Interview Questions (Q&A) for Undergraduate DPD Applicants

Objective: To gain insight into students challenges, experience, and thoughts on the DPD application process. These questions elaborate on students past to gain knowledge for future applicants.

Purpose: These questions were created as interview questions to gain perspective on experiences. The Q&A consist of 10 questions that are honestly answered by several students who have applied and are currently enrolled in the DPD program at Fresno State. These questions provide authentic personal experiences on the application process, skills and experience required for the application, and advice to future applicants.

These are replys to questions from Casey Qualls, Jenna Hagerty, Samuel Bates, and Hannah Cernansky. Currently in the DPD program at Fresno State and Graduating with a degree in Human Nutritional Science in Spring of 2025.

Application Process:

1. How would you describe your experience with the DPD application Process?

The application process was thorough, time consuming, and worth the effort. It feels like a lot at the time, but putting in the time and effort to meet the requirements, you do truly learn a lot. (Casey Qualls, December 2nd, 2024).

It was clear of what was expected for the application, however that did not make it any less pressured to have an intriguing application.

(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

I was stressed when I was doing it but looking back it was not that hard.

(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

2. What were the biggest challenges you faced when applying, and how did you overcome them?

One of the biggest challenges is trying to divide the required hours between clinical, community, and food service evenly. This way you were able to get plenty of experience in each atmosphere so that you can be prepared for future tasks. To overcome this, I had to go out and seek individuals to speak to and get information from where I could volunteer or participate in certain events to accumulate the correct amount of hours in each category. Also working and maintaining grades is very difficult, but that is where I learned the majority of my time management skills

(Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

Placing all of the application pieces onto the application site. It was difficult for me to Convert

(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

My biggest challenge was getting all 240 hours as a transfer student coming in with practically nothing. I overcame this by volunteering for ANY opportunity that presented itself that would fit within my schedule.

(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

3. What is one thing you wish you had known before starting the application?

Preparation & Resources:

Get involved as soon as you can whether it be on campus or volunteering at an offsite facility/job. Put yourself out there to go to events and participate in clubs, programs and events, where you can work and get to know people in this field so that you can also feel more comfortable, but also have others that you know in the field and can connect with. Networking will be so important as we move along in college and careers.

(Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

Put any and every accomplishment on the application. Random certificates, awards, nominations, anything that is extra is noted in your application.

(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

The difference between a cover letter and a personal statement.

(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

4. What resources or strategies have been most helpful for organizing your application materials?

I am personally a pen and paper type of gal so I printed out the requirement list put it in a binder in the clear sleeve and then added a sleeve for every step that I would need for the application process along with that, I would have my highlighters in my pens, color coordinated to keep myself organized on where I was and where I needed to be, according to my timeline. (Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

Make your personal statement present who you are. Not your list of accomplishments. Use your accomplishments and experience to list how it shaped who you are today. Chat GPT will NOT make your essays sound like you, but it can edit your paper so use it to that advantage.
(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

I had a separate folder only for volunteer documentation that I kept in my backpack.
(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

5. Did you seek out any mentorship or guidance, and if so, how did it help?

The majority of

guidance that I received for the DPD application was honestly from Dr. Herzig and just paying attention to what she was telling us in class during NUTR 61 and in general just talking about the program as often as we did during classes and conversations with others. Dr. Herzig will say this and personally there is nothing more true, if you have a nutrition/DPD program go directly to Her!
(Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

I had DPD students, trusted classmates, professors, etc. proofread my papers so that I had multiple points of views.
(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

Not necessarily for the DPD program, if I was confused I would go to Dr. Herzig.
(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

6. Were there any workshops, classes, or campus resources that supported your application process?

The main class would be NUTR 61 with the course outline project that you will use the rest of your duration at Fresno State.
(Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

Volunteering and working at Saint Agnes helped since it's a clinical setting. Honestly have as much experience as possible from a range of places.

(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

I did not utilize any campus resources.

(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

Skills & Experience:

7. What experiences (volunteer, work, clinical, community) have you found most valuable in building a strong application?

I would say the most valuable experience that I had was working on campus at the Fresno State nutrition lounge and with the research project for the USDA grant. Being involved on campus you get to be exposed to more education and learning because you are putting the environment where you get to see others in action and you can also put what you're practicing into action. The most beneficial experience I had was working as a CNA and the ICCU and really grasping the importance of nutritional value and nutritional
Support.

(Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

Working in a restaurant shows your background with food handling and safety. Working in a clinic or hospital will win you big points for patient experience. Overall customer service is a good experience to have under your belt.

(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

Being a research assistant stands out the most.

(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

8. How did you accumulate hours or experience in different areas like community nutrition, clinical settings, or food service?

For the clinical hours, I was able to use my hours as working as a CNA, which was really nice because I had over 2000 of those hours from working in that field for such a duration of time. For community nutrition, I have always been involved in the grocery to go (G2G) program at our church. We also go to the rescue mission quite often as a family or as a church to help prepare meals and distribute those meals as well. For the food service I did get to use some of the mission work because I am preparing food and also the Sports Nutrition lounge on campus where I got the opportunity to make food, store, and disperse food.

(Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

I took any and every opportunity that was sent my way whether it was a classroom announcement, emails from Dr. Herzig, or networking from outside sources. I received way over the amount of hours required so it was not a struggle to receive hours since my job(s) also counted towards hours.

(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

Community- journal check out

clinical- Winning Mentee and research assisting (mainly data entry hours)

Food service- Athlete lounge assistant.

(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

Advice for Future Applicants:

9. What tips would you give to other students preparing to apply to the DPD Program?

Try your best to get a variety of volunteer hours so that you can kind of get a feel for what department you think you'd like to work in. Working in the community gets you the experience that you need of dealing with the public and what that would look like possibly. Working in a clinical setting will show you what it's like to work inside that clinical setting and what the day-to-day routine is for someone who is in a sterile environment. Then in food service you have the opportunity to do so much and a wide variety of different opportunities with food service such as preparing food, prepping food, food, management, etc.

(Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

Don't overthink your application. Simply follow what is asked, and DON"T STALL OR WAIT TILL THE LAST MINUTE TO SUBMIT!! It stressed me out watching others turn in their applications an hour before the deadline. Work on your application ASAP.

(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

Having a lot of volunteering makes you a strong applicant however your GPA is more important.

(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).

10.Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently during the application process?

Looking back I would have started getting my binder out and organized earlier, so that you don't feel the stress or the pressure of missing/forgetting something, especially a critical small detail. It is important to be prepared and organized ahead of time so that you can be ready to jump into action or show proof of anything thoroughly and efficiently.
(Casey Qualls, Oral Communication, December 2nd, 2024).

I wish I added a list of certifications, awards, etc. that at the time I thought didn't matter but it does. You will need the same for master program applications.
(Jenna Hagerty, Oral Communication, November 30th, 2024).

Not necessarily, I would have liked to receive guidance on the formatting and requirements at the beginning of the semester instead of towards the end so I could have worked on it earlier on.
(Hannah Cernansky, Oral Communication, November 16th, 2024).