

# Megan Maher



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## Entry details

Entry Name: Brigade Fueling Station - Performance Nutrition at the United States Naval Academy

Institution Name: United States Naval Academy

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## Essay:

Brigade Fueling Station - Performance Nutrition at the United States Naval Academy

The Midshipmen Food Service Division (MFSD) supports the mission of the United States Naval Academy (USNA) by providing safe, wholesome, and nutritionally balanced meals to approximately 4,400 midshipmen in King Hall, USNA's dining facility. MFSD delivers three meals daily in direct support of the Brigade while remaining responsive to all mission-related food service requirements. Through high-quality food service, sound nutrition practices, and efficient resource management, MFSD plays a key role in sustaining the health, performance, and operational readiness of the Brigade of Midshipmen.

At the Naval Academy, nutrition is essential to mission readiness. Midshipmen face demanding academic, military, and physical requirements, making consistent access to performance-focused nutrition critical. To address this need, MFSD developed the Brigade Fueling Station to enhance the dining environment by offering convenient, evidence-based nutrition options that support training, recovery, and sustained performance.

The Brigade Fueling Station improves access to nutrient-dense foods while reinforcing the connection between fueling and operational effectiveness. Its primary objectives are to increase availability of foods that support strength, endurance, and recovery, provide targeted nutrition education aligned with training demands, and

encourage informed fueling decisions. Integrating these objectives into daily dining operations strengthens the link between nutrition and mission success.

Located near King Hall, the Brigade Fueling Station serves as a centralized hub offering strategically selected foods that support physical performance. Options emphasize balanced macronutrients to promote energy availability and recovery, including protein-rich items, whole grains, fruits, nuts and seeds, and convenient carbohydrate sources for pre-, intra-, and post-training fueling. This approach simplifies decision-making and allows midshipmen to quickly access foods aligned with their schedules and training needs.

Education is a cornerstone of the initiative. USNA dietitians engage directly with midshipmen through nutrition briefs for companies, varsity and club athletic teams, and military screener preparation groups. These sessions translate sports nutrition science into practical, actionable strategies for daily routines, covering topics such as endurance fueling, recovery, hydration, and performance optimization. Tailored education ensures relevance and impact across diverse training demands.

The program is reinforced through targeted communication efforts. The MFSD newsletter highlights a featured Fueling Station item each month, offering nutrition insights and practical tips. Additional outreach through the Brigade Daily email and MFSD social media platforms increases visibility and reinforces key messages.

The Brigade Fueling Station continues to evolve based on midshipmen feedback, emerging research, and product availability. The MFSD dietitian regularly assesses and refines offerings to maintain relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with current sports nutrition guidance.

Through strategic food selection, applied nutrition education, and alignment with the physical training mission, the Brigade Fueling Station demonstrates how integrated dining programs can directly enhance performance, readiness, and long-term success at the United States Naval Academy.

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