

# THE GRAPEVINE

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



Joan Gussow

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## GO TO IT!

By Joan Gussow

Let me start, briefly, with the personal. When you are very old, as I am, all “new” things create more anxiety and demand more pre-planning than they do when you are young and simply flinging yourself into whatever comes up. I think this reflects a recognition that declining physical agility makes one less able to cope with anything surprising that arises no matter how much wisdom you may have acquired with age.

So the pre-thinking necessary to make a physical foray into the entirely novel world we live in is chronically disorienting and contributes to my sense

that I’m in some sort of Groundhog Day movie and can’t even figure out what day it is. I’ve learned to sit, six feet apart, on my terrace with friends and have a glass (or two) of wine, so I’m not totally isolated socially. But people always ask anxiously if it’s OK to use my bathroom—germs after all—and this leads me from the personal to the global.

I recently heard a statistic that set me thinking. When I wrote this, the United States had one quarter of all the COVID-19 cases in the world, and one quarter of all the deaths,

*Continued on page 4*

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Students, Faculty, Alumni and Staff,

I could have never imagined writing my last “Letter from the Editor” in the midst of a pandemic. Nor right after the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s announcement to prohibit international students from staying in the country on an F-1 student visa at institutions conducting online learning. Fortunately, this is no longer the case!

Teachers College has taught me how to consider varying points of view when analyzing a topic or research question. Despite my many years of schooling, TC has truly taught me how to think. According to census data, 90% of Americans age 25 years and older had completed high school or higher levels of education in 2017 for the first time ever. I’m cautiously optimistic that my generation will utilize the tools we’ve learned in school to ignite change.

The TC Program in Nutrition is so special not only because of what we learn, but because of its internationally-diverse student body. Despite small class sizes, students hail from all over the world, including China, England, Guatemala, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia and South Africa. This enables an inclusive learning experience in which we can better understand cultures different than our own, ultimately helping us become better citizens and more culturally aware practitioners. Prior to TC, I never understood how schooling worked in China or knew that sports were mostly reserved for those with the potential to become professional athletes. I had never eaten crickets, which I did when visiting my TC friend at her home in Mexico. I never knew that some people in England use the word “mental” to describe something that’s mind-blowing. I am proud to be a member of this community that fought hard to allow its international students to remain in, and return to, NYC. For without its diverse student body, TC would be a wholly different, and dull, institution.

While I wish I were writing under happier circumstances, I pledge to do all that I can to make a difference in this world. I am so grateful for my TC experience and the amazing learning opportunities provided; more importantly, the friendships I’ve made with classmates spanning the globe. As the inspiring Joan Gussow encourages in her prolific cover article, it’s time to “Go to it!”



Sincerely,

Caroline Markowitz

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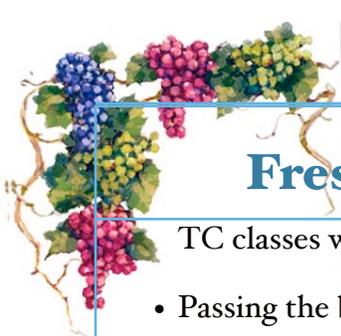
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1. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/07/educational-attainment.html#:~:text=For%20the%20first%20time%2C%20the,reach%2090%20percent%20in%202017.>



# Fresh Off the Vine: Events and Announcements

TC classes will be conducted online this Fall 2020.

- Passing the baton! Congratulations to our new:
  - ★ Grapevine Editor-in-Chief: Amanda Wahlstedt
  - ★ HealthNuts Coordinator: Camille Falisse
  - ★ Student Mentor Coordinator: Suzy Appel

*Pamela Koch and Randi Wolf wrote and presented this poem to the class of 2020 during a virtual graduation toast.*

Teachers College  
Columbia University

**A Virtual Graduation Toast  
Program in Nutrition  
May 2020**



Teachers College  
Columbia University

**Program in Nutrition  
1909-2020**

*We hope you will remember ...*

Our founder  
Mary Swartz Rose  
1909



Fig. 12. Mary Swartz Rose, author of *Ph.D. Degree*, 1909

*We hope you will remember ...*



The famous educator and philosopher John Dewey



To link theory & practice

*We hope you always remember ...*



To care about our food system ...

