University of Alaska Fairbanks

New Degree Program Request: Format 3A

NEW OCCUPATIONAL ENDORSEMENT REQUEST

RURAL NUTRITION SERVICES

12 Credits minimum

Submitted by
Interior – Aleutians Campus
College of Rural and Community Development
September, 2009
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I. COVER MEMORANDUM

A. NAMES OF PERSONS PREPARING REQUEST
This proposal was prepared by Sarah McConnell, Project Manager/Faculty Troth Yedda’ Nutrition Project, Clara Johnson, Director Interior – Aleutians Campus (IAC), and Shannon Erhart, Fiscal Technician IAC. The proposal was developed in collaboration with Susan Runyan, Registered Dietitian Faculty, IAC, Julie Maier, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Associate of Science degree, and Carrie King, Assistant Professor of Dietetics and Nutrition, UAA. An Advisory Committee of Registered Dietitians, Alaska Native health care leaders, stakeholders, and Alaska Native Elders have guided the development of Rural Nutrition Services.

B. BRIEF STATEMENT OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

Overview: Interior – Aleutians Campus (IAC) has developed the Rural Nutrition Services (RNS) Occupational Endorsement proposal in response to the soaring incidence of nutrition-related health care needs in rural Alaska, and the identified gap in postsecondary nutrition education in Alaska (see Appendix A). The RNS Occupational Endorsement would serve as a 12-credit gateway to employment and service with special relevance to Alaska Natives, rural Alaskans, and those individuals working with rural Alaskans. RNS also establishes an entry point to advanced education in nutrition science, health and food system-related fields.

The proposed curriculum of approved University of Alaska Fairbanks courses was developed through extensive consultation with Registered Dietitians serving rural Alaska, Tribal organizations providing health care and human services to rural residents, rural education organizations, and rural residents coping with chronic, preventable nutrition-related diseases such as type 2 diabetes and hypertension. The curriculum is unique in its combination of Nutrition Science, Behavioral Health and Alaska Native knowledge with the unique realities of rural and Alaska Native food systems. RNS builds on the proven education models of UAF’s Rural Human Services Program and Tribal Management Program by focusing on traditional Alaska Native knowledge and ways of learning integrated with current technology, science and vocational skills.

The proposed Occupational Endorsement responds to the exceptional vocational education and academic needs of Alaska’s workforce, needs of employers, and needs of people of all ages threatened by nutrition-related diseases. It has been carefully designed to provide students the foundation education and skills necessary to enter paraprofessional direct service and/or follow an academic pathway to the proposed RNS Certificate, Associate of Science or Associate of Applied Science degree.

Upon completion of an RNS Occupational Endorsement, a student will know entry-level Nutrition Science and have skills for communicating this knowledge to others using a broad range of techniques, including culturally relevant methods. Potential career opportunities include (but are not limited to) local Diabetes Prevention Coordinator, Head
Start Nutrition Educator, Elder Nutrition Cook, Tribal Administrator of Nutrition and Health Programs, and School Cook, as well as expanded capacity in the positions of Community Health Aide, Women Infant and Children (WIC) Program representative, and Wellness Coordinator. The students completing RNS pilot courses during the 2008 – 2009 academic year have demonstrated the capacity for employment and expansion of existing employment related to nutrition, health and rural food systems.

The Rural Nutrition Services Occupational Endorsement will be offered through the Interior – Aleutians Campus of the College of Rural and Community Development (CRCD). It is designed to fit the UAF Strategic Plan and overall goals of CRCD by educating rural Alaskans in a field that allows them to remain in their home community and find employment, which helps their people stay healthy.

Objectives:

- To provide a culturally relevant gateway to nutrition science employment and education within a rural Alaskan context.
- To prepare students, who may not otherwise be able to continue their education, for:
  a. Employment in nutrition-related fields
  b. Progressing to RNS Certificate, Associate of Science or Associate of Applied Science coursework.
- To increase the number of Alaska Natives and rural Alaskans with employment skills for nutrition-related positions, and postsecondary nutrition science knowledge.
C. REVIEW AND APPROVAL SIGNATURES

REVIEW:

Advisory Council Representative

Date

Program Head (responsible for transcription request and completion checklist)

Date

Director, Interior – Aleutians Campus

Date

Dean of School/College

Date

APPROVAL:

Curricular Affairs Committee Chair, College of Rural and Community Development

Date

Dean/Vice Chancellor
College of Rural and Community Development

Date

President, UAF Faculty Senate

Date

Chancellor, UAF

Date
II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE ENDORSEMENT

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENDORSEMENT

1. Occupational Endorsement Title:

Rural Nutrition Services (RNS) Occupational Endorsement

2. Admission Requirements and Prerequisites:

Admission is open to all individuals, especially those with a background and interest in nutrition, health and local food systems, including persons employed by or interested in employment with local nutrition, health care, education and government or other local entities in rural Alaska supporting the delivery of community-based nutrition, health and wellness services. Such services include health and social/human services, food service and access, tribal management and administration, education, food security, economic development, business development, and environment and natural resources.

