



UNIVERSITY OF  
SAINT JOSEPH  

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CONNECTICUT

2021

MASTER'S IN NUTRITION HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

SCHOOL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH AND SCIENCE

1678 ASYLUM AVENUE

WEST HARTFORD, CT 06117

*30 credits required to earn the MS in Nutrition*

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### **Location of Nutrition Department:**

The MS in Nutrition is within the Department of Nutrition and Public Health and is located at the West Hartford Campus of the University of Saint Joseph. The department offices are in Lourdes Hall, third floor.

### **Department of Nutrition and Public Health Description**

The department has offered an onsite Master’s in Nutrition for many years. In 2006 we determined that an online graduate program would better meet the needs of working adults who wished to continue their education. The program began in the Spring of 2007, and has been growing since then. The department houses Nutrition, Public Health, Exercise Science and Health Science majors. In Nutrition we offer two tracks, the Didactic program and Nutrition and Wellness.

We have a Dietetic Internship in addition to our Master’s in Nutrition. As of 2018, we launched a combined MS/DI.

### **Combined MS/DI**

This program merges the fully online Master’s in Nutrition with our accredited two semester Dietetic Internship (DI). Students who are matched to the USJ Dietetic Internship program automatically meet the requirements for admission to the USJ Master’s in Nutrition and are eligible to enroll in the combined MS/DI. Students in the combined MS/DI program will begin graduate coursework in the summer before the Dietetic Internship begins and then subsequent coursework will be completed in the remaining semesters with degree completion the following summer. Earning the Dietetic Internship verification does not require that you enroll in any graduate courses. An intern will earn the verification in May as long as all aspects for the internship are successfully fulfilled.

The department has seven full time faculty, a full-time internship director, an administrative assistant, and some very long-term adjuncts (see bios below). Many of our full and part time faculty have expertise in specific areas of dietetics, for example, diabetes, pediatrics, health coaching and sports nutrition.

### **Approach to School as a Part-time Adult working professional:**

Most students take 1-2 courses per semester. You have to decide what fits your life best.

USJ uses the platform Blackboard. For most courses you decide when to 'go to class'. The three Health Coaching courses require real time sessions, in the evening, a few times per month. A video-conferencing program is used. Other than that, you are not required to come to campus. Students are welcome to attend the May Graduation ceremony. Just let the director know so she can meet and greet you!

USJ offers courses in fall, spring and in two summer sessions. Research Methods and the final independent project must be taken sequentially.

Application: is found on the website (as you know at this point!)

Planned Program: turn it in as part of the application

<https://www.usj.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/revised-Grad-Nutrition-PLAN-OF-STUDY.pdf>

List the courses that you would like to take. We do add new courses every year or two and these can be taken even if not on your original plan. Your online degree audit (accessed on myusj) will automatically keep track of what you do take.

Presently, the only required courses are NUTR 594 Research Methods and NUTR 595/596 Independent Study for the regular MS in Nutrition program and NUTR568 and a Biostats course are additional requirements for the Combined MS/DI.

If one chooses, one can take up to two courses in a related discipline such as Public Health, Biology or Chemistry. If it is not on your planned program, please check with the graduate program director to make sure it is an acceptable course.

Students who are registered dietitians and completed a dietetic internship may transfer 6 credits to USJ toward the Master's. You must submit an original DI verification statement and fill out the Transfer request form. This can be forwarded to the program director at [mlbrown@usj.edu](mailto:mlbrown@usj.edu).

[Graduate Forms at the University of Saint Joseph | USJ West Hartford, CT](#)

## **Advisement:**

Students should contact the program director initially for advisement and program questions or just to talk with someone on campus.

Dr. Melissa Brown, [mlbrown@usj.edu](mailto:mlbrown@usj.edu) 860.231.5262.

Other faculty members may be chosen as one's advisor as you meet them.

As for course selection, at this point it is a very open program and you can choose the electives you are interested in.

