

Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics

the accrediting agency for the
Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics



Shaping the Future: ACEND's Commitment to Strengthening and Advancing the Health of the Dietetics Profession

Nancy T. Prange, PhD, MPH, RDN, LDN
ACEND Board



Disclosures

- ACEND Past Chair
- Program director of an ACEND- accredited program

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Learning Objectives

1. Connect the bridge between educational standards and the impact on the profession

2. Identify three impacts of artificial intelligence on the profession of dietetics

3. List two reasons for introducing new clinical skills to the practice of dietetics

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About ACEND®

Mission:

- Ensure the quality of nutrition and dietetics education to advance the practice of the profession

Responsibilities:

- Set national standards for education accreditation
- Evaluate education programs

Recognition/Accreditation

- US Department of Education
- Functions separately from the Academy



About ACEND®

ACEND is required by the U.S. Department of Education to be separate and independent from the Academy

- Separate Board
- Separate ballot
- Separate budget
- Independent decision making



ACEND's ability to self-govern is key to the health of the profession and its future

About ACEND®

ACEND is an agency of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.





ACEND® Board 2025-2026

February 14, 2025 US Department of Education Dear Colleague Letter to Academic Institutions

- Effective February 28, 2025.
- Guidance states that Federal law prohibits educational institutions from using race in decisions pertaining to:
 - Admissions
 - Hiring and promotion
 - Compensation
 - Financial aid
 - Scholarships and prizes
 - Administrative support
 - Discipline
 - Housing
 - Graduation ceremonies
 - And all other aspects of student, academic and campus life”

What is potentially at Risk

- Students' financial aid
- Grant funding and student support
- Other funding, programs, etc.
- Courses and curricula
- Programs and their accreditation
- Faculty positions

Decision separate
from the Academy

Recruiting ACEND Program Reviewers



- Great opportunity for networking, learn from others, understand the ACEND standards
- Responsibilities: 2 self-studies/site visits/year; Program reports (2-4/year)
- In need of all practitioners
- Applications on ACEND website www.eatrightpro.org/acend

ACEND Accredited Programs: As of February 2026

TOTAL ACEND Accredited Programs	621
Dietetic Technician Programs (DT)	18
Coordinated Programs (CP)	54
Didactic Programs (DPD)	205
Dietetic Internships (DI)	236
Future Graduate Programs (GP)	96
Advanced Doctoral Programs (ADP)	2
International Programs (ICP & FDE)	10

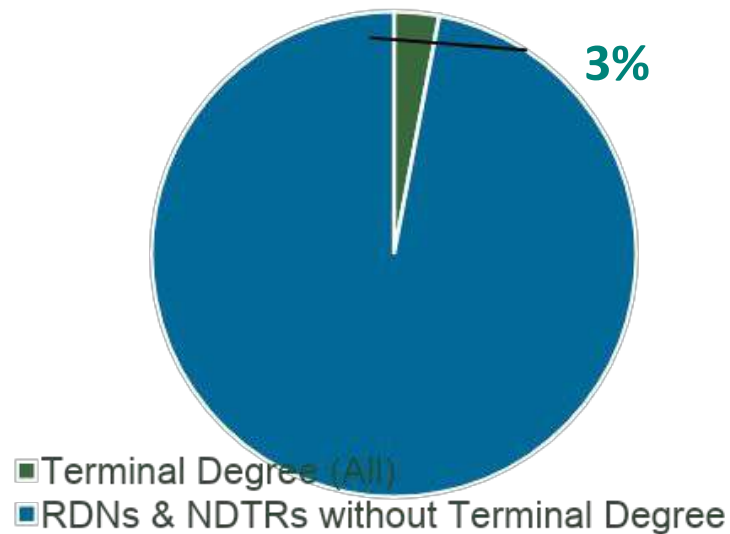
ACEND Doctoral Standards for the RDN



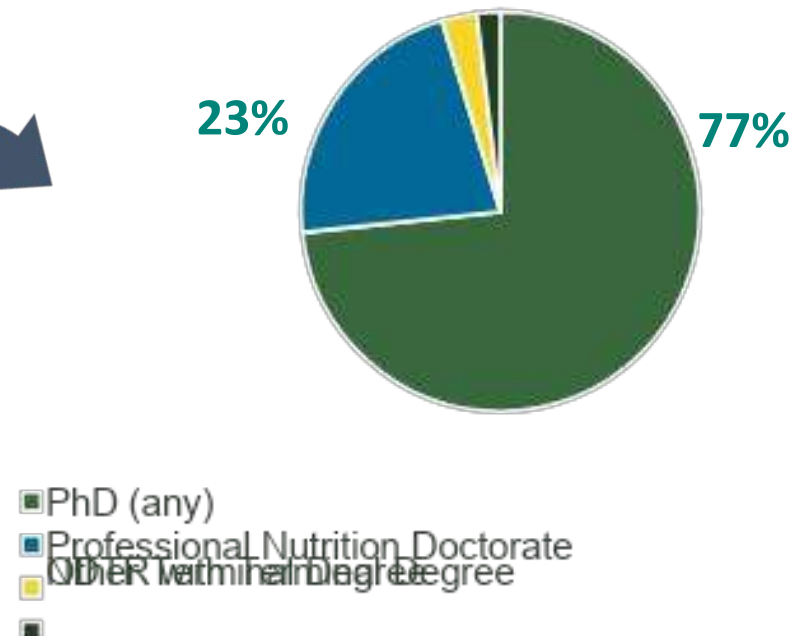
Shortage of RDNs with Terminal Degree

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics data show that only 3.0% of RDNs hold a terminal degree

