

Background and Organization of the Internship

The Central Michigan University Dietetic Internship (CMUDI) continues a long tradition of excellence in dietetic education that was begun by the Tri-City Dietetic Internship (TCDI). The TCDI began as a traineeship, accepting its first class in February 1974. The TCDI originated from Tri-City Dietetic Association (TCDA) members' concern about the inadequate number of internship positions available nationwide. At the same time, there was a consistent shortage of dietitians in the Tri-City area. The Tri-Cities are three neighboring cities of Saginaw, Bay City, and Midland, Michigan. These cities are located in the adjacent counties of Saginaw, Bay, and midland which encompass the East Central Region of Michigan. They are 100 to 120 miles north of Detroit and a half-hour away from each other. The Tri-Cities are 50-60 miles east of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan where the main campus of CMU is located.

In 1973, a steering committee consisting of members of the TCDA approached the Veterans Administration sponsored Area Health Education Center (AHEC). The AHEC was established in 1972 to respond to the need for continuing education of health professionals in the 14-county region of East Central Michigan. Working through the AHEC, the steering committee found interest and resources to develop and support a dietetic traineeship. The program originated with a consortium of five hospitals and then expanded to six hospitals in 1980. In December 1991 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Washington, D.C. conducted a site visit of the AHEC of East Central Michigan. The site visitors found the community component of AHEC's program (i.e. the dietetic internship and critical care nursing education) to be extremely strong with extensive community support and involvement. However, deficiencies were noted in the continuing education component for Saginaw VA healthcare employees. There were also philosophical differences between VA and AHEC Officials regarding the mission of AHEC. The site visors subsequently recommended that funding for AHEC be discontinued on September 30, 1992. On June 3, 1992, the VA sent official notification that funding would be discontinued. Despite the discontinuance of funding for AHEC, the internship continued operating through the 1992-1993 year using funds secured from four consortium hospitals and from a potion of AHEC Corporation funds disbursed after its dissolution. The TCDA held fund-raising events to generate additional funds for the internship and a TCDI alumni-giving program

was successful in raising some revenue. Because a permanent sponsor for the program was needed, CMU was asked to assume the financial and academic sponsorship of the program. Since 1993 the program has been sponsored by Central Michigan University's (CMU) Department of Human Environmental Studies.

In many respects, the CMUDI is similar to the former TCDI. It maintained its general emphasis and it is a unique partnership between a public university and a consortium of hospitals and medical centers serving as primary rotation sites. The number of hospitals serving as rotation sites has expanded from six to twelve. These twelve outstanding facilities provide program direction and learning experiences for interns. Numerous other healthcare and related facilities serve as rotation sites specializing in clinical, foodservice, and community nutrition.

Beginning with the 1993-94 class, the number of interns accepted into the program was increased from 6 to 12. Our program is currently approved to accept 20 interns per year.

The length of the program has continued to decrease from its original 51 weeks. Effective January 2003 the number of supervised practice hours changed to 32 weeks. With the reduction to 32 weeks a change was also made from one long class per year to 2 classes per year starting in September and January.

When CMU assumed the financial sponsorship, twelve hours of graduate credit through CMU's College of Graduate Studies were required.