Students should have a high school diploma or GED, or be enrolled in a university sponsored Tech Prep or Early College program. Previous training or work experience in the delivery or management of local nutrition service programs is recommended but not required. It is recommended that students be familiar with computer use, such as word processing, power point, and internet prior to enrollment in RNS courses.

Students must develop an Individual Academic Plan with a strong partnership and mentorship component to include three participants: the student, an academic advisor, and a mentor experienced in an aspect of local food systems. The academic advisor could be from the teaching staff or other advisory staff of UAF. The mentor could be a Registered Dietitian with experience in rural Alaska, a Community Health Aide with nutrition training, a Diabetes Prevention Coordinator, or other community member with expertise in local food systems/services.

The student’s Individual Academic Plan must:

- Build upon a comprehensive picture of their current strengths and challenges as well as areas of knowledge and skills, including their learning style.
- Provide a clear path of skill development to cover the gap between existing strengths and the current or prospective employment or educational requirements.
- Incorporate the following RNS program standards:
  - Well-developed logic and reasoning skills, including critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.
○ Computer skills, oral and written communication skills, nutrition science, local food system and research experience.
○ Independent and community-based goal setting and planning skills.
○ Job-related work experiences, such as community food security planning, nutrition education and outreach, or collaboration with professionals to support dietary recommendations in rural context.
○ Strong interpersonal skills in professional ethics and behavior, teamwork and leadership principles.
○ Broad academic exposure encompassing issues of nutrition science and service delivery.

Employer and/or supervisor for community-based Practicum and outreach assignments associated with courses will provide data for Student Outcomes Assessment and demonstration of student competencies in entry-level skill standards for jobs related to nutrition, health and local food systems.

To remain in good standing students must:
   a) Maintain a 2.0 grade point average
   b) Follow a sequential plan of study to meet job skill and/or academic requirements
3. Course Descriptions:

RURAL NUTRITION SERVICES OCCUPATIONAL ENDORSEMENT OUTLINE

1. Complete the general university requirements (page _ of the catalog)
2. Complete the occupational endorsement requirements (page _ of the catalog)
3. Complete the following Rural Nutrition Services courses
   - RNS F105 Nutrition Science for the Generations..........................3
   - RNS F120 Alaska Native Food Systems.........................................3
   - RNS F201 Community Nutrition Interventions...............................2
   - RNS F210 Introduction to Rural Nutrition Counseling.....................2
   - RNS F260 Rural Nutrition Practicum...........................................2 - 3

4. Minimum credits required............................................................12

RURAL NUTRITION SERVICES COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
This Occupational Endorsement proposal relies on existing, approved (May, 2009) UAF courses to meet its requirements.

RNS F105 Nutrition Science for the Generations, (3 credits). Basic applied nutrition science concepts in context of the life cycle presented in a culturally relevant framework. Introductory study of macro/micro nutrient requirements, food sources and physiologic/metabolic function with focus on relationship with health and change from traditional diets to contemporary Alaska Native diets. Overview of common nutritional problems affecting rural Alaskans.

RNS F120 Alaska Native Food Systems, (3 credits). A comprehensive overview of Alaska Native Food Systems including harvest methods, nutrient values, cultural, political and economic impacts and changing relationships (spiritual, personal, environmental, community, and diet). Traditional common elements of regional diets and nutrients that support health are identified, compared and contrasted with modern diet. Current food system issues are addressed.

RNS F201 Community Nutrition Interventions, (2 credits). Students learn a broad range of skills for leading culturally relevant nutrition outreach/extension interventions in rural Alaska with attention to learning styles, lesson planning, project design, media, and delivery methods. Focus on addressing nutrition and lifestyle changes to promote wellness and prevent nutrition related diseases.

RNS F210 Introduction to Rural Nutrition Counseling, (2 credits). Identification and exploration of issues relevant to rural nutrition counseling services with focus on development of understanding and skills necessary for the effective delivery of culturally competent services. Opportunities for development of basic rural nutrition counseling skills with emphasis on integration of Alaska Native values and principles; and strategies that
facilitate positive individual, family, and community wellness through healthy lifestyle choices.

