

Nutritional Sciences Department Newsletter Vol 11, Iss 4; September 2026	
Headline Story	2
Class of 2026 Graduation Celebration.....	6
Student Achievements.....	7
Presentations, Publications, and Invited Lectures and Boards	7
Journal Articles	10
Invited Lectures, Presentations, and Workshops	10
In the Media	11
Home	12



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
College of Human Sciences

Department of Nutritional Sciences™

Headline Story

From Seville to Lubbock: Culinary Medicine, Community and Connection

This summer, 15 Texas Tech students stepped beyond the traditional classroom and into the kitchens, markets, neighborhoods, and communities of Seville, Spain, as part of an innovative interdisciplinary study abroad program combining Culinary Medicine and Human Development and Family Sciences.

Led by Dr. Allison Childress from Nutritional Sciences and Dr. Shera Thomas-Jackson from Human Development and Family Sciences, the program connected nutrition, food, culture, health, and human development through hands-on community engagement.

A highlight of the experience was Campamento Inspira, a three-day camp developed in partnership with AEetc, a Seville-based organization supporting children undergoing cancer treatment and cancer survivors. Texas Tech students worked alongside the organization and participating families to create activities centered on food and nutrition, art, recreation, creativity, and connection.

One of the most meaningful lessons came from an unexpected challenge: language. While many Texas Tech students spoke little Spanish and many campers spoke little English, students and children quickly discovered that meaningful connections could be built beyond words.

The program encouraged students to embrace challenges through a simple mantra: “I can do hard things.” Through navigating a new culture, working across disciplines, overcoming language barriers, and responding to the needs of their community partners, students experienced firsthand the value of adaptability, collaboration, and empathy.

The experience continued after students returned to Lubbock. Artwork created by the children, along with photography and reflections from Texas Tech students, was showcased at the Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts (LHUCA) during the First Friday Art Trail, bringing the story of Campamento Inspira to the local community.

For Dr. Childress, the program demonstrated the power of community-engaged education: students were not simply completing an assignment, they were using their knowledge to contribute to a real community while learning from the people they served.

Planning is already underway for next year's program, with hopes of continuing to strengthen the partnership and support AEetc's goal of reaching more children and families across Spain.

From Seville to Lubbock, the program offered a lasting reminder that education can extend far beyond the classroom and that sometimes the most meaningful lessons come from listening, connecting, and learning to “do hard things” together.



Campers and TTU Students



Culinary Medicine Kitchen Class Making Pizzas



Dr. Childress and O&E Bag



Making Clay Sculptures

DFW Next Level Nutrition Camp Inspires Future Nutrition Professionals

The Department of Nutritional Sciences hosted the Next Level Nutrition Camp July 14–16, 2026, at TTU DFW, welcoming 10 high school students for a hands-on exploration of nutrition, sports nutrition, wellness, and culinary medicine. Led by Dr. Allison Childress, with support from Mrs. Holli Booe, Maegan Guzman, and TTU graduate dietetic interns, the camp introduced students to the diverse applications of nutrition through interactive activities, including body composition testing, blood pressure measurement, phlebotomy practice, culinary demonstrations, and sports nutrition activities. The camp also provided valuable professional development for four dietetic interns, who gained experience in teaching, curriculum delivery, leadership, and group facilitation. For the high school participants, the experience offered a new perspective on nutrition and potential career pathways. One student described nutrition as “a powerful form of preventative medicine,” while a parent shared that the experience even encouraged their student to consider Texas Tech University for college. The Next Level Nutrition Camp continues to inspire future nutrition professionals while strengthening hands-on learning and community engagement.



From the Classroom to the Clinic: A Nutrition and Diabetes Skills Fair

Several faculty and dietetic interns from the Nutritional Science department collaborated with Texas Tech Health Sciences Center School of Medicine to facilitate "From the Classroom to the Clinic: A Nutrition and Diabetes Skills Fair" for 1st-year medical students. They hosted several tables covering diabetes-focused content, such as carb counting and components of Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES), including how to use a glucometer and essential education for those with diabetes mellitus. They emphasized the importance of having Registered Dietitians present in patients' medical care and education, and hoped this will be a springboard for more opportunities to educate future doctors on nutrition concepts.



