

## Susan McDonald – Personal Statement

Similar to other young adults, vying to determine their lifelong destinations their freshman year of college at the ripe age of 18, I had no clue what career path and what major I should choose. My passion for nutrition and health and my realization to pursue a career as a Registered Dietitian has been developed throughout my young adult years. However, when I look back, I realize that nutrition and health have always played a vital role in my life and has been a subject of interest to me for many years. As I set forth on my journey through college at The Ohio State University, starting out as an engineering major and ending with a BA in Strategic Communications, I always made the conscious decision to eat right and to exercise. It was during college that I realized the food I ate had a direct impact on how I felt. Eating salty chips the day before a strenuous run, I found that I felt dehydrated no matter how much water I drank; if I ate unhealthy, too much carbohydrates and sugar, I felt groggy and weak the next day. I bought books on nutrition and learned how to eat to become a better athlete (I was and still am an avid equestrian). Little did I know this interest was a foreshadowing of my current pursuit of a second bachelor's degree in Dietetics.

Of course my goal is to become a Registered Dietitian and to have a career in clinical dietetics, but more than that, my goal is to help others live healthy. After much research, it has become obvious to me that there are so many more platforms for a Registered Dietitian besides a hospital. RD's are integral parts of many institutions, for instance, Intel headquarters in Santa Clara employs a staff of 5 full time Dietitians; doing so assists in keeping their employees healthy, boosts moral, and even helps keeps insurance claims down. I have a strong interest and attraction to acute care and corporate wellness/nutrition for athletes. I find these two areas of nutrition extremely fascinating and while these areas of focus may seem miles apart, they have one important aspect in common, they both center around helping others. Acute care focuses on healing and wellness/nutrition for athletes focus on helping individuals remain healthy and reach goals.

While my rigorous work schedule, often consisting of 60 hour work weeks, has prohibited me from being able to pursue volunteer positions within my county's WIC program or intern at surrounding hospitals, it has also provided me with the people and professional skills that I believe to be necessary to be a truly successful RD. As an insurance broker and benefits consultant, I give weekly presentations to audiences of 10-100+ people and I must communicate the muddy waters of insurance in a way that the average person can understand and appreciate. My profession has also given me the skills to communicate with a wide array of people, from public works employees to company CEOs to high ranking elected officials. While shadowing an RD at Jupiter Medical Center, I realized how crucial communication is to the dietetics profession. An RD must be able to communicate with all types of patients and their families; they must be able to communicate clearly why a certain meal plan or diet is imperative to the healing or wellness of a patient. Hospitals (or any clinical setting) can be very intimidating and unfamiliar to patients; I have also found that some health care professionals speak in

terms that patients do not understand. As an RD, I know I possess the ability to communicate to the patients in a way that will put them at ease and in a manner in which they will understand. Another strength which I have honed in my professional career as an insurance broker and benefits consultant is being able to build trusting relationships with my clients. This is another skill that will be extremely beneficial in the field of dietetics. Patients who trust their healthcare providers are more apt to follow advice, modify behaviors, and keep those changes in place for the long run.

Throughout my journey of pursuing a degree in dietetics, I have found the courses and workload to be extremely interesting; interesting to the point where it really does not feel like work or school, for me, I am learning about something in which I am passionate about. I truly believe that everything happens for a reason and pursuing a career in dietetics in my late twenties has given me the time to hone my professional and people skills which will help me become a great Registered Dietitian.

