen and learn from your clients and aspire towards a healthier and happier community.

'I have enjoyed seeing the growth of the profession of Sport Dietetics in Australia, USA and other parts of the world. It is now a full-time profession to many which was not present when I graduated.'



Second year Master of Nutrition and Dietetics students at Stonington Campus, Toorak, 1996.



1996

Fiona Sutherland

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Grade 1 Dietitian at Rugby Hospital, Warwickshire NHS, UK (1997).

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

After graduating, I worked in the UK for 18 months, interspersed with travel with fellow Deakin alumni and current dietetics director Claire Margerison. The specific details of those adventures are some of the most memorable and will remain locked in the vault! I worked as a Grade 1 dietitian in clinical practice, cutting my teeth in a variety of areas and establishing my preferences as not having a particular interest in clinical work. I moved onto Canada, where I took a break from dietetics and worked as a youth counsellor and outdoor education instructor at The Rocky Mountain Outdoor School and Calgary YMCA.

Undoubtedly these were some of the best and most influential years of my life, building skills in leadership, communication and working with a variety of people across the age, gender, socio-economic and cultural spectrum. These formative experiences have most certainly shaped my career as a dietitian despite not being directly related.

Upon returning to Australia, I worked in what was essentially a 'weight loss' centre which fortuitously was both a nightmare and the best opportunity for a younger dietitian. I heard the heartbreaking stories of people's struggles with food and eating, and the horrible way they spoke about and treated their bodies. It was also about this time I discovered Dr Rick Kausman's book *If Not Dieting, then What?*, which has ultimately shaped the rest of my career in supporting people to move away from dieting and hating their bodies. I also at this time completed my sports dietetics qualification.

I spent the next eight years working in an outpatient private eating disorder treatment program alongside private practice and working as a sports dietitian mostly at The Australian Ballet (2003–present), Collingwood Football Club (2002–2005) and Racing Victoria's Apprentice Jockey Program (2005–2017). Highlights were being part of a team which was in two consecutive grand finals, and supporting young athletes in their transition to elite sport. A highlight at the ballet has been the establishment of an evidence-based program focussed on prevention and early intervention on eating disorders in the dance setting.

Together with my business partner at Body Positive Australia, we set up group-based therapy programs for women with binge eating disorder and a busy private practice specialising in eating disorders and sports nutrition.

Getting back into work was a gradual process and over the last five years, I've had incredible opportunities to collaborate and be more involved with other dietitians. Highlights for me are guest lecturing at Deakin University (counselling skills, eating behaviour, eating disorders) and running training events with fellow APD Fiona Willer (in the non-diet approach). Over the past few years I've had the privilege of working alongside the fabulous Maree Ferguson from Dietitian Connection, more recently being one of the 'faces' of the '#knowlovefood' campaign to promote the role of dietitians. Collegial connection is a top priority of mine, hence setting up 'The Mindful Dietitian' has been a massive highlight, promoting connection and conversation among dietitians specifically in the areas of mindfulness, client-centred practice and the non-diet approach.

In the last year, I've been appointed onto the ANZAED (Australia New Zealand Academy of Eating Disorder) Executive Committee and ASDAH (Association for Size Diversity and Health), alongside fellow international health professionals. Through these organisations, I hope to further the promotion of dietitians and the unique role we play in contributing to the wellbeing of individuals, communities and our world

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

I was in the cohort 'with no home' when Dietetics left Geelong on its move to Burwood. In actual fact, our campus was the magnificent Stonington in Toorak with an awful library and wonderful cafe (mmmm ... potato cakes ...) where our coordinators and lecturers were Professor Gwyn Roberts, Professor Catherine Itsiopoulou, Jane Winter and Judy Appleton, amongst others. The two strong memories I have are Judy teaching us about sanitisation, and we had a 'how to wash your hands' lesson. (Why I remember this I have no idea but anyone who knows Judy will have a giggle ... and she would too.) The other is sitting down with Professor Roberts who showed us how to write what was called an 'email'.

At the time, it was revolutionary – hard to believe but true. In our little bunker, we battled through clunky *FoodWorks* and borrowed our nutrition books (the ones with paper) from the library. Ah, how things have changed. Socially, we were ... erm ... active and those years formed long-lasting friendships that still live on today.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Dietetics has changed both in smaller, and more significant ways. The internet opening up has led to greater opportunities for communication, collaboration and connection in ways that were simply not possible before.

The one important thing is that what we 'think' we know is constantly changing, and that has taught me to always hold things lightly rather than dismissing, or over-emphasising one particular way of working, or understanding something.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I hold hope that we are heading in a direction which allows us to respect and work alongside each other in a way that promotes our work from a united perspective whilst allowing for varying paradigms of practice. I hope that we become more insight-oriented and are able to integrate more ways to support students to be able to investigate their own relationships with food and body before graduating so they are in a stronger position to then support others with their concerns.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Hold everything lightly, never stop asking questions (even my Deakin lecturers will tell you that's what I did back then), keep experimenting, stay curious and be brave.

I hold hope that we are heading in a direction which allows us to respect and work alongside each other in a way that promotes our work from a united perspective whilst allowing for varying paradigms of practice.'



1997

Sue Shepherd

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I commenced two jobs simultaneously after I graduated.

I was employed in the new graduate position in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at Monash Medical Centre (MMC) soon after graduating, in December 1997. Although the position was initially for one year, my contract was renewed and I worked there until 2003. I loved working at MMC, over my time there I worked across many domains of clinical dietetics. This provided me with broad clinical dietetic skills, which I valued as I also commenced my GI-specialist private practice, Shepherd Works in December 1997.

Shepherd Works was borne as I was diagnosed with coeliac disease in early 1996 and found that there were limited resources or access to specialist dietitians with an interest in gut-health. Initially I was the sole-practitioner, however over the past 20 years, Shepherd Works grew to a team of 16 specialist dietitians and consulted with patients around the world with an international reputation of excellence in gut health and food intolerances.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

I have been blessed with a broad and exciting career, predominantly based around my primary love – gut health and food intolerances.

Over the past twenty years I have been a passionate advocate for raising awareness and improving the quality of life for people with coeliac disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and food intolerances and gut conditions more broadly. I have been a dedicated researcher proudly completing my PhD in aspects of the gluten free and low FODMAP diets in 2008. I enjoyed training medical and health professional audiences as an invited speaker to conferences around the world. I have recently worked at La Trobe university as a senior lecturer and have been a dietitian representative on numerous national and international medical advisory boards. I conceived the Gluten Free Food Show in 2006, an expo with over 100 gluten free exhibitors and broke records for a first-time expo's attendance at Melbourne Exhibition Centre. I have been a fearless patient advocate and became an award-winning author, writing 13 best-selling gluten free and/or low FODMAP cookbooks which are now sold around the world including USA, UK, France, Italy, Germany, Norway.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Loved every minute, can't pick a favourite memory, sorry!

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?


Back in my student days, dietitians were prominent in hospitals or community health centres. Only a minority of dietitians seemed to make their stamp in private practice, corporate nutrition (including food service), in the public health sector, media or other domains that are more common today. I feel that dietetics today is represented across a much greater breadth of workplaces and domains, which is both exciting and important for the longevity of our profession.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

There seems to be no boundaries to the scope and application of professional practice today. It is great to see the stereotypical roles of dietitians that dominated in the past now complimented with a diverse range of 'new' modes for dietitians to express themselves as the nutrition experts. The future will no doubt see more creativity and innovation in dietetic roles and penetration into the community.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Be eager to learn and take the driving seat in your own career. Don't just accept practices and recommendations without questioning them, challenging them and where practical, testing them. In doing so, you yourself will be challenged and tested and most importantly you will grow.