The Department of Nutritional Sciences continues to expand its research infrastructure

The Department of Nutritional Sciences continues to expand its research infrastructure and capabilities through new facilities, technologies, and specialized research tools available to investigators. Together, these additions strengthen the department's capacity for basic, clinical, community, and translational nutrition research and provide investigators with an expanding range of resources for collaborative and grant-funded research.

Integrated Life Sciences Facility

Researchers now have access to the Integrated Life Sciences Facility in the Academic Sciences Building, which includes:

- Histopathology BSL-2 Core
- Clean Room Core
- Human Sampling Core
- High-Resolution Nano-printing Lab

Expanded Clinical Research Resources at NMHI

The Nutrition and Metabolic Health Initiative (NMHI) provides extensive infrastructure for clinical and translational research, now including:

- Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry (DXA) for body-composition assessment
- Seca mBCA Alpha BIA device
- SphygmoCor XCEL system
- Cholestech LDX, CardioChek, and HbA1c analyzers

New Community Nutrition Research Resources

Community and public health nutrition researchers have access to an expanded collection of portable research and education tools, including:

- CardioChek Plus lipid testing
- Veggie Meter for skin carotenoid assessment
- Portable cooking sets
- Hydroponic indoor growing system

Expanded Molecular Biology Capabilities

Several specialized instruments and technologies are now highlighted within the department's Molecular Biology Laboratories, including:

- Brookhaven Nanobrook 90Plus PALS analyzer
- Olympus CKX53 microscope
- Invitrogen iBright 1500 imaging system
- Applied Biosystems QuantStudio3 and 7900HT systems
- Eppendorf Mastercycler Nexus gradient system
- Seahorse XF Flex Analyzer
- Leica DMI8 Spinning Disk Confocal Microscope with live-cell imaging capability
- Multiple ABI QuantStudio3 systems for gene and miRNA expression measurements

Expanded Neurobiology of Nutrition Research Capabilities

The Neurobiology of Nutrition (N2) Laboratory has also updated its available research techniques and behavioral assays, including:

- Brain immunostaining
- Taste reactivity testing
- Preference testing
- Progressive-ratio lever-press testing
- Specialized approaches for investigating food reward, hedonics, metabolic regulation, and brain–body interactions

Welcoming Our New Newsletter Editor

We are excited to welcome Anna Nelson, a graduate student in the Department of Nutritional Sciences, as the new editor of the Nutritional Sciences Newsletter beginning with the Spring 2027 issue.

As editor, Anna will highlight the achievements, research, and events that make our department special. We look forward to seeing the newsletter continue to grow under her leadership and to bringing our department's stories to students, faculty, and alumni of Nutritional Sciences.

Welcome, Anna! We are excited to have you take the lead and wish you great success in this new role!



Anna Nelson

Department Announcements

Class of 2026 Graduation Celebration

The Nutritional Sciences (NS) Department celebrated our Spring 2026 graduates on August 7, 2026.

- Master of Science in Nutritional Sciences and Nutritional Sciences-Dietetics
 - Esmaeili, Mina
 - Clifford, Lexi A.
 - Costello, James W.
 - Curtis, Emily C.
 - Gomez, Joseph Q.
 - Hetzler, Lucy J.
 - Madden, Eric P.
 - Anderson, Grace A.
 - Candelaria Pelet, Alondra C.
 - Conard, Abigail C.
 - Delacruz, Jourdan E.
 - Ernst, Gabriella G.
 - Estrada, Brenna A.
 - Hibinger, Allison
 - Hunnicutt, Savannah A.

- Nelson, Dominique M.
- Patel, Pari S.
- Plath, Kelsey
- Rozario-Levine, Angela J.
- Schaney, Madison B.
- Sheets, Marissa M.
- Taylor, Cassandra G.
- Toledo Ramos, Anamaria
- Williams, Laila M.

