

Heather Krick

DI Personal Statement

Abra-cadaver

It was a magical experience the day I dissected the brain of a human cadaver. As I sat in the Gross Anatomy Lab at Drexel College of Medicine, I began to appreciate the woman who previously made her own discoveries using this complex organ. I imagined it must have been a difficult decision for her to make; to let others dissect and examine her body after her time had passed. However, as I reflected more on it throughout that day, I concluded that maybe it wasn't. Maybe she spent her life dedicated to helping others, and this was her way of bravely continuing that legacy. Maybe she was involved in research and was excited to learn more about the human body just as I am today. Maybe she, herself, worked in the healthcare field and understood the power of life-changing educational experiences. It was not long after this moment I realized that I was, both literally and spiritually, connected with this woman; just as this owner of Brain #5 generously devoted her body to take my education to an astonishing new perspective, I am devoted to pursue similar ideals – impact the lives of others. That day was my assurance that I belonged in the healthcare field and could make a strong impact in the field of dietetics.

During my first years at Drexel University, I focused on gaining experience, developing professional skills, and expanding my network of connections. To add more perspective, I increased my involvement with local community nutrition programs MANNA and Philabundance. To gain professional experience, I made connections with dietitians at a local hospital, shadowed their clinical practices during university breaks, and helped facilitate their community nutrition events. To expand my culinary experience and knowledge, I attained a Minor in Culinary Arts. I was selected to take a 10-week Master Culinary Course with Marc Vetri, and through my connection with him, I was able to attain a job at Severino Pasta to maintain and update their nutrition labels. To start applying my culinary and nutrition knowledge, I participate in Cook For Your Life centered around providing nutrition education and culinary knowledge to cancer patients and their caretakers. I also wanted to somehow tie-together my connections, so I initiated and coordinated a sponsorship between Severino Pasta and Cook For Your Life.

At first, I thought going into this field would be a “no-brainer”, but once I truly understood the hard work and dedication needed to impact the lives of others, I knew I had to keep learning and gain more experience. I saw a weakness in myself with clinical nutrition practice and wanted to further

increase this knowledge to prepare for the dietetic internship. This became my goal for my Drexel Co-op, where I worked at a long-term care facility alongside a team of dietitians and foodservice managers. I became familiar with their electronic medical record database, online menu planning system, virtual pharmacy, and wound care services. By the end of my Co-op, I was able to interpret pertinent lab values, differentiate various diets, calculate anthropometric values and nutrient needs, determine tube feeding requirements, write progress notes, feed residents, and recommend supplementation and diet changes. Based on my work, I was chosen to conduct a research project on the potential of a newly implemented diet on over 60 residents and present my findings and conclusions to the board of department heads. In my future jobs and dietetic internship, I know this clinical experience and knowledge will be a good baseline from which to grow and continue to impact the lives of others.

The brain is a very complex organ, and just as all parts must communicate to accomplish tasks, I've learned communication must be strong in dietetics while making decisions among interdisciplinary teams. Throughout my Co-op, my ability to communicate clearly and concisely with patients, physicians, speech therapists, and dietitians became my strength. I also challenged myself to take on more projects, which helped me understand I need to focus on my time management skills. I'm improving this through maintaining an organized task list and schedule. My academics remained one of my greatest strengths, and through completing extra coursework and maintaining a high GPA, I am graduating this spring with Honors Distinction, the highest award offered by Drexel's Honors Program.

In the short-term, I would like to further develop my culinary skills, and I plan to do this by remaining actively involved with volunteer cooking programs and with continued education in culinary arts. I'm anxious to also take on a leadership role in a local health/wellness program to expand my leadership skills while impacting more lives in the community. I plan to take more courses in the field as I pursue my long-term goal of attaining Master's degree. As a part of my Master's program, I intend to expand my food science and food chemistry knowledge, so I can support nutritional research efforts in the future.

My experiences and goals in the field are a perfect match for a dietetic internship at Sodexo; I am dedicated to expand my knowledge and impact the lives of others by further increasing my experience with senior living and long-term care, while maintaining my culinary and ServeSafe food safety knowledge. By working hard to help others be mindful of their food choices, I can improve their quality of life and send them home in a better condition.

I found my niche that magical day in the cadaver lab with the help of my influential friend, Mrs. Cadaver Brain #5, who generously donated her body that impacted my life. We share the compassion to impact others, and I am impressed and inspired by the impact made by dietitians, nutritionists, and community-focused chefs. I recognize that through mixing new and old wisdom, a twist of life-changing experiences, peppered with comprehensive self-reflection, a dash of professional skills, and my appetite to learn about the human body, I have done well and prepared the perfect recipe to pursue a fulfilling career in nutrition and dietetics.