'It is great to see the stereotypical roles of dietitians that dominated in the past now complimented with a diverse range of 'new' modes for dietitians to express themselves as the nutrition experts.'



1998

Lisa Middleton

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I was unemployed for about six months after graduation. I then started working as a gym instructor/personal trainer and began offering private nutrition consultations where I worked at Hawthorn Aquatic and Leisure Centre. So, my first job in dietetics was one I created myself in a small shared health suite/office at the gym. Working in private practice can be hard work. Over time your clients and interests may vary, but that is the beauty of private practice also and what makes it exciting and rewarding.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

I have been fortunate to work with a number of elite athletes and professional sporting teams. I decided in Year 8 at school – so when I was about 14 years old – that I wanted to be a sports dietitian with Carlton Football Club! I didn't quite get to Carlton but did work for AFL teams Essendon, Hawthorn and St Kilda who all made grand finals or won premierships while I was there!

Probably the highlight of my sports nutrition work was volunteering at the Sydney Olympics and Melbourne Commonwealth Games as a nutrition helper in the dining hall, assisting athletes from all over the world.

'The highlight of my sports nutrition work was volunteering at the Sydney Olympics and Melbourne Commonwealth Games as a nutrition helper in the dining hall, assisting athletes from all over the world.'

Another highlight is my involvement with Sports Dietitians Australia (SDA) as a volunteer, on their board and for a period of time as president, as I am passionate about promoting the role of sports dietitians and their impact on athlete health and performance.

I was involved in teaching sports nutrition to sports science and nutrition and dietetics students at Deakin University 2004–2009. I was Unit Chair for the subject Sports Nutrition and was involved in developing a new unit Research and Advances in Sports Nutrition.

I do a variety of work currently, including lots of nutrition writing and presenting, but for me nothing beats working with individual athletes and clients and helping them to get the best of themselves, whether that be for health or performance goals. I would rather be talking to a real person than tapping computer keys any day!!

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

The friendships! I loved learning and the challenges of my Alfred Hospital placement particularly stands out, but it's the great friends I made, who continue to be part of my life that are the best part of my courses at Deakin. I was fortunate enough to meet some amazingly wise, clever, generous, dedicated, genuine, caring and fun people through my Deakin studies, and many I continue to have in my life today, even if we don't see each other that often and work in completely different settings and locations.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

The most significant change in dietetics that's had an impact on me personally is the emergence of social media and rapidly changing technology! For us older dietitians who are not super tech-savvy this can be a challenging area. There are so many benefits of social media and the ability to spread nutrition messages but with this also comes a range of different and often opposing nutrition views which can be difficult for consumers to navigate.

I think this is an area where APDs can have a positive impact, and many dietitians are already doing a great job in the area of social media. It's an area that most dietitians are not trained in and is ever evolving and will no doubt change the way that dietitians work and operate over coming years.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

In the area of sports dietetics, I would love to see continued recognition of the role of sports dietitians, with professional sporting teams prioritising nutrition and the budgets for nutrition services. Ideally all professional sporting teams would have sports dietitians on staff, along with chefs who can cater to athlete needs and educate for life beyond sport as well. As mentioned above, I think we need to be creative in our delivery of nutrition messages to improve the image and relevance of dietitians as the experts when it comes to nutrition advice.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

For student dietitians interested in private practice, most important word to remember is 'perseverance'. When I first started out it took me a long time to get going and it was really up to me to create my own opportunities. I don't like the word 'network' but there are great benefits to making connections with dietitians and other practitioners involved in your specific area of interest. After all, for private work, it's often not what you know but who you know! You may need to upskill in the areas of business planning, marketing and social media so start thinking about how you can do these things before you graduate. There's no time to sit around when you work for yourself, there are opportunities everywhere ... it's a matter of finding them or creating your own!



1999

Lisa Renn

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

My first job after graduation was at Knox Community Health Service (name changed to EACH) – this was part time. Soon after this I also got a short-term position at the Austin Hospital in their diabetes clinic.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

From working in community health and a clinical hospital setting I realised that my passion was for community health as it allowed me to spend more time with my clients and therefore create greater changes in behaviour and health status.

During this time, I had been spending more time with psychologists and diabetes educators and increasing my knowledge of diabetes management and counselling skills. I have also done more study with different counselling techniques and this culminated in putting together a weight loss group which I was able to evaluate and it showed a significant improvement in self efficacy and locus of control of behaviour. The outcome of this group led me to write my first book, *Body Warfare*, which uses a non-diet approach to weight loss and takes people through unhelpful thinking, motivation and other common barriers to weight loss or maintenance.

Another highlight is becoming a DAFNE (Dose Adjustment For Normal Eating for people with type 1 diabetes) facilitator in 2007 which allows me to run the course with a diabetes educator. I find this really satisfying as you are making real differences to people's quality of life in a short period of time.

I have used my skills in counselling and behaviour change to run workshops for dietitians which I have enjoyed as my career before dietetics was teaching so I still love learning and educating.

The thing I love most about dietetics is the diversity that you can create for yourself. Being a DAA media spokesperson has also provided some interesting and challenging opportunities and because of my role in the media I got to travel to Japan with Yakult which was definitely a highlight! I am now using the skills I have picked up around human behaviour to consult to businesses, looking at people management skills and high performance business teams.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

I really valued the opportunity to do placements at the hospitals – it was an excellent opportunity to get hands on experience under the guidance of others more experienced. I also remember the lecture from Dr Rick Kausman as he was very influential in informing my approach to weight loss with my clients and looking at the non-diet approach.

'The thing I love most about dietetics is the diversity that you can create for yourself.'

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

I often tell the story of when I first graduated and was speaking about healthy eating that I felt like I was telling people how to suck eggs – most people really did know what they were supposed to be doing. Now, thanks to the internet and media the diversity of messages about healthy eating is so broad people no longer have a clear idea of what healthy eating really is and I feel that now when I speak to groups and educate individuals that what I am saying is really useful, which is nice!

Another change is that there are a lot of new graduates coming into private practice which never used to be the case – I understand that is due to no jobs being available to them. However, this will mean the role of a mentor is even more important as these new graduates need to contribute to the reputation of dietitians in private practise in a positive way.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I think initiatives like #dietitiansunite or #knowlovefood as it's now known are vital as people are moving away from dietitians as a source of nutrition information. Trying to highlight that dietitians have expert knowledge and do love food and are great with helping people change is really important to the future of our profession outside the clinical arena.

I think with the world changing at such a pace it's pretty exciting to think that people can create their own business opportunities and even their own jobs so who knows where we are going it is only limited by our imagination.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

If you are needing to go into private practice then make sure you have a mentor.

It will also be handy to learn more about business. I often hear graduates say, 'Why didn't we learn that at uni?' However, it's like driving – you learn a lot when you get out on the road on your own. They can't teach you everything and in private practice you need marketing and business knowledge – that takes time and extra learning.

Keep your spirits up as it may take a while to get a job. I remember a good piece of advice that I learned off a dietetic manager, she said, 'You will get the job you are meant to have' which for me proved to be correct.

Keep asking questions, keep applying for jobs and take as many opportunities to increase your experience as possible even if it means voluntary work.



