

National Nutrition Month: Meet your campus dietitian and find out how she can serve you!

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In honor of National Nutrition Month (which also houses National Dietitian Day on March 13th), I just wanted to reach out and introduce myself. For those of you who haven't crossed paths with me yet, my name is McKenna, and I am your campus dietitian/nutritionist!



Who am I?

I am a 2013 Messiah grad who double majored in nutrition and exercise science and have been in this role for almost 3 full academic years. I also own a private practice as a certified sports dietitian and work part-time for Penn Medicine's sports medicine clinic in Lititz. I love just about any outdoor activity, especially when it involves being in nature and spending time with other people. My favorite fun food is homemade ice cream, which is something I have enjoyed experimenting with in creating unique flavors (my personal favorite flavor is cookie butter latte). My lovely Engle Center colleagues have graciously agreed to be my taste-testers. ;) I qualified and am currently training for the Ironman triathlon World Championship in Nice, France that takes place on September 22nd, 2024. This is a 140-mile race that combines swimming, cycling, and running. I know, I'm one of those weirdos who loves endurance sports. If you're ever curious about learning more, feel

free to ask! I can talk about triathlon all day and have loved using it as an outlet to connect with others and stay in shape. 😊



What support can I offer?

Ok, enough about me. Let me share a bit about how I can serve you—the Messiah student body, faculty, and employees. I spend most of my time at my office in the Engle Center, but you can also find me in the dining office or presenting nutrition information to groups around campus. I love sitting down with people in one-on-one counseling sessions and hearing their story. We are each created uniquely and there are so many layers that tie into our well-being. There is no one way to “do nutrition” well, so I enjoy coming alongside my clients as a fellow brainstormer and advocate for helping them grow in the way they nourish their bodies. I also act as a liaison between the student body and Dining Services, so if you have specific concerns or requests, please bring your ideas to me for discussion. We want to serve you the best we can and are always happy to hear your thoughts on how we can grow.

What even is a dietitian, anyway?

“Registered dietitian” is a credential that describes someone who uses up-to-date scientific evidence in counseling and educating people on how to promote health and manage various disease states through their eating habits. Additionally, dietitians can help

people navigate the plethora of misinformation out there that can have a detrimental impact on their body image and relationship with food. The society in which we live has distorted food and body in so many harmful ways that it's rare when I work with a client who doesn't have some sort of disordered eating pattern, whether intentional or unintentional. Our eating is supposed to be fun, sustainable, enjoyable, and flexible to help our bodies feel energized and strong, ultimately adding quality to our lives. Let me also note that the term "registered dietitian" is a legally backed term, indicating that someone in this profession has undergone 4-5+ years of an accredited academic program and supervised practice, passed a nationally-recognized exam, and is continuing their education to maintain their credential. Some dietitians also refer to themselves as a nutritionist; however, it's important to note that technically anyone can call themselves a nutritionist, since it is not a legally-backed term. When researching nutrition, focus on resources that have a dietitian involved, (look for letters such as RD, RDN, LDN, CSSD, etc. after their name) since they are considered experts in nutrition, even over doctors.

How can we get connected?

Here at Messiah, students can schedule free one-on-one sessions with me to discuss a variety of topics related to their eating and their nutrition. Employees now have access to my services for a small fee. If you're curious, call the Engle Center at 717-691-6035 to schedule an appointment. I'm looking forward to meeting with you!