

JULY
2024

NUTRITION

NEWS

August

- 6 Summer II last day
- 10 Commencements. Bachelor's 9:00 AM, Master's and Doctoral 2:00 PM
- 14 New Graduate Student Orientation
- 16 NUTR Faculty Retreat - Thomas Ranch (faculty only)
- 19 First Day of Classes - Fall 2024
- 23 FY24 Surplus Deadline: Transfer items to surplus. Place usable items on loading dock shelves. Contact Emma L. for guidance.

September

- 2 Labor Day - Faculty and Staff Holiday
- 20 Fall Departmental Welcome Reception
- 30 DPD Orientation



Welcome to the Department!



Alicia Gilmore

Dietetic Internship Director, Clinical Associate Professor

Alicia Gilmore, M.S., RD, CSO, LD, joined the Department of Nutrition as Clinical Associate Professor on August 1st. With over 25 years of experience as a clinical dietitian, Alicia has practiced in a variety of settings, focusing extensively on oncology patients and, for the past seven years, providing specialized medical nutrition therapy to individuals with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) and MSA (multi-system atrophy). She is also a dedicated trainer for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, where for the last eight years, she has taught dietetic students, interns, and dietitians how to perform Nutrition Focused Physical Exams and diagnose malnutrition in both adult and pediatric populations.



Meghan Windham

Associate Dietetic Internship Director, Clinical Assistant Professor

Meghan Windham, MPH, RD, LD, joined the Department of Nutrition as Clinical Assistant Professor and Associate Director of the Dietetic Internship Program on July 15th. She specializes in nutrition education and care for college-aged populations, with a B.S. in Nutritional Science from Texas A&M and an MPH and dietetic internship from the University of Texas School of Public Health-Houston. Meghan has made significant contributions in areas such as eating disorders, weight management, and medical nutrition therapy. An active member of the Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, she has been recognized as the Young Dietitian of the Year by TAND.



Welcome to the Department!



Dr. Waylon Hastings

Assistant Professor

Dr. Waylon Hastings joined the Department of Nutrition as Assistant Professor on August 1st. After completing undergraduate degrees in Biochemistry, Genetics, and Mathematics from Texas A&M University in 2013, he obtained a Ph.D. in Biobehavioral Health and Bioethics from Pennsylvania State University in 2020. Previously a National Institute on Aging supported Postdoctoral Research Scientist at Tulane University School of Medicine, he collaborates with the Telomere Research Network and CONsortium of METabolics Studies (COMETS) to develop methods to measure 'biological age' and functional decline in humans. He plans to continue this work at Texas A&M, expanding his research enterprise to investigate how metabolic stressors impact the ability of these measures to answer questions about mechanisms of aging and disease.

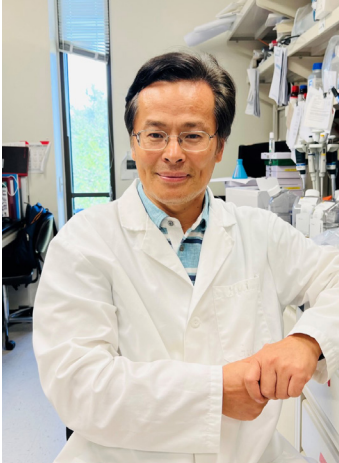


Dr. Hyunjung "Grace" Lee

Assistant Professor

Although Dr. Grace Lee is not new to our department, we are thrilled to recognize and celebrate her well-deserved promotion to Assistant Professor within the Department of Nutrition. After a couple of years as a Visiting Assistant Professor and ACES Faculty Fellow Grace successfully developed a plan for an independent research program and was promoted to tenure-track Assistant Professor. Over the years, Dr. Lee has made contributions to the fields of behavioral nutrition, global food security, and community-based nutrition interventions. Her research focuses on identifying barriers to healthy eating and physical activity among underserved populations and developing innovative, cost-effective interventions to address and overcome these challenges.

Faculty Highlights



Dr. Shaodong Guo

Appointed to NIH Review Group

Dr. Shaodong Guo has been invited to serve as a Standing Member of the Diabetes, Endocrinology, and Metabolic Diseases B Study Section of the NIH-NIDDK, beginning July 1, 2024. In addition, Dr. Guo has been active as an ad hoc reviewer for the NIH-NIDDK Pathophysiology of Obesity and Metabolic Disease study section and has contributed to various prestigious review panels, including the Swiss National Science Foundation, Texas A&M Innovation, and faculty promotion evaluations at New York University.