2000

Jona Segal

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Private consultancy work (Melbourne Sports Medicine Centre).

Graduate position with the Victorian Institute of Sport.

Corporate consultancy work (Peak Health Management).

Consultant Dietitian (Calder Cannons, TAC Cu)/ Assistant Dietitian with North Melbourne Football Club.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Dietetics allowed me to chase a dream job being involved in elite sport and has subsequently helped open other doors within the strength and conditioning fields. It has provided both networking and professional opportunities with some amazing coaches, athletes and allied health professionals, in addition to allowing the chance to travel domestically as well as abroad.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

I really enjoyed the course as a whole. I felt constantly challenged and engaged and was fortunate to go through with a really good group looked after by great lecturers and tutors.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

There continues to be terrific research in the dietetic field and it certainly feels like as our understanding of a very complex area continues to develop and evolve so does the messaging going out into the public space. Specific topics relating to sports nutrition around macronutrient intake (type, amount and timing), supplementation practices and even something as seemingly fundamental as hydration have all seen big changes in my view and potentially we are only part way through that process.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Dietetics will continue to stay relevant as long as it is driven by a combination of robust research and good quality practitioners that can effectively interpret that research and apply it appropriately in a practical setting. To me, dietetics should never deviate too far from being an evidence-based discipline that will continue to evolve in line with advances in research techniques and practices.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Never be afraid of asking or challenging, whether that be around philosophy, practical knowledge or even for an opportunity to work or gain experience with a fellow dietitian.

'Dietetics will continue to stay relevant as long as it is driven by a combination of robust research and good quality practitioners that can effectively interpret that research and apply it appropriately in a practical setting.'



Class of 2003 Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics/Bachelor of Applied Science (Health Sciences) students at Melbourne Burwood Campus.



2001

Beth Scholes

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

A health promotion role at South West – Primary Care Partnership in Warrnambool, focusing on children's nutrition.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

I have enjoyed a diverse career so far and worked in many different roles across different settings. Early in my career I worked in clinical dietetics at Austin Health, specifically in mental health and eating disorders. Managing clients with eating disorders was a career highlight. Whilst often very intense, overwhelming, and at times emotionally draining, I learnt so much in this role and many skills that I still use today and have applied to every other job I have had since.

I always felt passionate about public health nutrition. This passion was sparked when I did a community nutrition placement during my studies which was guided by Professor Boyd Swinburn and focused on obesity prevention. I knew then that I wanted to work at a 'big picture' level and focus on prevention of nutrition-related health problems.

A career highlight for me was working for the Heart Foundation where I worked as Nutrition Manager and Nutrition Advisor. Working at the Heart Foundation was an opportunity I had aspired to and gave me the opportunity to apply both my clinical and public health/health promotion skills. Through this role, I gained an incredible amount of experience and knowledge, especially in public health broadly and public health nutrition. I learnt about project management, policy, advocacy, submission writing, strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, government relations and so much more! I had the opportunity to be a media spokesperson on a number of occasions – a definite career highlight!

I have now been able to apply my skills, knowledge and leadership in the area of public health nutrition to my recent job in the consultancy team at Nutrition Australia, another amazing opportunity for me and I'm proud to say I love coming to work!

'I hope even greater recognition of the profession will happen over time with the general public, other allied health and general practitioners and the media recognising dietitians as the key people to provide nutrition advice.'

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

The people I studied with and the friendships I made. The incredibly passionate and caring lecturers and our clinical placement coordinators. My community nutrition placement in Geelong and having the opportunity to do a live radio interview for a Geelong community radio station. My elective placement at International Diabetes Institute.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

There are a greater number of private practice opportunities and a lot more dietitians working in private practice. There is also greater support for moving into a private practice role. There is a greater diversity in job roles for dietitians with more dietitians moving into areas such as food industry, health coaching, public health and health promotion roles.

The Dietitians Association of Australia has grown and offers a greater amount of information and support for dietitians, and has an even stronger role now in advocating for the profession.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I hope even greater recognition of the profession will happen over time with the general public, other allied health and general practitioners and the media recognising dietitians as the key people to provide nutrition advice.

I believe there will be even greater diversity of roles available to dietitians, including opportunities in food industry, research, public health, government, consulting roles and private practice and corporate, such as health insurance companies.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Seek opportunities, such as volunteering to gain experience in an area you would like to work in. Have a supportive mentor. Consider a rural/regional role – even for a first job – it can offer so much broad experience. I did this for my first job in Warrnambool and never looked back! Join a professional association such as the Dietitians Association of Australia.



2002

Sonja Kukuljan

Master of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Following the completion of my Graduate Diploma in Human Nutrition, I set up Private Practice as a Nutritionist in a Health and Fitness centre in Melbourne's CBD. I worked there throughout the time I spent studying my master's in dietetics. It was a fabulous experience and I acquired many important skills.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

My studies in dietetics at Deakin University positioned me well to undertake a variety of roles. Perhaps one of the most important landing places stemming from dietetics was the opportunity to undertake my PhD research at Deakin University.

From there, my dietetics training enabled me to undertake an academic position at Deakin University, where I was Unit Coordinator and Principal Lecturer in Sports Nutrition, and Exercise Programming in the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences Deakin University.

Looking for new growth opportunities, I then moved into a nutrition related role in industry and decided I enjoyed it. This has taken me to my current position at Freedom Foods Group, where I am the General Manager in Nutrition and which has become my most significant career highlight. As a dietitian working in food industry, it is extremely satisfying to truly make a difference to the nutrition quality of common, every day foods.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

My favourite memory still rests in the knowledge of how privileged a position I had to be totally engrossed in the task of higher learning. There was also the unity of the academic staff in striving to help students reach their best, the single-minded focus on excellence in learning outcomes and of course, the wonderful students themselves, who progressed through their various tertiary courses with me.

'Now more than ever, dietitians can position themselves as nutrition experts who have the know how and skills to tackle some of these extraordinary public health challenges better than any other allied healthcare professional.'

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

In my opinion, the face of dietetics has developed significantly since I graduated under the influence of social media. Today, dietitians have the opportunity to reach broader audiences via social media channels. This development has brought with it significant opportunities, upon which savvy, new dietitians are well placed to capitalise.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Globally, the prevalence of chronic disease associated with poor nutrition intake continues to increase, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Dietitians are well placed to work within areas that focus on nutrition related chronic disease prevention. Now more than ever, dietitians can position themselves as nutrition experts who have the know how and skills to tackle some of these extraordinary public health challenges better than any other allied healthcare professional.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Do the most you can to do the best you can, and always think creatively about opportunities that present themselves. There is always more to an opportunity than meets the eye – be sure to see such things creatively.



2003

Melissa Whitelaw

Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics/
Bachelor of Applied Science
(Health Sciences)

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Locum positions at St Georges Hospital, Kew and Box Hill Hospital, Box Hill

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

After a career as a secondary school teacher my interest was initially to become a sports dietitian. In my final year at Deakin I had an elective placement at the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH), Melbourne. I had over 20 years' experience in working with adolescents and this placement was my 'light bulb moment' when I decided that I wanted to continue to work with adolescents in a clinical setting. Twelve months after completing my studies I commenced work as the Department of Adolescent Medicine dietitian at the RCH and have been in that role since November 2004.

The RCH has provided me with the opportunity to develop my research interests alongside my clinical job. At the RCH, I have had some exceptional mentors who have supported and encouraged both my clinical and research interests. The foundations that I was provided at Deakin and now my colleagues at RCH has enabled me to publish and present at international conferences and more recently to commence a PhD. I enjoy my clinical work with adolescents but also the opportunity to combine my clinical work with research.