**RNS F260, Rural Nutrition Practicum, (2 – 3 credits).** The practicum provides students a supervised, community-based learning experience as they apply information from the RNS curriculum to nutrition outreach/extension. Focus is on the integration of nutrition science information with development of understanding and skills to provide culturally relevant community outreach/extension.

4. **Requirements for the Endorsement:**

   **a. Sample Course of Study and 3-Year Cycle:** To receive an Occupational Endorsement in Rural Nutrition Services, students must attain at least 12 credits of lower division (100 – 200 level) RNS courses, as described above.

   **Sample Courses of Study**

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   Total Occupational Endorsement credits = 12

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**3 YEAR COURSE CYCLE**

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b. PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION

RURAL NUTRITION SERVICES

College of Rural and Community Development
Interior - Aleutians Campus 474-6080

Occupational Endorsement
Minimum requirements for Occupational Endorsement: 12 credits

The Rural Nutrition Services Program teaches the job-related skills and knowledge needed for entry-level employment in a wide range of nutrition-related positions in health care, education, local government and other organizations serving rural Alaska. Students learn nutrition science, behavioral health as it relates to nutrition, Alaska Native knowledge and traditions related to wellness, and skills for sharing the information with individuals, groups and communities. Courses are taught within the context of the unique realities of rural Alaskan community food systems. Each student prepares an individual academic plan that guides their knowledge and skill acquisition, tracks their progress and identifies their goals in the rural nutrition field. Students have multiple opportunities to apply their learning through course outreach assignments and a Rural Nutrition Practicum experience.

The Occupational Endorsement in Rural Nutrition Services prepares a student for employment and/or for advancement to the (proposed) RNS Certificate, the Associate of Science or Associate of Applied Science degree, depending on the student’s future goals.

Occupational Endorsement

1. Complete the general university requirements (page ___ of the Catalog)
2. Complete the occupational endorsement requirements (page ___ of the Catalog)
3. Complete the following requirements:
   RNS F105 – Nutrition Science for the Generations ........... 3
   RNS F120 – Alaska Native Food Systems ...................... 3
   RNS F201 – Community Nutrition Interventions ............ 2
   RNS F210 – Introduction to Rural Nutrition Counseling ....... 2
   RNS F260 – Rural Nutrition Practicum ....................... 2 – 3
4. Minimum credits required ....................................... 12
B. ENDORSEMENT GOALS

1. Objectives and Outcomes-Based Evaluation:

The Occupational Endorsement in Rural Nutrition Services provides students with quality academic instruction and applied skills training needed for successful employment in nutrition-related fields and advancement to higher degrees in nutrition science. The RNS goal is to respond to the community request summed up by RNS Advisory Council Elder Alice Petrivelli, “Help us to help our people stay healthy.”

The goal of the Occupational Endorsement in Rural Nutrition Services is to prepare students for employment as well as advanced academic coursework, providing an articulated pathway for students to progress to the RNS Certificate, and the Associate of Science or Associate of Applied Science degrees.

a) Objectives:
- To provide a culturally relevant gateway to nutrition science employment and education within a rural Alaskan context.
- To prepare students, who may not otherwise be able to continue their education, for:
  a. Employment in nutrition-related fields
  b. Progressing to RNS Certificate, Associate of Science or Associate of Applied Science coursework.
- To increase the number of Alaska Natives and rural Alaskans with employment skills for nutrition-related positions, and postsecondary nutrition science knowledge.

b) Outcomes-Based Evaluation:
- Ongoing tracking of student recruitment numbers and course completion.
- Ongoing tracking of graduates in order to assess their ability to gain employment or enhance existing employment in nutrition-related fields.
- Ongoing tracking of completing students in order to assess their movement into subsequent certificate and associate degree programs as well as their subsequent academic performance.
- Evaluation of student’s achievement of RNS program standards (pages 7 - 8) through data collected from instructors, rural communities and employers, including skills and knowledge assessment identified in the RNS Practicum evaluation.

2. Relationship to Industry Needs:

The Occupational Endorsement in Rural Nutrition Services was created by the Interior – Aleutians Campus, in cooperation with employers, nutrition professionals, educators and stakeholders, and has a twofold focus:
1) to prepare students for entry into nutrition-related employment and enhancement of skills for existing employment; and

2) to prepare students for post-occupational endorsement education. An additional purpose is to meet the critical need for community-based nutrition service providers to address nutrition-related and preventable diseases such as type 2 diabetes and hypertension currently affecting rural Alaskans in unprecedented numbers. This program is focused on preparing students for immediate jobs and for subsequent education to meet additional industry needs.

