

PREFACE

Since starting as tenure track faculty in the Fall of 2013, I have established a successful research program, taught and mentored students, actively contributed to university life through service on committees across campus, and furthered my field through professional service and engagement. In each year of my tenure, my performance was assessed through annual faculty evaluation and progress towards tenure. Every annual faculty evaluation was ranked at the level of Outstanding, and I consistently met the department's expectations for conferral for progress towards tenure and promotion to rank of Associate Professor.

As preface to the Personal Action Dossier, the below narrative highlights my commitment to the mission of East Carolina University and my overall contributions to the institution and field of nutrition education.

BACKGROUND

I have been involved in school-based education research since 2004, when I was still an undergraduate at East Carolina University (ECU). As a student I worked with the FoodMASTER (Food, Mathematics, and Science Teaching Enhancement Resource) Initiative, a compilation of programs that uses food as a tool to teach mathematics and science in K-12 environments. My experience with undergraduate research solidified my desire to work in academia. I officially started my academic career in 2006. While working on my Master's Degree I took a position as Project Coordinator for a National Science Foundation (NSF) Innovative Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST) grant in ECU's Department of Engineering. It was with this experience that I learned how to manage grants (fiscal and data collection activities), supervise a team of employees, and collaborate with faculty and school administrators, teachers, and students. In 2008 after the NSF grant ended, I took a position as Associate Director for the FoodMASTER Initiative in ECU's Department of Nutrition Science; I would serve in this role until 2013 when I was promoted to the role of Director.

In 2009 I started working toward a PhD in Nutrition Science at North Carolina State University. It was there that I began to explore nutrition education in the early childhood setting. Understanding health behaviors (positive and negative) are often established before a child enters kindergarten, I wanted to learn more about nutrition education for younger children. Through my doctoral work I learned about the Head Start environment and the challenges for nutrition education. I also learned new methodologies related to qualitative research and development of evaluation tools for young children, both skills that are critical to my research agenda today.

After graduating with my PhD in 2013, I started as tenure-track faculty in ECU's Department of Nutrition Science. For the first three years of my tenure-track, I continued in my role with the FoodMASTER Initiative while I expanded my work with nutrition education in the Head Start setting. During my 3 year tenure as Director (2013-2016), Team FoodMASTER published 3 curricular resources, 7 papers in peer-reviewed journals, presented 7 professional presentations, submitted 4 federal grants, trained 150+ teachers on FoodMASTER curricula in 7 hands-on workshops, and planned/executed multiple community outreach events. In 2016 I made the decision to leave the FoodMASTER Initiative and focus solely on the development of my program FEEd (Food-based Early Education) for Head Start. In my PAD materials you will see a combination of K-12 and early childhood work representing this transition period.

SCHOLARSHIP SUMMARY

Since beginning the tenure track, I have been named as PI or Co-PI on **17 grant submissions** (9 federal external, 6 internal - 2 external grants are currently under review); served as **Co-PI on a 1.27 million dollar NIH SEPA** grant (2011-2016, currently in no-cost extension); served as **PI on 2 internal grants (\$6,500 total) funded** to support community-based engagement research; **published 19 academic articles** (25 career total); **authored and co-authored 4 preK-12 curricular resources**; presented **33 national and 4 international poster presentations** and **20 oral presentations/workshops**; and developed, organized, and delivered **17 training workshops for preK-8 teachers** across NC. My research activities have also been recognized through receipt of honors/awards such as ECU's University Scholar Recognition (2017) and ECU's Centennial Award for Ambition (2015).

As previously described, I began my experience in research exploring the integration of nutrition education into the K-12 environment. As a doctoral student, I used these experiences to examine the state of nutrition education in the Head Start environment. In my current research under the Food-based Early Education (FEEEd) Lab, I continue this line work by examining strategies: (a) to improve food-based attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors among Head Start teachers, children, and families (individual/interpersonal); (b) to improve school-based nutrition education programming for Head Start teachers, children, and their families (community)); and ultimately (c) to improve new and existing food/nutrition federal, state, and local level regulations and policies in the Head Start setting (societal). Currently, I am focused on development of FEEEd (Food-based Early Education) Lab programming for teachers and children in Head Start programs in Eastern NC and beyond.

My research is housed under the **Food-based Early Education (FEEEd) Lab's** (www.thefeedlab.org). The FEEEd Lab's research focuses on childhood overweight prevention by improving early childhood teachers' food and nutrition education strategies when working with children (birth-5 years) and their families in Head Start. Head Start is the federally funded preschool program serving low-income, low-resource children and families.