*We hope you always remember that you are now part of our long and proud history ...*

- The oldest nutrition program in the country
- 1909: The first nutrition science and nutrition education program
- 1947: The first public health nutrition program
- 1970: The first course on sustainable food systems
- 1982: The first nutrition and exercise joint program
- 2020: The first class to graduate virtually!

*And we hope you always remember that you can make a difference*



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."  
-Margaret Mead, Anthropologist

**Program in Nutrition  
2020 Graduation Poem**

Congratulations our Class of twenty-twenty,  
A virtual toast, wishing careers a' plenty.

You learned about food systems in *Nutritional Ecology*,  
And ended with much-too-much online technology.

In *Advanced 1 and 2* you studied with a mission,  
While in Nutrition Counseling you learned how to listen.

*Nutrition & Life Cycle* said babies eat with a splatter,  
Then revealed the division of responsibility by Ellyn Satter.

In *FN&B* you learned how people make their food choices,  
And in Community you learned the power of diverse voices.

*MNT* had packed lectures and numerous case studies,  
The graduate scholars soon became your best buddies.

*Strategies* was about theories and using DESIGN,  
Isobel's textbook became your lifeline.

Towards the end, *Nutritional Epi* taught you diet assessment,  
Then in *Analysis* the EAP processes were an investment.

And those in NEP, there was nutrition and sport,  
And practicum with athletes on the field and court.

So I'll end with good-bye and one last admission,  
Our faculty will miss you in our Program in Nutrition.

We wish you farewell, it sure has been fun,  
You are now part of our proud history as an alum!

***Congratulations class of 2020!!!!!!***

**This is no doubt a bittersweet time to be commencing during a period of great uncertainty. But graduating is a tremendous achievement and it is worth pausing to celebrate. Whether in-person or virtually, this is still YOUR MOMENT.**

Congratulations to the class of 2020. We all wish we could have gathered together to celebrate your graduation from our program. When one of my sons was two years old he described graduation as the day everyone wears the same dress and gives hugs. We did not get to do either this year. However, even as virtual graduates the entire world of food and nutrition is open to you. Everything you learned in our program has heightened relevance and urgency. You can ... and will ... be the difference you want to see in the world. - *Pamela Koch*

## *Go to it! (continued from cover)*

although we are only 1/20<sup>th</sup> of the global population. Weirdly, those are the same numbers I have used in *Nutritional Ecology* to talk about our devouring of the planet—that we 4% of the world's population were using up about 25% of the world's energy, and an outsized proportion of most other resources as well.

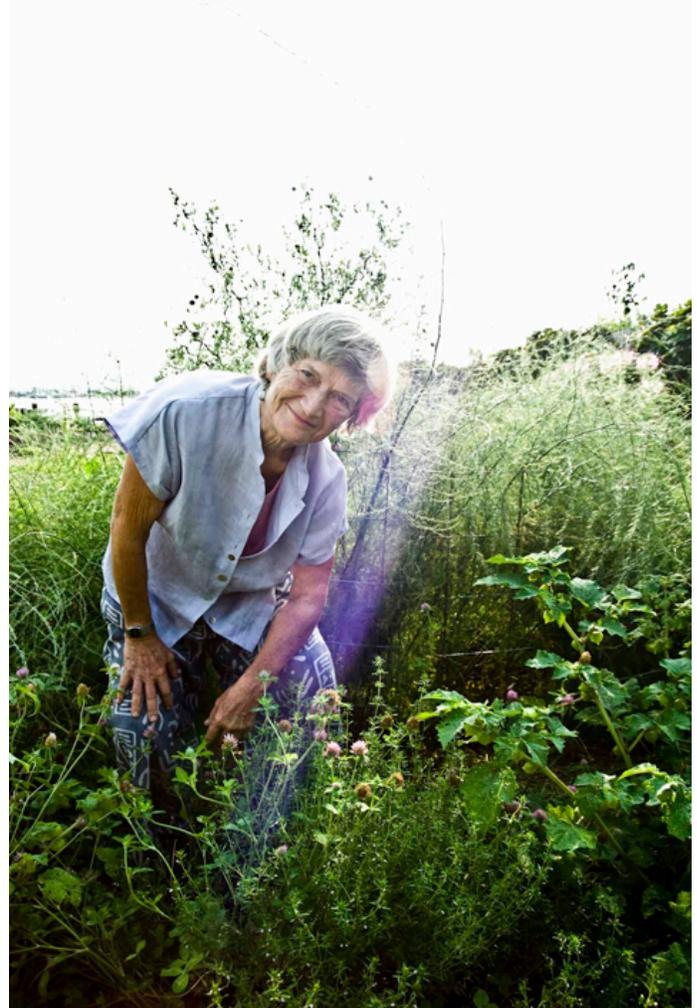
A recent article in the *Guardian* illuminated for me the connection between these two facts under the headline: *CORONAVIRUS IS A WARNING TO US TO MEND OUR BROKEN RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE*. “We must recognize that the way we currently produce and consume food, and our blatant disregard for the environment more broadly, has pushed the natural world to its limits. . . These outbreaks of disease are manifestations of our dangerously unbalanced relationship with nature.” New organisms are emerging from once wild places that our excessive demands have laid to waste.

