



## **NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES**

### **Draft Strategic Plan, July 2020-June 2025**

In Jan-Feb 2020 the department met to develop 4 strategic planning working groups, which worked independently and then came together in a faculty meeting on Feb 21 to discuss and agree on a draft plan. Our plan has 4 main goal themes, each with related goals and objectives that collectively will enhance and build forward to a stronger department over the next 5 years.

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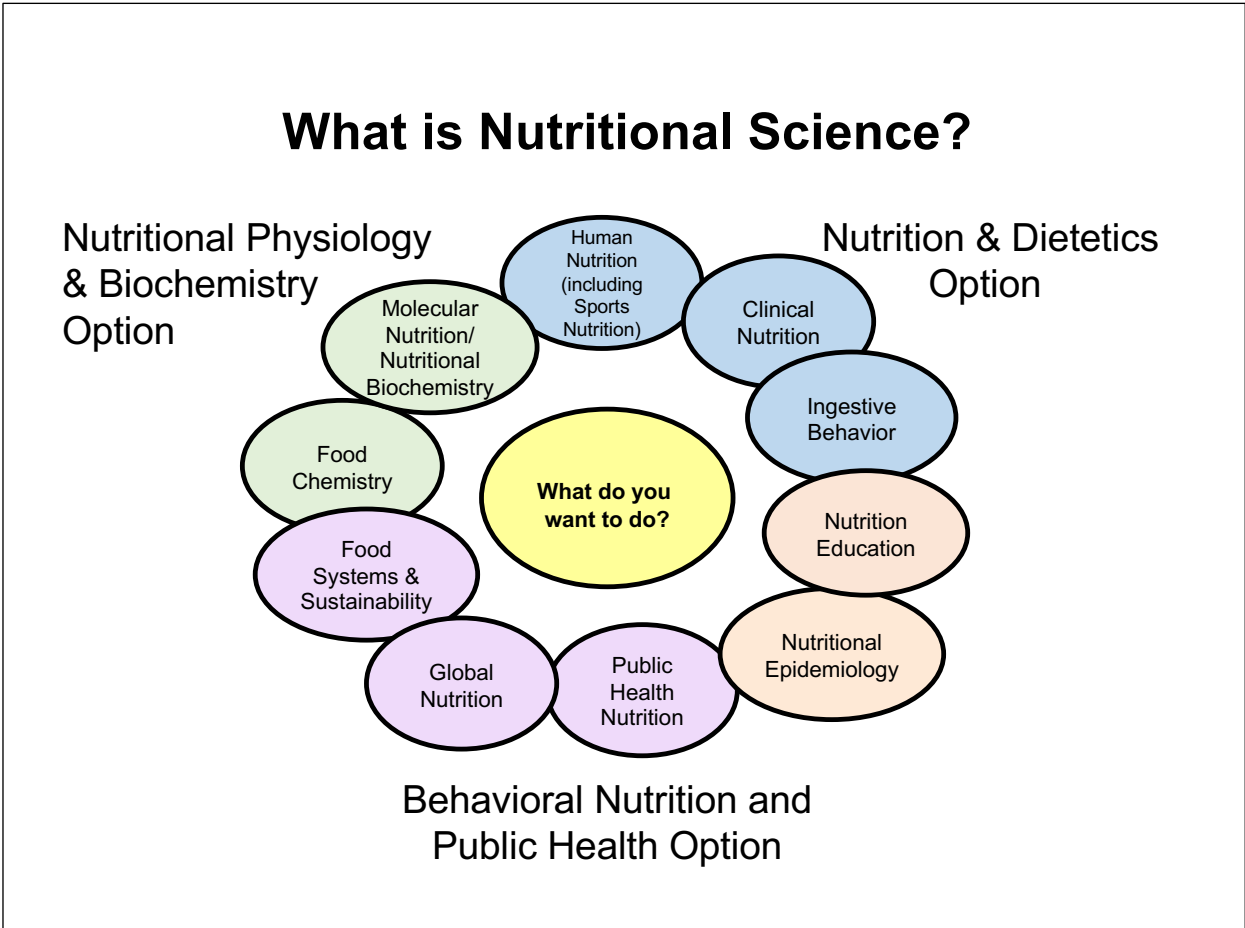
Draft plan submitted March 2, 2020 by Catharine Ross, Department Head, on behalf of the department
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**Goal Theme 1: Enhancing excellence, integration, and efficiencies across our educational programs**

Note: Consistent with HHD Strategic Plan Goal 3: Transforming Education and Access, the department proposes Goals 1 and 2 as ways that will assist students with timely progression to graduation; assist Commonwealth Campus students in making an efficient transfer to University Park; and provide several new streamlined pathways from the BS to various Master’s degree options.

Our undergraduate major offers broad training in 3 tracks (options) and leads to a wide range of health professions, as indicated below (Figure 1). Our MPS program develops professionals in leadership and advanced practical training related to dietetics. Our in-residence track provides internship experiences leading to qualification for the RDN credential. (Our MS/PhD program is considered a part of our research goals and is discussed in Goal Theme 2.)

In Goal Theme 1, we also provide supplementary goals (II.) that are continuations of our current plan, and two “stretch” goals (III.) that are of high priority but are resource intensive and cannot be accomplished by the unit itself.