Dr. Regan Bailey

Contributions Highlighted at Major Nutrition Conferences

Dr. Regan Bailey, Dr. Cowan-Pyle, and Diane Mitchell coauthored seven presentations at the American Society for Nutrition annual NUTRITION 2024 meeting in Chicago, IL. Dr. Bailey also organized the 5th International Conference on Precision Nutrition and Metabolism in Public Health and Medicine in Ioannina, Greece where she presented research on dietary quality among U.S. adolescents and emerging adults in NHANES 2015-2018. Additionally, Dr. Bailey participated in the NIH Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Study Section on July 15th-16th.



Dr. Bradley Johnston

Presents at International Conferences

Dr. Bradley Johnston was an invited presenter at the Obesity and Hypertension Canada Conference on low sodium salt substitutes in Banff, Alberta (April 2024), at the 31st European Congress on Obesity on innovative practice guideline methods in Venice, Italy (May 2024), and at the Strengthening Causal Inference in Behavioral Obesity Research R25 Course at the University of Arkansas/Arkansas Children's Research Institute (July 2024).



Faculty Highlights



Dr. Catharine Ross

Delivers Keynote at Retinoids Conference

Catharine Ross gave the opening keynote address on “Vitamin A and Immunity” to the 7th International Conference on Retinoids, held in St. Paul MN, July 7-11 and organized by the FASEB Summer Research Conferences. She was one of 3 of the conferees who had been present in 1982 at the first conference in this biennial series (then called the FASEB Summer Conference on Vitamin A). In the photo, she is front and center!

Dr. Karen Beathard

Promoted from Instructional Associate Professor to Instructional Professor and Mentorship Program to be Showcased at FNCE 2024 and

Congratulations to Dr. Beathard on her promotion from Instructional Associate Professor to Instructional Professor! This incredibly well deserved promotion follows her years of dedication to education, student success, and the Department of Nutrition as a whole. In addition, Dr. Karen Beathard’s abstract, “RD Mentorship Program: Increasing Interest in Preceptorship of Dietetic Interns,” was peer-reviewed and selected for the 2024 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo™ (FNCE®) poster session, which will be held from October 5-8, 2024. Contributing students from Texas A&M University are Bailee Chavez, Breanna Chavez, Julia Harrison, and Madysen Stasney, with Kenneth Rogers from Texas Tech University also contributing.



Staff Highlights



Dr. Ximena Paez-Colasante

Selected for 2024-2025 LEAD AgriLife Cohort

Ximena Paez-Colasante, Ph.D., has been selected for the 2024-2025 LEAD AgriLife cohort. Established in 2023, LEAD AgriLife is dedicated to developing emerging leaders across the Texas A&M AgriLife enterprise. This program recognizes participants who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to enhancing their leadership skills and advancing the mission of Texas A&M AgriLife. Throughout the program, these individuals will engage in workshops, seminars and practical exercises designed to develop their leadership skills.

Bea Bradley

Department Program Coordinator

Bea Bradley started July 15th at the Department of Nutrition's as Program Coordinator. She recently graduated in May 2024 with a Bachelor's of Science in Nutrition from Texas A&M University. She will be working with Marketing and Communications as well as undergraduate outreach and recruitment and is excited for the future here in the department.





Attendees included: Aaron Riviere, Karen Beathard, Holly Alexander, Kirsten Cook, Haana Gibbs, Gabby Rivera-Vega, Missay Turengen, Lindsey Teague, Nury Ramirez

Operation Border Health Preparedness

Dr. Karen Beathard, Aaron Riviere, and two teams of dedicated nutrition undergraduate students joined faculty and students from the Health Science Center, and Texas A&M Telehealth Institute in serving at Operation Border Health Preparedness (OBHP) in Laredo and Brownsville, Texas. OBHP is a week-long, 26-year-old Department of State Health Services emergency-preparedness exercise that delivers essential medical services to low socioeconomic areas in South Texas.

During the trip, our students engaged with over 500 individuals, offering nutrition education focused on dietary changes to mitigate the risks of chronic diseases. Through interactive sessions and practical demonstrations with local foods, the participants

learned valuable strategies to improve their overall health and well-being. Our nutrition students played a crucial role in this outreach effort, gaining hands-on experience in community nutrition and making a positive impact on the lives of those they served.

Additionally, this interprofessional experience provided the opportunity for nutrition students to serve collaboratively with medical, nursing, pharmacy, psychology and public health students and faculty. Daily huddles, debriefs, and reliance on fellow team members for translation promoted a unique interprofessional learning experience for all attendees. Further, these experiences yielded interprofessional networks that will extend beyond OBHP.