Please go to the website and to the catalog to view course descriptions.

[Nutrition & Public Health at the University of Saint Joseph | USJ West Hartford, CT](#)

[University of Saint Joseph - Acalog ACMS™ \(usj.edu\)](#)

## **Sports Nutrition Graduate Certificate**

[Sports Nutrition Graduate Certificate at the University of Saint Joseph | USJ West Hartford, CT](#)

This is a three-course certificate that can either be part of your MS or you can just complete the 3 courses, sequentially. If you are interested in learning more about this certificate contact:

Dr. Melissa Brown, [mlbrown@usj.edu](mailto:mlbrown@usj.edu) 860 231 5262.

### Courses Required:

NUTR 591- Sports Nutrition or NUTR610 Clinical Sports Nutrition

NUTR 604- Evaluating the Literature in Sports Nutrition

NUTR 608- Practical Applications in Sports Nutrition

## **Health Coaching Certificate:**

[Health Coaching Certificate \(Online\) at the University of Saint Joseph | USJ West Hartford, CT](#)

This is a three-course certificate that can either be part of your MS or you can just complete the 3 courses, sequentially.

If you are interested in learning more about this certificate contact:

Dr. Meg Gaughan [mgaughan@usj.edu](mailto:mgaughan@usj.edu) 860 231 5234

### Courses Required:

NUTR 520-Foundations of Health Coaching

NUTR 521-Health Coaching Process and Skills

NUTR 522-Application of Health Coaching

## **Final Degree requirement: NUTR 595/596 Independent Study-Final Project 3 credits\***

***\*Any research performed with human subjects requires an IRB application and approval prior to beginning any part of the study.***

Each student is required to complete an independent project as part of the 30 credit degree program. This is implemented in the final or second to last semester (NUTR 595 Fall or NUTR 596Spring) AFTER the completion of NUTR 594 Research Methods.

This is an opportunity for a student to explore an area in depth using a variety of methods or to create or examine an idea/program/method in detail. Examples of past projects are:

1. Evidence-based review:
  - Vitamin D and anticonvulsants in pediatric population
  - Diet and the role of nutrition in kidney stones in children
  - Prebiotics and type 2 diabetes
  - Micronutrient intake in children with celiac disease
  - PCOS and bulimia
  - Red meats and colorectal cancer prevention
  - BMI and new onset diabetes after transplant in solid organ transplant recipients
2. Proposed Hospital Protocols for initiating a new approach or tracking:
  - Monitoring Vitamin D status in CF patients
  - Tube insertion or not in patients with head and neck cancers
  - Enhanced Recovery After Surgery
3. Policy brief: initiate one or analyze a present one:
  - Policy brief and implementation on NPO guidelines pre-operative
  - Policy paper on guidelines for role of RD and end of life care
  - What are the government policies related to arsenic in the food supply?
4. Survey research (validating a survey):
  - Can use a variety of populations: i.e. students, consumers
5. Intervention studies (must be of short duration and feasible within the time-frame allowed):
  - Pre-Post test design to test the effectiveness of a nutrition education curriculum
  - Identification of the most effective feeding intervention strategies in picky eaters (children)

6. Active Data Collections-various

- Best way to teach nutrition focused physical exams as measured by self-efficacy\*
- Survey on how best to follow-up with clients between and after weight loss visits
- Increasing pediatrician awareness of diagnosing malnutrition
- Curriculum for bariatric patients
- Teen teachers in 4H will be tested on behavior changes and confidence after delivering a healthy living program
- Survey on how best to meet rural midlife women's needs for limiting weight gain\*School breakfast participation hurdles
- Pilot on food ranking system in a food pantry and increased food quality
- Examine caffeine intake and GI symptoms in triathletes
- What changes do people with Crohn's disease make to their eating habits?
- Compliance and factors that influence acceptance of oral nutrition supplement intake among an elderly population at risk for malnutrition.
- Identifying levels of weight bias in upper class undergraduate nursing students at USJ.
- Effect of continuous glucose monitoring on quality of life of adults with type one diabetes mellitus at an outpatient diabetes center.
- Assessment of the comfort level in patients with type 2 diabetes in managing their diagnosis.
- The impact of pre-pregnancy body mass index on exclusive breastfeeding duration.
- Examining the clinical use of the neutropenic diet: a survey of dietitians and nurses.
- Assessment of nursing staff awareness and knowledge of malnutrition in patients.

