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Entry details

Entry Name:	Eat the Rainbow, Paint the Rainbow: Nourishing the Mind and Body
Institution Name:	Rutgers University
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Peggy Policastro, Director of Nutrition

Eat the Rainbow, Paint the Rainbow: Nourishing the Mind and Body

National data reveals that poor mental health is a leading reason students leave college, with 40 percent reporting it impacts their academic performance "a great deal". Recognizing that dining halls are vital spaces for student social interaction and community well-being, Rutgers Dining Services collaborated with Scarlet Arts Rx in Spring 2025 to launch an innovative program: "Eat the Rainbow, Paint the Rainbow".

Goals and Objectives The program's primary goals were to educate students on the benefits of consuming a diverse range of colorful fruits and vegetables, highlight the parallel stress-reducing benefits of a balanced diet and artistic engagement, and improve overall academic outcomes and well-being.

Innovation and Program Content. To achieve these objectives, we hosted a ScarletWell-focused nutrition booth where students learned about natural food dyes and their nutritional counterparts. The science-based curriculum focused on educating students about phytochemicals and how different-colored foods support various bodily functions. Bridging the gap between nutrition and art, students used these natural vegetable dyes to paint on a community canvas displayed in the dining halls.

A unique outcome of this initiative was the development of a custom coloring book centered on "eating and painting the rainbow." Every graphic in the book was painted using vegetable dyes and featured one of our dining hall chefs

to further humanize the dining experience and reinforce the educational themes. Additionally, participants were offered free miniature canvas and paint kits to continue their artistic engagement.

Marketing and Advertising We deployed a multi-channel marketing campaign including hard copy materials in dining halls, student word-of-mouth, and collaborative social media efforts between dining services and Scarlet Arts Rx, out of the Mason Gross School of Theater and Visual Arts.

Feedback and Evaluation The event successfully engaged 138 student participants. Qualitative data highlighted high educational impact; many students realized they lacked prior knowledge about the nutritional benefits of different colored foods, noting the visual association significantly aided their learning. The booth also sparked engaging conversations regarding common nutrition myths, specifically the connection between carrots and eyesight, and helped students retain specific knowledge regarding fiber and digestion.

By pairing an artistic activity with a vital educational message, the program effectively bridged knowledge gaps and fostered a supportive, stress-reducing environment.

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Final Eat the Rai... 1.4 MiB

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ScarletrXBusch... 137 KiB

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ScarletrXBusch... 79 KiB

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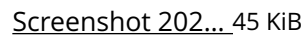
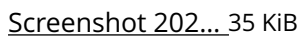
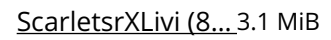
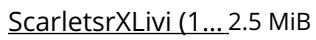
Beet Book Final... 954 KiB

A photograph showing several students gathered around a table covered with a bright red cloth. They are engaged in an art activity, with one student in the foreground focused on painting a small object. Various art supplies like paint containers and brushes are visible on the table. The background shows a well-lit indoor space, possibly a dining hall or common area, with other people and architectural details.

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A photograph showing students at a table with a red cloth, similar to the previous image. This one shows more of the table's contents, including stacks of white canvases or cards, paint containers, and brushes. A student is seen painting, and another is looking on. The setting is the same indoor event space.

ScarletsrXLivi (1... 2.6 MiB



DOCX
Instagram story... 2.3 MiB

Attachment name
https://www.youtube.co...