

D(I) Day: A Dietetic Intern's Story

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Two years ago, I knew very little about the world of dietetics, and even less about becoming a part of it. I scoured the American Dietetic Association's website for hours on end, and finally learned of the dietetic internship I would need to participate in to become a Registered Dietitian. With that knowledge, I couldn't wait to delve into the internship application process. Months later, however, my perspective changed a bit.

"What a dreadful form," I thought sullenly, scrolling through my dietetic internship application for the umpteenth time. The application I had been so eager to fill out six months earlier had become the enemy. Who were they to ask how many hours I spent volunteering? How dare they require so many time-consuming GPA calculations! And why in the world did I have to hand-write this personal essay? Most of these questions were brought on by delirium, though my mind still can't grasp the benefit to hand writing a personal essay (I mean, really?). I spent a countless number of hours modifying, spell checking, re-writing, spell-checking again, recalculating, and spell-checking yet again... (You get the picture). I knew the application was necessary, I was just really sick of looking at it.

Three days before the application deadline with six months of hard work and revisions, I was ready to be done. I reluctantly allowed my advisor to pry the application from my grasp (Do I need to spell-check again? Is my GPA correct? Did I smudge my essay?) And finally let it sail off into the great unknown, with the oh-so-trusted Mr. Post Master.

Now it was time to wait: which program would accept me? Would any program accept me? The next two months were excruciatingly long. A count-down on my computer sounded off the days as they passed: twelve more, nine more, only 3 more days...until it was finally the day of the internship matching! Now, only a few more hours until midnight and it would all be over; I would know what program had accepted me (if any – yikes!). Nine-o'clock p.m. Now it seemed as if midnight itself would never come! As a pre-emptive celebration, my roommates popped the cork on a bottle of Pinot Noir and the four of us settled down.

An empty bottle of wine and a few hours' worth of supportive encouragement later, it was already eleven-thirty! I readied myself at the computer: roommates gathered 'round, website loaded, login entered, and finger cocked over the mouse-pad in anticipation. The alarm for my countdown sounded at midnight, and I jabbed my finger down to enter the dietetic internship-matching site. I held my breath, waiting for the site to load...nothing. My breath came out in a whoosh as I tried the login button again. Still nothing! "Oh no," I panicked, "someone stole my match!"

My delirium was back; I repeatedly stabbed my pointer at the "Login" button, to no avail. One by one, my roommates brought out their laptops, attempting to log me in. After further failed logins among the four of us, we came to a conclusion: the website just couldn't handle thousands of crazy dietetics students trying to login simultaneously. So once again we sat back to wait, this time, laptops at the ready. My internship matching had turned into a group effort, and the next few hours were spent chatting amidst the constant click of attempted logins.

Around three-o'clock a.m. there was a breakthrough. A shriek of surprise came from across the room as access was finally granted to one of my roommates. She leapt across the room, hurling her laptop at me and plopping down next to the others, who had huddled in to see the results. I was in the site at last, and my stomach was in my throat. This is what I had been waiting for all night, all year actually, and now I was almost too scared to click the daunting gray "Matching Results" button.

"Please let it be my number one internship choice," I whispered, "I'm going to be so disappointed if it's not."

My finger hovered over the button a moment longer before my roommates prompted me to quickly go ahead or we'd be locked out again! That pushed me into action and I pressed the mouse key. We each held our breath as the screen loaded. When it finally did, my eyes went out of focus as they adjusted to the shock of seeing my first internship choice printed before me. My roommates were hollering and jumping around the room for a full minute before the words sank in and I joined in their jubilation.

After another round of congratulatory hugs, we finally headed for bed. Snuggling in, I expected to feel the pressures and anxieties of the past few months float away, leaving only the fluffy comfort of receiving my number one internship match. Instead, as I felt the old stressors drift out, I felt a rush of new, more exciting ones move in. Gone was my concern for the application process, and in its stead, I found new concerns: "When do I start? Where will I live? Who will I live with? How am I going to live that far from Michigan, my friends, my family?" I sighed and laughed to myself as the thoughts flooded my brain. Who was I kidding? The matching process was just another step in the long, winding road to become Registered Dietitian. This was only the beginning – and I couldn't wait.

From the author: Good luck to all of the future dietetic interns this April! I know it's been a long, exciting journey and I'm so excited for all of you!