RDNs with Terminal Degrees



Type of Terminal Degree

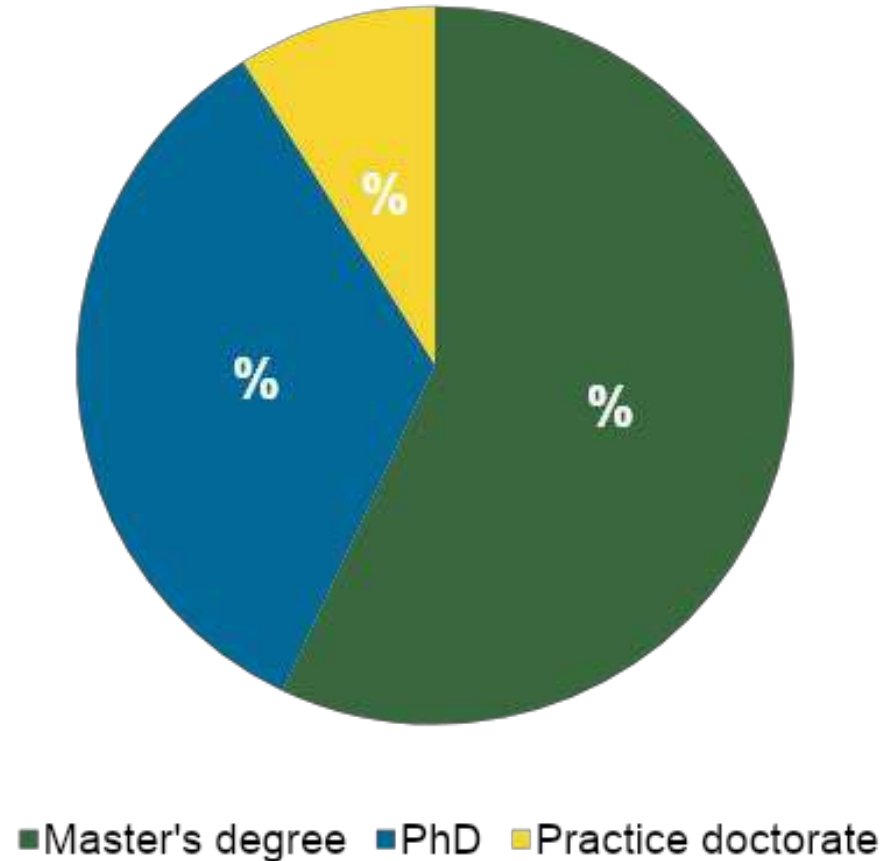


Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Member and Non-Member RDN and NDTR Data. June 2022.

Growing Need as RDN Moved to Master's Level

Percent of Program Directors by Highest Degree Earned

More than half of ACEND program directors do not have a terminal degree



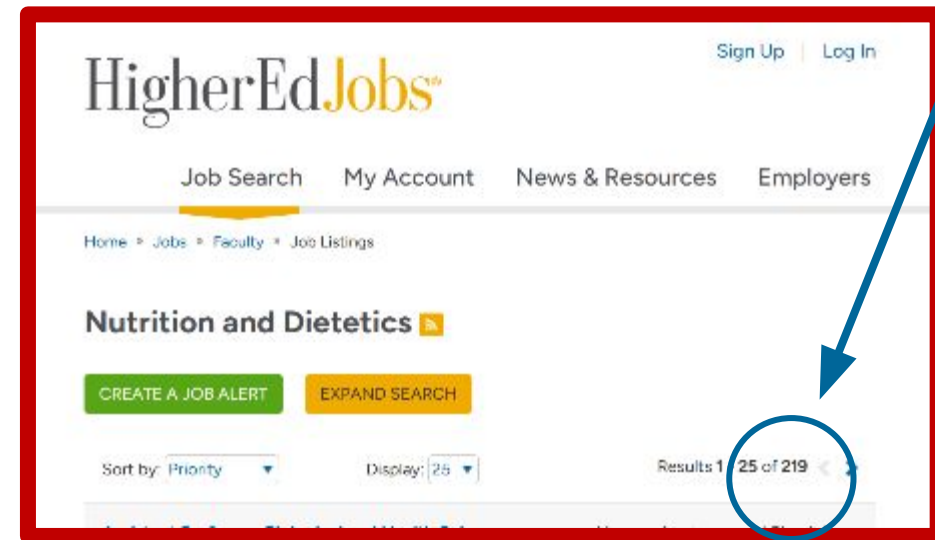
Shortage of Faculty

At any one time there are over 200 nutrition and dietetics faculty openings posted in HigherEdJobs.com

The demand for PhDs in the health sciences has significantly increased in industry, government, and policy sectors.

In 2022, private sector employment of PhDs (47%) exceeded the education sector (41%).

219 open
positions; 2/26



Davis et al., JAND 2023
Konig et al, PLoS One, 2022

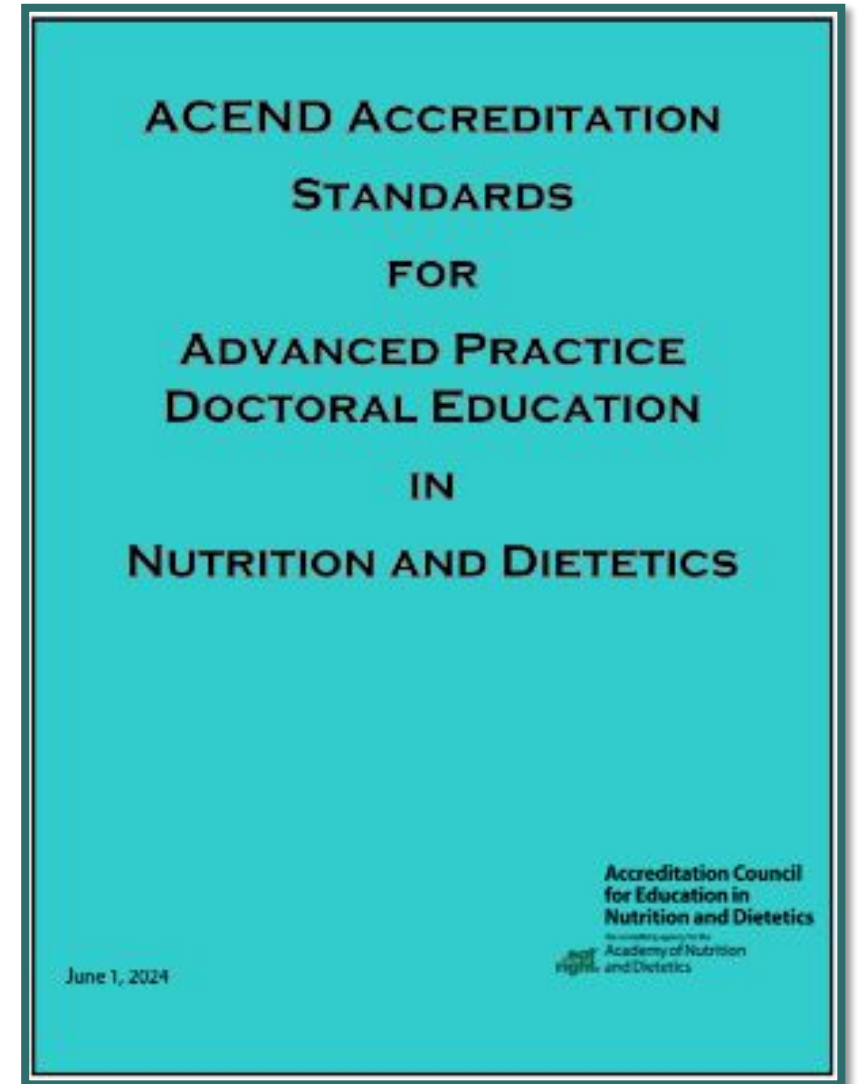
Shortage of Terminally Prepared Practitioners

