

My journey in health education and promotion has been shaped by a commitment to improving the lives of underserved populations through education, research, and community engagement. My journey began with earning a Bachelor's degree in Nutrition and Foods from Texas State University, where I graduated in 2016 with a 3.9 GPA. Following this, I completed a Dietetic Internship at Oregon State University and earned my Registered Dietitian (RD) license in 2019. While my work as a RD covered several sectors, my most rewarding experiences came from community-based programs that provided critical support to underserved populations. These experiences inspired me to expand my impact by pursuing advanced education in public health.

I completed a Master's in Public Health Education and Promotion at Texas State University in 2021, graduating with a 4.0 GPA. During this program, I conducted a thesis examining the associations between COVID-19 stress, food insecurity, and fruit and vegetable consumption among university students. This research resulted in two peer-reviewed publications in the *Health Education Monograph* and the *Journal of American College Health*, with the former earning the 2022 Mohammad Torabi Student Research Paper of the Year. Additionally, I served as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Health and Human Performance, where I supported faculty in public health teaching and research. My time at Texas State also allowed me to take on leadership roles as Vice President and later President of the Delta Chi Chapter of Eta Sigma Gamma, a national health education honor society. In these roles, I led my colleagues in designing, implementing, and evaluating community health programs that earned national recognition, including the Service Activity Awards for our nutrition education programs in 2020 and 2021, and the 2021 Chapter Recognition Award.

Currently, I am pursuing a Ph.D. in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Texas Health Science Center (UTHealth) in Austin. I serve as a Graduate Research Assistant under Dr. Alexandra van den Berg, focusing on food assistance programs aimed at improving dietary behaviors among underserved communities. This work has further developed my expertise in program evaluation, research dissemination, and community engagement. My research efforts have been enhanced by my active involvement in professional organizations such as the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) and Texas SOPHE, where I have had the opportunity to present findings at state and national conferences. Highlights include my presentation on transitioning service-learning programs to an asynchronous format at the Texas SOPHE Virtual Conference in 2021 and my work evaluating dietary behaviors of food-insecure and food-secure parents at the Texas SOPHE Conference in 2023.

My professional goal is to become a public health professor specializing in community-based research, with a focus on food insecurity and its impact on health, particularly among children and youth. By combining my background in nutrition with the research training I am gaining through my doctoral studies and research assistantship, I plan to design, implement, and evaluate programs that improve food access and encourage healthier behaviors in low-income and ethnically diverse communities.

After completing my doctoral program, I plan to work in academia, focusing on developing and implementing community-based nutrition interventions to improve food access and education among underserved populations in Central Texas. These efforts will empower families, promote

equitable access to nutritious foods, and improve health outcomes among disadvantaged communities.

The research experience I am gaining during my doctoral studies is enhancing my skills and knowledge, preparing me to be a competent researcher and educator. These efforts will allow me to address health disparities, improve food security, and improve health outcomes among children and youth.

My current and future activities are designed to advance the health of children and youth. Through my research and community engagement, I aim to address food insecurity, which is a critical barrier to healthy development in children and youth. My doctoral studies and research assistantship are focused on food assistance programs that seek to improve dietary behaviors in underserved populations, helping families make healthier food choices and fostering environments that promote better nutrition. This work will have a lasting impact by improving food access and supporting healthier behaviors, ultimately contributing to better long-term health outcomes for children and their families.

Additionally, my professional goal of becoming a public health professor will allow me to educate and mentor the next generation of public health professionals, particularly first-generation and underrepresented students. By preparing these future leaders to address health disparities, I will enhance the reach and impact of my work in combating food insecurity and promoting health equity. Through both my research and teaching, I am committed to empowering children and youth in low-income communities, improving their access to nutritious food, and supporting their long-term health and well-being.

The Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship would benefit my financial stability and academic pursuit through the UTHHealth School of Public Health. I greatly appreciate your consideration of my application for the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship.

Sincerely,

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