Student Achievements

- Kolawole David Adeyemi received the Doctoral Student Research Award: Awarded by the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB), Student Government Association (SGA) Travel Grant, and Helen Hodges Educational Charitable Trust Award for 2026
- Rebecca Castillo, won first place in the 2026 American Society for Nutrition's Diversity in Nutrition Oral Competition
- Tanvi Kale received the Summer Thesis/Dissertation Research Award

Presentations, Publications, and Invited Lectures and Boards

American Society for Nutrition (July, 2026)

Nutritional Sciences students showcased their research through poster presentations at Nutrition 2026 conference in Washington, D.C., presenting studies on topics such as GLP-1 therapies, food noise, gut health and aging, personalized nutrition, glucose metabolism, metabolic health, and therapeutic approaches to obesity. Their work is clear evidence that these students are pushing the field forward and shaping the future of nutrition science.

Oral presentations

- **R. A. Castillo**, O. H. Park, B. Castillo, S. Shine, H. Gong, C. Lyford, & S. Badruddoza. Supporting Toddler Vegetable Intake: Caregiver Perspectives on a Multicomponent Intervention for Low-Income Families
- **Seyed "Ali" Abbas Hashemi**, Marleigh Hefner, & Sheikh Mohammed Shariful Islam. Cross-Trial Prediction of Tirzepatide-Associated Weight Loss Using Trial-Level Validation

Poster Theatre Presentations

- **Kolawole D. Adeyemi**, Nicole Larson, Duke Appiah, Oak-Hee Park, Surya Raj Niraula, & Sheikh Mohammed Shariful. Diet Quality and Cardiometabolic Health Among Young Adults in the US: Findings From NHANES 2011–2020
- **Gaurav M. Kudchadkar**, David B. Allison, Emily J. Dhurandhar, Nikhil V. Dhurandhar, Chaoling Dong, & Gareth R. Dutton. Food Noise: Psychosocial Correlates in a Treatment-Seeking Population

Poster Presentations

- **B. B. Castillo** & O. H. Park. Qualitative Analysis Evaluating the Healthy Eating and Active Lifestyle for Rural Texas High School Students (HEALTH)
- Martin Binks, Rita Wang, Emily J. Dhurandhar, Kevin C. Maki, **Nikhil V. Dhurandhar**, Ted Kyle, Sydney Yurkow, Misty Hawkins, Jon Agle, Emily Ho, Lawrence Cheskin, Thorkild Sørensen, Bernard Gorman, & David B. Allison. Food Noise, BMI, and Eating-Related Quality of Life: Validation of the RAID-FN and New Insights From a National Sample
- **M. Zaroudi**, A. C. Shin, M. Ali Ahmadi, M. Ramezan, T. Mobaderi, & S. Galyean. Impact of Synbiotics Supplementation on Cognitive Function and Age-Related Biomarkers in Older Adults
- **S. M. Ostojic**, N. Todorovic, D. Nedeljkovic, D. Korovljev, V. Stajer, & J. Timmcke. Rosemary–Daily Supplementation and Sleep–Energy Outcomes in Middle-Aged Adults
- D. Korovljev, D. Nedeljkovic, A. Tarnava, N. Todorovic, & **S. M. Ostojic**. Hydrogen-Rich Water Effects in Metabolic Syndrome Stratified by Breath Hydrogen
- **Mina Esmaeili**, Amir Dayhimi, Kimia Jazi, Asiye Bigdeli, Fatemeh Farhoudi, Mohamadreza Erfanimanesh, Farhad Gorji pour, Marjan Ajami, & Hamidreza Pazoki-Toroudi. Harnessing the Gut Microbiome in Cancer Immunotherapy: Mechanisms, Challenges, and Routes to Personalized Medicine—A Systematic Review
- **Tanvi Kale**, Masoud Nateqi, Vijay Hegde, & Nikhil V. Dhurandhar. Insparin Enhances Glucose Clearance Independent of Fasting Status in Mice
- **Most Arifa Sultana**, P. Babu Balagopal, & Vijay Hegde. Exploring the Neuroprotective Effects of Nanoparticle Encapsulated Antioxidants in Ameliorating Alzheimer's Disease Pathology: An In Vitro Approach
- **Fardous Farhana**, Nikhil V. Dhurandhar, & Vijay Hegde. Insparin Protein Attenuates Fibrosis and Oxidative Stress in TGF- β 1-Activated Hepatic Stellate Cells: Implications for MASLD and Liver Cancer
- **Hazera Binte Sufian**, Vijay Hegde, & Bhaskar Das. Targeted Inhibition of Methionine Aminopeptidase 2: A Novel Strategy for Anti-Obesity Therapy
- Watkins BA, Watkins JR, Blandio A, **Shin AC**, Cremonini E, Zhang G, Mackenzie GG, Rucker RB. Setting the bar for trust and nutrition validation in biomedical research with AI-assisted ChatGPT methodology
- **Tatum Walker**, Ashti Morovati, Shane Scoggin, Naima Moustaid-Moussa, & Yujiao Zu. Alginate Hydrogel Encapsulation Improves Gastrointestinal Retention and Colon Delivery of Tart Cherry Anthocyanin Nanoparticles
- **Yujiao Zu**, Ashti Morovati, Tatum Walker, Shane Scoggin, & Naima Moustaid-Moussa. Prebiotic Chitosan Nanoparticles Enhance Tart Cherry Anthocyanin Delivery and Attenuate Diet-Induced Obesity in Mice