As reflected in the Post Secondary Nutrition Education Needs in Alaska: A Statewide Needs Assessment, published June 29, 2005, the industry needs for this endorsement are substantial. The assessment identifies the industry (e.g. health and behavioral health care, education, food service, and food system management) need for entry-level positions with nutrition knowledge and skills, as well as the critical need for "home grown" Alaskan nutrition professionals. The assessment identifies a desperate need in rural areas for Registered Dietitians, describing signing bonuses as high as $30,000 to attract these professionals from outside of Alaska – excess funding not readily available in rural settings. The Occupational Endorsement in Rural Nutrition Services provides an important gateway for rural Alaskan residents and Alaska Natives to enter the academic pathway to the much-needed higher education required for nutrition professions needed in Alaska (e.g. Registered Dietitians, public health and Cooperative Extension Service professions and nutrition science researchers).

In addition, this occupational endorsement directly relates to and supports the UAF 2010 Strategic Plan goals of:

- Serving as the premiere higher educational center for Alaska Natives by both increasing the number of Alaska Native students at UAF and by increasing the proportion of degrees awarded to Alaska Native students.
- Providing high quality undergraduate education for traditional and non-traditional students by increasing the numbers of students who enroll in and successfully complete their 100-level and above coursework and degrees.
- Forming active collaborations with communities, organizations, businesses and government to meet identified state, national and global needs through increased numbers of students graduating with degrees in science-related fields.
- Serve as a model to demonstrate how gender, race, and cultural diversity strengthen a university and society.

3. Occupational or Other Competencies to be Achieved:

The Occupational Endorsement in Rural Nutrition Services will provide the student the opportunity to develop the skills and training necessary either for immediate employment in a variety of nutrition-related fields or for entry into a related certificate
or associate discipline such as the RNS Certificate, Tribal Management Certificate, Associate of Science or Associate of Applied Science in Tribal Management.

Specific competencies are reflected in each course syllabus, and include competencies such as:

- Identify fundamentals of nutrition and metabolism, including macro/micro nutrient concepts: carbohydrates (and fiber), proteins, fats, minerals, vitamins, and water.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and contrast these nutrients between traditional and contemporary Alaska Native diets.
- Demonstrate an introductory ability in assessment of health risks, health promotion, and disease prevention, especially lifestyle disease prevention.
- Demonstrate understanding of nutrition and professional resources as well as when to and how to make a referral.
- Demonstrate knowledge of health and culture by creating an Alaska Native Food Guide.
- Demonstrate knowledge of lifestyle change process to achieve or maintain healthy weight.
- Demonstrate skills for engaging in culturally based, community-centered planning for change.
- Identify key intervention points to promote healthier nutrition, looking at food from production to consumption.
- Demonstrate a range of communication skills for nutrition outreach/extension.
- Demonstrate appropriate use of self, including boundaries, referrals, and ethical conduct, in a rural setting.
- Demonstrate application of nutrition science knowledge in a counseling setting.
- Demonstrate the ability to build a counseling relationship, including listening skills and use of open-ended questions.
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct a basic assessment, gathering information by the use of listening and open-ended questions, set goals, engage in on-going assessment of progress, and goal maintenance.
- Demonstrate nutrition service competence by planning, implementing and evaluating a community project in a timely manner.
- Demonstrate the ability to integrate Nutrition Science knowledge and Community Intervention methods effectively in a culturally relevant community-based project.

4. Relationship of Courses to Endorsement Objectives:

Courses directly serve endorsement objectives by:

a) Providing coursework and applied experiences that are relevant to student needs for nutrition-related careers, especially serving rural Alaska and Alaska Natives.

b) Providing opportunities to increase student knowledge in nutrition focused disciplines and the relationship to rural Alaska and Alaska Natives.

c) Providing culturally relevant opportunities for development of skills and knowledge in nutrition and related disciplines.
d) Providing opportunities for Alaska Natives and rural Alaskans to enter the field of nutrition science and service.
C. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN

The RNS Occupational Endorsement will be assessed through on-going student and faculty evaluations, and according to the RNS Student Outcomes Assessment Plan. This assessment will consist of monitoring student recruitment, retention, progress while in the program and the results of the program as seen by students, alumni, employers and community key informants. The full RNS Student Outcomes Assessment Plan will be assessed through on-going student and faculty evaluations, and according to the RNS Student Outcomes Assessment Plan. This assessment will consist of monitoring student recruitment, retention, progress while in the program and the results of the program as seen by students, alumni, employers and community key informants. The full RNS Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan can be found as requested in Section VIII, item D. of this document.