Student & Trainee Spotlights



Nirjhar Ruth Ghosh - Scholarship Success

Nirjhar Ruth Ghosh's recent PhD publication was recognized as a scholarship success by the U.S. GRADE Network, an organization that organizes workshops to promote best practices in guideline development and systematic reviews. The Network offers scholarships to top applicants to join their workshops. During registration, Ruth shared that her PhD project—a systematic review on evidence-based competencies among nutrition professionals and students—would benefit from the knowledge she gained from the workshop. Impressed by her project proposal, the organizers awarded her a scholarship for the 2-day event. This year, following the publication of her review in the Journal of Nutrition, the U.S. GRADE Network highlighted Ruth's achievement as a notable success among their scholars. Way to go, Ruth!

tx.ag/USGradeNetworkStory tx.ag/RuthsPublication

Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking Schools: Increased Confidence in Preparing Safe and Healthy Meals during a Power Outage
Odessa Keenan M.A., CHES
Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service, Department of Nutrition

BACKGROUND
Texans have faced significant challenges due to a range of natural disasters, highlighting the critical need for emergency preparedness, particularly in maintaining health and nutrition during crises.

OBJECTIVE
Dinner Tonight Emergency Preparedness Healthy Cooking Schools should increase awareness of risk to health during emergencies and educate individuals on how to prepare to maintain good health during emergencies.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW
Use of Theory
Dinner Tonight Emergency Preparedness Healthy Cooking Schools use the Health Belief Model to encourage participants to take action in creating and maintaining emergency meal kits and other emergency preparations for their families.

PARTICIPANTS INCREASED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF...

the correct portion of the foods they prepare	48%
how meal planning can help save time and reduce costs	67.3%
how to handle the risk of power outages	64.1%

PARTICIPANTS INCREASED THEIR CONFIDENCE IN...

modifying recipes to reduce calorie content	74.8%
meal planning to prepare healthy meals	71.3%
daily preparation, storage, and use of emergency meal kits	70.4%

EVALUATION METHODS
Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking Schools are evaluated using a retrospective post questionnaire. Healthy Cooking School participants are evaluated in areas of understanding of meal planning, nutritional content of foods, and impact of food on health (Figure 1), as well as level of confidence in meal planning, recipe modification, and food safety (Figure 2). Participants are also asked about program satisfaction (Figure 3).

DISCUSSION
In conclusion, Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking Schools are effective means of education to increase confidence in preparing safe and healthy meals since the initial implementation. Dinner Tonight Emergency Preparedness Healthy Cooking Schools have been implemented statewide to meet the needs of Texans living a variety of natural disasters.

Odessa Keenan Presents Research

Odessa Keenan presented her poster "Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking Schools: Increased Confidence in Preparing Safe and Healthy Meals during a Power Outage," at the 2024 Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior Conference on July 31st. The Dinner Tonight Emergency Preparedness Healthy Cooking Schools aim to raise awareness about health risks during emergencies and educate individuals on how to maintain good health and nutrition in such situations. Great work, Odessa!

Student & Trainee Spotlights



Dr. Gabrielli De Mello PAPH Acceptance

Dr. Gabrielli De Mello, a post-doctoral fellow in Healthy Living, was accepted into the competitive training program: Physical Activity & Public Health Postgraduate Course on Research Directions and Strategies. This weeklong training program, hosted in the fall by the University of South Carolina, brings together the top experts in physical activity and public health research, including program officers from the NIH and CDC, to train the next generation of research scientists. Only about two dozen post-doctoral students or early career faculty are selected for this prestigious opportunity each year. Congratulations Gabrielli!



Marianny Alvarado Receives Travel Award

Marianny Alvarado, a PhD student focusing on prenatal micronutrient deficiencies in the Suzuki Lab since July 2022, was honored with a travel award at the International Retinoid Conference VII, part of the FASEB Science Research Conference series held in Saint Paul, Minnesota to support and honor her research. In the group photo of the award recipients, Marianny is the third person from the left. We are so proud of you Marianny!

Incoming Graduate Students Receiving Awards



Laurel Goldston

Doctoral Research Excellence Assistantship

Laurel Goldston, a recent graduate of Florida International University with dual BS degrees in Nutrition and Dietetics, has been selected for the highly competitive Doctoral Research Excellence Assistantship and will join the Department of Nutrition's graduate program. Only four students across the Texas A&M University System receive this prestigious award each year. Laurel's background in microbiology enzyme design and spaceflight nutrition, combined with her role as a sensory scientist for global brands, highlights her exceptional research potential and commitment to advancing her field.