Seyed Ali Abbas Hashemi



Drs. Nikhil V Dhurandhar & Vijay Hegde, Hazera Binte Sufian



Drs. Nikhil V Dhurandhar & Sergej M. Ostojic



Dr. Gaurav Kudchadkar

Alzheimer's Association International Conference (July, 2026)

- **Ramezan M**, Shin AC. Sex-specific hypothalamic glucose metabolism defines divergent metabolic trajectories in Alzheimer's disease
- **Ali Ahmadi M**, Haque ZF, Ramezan M, Ramoni N, Shin AC. Cognitive function improves in female 5xFAD mice following plasma BCAA reduction

International Conference on Eating Disorders (June, 2026)

- Munn-Chernoff M, Cho Y, Marable J, Bigham C, Ramezan M, Hefner M, **Shin AC**, Galyean S. The Role of GLP-1 Receptor Agonists in Disordered Eating, Psychological Traits, and Metabolic Outcomes: A Pilot Study

Journal Articles

- Hawkins MAW, Jimenez-Garcia JA, Dhurandhar EJ, Maki KC, **Dhurandhar NV**, Kyle TK, Yurkow S, Agley J, Cheskin LJ, Sørensen TA, Binks M, Wang X, Gorman B, Chao AM, Allison DB, Ho EH. New Horizons for the Ro Allison Indiana Dhurandhar Food Noise Inventory: Response to a Letter to the Editor. *Obesity*, 2026
- Sosa-Holwerda A, **Niraula SR**, Oldewage-Theron W, Moustaid-Moussa N, Thompson L, Park O. Mapping Knowledge Gaps: A Needs Assessment of Sorghum, Whole Grains Knowledge and Prediabetes Risk. *Nutrients* 2026
- Adeyemi K, Larson N, Appiah D, Park O, Niraula SR, Islam SMS. Diet Quality and Cardiometabolic Health Among Young Adults in the U.S.: Findings From NHANES 2011–2020. *Current Developments in Nutrition* 2026
- Acharya A, Mishra R, Pokhrel A, **Niraula SR**, Shreewastav K. Nomophobia and Smartphone Usage Patterns among Medical Students at a Tertiary Care Medical College in Eastern Nepal. *Journal of Nobel Medical College* 2026
- Parajuli R, Oldewage-Theron W, **Niraula SR**. Association between unhealthy snack food and beverage consumption and the nutritional status of Nepalese children and adolescents: A systematic review. *PLoS One* 2026
- Watkins BA, **Shin AC**, Shen CL. Editorial: Brain health across the lifespan: nutritional interventions and physical exercise for healthy aging. *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 2026
- **Shin AC**, Haque ZF, Galyean S, Heftner M, Esmaeili M, Lawrence JJ, Watkins BA. Brain health across the lifespan and the impact of nutrition, microbiota, and sleep. *Aging Research Reviews*, 2026
- Bisht J, Rawat P, **Shin AC**, Hegde V. Mitochondrial dysfunction in AD and mitochondria-targeted therapeutics. *Cells*, 2026

