

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

The Master of Science (M.S.) degree program at Northern Illinois University provides advanced studies in nutrition and dietetics. Core courses focus on both prevention and treatment of nutrition-related diseases. Some of the courses that students may select from include: Macronutrients, Micronutrients, Intensive Metabolic Nutrition Support, Maternal and Infant Nutrition, Nutrition & Physical Activity, Geriatric Nutrition, Obesity and Eating Disorders, Counseling Skills & Strategies, Strategies for Modifying Behavior Change, and Seminar on Outcome Studies and Public Policy.

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

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

**Prerequisites.** Prerequisites to the program include completion of a Didactic Program in Dietetics or one semester of each of the following subjects: general chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry, statistics, general biology, human physiology, microbiology or bacteriology, basic nutrition (with a chemistry prerequisite), applied nutrition, principles of food preparation, and two semesters of nutrition in clinical care. An average of B or better in these prerequisites is required.

Students whose baccalaureate degree was in a subject other than nutrition and dietetics are required to complete the requirements of the Didactic Program in Dietetics for admission to the dietetic internship and M.S. program or, for admission to the M.S. program only, the fourteen courses listed above. If the applicant has already completed general chemistry and general biology, the remaining pre-requisites can be completed in four semesters of part-time study, starting with a fall semester.

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

**Structuring the program.** When you are admitted to the graduate program, you will be assigned to one faculty person who will serve as your academic advisor. Students work

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

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

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

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

#### **Financial Assistance - Graduate Assistantships**

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

**Application and Admission.** Admission to the M.S. program and the Dietetic Internship are separate, but related processes. Not all students admitted to the M.S. program are interested in or are eligible for the internship. Criteria for admission to both the internship and graduate degree programs are similar including (but not limited to) grade point average (with special emphasis on the sciences, food service, and nutrition courses), Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, and letters of recommendation. The internship also requires work experience, an interview, and computer matching through D & D Digital Systems. Application forms for the M.S. program are available at <http://www.grad.niu.edu/index.shtml>. The Dietetic Internship application is available at [http://www.niu.edu/fcns/graduate/pdfs/program\\_application.pdf](http://www.niu.edu/fcns/graduate/pdfs/program_application.pdf). Catalogs can be requested directly from the Graduate School (815-753-0395).

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

D & D Digital Systems

Telephone: 515-292-0490

E-mail [dnd@netins.net](mailto:dnd@netins.net)

<http://www.dnndigital.com/ada/index.html>

It is necessary to limit enrollment in both the M.S. program and the internship. The best candidates are selected on the basis of performance in prerequisite courses, undergraduate grade point average, GRE scores, and in the case of the internship, work experience and interview performance. Applications to the Graduate Program are accepted continuously throughout the year; however, if a student wishes to be considered for financial aid (graduate assistantships, fellowships, or tuition waivers) applications should be received as early as possible.

Internship applicants must adhere to the computer-match application deadlines. Occasionally a student may begin taking graduate courses as a “student-at-large”, and subsequently apply and be admitted to the graduate program. If you are considering doing that, you will need to meet with a faculty advisor prior to enrolling to discuss which courses may transfer into the M.S. program. Applications for student-at-large status are brief and can be submitted for a given semester as long as registration continues.

Usually dietetic internship applications are due September 25 (for spring admission) or February 14/15 (for fall admission). Because these deadlines are well in advance of the deadlines for application to the Graduate School, potential interns may wish to delay their graduate application until they have been informed of their internship match.