**Figure 1.** Career paths from the 3 options in Nutritional Sciences.

**Goal 1: Create efficiencies that improve time to graduation for our students**

**Objective 1. Provide more options and more efficient pathways to graduation by enhancing academic advising**

Timing: ongoing, years 1-3, continuing

Action Item: Department academic adviser will offer multiple methods for engagement with academic advising including new group sessions and workshops

Performance Indicator 1: Enhanced advising strategies for student success and preparation will be in place

Performance indicator 2: Tracking of time to graduation

Performance indicator 3: Student advisee survey on assistance they received that helped them progress

Metrics: Documentation in Starfish of new sessions will be offered to inform students of broad on-ramps to careers and further education;

Documentation of communications with HHD Advisers at Commonwealth campuses

Documentation of interactions with Schreyer Institute for Teaching Effectiveness (SITE) to plan most effective ways of communicating with advisees

Tracking of time to graduation with BS degree, which we anticipate will be trending shorter (particularly for change of campus students, see next objective) by year 5

Documentation that we have followed up with advisees once a year on their perception of advising effectiveness. (We anticipate that this will provide good feedback, that can be further used for recruiting.)

Resources: Adviser time. Faculty time to participate in these workshops.

Print and web materials (support from designated Communications specialist and HHD CCOM)

**Objective 2. Broaden access to lower division courses to Commonwealth campus students, to ease their transition to UP campus**

Timing: Ongoing. Continuing years 1-5.

Action item: Collaborate with stakeholders to extend nutritional sciences courses to the commonwealth campuses. Stakeholders include advisers/faculty at Commonwealth campuses with HHD premajors and the Office of the VP for Commonwealth Campuses.

Key Performance Indicator: Students from the Commonwealth campuses will have increased access to courses that prepare them for the major, offered by the Department of Nutritional Science while at their campus

In year one (fall 2020), we will pilot NUTR 360: Nutrition Education and Behavior Change Theory, by using the Digital Learning Cooperative (DLC)

Metric: A minimum of two campuses will have students take NUTR 360 through the DLC

Additional resources: Technological support, faculty to teach the class

Request additional resources through Office for Commonwealth Campuses to expand to other campuses

Additional performance indicators (consistent with One Penn State concept):

If successful, we will select one other NUTR course that students in the major can complete prior to transfer, or that would serve as supporting course for other programs, and develop for DLC presentation.

Timing: Years 4-5.

Metric: A minimum of two campuses will have students take NUTR xxx through the DLC.

Resources: Technological support, faculty to teach the class

Additional resources through Office for Commonwealth Campuses

**Objective 3. Provide streamlined pathways from the BS in Nutritional Sciences to graduation with a master's degree in various specialties**

Action items: Meet with appropriate master's level advisers or program faculty in selected programs;

Evaluate undergraduate courses that will count towards the Master's degree;

Prepare prospectus papers for new programs and gain approval;

Prepare proposals, shepherd through university review system for consultation

Key Performance Indicator: IUG's will be created for four programs:

**BS to MPS**, envisioned to serve primarily students in the Nutrition and Dietetics option who want to earn a Master's degree; makes use of the online MPS program in Nutrition and provides Supervised Experiential Learning (SEL) track as an additional option during the master's program

**BS to MPH**, envisioned to serve primarily students in the Behavioral and Public Health Nutrition option who want to earn a Master's degree in Public Health; makes use of the master's program in Population Health Sciences at Penn State-Hershey

**BS to MIA**, envisioned to serve primarily students in the Behavioral and Public Health Nutrition option who want to earn a Master's degree in International Affairs; makes use of the master's program in International Affairs in the School for International Affairs, University Park

**BS to MS**, envisioned to serve students in either the Physiology and Biochemistry or Behavioral

and Public Health Nutrition options who want to earn a Master's degree in nutrition research with faculty at the University Park campus. This IUG will include "Custom" IUGs with scholars in the Schreyer Honors College.

Timing: Years 1 through 2, set up and approval process

Metrics:

Year 3-5: Students enrolled in at least 3 of these 4 IUG programs.

Year 5: Graduation of students with BS-MS combined degrees.

**Goal 2: Identify and implement ways to increase diversity/inclusion contents of relevant courses by systematically assessing the competencies embedded in our UG and graduate courses**

**Objective 1. Develop a curriculum assessment plan that will evaluate the curriculum for diversity, inclusion and cultural competency contents, and new opportunities**

Key Performance Indicator: We will know where our curriculum has strengths (which may not be fully appreciated) and where there are opportunities to expand content related to diversity/inclusion/cultural competence.

Note: Nutritional Sciences makes use of, for example, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) data extensively in teaching and research, and these data are collected and often expressed by ethnic group, providing excellent opportunities for blending discussions of diversity into evidence-based nutrition data. Nutritional Sciences also has a strong global component (NUTR 421, NUTR 425, etc.) that can be further developed for education about diverse cultures. However, we have not systematically analyzed our courses for diversity/cultural competency and mapped the curriculum in its entirety.

Action item: Develop an assessment plan, evaluate current course syllabi (UG and Grad),

Key Performance Indicator: Curriculum will have diversity/inclusion/cultural competence throughout various courses, with at least 4 courses having 10% or more content that addresses this directly.

Timing: ongoing. Plan the assessment in year 1 and complete the assessment in year 2.

