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Keeping Teams Fueled for Maximum Performance

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Keeping Teams Fueled for Maximum Performance

Sports Nutrition Volunteer Program participants gain professional skills while aiding Ole Miss athletics

JUNE 22, 2021 BY SARAH SAPP

FaTvLiErCtSMPrSt



Josh Hogg, a sports nutrition doctoral student and graduate assistant at the University of Mississippi, from Oxford, Ohio, oversees operations at the Gillom Center fueling station for student-athletes. Photo by Thomas Graning/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – Before, during and after practice and game time, student-athletes at the **University of Mississippi** rely on sports nutrition staff to keep them properly fueled and hydrated to maximize their performance.

Behind the scenes, members of the Sports Nutrition Volunteer Program make sure delicious and nutritious snacks are ready to eat, and that water and sports drinks are readily available.

“Proper fueling is critical for performance and recovery,” said Melinda Valliant, a registered sports dietitian and chair of the **Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management**. “Many athletes have little to no education on what they need to fuel their body, so the sports R.D.’s primary role is to educate them on their individual needs.”

Around 20 undergraduate students participate in the program and are responsible for preparing food for the athletes. As a part of their required clinical rotations, 10 students from the Coordinated Program in Dietetics also work with the program.

The Coordinated Program in Dietetics is a graduate-level practicum program that combines supervised practice with graduate coursework, requiring 30 hours of graduate credit and 1,200 hours of supervised practice. Graduates earn a Master of Science in Food and Nutrition Services and are eligible to sit for the certification exam for registered dietitians.

The graduate students work alongside registered sports nutritionists to ensure student-athletes are getting the nutrition they need from the food and beverage offerings available in fueling stations surrounding athletic training facilities and event venues.

Addison Shelton, of Natchitoches, Louisiana, recently graduated with a bachelor’s degree in dietetics and nutrition and is in her first year of the program. She found out about the opportunity to volunteer when a graduate assistant involved with the program spoke to a class about it.

“My duties can be endless,” Shelton said. “I work in the football weight room, so we are responsible for putting out shakes for the players in between different lift groups. We make green, chocolate and strawberry smoothies almost every day for the players’ recovery after practices.”

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Campus Briefs

Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation’s capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to

"We also make protein balls, tons of fruits and even have snack tables to make sure the athletes are getting supplied with enough energy to suffice them throughout their strenuous exercises."

Students gain much more from volunteering than simple credit hours toward their degrees, she said.

"I gained so much knowledge on how important properly hydrating and feeding athletes can be, especially at the collegiate level," she said. "I learned how to operate a body composition machine, which tells us the full body breakdown of fat and muscle of each athlete. I have also developed workplace skills that will serve me well in a future career in sports nutrition."

The experience also has made her aware of career options, Shelton said.

"Being a volunteer gave me the insight that being a sports dietitian is what I want to do, and ultimately help and advocate for collegiate athletes one day."

Master's student Walid Kherat, from Peoria, Illinois, recently completed his clinical rotation with **Ole Miss Sports Nutrition**. His duties included managing all the volunteers while working exclusively with football players.

"I assisted daily operations of feeding football student-athletes, including fueling, recovery, snack tables and meeting room bins," Kherat said.

"I helped them with proper breakfast and lunch choices, based on their individual goals and needs. I performed body composition tests and interpreted results, as well as individual nutrition consults with multiple student-athletes."

Kherat developed educational materials and designed individualized meal ideas, plans and eating schedules. He managed nutrition stock and inventory, along with placing orders per team needs and worked closely with food caterers in serving and setting up food.

During his time with the team, he worked the sidelines of the 2020 Egg Bowl and multiple practices and scrimmages, which include managing in-game refueling, cramping and more.

The volunteer program, run through the **Center for Health and Sports Performance**, also offers research opportunities for Ph.D. and master's students in nutrition and hospitality management.

Research in the program is widely varied, including nutrition's role in recovery from injury, and food insecurity and athletes, Valliant said.

Matthew Frakes, a 2020 graduate of the doctoral program in nutrition and hospitality management, starts as director of sports nutrition at Notre Dame in a few weeks. The Columbus, Ohio, native's research involved the impact of nutritional status on recovery from concussions.

"The purpose of this investigation was to observe the relationship between total calorie and macronutrient intake on return to baseline measurement times in collegiate athletes with concussions," Frakes said. "My findings suggest that meeting overall energy needs and the intake of carbohydrates may shorten symptom duration post-concussion."

Kacie Poll, of Mundelein, Illinois, is a food and nutrition services program master's student who examined food security in high school and collegiate athletes for her thesis.

"In my research, I assessed the relationship of high school and collegiate household food security status to current food consumption behaviors in a sample of NCAA Division I male collegiate athletes," she said. "I concluded that high school food insecurity is associated with preoccupation with food in male collegiate athletes."

"The food insecurity demonstrated in the sample of Ole Miss athletes in the study is associated with preoccupation with food and food hoarding in male collegiate athletes. Screening for food insecurity and disordered behaviors in this group is warranted."

Students interested in sports nutrition should know the practice is not an entry-level field, Valliant said.

"Students aspiring to be sports registered dietitians need to focus on becoming registered dietitians," she said. "We do not have a specialty at the undergraduate level, but we do have an undergraduate sports nutrition course, NHM 319: Foundations in Sports Nutrition, that students can take."

Sport nutrition emphasis areas at the master's and doctoral levels are available through the Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management.

Graduates can find careers in collegiate athletics, with professional sports teams and with Olympic athletes.

For more information about the Sports Nutrition Volunteer Program or degree programs in sports nutrition at Ole Miss, email Valliant@olemiss.edu or visit **Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management**.

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