Food and nutrition education strategies include providing teacher professional development (personal wellness and pedagogy), developing evidence-based integrative STEAM learning curricula for classroom environments, and working with local, state, and national partners to expand programming.



Current and past research in the **FEEEd Lab** has focused on:

- Examining the influence of teachers' background (e.g. knowledge, attitudes, health behaviors, prior experience with food) on the food and nutrition education strategies implemented in their classrooms
- Influence of teachers' feeding/nutrition education strategies on young children's preferences and eating behaviors
- Understanding communication between teachers and parents related to young children's preferences and eating behaviors
- Influence of the teacher/parent relationship (specifically related to food/nutrition) on children's food consumption/preferences and eating behaviors in the classroom environment
- Development and evaluation of teacher professional development programming focused on personal health behaviors (collaboration with North Carolina State University Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP))

- Development and evaluation of integrative curricula using food as a STEAM education teaching tool for young children (3-5 years) attending Head Start programs
- Influence of local, state, and federal policy (e.g. CACFP) on the food and nutrition education strategies teachers use with young children and families

My long-term research goal is to obtain federal support for the development of FEEd Lab programming for teachers and children. This programming includes two arms: *Teachers' Eating Smart and Moving More* and *PEAS* (Preschool Education in Applied Sciences).

I have worked in partnership with NC-based Head Start programs since 2009. I believe my sustained relationships with Head Start organizations across the state, past grant experience, and recent publications/presentations will support the further development of this research agenda and movement into the next important stage of my work, obtaining external federal funding. I recently submitted an NIH R25 in the amount of \$1.3 million to support FEEd Lab work in NC-based Head Start programs. I anticipate also submitting a USDA Foundational grant by the end of this academic year (2018-2019).

TEACHING SUMMARY

As faculty in the Department of Nutrition Science I have taught research methods at undergraduate (NUTR 3500-Writing Intensive (WI)) and graduate levels (NUTR 6200), Nutrition Science (NUTR 2105), and Pediatric Nutrition (NUTR 6500). I teach classes that are in-person, as well as distance. In line with current ECU's Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) goals, my aim for the undergraduate course I teach is to foster the development of critical thinking and writing skills. Dietitians play a key role in communicating health information to the public. Our students should become more comfortable with the writing process, writing in multiple formats and genres, and understanding how to translate and use science to guide the public on how to make healthy living decisions. During the first 4 years of my tenure track, I taught WI courses since my first semester at ECU. To develop my personal knowledge and skill sets in the area, I participated in workshops offered by QEP focusing on metacognition and responding to student writing; have had 3 writing mentors placed in my course over 3 separate semesters; and have participated in both the Spring and Summer Writing Across the Curriculum Academies. These experiences improved my teaching expertise in the area of writing and have strengthened the quality of the WI research methodology course for undergraduates. I have also used these skills to support writing-based assignments in my graduate-level courses.

Starting in Summer I 2016, I began teaching graduate level courses. My primary goal for these courses is to focus on improving the student learning experience with distance education and eventually expand course offerings within my expertise. For example, in NUTR 6500 I offer opportunities for students to engage with myself as well as health professionals in the community in person or distance through an annual Pediatric Nutrition in Practice Lecture Series. The series provides students with the opportunity to attend in-person or online lectures and interact with and build relationships with faculty and local professionals. All students and faculty in the College of Allied Health Sciences are invited to attend.

Student Engagement & Mentoring: My teaching is directly connected to my research and service activities. I regularly mentor graduate and undergraduate students in research and service projects. Since beginning as faculty, I have mentored **30 undergraduate students** and **14 graduate students** (3 thesis-seeking). Thirteen of my past undergraduate students chose to seek a master's degree, and nine of my past graduate students currently hold full-time positions as clinical dietitians across NC.

To date, **9 undergraduate and 1 graduate students have received awards for oral or poster research presentations; 7 undergraduates** have received an **Undergraduate Research &**

Creative Activity Grant for a cumulative total of **\$7,470**; **3 undergraduate and 2 graduate students have received travel grants** to support research presentation at a national conference for a cumulative total of **\$7,470**; **14 undergraduate and 12 graduate students have presented research at a national conferences** (e.g. Society for Nutrition Education & Behavior, Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics' Food and Nutrition Conference & Expo); and **9 undergraduate students have been named on a peer-reviewed journal publication**. Each of these students have demonstrated significant gains in interpersonal communication and leadership skills.