Need for:

- Conducting and publishing Practice-based research
- Disseminating results of outcome studies, including quality assurance
- Expansion of the dietetics profession into new leadership opportunities

ACEND Advanced Practice Doctorate Level Standards (APD)

- Released June 1, 2024
- Optional standards and degree level
- For the RDN with minimum 2 years of professional experience
- Not entry-level
- Professional doctorate and not PhD
- Accessed at www.eatrightpro.org/ACEND





ACEND Standards Updates



©Yan Krukau; free photo at Pexels.com

ACEND Accreditation Standards

For Nutrition and Dietetics

Coordinated Programs (CP)

Adopted September 1, 2021; Effective June 1, 2022

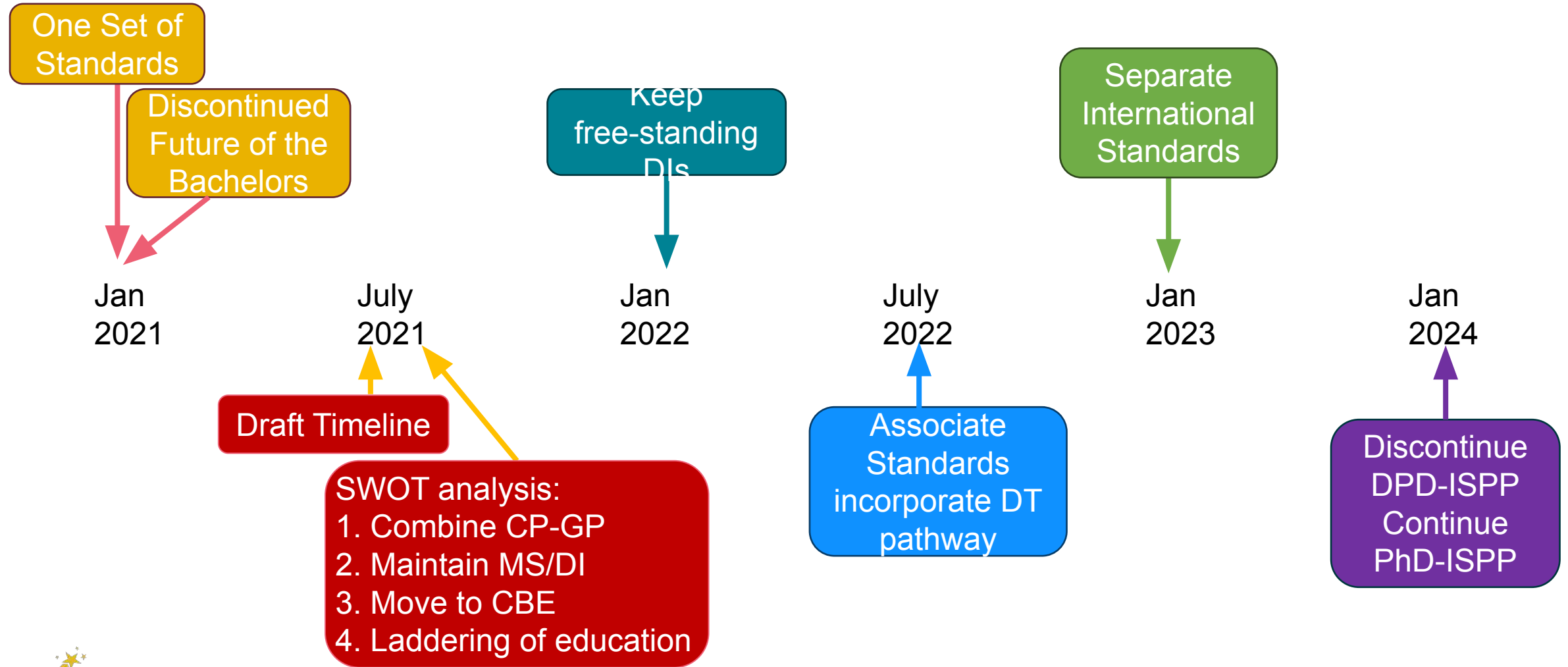
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ACEND Standards

- ACEND updates its standards every 5 years
- Currently on the 2022 Standards
- Next update is for the 2027 Standards

ACEND Board Discussions and Decisions January 2021 - January 2024 : ACEND 2027 Accreditation Standards



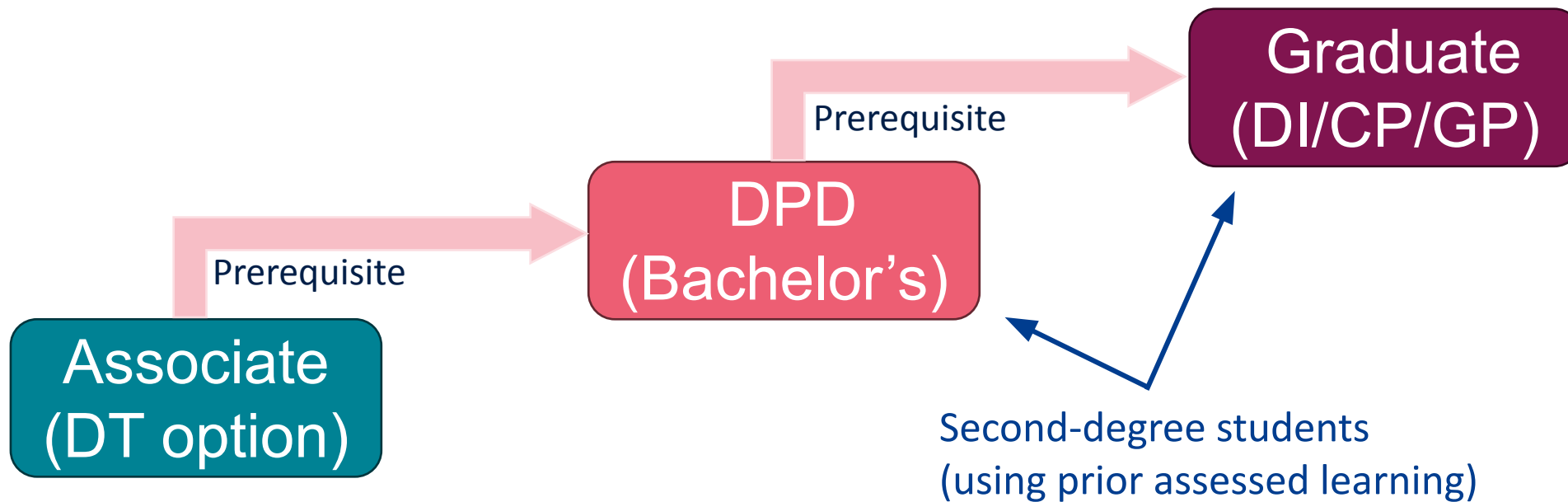
Board Discussions and Decisions:

2027 ACEND Accreditation Standards

- Move all programs to competency-based education (CBE)
- Ensure education laddering
- Move to a general associate-level standards; Incorporate DT pathway
- Combine CP and GP into one set of standards
- Keep DPD plus graduate-DI as a separate pathway
 - Protect interns in intern-identified SP programs
- Support accreditation for international dietetics programs
- Discontinue ISPP-DPD-Verification Statement
 - Keep ISPP-PhD

2027 Standards: Education Laddering

- The degree curriculum and student competence are built upon from the previous degree.
- Allows students to progress through successive degrees while carrying forward course credits as completed prerequisites.



Practice Applications

Competency-based education (CBE) has many tangible and intangible benefits:

- Improved exam pass rates save graduates money, stress, and time

	Coordinated Programs (CP)	Dietetic Internship (DI)	Graduate Programs (GP)	Significance (P Value)
Most Recent Annual Data - 2022-2023				
Pass Rate on the RD Exam – (1 year of first attempt)	88%	88%	94%	P<.05
First Time Pass Rate on the RD Exam	60%	63%	78%	P<.05

- Performance Indicators articulate the practitioner’s skills for better communication with legislators and the public
- CBE provides global recognition to support future pathways for practitioner mobility

Faculty and preceptors need training to develop a strong basis in CBE

The graphic for "Advancing the Profession" is a white rectangular box with rounded corners, centered on the page. Inside the box, the text "Advancing the Profession" is written in a bold, dark teal sans-serif font. Below the text is a visual metaphor for advancement: a series of five light brown wooden blocks arranged in a staircase pattern, ascending from the bottom left to the top right. Black curved lines connect the top of each block to the bottom of the next block, creating a continuous upward path.

Advancing the Profession

SNAP to LOG

meals by one photo

Onion: 15 g / 4 kcal

Arugula: 15 g / 4 kcal

Spinach: 30 g / 9 kcal

Avocado: 40 g / 64 kcal



Pomegranate: 15 g / 15 kcal

Radicchio: 15 g / 5 kcal

Lentils: 50 g / 47 kcal

Onion: 15 g / 4 kcal

TRACK

calories with ease

Breakfast 303 kcal 01.02.24



Protein: g

17

Carbs: g

30

Fats: g

12

Calories: kcal

270

Meal composition:

- avocado 40 g / 64 kcal
- spinach 30 g / 9 kcal
- arugula 15 g / 4 kcal
- pomegranate 15 g / 15 kcal
- onion 15 g / 4 kcal
- radicchio 15 g / 5 kcal

Meal composition:

- radicchio 15 g / 5 kcal

Log meal

Ask AI

ask a nutritionist

AI Food

Stats

Profile

REACH

ideal weight faster

Daily intake

1714 kcal 54 left

1808

protein 68 g
0 left

fat 52 g
0 left

carbs 212 g
10 left

Losing weight

4,5 kg

80 kg

0.5 kg left

75 kg

Meals Ratio

24%

41%

23%

12%

AI Food

Stats

Profile

BUILD

goods habits

Intake Ratio

Day

Week

Month

01.02.2024 - 07.02.2024

Meals

Macros

Ratio diagram



Week average

Breakfast 24%
413 kcal

Lunch 41%
706 kcal

Dinner 23%
398 kcal

Other 12%
206 kcal

Total 1723 kcal / 1808 goal

AI Food

Stats

Profile

Dietetics can not be mostly a profession of words!



The Age of AI

- Chat GPT rated higher than human therapists
- Friend chatbot more accessible in crisis

(PLOS Mental Health, 2025; BMC Psychology, 2025)

