

Nutrition Education Plan

The fieldwork I have been assigned to complete during this course is LINKS, or Leaders in Nutrition Knowledge and Support. This program has been active at Chico State for several years, and was created by a graduate student in nutrition. The purpose of this program is to increase students' awareness and knowledge of nutrition, and make it applicable to their individual lives.

The goal of this program is to teach students how to maintain and improve their health by making simple choices and improvements in the nutrition of their diet. The target audience is undergraduate students, typically freshman, who have the college lifestyle, and are unaware of most nutrition recommendations.

The main rationale behind this program is to help students to learn the basics of different areas of nutrition and physical fitness. Many students have never taken a nutrition or health class, and are unaware of what they should be consuming, and what amounts are required for their bodies. Fitness is also vital in living a healthy life, and many students are unaware of the health benefits that it can provide. Student groups that are scheduled under LINKS are generally required to pick one, or several, topics that they want to have covered during their education time.

The main ones LINKS contains is back to basics, which is a general overview of nutrition and physical activity. Another main topic is body image, and this includes perceptions of the body, overcoming myths and making healthy choices on campus. One of the most popular sessions requested is cooking 101, which involves a demonstration

and tasting of healthy cooking options for students to implement in their own lives. Another topic is defensive dining, which includes how to maintain nutritious food choices while dining out. Athletes have specific caloric and protein needs, so there is a sessions dedicated to fueling the athlete. Shopping in the grocery store can be new and overwhelming for many students, and the supermarket tour sessions is directed towards these groups.

During the LINKS sessions, materials will be needed to supplement the topics that are being talked about, as well as provide ideas and recipes for students who desire to cook and try out healthier options on their own. For the cooking 101 demonstrations, food ingredients are also requires to make a healthy meal for the students to try. In the one cooking demonstration that I have been a part of in this semester, so far, we passed out a recipe page to the students of the two recipes that we made. We hoped that they would be able to make the same meals in the future, or at least see the types of ingredients we had chosen to use. We found the two recipes used off of websites, and then typed them onto a page that we decorated and printed out for the students. We also gave them a packet that included healthy snack ideas, dinner ideas, shopping tips, and several other important concepts.

My partner and I are currently in the process of developing a packet of information, and a brochure, on how to eat and buy sustainably in Chico. There are several farmers' markets weekly that take place, as well as several small grocery stores that sell local produce and other products. Many people, however, are unaware of how to eat sustainably, and buy products that are grown locally. Others are unsure of how to use the products that are offered at the farmer's market. Our goal is to implement a new

program in LINKS that will help students to be able to know where the markets are, what they offer, and how to implement them in their diets. We do not currently have a copy of the brochures or handouts that we will be developing, but are researching information, and talking to local Chico residents about how they use local products. Hopefully, by the end of the semester, we will be able to have one LINKS session dedicated to this new topic.

Through the LINKS program, our preceptor, Michelle Morris, evaluates us. We send her weekly logs of the work hours that we have put in that week, as well as a description of the tasks that we performed. This is helpful, both in keeping track of what we have been doing, and tallying up the number of hours that we have volunteered. My partner and I do not do all of our work together, but have some tasks that are delegated to us individually.

My personal goal this semester in participating in the LINKS program is to gain confidence in my ability to teach others basic skills about nutrition. I hope to come out of this experience with a newfound ability to educate those around me, both in a casual and professional setting. I also hope to learn more about which topics are most applicable and accepted by college students. I think it is vital to educate students during college on how to eat nutritiously. The decisions and food habits that they create when they are in college may stick with them for the rest of their lives. It is extremely hard to change habits that have been part of a person's daily routine for twenty years, but if people are educated from a younger age about proper food choices, this can help.

As our country continues to struggle with obesity, and the quest for weight loss strategies and diets continues, it is helpful to have programs like LINKS being

implemented. I am privileged and excited to be a part of the education team for this program, and to see what changes I can see this semester in my younger peers. Hopefully more universities will see the benefit of having programs like this one in the future, and they will implement ones that are similar.