'Nutrition and dietetic advice is a very crowded area. I hope that in future there is greater awareness, understanding and recognition of the skills and education undertaken by dietitians.'

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

As quite a 'geriatric' student I found myself studying with a fabulous group of students. They were all very generous, particularly when I was struggling with the new technology of computers and using a mobile phone! I was also very appreciative of the support of my lecturers who were understanding of the challenges of working, managing a family and studying. It was a great time and I am grateful that Deakin University gave me the opportunity to go back to university and to have of a career change.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

The increased availability of information about health and nutrition for everyone to access on the internet and in the media. In addition to this, we also need to deal with the accuracy and quality of information provided by people not qualified to provide dietetic advice.

These messages often promote fad diets, provide recommendations for new trendy foods and questionable supplements. Our messages based on quality research and evidence about foods with sustainable long term outcomes is frequently perceived as dull and not the immediate fix that many people are hoping to achieve. This is becoming more of a challenge to manage and particularly in adolescents who are vulnerable to all these messages.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Nutrition and dietetic advice is a very crowded area. I hope that in future there is greater awareness, understanding and recognition of the skills and education undertaken by dietitians.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Dietetics is a fantastic field to work in with many areas to use your skills. Gaining employment however is currently not easy. I recommend that you take every opportunity to do volunteer work in the field. Be open to relocating to wherever you can gain employment and also open to work in an area that is not necessarily your first preference.



2004

Zoe Nicholson

Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics/
Bachelor of Applied Science
(Health Sciences)

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I always knew private practice was where I wanted to work and I was fortunate enough to begin my private practice straight out of university. I did three years in a small sub-acute hospital but left this as soon as my business was busy enough to provide sufficient income.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

The 2010 Dietitians Association of Australia conference was a key turning point for me where after practising in relative isolation for the past five years, I discovered the power of networking. It was at this conference that social media really started to take off and from which the Melbourne Private Practice meetings were born. Being connected with other dietitians really helped me grow my private practice and my dietetics skills.

The next key turning point was in 2014 when desperately looking for some continuing professional development, I stumbled across the Non-Diet Approach workshops. Now, I should acknowledge that Fiona Willer had introduced me to the non-diet approach at the 2012 conference and I also sat in on a Health At Every Size® workshop, however I guess I wasn't ready to hear that message in full just yet. I started reading Fiona's *Non-Diet Approach* workbook and the missing piece to the puzzle appeared – I had always struggled with a weight focus and being prescriptive with food for general health – that very day I started to change my practice and I haven't looked back.

Around this same time Jodie Arnot contacted me as she loved what I was doing on my figureate Facebook page and from just one meeting, The Moderation Movement was born. Our Facebook page took off overnight gathering 1500 followers to today where we have well over 37,000. The Moderation Movement has been the ideal platform to talk about everything non-diet, Health At Every Size®, body image, wellness and more.

Another highlight has been making connections with other Health At Every Size® and non-diet dietitians and practitioners all over the world through social media.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Community placement in final year where myself and three uni friends spent six weeks exploring food diversity in the Greater Green Triangle. We were based in Warrnambool but travelled as far as South Australia where we spent a week in Coonawarra in a gorgeous little cottage. Those of you who know I love my cheese and wine would understand my delight with this experience! We also ate apples straight from orchards and to this day they are the best apples I've ever tasted. We also had the pleasure of doing some cooking with an Aboriginal community along with trips to Port Fairy and the Grampians.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

I can only answer this from a private practice perspective and that would be to say many dietitians are changing the way we practice in recognition the traditional weight management and dietary advice isn't very effective, if at all. The use of social media is also a significant change making networking and business promotion much more accessible.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I strongly believe our nation has a crisis of disordered eating, dieting and body image dissatisfaction. In terms of the field I work in, it will be non-diet weight neutral dietitians who are instrumental in turning this around and really making a difference to the health of our population in terms of eating and exercise behaviours.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Read, read, read and read some more (books, blogs and posts), listen to relevant podcasts and then network. Go to conferences, not just Dietitians Association of Australia. Make contact with other dietitians or health professionals in your field who share your philosophy. You will learn so much from this. If non-diet or Health At Every Size™ is your interest, start with Beyond a Shadow of a Diet and then work from there.

'I always knew private practice was where I wanted to work and I was fortunate enough to begin my private practice straight out of university.'



2005

Jelica Vrkic

Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics/
Bachelor of Applied Science
(Health Sciences)

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

It was a one-day-a-week back-fill position for a dietitian completing a project at Bundoora Extended Care Centre (BECC) which is a sub-acute hospital, part of Northern Health. The work I completed was as a clinical dietitian for the geriatric inpatients at BECC. This turned into ongoing work for almost two years ranging from three to five days each week across three sites part of Northern Health (The Northern Hospital, BECC and Broadmeadows Health Service).

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Career highlights are every experience and opportunity I have had in the different roles I have been in. Accepting a one-day a week locum back-fill position at Northern Health exposed me to a range of roles across the acute and sub-acute setting of this health service and it was an invaluable experience for a new graduate. I was challenged and learnt a lot and also became good at adapting to new environments and settings as the role saw me move across three different sites. It also provided me with insight into the needs of an older population group and I was lucky enough to meet a mentor there who provided me with great support and opportunity to develop myself as a dietitian.

My second opportunity came in the form of a role as a dietitian at Jenny Craig and the highlight for me here was to learn about the weight loss industry and I was exposed to plenty of menu planning, product development and training / coaching. It was a great opportunity to develop my communication skills and menu planning skills.

My next opportunity was as a company dietitian for Compass Group (a caterer). This role was my first autonomous role which allowed me to develop my skills in organisation, presentation, menu planning, aged care and health promotion.

From here I accepted a role as a Nutrition Adviser at Nestle Infant Nutrition and I have to say that has been my favourite and best experience to date. My career highlights here were winning the Rookie of the Year and Nutrition Adviser of the Year awards. My other career highlights were all the learning on infant nutrition as well as the opportunity to develop my communication and presentation skills. The company was extremely supportive and exposed me to another area where I could use my nutrition skills. In my current role at SPC my career highlights have been in the success I have had with managing national accounts and in my work with our marketing team on new product developments.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Meeting three wonderful dietitians who I have gone on to maintain a close friendship with long after our study completed at Deakin.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

There has been a greater influx of other professionals who are not APDs but who see themselves as nutrition experts, making it an even tougher environment for dietitians to find work and convey our evidence based messages in a way that is compelling and appealing to the wider public.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?


I see dietitians moving into non-traditional roles where I believe we can have a huge impact. Our training focuses on a few core areas which are important to develop your skills and confidence and I think once we do this, we should not be afraid to step into areas that are outside of this. Every time I have tried something new, I have loved the experience and learning. My current role is focused on sales and business management with the opportunity to impart my knowledge on nutrition through project work on product development and training of our employees. I think we need to embrace all opportunities to make a difference for the better.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Consider all opportunities when you are looking for your first role (or next role) and don't be afraid to try something that is new to you. You will grow and develop and you can only learn from your experiences so take the risk.

Never be afraid to ask for help, ask questions or admit that you don't know something – the learning will stay with you forever and honesty is an admirable trait in the workplace.

Find a mentor in an area of interest for you or someone who you think has the skills you would like to develop one day. It can be a formal or informal relationship and you can have more than one mentor throughout your career.