AI “Transforming” Nutrition Counselling



©JM Magazine image, 2025



Produced high-quality nutrition counseling

Anthology, 2024



Praised for speed and accessibility, especially in underserved areas

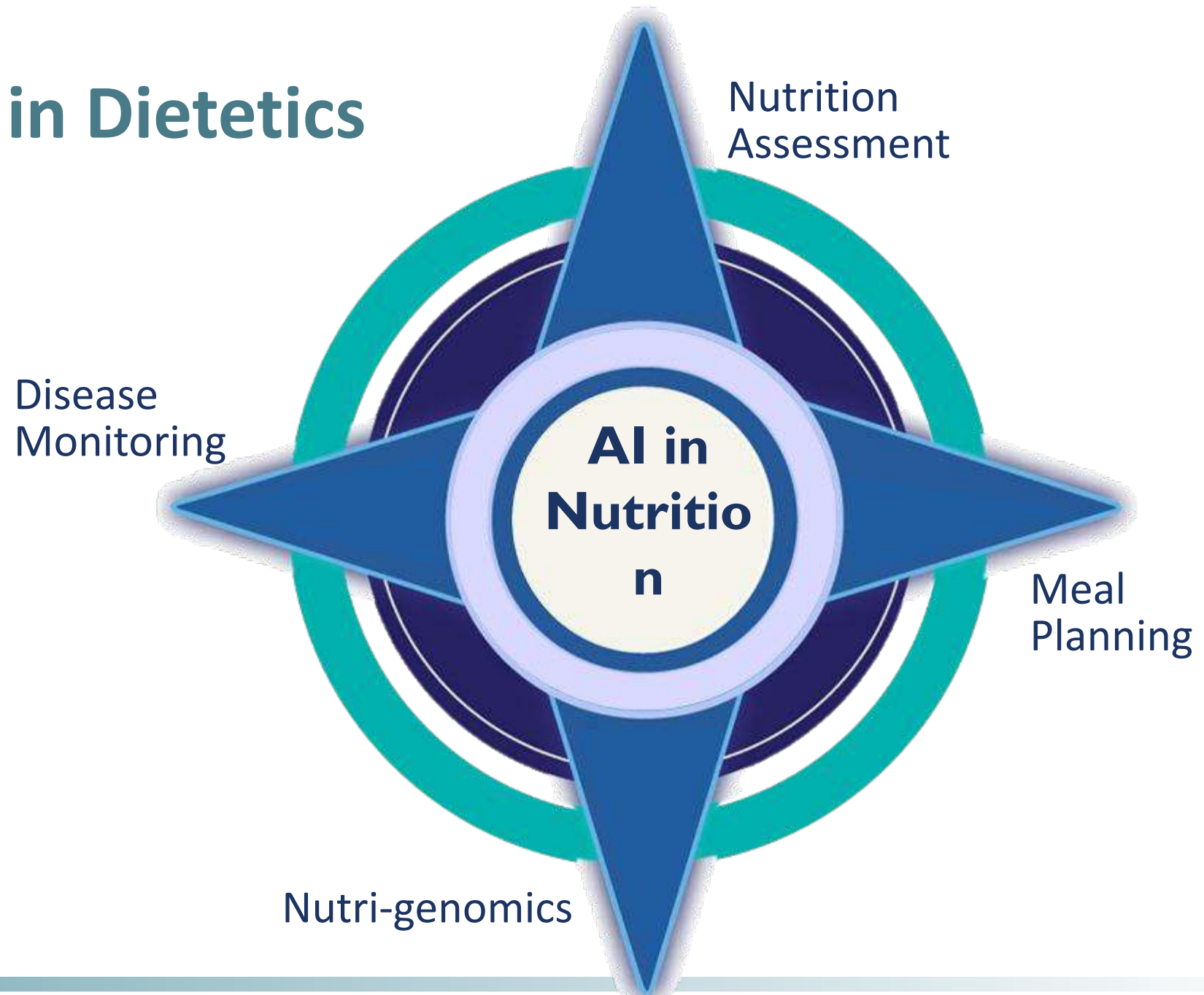
JAMA Network, 2025



Makes nutrition counseling more scalable, data-driven, and accessible

Review in Springer Nature, 2025

Power of AI in Dietetics



Dietetics

Future is at risk!

A man in a dark suit is walking away from the camera down a long, straight road that stretches towards the horizon. The road is flanked by blue water on both sides. The word "RISK" is painted in large, light blue capital letters across the width of the road. The man is walking on the white center line of the road, which leads directly into the word "RISK".

RISK

The background of the slide is a photograph of medical supplies on a light blue surface. In the foreground, a pair of hands wearing purple nitrile gloves holds a syringe with a green and white checkered label that reads 'Enteral' and 'Commenced:'. To the left, there is a petri dish with a scale from 0 to 600. In the upper center, a white plastic container holds a syringe and a tube. To the right, another syringe with a green and white checkered label is visible. The overall scene suggests a clinical or laboratory setting.

Scopes of practice are blurring

Current State of Limited Scope of the RD: Creep into RDN Scope

RDs
cannot do
a skill in all
states

Skill not
included
in
curriculum

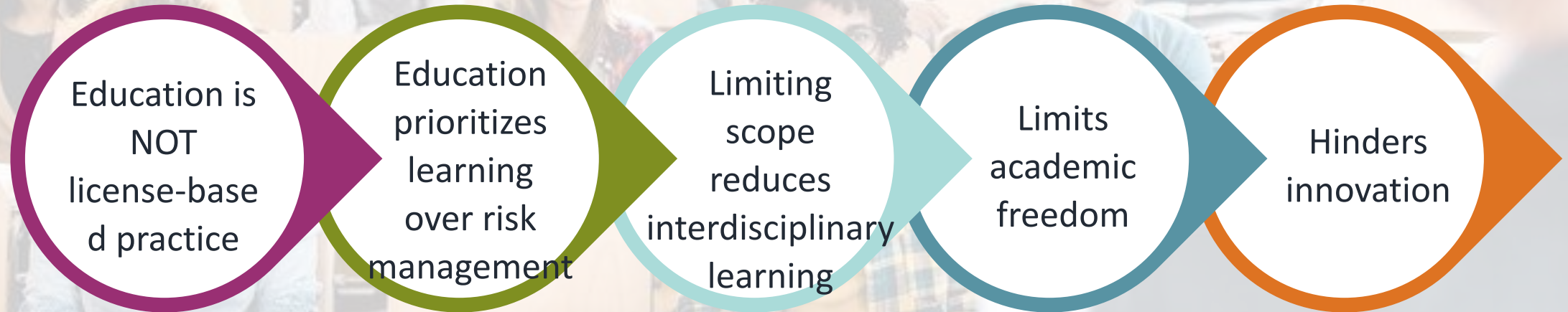
During a
shortage in a
state, RDs
lose out
because they
don't have
the skills

Other
professions
with the
skills
increase
their scope

RDs are left
behind.
Scope
shrinks or
improves at
a snail pace

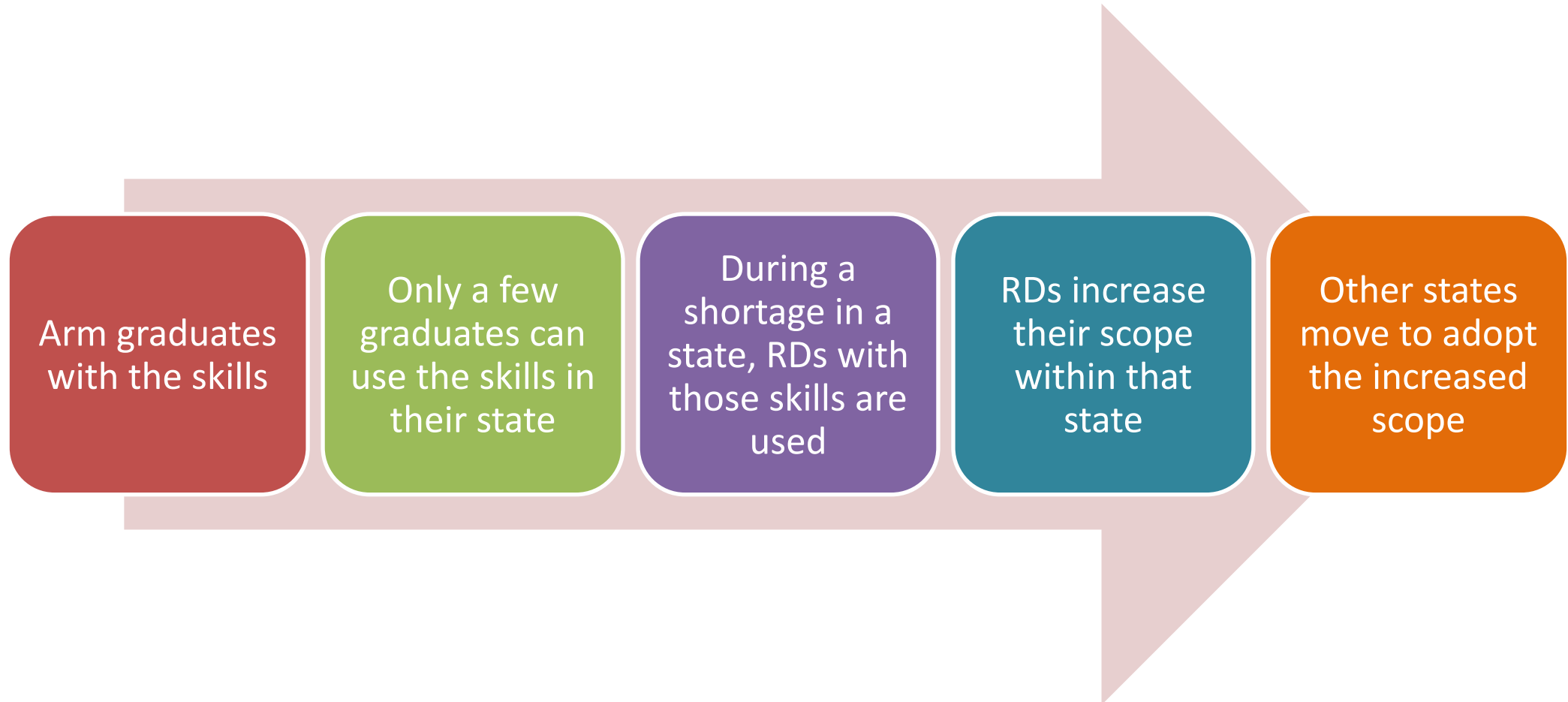
There is no such thing as limited scope in education

