

I completed a bachelor's degree in Nutrition and Foods from Texas State University in December 2016. I excelled during my undergraduate nutrition courses, receiving a 3.9 GPA and participating in two nutrition-based research opportunities – community and clinical research. I furthered my education by completing a Dietetic Internship at Oregon State University and obtaining a Registered Dietitian license in August 2019. My internship experience allowed me to work in various nutrition-focused professional sectors. The most meaningful impact of my professional career came from working in the community sector through non-profit organizations and community outreach programs. These experiences propelled me to continue my educational pursuit by completing a master's in Public Health Education and Promotion from Texas State University in May 2021, receiving a 4.0 GPA. I completed a thesis analyzing the association between COVID-19 stress, food insecurity, and fruit and vegetable consumption among university students, allowing me to publish two peer-reviewed manuscripts in the *Eta Sigma Gamma Journal*, *Health Education Monograph*, and the *Journal of American College Health*, and served as a Graduate Assistant in the Health and Human Performance Department from August 2019 – May 2021. I served as the Vice President and President of Eta Sigma Gamma (the national health education honor's society), where I led Texas State University students in developing, implementing, and evaluating multiple community health programs. As an officer, I had the role of managing program data collection and developing the annual activity evaluation reports. Our chapter was awarded the 2020 Service Activity Award (Nutrition Education Program), 2020 Teaching Activity Award (Sexual Health Education Program), 2021 Service Activity Award (Nutrition Education Program), and 2021 Chapter Recognition Award at the national Eta Sigma Gamma conference. Additionally, I was awarded the 2022 Mohammad Torabi Student Research Paper of the Year.

My enrollment in SOPHE and Texas SOPHE has allowed me to deliver research data to academic and community-based researchers. I presented research on the *“Challenges and solutions to transitioning a service-learning, community-based nutrition program from synchronous to asynchronous delivery”* at the Texas SOPHE Virtual Conference in 2021. Additionally, I presented *“Process and impact program evaluation of Eta Sigma Gamma student-led holiday food drives”* at the 72nd Annual Meeting of SOPHE virtual meeting in 2021. This year, I presented research on *“At Home and Away from Home Dietary Behaviors of Food Insecure and Food Secure Parents”* at the Texas SOPHE 2023 Conference in Austin, Texas.

I am pursuing a PhD in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences through the University of Texas UTHealth Science Center, where I am serving as a Graduate Research Assistant. The current research focuses on the utilization of food assistance program benefits throughout Texas. My recent community-focused research experience provides the skills to evaluate nutrition-based programs affecting vulnerable populations. The research experience I will obtain during the doctoral program will allow me to continue conducting research and publishing public health data and educational information for community members and public health researchers.

After completing my doctorate program, I will continue to work in academia and serve as a public health professor with a community-based research focus on food insecurity amongst disadvantaged and ethnically diverse children and youth. My professional goals are to develop, implement, and evaluate community-based nutrition interventions to improve food access and education among low-income children and adolescents in central Texas and globally. The research

experience I will gain during the doctoral program will benefit my research skills and knowledge, allowing me to become a competent researcher in the classroom setting and practice.

Obtaining financial support through the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer Graduate Student Scholarship will allow me to continue pursuing my doctoral studies. I am currently focusing on my studies while concurrently working as a Graduate Assistant for Dr. Alexandra van den Berg in the Division of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences. I will support myself during the program without student loans and financial support from my family. These scholarships would benefit my financial stability and academic pursuit through the UTHealth School of Public Health.