I've complained for decades about how our growing dependency on electronic communication distracts us from noticing what's happening to the natural world around us. Alarmingly, the sudden urgency of physical distancing has drawn us even deeper into the digital. We depend even more on those little slabs of technology we carry around in our hip pockets, our fanny packs, our hearts, now that they can send us zooming across the miles to look in on friends and relatives we can no longer hug.

I don't have a smartphone, so I don't have a Facebook or Twitter feed to distract me with whatever the world out there wants to tell me—or sell me—but I know that almost none of it has to do with how my life is impacting nature. And one of the things I've spent some of my hibernation months doing is thinking about, studying about, speculating about, how our “consumer” society can return to “normal.”

The pandemic has tended to drive out of our minds the fact that returning to “normal” is returning to an increasingly unsustainable way of

living on a planet we are rapidly altering in ways that will produce chaos—and disease. We CANNOT return to “growth” as normal since continued growth on a finite planet is destroying us. I have no answers. Your generation must find a new way to live and I see on the streets that it is. Go to it!



*Joan with her asparagus.*

## ZOOM-ING INTO THE END OF SPRING 2020

By Cindy Zheng

“It will be the worst Spring break of my life,” my friend told me disappointedly.

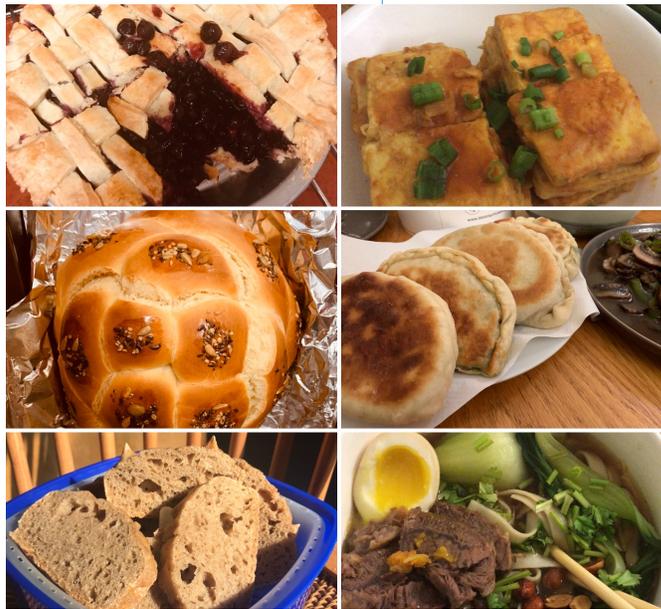
It took us hours to cancel our flight to San Juan because of the increased call volume that resulted from COVID-19. While complaining about the long wait time, my friends and I agreed that canceling our travel was necessary to protect our health and safety. My family in China was more concerned than I that they checked in with video calls twice a day.

