

ENGAGING DIETETIC STUDENTS IN FOOD AND NUTRITION MANAGEMENT: HELPING THEM SEE THE BIG PICTURE

JOAN GIAMPAOLI, PhD, RDN (Presenter); MARIA GIOVANNI, PhD, MBA
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO
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Background

- Business and management skills are essential to promote and elevate the profession of dietetics beyond entry-level status
- A competency that is important in all areas of dietetic practice
- This Mega Issue was addressed by AND-HOD at FNCE, 2014
- However, many dietetic students do not see the need for these courses or skills – a systems disconnect!



Purpose

The purposes of this project are:

- examine how members of the Foodservice Systems Management Education Council (FSMEC) are addressing this topic in their classrooms
- to present suggestions from dietetic students about ways to engage them in nutrition management courses and help them realize future applications; and,



Methods

- FSMEC Members:** surveyed FSMEC members regarding strategies they use to engage dietetic students in foodservice management courses and the challenges they encounter with this process
- Demographic data was obtained
- Survey was distributed by e-mail using the FSMEC membership list
- Descriptive statistics used



Methods

- For students:** conducted 3 focus groups with dietetic students from three nutrition management classes to obtain their feedback on ways the nutrition management courses could be made more engaging
 - NFSC 230 (2 classes) Introduction to Foodservice Administration
 - NFSC 430 (1 class) Foodservice Procurement and Management
- Total of 95 students



Results – FSMEC Members

- Response rate:** 17 of the 127 members participated (14%)
- Demographics** – in summary...
 - 14 participants were 46 years or older
 - 16 participants were female
 - 8 participants had a Masters degree and 9 had a Doctoral degree
 - 8 participants had been employed in a foodservice operation 10 years or less and 7 had been employed 11 years or more
 - 4 participants had been teaching foodservice management classes 10 years or less and 12 had been teaching 11 years or more
 - 13 participants taught at a 4-year university
 - 14 participants were RDN's

Results – FSMEC Members

- **Foodservice Management classes taught**
 - Foodservice Procurement and Management (6)
 - Quantity Food Production Lecture (9)
 - Quantity Food Production Lab (8)
 - Introduction to Food Systems Management (9)
 - Advanced Food Systems Management (5)
- **Other**
 - Sanitation and Safety, Experimental Foods Lab and Cultural Competence Through Food Lecture and Lab (2)
 - One participant stated they changed their foodservice management classes to experiential learning

Results – FSMEC Members

- **Students perceptions of foodservice management**
 - Negative – “lunch lady”, foodservice workers
 - Do not see importance of foodservice management, not a career choice, classes seen as irrelevant, want to be clinical dietitians
 - Surprised about all the classes they need to take in this area
 - Lack of interest until graduation, then see opportunities for advancement in this area
 - Depends on how you market management classes, put a clinical twist on classes (integration)
 - Think it is about cooking and recipes and many students do not know how to cook
 - Enjoy food aspects of classes
 - Leadership, management, and motivation theories seen as unimportant
 - However, some respondents noticed a change in last few years with more interest in this area
 - After taking EXL class impressions are more positive, see more potential in area

Results – FSMEC Members

- **Most interesting aspects of teaching foodservice management classes to students**
 - Classes/topics
 - Systems approach, leadership, communication, motivation, financial management (costing, budgeting), menu writing, human resources management, food product flow, inventory (interactive with small groups working through problems), HX of food, equipment, current trends in the field, ServSafe,
 - Instructors need to be passionate about field - has impact on students future career decisions

Results – FSMEC Members

- **Most interesting aspects of teaching foodservice management classes to students**
 - Experiential/Application
 - Class discussions about FSM with student experiences
 - Field trips and tours of foodservice facilities
 - Guest speakers (managers, RDN's who are dynamic and passionate about the field and connect FSM to nutrition)
 - Students become more engaged as realize how RDN's can impact public health as a foodservice manager
 - Relate management back to clinical and real-life experiences
 - Skills transcend to practice at all levels
 - Management involves creative problem-solving - students find it more creative than they thought

