

Alyssa Beavers, PhD, RD

Research Dietitian



Question: What is your job title?

Answer: Assistant Professor

Where do you work (setting and/or company)?

Wayne State University, Department of Nutrition and Food Science

How long have you been at this job?

About 1 month (but I have been conducting nutrition research for over 7 years!)

Please describe your job (including typical role, population served and anything else you feel is important in understanding the job):

My job is a combination of teaching nutrition courses and conducting community nutrition research. My current research focuses on the link between urban gardening and health, including diet, physical activity, and the gut microbiome.

Does your job require any additional schooling or education?

Being a nutrition professor requires a doctoral degree, and frequently an RD credential is preferred.

What are possible places of employment for your position?

Colleges and universities.

What is your favorite thing about your job?

My favorite thing about my job is the variety; every day is different. My responsibilities range from mentoring students, collecting and analyzing data, writing papers, and teaching classes.

Why/how did you choose your field and how did you get into it?

I loved my community nutrition course as an undergraduate student. I became drawn to improving nutrition community-wide. I choose a career in research because I strongly value evidence-based methods, and by leading research I am contributing to the evidence base of community nutrition practice.

What is your educational background?

I received my bachelor's in dietetics, master's in nutritional science, and completed my dietetic internship at Iowa State University. I then went to Michigan State University for my PhD in human nutrition.

What is your job/work background?

During both my master's and doctoral degrees I worked as a graduate research assistant, and I then spent a short amount of time as a postdoctoral researcher. I have experience with a wide variety of nutrition research, ranging from examining iron bioavailability in cell culture to examining the influence of gardening on diet and health.

Why did you decide to become an RD?

While the RD credential isn't explicitly required for a career in community nutrition, many of the jobs I was interested in required or preferred the credential.

What do you like and what do you not like about the field in general?

I like that the importance of nutrition is becoming more recognized by the general public. However, the increasing prevalence of nutrition fads and misinformation makes it really challenging to get people to know the basics of good nutrition.

What areas in dietetics do you think will become more important/growing in the future?

With a growing need to ensure that what we eat is good for both human and environmental health, it will be increasingly important for dietitians to be knowledgeable about sustainable food systems.