7. Design/implement plan for a Nutrition Program

- Can use a variety of settings: i.e College campus, Supermarket, schools

8. Secondary data analysis

- Centers for disease control
- NHANES

9. Retrospective nutrition data collection study

- Can use a variety of populations: i.e. inpatients, outpatients, food service, public health program
- Food service

10. Develop/implement an internet nutrition program or blog plan

- Organization website, Online blog, Online listserve

11. Develop/plan nutrition education curriculum

- Farmer's markets
- Members of a workout gym

12. Evaluation plan for an existing nutrition program or policy

- SNAP-Ed
- WIC

- National School Lunch
- Food Bank

### 13. Qualitative Research focus group

- Religious groups
- Community gardens
- Clubs or organizations
- Students
- Teachers
- Athletes

You will work independently, but with a faculty mentor. Usually before the semester officially begins, the program director will post the syllabus and then make arrangements to call each student for an individual conversation to begin to narrow down project options and develop a practical approach. After the topic and method is decided, you may switch to another faculty member who is more familiar with your chosen area. If you choose to use human subjects or collect data that may be identifiable, you must complete an application to the USJ Institutional Review Board and also complete training on the use and ethics of using human subjects. This is normally completed within the Research Methods course.

To meet the university requirement for a comprehensive exam the independent study semester culminates with a live or video link presentation to the department faculty and a final paper describing your project. You must earn at least a C on this final project in order to complete the Master's.

## **Publishing and disseminating your work:**

We highly encourage all students to submit their completed works for publication. If you are interested in pursuing this option, discuss this with your advisor early on in the process so that a plan can be formulated. You will want to plan your research study, program evaluation, educational program development, etc., with the end goal of publication in mind. Your advisor will be able to guide you in that process. Examples of what you will want to plan in advance are authorship and target journal. You will want to agree upon a plan for authorship (who will be listed as an author, who will be first and last author, and who will be corresponding author) during the early planning phase so that there is no discrepancy later on. Early selection of a target journal will also help streamline the process in terms of types of articles they accept, criteria for publication and reviewing examples of what manuscripts they have accepted for publication. If you know what the journal's mission is and the readership they serve, this will help to plan your study/project. Once decided upon, review the author guidelines on their website so that you know well in advance what information and format will be required. Further, you will want to know whether or not the target journal requires regulatory approvals such as the Institutional Review Board if human subjects are involved (most do require these assurances). There are several different options for publications including case studies, expert opinions, evidenced-based reviews, meta-analyses and primary, original research studies such as survey-research, cohort studies and clinical trials. For instance, if you know you would like to complete an evidence-based review on a topic related to diabetes,

then you would determine the target journal and craft your review based on their author instructions. Opportunities to publish new program development or practice-based papers also exist. Another option is to summarize your work in poster format and submit it to present at a state, regional or national conference. Your advisor will be available to help you make these decisions along the way.

### **Click the link below for a YouTube video of recent MS in Nutrition graduate:**

[Nutrition, M.S. \(Online\) at the University of Saint Joseph | USJ West Hartford, CT](#)

### **Information about graduate assistantships:**

[Graduate Assistantships at the University of Saint Joseph | USJ West Hartford, CT](#)

These are generally offered to local students who can be on campus from 8-16 hours per week. The USJ graduate assistantships are generally tuition waivers for one or two courses in exchange for 8 or 16 hours respectively of work for the department. Please see myusj at the address above for more specific information or contact: Dr.Melissa Brown at [mlbrown@usj.edu](mailto:mlbrown@usj.edu) 860.231.5262

