

## **STUDENTS RESPOND TO INTEREST SURVEY**

*By Chelsey Bobcek and Laura Gorman, WSDA Student Board Members*

In late November, WSDA ran an online survey for WSDA student members. A big “thank you” to all the students who took time to participate in the survey, we received some great responses! We thought we would share what we learned about you, so we can do our best to be your representative voice.

About 74% of the respondents were Student ADA Members. The majority of students indicated that one motivating reason to join the ADA was the information and resources such as the ADA Journal and ADA Times, with scholarships taking a close second. Some other reasons cited included networking with professionals and attending professional conferences.

Of those respondents who were not ADA members, 53% cited lack of finances as an issue, while 26% felt that they did not have enough information about ADA to become a member.

Of special interest is the fact that 82% of the students who participated in this survey were not aware of the WSDA Mentor Program. There was an overwhelming interest among students to get volunteer hours and mentor experience, especially during summer when more than 50% of respondents indicated availability May through August. One respondent commented that they are always interested in job shadowing in different areas and really would like more mentoring experiences in such fields as community nutrition. Some of the most sought after experience includes clinical, weight management/bariatric programs, special needs diets, diabetes, summer camps, and WIC.

This survey also reflected a strong interest in attending the WSDA Annual conference. Students would like specific sessions with issues focusing on student needs. At least 24 students indicated that they were planning to attend the WSDA Conference in Spokane in April, and another 30 indicated that they might attend. Areas of interest for students include current issues in MNT (74% expressed interest), interviewing/job search skills (60% expressed interest), and entrepreneurial opportunities (48% expressed interest). A couple of concerns expressed by students were the cost of the program, as well as having to miss classes to attend.

Of the students surveyed, 93% intend to continue training and take the RD exam and 84% plan to begin or continue their ADA membership.

One comment from a student caught our attention; it simply said “where have you been?”. Clearly, there is some exciting room for growth within the WSDA student membership. Some focus areas should include educating current students about what ADA and the benefits of membership, growing and promoting our mentor program to get students linked up with RDs across the state for a mutually beneficial experience, and including some student events or programs into the annual WSDA conference. The partnership between dietetic students and current RDs is important and it is time to pave the way for the road ahead of our future Washington RDs!

*Do you have questions? Contact Chelsey or Laura (see the board webpage for email addresses)*