In early March, my parents strongly encouraged me to stay home from classes. It was a huge relief for them when TC announced conducting classes online for the rest of the Spring semester. As Zoom learning began, the demarcation between life and work became slippery. At the beginning, I was excited to embrace this new learning mode and enjoy the flexibility brought by virtual learning. However, when finding out my screen time increased 22%, I started to examine the impact of COVID-19 on my life. Without a break from the screen for school, parties, and family video calls, I felt exhausted. The anxiety expressed by others was indeed contagious - both my appetite and sleep quality declined. I could hardly focus on my course assignments because

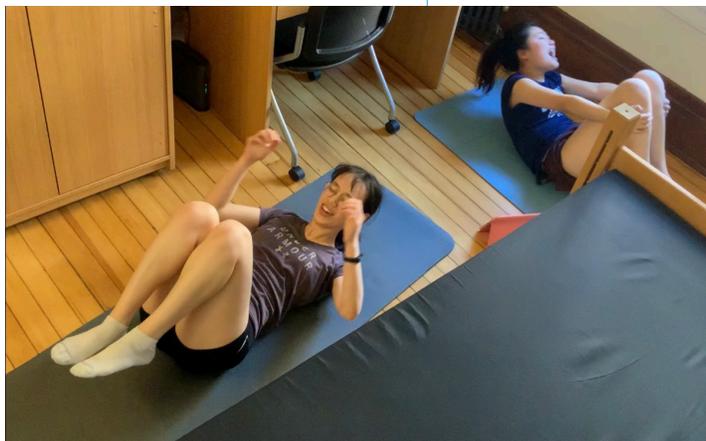
of the dilemma I faced between traveling back home to China, which may expose me to the virus, or staying in NYC without my family around.

It is human nature that we want to feel connected during this pandemic, but my Zoom fatigue also reflected the importance of “me time”. I found it vital to leave myself some space to deal with my emotions and figure out how to rebuild structure during quarantine. Inspired by at-home workout plans on Instagram, I decided to start structuring my days by simply getting out of my pajamas. Dressing in activewear as my quarantine attire pushed me to stay physically active. My yoga mat became one of my necessities; I increased the frequency of my yoga practice and HIIT workouts, which reduced my additional stress. With improved mental health, I was able to return to my cooking routine. Sharing food with my roommates always brings me joy. Eating well makes me feel productive and this in turn helped me adjust to the new remote learning environment. Zoom-ing to the end of semester is not what I expected, but one thing I definitely have learned in the second half of Spring 2020 is how to be flexible.

Although well adapted to social distancing, I still miss face-to-face communication with my friends, nutrition program faculty, and family 7,252 miles away in China. I am very grateful to everyone who helps me navigate through this uncertain time. Let us celebrate together when this is over!



*Delicious foods Cindy has cooked during quarantine.*



*Cindy and her roommate working out!*

During my first semester at Teachers College, I learned that nutrition education is not just about teaching healthy eating, but also educating about sustainable food choices that contribute to protecting our natural resources (Gussow & Clancy, 1986). One way to eat more sustainably is to grow your own herbs and vegetables. Here are some of the many benefits of growing your own vegetable garden.

- *Growing your own food promises fresh, nutritious produce.*
- *It is a fun way to be physically active outside and get Vitamin D through sunshine.*
- *You will save money on groceries.*
- *Gardening can reduce stress.*
- *This experience connects you with nature (Lussier, 2018).*

As a personal project, I decided to start, or at least to try, growing my own herbs and vegetables. I started with zucchini, arugula, red onion, coriander, mint, chives, and tomatoes. I am learning through trial and error, and still have much to discover, but I want to share some of the basics I have reaped thus far.

### Choose your seeds:

Start by picking seeds that are simple and fast growing. **Beginner's Tip:** Try growing radishes, arugula, lettuce, basil, and kale.

Summer is the preferred season for most plants, but some thrive in different weather conditions. I recommend checking specific plant needs before choosing seeds. **Beginner's Tip:** If you live in NYC go to [this link](#) for a list of herbs and vegetables and the best time of year to grow each.

You can either buy your own seeds or use seeds from produce you have at home. For example, if you use seeds from an apple, place the seeds in water for 24 hours. Get rid of those that float and use those that sink.

