

# Peggy Policastro



kgZLwDQz

## Entry details

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

Institution Name: Rutgers University

Entry Completed By (*name and position*): Peggy Policastro, Director of Nutrition

Email Address: [peggyp@dining.rutgers.edu](mailto:peggyp@dining.rutgers.edu)

Phone Number: +18489325447

Address: 61 Dudley Road

City: New Brunswick

State: NJ

Zip Code: 08901

Country: United States of America

## Essay:

### 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.

Log in to [nacufs.awardsplatform.com](http://nacufs.awardsplatform.com) to see complete entry attachments.

PDF

[Final Eat the Rai... 1.4 MiB](#)

PDF

[ScarletrXBusch... 137 KiB](#)

PDF

[ScarletrXBusch... 79 KiB](#)

PDF

[Beet Book Final... 954 KiB](#)



[ScarletsrLivi.JPG 2.4 MiB](#)



[ScarletsrXLivi \(1... 2.6 MiB](#)



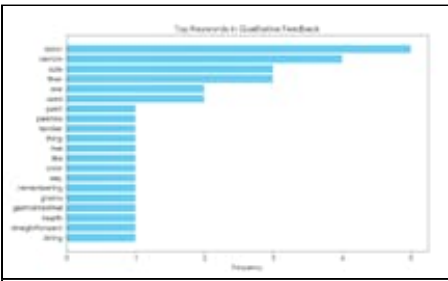
ScarletsrXLivi (1... 2.5 MiB



ScarletsrXLivi (3... 3.1 MiB



ScarletsrXLivi (8... 3.1 MiB



Screenshot 202... 35 KiB



Screenshot 202... 45 KiB



ScarletsrXNeils... 2.7 MiB



ScarletsrXNeils... 3.2 MiB



ScarletsrXNeils... 2.5 MiB



ScarletsrXNeils... 2.4 MiB

DOCX

Instagram story... 2.3 MiB

Attachment name

<https://www.youtube.co...>