

My name is Melissa Olsen and I am the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Nutrition Programs Manager at Feeding the Gulf Coast (formally known as Bay Area Food Bank). Feeding the Gulf Coast is the food bank that serves the lower eight counties in Mississippi, lower nine counties in Alabama, and seven counties on the Florida panhandle. Feeding the Gulf Coast provides nutritious food to meet the challenge of feeding people who are hungry.

I engage in the management and development of nutrition education programs for children and seniors across all three states. Many extensive community nutrition education outreach programs such as Cooking Matter for Kids is conducted monthly to increase child education and cooking skills with healthy food. I play an important role in securing community outreach partnerships with various medical organizations in Mobile, AL. I have developed numerous diabetes and heart healthy educational programs that included cooking modified recipes. I ensure organizational and partner compliance with state and federal program regulations such as Summer Feeding and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Another aspect of my job is serving as a dietetic preceptor to various interns from Delta State University, University of Southern Mississippi, and University of Alabama at Birmingham. I find joy in making a difference in their lives.

Delta State University's dietetic internship really allowed me to reach out and network with other dietetic professionals. I was able to select my own preceptors at many different organizations across Mississippi that I wanted to intern with. The exceptional staff in the Nutrition and Dietetics department at Delta State University really goes out of their way to make sure that you have the knowledge and skills to become an entry level dietitian by the time you graduate from the program. I credit a lot of my knowledge and confidence as a dietitian nutritionist to the professors in the Nutrition and Dietetics department at Delta State University.