**Objective 2. Following up on objective 1, we will develop a new course, tentatively referred to as "Nutrition and the Media," that has embedded in it >25% cultural component and will qualify for either a US or IL designation**

Timing: years 4-5 course development and implementation

Key Performance Indicator 1: Use the content survey above and plan with College of Communications, as well as units in HHD, to design a course addressing Nutrition and the Media

Note: We have long wanted a course that addresses popular/fad diets, how the media uses and misuses nutrition information, how advertising affects perceptions of foods and diets, and how

to write/speak/communicate with the media effectively and accurately about nutrition issues. These issues may include subjects such as adequate food security; food and the environment (sustainability); one-sided stories; food/nutrition advocacy. Developing the course will require wide consultations, but we anticipate it will be very well received.

Key Performance indicator 2: We will develop a plan for a new course on “Nutrition and the Media”

Resources: Faculty time; consultation time with other units. There may be an opportunity to apply for university funding directed to enhancing undergraduate education. For example, we have received funding previously for Gen Ed course development and for Open Educational Resource development, and would look for university support for this new course. This may also be an opportunity to request support from the Institute for Sustainability.

## **II. Supplementary objectives**

These objectives are part of the department’s plan to enhance education, but represent either ongoing activities or objectives that can be accomplished without major changes to the Strategic Plan and with currently available resources.

### **Objective 3. Provide opportunities for field experience for all students**

Timing: Year 3-5

Action item: Make NUTR 495: Advanced Field experience available to the Nutritional Physiology and Biochemistry and Behavioral Nutrition and Public Health in the Nutritional Sciences major.

Key Performance Indicator: All options in the Nutritional Sciences major will have access to a Field Experience course, similar to NUTR 495 for the Nutrition and Dietetics option students.

Metric: 20% of students in the Nutritional Physiology and Biochemistry, and Behavioral Nutrition and Public Health options, will enroll for a Field Experience course in the summer (Supervised Internship).

Resources: Faculty time (will require instructor assigned to the course), communications with sites (materials and assistance of Communications specialist)

### **Objective 4: Support and expand faculty knowledge and skill development about best practices in teaching, learning, and technology**

Timing: ongoing, all years.

Action item: We will share teaching, learning and technology events offered through Penn State with Nutritional Sciences faculty using various communication outlets (e.g., email messages, faculty meetings, HHD weekly announcements, etc.).

Key Performance Indicator 1: Nutritional Sciences faculty will attend an event on teaching, learning and technology offered through Penn State

Performance indicator 2. Faculty will document attending at least one teaching-learning

workshop per year focused on best practices in teaching, learning, and technology

Performance indicator 3. One guest (SITE or TLT, etc.) will be invited per year to a faculty meeting for updates.

Performance indicator 4: New technologies will be shared throughout the department via the “Teaching Tip” that is a regular feature of monthly faculty meetings.

Resources: Website improvements and departmental support

**III. The goals below are real goals but they require resources well beyond those the department can provide, thus they are presented here as objectives without specific timing.**

**Goal 3: Create new and enhanced experiential learning and hands-on laboratories throughout the curriculum**

**Objective 1. Incorporate simulations into online practice-based and in-residence courses.**

Action items: Find space for a physical lab and develop video materials for on-line simulation activities.

Note: Simulation is used extensively in Nursing education at Penn State (to the point that there is no time open for us to use Nursing’s laboratories for our students) to demonstrate and discuss patient interactions and how-to procedures. Simulations can include using “model patients” such as theatre arts students, and it may include methods of advanced nutritional assessment. Currently, we have neither space nor equipment/facilities for this objective. Other programs outside Penn State are ahead of us. We see simulation with videotaping as also being useful for on-line teaching, both UG (NUTR 251 could include a SIM activity) and in the online MPS program for teaching Advanced Nutritional Assessment.

**Goal 4: Have a state-of-the-art Teaching and Demonstration Lab**

**Objective 1. Improve our teaching facilities that are also a “public face” of our department**

Action item: Renovate/rebuild the Foods Laboratory to be a place for more effective demonstrations and for use as a strong recruiting tool for the major and HHD

Note: The Foods Lab, 7-Henderson, was built over 22 years ago and is showing its age. The lab is nevertheless very well liked, as it is “homey” if not modern, and is used extensively for classes, recruitment events, fund raising, and student clubs, – it serves as a public facing aspect of the department, college and university. A renovated space with modern equipment and especially a better designed demonstration area with video monitors and recording capabilities is a strong need of the department and HHD.

## **Goal Theme 2: Elevating our excellence in health research: Cells to Society**

Note: This theme integrates faculty research and graduate education, as the graduate students are integral to our research enterprise. The department's goal aligns directly with HHD's goal of Enhancing Health and Well-Being, and the University's Thematic Priority of Enhancing Health.

Based on an already strong reputation and an excellent ranking of our Graduate Program in Nutritional Sciences (GPNS) by the National Research Council, our objectives are now to elevate our department's excellence to a higher level by: 1) Elevating our research output and productivity through increased collaborations and transdisciplinary research. 2) Growing the graduate program to better preparing graduates for the future, in which Health Sciences jobs are predicted to increase. Advanced knowledge will be essential for career advancement and becoming leaders in nutrition research.