Scope of Practice Does Not Belong in Education



Education is the Key to Expanding Scope of Practice

Skills in the curriculum must come first, before licensure and scope



Creep on RDN Practice & Scope



RDN's

Weight Management

Diabetes & Insulin Education

Writing Diet Orders

Swallow Evaluation

Breastfeeding

Genetics

Health Coaching

Wellness & Medspas

Sports Nutrition

Vit. & Min. Injections

Nutritional

Take Back our Lanes



RDN's

Weight Management

Diabetes & Insulin Education

Writing Diet Orders

Swallow Evaluation

Breastfeeding

Genetic Counseling

Health Coaching

Vit. & Min. Injections

Sports Nutrition

Wellness & Medspas

Claim our space now or...
REGRET





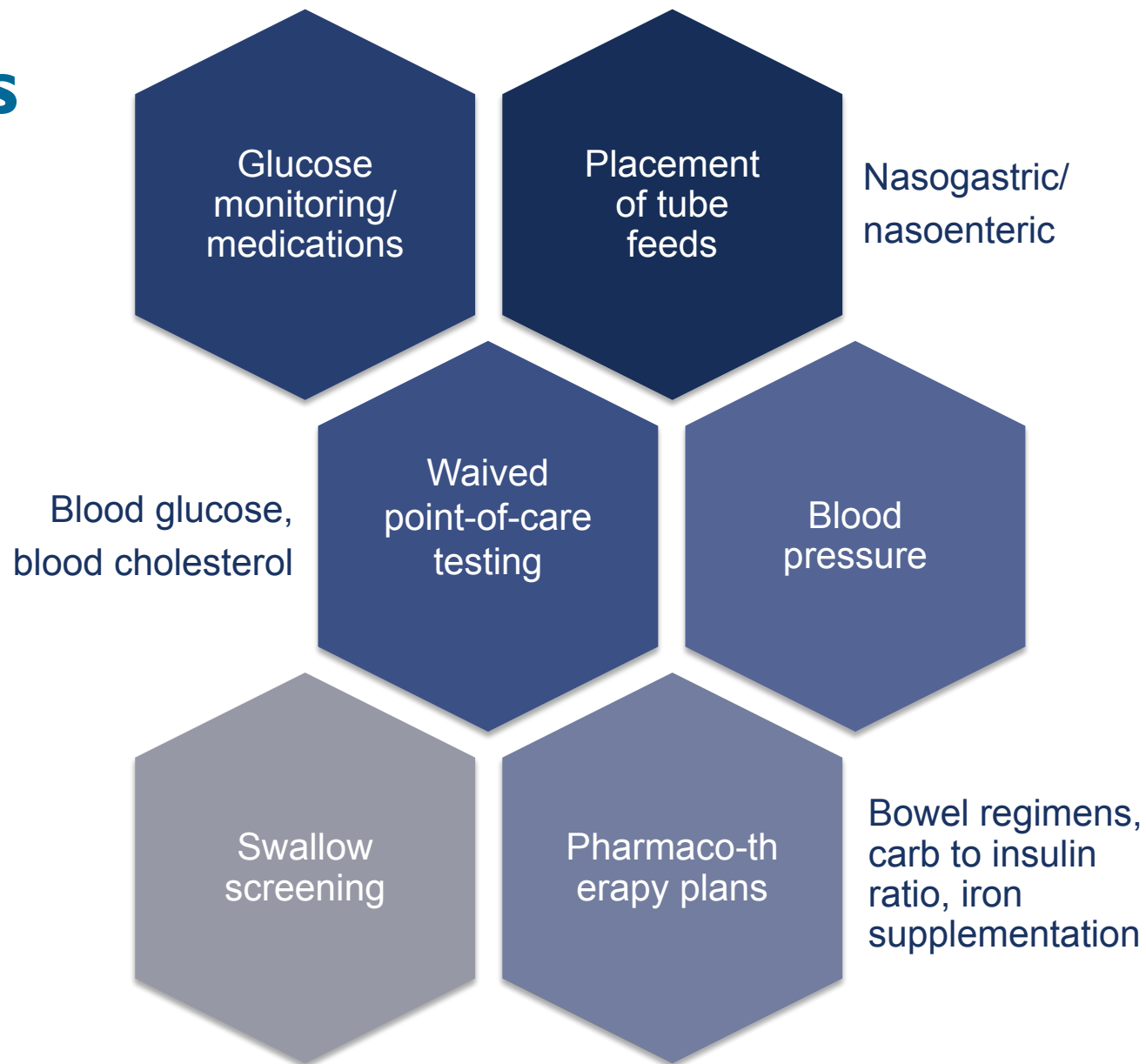
