



Memorandum of Understanding

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Department Chair: Virginia Gray Date: 2/12/2026
Virginia Gray

Interim Dean, CHHS : Grace Reynolds, D.P.A. Date: 2/12/2026
Grace Reynolds, D.P.A.

Vice Provost Academic Programs: Pei-Fang Hung Date: 2/12/2026
Pei-Fang Hung



Program Review Summary
Memorandum of Understanding
Master of Science in Nutritional Science
Department of Family and Consumer Science
College of Health and Human Services
January 2026

This document serves as a summary of the findings from the Program Review and presents a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the consensus reached among the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), the College of Health and Human Services, and the Division of Academic Affairs. The MOU is based on the external review site visit conducted in March 2025 and the departmental self-study completed in June 2024. This review documents the outcomes of the Master of Science (M.S.) in Nutritional Science program and documents the implementation of the newly launched Master of Science in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics (GPAND). The MOU establishes the goals and actions related to program transition, faculty resources, and assessment during the next program review cycle. Progress toward these goals will be assessed in the department's annual report.

The Master of Science (M.S.) in Nutritional Science program includes the following concentrations: (i) Food Science, (ii) Internship Program in Nutrition and Dietetics (IPND), and (iii) Latino Health and Nutrition. The majority of students were enrolled in the M.S. in Nutritional Science + Internship track (IPND). CSULB has traditionally maintained two accredited pathways for dietitian training: (1) an undergraduate Didactic Program in Dietetics and (2) a graduate M.S. in Nutritional Science + IPND. Following recommendations from the previous Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and evolving accreditation requirements, the Department developed the Master of Science in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics (GPAND), which admitted its first cohort in Spring 2025. As part of this transition, the M.S. in Nutritional Science + IPND has been discontinued, with the final cohort admitted in Fall 2023.

While the former M.S. in Nutritional Science program itself was not accredited (only the IPND held accreditation through ACEND), the new M.S. in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics program has now received full ACEND accreditation. Accordingly, this review focuses on documenting the outcomes of the M.S. in Nutritional Science and informing the development, implementation, and stabilization of the GPAND curriculum. Future program review activities will follow the GPAND accreditation cycle. The M.S. in Nutritional Science is not admitting new students, and this review reflects a transitional phase as the Department moves toward a single graduate program in nutrition.



The Department has met recommendations as outlined in the MOU from 2019 (following 2017 self-study and 2018 external review visit), stating the program will: 1) continue to implement an ongoing program of assessment of institutional, programmatic, and student learning outcomes across the Master's Program, including "closing the loop" strategies; 2) provide an annual update (due June 1) on progress made towards the actions agreed to in this MOU, with a comprehensive self-study due June 2024 for 2024-2025 Academic Year external review/UPRC report process; 3) consider offering additional electives and/or developing a current topics course topic to reflect several cutting-edge developments in the field; 4) continue review and modification of the current curriculum to meet FEM standards; 5) work with the College to track enrollment and make a final determination on the viability of continuing to offer the Latino Health and Nutrition certification within 5 years; 6) work with the College to develop a strategic plan that seeks solutions to address workload concerns specific to thesis and project supervision; and 7) work with the College to develop a plan to meet the resource needs of the Program.

Resources reviewed for the report:

1. Self-study June 2024
2. External Review report 2025
3. Previous MOU 2019 (for 2017 review)
4. Department website and catalog

Strengths were Identified in the Reports

1. **Mission Statements.** The Department maintains clearly articulated mission statements and program goals that are appropriately aligned with the profession and prominently displayed on its website.
2. **Curriculum.** The Department implemented significant curricular modifications during this review cycle. The new Graduate Program in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics (GPAND) enables undergraduate students to apply during their third year and begin the program as seniors, effectively reducing time to degree by one year. Launching in January 2025, the program emphasizes a practice-based learning approach to better prepare students for professional practice and internship placements. Additionally, faculty have introduced curricular revisions that strengthen equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), critical thinking, and evidence-based practice across the curriculum.
3. **DFW Courses.** The M.S. in Nutritional Science program does not have any courses with high (greater than 15%) CDFW rates. The only course approaching this threshold, *NUTR 696 Research Methods*, has reported up to 9.5% CDFW (primarily "C" grades) in recent semesters. Faculty have responded by improving the scaffolding of learning for students



with limited research backgrounds and by integrating research concepts from NUTR 696 into other courses to reinforce student mastery.

4. **Diversity of Student Body.** The Department demonstrates measurable progress in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion among graduate students. Between 2017-2021, approximately 20-30% of graduate students identified as members of underrepresented groups; this proportion increased to 38-52% during 2022-2023. Similarly, the percentage of first-generation graduate students rose from 5.6-7.1% (2017-2018) to 28.6-36.8% (2022–2023). Across 2017-2023, cohorts were predominantly female (average 9.7% male). While annual variations exist in timely graduation rates between minority and non-minority students, there is no consistent performance gap between the two groups.
5. **High Impact Practices.** All graduate students complete a thesis or directed project as their culminating activity. Faculty initiate planning discussions with students in their first semester and provide sustained mentorship throughout the process. Student feedback consistently highlights the program’s strong emphasis on research and evidence-based practice, which equips graduates with valuable analytical and professional skills. Historically, most students enrolled in the internship track; moving forward, all students will participate under the new program structure. Additionally, all students engage in service learning through NUTR 531, and writing proficiency is emphasized throughout the core curriculum.