The department has consistently had 11-12 tenured or tenure-track faculty for the past 25 years. Despite maintaining a high research dollars-to-faculty ratio, we have not had opportunities to grow the number of tenure-track faculty, and, thus, neither has the graduate program, which depends on these faculty for growth over time. Growth is essential because the tenure-line faculty are the only ones who are "multipliers," able to generate the funds that support and mentor undergraduate and graduate student researchers, postdocs, and staff, and, through their buy-outs, help support non-tenure track faculty. Thus, growing the tenure-line faculty is both cost-effective and the only way to elevate the stature of the entire department. Nutritional Sciences has established excellent relationships with SSRI, the Huck Institutes, and is in a good position to strengthen its interactions with the Penn State Cancer Center, the College of Medicine (both at UP and Hershey), IST, and other units at Penn State.

Expertise in the department currently fits in 4 broad areas of research emphasis, all of which are critical to public health: 1) chronic disease prevention (cardiometabolic disease, ingestive behavior and obesity, cancer, inflammatory bowel disease and age-related cognitive impairment), 2) child and maternal health nutrition; 3) the impact of nutrition on the gut microbiome, and vice versa; and 4) global nutrition, both US and international. Our impact on public health is diagrammed in [Figure 2](#). However, we also have significant gaps that represent opportunities for collaboration and even more impactful contributions to public health. We have the capability to contribute at an even higher level to the STEM and the social and behavioral sciences. We are one of the very few units at Penn State with expertise from cells to society (see map of faculty expertise covering 4 "levels" of inquiry, from cellular/molecular, to societal, [Figure 3](#)). In this Goal theme, we propose specific objectives and suggest ways that new hires can align with and support the College's goals. We propose to be proactive in co-hires with Departments, Centers, and Institutes for fostering more transdisciplinary research. At the same time, we will seek to diversify the faculty and GPNS through active recruitment and active demonstration that our department practices inclusion. We will contribute to the university's new theme of resilience by tackling hard problems, such as food insecurity and inequity, and nutrition and disease prevention, both domestically and around the world.

**Objective 1: Grow the tenure-track faculty to be capable of handling the projected needs for**



**expertise and job growth in health care, and to tackle the urgent public health crises in the US and globally**

Timing: 2020 to 2025

Key Performance Indicator(s). The Department will have new faculty able to fill gaps and integrate interests, from cells to society. These faculty will be able to fill gaps which now include:

- **Food Security** (related to homelessness, mental health, obesity, work capability; local-international) – This area is integral to nutrition and provides an opportunity to partner with SSRI or the College of Medicine, as well as to use research resources at Penn State and in the Big10 consortium to better understand food security and health risks in the college-age population. It also links to global issues of food security and nutritional support for disadvantaged populations, refugees, after natural disasters, etc. This area also aligns well with university initiatives such as President Barron’s University Task Force on Food and Housing Security.
- **Sustainability and Healthy Food Choices**—How do people make choices when sustainability and healthy eating patterns are not always in agreement? What do we know about the drivers of food choice? Eating cues? This area is an opportunity to partner with SSRI. With expanding interest in “synthetic foods,” how do people understand food quality and make healthy dietary and lifestyle choices?
- **Nutrition and the Environment**—Despite strong evidence that in utero and postnatal exposures have great impact on chronic disease risk, we have no faculty with the genetics background to tackle this at the molecular-cellular level (mechanisms) or population-health levels (application). This area would fit with the College of Medicine’s Pediatrics and/or Population Health Sciences interests, possibly as a co-hire.
- **Personalized Nutrition**—How are nutrient requirements, metabolism and health risks impacted by *genetics* and *environment*? We need expertise at the molecular genetic level, able to interface with bioinformatics and analyze big data sets. This area represents a huge opportunity, while without it we will not be a modern nutrition department.
- **Adolescent and Young Adult Nutrition and Behaviors**—Despite existing at a university with one of the largest food services in the US, and despite the high rates of obesity and increasing higher rates of diabetes, fatty liver and metabolic diseases in the US and Pennsylvania, we have no faculty focused on the adolescent “emerging adult,” and no faculty focusing in this space. It is a great opportunity in the technology domain to use M-technologies for messaging, data collection, and real-time monitoring of food and nutrition-related behaviors.
- **Additional faculty in public health chronic disease prevention. Nearly all chronic diseases have a strong nutritional component to their complex etiology. Our department can capitalize on its strengths to build expertise in nutrition and cancer prevention, digestive and immune diseases affecting the gut, and neurological diseases and neurologic regulation of eating behaviors.** The microbiome is now clearly a driver for nearly all disease processes and having deeper expertise in this area, intimately related to nutrition, is going to be essential. The microbiome also plays a role in postnatal development, and expertise in lactation/breastfeeding

and public health is currently lacking. There are many opportunities to address these gaps through either lab-based mechanistic approaches and/or data-based epidemiological approaches, both of which will integrate well with the current strengths of the department.

- **Exercise/elite performance, nutrition, and well-being across the “health-span.”** Healthy aging is critical to reducing health care costs, and nutrition is a huge part of healthy aging. The department has no faculty working with aging populations, except for the Geisinger Rural Aging Study, which is coming to a natural close. There are opportunities within HHD and with HCoM to do cutting edge research in this space. There are also opportunities to do research with younger populations around exercise and wellness related to nutrition (Intercollege Athletics; Kinesiology), and opportunities for STEM-related research if a new institute for metabolism/cardiometabolic health becomes a reality.

- Over the next 5 years, there will also be critical needs for **replacing faculty who are now approaching retirement**. These need to be filled with high-quality external candidates to maintain the department’s stature and visibility to the profession. There will be opportunities to use **endowed chairs** as recruiting tools to attract exceptional new professors to the department.