### Soil:

**Seed starting mix:** Planting your seeds in the correct soil is extremely important. To start you will need a seed starting mix, which is a mixture of soil that is designed to give seeds their best chance at thriving. A seed starting mix is finer and lighter than normal garden potting soil and has a greater capacity to retain water. To be 100% sure that there are no contaminants in your seed starting mix, it is recommended to use a soilless mix like coconut coir

or peat moss. Both Peat Moss and Coconut Coir are specialized substratum that have many benefits such as holding several times its weight in moisture and holding onto nutrients so that they remain when you water the plant. Or you can buy a seed starting mix labeled “sterilized” which means that the manufacturer has pasteurized the mix to kill bacteria and harmful pathogens.

**Soil to transplant your seedlings:** Before transplanting the plants into the ground or larger pots, first prepare a weed-free surface, and enrich the soil by adding compost and fertilizer. I recommend buying the compost mix soil or potting mix.

### Where to Grow Your Seeds:

Seeds are like babies. In order to help ensure your seeds germinate and grow into healthy young seedlings, it's advisable to nurture them in a safe and a controlled environment like a seed tray or a pot. This allows you to better control over your seeds than if you grew them outside. This also ensures your seeds come in less contact with illness and insects, and neither the rain nor the wind will carry your seeds away. If you want to grow a great variety of seeds, I recommend using a seed tray which will allow you to grow a wide selection of seeds using little space. **Beginner's Tip:** Buy your germination tray or visit [this website](#) for tips on making seed trays at home. If you are only growing a few varieties of plants, you can plant your seeds in a pot, which negates having to transplant your seeds as quickly.

### Planting your seeds

1. Always read the instructions on the seed packet.
2. Put your seed trays or pots somewhere you can easily access, and you pass by often. This will help you remember to take care of your seeds.
3. Plant the seeds at a depth equal to two or three times their width. It's better to plant seeds too shallow than too deep. (I got carried away planting some of the seeds too deep, and they never germinated.)
4. In the beginning, you'll need to water your seeds often, especially if you live somewhere warm. After making the mistake of watering my seeds too infrequently, I began watering them twice a day. On really sunny, dry days, I recommended watering 3-4 times a day. A spray bottle or watering can to water the seeds work best.

*Continued on next page*

## Vegetable Gardening for Beginners (continued)

5. Make sure to keep your plants somewhere with natural sunlight, but not where they receive direct sunlight all day. I came across a concept called “Hardening of Seedlings” which is the process of exposing transplants gradually to outdoor conditions over a period of 1-3 weeks. This process is critical to the success of your plant once transplanted (College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2020).



Starter kit: I used a seed tray, peat moss. Seeds: zucchini, arugula, red onion & coriander



It's the happiest feeling when your seeds begin to grow!

### Transplanting your seedlings:

1. Transplanting is the process of moving your seedlings from one growing location to another (to a larger pot or the garden).
2. The appropriate time to transplant your seedling is when the seedling has 3-4 true leaves.

**Beginners' Tip:** The first leaves a plant produces are called cotyledons. True leaves come after and are often darker and larger.

3. In your enriched soil, dig a hole large enough for your seedlings.

4. Carefully remove the seedlings from their containers, trying not to disturb the roots.

**Beginner's tip:** I used a little spoon to loosen the soil, and then pushed on the bottom of the seed-tray.

5. Set seedlings in the holes, and then cover the holes with soil.



After transplanting my seedlings from seed-trays to larger pots.

### Final Advice:

If you're thinking about starting a garden, I suggest starting as soon as possible; it is an incredible experience. Don't get discouraged if it doesn't work out at first. Please reach out if you would like more tips or better yet, if you have tips to share with me!

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# COVID-19: IMPACT ON U.S. FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

By Amanda Wahlstedt

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated issues with America's healthcare system, economic disparity, systemic racism, and injustice within the food system. With unemployment rates still greater than 13%, and over 20,000 new COVID-19 cases daily, millions of Americans face economic distress, highlighting our country's current state of food insecurity.

In light of an indefinite lockdown during the pandemic's early months, Americans panicked. Those who could afford to do so stocked their bathrooms with toilet paper and pantries with pasta, leaving supermarket shelves and pharmacy aisles empty. Meanwhile individuals of lower socioeconomic status (SES) struggled to find and access affordable food.