The RNS Program Manager/Faculty and RNS Registered Dietitian Faculty will be responsible for collecting data, with the Program Manager/Faculty directing implementation of the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan. There will be direct assessment of student learning in an experiential learning environment with direct input from an employer through administration and analysis of the results of a Practicum Evaluation Tool by the Program Manager, who will disseminate results of the survey to the Rural Nutrition Services faculty.

III. PERSONNEL DIRECTLY INVOLVED WITH THE PROGRAM

A. FACULTY INVOLVED, DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Resumes for key personnel are attached as Appendix B.

Two existing Interior – Aleutians Campus (IAC) faculty are involved in the immediate management, coordination and instruction of the program.

RNS Core Faculty:

- Sarah McConnell, Assistant Professor, Tribal Management/Rural Nutrition Services, Interior – Aleutians Campus, Fairbanks.
- Susan Runyan, Assistant Professor/Registered Dietitian Faculty, Rural Nutrition Services, Interior – Aleutians Campus, Fairbanks.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE, COORDINATING AND CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL

Resumes for key personnel are attached as Appendix B.

1. Clara Johnson, Director, Interior – Aleutians Campus, College of Rural and Community Development.
2. Sarah McConnell, Program Manager/Faculty, Rural Nutrition Services, Interior – Aleutians Campus, College of Rural and Community Development.

Classified staff:
1. One .2 FTE administrative assistant is available to this program and is supported by USDA grant funds until 2011.
2. Staff support from the Interior – Aleutians Campus is available to the program as needed.

IV. ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

A. PROJECTED/PRESENT ENROLLMENT
Information available in the Post Secondary Nutrition Education Needs in Alaska: A Statewide Needs Assessment, published June 29, 2005 verifies a critical need for workforce development and university-level nutrition education in Alaska. Since that time, the need has grown as nutrition-related diseases have increased and as more people have become interested in nutrition as a career and a path to improved personal health.

In the RNS pilot year, 2008 – 2009, thirty (30) students enrolled in RNS courses. Ten (10) students enrolled in a seven – eight (7 – 8) credit semester-long course of study, and seven (7) continued with a five (5) credit second semester of study. In the second year of RNS, 2009 – 2010, as of this writing, fifteen (15) students have enrolled in the two-semester, twelve – thirteen (12 – 13) credit course of study that began September 21, 2009. Recruitment focused only on the communities served by Interior – Aleutians Campus.

In addition, there are multiple community requests from the Interior – Aleutians Campus service area to deliver a one-credit “Rural Nutrition and Health Change” overview course, which has in 2008 – 2009 resulted in student interest in enrollment for additional RNS coursework, providing an additional portal to the RNS Occupational Endorsement.

Based on the needs assessment, the RNS pilot year 2008 – 2009, current applications, the limited initial recruitment area, and RNS Advisory Council input described below in item IV. B., the evidence supports the projection of a steady enrollment of at least ten (10) new students per year entering the Occupational Endorsement program.

B. HOW DETERMINED: SURVEY, PILOT, ADVISORY COUNCIL

The enrollment projection was based on the Statewide Needs Assessment, an active RNS pilot year, current applications to and interest in the coursework, the limited area of recruitment for the pilot year, student and employer comments, and guidance of the RNS Advisory Council.

The Post Secondary Nutrition Education Needs in Alaska: A Statewide Needs Assessment, published June 29, 2005 (Appendix A) “...surveyed Alaskans who work in health care, preventive services, and education. Three key groups who either hire these
occupations (hospitals & nursing homes, and Alaska Native health corporations) or advise potential students (large high schools) were targeted... There were 164 responses. In addition, 27 key informant interviews were conducted to determine current and future needs, and ways to address barriers...” Some of the findings included: “Ninety-nine percent of respondents stated that in the next 3 – 5 years student interest in nutrition education will increase (59%) or remain the same (40%).” Paraprofessionals were noted among the “four major needs” in post-secondary nutrition education. “There is a widespread need at the village level for paraprofessionals.” The assessment noted the need for individuals trained at the certificate/associate level for a wide range of nutrition-related positions. In addition, the assessment notes that “Trained manpower is only one part of the equation, however an important one. By recruiting students and exposing them to the latest research on chronic diseases and appropriate interventions, we are taking steps toward resolving problems that impact our culturally-diverse Alaskan society.”