Based on our past experience, new hires have often come to us as a result of cluster hires initiated by Penn State institutes, and we have had to follow an opportunistic pathway. We are cognizant that some of our new hires will likely be part of larger programmatic decisions. From the list above, it is clear that Nutritional Sciences has ample good ideas for filling the multiple gaps that currently exist in our department, which are holding us back from reaching a higher level. Our objective is for the department to have a minimum of 15 tenured or tenure track full-time equivalents. With this size we will be able to grow our research breadth and collaborations, and increase our mentoring of graduate students and postdocs (Objective 2). Without this, the department is at risk of lagging behind competitor programs in our field.

Action items: Search committees formed, interviews held, post-interview negotiations successful, preparation for arrival of new faculty

Timing: Searches beginning in 2020-21 and continuing annually to 2025

Metrics: As a result of new faculty, there will be--

- New transdisciplinary grants (multi-PI or consortium-based)
- New specialty courses offered to graduate students
- Faculty groups engaged in the writing of successful new training grants
- Faculty support for postdocs (also an opportunity for diversification)
- Awards from the profession to faculty in recognition of their excellence in research
- Impact on public health as quantified by number of leadership roles that faculty play in guiding public health policy and the number of scholarly contributions in high impact journals
- Recognition to Penn State and HHD of having thought leaders in Nutritional Sciences, evidenced by invitations to study sections, boards, external review groups
- Evidence of enhanced public outreach (linked to Communications goal, Goal theme 4):

press releases, invitations to speak and serve major professional societies

- Within two years of hiring new faculty, as compared to FY 18/19 metrics
- there will be at least a 15% increase in:
- the number of faculty involved in new collaborative research
- the number of research papers published from new collaborative efforts
- the number of agencies from which we seek extramural support will have been expanded
- the number of new grant applications funded
- the number of graduate students supervised
- the number of graduate students supported on grants
- the number of gifts and endowments in support of research programs
- the number of undergraduates receiving college, university and national awards for research
- the number and size of external grants with multiple disciplines
- the success rate on collaborative pilot grants
- the number of publications that include faculty co-authors
- the number of papers using cutting edge science and information-data science technologies
- By year 5 after hiring new faculty, the metric will be increases by at least 25% in the above

Additional resources needed:

Tenure track faculty lines; start-up packages, suitable space to accommodate faculty and their student-postdoc groups

Faculty incentives for research productivity (time release to begin new projects)

Dedicated HHD Development efforts to secure new funding for new endowments, Early or Mid-Career Professorships, and research support endowment funds

**Objective 2: Grow our graduate program by increasing student enrollment, training grant support, and opportunities for collaboration**

Note: This objective is tightly linked to objective 1, as the department's current faculty are working at capacity regarding training. Nutritional Sciences graduate students have a high success rate at national/international meetings and society conferences for winning travel awards, emerging young scientist awards, and in obtaining competitive postdoc positions. Our graduate alumni occupy strong positions in government, industry and academic positions, but we lag behind universities like Cornell, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Tufts in the numbers of students we graduate and therefore the number that go on to these higher positions of leadership. The department envisions that it can become a national leader in producing PhDs in nutritional sciences who have exceptional preparation for government positions, academia, industry and policy organizations. This can only happen if our program can grow. Moreover, the University needs to be prepared for the next NRC review of graduate programs, and for this we will need to demonstrate progress and growth in stature since the last review. There are strong competitors in the field, such as a new program in Nutrition at the University of Michigan and rising programs at UC-Davis, Texas A&M, a new major UG created at the University of Pennsylvania that may

develop into a grad program, and other successful PhD programs such as at Tufts. The competition for high rankings will be intense and this makes it imperative that our graduate program receives the support that is necessary for it to grow.

Timing: 2020 to 2025, concurrent with growth of faculty (Objective 1)

Key Performance Indicator(s) – Improvements in:

- Number Training Grant proposals submitted on which department faculty are listed as training faculty
- Number of graduate students being trained, including Nutritional Sciences, Physiology and in Dual title programs (CTSI, Behavioral Neurosciences)
- Number of students entering GPNS with prior graduate school, accredited internship or work life-experience
- Number of graduate students who are supported by a training grant, individual fellowship, or who receive supplemental extramural scholarships and awards
- Increased collaborative and transdisciplinary students—students co-mentored by two faculty; students with minors or Dual Title programs outside traditional pathways
- Increased student use of large datasets
- Increased student-to-student collaborations across units
- Faculty participation in HHD-wide plans to grow PhD training in data sciences and advanced statistical methods
- Increased faculty involvement with postdoctoral mentorship
- Increase in number of postdocs who receive funding from extramural sources (Fellowships, F32 grants, K99/01 awards, etc.)

Action Item

By year 2, have 3 additional PhD students enrolled in Dual Title programs (at least 1 with TL1 or extramural fellowship support)

By year 2, one submit a Training Grant on which Nutritional Sciences faculty are PIs or form a significant body of trainers/mentors

Metrics: By year 4, have a funded training grant with trainees appointed

By year 5, faculty are organized to write another training grant for submission

- Increased number of faculty participating on doctoral committees for students in other colleges
- Additional resources needed: Faculty release time to the PI for training grant preparation and for management after award
- Tuition dollars to top up extramural fellowships that require institutional cost-share (F31's, etc.)