The current statistics on America's food insecurity are staggering. According to a Brookings Institution survey, nearly one in five households are experiencing food insecurity – a rate three times higher than during the 2008 recession. The USDA found that prior to the pandemic, over 37 million Americans did not have access to adequate nutrition. It is now estimated that in 2020 more than 54 million people may experience food insecurity - one in four Americans have had someone in their household skip a meal or rely on charity or food government programs during the pandemic.

These programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Women Infants Children (WIC). SNAP eligibility requires that your household is at or below 130% of the federal poverty line (an annual earned gross income of less than \$18,744 for a 1 person household). In order to qualify for WIC, which serves mothers, infants and children under the age of five, you must be 185% below the federal poverty line.

In light of the rise in unemployment and food insecurity, programs like SNAP and WIC are of utmost importance for our more vulnerable citizens. And yet, SNAP expansion has remained a partisan issue. In December, President Trump

announced his plan to tighten restrictions on SNAP eligibility. These constraints were to be implemented in April, and prohibited states from offering waivers to able-bodied applicants who were not working if the region's average unemployment rate was at or greater than 6% for the proceeding 24-month period. However, considering our nation's current state of our nation, a federal judge issued an injunction in March, calling the restrictions "unlawful." In May, the USDA, overseen by Republican Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, issued a notice that it was appealing this injunction. If the USDA wins, approximately 700,000 Americans will be stripped of their SNAP benefits.

The controversy around the potential SNAP expansion amid a crisis highlights our country's divisiveness. While Congress has assisted Americans with stimulus checks and increased unemployment benefits, they have approached food security timidly. While some measures have been taken, such as the Families First Coronavirus Act, increasing overall SNAP benefits and allowing states to temporarily make it easier for families to continue participating in SNAP, further and more long-term expansion remains controversial.

In May, the House Democrats introduced a new legislative package that would address COVID-19's public health and economic impacts , including SNAP funding. The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act proposes a 15% increase in the maximum benefit levels for SNAP recipients and provides an addition \$10 billion to support the projected increase in participation. The act also includes two provisions specific to WIC, such as a short-term flexibilities for states to increase the value of Cash Value Benefit for fruit and vegetable purchases to \$35/month through September. Though the HEROES Act passed in the House, it is facing pushback in the Senate, as Republicans oppose long-term expansion of the program for fear of fueling dependency and a welfare state.

*Continued on next page*

## COVID-19: Impact on U.S. Food Assistance Programs (continued)

On the bright side, more states are implementing Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT), which provides food support for children who missed school breakfasts and lunches as a result of school closures.

While politicians continue to debate the cost of hunger, mainstream and social media have played a primary role in educating individuals about food insecurity and programs like SNAP and WIC. In March, a grassroots political organizing group, Suit Up Maine, tweeted the following alongside an image of a WIC brand product:

*"#SocialDistancing, if an item has a WIC symbol beside the price, get something else. People who use WIC to feed their kids can't switch to another brand or kind of food. If a store runs out of WIC-approved options, they will go home empty-handed.#mepolitics"*

The tweet quickly gained traction; celebrities like Kerry Washington and Janelle Monáe shared the post. This catalyzed awareness around WIC-specified brands, and the disproportionate ways that those of lower SES are being affected by higher income individuals panic buying and hoarding food. By the end of March, news outlets and social media urged consumers to avoid grocery shopping on the first few days of the month, when many SNAP and

WIC benefits come in, and to educate themselves on WIC approved brands. The issue of food insecurity during this time will not be resolved overnight or via social media. However, this pandemic has brought increased awareness to these programs and demand for change around food justice and nutrition for our most vulnerable community members.

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Photo: <https://petworthcmarket.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/snap-wic-1.jpg>

### **Why did you choose TC for your DI?**

I really loved that the TC dietetic internship is less clinical than others and offers interns a wide scope of rotation sites. While many other programs are generally based in a single hospital for most or all of the year-long internship, TC's sends interns to a broad variety of sites for two to ten weeks providing a really wide array of experiences across the field of nutrition.