The 2008 – 2009 year of RNS trial coursework demonstrated a significant demand for this program. At the end of the two-semester course of study, 100% of students publicly stated an interest in enrolling in additional coursework. Students were highly supported by their employers, and there were frequent comments in evidence of the continued need for the program from representatives of organizations such as Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Eastern Aleutians Tribes, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association. Comments were verified in letters of support for grant applications and letters of support received for this proposal (Appendix D).

A diverse fourteen-member RNS Advisory Council made up of Registered Dietitians, Alaska Native Elders, health care and behavioral health service providers, school board members, educators and tribal leaders, has continuously defined and supported the projected need for the program.

C. MAXIMUM ENROLLMENTS

The current RNS faculty could support a maximum enrollment of twenty (20) students per year. Additional enrollment, if sufficient, could possibly be accommodated by adjunct faculty.

V. NEED FOR THE OCCUPATIONAL ENDORSEMENT

A. EMPLOYMENT MARKET NEEDS

Employment market needs are formally identified in the Post Secondary Nutrition Education Needs in Alaska: A Statewide Needs Assessment, published June 29, 2005 (Appendix A), the Alaska State Education Plan: Student Health & Safety section, the American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Program for the Elderly, and other state and federal initiatives such as Diabetes Prevention and Family Wellness.
Specifically, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development is in the process of taking action steps that implement health and wellness programs, and implement nutrition and physical education programs to ensure that students develop patterns of lifelong healthy behaviors. Most programs of the AI/AN/NH Program for the Elderly provide modified diets for diabetics, or others who might be on low-fat, low-cholesterol, and low-sodium regimens, and several provide special nutrition education services, screening and counseling. For rural communities, the RNS coursework is carefully designed to prepare local residents to effectively fulfill job duties for these programs.

Among the key findings of the Statewide Needs Assessment (Appendix A), “Establishment of additional training in nutrition by the University of Alaska is justifiable on the basis of the overall needs of Alaskans for improved nutritional status and the expanding need for nutrition-related occupations and opportunities for employment. The University will contribute to the health of Alaskans statewide by offering this training.” Projected employment needs for 2012 showed a ten-year increase of 15.4% for food service workers, 34.8% for dietitians and nutritionists, and 21.1% for food service managers.

Furthermore, key informants from Alaska Native tribal health organizations have identified the need. Students of the RNS trial year 2008 – 2009 report becoming employed in nutrition-related positions expressly due to their RNS knowledge and skills, while others have experienced the expansion of their existing job to include nutrition education and support activities.

To date rural needs are often met with personnel receiving limited on-the-job training, or by a long wait and extensive travel to access professionals in urban facilities. Local positions such as Diabetes Prevention Worker have been funded but gone unfilled due to the lack of qualified applicants.

The obvious deficiency in on-the-job training combined with workshops and conferences is that it maintains the person at a lower employment status in fields requiring academic credentials and professional credentials reliant on academic degrees. The Rural Nutrition Services Occupational Endorsement provides both an immediate credential and a foundation for academic advancement toward higher credentials and higher employment.

VI. OTHER

The Rural Nutrition Services Occupational Endorsement proposal is the result of an ongoing initiative by Alaska Natives, rural Alaskans, tribal health care and education organizations, stakeholders affected by nutrition-related diseases, and communities concerned about the lack of quality educational opportunities available to the rural tribal workforce for nutrition science and service. The guiding force behind the proposed endorsement is the Interior – Aleutians Campus, a Rural Nutrition Services Advisory Council, and the first cohort of RNS students. The Advisory Council members are:
The purpose of the Rural Nutrition Services Occupational Endorsement is to offer a rural-specific, culturally-relevant credential through the College of Rural and Community Development. This effort builds on the work and traditional wisdom of individuals and organizations from rural Alaska. The endorsement respects and integrates traditional ways of learning, and values the strengths and resources of Native people, addressing the uniqueness and diversity of rural communities and their food systems.

Based on the participation of rural tribal organization staff and leaders, as well as local schools, businesses and community-based services and the critical need within rural Alaska for nutrition-related education that is accessible and culturally relevant, enrollment for this endorsement is expected to be substantial. This endorsement directly addresses the University’s stated commitment to serve the Native population of Alaska and emphasizes recruitment of Native students in an under-served academic area.

VII. RELATION OF ENDORSEMENT TO OTHER PROGRAMS WITHIN THE SYSTEM

A. EFFECTS OF ENROLLMENT ELSEWHERE IN THE SYSTEM

The Rural Nutrition Services Occupational Endorsement has the potential of a positive impact on student enrollment in other programs with the University of Alaska system. Students who complete the RNS Occupational Endorsement will be encouraged to continue their education in certificate, associate and baccalaureate programs. A majority of the students are non-traditional students who are not otherwise enrolled in University
programs or courses, with many students returning to the University after extended absence from academic pursuits.

