



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, LIFE & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Nutritional Sciences & Wellness

LOCATING PRECEPTORS FOR SEL

Applied Nutrition -Dietetics Supervised Experiential Learning Guide

Securing your own preceptors requires organization, persistence, and professionalism. Use this handout as your roadmap to successfully identify, contact, and secure preceptors for your Supervised Experiential Learning (SEL).

1. What is a Preceptor?

A preceptor is an expert or specialist who guides your hands-on training, mentors your professional development, and helps arrange learning experiences within the field of nutrition and dietetics.

- Who qualifies? Most preceptors are Registered Dietitians (RD/RDN). However, not all your preceptors must be RDNs. They should be active professionals involved in the field who are in a position to guide your learning.
- Clinical SEL Requirement: Your Clinical Nutrition rotation must have an RD/RDN as the primary preceptor.
- Site Flexibility: Clinical sites do not need to be restricted to large hospitals. Skilled nursing facilities with rehabilitation units are excellent, dynamic alternatives.

2. Your Rotation & Hour Requirements

The program requires hands-on experiential learning across three primary focus areas. Plan your outreach early to accommodate these specific hour blocks:

SEL Rotation Area	Total Hours	Commitment	Target Facilities & Sites
Community Nutrition	250 Hours	16 hours/week	Public health clinics, WIC offices, school nutrition programs, food banks.
Food Service Management	250 Hours	16 hours/week	School districts, hospital kitchens, university dining, corporate cafes.
Clinical Nutrition	500 Hours	32 hours/week	Acute care hospitals, outpatient clinics, skilled nursing/rehab facilities.

3. How to Locate Potential Preceptors

Finding preceptors takes proactive networking and diligent outreach. Utilize these strategies to build your prospect list:

- **Leverage Personal Connections:** Talk directly with your academic advisor or Program Director. Reach out to professionals you have previously worked with or volunteered for.
- **Professional Networking:** Attend state and local Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics events to interface with professionals working directly in your geographic area.
- **Cold Contacting Facilities:** While calling or visiting facilities blindly can be challenging, it is a highly effective way to make a direct connection. (For Foodservice: ask for the Kitchen/Dietary Manager; For Clinical: ask for the Clinical Nutrition Manager/Director of Nutrition).

4. Information to Share When Reaching Out

It is crucial to remain organized and professional during every interaction. Introduce yourself and explain that you are applying to a distance program, which gives you the exciting responsibility of coordinating your own local training. Be ready to instantly provide:

- **Experience Type:** Exactly which SEL area(s) you want to complete under their supervision.
- **Timeframe & Duration:** How many total hours and weeks you are requesting to spend at their facility.
- **Schedule Flexibility:** When your target dates are, and whether you can accommodate their facility's busy seasons.
- **Your Unique Value:** Highlight specialized qualifications that make you an asset (e.g., bilingual skills, experience working with veterans, CPR certification).

Pro-Tip: Draft a well-formed, concise email template that includes your personal introduction, professional intent, and the exact logistics above. Always refer to the program's sample SEL Preceptor Communication Packet before sending.

5. Information for Prospective Preceptors

Serving as a preceptor is an excellent opportunity for mutual professional development and community mentorship. Use the expectations and benefits below to help pitch the value of hosting you to prospective managers.

Preceptor Expectations	Key Benefits & Incentives
• Signed Agreement: Provide a tentative commitment form to include with the application. • Training & Supervision: Guide the student through daily workflows, similar to training a new employee. • Learning Value: Coordinate unique learning experiences within the facility as available. • Evaluations: Log competency assessments during and after the rotation.	• Continuing Education: Preceptors can earn direct CEU credits for hours spent teaching. • Extra Project Support: Students can complete special, back-burner facility projects. • Stay Up-to-Date: Engaging with student inquiries keeps practitioners close to current research. • Professional Growth: Add valuable leadership, teaching, and mentorship experience to your resume.