

Lori Granich - PodCAST Transcript

KARA:

Hello and welcome to the podcast, a podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University. I'm your host, Kara Snyder, and I serve as the assistant dean of marketing, communications and constituent relations for the College. Each episode, we're sitting down with an alum of the college, and today, we have a chance to talk to Lori Greenwich, Lori is an alum of the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences and currently serves as the Senior Director of lifelong learning and meetings operations for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Welcome and thank you for being here.

LORI:

Thanks, Kara.

KARA:

This is going to be fun. I would love to start at the beginning. Why did you choose ISU?

LORI:

Oh, that's a great question. So I had some family and friends who went to ISU. I was looking at a couple universities in state, out of state, you know, did some campus tours, and I just really felt like home, like the second I came on campus. I felt like everyone was so inviting. I'm obviously drawn to nutrition and dietetics, which we'll get into, and they had a fabulous program. So really, I would say those campus visits really changed it for me. I just really felt a sense of community. I felt the same way that when I was taking my high school, actually, it just didn't feel like a transition, it just felt like somewhere I belonged.

KARA:

So when you're thinking about nutrition and dietetics, was that something that spoke to you as a high schooler? Did you know you were interested in that before you even arrived on campus?

LORI:

So I probably did not know what a dietitian did when I was in high school. So I've always I'm an athlete. So I've been an athlete since, honestly, probably since I was like, seven or eight years old, and because of that, really into health and fitness. My mom was a nurse, and she worked with a bunch of the dieticians, and she basically told me that, like, nursing won't be for me, which is completely fine and completely accurate. And she's like, I really think you should talk to the dieticians at the hospital. And I did. It's so funny, because I actually work with one of them. Now, the world is so small, but talked with them and realized that, you know, all the passion I have for nutrition and health in my everyday life, I could transition into a career, and I feel like I might be one of the only people that I know that I never change majors and something that I love to do 20 years ago, I'm still doing today, and I really don't see myself leaving. Yeah, that's such a gift.

KARA:

I think you're right. I think that's rare. And to have find that passion and find that interest is at such a young age is so special. That's really exciting. So share with us, once you came to campus and you found that ISU was the right place for you, how were you involved while you were here?

LORI:

Yeah, so I held a couple jobs, some related to nutrition, some not related to nutrition. So I think, I think my first year, I kind of just like, you know, took it all in, got to know people didn't do anything formally, and then I started working at Special Olympics. I absolutely love that opportunity. So I work there. I believe my sophomore year through senior year, it was actually right across from the Rec Center where it used to be back in the day. And so I'd go work out, then I would go to work. It was, it was lovely, and the people who work that were so wonderful. And then when I started getting into, like, the core of my dietetics program, which I think happened around junior year, I started volunteering at a local food pantry, which I also loved. And then worked at a program called, I think this is what it's called, I you know, it's been, it's been a minute. So it was called nutrition mission, which was in the health like the Student Health Services arena. And students would come in and they would talk to you about, you know, what they typically eat in a day. And we would do diet recalls and some analysis for them, and that was volunteer really like that too. So all those little opportunities kind of got me, you know, some experience in different realms, and I thoroughly enjoyed all of them. And what do you miss most about being a student on campus? So I just think the community and the camaraderie is so unmatched. So some of my lifelong friends, actually my roommate, who I really didn't know freshman year. We were from, like, kind of the same neighborhood, which is how we got paired up, but we did not know each other. We are still best friends. Talk literally every day. But just love that camaraderie. I love being able to either walk out of your dorm and see friends, go to the quad and see friends, and it was just like this vibe. And I was there a couple years ago, and I still felt it, just walking around, of again, friends and classmates, and I'm also someone who- this is really nerdy, but I really love school, like I've always had a growth mindset. So I enjoyed learning. I loved the professors, especially in the Family and Consumer Science Program. I'm going to give a shout out. I know Dr Julie Schumacher is still there, and Dr Cullen is not there. He was in the nutrition program, but he's a legend. So if you haven't heard of him, I'd be very surprised, but they were just just so wonderful in shaping my career.

KARA:

which leads us right into my next question. Once you were completing your time on campus, you know, you certainly did a good job of being involved and getting some of those professional experiences. What was that initial job search like for you? And then where did you land? What was your entry level job?