The Allied Health department, Center for Distance Education and Chukchi Campus currently offer the popular HLTH 203 course that would be required for the proposed RNS Certificate. Allied Health department management, Christa Bartlett, has been consulted about meeting any increased demand for this course resulting from student success in the RNS Occupational Endorsement and subsequent progression to the RNS Certificate. Resources exist within the RNS faculty to meet any increased demand for this course.

Careful design and planning of the RNS curriculum, in consultation with related certificate, associate and baccalaureate programs and nutrition professionals, has resulted in multiple articulated academic pathways for students. A significant inter-MAU collaboration provides an articulated pathway for RNS students to advance to the Certificate, AS degree and on to the BS level and dietetic internship, building the credentials required for Alaska's much needed Registered Dietitian professionals. RNS students would also find an articulated pathway to the AAS degree in Tribal Management.

B. DUPLICATION/APPROXIMATION OF OTHER UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

The Rural Nutrition Services curriculum was carefully designed in collaboration with University departments, including UAA and UAS departments, to develop complementary courses that are not duplications of other courses available within the University system. At present there is no other occupational endorsement within the University system that focuses entirely on nutrition science and service in a rural context, and provides students with a clearly articulated academic pathway to the Certificate, AS and BS degrees or to the AAS degree.

C. RELATION TO RESEARCH AND SERVICE ACTIVITIES

1. Research

While research is not a primary focus of this endorsement, RNS is a unique model that will be documented and shared throughout the academic and health care community. This program will produce a substantial body of information in student outcomes assessments, changes in academic programs and teaching style, community interventions (service learning) and other information relating to culturally relevant workforce and skill development in rural Alaska. This occupational endorsement, which supports articulation to certificate, associates and baccalaureate programs will build scientific curiosity and inquiry.

Above all, students will become familiar with the role and value of research as it relates to nutrition science. They will become thoughtful consumers of research and potentially constitute a local workforce, community partnership, or even initiate
community based participatory research activities in rural Alaska. Broader based community involvement as consumers rather than “subjects” is seen as a critical missing component in traditional research, and takes the trend of community based participatory research to as yet unachieved levels.

2. Service

RNS students have already demonstrated an outstanding level of community service in their course outreach assignments and capstone Rural Nutrition Services Practicum projects. These students, and it is anticipated that future students, provide a valued service to their community by sharing nutrition and food systems information in their home community. Service learning permeates the RNS curriculum.

RNS faculty have already been involved in substantial service activities in coordination with tribal organizations, local health care providers, and other groups promoting health in rural Alaska. RNS faculty continue to be invited to service opportunities for Alaska Native groups and rural organizations. RNS hosted a monthly Rural Nutrition Tea, bringing together University educators, researchers and students with community employers, professionals, Alaska Native Elders, service providers, administrators and stakeholders with an interest in rural nutrition and food systems issues.

As stated in the Statewide Needs Assessment, “Alaskans face growing nutrition-related problems. Sixty-four percent of Alaskans are overweight or obese. With increases in obesity come increasing health risks. Alaska Natives are experiencing the greatest increase in the prevalence of diabetes in all of North America. (Alaska’s) cost of medical treatment for nutrition related conditions is (the highest in the nation). One of every eight dollars in Medicaid spending now goes to care for people with diabetes. Kidney dialysis, a potential result of uncontrolled blood sugar or high blood pressure costs $250,000/year/patient.” The RNS opportunity for service is critical.

The Rural Nutrition Services Occupational Endorsement is part of a comprehensive plan to spread employment skill development through academic education throughout the state and into every rural community. The program will provide a much needed and sought-after service to rural Alaska’s tribal and local employer base and workforce as well as providing a much needed link to urban and State providers.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION/TERMINATION

A. DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Six (6) RNS courses received Faculty Senate approval in May, 2009 and will be appearing in the Catalog. The RNS Program anticipates enrolling students for the Occupational Endorsement in spring, 2010. The RNS Occupational Endorsement is expected to be in the 2010 – 2011 University of Alaska Fairbanks Catalog. RNS courses are currently scheduled for fall, 2009 and will be scheduled for spring, 2010.
B. PLANS FOR RECRUITING STUDENTS

Students have successfully been recruited in the Interior and Aleutians regions through articles in tribal newspapers; faxed announcements to Tribal Councils, village clinics, village schools, Native local and regional corporation offices, Tribal non-profits and health providers; displays and recruitment efforts at tribal meetings such as Tanana Chiefs Conference Convention and related conferences such as the Alaska Dietetics Association Annual Conference; email list serve’s; and word of mouth. RNS Advisory Council members and former students have assisted with recruitment by making referrals. Phone calls to rural community-based and itinerant health care providers, schools, Head Starts and Tribal Councils, as well as presentations at trainings and gatherings such as Elder Nutrition Program cooks training have attracted some students. Sharing color flyers at conferences and meetings, with itinerant service providers traveling to the villages, and at village-serving airline offices has been effective.