'Never be afraid to ask for help, ask questions or admit that you don't know something – the learning will stay with you forever and honesty is an admirable trait in the workplace.'



2006

Robyn Delbridge

Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Dietitian for Kini Health (now Ochre Health) in Bourke (far north west NSW), a non-profit allied health group working with GP practices and Aboriginal Medical Services in Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar and Enngonia.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

All I wanted to do when I finished uni was to use my dietetics qualification to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and that's exactly what I've done!

Dietetics has taken me on many professional adventures during my career; Bourke and far north west NSW, to The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy, Melbourne, to Thursday Island and the Torres Strait as well as a statewide nutrition role at the Victorian Community Controlled Health Organisation.

I have also had the pleasure to contribute to our dietetics profession through convening the Indigenous Nutrition Interest Group (2012-2013), and a workforce support research project titled 'Community of Practice for Dietitians working in Aboriginal Health' (2013-2015).

I served as a Board Director for the Dietitians Association of Australia (2013-2017) and have been instrumental in our Reconciliation Action Plan journey.

I have been humbled by being awarded the DAA Young Achievers Award 2016 for my championing of Aboriginal health and leadership in our profession.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

I enjoyed campus life, cheap sub sandwiches and finding a sunny spot on Mutant Way. It was so good to finally get into the kitchen in third year and do special diet cooking pracs.

I was also pretty lucky to go on placements in Bairnsdale (Victoria) and Katherine (Northern Territory) which escalated my learning and helped me shape the kind of dietitian I am today.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

One of the things that initially drew me to dietetics was the diversity in practice areas, and I think that has expanded even further since I graduated. It makes me so proud and happy to see dietitians innovating and influencing in so many places.

Career paths are even less linear than when I finished uni, and there are so many opportunities out there for people who can see them and seize them.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I want to see strong and proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as dietitians, bringing old and new ways together to lead and innovate nutrition solutions in communities across Australia.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

The future is bright and it is yours to create!

'I want to see strong and proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as dietitians, bringing old and new ways together to lead and innovate nutrition solutions in communities across Australia.'



Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics, fourth year students and the first cohort of five in the new Master of Dietetics, 2007.



2007

Derrick Ong

Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics
(Honours)

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I was doing some private practice work in Melbourne for about a year before returning to Singapore in 2009 to take a role as a Clinical Dietitian at the Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

My experience as a clinical dietitian in a large tertiary hospital like SGH certainly helped to hone my clinical skills as a graduate dietitian through the wide variety of patients seen.

However, I started to realise that nutrition would be more valued as a preventative, rather than a curative or 'management' strategy for chronic diseases. As a result, I left my clinical position to pursue community dietetics, first at National Healthcare Group (NHG) Polyclinics where I was involved in chronic disease management and prevention, and later on through setting up my own private practice, Eat Right Nutrition Consultancy.

I started doing more things I never imagined I would be doing as a dietitian like cooking demonstrations, supermarket tours and going to a diversity of settings like factories and shopping malls to educate the public on healthy eating for chronic disease prevention.

My team has grown over the years, and I now have staff who manage my clinic operations and sales, as well as nutritionists who are involved in nationwide level health promotion programmes and corporate nutrition education.

Being a dietetic entrepreneur has been both a tough and rewarding journey. The challenge for me now is to take my team to the next level of spreading the message of preventative nutrition to the neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Doing role playing for nutrition counselling – it was really fun! Also, the ease at which I could drop by the various lecturers' offices for a chat – it helps to bounce ideas off people who have been in the profession for many years.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

New fields like nutrigenomics have come up in the past five years that has really challenged the way we think about nutrition counselling. The power of social media has also made the marketplace of competing ideas for what good nutrition is a lot tougher, and we as dietitians have had to make our stand loud and clear through various media channels.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

The public is a lot savvier about the latest research and fads/trends, so as a profession, we really need to be up to date with what's going on in both media and academia. I would say that nutrigenomics is really the way forward for our profession and dietitians cannot ignore it any longer. The other area is environmental protection and the sustainability of our food supply. Increasingly, we as dietitians cannot shun away from taking a stand on sustainable eating alongside healthy eating.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Be open about the myriad of paths which a dietetics degree can take you. Of course, it is important to get a good clinical training foundation but don't just be content with staying there. We need dietitians in all different spheres – government institutions, think tanks, academia, corporate, food industry, community – to influence the mind share of the public that *we can make a difference!*

'The public is a lot savvier about the latest research and fads/trends, so as a profession, we really need to be up to date with what's going on in both media and academia.'

2008

Nick Dunn

Bachelor of Nutrition
and Dietetics



What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Community Health Dietitian (grade 2 position) with Dianella Community Health in Broadmeadows.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

For six years, I worked in community health in both London and Melbourne, primarily in paediatrics. Highlights from this time included the development of an obesity prevention program for young children and the development and roll-out of obesity prevention/management training for school nursing, maternal and child health across London. In Melbourne, I had the opportunity to instigate and execute a new paediatric dietetics service with MonashLink community health and developed an obesity management program for school-aged children.

In 2013, I moved into private practice with Diet Solutions consulting with adults and children, mostly with functional gut disorder/IBS. Highlights from private practice have included being a guest speaker on prebiotics in infant health at the National GP Conference (HealthEd), a guest presenter at the DAA-Tas branch annual event on the topic of the dietary management of IBS, and a guest webinar presenter for Education in Nutrition on the topic of faecal microbiota transplant for the management of IBS/IBD.

'Take every opportunity that presents itself, be it voluntary or paid, a variety of experiences is valuable in shaping you as a dietitian.'

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

Final year clinical placement at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. This was not only an opportunity to put theory into practice but a chance to learn new skills in a real-world environment.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Consumer perception of the industry appears to have shifted over the years and this is leading to some meaningful change in how dietitians must operate. The industry is regularly challenged by parties outside of the health profession, particularly in regards to credibility and value. I think that this is due, in part, to consumers having high accessibility to nutritional information, of which can be conflicting, affected by trends and influenced by disreputable sources and the media. The overwhelming sources of 'advice', has meant the public has largely become confused about how they should eat.

The dietetics degree has also changed from a Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics to a master's since I graduated in 2008. It seems to be much harder for new graduates to gain employment in 2017 compared to ten years ago. In speaking with older colleagues, they talk of the relative ease of getting that first job, which I've been made aware is no longer the case unfortunately.

I'm not sure whether this is due to higher numbers of graduating dietitians in each cohort or less demand for dietetics services overall.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Dietitians have to be avid in championing research over 'on-trend' diets; in using the media and consumers' hunger for nutritional information to our advantage. Advocating for the professionalism of the industry and clawing back the understanding that nutritional advice is the sum of evidence over anecdotes and opinions.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Seeking employment as a new graduate seems to be much tougher in 2017. Take every opportunity that presents itself, be it voluntary or paid, a variety of experiences is valuable in shaping you as a dietitian. Develop a network of industry professionals, student colleagues and lecturers – you never know who might be able to open the door for you. Lastly, loosen your boundaries of what your perfect job might look like. The roles you take will grow and evolve with you over time anyway.



2009

Chu Kion (CK) Yao

Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics
(Honours)

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I was a research assistant/dietitian within the Monash University FODMAP research team based at Box Hill Hospital.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

I have undertaken a career in dietetics since graduating. During the last seven years, I have gained significant research expertise in probiotics and diet for the management of functional gastrointestinal symptoms, having a strong publication record in these areas.

