

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**

UH WELLNESS

Base Funding Request

Fiscal Year 2013-2014

UH Wellness (UHW) Base Funding Request Nutritionist with Wellness Specialization

University of Houston Wellness (UHW), housed within Health and Wellness in the Division of Student Affairs, is a campus wide education and prevention program whose mission is to promote healthier choices on campus. As part of that mission, UHW has developed a collaborative relationship with the UH Department of Nutrition to supervise a nutrition intern (on 3 week rotations) during fall and spring semesters. This has been a service that has garnered much support among students, and has been well utilized. For example, one of our spring 2012 interns saw 88 (averaging over 20-25 sessions per week) unique students during her rotation. This was in addition to nutrition workshops, presentations, materials development, and other outreach responsibilities. Although the rotation has been quite beneficial to our students, the intern placements are inconsistent, at times with several weeks, or even several months of gap time between placements. This leaves students uncertain as to whether the service will be available and students in need of assistance often unable to receive it. Additionally, we can only offer them administrative supervision and rely on the Nutrition Department to provide them with clinical supervision. Last spring, there was also a high demand for the “Biggest Loser” program sponsored by Campus Recreation (CR) and supported via nutritional counseling (with student interns) and stress management and other workshops offered at UHW. In addition, the University Health Center (HC) and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) see clients who may have distorted expectations around eating including some diagnosed with eating disorders. Every spring, CAPS sponsors an Eating Disorders Screening Day, supported and co-sponsored by UHW. These factors would seem to indicate there is a high demand for nutrition counseling on campus. Having a licensed nutritionist available to supervise and consult on such cases would be extremely important.

UH students, in general, do make healthy choices. According to data collected campus wide on the Wellness Survey in spring 2012, 60% of UH students indicate they put fruits and vegetables in their diet on a daily basis most of the time. However, 33% still eat high calorie/high fat foods and 28% eat fast foods at the same high levels. Nutrition is not only a healthy behavior that affects students physically. It also impacts their learning and ultimately their success at the university. Professor Terry Doyle (Resource for Learner Centered Teaching), who spoke at the Student Success Workshop last spring, discussed studies that link food and hydration to successful learning. The complex carbohydrates from fruits and vegetables help us in learning, while carbohydrates that cause glucose levels to fluctuate, do not. Having a nutritionist on staff, full time, would help us support students in their quest to make healthier choices. Again, these factors would seem to indicate it is an important issue for student well-being and also for student success.

A nutritionist would be important in that this would provide full time nutritional counseling, but the person hired would also be expected to have a “wellness” focus (now being emphasized within that discipline). This would mean the individual would be expected to coordinate skill building, especially in the areas of stress management, relaxation, communication and conflict, and coping. These are essential skills for students, and data from the campus wide Wellness Survey supports this point. Among UH students, 85% indicate they experience stress at least occasionally, most of them more frequently. Only 28% indicate they cope with stress in healthy ways most of the time, with at risk students even more likely to indicate they do not cope in healthy ways most of the time. Yet, the same UH data also tells us that those students who do report healthy coping are statistically more likely to report a GPA of 3.0 or above than those who do not.

A full time nutritionist could benefit all of the units of Health and Wellness, and in essence, all students in their move toward improved well-being. Having such a position also would align our program with “best practices,” as are such wellness programs at such institutions as Arizona State University, where Health and Wellness units have nutrition positions. The position requested in this proposal would be housed within UH

Wellness, but would rotate to both the HC and CAPS at least once per week. The position would also supervise nutrition interns rotated through the Department of Nutrition, as well as support the peer education program in its efforts. Finally, this position would be responsible for the development of our “wellness coaching” efforts including stress management and coping efforts. We are appreciative of being considered to receive support for this position. Outlined below is the specific amount requested.

1.0 FTE Salary (\$40,000) & Benefits (\$11,120) = Total **Request** **\$51,120**