### **Nutrition & Public Health Department Faculty Contact Information:**

**Brown, Melissa, PhD, RD, CSSD, LD**

Interim Chair and Nutrition Graduate Program Director, Assistant Professor, Director, Combined MS/DI Program, Director, Athlete Nutrition Advising Program Lourdes Hall 2T

[mlbrown@usj.edu](mailto:mlbrown@usj.edu)

860.231.5262

**Caruso, Christine, PhD, MPH**

Assistant Professor, Director of Undergraduate Public Health Program Lourdes Hall 5T

[ccaruso@usj.edu](mailto:ccaruso@usj.edu)

860 231-5235

**Fanelli, Lisa, OTD, OTR/L**

Associate Professor, Program Director Health Science

[lfanelli@usj.edu](mailto:lfanelli@usj.edu)

860 231-5752

Gaughan, Meg E., PhD, RD

Associate Professor, SNAP-Ed Director Lourdes Hall 3T

[mgaughan@usj.edu](mailto:mgaughan@usj.edu)

860.231.5234

Lawrence, Margery, PhD, RD

Associate Professor Emeritus, Lourdes Hall 20T

[mlawrence@usj.edu](mailto:mlawrence@usj.edu)

Reid, Kaydian, DrPH, MA

Assistant Professor, Director of MPH Programs Lourdes Hall 18T

[kreid@usj.edu](mailto:kreid@usj.edu) 860.231.5843

Zaharek-Girgasky, Marguerite, PhD, RD, CD-N

Assistant Professor, Director, Didactic Program in Dietetics Lourdes Hall 3T

[mzaharekgirgasky@usj.edu](mailto:mzaharekgirgasky@usj.edu)

860.231.5769

## **Our full-time nutrition faculty at USJ:**

### **Melissa Brown, PhD, RD, CSSD, LD:**

Dr. Melissa Brown has a broad background in both nutrition and in pancreatic islet transplantation for the treatment of diabetes. She graduated in 1994 from the University of Massachusetts Amherst with a B.S. in Nutrition and then went on to complete a combined Master of Science/Dietetic Internship program at Rush University in Chicago IL. After working for a year as a clinical nutrition support dietitian and owner of her own private practice, Dr. Brown returned to school in 1997 to obtain her Doctorate with a focus on nutrition and pancreatic islet transplantation at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Brown completed a post-doctoral fellowship in islet transplantation and diabetes research at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, MA. Later in 2008, Dr. Brown relocated to Springfield, MA at the Pioneer Valley Life Sciences Institute which is a translational research institute jointly owned by University of Massachusetts Amherst and Baystate Medical Center. At PVLSI, Dr. Brown successfully started the human islet transplantation research program as well as formed several collaborations in diabetes and metabolism related research. Currently Dr. Brown continues to facilitate the islet research program at PVLSI and comes to USJ from UMass Amherst where she was a faculty member in the Department of Nutrition. At USJ, Dr. Brown currently teaches undergraduate Medical Nutrition Therapy I and II, undergraduate sports nutrition, and serves as a mentor for Honors students and Nutrition 499 students. Dr. Brown also teaches the graduate online Diabetes course, GI course, sports nutrition related courses and Independent Study/Research. Dr. Brown is the Director of Graduate Programs in Nutrition. Dr. Brown is also the Director of the Athlete Nutrition Advising Program and provides performance nutrition guidance to athletes and training opportunities for undergraduate nutrition majors, dietetic interns and graduate nutrition students that have an interest in sports nutrition. Dr. Brown is board certified in sports dietetics and co-owner of Pro-Style Nutrition Consulting, LLC.