Having recently completed a PhD in manipulating diet and colonic fermentation in inflammatory bowel disease, further research in this area will hopefully improve evidence-based dietetic practice in this area. Hence, not only has my research led to presentations at several international and national conferences, I was a recipient of awards including the 'Best Conference Presenter' at an international Dietetics Conference and was recently featured in mainstream newspapers including The Age, Herald Sun and New Scientist magazine.

My research work has also expanded my professional network with collaborations with dietitians all around the world, the food industry and with multidisciplinary scientists across several universities.

Most importantly, my research has significantly enhanced my clinical practice as a specialist gastrointestinal dietitian and allowed me to provide best-practice care for my patients.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

I really enjoyed attending extra CALD classes after tutorials and getting introduced to the Australian culture as an international student. Adam Walsh and Claire Margerison made it really fun and interesting. I was also super fascinated by the lectures surrounding the evidence and physiological concepts that framed existing dietary approaches in clinical practice.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

I believe that there is a growing awareness of the need to increase the evidence base for our dietetic practice. I can see a lot more demand for careers in dietetic research and more dietitians interested in undertaking doctoral research degrees.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

The emergence of successful dietary approaches with a large evidence base, for example, the low FODMAP diet for the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome will only continue to increase.

There is increasing recognition that diet could potentially be a primary treatment modality in many chronic diseases. This will not only place dietetics at the forefront of medical management but also hopefully, reshape the availability of funding for dietary research.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Be open to possibilities and opportunities and don't be afraid to pursue a different dietetic pathway to your peers.



Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics class of 2006.

'Most importantly, my research has significantly enhanced my clinical practice as a specialist gastrointestinal dietitian and allowed me to provide best-practice care for my patients.'



2010

Rebekah Daniels

Master of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

I obtained my first job as a dietitian at Gippsland Southern Health Service. This position involved a range of clinical, aged care and community-based services. I was involved in a number of group-based activities such as diabetes education, cardiac rehabilitation and various health promotion activities including cooking classes/demonstrations.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Dietetics has given me the opportunity to work in many varied roles and diverse locations across Victoria and New South Wales. These positions have enabled me to gain a depth and range of experience in many aspects of dietetics including food service provision, the clinical management of clients, customer service, both internally and externally, and liaising with all levels of an organisation. Many times, as a dietitian I am required to think outside the box and draw on my experiences in meeting new and challenging situations.

I am currently preparing to volunteer as a dietitian overseas in developing countries giving much needed advice to improve the health of these communities.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

There were many highlights studying dietetics at Deakin university including the opportunity of networking through placement and the provision of lectures by dietitians specialising in different areas of dietetics. However, a favourite memory is the close and supportive group of friends I studied dietetics with and the ongoing relationships this has provided. I especially enjoyed the inclusiveness of my classmates, everyone was included, whether it was between classes or during classes.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Dietetics is a continually changing industry as new research and developments such as 3D-printed food emerges due to a focus on visually appealing meals. Other changes include the standardisation in documentation using the IDNT terminology and a shift away from clinically-focused dietetics courses to a more well rounded approach giving greater opportunity post-graduation.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

With the ever-rising rates of obesity and the chronic diseases that go along with this there is a greater need for more dietitian-led education and health prevention than ever before. Health prevention strategies will be key in changing the current trends in chronic disease rates.

'As the population ages, there will also be ever-increasing demand for dietitians specialising in aged care nutrition. Being able to work with food service staff in aged care facilities to provide appealing and nutritious meals especially for those on texture-modified diets will be important.'



Class of 2010, including the last cohort of the Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics students as well as the Master of Dietetics students.

As the population ages, there will also be ever-increasing demand for dietitians specialising in aged care nutrition. Being able to work with food service staff in aged care facilities to provide appealing and nutritious meals especially for those on texture-modified diets will be important. As more facilities seek to improve the appearance of texture modified foods through the implementation of moulded food or use of 3D-printed food, dietitians will have a key role in liaising with food service catering companies to ensure meals are nutritious.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Perseverance. In order to obtain your dream job be prepared to move to rural locations, to volunteer, stay up to date with current research and remain active in the dietetics industry in order to build up experience and networks in the industry.



2011

Claire Dagley

Master of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

My first, and current role since graduating is as a clinical and community Dietitian at a rural health service located in South West Victoria. This role is incredibly varied and has allowed me to work across a range of areas including; clinical, community health, aged care, community rehabilitation, disability and health promotion. By taking on a rural position as a new graduate, I was able to gain valuable experience in a number of areas of dietetics that would not normally be afforded to someone so new to the profession. Whilst challenging, it has also been a fantastic opportunity to determine which area of dietetics I want to specialise in, and where I then focus my further studies.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

Over the last five and a half years I have continued to work in the same rural health organisation. I have been very fortunate to be a part of a fantastic team of health professionals and strongly value the professional and personal relationships I have built over my time there. I have also worked weekends in private practice for the past five years to supplement my experience in public health, which has provided great insight into the different challenges faced when working in the private sector.

From a professional perspective, my clinical role has led me to taking on a dialysis caseload where I developed a passion for renal nutrition. This is an aspect of my dietetics career that I have been fortunate enough to further pursue over the last 18 months. Enrolling in the Renal Nutrition Program last year, I undertook additional study to enhance my skills and knowledge in this area. Shortly after completing the course I was offered a 12-month part time renal dietitian position at a large regional hospital, which has thus far been a fascinating and exciting experience. I have often seen working in renal nutrition as my 'dream job,' so it feels pretty amazing to finally be doing it!

In addition to enjoying the clinical side of my work, I have also valued my experiences working with community clients. In particular, I worked for 18 months as a community outreach Dietitian within a diabetes management team that provided services to a number of Victorian coastal and inland townships. These outreach locations were situated 30 to 75 minutes away from the nearest large town, so we were able to increase client access to allied health services on a regular basis. This role involved developing close relationships with referring general practitioners, as well as other members of the health care team, such as the diabetes educator and podiatrist, which was a very rewarding experience.

'It is not always easy to know which area of dietetics you will eventually become passionate about, so don't be afraid to apply for jobs that aren't at face value your 'dream job'. You never know where that first job might take you!

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

My favourite memories of studying dietetics at Deakin are those from both my clinical and food services placements. Although often the more stressful components of the course, placement was undoubtedly a great opportunity to not only get to know other classmates better, but also to potentially build some lifelong friendships as well. I will never forget bonding with my food service placement partner over our rather nerdy shared love of writing lists and creating timelines for our project work (as well as watching *Farmer Wants a Wife* in the evenings after placement!). We continue to be close friends now and always ensure our catch ups involve great food and decent coffee. Similarly, I also have fond memories of spending time with the other students in my clinical placement group. After completing the tough nine weeks of placement I can remember enjoying our celebratory dinner where we had a great evening eating delicious Thai food and having plenty of laughs.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Dietetics as a profession appears to face more challenges now than it did almost six years ago when I graduated. Back then it seemed that we faced less criticism from the public over our role and currency as experts in nutrition. The rise and rise of social media means that everyone and anyone can claim to be an 'expert' in nutrition regardless of their qualifications, so we must work harder than before to ensure we are strong advocates for our profession.