These recruitment methods will be continued, with the addition of brochures, a link with the Interior – Aleutians Campus website, and posters. Extensive communication and collaboration with Alaska Native organizations, health care, behavioral health care, schools, Head Start, Elder Nutrition programs, stakeholders and rural communities will continue and be expanded. This is a program that has much to offer and attract students interested in well-being, disease prevention, fighting diseases, and promoting healthier lifestyles in their community with a culturally relevant perspective.

C. PLANS FOR PHASING OUT ENDORSEMENT IF UNSUCCESSFUL

As this program does not involve new equipment or other major program investment, the phasing out process should only involve the assurance of program completion by existing students.

If it becomes necessary to close the program, Rural Nutrition Services students will be provided the opportunity to complete the University requirements for the Occupational Endorsement.

D. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM

The program will be assessed through on-going student and faculty evaluations, and according to the RNS Student Outcomes Assessment Plan. This assessment will consist of monitoring student recruitment, retention, progress while in the program and the results of the program as seen by students, alumni, employers and community key informants. The full RNS Student Outcomes Assessment Plan follows.
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Occupational Endorsement in Rural Nutrition Services
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM GOALS</th>
<th>INTENDED OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA/PROCEDURES</th>
<th>IMPLEMENTATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The mission of the College of Rural and Community Development, Interior Aleutians Campus is to provide educational opportunities for the students in Alaska without requiring them to change or leave their culture or heritage. I-AC is committed to educating Alaska Natives and rural residents, assisting them to sustain social changes in their communities, thereby enriching the quality of their lives and cultures. The Rural Nutrition Services (RNS) fits the overall goals of the Interior-Aleutians Campus (I-AC) by meeting the skill-development and workforce needs of rural Alaska and encouraging rural residents to attain university credits and degrees pertinent to the rural health, education, and cultural systems. The RNS objectives are:</td>
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<td>• To provide a culturally relevant academic entry-point to nutrition science education.</td>
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<td>• To prepare students, who may not otherwise be able to continue their education, for: 1) Employment in nutrition-related fields and/or 2) Certificate, Associate of Science or Associate of Applied Science coursework.</td>
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<td>• To increase the number of Alaska Natives and rural Alaskans with postsecondary nutrition science knowledge and service skills.</td>
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<td>1. Achieve student employability by providing education based on specific job-related requirements. Students must attain skills and knowledge according to the following RNS program standards:</td>
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<td>• Well-developed logic and reasoning skills, including critical thinking and problem-solving abilities</td>
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<td>• Computer skills, oral and written communication skills, nutrition science, local food system and research experience</td>
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<td>• Independent and community-based goal-setting and planning skills</td>
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<td>• Job-related work experiences, such as community food security planning, nutrition education and outreach, or collaboration with professionals to support dietary recommendations in a rural context.</td>
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<td>• Strong interpersonal skills in professional ethics and behavior, teamwork and leadership principles</td>
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<td>• Broad academic exposure encompassing issues of nutrition science and service delivery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Occupational Endorsement graduates in Rural Nutrition Services will utilize their endorsement as a foundation for further education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Occupational Endorsement graduates in Rural Nutrition Services will possess skills and knowledge to perform effective community-based nutrition-related service in rural Alaska. Occupational Endorsement graduates in Rural Nutrition Services and their employers will express overall satisfaction with the quality of student coursework and endorsement program.</td>
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<td>• 80% of the graduates will express overall satisfaction with skill and knowledge development as a result of Rural Nutrition Services course of study.</td>
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<td>• 80% of the student Practicum Supervisors (predominantly employers) will express overall satisfaction with the student's skill and knowledge development as a result of Rural Nutrition Services course of study.</td>
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<td>2. Occupational Endorsement graduates in Rural Nutrition Services will seek further education in nutrition science, dietetics, related sciences, health, human services, education, public administration, business, economics and other food system disciplines.</td>
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