Results – FSMEC Members

- **Most interesting aspects of teaching foodservice management classes to students**
 - Experiential/Application
 - Helping students understand why RDN's should know how to cook
 - How dynamic and exciting environment can be
 - Showing pictures of beautiful food prepared for a variety of clientele
 - Watching students apply skills and concepts in a catered event and seeing how important it is in their career
 - Having students work in campus dining hall to get hands-on experience, they enjoy the project portion of FSM

Results – FSMEC Members

- **Most challenging parts of teaching foodservice management classes to students**
 - Motivation
 - Motivating to consistently attend class
 - Keeping them interested and realizing these are not “blow off” classes
 - Can be a dry subject: making a topic that seems boring come to life
 - Realizing information is valuable and can be used in the real world
 - Relate to RDN exam
 - Having students examine what happens to the level of patient care in facilities where RDN's do not understand what goes on in their kitchens
 - Financial management, foodservice math, teaching students how to cook without adding additional credits
 - Competes with MNT classes for interest and attention

Results – FSMEC Members

- Most challenging parts of teaching foodservice management classes to students
 - **Resources**
 - Some programs may have a lack of meaningful hands-on experiences
 - Need for good visual resources
 - Finding up-to-date relevant DVD's to illustrate management concepts

Results – FSMEC Members

- Most challenging parts of teaching foodservice management classes to students
 - **Maturity**
 - Getting the complexities of foodservice across in a classroom setting - after DI they like foodservice better and may choose it as a career
 - Students who struggle with critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and have minimal framework for dealing with areas
 - Creating a professional office environment to create teamwork
 - Exposed too early - lack vision, awareness, knowledge: exposed as a Jr. difficult to make class meaningful
 - Do more, talk less

Results – FSMEC Members

- How do you make general foodservice management topics/concepts more engaging for students during lecture? (esp. financial management)
 - Little lecture, students given mostly assignments/activities (with guidance) to foster professionalism
 - Lots of in-class and out-of-class activities
 - Lots of in-class worksheets, Excel worksheets
 - Start with costing items on a smaller scale then move up to larger scale recipe costing
 - Costing out catered events students worked on (AP/EP costing)
 - Apps and software that can do food/labor costing

Results – FSMEC Members

- How do you make general foodservice management topics/concepts more engaging for students during lecture? (esp. financial management)
 - Book of Yields, Controlling Foodservice Costs (NRA), math for foodservice books, Food and Beverage Cost Control
 - Flip the classroom (read the lecture notes/chapters and practice in class)
 - Case studies in groups, group presents to class
 - Use a budget planning simulation based on the school nutrition model
 - Lots of practice

Results – FSMEC Members

- How do you make foodservice management topics/concepts more engaging through class experiences?
 - Field trips (SYSCO), videos, role playing, and other scenarios, oral training presentation assignment
 - Guest speakers (hold class in lab and guest speaker brings in modified consistency foods)
 - In-class activities/projects to reinforce concepts (menu planning, HACCP, business plan)
 - Actual hands-on experiences (on-going operations, cater an event, students go into a restaurant and perform closing inventory, student run restaurant)
 - Class discussions to talk about experiences

Results – FSMEC Members

- How do you make foodservice management topics/concepts more engaging through class experiences?
 - Work in different types of kitchens to see various management styles
 - Work with community partners
 - Students prepare a digital story connecting what they learned in foodservice management
 - Personalizing assignments - let the student choose what type of facility for which they want to create a project

Results – FSMEC Members

- **Any other comments?**
 - Passion of instructor is critical
 - Encouraged by Mega issue (management needs to be in all areas of practice)
 - Need more resources from the Academy to teach food management
 - Students have little practical skills when it comes to menu development
 - Re-organized all management material into two 4-credit hour EXL courses, students are more engaged and come out with a more positive perspective on management
 - Need support of other faculty members in this area
 - Must advocate for this area in dietetics education – grateful for leaders in this area
 - What really engages them is seeing first hand how foodservice managers contribute to health and wellness through foodservice

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **Response rate:** 13 out of 91 students participated (14%)
- **Demographics:** in summary...
 - 3 NFSC 430 - all Seniors
 - 10 NFSC 230 - 2 graduate students, 8 Sophomores and Juniors
 - All dietetics majors