Dietetics has also changed as more knowledge has been gained in certain areas of nutrition. The role of the gut microbiome, nutritional genomics and even international dietetics and nutrition terminology are all things that weren't covered when I was going through university.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Dietetics will continue to be an integral part of healthcare services, particularly in the hospital setting. However, to ensure we maintain, and ideally grow, our audience in the community and private sectors, we will need to be both proactive and to evolve as a profession. Regardless of this, I hope that dietetics continues to be a profession that plays a key role in supporting and inspiring our patients and clients to achieve their nutrition and health goals.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Without fail I always advise any graduating dietetics students to ensure that they remain as open-minded as possible when it comes to chasing their first dietetics role. It is not always easy to know which area of dietetics you will eventually become passionate about, so don't be afraid to apply for jobs that aren't at face value your 'dream job'. You never know where that first job might take you!



2012

Whitney Atkinson
Master of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Sole Clinical Dietitian at Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

From a Bachelor of Science majoring in Anatomy at Melbourne University, I pursued the Master of Dietetics at Deakin University. The comradery and education was excellent! Since then I have undertaken the Sports Nutrition course with Sports Dietitians Australia (at the Australian Institute of Sport) and also completed a postgraduate renal nutrition course with Royal Adelaide Hospital.

I have also worked at Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital as Sole Clinical Dietitian, Monash Medical Centre and Casey Hospital as a contract clinical dietitian, Hepburn Health Service as a Grade 2 community dietitian and I am a private practice owner having started Advanced Nutrition.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

We had an excellent cohort and I personally enjoyed the rainy days when we were in the classroom together listening to group work presentations. I still see many dietitians who I studied with, and have made several lifelong friends.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

It's hard to say. I guess with the gradual increase in awareness of the profession, there is more demand for courses. And more graduates entering into a workforce with limited positions has made it increasingly competitive to land a job. I believe that while this is stressful for graduates (and experienced dietitians), it might encourage us to be innovative and advocate for dietitians working in a range of industries.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I would like to see the profession as fundamental to the re-development of products within the food industry, the generation of policies to tackle overweight and obesity and to create strict guidelines in relation to the marketing of food products. I feel that this would be a grass-roots approach to chronic disease prevention on a national scale.

With the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Medicare rebates and in the clinical and community settings, I currently feel our major role is spent more with individuals.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Seize all opportunities! Get active in your local community! Take great pride in being a Dietitian. Work hard with open communication, to be known as an excellent clinician, and to be a strong advocate for our practical salubrious profession.

'I would like to see the profession as fundamental to the re-development of products within the food industry, the generation of policies to tackle overweight and obesity and to create strict guidelines in relation to the marketing of food products.'



Master of Dietetics class of 2012.



2013

Shae Rickards

Master of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

Dietitian at the a2 Milk Company.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

After the master's, I commenced working as a dietitian at the a2 Milk Company™ specialising in paediatrics. Here, my job entails dietary assessments with consumers, product development, regulatory compliance, communications through different platforms and educating healthcare professionals.

Highlights include the launch of products I've assisted with into the marketplace, supportive mentoring I've received and seeing company growth.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

My community placement in remote Far North Queensland. This placement fulfilled my sense of adventure, enabled me to observe the health issues faced within the Indigenous population and I gained lifelong networks.

Working with an indigenous community gave me the opportunity to gain an understanding of different cultural groups and expand my cultural knowledge, that I would not had access to in a metropolitan placements. It also allowed me to develop self-reliance and flexibility.

After placement hours, I joined local sports team, went fishing and went four-wheel driving. They really are an opportunity not to pass up on!

'We as a profession must continue to restructure and evolve how we educate and engage with individuals.'

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

More than ever before, nutrition is entrenched in the media and throughout social platforms. There are many conflicting messages from nutrition 'claimed' experts that further confuse the public.

To stay at the forefront of nutrition, the dietetic profession has to understand the market, digitalise and re-brand.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Digital innovations and advances in science and technology have and will continue to give nutrition and dietetics a big shake-up. People are able to use devices to access nutrition information in their daily lives and we have radically altered how we communicate with one another.

With this, we as a profession must continue to restructure and evolve how we educate and engage with individuals.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Gain relevant work experience and take advantage of the many opportunities and extra-curricular activities university life presents. These days, and more than ever, having a university degree isn't the only thing that will land you in your dream job. It's now harder to distinguish yourself, and rightly or wrongly, it's not enough to rely on just a degree.

Connect to the hidden job market. You would be amazed how many jobs aren't advertised. You absolutely can find success via door-knocking, networking and plain old good luck, meeting the right person, at the right place, at the right time.

If you've never held a job before, employers will be wary of you, as there is no way of judging your basic work skills such as reliability, being personable and adept at time management. These skills are vital, as the qualifications are rendered or useless if they cannot be effectively applied in a workplace.

If you can't find work or afford work unpaid, hunt for work in a related field instead, building your contacts and trying to move across later and be prepared to take on an insecure, low-paid position possibly tangential to your qualifications.

Have purpose, make a difference and love what you do.



2014

Ashley Ng

Master of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

After completing my dietetics course, I went straight into my PhD part time. I then started working in private practice as well as doing research assistant work as a Dietitian.

In my private practice, I focused mainly on chronic disease management and weight management but often saw clients with IBS. As a research assistant, I was helping to develop an app to help parents increase fruit and vegetable intake. My role was to write the content in the app and even did some cooking demos and filmed a supermarket tour for it.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

The variety of work that comes with consultancy and research is exciting. For example, the work I did for the fruit and vegetable app was so different to what I had experienced on placement.

More importantly, it has helped with my PhD research project in reaching out to participants and undertaking qualitative interviews. The skills that I learned from dietetics around motivational interviewing came in really handy.

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

The friendliness of lecturers. We were treated more like professionals and they were incredibly supportive.

My favourite memories include our morning tea fundraiser that we put on, hospital days and working with our peers. We became like a family.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

I think the field is on the cusp of a major turning point at the moment, which is incredibly exciting as we get to influence this change.

I've seen fads come and go while anticipating the next super food.

There has been a push to challenge research, which calls for dietitians be on top of their research and analytical skills. And I think we will continue to see that more in the future.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

Not into the 'wellness' industry! We need to change our perception from 'food police' to 'clinical experts'. I think it's terribly sad that people avoid seeing dietitians for fear of being told they can't eat their favourite foods. While it's not a new thing, we need to constantly work towards patient-centred care rather than using them as buzzwords.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Remember why you wanted to work in healthcare in the first place. You have the power to empower clients and patients to take charge of their health and change health behaviour. Do not take that for granted.

'We need to change our perception from 'food police' to 'clinical experts'. I think it's terribly sad that people avoid seeing dietitians for fear of being told they can't eat their favourite foods.'



Master of Dietetics class of 2015 end of Semester 1 celebrations, June 2014.

Clockwise from bottom left: Stacey Sayers, Jessica Hung, Julia Kuypers, Samantha Chiodo, Emma Beswick, Tom Scully, Shirley Webber, Olivia Gourley, Emma McKie, Chantelle Elson, Ee Ling Ng, Olakunle Adegbola, Nina Mills, Ebbonnie Platt, Kasey Jaeger, Emily Robertson, Samantha Baring, Delia Trinca, Srdjan Savic.

2015

Olivia Gourley

Master of Dietetics



What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

After being unsuccessful in attaining the permanent Grade 1 Clinical Dietitian job at Latrobe Regional Hospital, I was instead offered a two-week locum covering some unexpected leave within the department. I jumped straight in covering acute aged care, general medicine and wherever else cover was needed. After surviving the steep learning curve that was my locum, I was then offered a 12-month contract in radiotherapy, acute aged care, orthopaedics and mental health. The department received additional funding to start an outpatient wound clinic and a nutrition pre-surgery project, so 18 months later I'm still here!

