What does a Registered Dietitian do in the sports nutrition setting?

- The Sports Dietitian provides individual and team nutrition counseling and education to enhance the performance, health and safety of student-athletes and teams, on-site and during travel. Primary responsibilities include counseling individuals and groups on nutrition for performance and wellness; translating the latest scientific evidence into practical sports nutrition recommendations; tracking and documenting outcomes of nutrition services; mitigating risk of positive drug tests and adverse effects from dietary supplement consumption; and serving as a food and nutrition resource for coaches, staff, and administration. Please see the outline of a sports dietitian job description linked here: [http://www.sportsrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/sports-dietitian-job-description.pdf](http://www.sportsrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/sports-dietitian-job-description.pdf)

How can a RD help mitigate risk for a university?

Given the unique skill set of a registered sports dietitian, many topics that could potentially threaten the performance, health and wellness of a student-athlete can be addressed through the services of a sports RD:

- Research shows 74% of female student athletes do not meet the minimum recommendations for carbohydrate intake and 50% miss the mark for protein intake. There were no differences among the sports. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23305540](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23305540)

- According to NATA, the NCAA reports that disordered eating symptoms occur in approximately 25 percent of collegiate female athletes and 20 percent of male collegiate athletes competing in a diverse range of sports. [https://www.nata.org/practice-patient-care/health-issues/nutrition](https://www.nata.org/practice-patient-care/health-issues/nutrition)

- Between 45-89% of student athletes are reported to utilize dietary supplements, an industry which is highly unregulated, exposing student athletes to risk for positive drug test and compromised health through contaminated and poor-regulation of products. [http://www.ncaa.org/health-and-safety/nutrition-and-performance/performance](http://www.ncaa.org/health-and-safety/nutrition-and-performance/performance)
  - Student athletes report their source of information regarding supplements to most often come from family members, an un-certified store nutritionist, fellow athletes, friends, or a coach. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15129934](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15129934)
Are other professions well suited to cover the topic of nutrition with student athletes?

In the absence of a sports dietitian, student athletes seek nutrition advice from the Internet, their parents, peers, coaches, athletic trainers, and strength and conditioning coaches. Of those sources, the formal nutrition education background of those employed by the institution is limited:

- Most US medical schools (71%) fail to provide the recommended minimum hours of nutrition education; 36% provide less than half of the recommendation. [https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jbe/2015/357627/](https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jbe/2015/357627/)
- Certified Athletic Trainers typically take one nutrition class during their professional education in order to meet the competencies outlined by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education. [https://caate.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/5th-Edition-Competencies.pdf](https://caate.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/5th-Edition-Competencies.pdf)
- The NCAA does not require strength and conditioning coaches to be certified, but those who choose to get certified are asked nutrition questions within their certification exam. Not all certifications require that an individual took a formal nutrition class during exam preparation.
- The NCAA does not require sport coaches to hold any particular degree of higher education. There is no formal required nutrition education for sport coaches.

Clarification on FT employment status reported within the data:

- This data does not represent a percentage of respondents who spend 100% of their time working within sports nutrition. The way the question around this topic was asked did not result in answered as intended. Therefore, this data reflects those who work full time in general and may spend a portion of their full-time employment working within sports nutrition.
Resources or next steps for an institution interested in getting a RD involved at their establishment:

- The Collegiate and Professional Sports Dietitians Association (http://www.sportsrd.org/) is aware that it is not always realistic for an institution to hire the services of a full-time sports dietitian. As an organization, we are always available to dialogue with colleges and universities about what may be best for them and to brainstorm on the most realistic way to better serve their athletes. If you are looking for assistance with locating a sports dietitian in your area or any further discussion regarding the hiring of a sports dietitian, please contact our Executive Director, Amy Freel for more information (amy.freel@cpsda.org). In addition, our website provides many resources that are available to the public:
  - Sports Nutrition Fact Sheets for use by collegiate athletes, coaches, administrators and others: http://www.sportsrd.org/?page_id=1747
  - Performance Nutrition Infographics for use by coaches, athletic trainers, strength coaches and other allied healthcare members working with athletes to educate athletes at all skill-levels on the benefits of fueling for performance: http://www.sportsrd.org/?page_id=3791
  - A list of full-time sports dietitians in different arenas should you want to reach out and connect with someone: http://www.sportsrd.org/?page_id=1176
- While their main area of expertise is likely not sports nutrition, there are many options for gaining access to a registered dietitian who may already be on campus or in the immediate area. A few options to explore:
  - An RD currently working at the campus health center
  - An RD currently working on campus as a professor
  - An RD in town who may be willing to come on as a consultant
  - An RD currently working at a local hospital
  - An RD currently working for your campus food service provider (Ex. Chartwells, Sodexo)
- Within any of the possibilities listed above, an institution should create their own vision/structure for how to utilize this individual, ie. hourly employment, a set number of hours/week, etc.