

New Fueling Station Gives Nutrition Students Hands-on Experience

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Utah State University's Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Food Sciences has partnered with USU Athletics to offer a place where busy athletes can get nutritious pre- or post-workout snacks.

The Aggie Fueling Station was created by representatives from the nutrition program and athletics, who had a goal of working together to provide athletes with the food they need to complement the physical demands of training and nutrition and dietetic students with hands-on experience with sports nutrition

The station is stocked with appetizing food focused on combining convenience and nutrition. Student athletes can choose from a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, cheese, milk, chicken, Greek yogurt, beef jerky, peanut butter, trail mixes and more.

Workers at the fueling station prepare fruits and vegetables, measure out serving sizes, restock the serving area and plan the daily special. In addition to the food preparation, volunteers are on-hand to answer nutrition questions from student athletes and give presentations about health and wellness to sports teams.

"It's the ultimate win-win," said Sheryl Aguilar, the research dietitian in charge of the station. "Our students are getting real-world experience and the student athletes are getting sound nutrition advice."

Aguilar said working at the station especially caters to students interested in sports nutrition or nutrition

education. Participation at the station is now a requirement for juniors and seniors in the dietetics program.

Natalie Norris, an alumna of the USU dietetics program and a past soccer player for USU, has been hired to work in both the nutrition and the athletics department to better connect the two programs. Aguilar said this connection is important because it allows the students more opportunities in sports nutrition and provides staffing to run the Fueling Station and educate the student athletes.

"It was interesting for me to see how the things I was learning could translate into an actual job," said Stacey Garrett, a recent graduate of the coordinated dietetics program and one of the Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN) who helps run the facility.

The station currently serves all student athletes.

"I love having access to the Fueling Station because it's so quick and convenient," said Brenn Flint, a member of the track and field team. "I come almost every day, sometimes even twice a day."

Aguilar said athletes have special nutritional needs because of the additional stress put on their bodies due to their physical exertion. They need additional calories, carbohydrates, protein, fluid and electrolytes (such as sodium and potassium).

"Working with the student athletes has been really neat," said Anna-Marie White, a student in the coordinated dietetics program. "We're able to answer their questions and we can really help them implement healthy habits into their everyday lives."

Writer: Shelby Ruud, Shelby.ruud@usu.edu

Contact: Sheryl Aguilar,
Sheryl.aguilar@usu.edu