

Pioneering New Trails as an Aggie Dietetics Alumna

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The team of Utah-trained dietitians now with The Lockwood Group is (left to right) Maria Ralph, Ashley Williams, Chelsea Norman, and Elizabeth King

For Chelsea Norman, a graduate of Utah State University's coordinated dietetics program, career success has meant traveling an unexpected path from clinical dietetics to medical communications, where she now fills a non-traditional role for a dietitian.

Chelsea knew from an early age that she wanted to be a dietitian.

"Both of my parents are in the medical field, and I knew I wanted to be, but I wasn't drawn to being a doctor," she said. "I wanted to play a different role, and, after learning about dietetics, I thought, 'I could do this. This would be great.'"

Her college search led her to Utah State where the distance from her home allowed her to gain independence but still provided plenty of outdoor activities, which she had grown to love as a Colorado native. After touring the Logan campus, she knew it was the right choice.

As a freshman, Chelsea searched for volunteer and work opportunities related to nutrition.

"My focus was 'What can I do now in order to get into the dietetics program?'"

Chelsea said.

On campus, she volunteered in the kitchen at the Edith Bowen Laboratory School and at the USU Student Organic Farm. She was selected to be a student ambassador for the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences. She also worked at Avalon Hills, a local eating disorders clinic, and completed a summer internship with USU Extension, which grew into work as a nutrition education assistant that she continued through the remainder of her time at USU, teaching nutrition and meal-planning skills to people who received federal nutrition assistance.

Chelsea was accepted into the coordinated dietetics program, one of the two undergraduate routes offered at USU, which includes a 1200-hour internship in a variety of clinical settings. For Chelsea, the internship fostered her love of pediatric nutrition with internships at Primary Children's Hospital and the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Intermountain Medical Center. After graduating in 2016, Chelsea and her husband, Josh, relocated to San Francisco where Chelsea began her career as a clinical dietitian in the NICU and intensive care unit at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center. After a year in the Bay Area, Chelsea was offered a position at the University of Utah metabolic clinic, which prompted her to return to Utah. In this role, Chelsea cared for patients with genetic conditions who require specialized diets as part of their overall health management. She was also involved in clinical trials for rare diseases, guest lectured for nutrition and genetic counseling students, and earned her master's degree in nutrition and integrative physiology from the University of

Utah. During this time Chelsea was introduced to The Lockwood Group, a medical communications company based in Connecticut. Four years after leaving Logan, Chelsea and her husband returned, drawn back by

the allure of the mountains, slower pace of life, and some properties they own. Chelsea continued to work for the University of Utah for six months after moving to Logan but quickly realized it was time to find something closer to home. That's when she applied to work for Lockwood as a scientific director.

"Medical communications was new for me and probably new for a lot of dietitians in general," said Chelsea. "I don't think it's talked about often."

As the first dietitian in a role typically held by Ph.Ds. and medical doctors, the Lockwood Group took a chance on Chelsea, and it worked. Within the past two years, she has been promoted twice.

"I wasn't a typical dietitian," Chelsea said. "I really loved working with rare diseases, and I loved working with kids and their families." Now, as a scientific director, Chelsea works with rare diseases in a different capacity, creating content for clinicians and healthcare providers to keep them aware of clinical and therapeutic advancements. Although she no longer works with patients in a clinical setting, Chelsea's work still benefits people in the rare disease community.

Since she began working for Lockwood, Chelsea has referred three other dietitians from Utah—USU dietetics alumnae Ashly Williams and Elizabeth King, and Maria Ralph, a graduate of the University of Utah—to similar positions with the company.

They have also been successful and earned promotions in the first year of applying their skills to medical communications.

"Probably the biggest skill that I brought with me from my time at USU is how to think like a clinician," Chelsea said. "We learn a lot about how to gather evidence, how to read the literature, and how to write scientifically. As dietitians, we're very detail-oriented. I think it lends naturally to a field like this where there is a need for that attention to detail. We have had a lot of great education, and we're uniquely suited for what we do at Lockwood."

Chelsea credits her career path to actively searching for and exploring new opportunities when they became available to her.

"I just took every door that opened, and it led me to where I am now," she said. "I

love what I do. There's an unlimited world of possibilities out there. You might need to get a few more skills or pivot a little bit, but you can find something that you enjoy doing."