### **Meg Gaughan, PhD, RD:**

Dr. Gaughan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Public Health at the University of Saint Joseph. Meg teaches in the undergraduate (NUTR 305 and NUTR 310) and graduate programs at USJ; her expertise is in counseling, health coaching, and nutrition education. She is the director of the USJ-SNAP-Ed program, a 1 million dollar grant, which integrates USJ students into nutrition education delivery and research in the community. In 2015, Meg created a graduate level Health Coaching Certificate program at USJ. This program features a combination of coaching psychology, health behavior change theory, and practice skills, to enable students to join the emerging field of health coaching.

### **Margot Zaharek-Girgasky, PhD, RD, CD-N:**

A graduate of a small, liberal arts college herself, Marguerite Zaharek-Girgasky, Ph.D., felt drawn to the University of Saint Joseph for its sense of community. After volunteering in the Peace Corps and teaching at other institutions, she selected USJ as her next professional “home,” inspired to share her passion for Nutrition with like-minded students. With a career that encompassed both community nutrition and community-based participatory research, the structure of a liberal arts education provides the ideal opportunity. “I really like the fact that this is a career-driven program housed within the liberal arts focus,” Zaharek-Girgasky said. “We are not just narrowly training students for one specific type of job; we’re providing them with a broader perspective.”

## USJ Adjunct Faculty: (this is not a comprehensive list of the professionals who teach in our program):

### Mireille Blacke, MA, RD, CD-N

Mireille Blacke is a Registered Dietitian, Certified Dietitian-Nutritionist, and Addiction Specialist. In addition to teaching Bariatric Surgery Nutrition as an Adjunct Professor at USJ,

Mireille works as a Clinical Dietitian at Bristol Hospital and serves as the Publications Chair for the AND's Behavioral Health Nutrition DPG. She has been published in Llewellyn Publishing's Moon Sign Book, Herbal Almanac, and Magical Almanac, Today's Dietitian, and OKRA Magazine. Mireille worked in rock radio for two decades before shifting her career focus to Psychology, Nutrition, and Addiction Counseling. She is obsessed with the city of New Orleans, the various works of Joss Whedon, and her Bengal cats.

### Sue Gebo, MPH, RD, CD-N, CDE

Sue Gebo earned her BS in Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University and an MPH in Human Nutrition at the University of Michigan. Through her private practice in West Hartford, CT, she provides individual nutrition counseling for a variety of health concerns. In addition to her work at USJ, she also served as part-time faculty for the UConn-St. Francis Hospital Family Medicine Residency Program and for Middlesex Community College. At USJ, Sue teaches several online graduate nutrition courses, including Obesity, Child Obesity, Eating Disorders, and Psychology of Eating.

### Elaine Hsieh, PhD, RD

Elaine Hsieh earned her BS in Nutritional Sciences at UC Berkeley. After working in clinical dietetics at UC San Francisco, she returned to UC Berkeley and earned her PhD in Molecular and Biochemical Nutrition. Hsieh has performed and published extensive research in cell proliferation as a marker of carcinogenesis in a variety of biological settings, including caloric restriction, psoriasis, and the use of lunasin as an anti-carcinogenic soy protein. She has over 10 years of experience in teaching both traditional and online classrooms, at UC Berkeley and here at USJ where she focuses on several graduate courses including Nutrition and Cancer, and Cardiovascular Nutrition. Hsieh also works as a nutrition consultant for a research group at University of San Francisco that focuses on diabetes and nutrition education in specific communities. She lives part-time in San Francisco and in Dubai.

### Marion F. Winkler, PhD, RD, LDN, CNSC

Marion Winkler is Associate Professor at the Alpert Medical School of Brown University. She practices as the Surgical Nutrition Specialist, Department of Surgery and Nutritional Support Service at Rhode Island Hospital and has over 30 years of experience in nutrition support. Dr. Winkler received a BS in Nutrition from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland Ohio, MS in Allied Health and Clinical Dietetic Research from the University of Connecticut, and PhD from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (now Rutgers University). Dr. Winkler currently serves as President of the ASPEN Rhoads Research Foundation. She is a Past President of the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ASPEN), an active member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND), former chair of the Dietitians in Nutrition Support dietetic practice group, and a former member of the Board of Trustees for the Oley Foundation. She serves on the editorial board for the Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (JPEN) and Topics in Clinical Nutrition. She speaks nationally and internationally on topics including malnutrition,