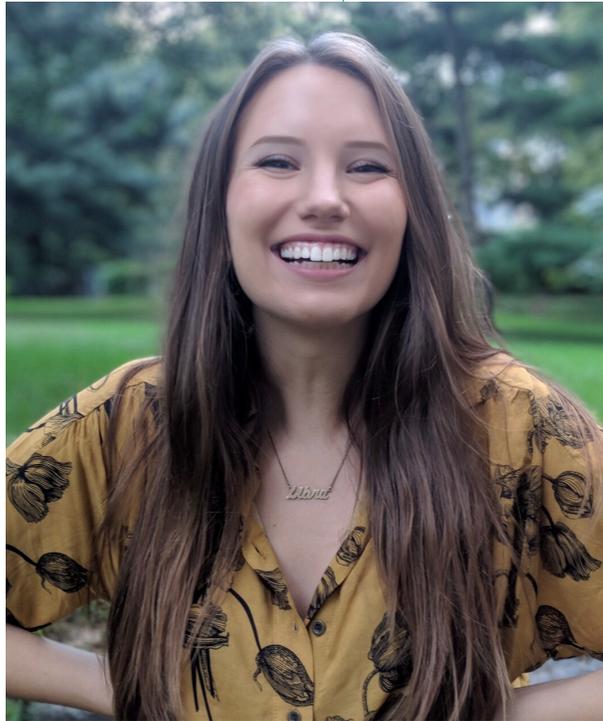
### **What rotations have you completed thus far? Which has been your favorite and why?**

I rotated at Amsterdam Nursing Home, Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center, Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the Celiac Disease Center at Columbia University Medical Center, and SuperKids Nutrition. To be completely honest, I absolutely loved all of my rotations, but I would have to say my favorite was at the Celiac Disease Center. I was able to spend ten weeks there, which made it my longest rotation. My preceptors were fantastic and eager to teach me everything they know about celiac disease and GI health. I also got to partake in some of the research studies they had going on at the time which I had never previously done but really enjoyed.

### **Briefly, what is a typical day like for an intern?**

It's so hard to say what a "typical" day is, because there really isn't one! Depending on the rotation, most of us work five days per week during typical work hours, so about 9AM-5PM. I don't think any of us ever worked on weekends, which is a huge plus. We spend our days shadowing or leading client counseling sessions, writing chart notes about our visits, making

nutrition education materials and hosting educational classes, sitting in on multidisciplinary meetings, observing other disciplines like speech pathologists, and so much more. We also have class at TC one night per week.



### **What advice do you have for students entering their DI?**

Be open to every experience that's offered to you and keep a positive attitude. Even if you think you won't love a rotation or if a preceptor asks you to do something you don't expect to enjoy, remaining optimistic will allow you to make the most of your internship year. Take this opportunity to absorb everything that your preceptors and other employees at your sites are willing to teach you and ask lots of questions. And remember, even if you actually don't love a particular placement, you can do anything for two to ten weeks and you will get through it!

### **What are your future interests/endeavors and how has the DI contributed to them?**

I can't say exactly where I'll be a month from now, but I hope to be working in a clinical nutrition setting like a hospital or long-term care center. I'd love to open a private practice someday in the future, too. The DI gave me a broad perspective on what being a dietitian can mean in a variety of settings and it really helped me nail down my goals for the future. Being on site and working hands-on during the internship year teaches you more than you can ever learn in a classroom. I will seriously miss being an intern and I hope future classes love this experience as much as I did!

# RECIPE CORNER: SUMMER SMOOTHIE

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During the summer, I love refreshing foods like smoothie bowls. Smoothie bowls are great because they taste like dessert, but can be made with primarily fruits and vegetables. This smoothie bowl features seasonal summer ingredients: berries and beets. It can be made in less than five minutes and is only five ingredients. - Mel Spinella

**Ingredients:**

1 cup frozen berries  
1 cup frozen beets  
1/4 avocado or 1 tbsp nut or seed butter  
Cinnamon to taste  
1 cup almond milk

**Directions:**

Place all ingredients (except optional ingredients) in a high speed blender and blend until smooth. Place smoothie in a bowl and eat with a spoon! I like topping it with honey bee pollen and chia seeds.