



Linda T. Farr, RDN, CSOWM, LD, FAND
president@eatright.org



Taking Action: Increasing Efforts to Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion unite and strengthen us, as a profession and an organization alike. When diversity and inclusion are embedded into the culture of everything we do and say, they will become a part of our daily processes. We will be giving voice to our members' unique cultural perspectives, raising awareness of cultural practices, influencing cultural evidence-based practice, building a pipeline of diverse students, and serving diverse consumers with equity, cultural humility, and respect.

This is the second article in a two-part series on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Academy has been taking action—and we will increase our efforts in this all-important area.

Diversity and inclusion have been included within our plan of work for many years, and I believe it is important to be thankful and appreciative of all of the efforts of those who came before us and those who currently serve: as leaders, liaisons, advocates, authors, speakers, researchers, community volunteers, mentors and educators. All of these individuals, and many others, promote the advancement of food, nutrition, and dietetics diversity and inclusion.

Last month, we heard from a number of the Academy's Black members, as well as from the National Organization of Blacks in Dietetics and Nutrition member interest group (MIG). My focus this month is on MIGs and our International affiliate, who play a such key role in reflecting the interests and characteristics of our diverse members and the diverse public they serve.

Maria Virginia Tijerina Walls, MS, NC, Chair, Latinos and Hispanics in Dietetics and Nutrition MIG (LAHIDAN)

The Latino and Hispanic community is rich and diverse. Diversity strengthens the dietetics profession and contributes to fulfilling its objectives of science and knowledge. It is crucial to increase the number of our members to expand our influence and representation in the Academy and across the whole dietitian community in the United States. We are experts in a wide range of areas, being able to attend the needs of any community. We want to see an increased number of initiatives at the university level to train Latino/Hispanic dietetic professionals. It is imperative to help them overcome financial and social barriers to make education and internships more accessible. In the period ahead, we look forward to seeing an end in the inequity gap.

Nikki Nies, Chair, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders MIG (AAPI)

We are here to represent and lift up the voices of all the diverse cultures of the Academy. We empower members to be leaders in cultural evidence-based practices through diversity and inclusion.

Our Foundation's Contributions to Diversity and Inclusion

Last year as President-elect, I had the opportunity to serve on the Foundation's Board of Directors. I saw first-hand how dedicated donors work with the Foundation to support diversity and inclusion within our profession by creating scholarship and award opportunities for our diverse members and students. In addition, nearly one-third of all Foundation Fellowships have been awarded to diverse members who work in the United States and globally to address the greatest food and nutrition challenges throughout the world. Since 1979, a number of Foundation Funds have been established by individual members, the Commission on Dietetic Registration, state affiliates, dietetic practice groups (DPGs), and MIGs. These scholarships and awards offer financial support for diverse registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) and students at all levels of study. For example, the Commission on Dietetic Registration Diversity Scholarship awards 20 scholarships at \$5,000 each to diverse students every year. From 2017-2019, the Foundation awarded over \$535,000 to 211 diverse recipients. Students can apply for scholarships when the application opens each year in February, while Fellowship opportunities are posted as they arise. For more information, visit www.eatrightFoundation.org. If you are interested in working with our Foundation to establish a Fund of your own for these purposes or donate to an existing fund, I urge you to do so.

These groups represent diversity in *ability, age, creed, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, size, and socioeconomic characteristics in the nutrition and dietetics profession.*

I asked these group's members and leaders what they would most like their fellow Academy members to know about the priorities they are dedicated to addressing. You'll find their informative responses in the accompanying boxes.

Dixie R. Havlak, RDN, Leadership Team Member, Global Member Interest Group (GMIG)

GMIG is focused on providing assistance with community health issues in a wide variety of cultures and economic circumstances much different from our own. Thus, it is fundamental that we strive to be culturally aware, sensitive, and respectful of cultures all around the world. The recent events in the US remind us that we should strive always for tolerance and equality within as well as outside our country.

