

National Nutrition Month 2025

University of Maryland

Essay:

In honor of National Nutrition Month, the University of Maryland presented “Smart Fuel for Smart Students”, a four-week informational and interactive series every Tuesday throughout the month of March. As we set out on our ninth annual event series, we were inspired by our own experience as students navigating planning meals to sustain energy, boost productivity, and support overall health throughout the day.

Nutrition education each week was geared towards nutritious breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack options, with the intention of showing students how mealtimes can provide fuel throughout the day. In addition to organizing themed tabling events weekly and promoting healthy recipes, UMD Dining Services hosted a chef cook off featuring 9 cooks throughout the month from each dining hall using products related to the weekly theme. The goal was to incorporate products that have different benefits at mealtimes in a new way while encouraging creativity and friendly competition among our cooks in all UMD dining halls. We highlighted products from sponsors, whom we purchase from on a regular basis, and allowed chefs creative freedom in their recipe selection while including the product being featured that week.

“Smart Fuel for Smart Students” emphasizes how a variety of foods can benefit energy and productivity levels for busy students throughout the day. From weeks one to four, events were marketed as “Kickstart Your Day”, “Lunches To Live By” featuring representatives from MenuTrinfo with specialized allergen information, “Fuel for the Finish Line” with special guests from Hormel Foods, and “The Study Snack Advantage”, welcoming General Mills and Pepsico. In our chef cook-offs, each event featured recipes crafted to fit each week’s theme, as well as interactive trivia, educational handouts, and giveaways

from the rest of our corporate sponsors. To modernize our approach to marketing events, we put a heavier emphasis on social media, weekly blog posts, and newsletters that provide education and advertise the events in a virtual space, hoping to reach more students across campus.

With the collaboration of our sponsors J.R. Simplot, Old Line Meats, Hormel, Mrs. T's Pierogies, and General Mills, UMD Dining Services chefs developed recipes relating to each week's theme in a new and interactive way. We also worked closely with the Vice President's Council, MenuTrinfo, UMD Resident Life, and 251 North Dining Hall staff to help us execute a successful and engaging series and cheer on our chefs.

Each week we offered a mini-quiz questionnaire to students to be entered in a raffle to measure our educational outcomes. Additionally, to incentivize furthering nutrition education for Maryland students, each new sign-up for our monthly newsletter was allotted a raffle entry. On average, 2,250 students came through our event each week, and we received positive feedback from students and staff on the event. By gearing our education towards the collegiate demographic, we provided an engaging and comprehensive education series rooted in functional foods to encourage a healthy and balanced lifestyle, fueling the future of UMD minds.

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