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

My role at Latrobe Regional Hospital has been so varied from gestational diabetes outpatients, surgical inpatients, mental health nursing home, radiotherapy outpatients and chemotherapy day patients. My favourite thing about my career is that every day is different.

In my role, we work collaboratively as a team to support each other and ensure all patients are seen. We work together to give everyone opportunities in areas they want to work. My highlight is my work in radiotherapy. In particular, my favourite area is the combined clinic we run with the speech pathologist for any patients with head and neck cancers. These patients often have numerous nutritional impact symptoms and require extensive dietetic input. We help our patients through their lowest points and get to see them through their recovery. In these patients, you really see the impact of nutrition on a person's health.

‘My favourite piece of advice I received during a teaching clinic was to consider the person as a whole, understand who they are, their viewpoint, how they must be feeling and then, just talk to them.’

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

At the time, I dreaded teaching clinic role plays, however in hindsight, they were invaluable teaching. While clinical knowledge can be developed through years of study (and continued professional development), learning to talk to people can only be practiced in such a setting. I’ll never forget how nervous I felt, talking to my first ‘patient’. Eighteen months on, it seems bizarre to be nervous talking to patients. In my role, it is integral to be able to read patients, console them, make them laugh and know and understand them as a person, not as a clinical picture. My favourite piece of advice I received during a teaching clinic was to consider the person as a whole, understand who they are, their viewpoint, how they must be feeling and then, just talk to them.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

Dietetics has had a large focus in the media with the rise of health gurus. This has seen dietitians upskilling in their use of social media and promoting their presence as a profession. By doing so, we ensure that the nutrition information that is readily available to the public is evidence based and best practice. This rise in interest in nutrition by the general public is definitely a positive but we as a profession need to make sure we remain up to date with the latest health trends.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I feel while there may currently be a shift of people’s focus towards health gurus for their nutritional advice, there will always be work for dietetics. With increased public interest in nutrition, the profession as a whole is likely to expand. As technology continues to advance so too will our use of technology to provide dietetic services. Dietetic consults will become more readily available online, providing greater access to a wider range of people.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

Go for any opportunities that present themselves. My two week regional locum position turned into 18 months in a role I love with an amazing team of people. Be open minded – when I graduated, I considered my dream role to be paediatrics in a community setting yet here I am, in the opposite area getting enjoyment from clinical adults and even geriatrics.

I recommend considering regional roles also. Getting a regional job, especially for my first role, has been an amazing opportunity. Many of my colleagues have relocated from Melbourne also, so you are surrounded by likeminded people in the same situation as you. I’ve made some of the best friends as you grow close in a small team. In regional dietetics, you get so many opportunities that wouldn’t necessarily be on offer in a metro setting. So far I’ve set up and run an outpatient wound clinic, implemented communal dining on the geriatric and rehab wards, helped supervise clinical dietetic students and am about to take on home enteral nutrition clients as my main caseload. Remember that dietetics is so much more than just clinical or community – you really can apply your skills in so many settings.



2016

Melanie Stray

Master of Dietetics

What was your first dietetics job after graduation?

After graduating from Deakin in June of 2016, I secured my first job by August as a full-time dietitian at Yakult Australia. My role was to work as a part of the public relations team, promoting the research and benefits of probiotics to health professionals, to be involved in the creation of consumer information material as well as assisting with nutrition regulation activities. I was thrilled to have gotten in to the workforce so quickly and eager to learn as much as I could about the benefits of good gut health and how probiotics can play a role in this.

From this role, I was able to learn more about food industry dietetics and I enjoyed being able to make a difference to a wide community by educating about probiotics.

Please summarise your career/career highlights, i.e. where did dietetics take you?

As I have only been in the industry for about a year, I have not had a large list of career highlights, however some of the aspects I have enjoyed so far about my career included being able to begin my career in an area I was passionate about being in the food industry and gut health area.

Also, a highlight for me was remaining involved in the Deakin community, doing presentations regarding my career journey and probiotics as well as partaking in events such as the Start-up experience developing skills in entrepreneurship and leadership which I hope to take learnings from these experiences in to my future career.

I have also had the opportunity to travel to Japan as a part of and experience the nutritional culture and values which have opened my eyes to what more we can do as a dietitian to promote the importance of nutritional health.

For me, also having the opportunity to reach such a wide range of health professionals and consumers by Yakult's publications and websites has allowed me to get my voice in to the community so I can promote the profession and provide nutritional education in a different form from traditional methods.

'The sky isn't the limit, we can upskill ourselves to make our profession more durable so we can suit a variety of roles in educating the benefits of good nutrition.'

What is your favourite memory of studying dietetics at Deakin?

My favourite memory from my studies at Deakin are the connections made within the entire cohort of dietetic students. In all units, we were encouraged to work in a team and learn from each other's perspectives. I enjoyed creating meaningful relationships with my peers and staff and these relations have assisted me in furthering my career and knowledge.

How has dietetics changed since you graduated?

I have personally seen a change in dietetics since I graduated even though it was a short time ago. This might be because I am aware of certain niche areas within the profession. To me dietitians are becoming more outgoing and thinking outside of the norm in regards to potential careers and seeing a greater value in working in a variety of settings. I believe as we continue to further this type of mentality this will help to grow our profession and gain more respect.

Where do you see the profession of dietetics heading?

I see roles in dietetics becoming more varied and as dietitian's we may need to increase our skill set more. This may be to include training in marketing or communication skills such as social media, we may also need to have stronger business skills so that we are able to better run our own business with greater potential and success.

The sky isn't the limit, we can upskill ourselves to make our profession more durable so we can suit a variety of roles in educating the benefits of good nutrition.

What piece of advice would you give to a dietetics student graduating today?

There is no limit to your success, you could dream to help just one person reach their nutritional goals or you could aim more broad scope targeting a wider population.

Persistence is key in reaching your goals in your career. Your career path may not be direct but take advantage of these experiences and let them help you develop other skills as you never know when you may need them.

Ultimately, find what you are passionate and let your skills and knowledge shine through.

Deakin University

Professor's Prize in Dietetics

The Professor's Prize is awarded to the most outstanding graduate from the course based on a combination of high-level academic achievement and professional practice in the application of dietetics.

1986	Maria Fitzgerald	1999	Sarah Mackey
1987	Catherine Toyas	2000	Erica Clifford
1988	Jane Willcox	2001	Kathryn Smart
1989	Sharon Croxford	2001	Heidi Davies
1990	Sally Thomson	2003	Greta Hall and Sonia Withers
1991	Caroline Nicholls	2004	Melanie Nichols
1992	Susannah King	2005	Sarah Freeman
1993	Kristin Gay	2006	Gaye Rutherford
1994	Elisa Hughes	2007	Alison Garth
1995	Michelle Leyden	2008	Belinda Gout
1996	Anne Wilson	2009	Claire Trevorrow
1997	Rhoda Lucas	2010	Jenna Yeo
1998	Ernestine van Herwerden	2011	Meaghan Butterley
		2012	Whitney Atkinson
		2013	Jasmine Everist
		2014	Brooke Dillon
		2015	Fiona Moncrieff
		2016	Stephanie Labourne



School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences Awards Night May 2017. Course Director, Master of Dietetics Claire Margerison presenting Professor's Prize award to Stephanie Labourne.

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