



Benedictine
University

Federal Grant Supports Multicultural Scholars Program in Dietetics

November 10, 2020

Lisle, IL – The Department of Nutrition at Benedictine University has received a \$210,000 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), which supports a new Nutrition and Dietetics Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP). Through scholarships and other funds to support recruitment, engagement and academic success, the program aims to support the leadership development of dietetic students from underrepresented groups.

“The Nutrition Department at Benedictine University has been educating and training students to become Registered Dietitians for nearly 40 years,” said Catherine Arnold, M.S., Ed.D., RDN, LDN, professor and department chair. “The employment of dietitians continues to grow at a rate faster than average, but the percentage of dietetic students who identify themselves from an underrepresented minority group remains far fewer than the population they serve.”

The two-year program will provide \$6,500 per scholar, per year, for 10 scholars. Unique experiential features of the MSP program include mentoring, service learning, leadership training and study abroad opportunities. Through collaboration with community partners and study abroad, scholars will become leaders in understanding and improving nutrition as a social determinant of health. Students will also participate in a practicum that collaboratively develops a “Pay It Forward” community service project to positively impact a community in need.

“I am honored to have been selected as one of this year’s participants in the Nutrition and Dietetics Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP),” said Linda Vargas, senior at Benedictine. “Through the program, I have been able to participate in the virtual Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo and join the Nutrition and Dietetics Academy, which has helped me connect with registered dietitians who now serve as my mentors. Upon graduating from Benedictine, I plan on continuing my education in a Dietetic Internship program. Thanks to the scholarship, a financial burden has lifted, and I am able to focus on making my dreams of becoming a registered dietitian nutritionist as reality.”

As a part of the Multicultural Scholars Program, Benedictine University will implement an affiliation agreement with Harper College’s A.S. in Nutrition program, allowing for a seamless transfer pipeline from a diverse student body into a successful baccalaureate program. Five rising juniors will be selected for the program from Benedictine University’s current student body, while five scholars will be recruited as transfers from Harper.

“We are grateful to the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture for funding the next five years of this new program,” said Arnold. “Our goal is to recruit, train and mentor these students from groups historically underrepresented in USDA mission areas, then see them through to

graduation and beyond to become successful members of the nutrition and dietetics community.”

For more information on this program, [click here](#).

This program was made possible by The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), USDA, Multicultural Scholars Program, Award Number: 2020-38413-30730

Benedictine University is located in Lisle, Illinois, just 25 miles west of Chicago, and has a branch campus in Mesa, Arizona. Founded as a Catholic university in 1887, Benedictine enrolls nearly 5,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. Forbes magazine named Benedictine among "America's Top Colleges" for the ninth consecutive year in 2019. Benedictine University was also named the second-safest campus in the country and safest campus in Illinois by yourlocalsecurity.com in 2019. Accredited by the [Higher Learning Commission](#). For more information about the University, contact (630) 829-6300, admissions@ben.edu or visit ben.edu.