

Cal Poly



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Entry details

Entry Name:	Cal Poly Campus Dining — National Nutrition Fair
Institution Name:	Cal Poly
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Melanie Belanger, District Marketing Director

In Spring 2025, Cal Poly Campus Dining designed and implemented a comprehensive National Nutrition Month (NNM) program aligned with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics theme, “Food Connects Us.” The theme was intentionally woven throughout dining operations, marketing, and experiential education — demonstrating how food connects students to health, campus resources, and nutrition experts.

The program engaged the primary target audience — college students — by meeting them where they are: dining venues, social media and interactive campus events. Methods used to achieve program goals included:

- Point-of-purchase nutrition messaging through limited-time menu offerings
- Social media engagement tailored to Gen Z communication styles
- Hands-on, experiential learning opportunities
- Cross-campus and community collaboration

Innovation

The program integrated nutrition education directly into students’ daily dining experience. The “Feel Good Food of the Month,” mushrooms, was featured through limited-time menu offerings — Roasted Mushroom Po’ Boy, Poblano Mushroom Tacos, Al Fungi Pizza — across campus venues, making nutrition accessible and relevant at the point of choice.

An interactive Instagram “Ask the Dietitian” series connected Gen Z students with a registered dietitian in a format native to how they communicate. Campus Dining also partnered with Cal Poly Nutrition Club, Cal Poly Food Pantry, CalFresh, Campus Health & Well-Being PULSE teams, Cal Poly Farms, and local vendor Mighty Cap Mushrooms — to broaden reach and diversify engagement across both in-person and digital channels.

Marketing & Advertising

The marketing campaign was clear, consistent, and platform-native. Social media leveraged posts, stories, and interactive Q&A to engage students in formats they already use. In-dining signage and event collateral reinforced the NNM themes throughout March, while messaging consistently emphasized evidence-based nutrition in student-focused language. The multichannel approach — digital, physical, and experiential — maximized visibility and drove participation across diverse student groups.

Program Content

Program content was science-based, timely, and delivered through four coordinated components:

Dining Integration: Mushroom-forward limited-time offerings highlighted plant-forward eating and nutritional benefits at the point of service.

Digital Education: Social media content promoted NNM messaging and featured the “Ask the Dietitian” series, delivering science-based information in an engaging, accessible format.

Campus-Wide NNM Event (March 11, 2025): This large-scale outreach event drew over 500 attendees. Activities included nutrition trivia and myth-busting with dietitians, a DIY hydration station, a trail mix station, local citrus from Cal Poly Farms, and a mushroom flatbread demo by Mighty Cap Mushrooms and Campus Dining chefs.

Teaching Kitchen – Nutrition Across the Lifespan: Cal Poly Dietetic interns hosted a hands-on “Eating the Rainbow” fruit kebab Teaching Kitchen. It was for 4 to 5-year-olds from the ASI Children’s Center, extending NNM’s reach beyond the college population and fostering early, positive food connections.

Feedback & Evaluation

Program goals — to engage students with nutrition education through innovative, multichannel experiences — were clearly stated and effectively met. The campus-wide event drew more than 500 attendees, the “Ask the Dietitian” series generated direct student interaction, and cross-campus partners actively contributed and promoted the program. Enthusiastic participation across all activities, positive partner feedback, and strong event attendance collectively demonstrated that the program reached its target audience and achieved meaningful, positive outcomes.

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