



Entry details

Entry Name:	Nutrition Month Madness
Institution Name:	Elon University
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Christian Wallace - Guest Experience Manager

Nutrition Month Madness is an interactive, chef driven tournament designed to engage students in nutrition through participation, competition, and tasting. Hosted in the center of Lakeside Dining Hall during March, the program aligned with National Nutrition Month and transformed the space into a multi week experience where students actively explored food, ingredients, and nutrition concepts. The program featured eight culinary team members competing in a three-round bracket, with four matches in round one, two matches in round two, and a championship round. Additional objectives included increasing awareness of nutrition in ingredients, encouraging students to try new foods, and connecting culinary creativity with practical nutrition knowledge.

The tournament featured culinary team members from three dining halls, ranging from line cooks to Chef de Cuisines, all nominated by culinary leadership and the Registered Dietitian. Each round centered around a featured ingredient selected by the Dietitian, including tomatoes in round one, root vegetables in round two, and fruit in the final round. These ingredients were highlighted through program collateral that shared clear, student-friendly nutrition benefits, reinforcing the educational component of the event. All dishes were required to follow nutrition guidelines established by the Registered Dietitian. Guidelines encouraged the use of lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats, while limiting fried foods and avoiding excess added sugars.

Chefs were given structured timeframes to develop dishes using the featured ingredient. During each live competition, chefs plated small tasting portions side by side in the center of the dining hall, creating a highly visible

and engaging area. The focus was to bring our team out to the students and not be behind a counter. Students were welcomed by student marketing interns who explained the process and handed out the voting tickets.

Students sampled both dishes and voted for their preferred option using physical tickets, which they placed into labeled voting boxes in front of a large bracket display. This voting method was intentionally chosen to create a more personal and memorable experience, increasing engagement and participation. The bracket was updated in real time, with winners announced after each round, building momentum and continued interest throughout the program.

Marketing and promotion were executed through a multi-channel approach including student-led social media content, dining hall signage, and in person engagement. Recap posts after each round highlighted both the competition results and the nutritional benefits of the featured ingredients, reinforcing key messages beyond the event itself.

The program successfully reached a wide student audience through its central location and format, with consistent participation across all rounds. Students engaged directly with both the culinary team and nutrition concepts, often trying dishes they may not have otherwise tried. Students expressed interest and enjoyment, with the tournament format creating a sense of anticipation and repeat participation.

Nutrition Month Madness demonstrates how nutrition education can be delivered through experience rather than instruction, using competition, creativity, and student interaction to make wellness both accessible and engaging.

Log in to nacufs.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.

