

Development of a Nutrition Curriculum to Improve Eating Patterns among College Students

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Introduction

Research shows that college students face numerous barriers that may negatively impact their dietary patterns, including nutrition knowledge deficit, peer influence, perceived food expense, and time restraints.

This project aimed to develop a four-part nutrition curriculum for college students to help reduce these barriers.

The curriculum is rooted in social cognitive theory and strives to increase nutrition knowledge and skills while positively impacting students’ behavior, attitudes, and beliefs around eating.

The curriculum focuses on providing motivation and support through technology, social media, and cooking demonstrations to increase self-efficacy.

Methods

- There were 6 components in the development of this project**
1. Review the available literature on common barriers college students face in following a balanced eating pattern.
 2. Identify nutrition education materials and tools that would be useful for college students to make behavior changes.
 3. Develop a four-part evidence-based nutrition curriculum.
 4. Develop an evaluation tool to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum.
 5. Enlist an expert committee to evaluate and provide feedback on the curriculum.
 6. Assess and include input provided by the committee.

Results

The finished curriculum included four one-hour lessons occurring over four weeks in a volunteer class setting. Each lesson includes a summary of the session, materials, activities, and objectives.

The lessons were created to include discussions, writing components, social media, lectures, and hands-on activities to engage students.

Some lesson materials were adapted from the USDA, HHS, DGA, and CalFresh Healthy Living.

Discussion

An outside expert panel was formed to evaluate and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum.

The curriculum evaluation process allowed the panel to provide various recommendations that were incorporated to improve the final curriculum.

The overall results from the survey conveyed that the curriculum was appropriately tailored to college students.

Recommendation	Curriculum Changes
Add a food demonstration that includes an entrée in addition to the yogurt parfait.	The final class's food demo was changed to a main dish rather than a snack.
Be mindful of using words such as good vs. bad; healthy vs. unhealthy.	Words such as good, bad, healthy, and unhealthy were replaced with nutritious or balanced.
Include some form of cultural difference when discussing lesson 1.	Lesson 1 was changed to have students write down cultural foods recommended by the DGA.

Figure 3. Expert panel recommendations and changes made to the final curriculum.

Lesson	Objective	Curriculum Components	SCT
(1) Balanced Eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define four components of balanced eating.• Describe five components of MyPlate.• Name three items on a food label.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce balanced eating• Discuss MyPlate• Review Food Label (knowledge/skills)	Increasing health-related knowledge and skills may endorse action or behavior change.
(2) Creatively Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply MyPlate principles to creating a balanced meal.• Plan two nutritious meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review MyPlate• Pinterest vision boards• Create motivational quotes (social support)	Social environments and support can affect an individual’s health behaviors.
(3) Buying on a budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a shopping list.• Recall two benefits of buying in-season.• Understand two ways to include canned or frozen foods.• Name one campus resource.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to plan for shopping• Buying in season• Canned/frozen produce• Food demonstration• On-campus resources (Tools/resources)	Increased self-efficacy is a significant motivator for behavior change.
(4) Let’s get cooking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know how to create a simple, cost-effective meal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review recipe• Food demonstration• Discuss recipe cost• Create meal ideas• Verbal group reflections (Skills, support)	Increased skills improve self-efficacy and confidence in overcoming barriers.

Figure 2. Curriculum objectives, components and connection to SCT.

Conclusion

This project highlights the numerous difficulties college students face when engaging in healthy eating practices.

To improve college students' dietary habits, there needs to be a focus on behavior change, nutrition awareness, food preparation skills, and social support with an emphasis on promoting self-efficacy.

Thus, a nutrition curriculum that educates and empowers students through interactive and engaging lessons should be adopted

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For more information

Please contact Ashley.glantz01@student.csulb.edu. More information on this and related projects can be obtained at www.csulb.edu/university-library.



Figure 1. Handouts from the curriculum.

