

*Open Letter to Oregon Educational Programs About Nutrition Instructors*

INSTRUCTIONAL DEANS

AND

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORS

Dear Colleague:

We have been contacted by both citizens and licensed dietitians who are concerned about the credentials of nutritionists teaching at some colleges in Oregon. In nutrition, non-accredited correspondence schools and other organizations have issued a multitude of “degrees” and certificates. These documents are promoted as equivalent to established credentials that qualify the recipient as an expert in nutrition. This is often not true and is confusing to the uninformed public. Anyone may call themselves a “nutritionist” regardless of education, background or qualifications.

The Licensed Dietitian is a food/nutrition expert recognized under the authority of the State of Oregon. The public is protected through the licensure, which ensures that the Licensed Dietitian meets and maintains national and state standards of knowledge and experience for the profession.

The main objective of this Board is to enhance the public’s protection. The public trusts government and school administrators to hire people who have the proper credentials for the services they provide. Licensing standards are set to prevent individuals who don’t meet the standards from representing themselves as equivalent to those who do. To protect the public, we reason that a licensed dietitian should be involved in providing medical nutrition therapy for nutrition-related diseases including, but not limited to, diabetes, high cholesterol and weight management.

It is not within the scope of the Board to investigate complaints related to unlicensed dietitians or nutritionists. However, in the interest of public safety and health, we recommend that you hire licensed dietitians to teach your nutrition and medical-nutrition-therapy courses. To that end, we think that it is useful to provide you with information and resources to help in the assessment of any such possible employee.

Our brochure is enclosed with additional information. You may also connect to our web site: <http://www.oregon.gov/obeld>. The site outlines standards and priorities of the Board as stated in the licensure act. It also serves to validate licensure for those purporting to be licensed and/or otherwise qualified.

Thank you for your consideration of this concern voiced to us by some citizens of Oregon. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Most sincerely,

Madelyn Koontz, Chairperson