Travel funds at a higher level for graduate students whose research requires international visits

Figure 2

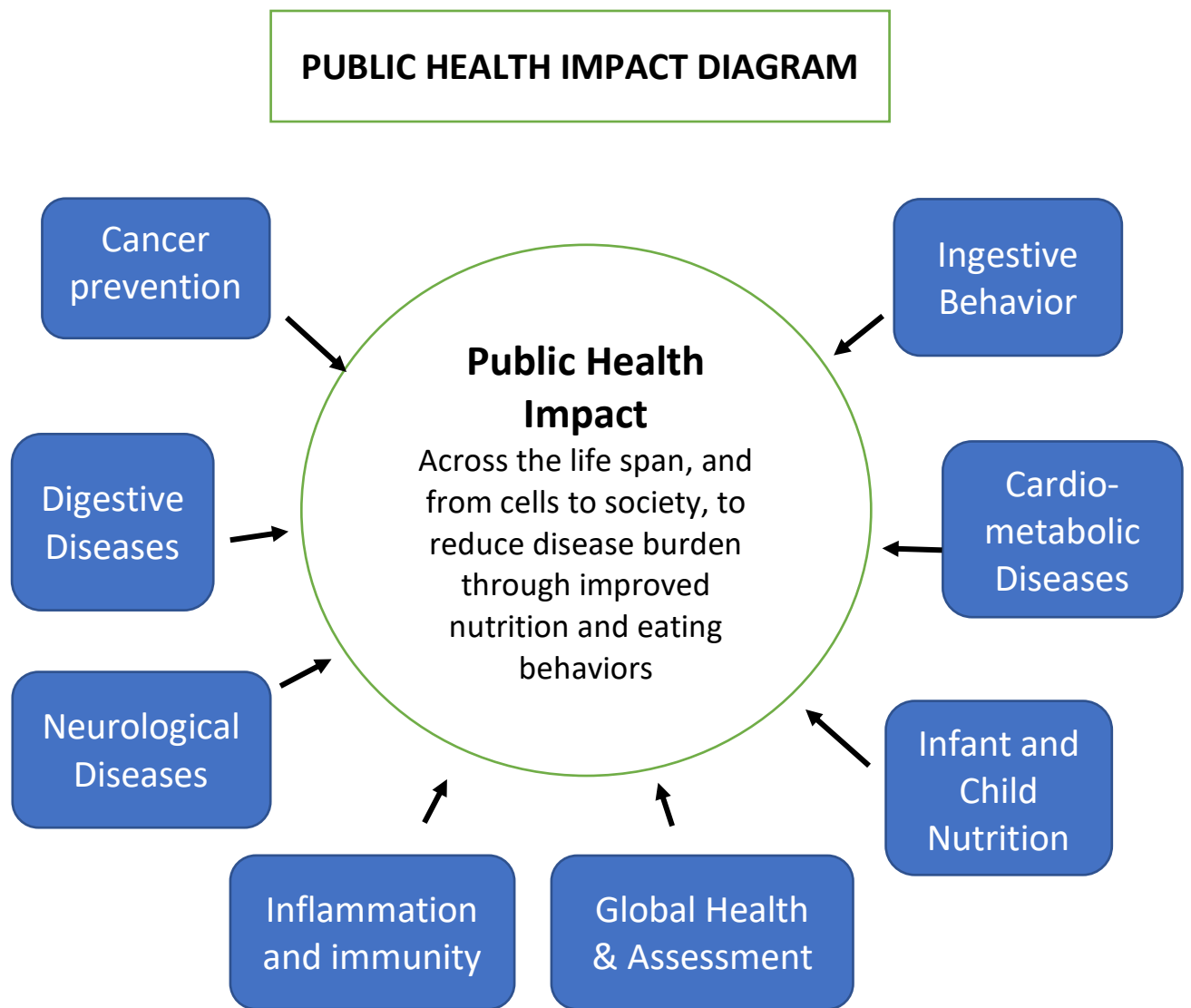
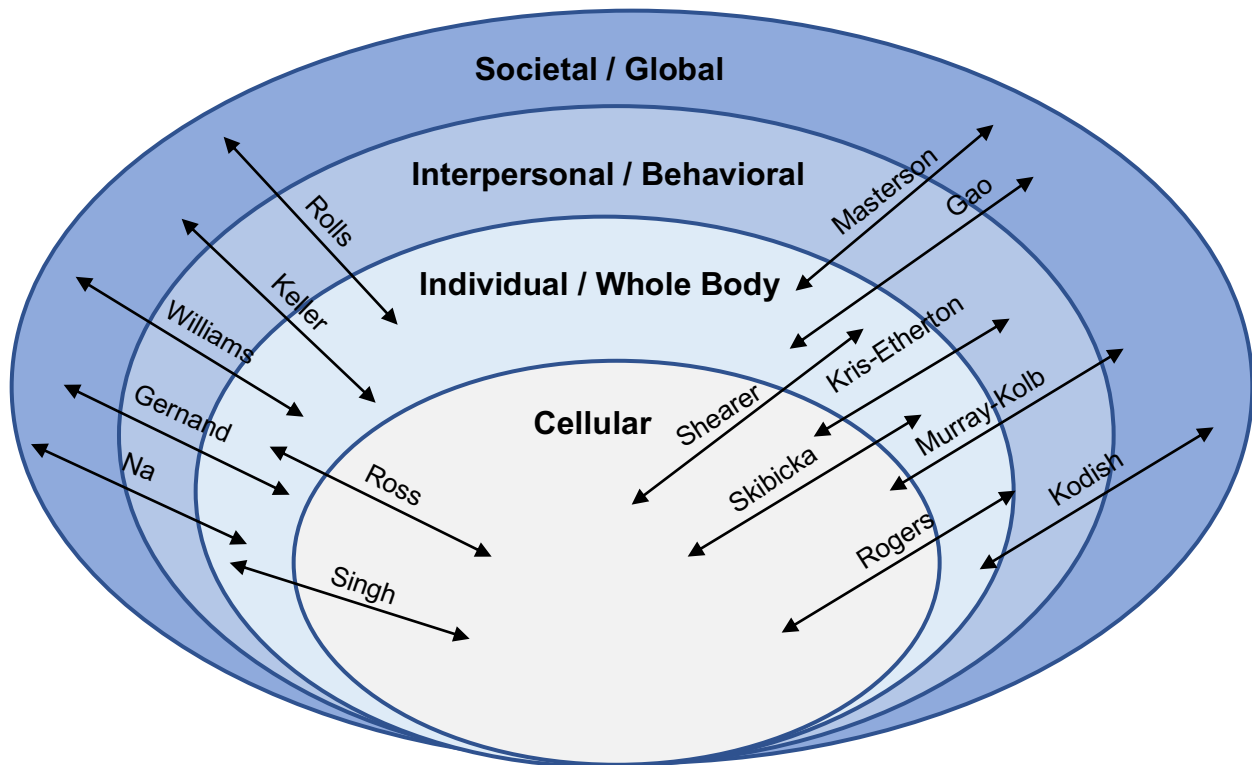