Concerns were Noted in the Reports

No significant concerns were identified.

Opportunities for Development

1. **Assessment.** The Department developed an assessment plan as part of its 2018 program review process. Current assessment practices focus primarily on addressing learning gaps identified by faculty during the evaluation of student work. The program has since incorporated both direct and indirect measures aligned with Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and has begun implementing its updated assessment plan. Continued application of this plan, with systematic documentation of “closing the loop” activities, will strengthen the program’s evidence of continuous improvement and student learning.
2. **Enrollment and Program Options.** Enrollment in the M.S. in Nutritional Science + IPND grew from 14 students in Fall 2017 to a peak of 21 students in Fall 2022. Small cohort sizes remain necessary to ensure appropriate internship placements, which supports program quality but limits flexibility in offering additional electives due to smaller class sizes. With the launch of the Graduate Program in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics (GPAND), which enrolls approximately 20 students per cohort annually, the Department shifted all new



graduate admissions to the accredited program beginning in January 2025. No new students were admitted to the M.S. in Nutritional Science for Fall 2025.

Content areas previously emphasized in the M.S. in Nutritional Science, including Food Science and Latino Nutrition, have been integrated into the GPAND curriculum where appropriate. This approach ensures continuity of academic strengths while consolidating graduate education in nutrition into a single, accredited degree program.

3. **Faculty Resources and Workload.** The program maintained five full-time equivalent faculty (FTEF) through Fall 2023, when one tenure-track faculty member departed for another academic position at another institution. CSU policy requires graduate programs to maintain at least five FTEF, highlighting the importance of sustaining faculty capacity. As student enrollment increased from Fall 2017 to Fall 2023, the student-faculty ratio (SFR) rose from 2.8 to 4.8, reflecting a substantial increase in faculty workload. Faculty resources supporting the M.S. in Nutritional Science have been incorporated into the development and implementation of the GPAND program. The Department maintained five full-time equivalent faculty (FTEF) through Fall 2023; however, the departure of one tenure-track faculty member underscores the importance of sustaining faculty capacity to support graduate instruction, mentoring, and research supervision within the GPAND. As enrollment transitions fully to the accredited program, faculty workload considerations (particularly related to thesis and directed project supervision) will be addressed within the context of a single graduate program model. The program is encouraged to explore revised approaches to culminating experiences that maintain academic rigor while balancing faculty workload.
4. **Graduation Rates and Time to Degree.** Students in the M.S. in Nutritional Science + IPND have demonstrated high two-year graduation rates (91.7%) in all but two years of this review period. This is an important achievement, as students in this track must graduate before becoming eligible to sit for the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) exam. In contrast, students in non-internship tracks have experienced lower completion rates. Over a five-year period, 15 students enrolled, with 4 not completing the program, resulting in a 73% graduation rate.
5. **Curricular Innovation.** The recently developed Current Topics in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics course addresses emerging issues such as interdisciplinary practice, the role of artificial intelligence in information consumption, and gastrointestinal (GI) health. Offering this type of special topics course provides flexibility for faculty to integrate new developments and innovations in the field, supporting the program's continued relevance and adaptability.

Recommendations:



It is therefore agreed that the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences – MS Nutritional Science program will collaborate with the College of Health and Human Services and Academic Affairs to:

1. Continue to implement the program’s comprehensive assessment plan to complete annual assessments using direct and indirect methods, and report on “closing the loop” activities that demonstrate continuous improvement. Provide an annual update (due September 1) on progress toward MOU actions to the CHHS Dean, Vice Provost for Academic Programs, and the Coordinators for Program Review and Assessment. The comprehensive self-study for the M.S. in Applied Nutrition will follow the program’s accreditation cycle, while the self-study for the remaining M.S. in Nutritional Science options will be due June 2031 for the 2031-2032 review cycle. (*Addresses Opportunity #1*)
2. Monitor enrollment trends, graduation rates, and student outcomes in the Master of Science in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics to ensure program quality, sustainability, and alignment with departmental resources and strategic priorities. (*Addresses Opportunity #2*)
3. As enrollment allows, expand and refine graduate course offerings within the Master of Science in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics to enhance curricular breadth, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, and ensure responsiveness to emerging developments in nutrition and dietetics practice. (*Addresses Opportunity #2 and 5*)
4. Evaluate and, if necessary, redesign the thesis/project supervision model to ensure sustainability given increasing enrollment in GPAND and faculty workload. Consider strategies such as cohort-based projects, structured research mentorship, or capstone alternatives to balance quality with faculty capacity. (*Addresses Opportunity #3*)
5. Continue developing and refining special topics courses (e.g., Current Topics in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics) to integrate emerging issues such as AI applications, interdisciplinary health practices, and evolving professional standards. (*Addresses Opportunity #5*)

Note: The Department anticipates pursuing formal discontinuation of the M.S. in Nutritional Science following completion of all remaining student obligations and confirmation of long-term program alignment.

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Chair for the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences: Virginia Gray

Interim Dean for the College of Health and Human Services: Grace Reynolds-Fisher

Vice Provost for Academic Programs: Pei-Fang Hung

*DocuSign signature page on file.