Kevin Nguyen

Avilés -Johnson Graduate Fellowship, Lechner Scholar Grant

Kevin Nguyen, who recently completed his BS in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology with a minor in Nutrition at Chapman University, has been awarded the Dr. Dionel Avilés '53 and Dr. James Johnson '67 Fellowship. This highly competitive fellowship supports only a select number of students each year and will support his graduate studies in the Department of Nutrition at Texas A&M University. Kevin's extensive research experience, including projects on plant genetics presented at national conferences and in preparation for publication, highlights his significant contributions to the field.



Victoria Martinez

Avilés -Johnson Graduate Fellowship, Lechner Scholar Grant

Victoria Martinez, who recently completed her BS in Biology from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in May 2024, has been awarded the Dr. Dionel Avilés '53 and Dr. James Johnson '67 Fellowship. This prestigious fellowship provides up to four years of funding and will support her graduate studies at Texas A&M University. Victoria's research leadership, including her role as project lead for UTRGV's Engaged Scholar and Artist Award and her co-authorship of a publication on green lubricant additives, underscores her academic achievements and research potential.



Khatereh Babakhani

Lechner Scholar Grant

Khatereh Babakhani, who earned her Master's degree from Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, has been awarded the prestigious Lechner Scholar Grant. This competitive grant, offered to select students within the Texas A&M University System, recognizes Khatereh's outstanding academic achievements and potential in the field of nutrition. As a Lechner Scholar, Khatereh will join the Department of Nutrition's graduate program and participate in the Agricultural Graduate Excellence Leadership Community (AgGIE LC). This community will provide her with invaluable opportunities.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Take a look at our departments most recent publications!

Dr. Heidi Vanden-Brink Published in the Journal of Endocrinology: Changes in the bile acid pool and timing of female puberty: potential novel role of hypothalamic TGR5. Vanden Brink H, Vandeputte D, Brito IL, Ronnekleiv OK, Roberson MS, Lomniczi A.

tx.ag/ChangesInBileAcidPool

Dr. Rebecca Seguin-Fowler's Team Published: Multilevel Interventions Targeting Obesity: State of the Science and Future Directions. Seguin-Fowler RA, Graham ML, Demment M, Uribe ALM, Rethorst CD, Szeszulski J.

tx.ag/MultilevelInterventions

Dr. Shaodong Guo and His Lab Members Published Several Research Articles on Diabetes and Obesity Research in High Impact Factor Journals including on diabetes and obesity research in high impact factor (IF) journals, including Nature Communication (IF16.6), Diabetes (IF7.7), Diabetologia (IF8.4), J of British Pharmacology (IF9.4), Cellular and Molecular Gastroenterology and Hepatology (IF7.2), Aging Cell (IF8), American J of Pathology (IF6), International J of Molecular Sciences (IF5.6), and Nutrients (IF5.7) in 2023-2024. For more information go to the link.

tx.ag/ShaadongGuo

Dr. Shaodong Guo Published His New Book: Research On Metabolic Diseases Due To Overnutrition and it is available on Amazon at the following link.

tx.ag/MetabolicDiseasesDueToOvernutrition

Regan Bailey's Team Published: Dietary Quality and Diet-Related Factors Among Emerging Adults (18-23 y) in the United States Are a Cause for Concern: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2015-2018. Cowan-Pyle AE, Bailey RL, Gao J, Hess JM, Ademu LO, Smith JL, Mitchell DC, Racine EF.

tx.ag/DietaryQuality

Dr. Sumathi Venkatesh and Odessa Keenan Contributed to and Published: Cooking Well with Diabetes: A Healthy Cooking School for Diabetes Prevention and Management. Venkatesh S, Leal DO, Valdez A, Butler PI, Keenan OE, Montemayor-Gonzalez E.

tx.ag/CookingWell

Dr. Jacob Szeszulski at the Research and Extension Center - Dallas Led and Published: Optimization of implementation strategies using the Multiphase Optimization Strategy (MOST) framework: Practical guidance using the factorial design. Szeszulski J, Guastaferrero K.

tx.ag/OptimizationUsingMOST

Dr. Shaodong Guo and his lab members Dr. Wanbao Yang and student worker Jeffrey Guo wrote a textbook chapter entitled: "Insulin Resistance in Obesity" for the Metabolic Syndrome: A comprehensive textbook, 2nd edition, pages 405-427, editor Rexford S. Ahima, Springer International Publishing, 2024.

Have a great start to your Fall 2024 Semester!

Send your news to bea.bradley@agnet.tamu.edu
so we can include you in the next newsletter!