As faculty at ECU, I challenge my students to represent the mission of East Carolina University to be a national model for student success, public service, and regional transformation by providing them with unique opportunities for short- and long-term success through my teaching, research, and service. Whether I am teaching in the classroom or mentoring students in community-base research, my central goal for teaching is to involve students in the learning process in ways that facilitates critical thinking through challenging hands-on experiences and relevant problem solving. I strive to create these experiences for each of my students. For these efforts, I have received numerous teaching honors/awards including the 2016-2017 North Carolina Dietetic Association Outstanding Dietetic Educator Award, 2016 College of Allied Health Science's Dean's Award for Outstanding Teaching, and ECU Honor's College Mentor of the Year Award (2016).

SERVICE SUMMARY

In accordance with ECU's mission to be a national model for student success, public service and regional transformation, I am committed to university, community, and professional service. Since 2008, I have worked to positively impact communities in North Carolina (NC) through the FoodMASTER Initiative and FEEd Head Start. Over the past four years I have served on **2 community-based committees**; **authored or co-authored 4 educational resources** for teachers, children, and/or families; submitted **2 collaborative foundation grants** with community partners; implemented multiple **outreach events**; and planned/implemented **17 teacher professional development workshops to 300+ preK-8 teachers** across NC. These activities synergistically work together to achieve my goals for scholarly engagement in surrounding ENC communities.

I have also participated in other community-based service activities. For example, starting in fall 2015 I began working with Pitt Partners for Health Nutrition & Physical Activity (PPH N&PA) partners to develop evaluation tools and collect data on the impact of their community Grocery Store Tour program. Each year local dietitians who are affiliated with PPH N&PA lead 10-15 grocery store tours across Pitt County. The tour uses the Share Our Strength Cooking Matters at the Store curriculum and is structured around four primary teaching components: (1) reading food labels, (2) comparing unit prices, (3) finding whole grains, and (4) identifying three ways to purchase produce fruits/vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned). Each tour ends with a "\$10 Challenge" in which participants use knowledge learned to make a healthy meal with a small budget. There was a need to evaluate program outcomes to justify continued funding. In spring 2016, my team developed and pilot-tested a nutrition knowledge survey and a pictorial method for assessing food selection behaviors during the \$10 Challenge. In Spring 2017, we collected data from 10 tours and reported findings back to the community group to inform future programmatic activities. The program was funded through a Vidant Community Benefits Grant.

Within the university, I have participated on numerous committees at the department, college, and university levels. My service goal is focused on supporting activities related to Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Research & Creative Activities. My efforts related to WAC service have allowed me to serve as a resource/liason for WI-related issues within our department,

including leading the development of university assessment materials (e.g. curriculum audits, SACS).

My goal for professional service is to serve the field of nutrition education at the national and international level through committee service, journal/grant referee service, and the recruitment and mentoring of students. Over my tenure I have been involved in leadership roles with multiple professional organizations including the American Society for Nutrition (ASN), the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics (AND), and the Society for Nutrition Education & Behavior (SNEB). Recently I have focused my professional service on supporting the SNEB. As a member of SNEB I have Chaired two Divisions (Higher Education and Nutrition Education for Children); Co-Chaired the Conference Abstract Committee for two years; served as a conference abstract review; and served as a regular reviewer of the *Journal of Nutrition Education & Behavior* (JNEB).

FUTURE

During my four years at ECU, I have developed a strong agenda for scholarship, teaching, and service. I plan to continue to active pursuit of my goals within these areas as I continue my career at ECU. In the area of scholarship, I plan to continue seeking external funding to support my current research agenda, FEEd Head Start. I have established a strong collaborative team and have been working to build a publication/collaboration history with each.

In the area of teaching, my goal is to continue my efforts in the area of student engagement and mentorship in research. In the classroom, I plan to continue focusing on research and writing skills among our students. I would also like to expand the courses I teach within my area of expertise, such as in the area of Nutrition Education. I also plan to continue organizing the Pediatric Nutrition Summer Lecture series to our students and CAHS faculty/staff. Long-term I envision the lecture series as an opportunity for the department to offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to professionals across NC. The model can be used to generate funds in support of department activities and student scholarships.

Finally, in the area of service, I plan to continue Head Start teacher professional development outreach efforts across the state (community). At the university/college/department levels, I will continue engagement with committees focused on Research and Writing Across the Curriculum activities. Finally, at the professional level, I plan to continue my leadership with the Society of Nutrition Education & Behavior, using this platform to also expand the quality and impact of my research through national collaborations.