Determining Where to Apply

One of the hardest tasks is deciding where to apply to from among the approximately 220+ available supervised practice programs.

Start by examining the supervised practice program listings in the Academy Directory of Dietetics Programs on the Web at [http://www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) (click on “For Students,” “Accredited Programs,” “Dietetic Internships”). This directory lists all of the programs and reports the length and cost of a program, start dates, number of students, whether a graduate degree is optional or required and contact information for the Program Director. (See attached sample and “Tips for Using the Online Directory” included in this packet).

Things to consider

Do you need to start a program on a certain date?
Do you have constraints on where you can live?
Do you have financial constraints?
Do you want to complete a graduate degree at the same time?

Once you have a shorter list of programs to consider, you should take a closer look at each program to determine if you’re a good fit. Consult *The Applicant's Guide to Supervised Practice* (available in the Dietetics Computer Lab in hard-copy and through nutrition.cornel.edu > undergraduate dietetics) which provides more detailed information on most programs (see attached sample). The guide reports the percentage of the program that is spent in clinical, community and management rotations and information about specialty rotations. It also includes information on competitiveness of the program by noting the number of applicants compared to the number of positions available, the minimum GPA considered and the average or range of GPAs of current students. Each program also ranks the criteria considered regarding applicants to their program. Also available in the Dietetics Computer Lab are brochures from various programs. All materials received from programs are placed in the filing cabinet and organized alphabetically by state. Access and review this information at your leisure.

Most of the programs have Web pages and the majority of the program directors have email addresses. You can access the Web pages from the on-line Academy Directory of Dietetics Programs. From this directory you can also find links for the email addresses for most program directors so that you can request information on programs without a Web page.

Visiting programs before you apply is very beneficial. It can be very informative to meet the Program Director, dietitians you’ll be working with and interns who are currently in the program. Some programs have days when they give tours. Many programs offer an Open House in the fall. When contacting DI Directors, you may ask them if they hold an Open House. The following website attempts to consolidate the dates and times for various internships. See [www.indiana.edu/~nutrvmg/DIopenhouses.htm](http://www.indiana.edu/~nutrvmg/DIopenhouses.htm) (link also available through the Academy website student section) for more information. Keep in mind however that this is not a complete list. The DPD Director will also forward Open House Information as it becomes available. Some programs also allow you to visit at other times if you make...
arrangements in advance. If you are interested in programs in New York and nearby states, plan to attend the annual GNYDA DI Fair. The fair is typically held in November. Check your e-mail and the Dietetics Bulletin Board for more information.

Keep in mind that an open house opportunity is not an interview, but it may be the only face-to-face contact you have with the DI Director. Being prepared, courteous and professional at the Open House will serve you well. Be sure to dress professionally, wear only understated jewelry (no eyebrow rings, etc.) and be prepared for your visit. This means knowing the information that is in the promotional materials and on the program website so that you don’t ask questions that you should already know the answers to. Always speak politely, with enthusiasm and interest.

If you cannot visit a program, you might consider calling the Program Director and asking if you could speak to some of the current interns. They are the experts on the student experience in the program.

Most of our graduates are very successful in their internships and programs welcome well-prepared applicants from Cornell. A list of the internships attended by our graduates over in recent years is posted.

Programs prefer diversity in their interns so it is unlikely that more than two Cornell students will be accepted into a program during the same program year (although on occasion several of our students have been accepted to the same program). To help you know how many classmates will be applying to various internships, throughout the semester we will ask students to tell us where they intend to apply. This list will be posted with the name of the program and the number of individuals applying. If you have a GPA on the lower end and have little work experience, you should consider programs that other Cornell students are not applying to.

**Should I Get a Master's Degree at the Same Time as Doing an Internship?**

The answer to this question depends upon your personal circumstances. If you are really tired of going to school and would like a break, it would be best to put off graduate school. If you really aren't sure what you want to do for work, it might also be best to wait. An internship offers the opportunity to explore many areas of dietetics practice and might provide you with a clearer idea of what activities are most interesting and satisfying to you. In today's job climate, there is much less job security than there used to be. People change jobs many times in their careers and even change careers entirely. If you plan to do nutrition research and teaching, or advanced clinical nutrition practice, a graduate degree in nutrition can be helpful. There is a shortage of PhD, RD’s for academic and research positions. Many practitioners would also benefit from obtaining a graduate degree in some field other than nutrition such as a Master of Public Health (MPH), a Master of Business Administration (MBA), a Masters in Health Administration, a Masters in Communication, Education, Psychology, Food Science, etc. This kind of degree will expand your skills, provide cross-functional skills and make you more versatile and valuable to your future employers.
These facts argue for waiting to get a Master's degree until after you have worked for a while and learned about what field of study would help you most in your career. On the other hand, it is much easier to do your graduate degree before you are used to having a full-time salary and before you take on other commitments.

If you are concerned you will not be competitive for the internships that you are most interested in, it pays to have a back-up plan. Consider concurrently applying to graduate schools. Some internships are available only to students who are attending the graduate program at that same university.