OPPORTUNITY

ACEND 2022 Standards

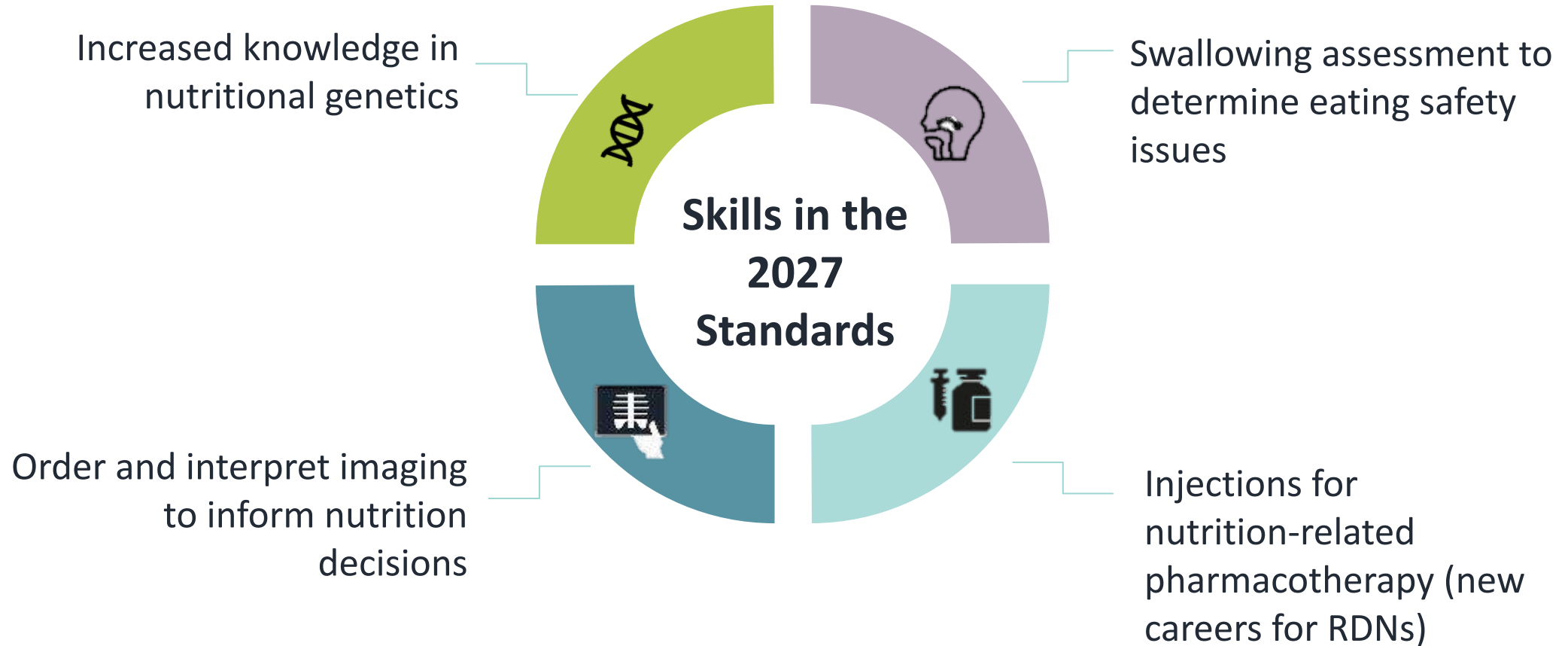
In the 2022 Standards ACEND added clinical skills:

1. Elevate the skills of RDNs
2. Serve the public
3. Enhance the value of the RDN
4. Support licensure

Plans to continue to enhance skills in the 2027 Standards



Expanding Clinical Skills: 2027 Standards



Taught in the academic setting

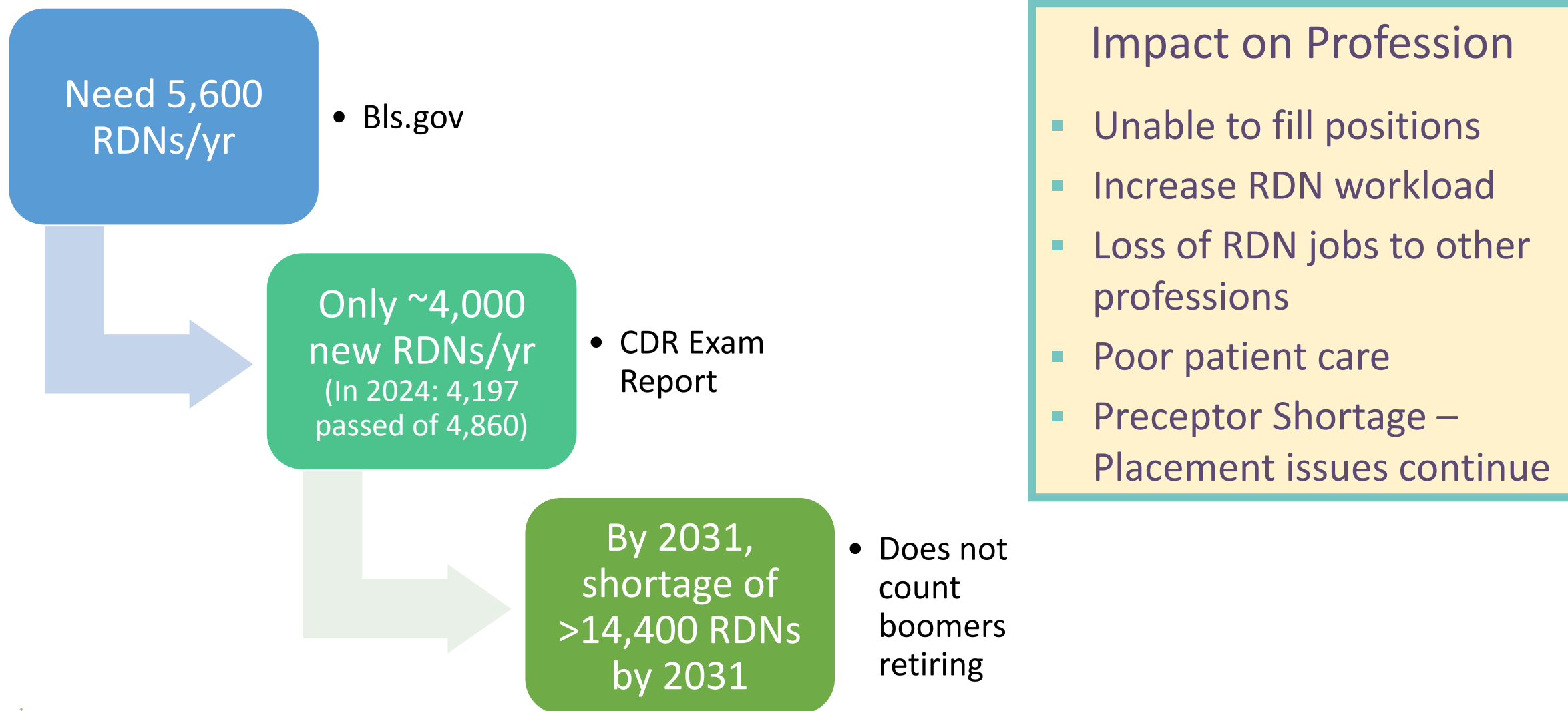
Shortage of RDNs



Projected Shortage of RDN Professionals

- Employment of RDNs is projected to grow 7%-11% from 2022 to 2031
 - About 5,600 openings for RDNs are projected each year, on average, over the decade.
(<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dietitians-and-nutritionists.htm>)
- Retirement of baby boomers