Invited Lectures, Presentations, and Workshops

- Dr. Nikhil V Dhurandhar
 - Clinical Integration & Future Directions of Food Noise in Obesity Care. American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, May 2026.
 - Is Medication the Missing Piece? Rethinking Obesity Management”. Office of Faculty Development. Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. El Paso, TX. May 22, 2026
 - Primary Care Obesity Management Course: A collaboration between Texas Academy of Family Physicians. June 27, 2026.

- Dr. Andrew Shin
 - Nutrient sensing in the reward circuit: Branched-chain amino acids and sweet intake.
Asan Medical Center, Department of Medicine, Seoul, South Korea
 - Rewiring reward: branched-chain amino acids in hedonics, motivation, and obesity.
Seoul National University, Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, Seoul, South Korea

Awards, Miscellaneous Board and Other Appointments

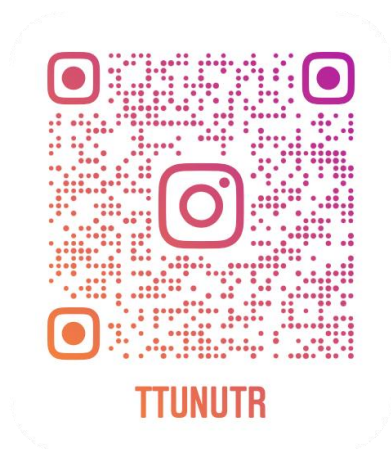
- Dr. Nikhil V Dhurandhar received the Distinguished Fellow of the American Society for Nutrition - the highest honor bestowed by the American Society for Nutrition.
- Sara Ranjbar along with Co-chairs for the dissertation: Nik Dhurandhar and Vijay Hegde won the 2026 George A. Bray Doctoral Dissertation Award
- Dr. Yuijiao Zu was a finalist in the American Society for Nutrition's (ASN) Early Career Research Award Competition, an educational activity that recognizes early-career scientists within 10 years of a doctoral degree working a career in nutrition science or practices presenting outstanding

In the Media

- Dr. Allison Childress
 - Was quoted in the article [Kimchi May Help Clear Microplastics From the Gut, Early Research Shows](#)
- Dr. Gaurav Kudchadkar
 - Research findings on food noise presented at ASN 2026 were highlighted in a highly reputable science advocacy blog "Conscienhealth"
<https://conscienhealth.org/2026/07/27/ywm2026-food-sings-to-me-like-harry-belafonte/>

Home Page Content

- Department Announcements
 - Learn about spring graduates, new appointments, and lab updates!
- Student Achievements
 - See what kind of awards NS Department students are receiving.
- Faculty Awards
 - Get the scoop on the latest faculty member awards!
- Funding
 - Check out our funded projects.
- Abstracts, Publications, and Invited Lectures and Miscellaneous
 - Discover the revolutionary research and efforts being done by students and faculty!
- In the Media
 - Catch up on all our media-worthy news items.
- Contact Us
 - Share your comments and suggestions. Email the editor Tanvi Kale (takale@ttu.edu) whenever you receive awards or funding; appear in the media, or have lab updates, publications, presentations, or other achievements you wish to share. We look forward to hearing from you!
Add my email and name
- Follow Us
 - Like and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to keep up with the latest NS news!
 - Facebook: Texas Tech University Department of Nutritional Sciences (@TTUNSc) <https://www.facebook.com/TTUNSc/>
 - Instagram: TTU Nutritional Sciences (@ttunutr) <https://www.instagram.com/ttunutr/>



- Twitter: TTU Nutritional Sciences (@TTUNSc) <https://twitter.com/TTUNSc>