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **Why did you choose the Nutrition and Food Science major?**
 - Loves food, loves to cook, garden – interest started as a hobby
 - Was interested after biochemistry class, understand health issue through chemistry and chemical structures
 - How to eat well as a professional dancer
 - Husband has allergies and food intolerances which increased her interest in nutrition and to become an RDN
 - How food systems impact environment
 - How nutrition impacts athletic performance; fell in love with nutrition after class in sports nutrition

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **What were your thoughts when signing up for the nutrition management classes?**
 - Had no idea what the class would be about
 - Would not have signed up for them if did not required
 - Can see relevance but no interest
 - Good to take beginning classes to get a good background of management principles and may peak interest – pathways for upper division classes
 - Have a lot of foodservice experience so not most exciting class
 - These classes take away "love of area", should be pathways

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **What were your thoughts when signing up for the nutrition management classes?**
 - Does not want to be in management, did not see how it would help but now sees it as beneficial for the future
 - Thought student would learn how to run a restaurant
 - Like well-rounded approach – each job will use different skills
 - More in-depth than originally thought, gave a good background of management principles
 - Did not realize dietetics had so many areas
 - Hard to relate introductory class to later classes since introductory class was taken 2 years ago

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **What are your impressions of nutrition management?**
 - These classes are more concerned with business aspects (budgeting, management) than with nutrition aspects
 - Paperwork, number crunching
 - People skills – interacting with vendors, employees
 - The manager has so many jobs to do
 - Think of hospitals and helping older people
 - Nutrition Administration is a bigger umbrella, Nutrition Management is more narrow, more science (think of hospitals not overall foodservice)

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **What were the most interesting parts of this class?**
 - Projects were helpful (menu planning, recipe adjustment, marketing brochure, budgeting), Excel usage
 - Good practice in-class with assignments, worksheets helped instill concepts,
 - Class was not run like a regular class, a lot of discussion, interaction
 - Field trips enhanced learning
 - Learning about healthcare aspects of foodservice
 - How systems work together- can see how things could have been done differently from past poor management experiences
 - Management concepts and leadership styles

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **What were the most challenging parts of this class?**
 - A lot of information and a lot of new information – “out of left field”
 - Staying focused and studying for a class not interested in
 - Class can be boring if have previous foodservice experience, common sense
 - Concepts can be confusing in foodservice management (mission and vision statements, food production systems)

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **What would make these classes more engaging?**
 - More real-life situations – hospitals, schools nutrition
 - More guest speakers
 - More discussion of what careers are available in nutrition management (Introduction to Dietetics)
 - “Day in the life” of a foodservice manager - this is how this concept will affect you in a later job
 - Keep group discussions to break-up lectures
 - Add more field trips
 - Include more technology, more current videos
 - Talk more about ethical concerns in foodservice (procurement)
 - Sustainability

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **How do you see using business and management skills and concepts in your career?**
 - Running own business, running a restaurant
 - If want to be a leader in a job needs these skills
 - I don't know where I will end up in my career so am not sure
 - Having people who understand business and nutrition is valuable for running a foodservice operation
 - Will have more respect for foodservice management as a clinical dietitian
 - Knowing skills gives you more credibility with staff

Results – Student Focus Groups

- **How do you see using business and management skills and concepts in your career?**
 - Taking a foodservice management class makes me not so afraid of being a manager, feels like I have the skills to grow into management – a lot of students do not feel they have personalities for management
 - Developed an appreciation for area of dietetics
 - Realizes the us vs. them mentality needs to change, students feel the perception that clinical dietetics is more prestigious than management dietetics
 - Although students in the focus groups did not want to pursue a career in foodservice management, they were more open to its possibilities
 - Other students in classes did switch to nutrition management
 - The classes were an eye-opener for them

In Summary...

- Instructor needs to be passionate about area of dietetics
- Keep the class active in a variety of ways
- Include guest speakers
- More activity, less lecture
- Relate foodservice management concepts to all areas of dietetics and to professional career in the future
- Management concepts need to be introduced throughout the dietetics curriculum

Any Questions???

Thank you to all who participated in the survey!

Joan Giampaoli

Maria Giovanni