Figure 3

**Research in Nutritional Sciences comprises discovery science to implementation research—from Cells to Society**



### **Goal Theme 3: Promoting excellence in alumni-student-faculty engagement**

Note: The objectives of this goal address promoting Alumni Engagement, in order to utilize alumni in our educational mission and to allow opportunities for alumni to engage creatively with faculty, students and staff. We will use the MACS (Mentoring, Awards, Communications, Social) as a framework for mutual engagement and shared learning.

**Objective 1. Create and conduct a detailed survey to all Nutritional Sciences Alumni Undergraduate, Graduate (MS, MPS and PhD) and previous Dietetic Internship (now Experiential Track MPS) to assess alumni participation and interest in engaging in department initiatives**

Timing: Create and send survey to current Alumni by August 2020 and analyze survey responses by end of December 2020

Thereafter, survey to be sent to all Alumni annually in August and refined with input from Alumni Relations

Key Performance Indicator: Survey completion results analyzed with assistance of Alumni Relations

Action Items: With the help of Alumni Relations in the College of Health and Human Development, to assess alumni interest in engaging in department initiatives

Timing: as above

Metric(s): Goal of >30% Alumni Response rate for initial and annual surveys

Additional resources needed: Assistance from HHD Alumni Affairs staff. Additional resources needed--Gift cards to increase incentive for completion of survey by alumni, as used for Penn State Community Survey,—every 100<sup>th</sup> respondent will receive an (Amazon or Starbucks, or other) gift card

**Objective 2. Continue, enhance, and expand the “Alumni in the Classroom” Experience**

Note: This experience has been very successful for both alums and our students but it has not been as well coordinated with curriculum as it could be, and has often featured more senior achievers. We will seek a wider range of alumni, including younger career-starters

Timing: Offer Alumni in the Classroom Experience for spring 2021 surrounding timing of NDAS Brunch or National Nutrition Month and Fall 2021 surrounding HHD/Nutritional Sciences Tailgate for home football game

Pilot “Undergraduate: Exposure to Nutrition Professions Speaker Series” in spring 2021 with one event and begin a regular series (3 events per year based on alumni availability) in fall 2021

Action items: Scan lists of recent grads for which we have employment information, and let them know about the Experience. Survey interest

Action item: Follow up with specific invitations, planned around events held at Penn State or alumni's personal travel plans

Timing: as above

Key Performance Indicator: Survey completion results (See objective 1) will be analyzed with help of Alumni Relations. This will allow assignment of alumni to faculty classroom settings and speaker series

Additional resources needed: Funds to offer group meals during planned events

Media support to follow up with recognition of participation in Alumni in the Classroom

**Objective 3. Connect often and effectively with alumni to promote alumni-student-faculty engagement**

Note: The Nutrition and Dietetics (NDAS) APG is active and the annual brunch event is popular and well attended. Most of the leadership of the APG has come from grad alums. We will seek to broaden this by helping the APG reach out to younger alums as well. The department head and the faculty liaison to the APG are in frequent contact with the APG, attending the APG's monthly phone call. At the annual brunch, the department head presents an update and a faculty member gives a research talk.

Timing: Immediate and ongoing

Key Performance Indicator 1: Continue successful APG Brunch including invited Faculty Speaker and Awards presentations to outstanding students undergraduate and graduate students and Alumni.