Yaqutullah Ibraheem Muhammad, MS, RDN, LD, Chair, Religion Member Interest Group (RMIG)

RMIG is a community for diverse nutrition professionals with an interest in cross-cultural awareness and reducing health disparities. There are currently sub-groups for each of the (Abrahamic) Jewish, Muslim, and Christian faith communities. RMIG acknowledges the fundamental equality at the heart of humanity.

Dylan Bailey, MS, RD, Chair, Cultures of Gender and Age Member Interest Group (COGA)

As a relatively new Member Interest Group, COGA promotes the exchange of perspectives and learnings across gender, age, and lived experience. COGA addresses the unique needs for education, networking, programming, and collaboration across our membership while also providing an inclusive, collective voice within the Academy for young practitioners, seasoned members, and men in the profession.

Reiko Hashimoto, RD, IAAND Country Representative for Japan

I think the multi-ethnic Academy's efforts to improve understanding for equity, inclusion, and diversity will have a beneficial influence over the dietetic society in Japan.

Abi Navarro, RD, MSc, PhD, IAAND Secretary and member from Mexico

IAAND broadened my horizons and made me realize that by the time I was opening up my way as a dietitian in Israel, I could do the same worldwide.

Mudita Arora, MSc, MS, RDN, LD, Chair, Indians in Nutrition and Dietetics Member Interest Group (IND)

Even in these unprecedented times, diversity and inclusion remains a part of IND's DNA. IND values and respects true collaboration built on the principles of diversity and we believe in the uniqueness of our members' voices engaged in a world of inclusion and belonging. IND members are your go-to resource for culturally diverse and evidence-based information to assist with your clients of Indian origin.

Karla Padrelanan, RD, RND, CSG, IAAND Country Representative for Qatar

Having been a member of IAAND provided me additional opportunity to interact, in a wider scope, with colleagues of different nationalities so as to better appreciate cultures—which of course includes food. It has been said that food is a universal language as it is considered a source of energy, happiness, and of course a form of medicine. The current global situation and the way technology is providing ease of access and communication makes IAAND relevant now more than ever.

Monique Richard, MS, RDN, LDN, FAND, RYT, President, International Affiliate of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

IAAND is a robust culturally diverse community with over 1,200 members in 84 countries across the globe. From Botswana to Bahrain, the Czech Republic to Cyprus, Ghana, Australia, Qatar, Laos, Brazil, and more, our members span over multiple time zones for the common goal of promoting international collaboration in the global nutrition and dietetics community. We are supporting the profession as a whole, but also each individual that represents the profession, maintaining cultural awareness and sensitivity, exploring barriers and bias to practicing dietetics, and delivering nutrition care in their respective country or the country they currently reside in. We offer tools such as Country Information Sheets, which include local institutions, resources, and credentialing information, are working on tip sheets for information gathering using the nutrition care process pertinent to certain countries and further expanding for local/regional areas within the country, as well as translating resources and tools to local languages. We all want to support health in our communities, families, our planet, and in ourselves through nutrition. By coming together, supporting, and learning from each other, we influence the changes we want to see in the world. IAAND welcomes all of you to join us in action.

We will continue to update our strategic plan, which guides our direction and establishes impact goals such as improving health equity and access, championing legislation and regulations that increase food and nutrition security through the life cycle, developing and advocating for policies that support prevention and well-being initiatives, and increasing the diversity and cultural competence of our workforce to reflect the communities we serve.

As an organization, the Academy needs your participation and widespread representation to continue to build diversity, inclusiveness, and value for each person's unique perspective and qualities. We will continue to listen to all points of view.

I encourage you to please share your perspectives, identify problems, and present ideas and solutions.

MIGs are open to all Academy members. You can learn much more about MIGs and how to join at www.eatrightPRO.org/membership/academy-groups/member-interest-groups.

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