short bowel syndrome, and enteral and parenteral nutrition. Dr. Winkler's current research focuses on the quality of life of home parenteral nutrition dependent patients. She is the recipient of numerous awards including the AND Medallion and Clinical Excellence Awards, the ASPEN Distinguished Achievement in Nutrition Support Dietetics Award, Outstanding Dietetic Educator from the Rhode Island Dietetic Association, and the Nan Couts Award for the Ultimate Volunteer from the Oley Foundation.

#### [Cathy Wickham, PhD, RD](#)

Educational background: PhD University of Massachusetts, Amherst; MS University of Saint Joseph; Certificate in Catering–Le Cordon Bleu, Paris; BS Bentley University; AS University of New Hampshire

Teaching areas: Foodservice Systems; Management of Food and Nutrition Services; Professional Development and Communication in School Nutrition

Areas of specialty: Food and culinary literacy; food safety; foodservice systems; foodservice management; school nutrition

### **NUTS and BOLTS related to registration:**

Below is information from the letters you will receive from the graduate office. Your two important pieces of information are your student ID number and your USJ email! You have to monitor your email as this is the only way we can keep in touch with you.

As you will have already seen, your first communications will come through your personal email.

If you plan to apply for financial aid, please ensure that your FAFSA has been completed. You do not need to submit an additional financial aid application. Since you are now accepted, you will be awarded aid once your FAFSA is received. You will find important information regarding completion of this process at: [Graduate Financial Aid at the University of Saint Joseph | USJ West Hartford, CT](#)

#### **Important:**

You will receive your USJ credentials shortly before the registration date for your initial year and term. To view upcoming registration dates, please see our Academic Calendar. These credentials will be sent via email, and they will enable you to register for courses online.

To register online, log on to MyUSJ

Under the Student Tab, refer to the "Add-Drop, Course Registration, Course Search" column on the left side of the page

For more information on registration, please contact the Registrar at 860.231.5225 or

[registrar@usj.edu](mailto:registrar@usj.edu)

If you are pursuing course work on campus, please ensure that your immunization records have been cleared by Health Services ([healthservices@usj.edu](mailto:healthservices@usj.edu)).

You have been provided with your student identification number in previous communications and it is important to use this number in all communications or transactions at the University during your time

with us. This number will also appear on your formal admission letter, so please keep it available for reference.

Your next steps are:

- Secure financial aid, if applicable, by submitting your FAFSA. If you have questions, please contact the Student Financial Services Office ([financialaid@usj.edu](mailto:financialaid@usj.edu)) or 860.231.5223
- Register for classes once you receive your log-in information. These credentials will be sent via email shortly before registration opens for your initial year and term.
- In terms of ease of getting into the courses you want, the earlier you register the better. Usually one can register for Spring in October and late March/early April for Summer and Fall.

Things to remember:

- NUTR 594 Research Methods must be taken before your final project (NUTR 595 Fall or NUTR 596 Spring).
- The Sports Nutrition Graduate Certificate courses and the Health Coaching courses must be taken in sequence. Also, the Health Coaching courses require real time video conferences in an evening.

myusj: your user name and password for the network, Blackboard and myusj is all the same.

[www.usj.edu](http://www.usj.edu)

On our website, you can access myusj, and that contains almost all the information you would need about the school, forms etc. Under the Graduate and Research/Grants tab is information related to the USJ Institutional Review Board.

Also, you can view your transcript/degree audit by going to the student tab.

Note: This is a work in progress and information will be added as students make suggestions.

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THANK YOU FOR READING THROUGH TO THE END AND WELCOME TO THE USJ DEPARTMENT OF  
NUTRITION AND PUBLIC HEALTH!

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