Key Performance Indicator 2: Attendance by Alumni, faculty and students (undergraduate and graduate)

Action Item: Coordinate with APG President and HHD Alumni Relations staff to assure successful event

Metric(s): Attendance of faculty, alumni and students to brunch

Additional resources needed: NDAS to fund brunch annually; continue with Awards as part of alumni brunch

Key Performance indicator 3. Connect with Nutritional Sciences Alumni, at minimum at two annual meetings per year including: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Food and Nutrition Conference and Exposition (FNCE) and the American Society for Nutrition (ASN)

Timing: FNCE is annually in the fall (October) and ASN is annually in the summer (June)

Key Performance Indicator 4: Advertise and encourage attendance of alumni, faculty and students to events with assistance of Alumni Relations and undergraduate/graduate advisors

Action Item: Set up events (staff – faculty coordination); have host ready for event; use website



and Newsletter to send out pre- and post-event announcements

Timing: FNCE is annually in the fall (October) and ASN is annually in the summer (June)

Metric(s): Track attendance through pre-registration and at actual events

Additional resources needed: Department of Nutritional Sciences will sponsor/co-sponsor receptions

Performance indicator 3. Continue to recognize Nutritional Sciences Alumni and their accomplishments

Timing: Ongoing through Department of Nutritional Sciences Awards Committee nominations for Alumni eligible awards, Nutrition Stars on the Nutritional sciences website, appoint alumni as Affiliate Faculty, having a specialized role in research and teaching in the department

Key Performance Indicator: Advertise and encourage attendance of alumni, faculty and students to events with assistance of Alumni Relations and undergraduate/graduate advisors

Action Item: Appoint Awards Committee annually and encourage very active engagement with faculty and students to select highly competitive potential awardees and prepare excellent nomination packages

Timing: Ongoing. College of Health and Human Development call for nominations for Alumni specific awards annually in the spring and fall; Monthly Nutrition Stars recognized on department website per schedule; appointments for affiliate faculty annually

Metric(s): Track nominations of alumni awards, nutrition stars and affiliate faculty. Ensure affiliate faculty are being utilized for expertise areas in the classroom settings for guest lectures/alumni in the classroom as needed

Additional resources needed: Stipends for travel to campus for special engagements.

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## **Goal Theme 4: Enhancing the visibility of our faculty and students and becoming a credible go-to source and public face of ‘nutrition & health’ scientific information**

Note: Faculty in Goal Theme 4’s working group surveyed the department’s faculty as to how, and how often, they communicate with media, and what are the major concerns about communications. Website was overwhelmingly the main immediate concern.

**Objective 1. Improve our Communications strategy, especially focused on web-based communications, so that we are easily found, represented authentically, and provide needed information to undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff throughout Penn State, and to colleagues nationally and internationally**

Timing: Years 1,2 (high priority)

Key Performance Indicator 1: Our website will be significantly improved visually, it will have authentic images representing our department, which includes demonstrating our diversity and engagement, and it will be targeted to audiences that include UG, Grad (both prospective and enrolled) and professionals looking for expertise at Penn State

Action item 1: Work with HHD Communications and new Communications Specialist assigned to the department to 1) improve our website and create new visually appealing (infographics, dashboards) and 2) improve written communications (press releases, Newsletters, APG highlights; Breaking News Updates) for distribution and to monitor “hits” and use

Action item 2: Use our website more effectively to recognize the outstanding achievements of our students, faculty, and alumni (continue and enhance NUTRITION STARS on the website, see Goal theme 3 on Alumni Engagement)

Action item 3: Use our website more effectively to demonstrate current research and research success, for use in graduate student recruitment (see Goal theme 2 on Enhancing Research and Graduate Education)

Timing: as above

Metrics: Infographics approach is in place; more timely presentations of important announcements and breaking news

Resources:

Support staff (Communications specialist)

Incentives to one or more specific faculty members for time to act as key liaisons and channels of information to the Communications specialist

Input from all faculty as content experts

Key Performance Indicator 2: Feedback from clients

Timing: years 3-5

Metrics: Evidence that our website is now easier to navigate and attractive

Evidence that it is being increasingly used (visits to website, posts of new contents, interest generated)

**Objective 2. Increase our presence as a go-to resource that responds to requests from the media and proactively comments on nutrition-related issues in the press and popular media**

Note: The department has long had outstanding content experts and therefore its faculty are frequently contacted by press/media specialists for comments/reactions to new publications and other news items. But Nutritional Sciences has never had the resources to be proactive. We envision creating and posting podcasts, discussion videos (e.g., in-conversation with a faculty member, student, or alum), and animated science videos aimed to enhance “Nutrition & Health” understanding on best nutritional practices, wellness, and popular diets. Rather than waiting to be called upon, we seek a more proactive role that gives us a voice in providing evidence-based information to the public.

Timing: Years 3-5, depending on hiring new faculty

Key Performance Indicator 1: Documentation of contacts by media; record of publishing a new vehicle for communicating nutrition information

Timing: Begin assessment in year 3, after website improvement have been made

Additional resources required: A new faculty member with dedicated time to Nutrition Information/ Communications, who can also teach and do research in this area

Key performance indicator 2: A new course (see Goal Theme 1) in Nutrition and the Media

Timing: Years 4-5, after hiring new faculty

Resources: The faculty above

Note: Such a new hire might have a joint appointment with the Bellisario College of Communications, or possibly be co-funded by University Health Systems, Intercollege Athletics, or even Campus Dining. We currently lack “reach” to these central non-academic units that serve large numbers of students and employees, and yet we and they both have very similar objectives regarding enhancing student and employee health. And, we have content that they need. We think this objective fits well with President Barron’s concerns for better well-being regarding food security and housing.