Impact of Shortage of RDNs on the Profession





What Can You Do to Help?

- Be positive about the profession – Combat negative talk
- Highlight the positive impact of the work of the RD – make it meaningful
- Work with other RDs to ensure an inclusive environment for all students/interns
- Make the time to be a mentor and a recruiter
- Advocate for the advancement of the RDN and your own advancement



ACEND Resources

ACEND Resources Webinars for Practitioners: [Eatright.org/acend](https://eatright.org/acend)



Public Notices and Announcements

- ACEND Updates
- Noteworthy Practices
- Filing a Complaint
- Accreditation Decisions
- Programs Under Review
- Virtual Town Hall Meetings

[Learn About >](#)

Webinar recordings relevant to practitioners



- [March 10, 2026](#) (Medical Nutrition Therapy and Chronic Disease: An Evidence Update for Nutrition and Dietetics Educators)
- [April 7, 2026](#) (2027 Accreditation Standards Updates)

Recording and Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes, presentation slides and recordings are posted below. Some meeting minutes include the responses to the questions asked during the town hall.

- [January 20, 2026](#) (2027 Accreditation Standards Q&A)
- [December 16 and 18, 2025](#) (2027 Accreditation Standards for All Program Types)
[Meeting Minutes](#) | [Presentation Slides](#)
- [September 24, 2025](#) (Draft 2027 Accreditation Standards for DIs)
- [September 16, 2025](#) (Draft 2027 Accreditation Standards Rationale)
- [July 8, 2025](#) (Organizing DI Programs in Competency Software)
- [June 17, 2025](#) (Beyond Accreditation: Enrollment Success Through Strategic Program Outreach)
- [April 15, 2025](#) (DICAS Application Process Task Force Update)
- [February 18, 2025](#) (ACEND Board Updates)
- [September 17, 2024](#) (Advanced Practice Doctoral Standards for the RDN)
- [July 23, 2024](#) (Importance of DPD Programs: Part 2)
- [February - March 2024](#) (Dietetics Application Process Task Force Town Hall Recordings/Q&A)
- [January 16, 2024](#) (Making an Impact: The Effectiveness of MNT by RDNs)
- [December 13, 2023](#) (Dietetics Application Process Task Force Updates)
- [November 14, 2023](#) (Open Q&A)
- [October 24, 2023](#) (Overcoming Challenges with International Student Admissions into ACEND-accredited Programs: A Recipe for Success)
- [September 19, 2023](#) (Swallow Screen for Dysphagia: What RDs Need to Know)
- [January 17, 2023](#) (Developing a Quality Graduate Program)
- [April 19, 2022](#) (2021 ACEND Program Outcomes)
- [March 29, 2022](#) (ACEND NDTR Webinar: Dietetic Dream Team: How the NDTR Can Support the RDN)
- [January 19, 2021](#) (Competency Based Education)
- [November 10, 2020](#) (Program Options for Free-Standing Dietetic Internships)

ACEND Resources Webinars for Practitioners: [Eatright.org/acend](https://eatright.org/acend)



ACEND Training and Volunteer Opportunities

- Program Directors
- Program Reviewers
- Preceptors and Mentors

[Learn About >](#)

Leadership Fundamentals

Centered Leadership

Cost: \$0

Course Time: 1 hour

This resource aims to identify participants' current leadership strengths and guides the development of these skills.

Joyful Leadership

Cost: \$0

Course Time: 5 hours

This resource explores traits of strong leaders and provides insight into developing those skills to lead others with a joyful mindset.

Communicate like a Leader

Cost: \$0

Course Time: 1 hour

This resource provides tools to enhance communication skills related to leadership from a leadership perspective.

Negotiation Proficiency

Salary Negotiation

Cost: \$0

Course Time: ~10 minutes

This resource provides quick strategies for salary negotiation during an interview.

Making the Most of Your Negotiation Situation

Cost: \$0

Course Time: ~30 minutes

This resource explains negotiation strategies related to conflict resolution. Using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Resolution Instrument (TKI) participants will optimize their negotiation tactics through role-play scenarios.

The Art of Negotiation

Cost: \$0

Course Time: 6 hours

This resource identifies negotiation strategies and demonstrates how to apply them in various settings while explaining the personal and behavioral characteristics of negotiators.

Self-Advocacy Strategies

Self-Advocacy: Be Your Own Champion

Cost: \$0

Course Time: 1 hour

This resource focuses on developing assertive leadership communication skills for self-advocacy in professional contexts. By exploring advocacy strategies and engaging in relevant practice scenarios, participants will gain practical experience applicable to real-world professional situations.

Advocacy in Leadership

Cost: \$0

Course Time: N/A

This resource is a compilation of written materials that explore advocacy in different areas of the professional world.

The Secret to Self-Advocacy

Cost: \$0

Course Time: ~20 minutes

This resource explores why self-advocacy can be difficult and provides steps to overcoming the fear of asking for what you want.*

**The presentation is directed to a female audience, however, the concepts are applicable to all genders.*

- Preceptor Course
- Becoming an ACEND reviewer
- Leadership training resources



References

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Commission on Dietetic Registration, *Number of RDNs with terminal degrees*, personal communication July 2024
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- Davis AM, Vogelzang JL, Affenito SG. The shortage of RDNs with a terminal degree: A call to action for the profession. *J Acad Nutr Diet*, 123(4) 2023: 569-575
- Konig J, Postdoctoral employment and future non-academic career prospects. PLoS ONE, 17(12):2022 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278091>
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- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Dietitian and Nutritionists. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dietitians-and-nutritionists.htm> Accessed August 2024

THANK YOU

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www.Eatright.org/acend



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