LORI:

Yeah, so with dietetics, you have to do an internship after you graduate with your bachelor's degree. So now it's even different. But back then, it was just bachelor's degree, and then they go right into your internship. I believe my internship was around 10 months. So basically it's like, it's like additional schooling, and then you go to various sites where dietitian would work, and

you complete a rotation of three to four months. So that internship, I did a community based program, I did a food service program, and I did a clinical program in a hospital. So I did that for a year, and then you're eligible to sit for the rd exam. So I took some time off after the internship to really study for the exam, and then I realized without structure, that I'm really not good at just sitting at home and studying, so I and at the time you could get a job without technically passing the test, is it was called already eligible. So I actually lucked out and got a position that where I did one of my rotations, they hired me on, which is just something to say to anybody who's listening to this is like any opportunity, whether you're volunteering or you're doing an internship, just like, make sure that you're leaving a good mark on that, because you just never know what other opportunity will come across your desk. But I ended up working in that hospital doing clinical which was really great, because then it really helped me, obviously, study for the test. I was kind of just like, immersed in a hospital all day, so really learned that. So yeah, just started off as a clinical dietitian, which I think most, at least most dietitians at that time, that's what they were doing, just in in the neighborhood that I grew up in.

KARA:

So then, how did you progress? You know, now you have this very impressive title. I'm talking to the Senior Director of lifelong learning and meetings operations. How did you get from your entry level position to your current role?

LORI:

Oh my gosh, you're so sweet. So I worked in clinical I worked in acute care, which means basically, like bedside for like three or four years, then I transitioned to outpatient bariatric surgery, which I also really liked, and just gave me like, two very different experiences working as a clinical dietitian, so I'd want to say my hospital experience was around six years, and then at the end of my outpatient journey, I went back to school, and I got my MBA, and I really fell in love with the business side of things, and so, like, I love to have different experiences, so sometimes They're all over the place. So while I was working at the hospital, I did some consulting. So I consulted for a hospice company and did some end of life care, and then was getting my MBA. And literally, the weekend before I graduated, like, pretty much, like the two months before I graduated, I was like, okay, like, now I want to try something different. Started applying. And the weekend before I got my MBA, I got a call back from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and the position you needed a master's. And I was like, well, I'll have that next week. And it all worked out. And so I started at the academy at a pretty entry level position too. So I started as a manager professional development. If people don't know what the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is, it is the Association for dietitians. So there's associations for basically everything. I'm sure you've heard, American Dental Association, American Medical Association. So the academy is specifically serves dietitians and dtrs and so I started is manager professional development, which just means I was planning webinars, I was planning our annual conference, and then just have been really lucky to work my way up. I've been here for 10 years. Actually, this will be my 11th year. Have had three or four promotions in between. So started off as a manager. Now I'm overseeing the program, which is is just crazy to think about in a short amount of time, but that's kind of been my transition.

KARA:

So can you talk a little bit about staying loyal to one place and your promotional path, and what that's look like for you to continue to seek out opportunities to learn and grow in one location. Because I do think for people entering the job force right now, that's that's kind of rare, right? And that's really special. Can you speak to that?

LORI:

Yeah, 100 especially what we've seen in the last couple years of people, you know, kind of jumping around and because I've been able to grow and take on different departments and learn different skills, it kind of feels like even though I've been at the same place that I've been doing different jobs, so I'm still continuing to grow. And yeah, I just I love this profession so much. It's very different working at where I'm working, because all we do is continually champion for dietitians and techs. And it just brings me a ton of joy. It's brought me joy since the day I walked in here, and again, 10-11, years later, it still brings me a ton of joy. So really, the thought of leaving has never crossed my mind. And I think that's okay. I think that's okay in a place again that you're growing, you're being challenged, and if the passion is still there, you know, why not stay?

KARA:

And what I think is so interesting about your current role is the fact that you are educating others. You're lifting up others in your field. Talk about embracing an opportunity like that, as opposed to being what I consider more front lines at the bedside. Because I think some of our current food and nutrition students might not know that opportunities like yours exist. Yeah, so I loved being bedside. I will say that, and I know not everybody loves that, and so I had to be like, I love this, I love that, but I really did. I really enjoyed being bedside, especially when I worked outpatient, because inpatient, you don't get to know your patients as well. Outpatient, working in Bariatrics, I got to know people. I had to see them for at least six months before they could have surgery. And we really, like built a relationship. I could see their progress, like we could actually have some intervention, because we were, again, talking for an extended amount of time. I even I ran the marathon with one of my one of the patients, like we it was just wonderful. And then the transition, which I am seeing a lot of dieticians, transition out of healthcare and move on to different things. And the transition is hard because, again, working in a hospital and then working for a large organization, like two totally different things, even, like the just the my first day, I remember, like, the speed of email coming in at the organization I'm at now, I was like, Oh my gosh, I'm not you. We don't really use email in the hospital. We're just, you know, seeing patient and patient. But I think, you know, working at the association, I feel my impact is so much broader. So the first day that I started, this is not even a joke, I tell everyone this, I talked to the dietitian from the Houston Astros and the dietitian for NASA. I guess I assumed that MLB teams had dieticians, but definitely did not know that NASA had a dietitian. And I was like, Oh my goodness. Like my eyes just open up. Of like, the impact of dietetics. And so now that I'm in a position that, you know, creates education for this broad mass and it it's creating education to help dieticians and dtrs do their job better, and if they do their job better, they more likely to have better patient outcomes. Also helps them move up in their career. I'm seeing dieticians move out of, you know, the traditional hospital setting, into all these

different arenas. And I love that we're able to provide the education and resources that can help them get there.

KARA:

Well, you're obviously very passionate about your job, which I love to hear. If you had to pick one thing, what is your favorite part of your job?

LORI:

Definitely the volunteers. So if you are not familiar with associations, associations basically run on volunteer committees. So you have, like, I oversee a committee that plans our annual conference. There's so many different committees. There's committees on reimbursement, there's committees and like practice groups devoted to diabetes or kidney disease like there's committees of subject matter experts all over the academy and then all over all other associations. And they are some of the smartest people that I've ever worked with. They're so forward thinking. They care so much about the profession. And I just love our interactions. I love the ideas that they have. They take, and these are all volunteer opportunities. They take so much time out of their lives to give back to the profession. And it's by far the highlight of my career, being able to work with these people. And then on the flip side, I have to ask, what is the most challenging thing about your job. So I would say being on the national stage just means there's always an extra level of scrutiny. Another hard thing for us is that dietetics has come so far since even when I was in school 20 years ago, it's not hospital just hospital based anymore. You're seeing dietitians in the media. You're seeing them work for professional sports teams, you're seeing them in correctional facilities. You're seeing them in long term care. They're everywhere. Anywhere that there's food or health, you can find a dietitian. The hard part about that is creating enough resources to meet all those needs, especially when things are changing so quickly, like you've all seen the impact AI has had on, like, every industry in the last couple years, or even, like to talk about how much COVID has impacted us and and us here we have to, like, move at lightning speed to get education and resources out to the masses. And it just competing priorities. You know, what to get out first, what to prioritize trying to really meet the needs of everybody? I think is the biggest challenge that we face. That makes perfect sense.

KARA:

Well, Lori, we are going to finish with a speed round, so I'll ask that you just go with your first instinct on these questions. The first one is, do you make New Year's resolutions? And if so, did you make one this year?

LORI:

I make New Year's goals. I'm very goal oriented, and yes, I make like- this sounds crazy, I make like 20 goals a year in different areas. So financial health, how many books I want to read, a new country I want to go to? And yeah, and I every month look at where I'm at towards meeting those goals. I am so glad I asked you that question. It's my favorite. I I love it. I wish I could show you my notebook if we were on camera and in every, actually, every week, I go through of like, how, because you have to do little things each week to make progress, but I write it all

down. It is one of my favorite things to do. I sit there on New Year's Eve and write it out, and it's really helped me come a long way.

KARA:

Oh, that's awesome. What is your go to lazy dinner?

LORI:

Ordering Ramen. Ramen is my go to comfort food, especially now that it's, you know, like 20 degrees in Chicago.

KARA:

Yes, that's a great answer. What are you reading or listening to right now? And now, I'm really intrigued, knowing that you're trying to make progress to your 2025 reading goal.

LORI:

Oh, I do have the Goodreads is a great app to help track your your reading goal. If anyone's interested. But I am reading a book called unreasonable hospitality. Have you heard of it? I have not. Do you recommend it? So it's very specific, like I find. So I also work in meetings, which I really didn't talk about because it's not dietetics focused, but basically meetings means organizing conferences and symposiums and stuff that are in person. And unreasonable hospitality is a book written about 11 Madison Park in New York, which is a restaurant, and basically how they unreasonably went above and beyond to meet customer expectations and got like, four Michelin stars. It's It's fascinating. I really liked it.

KARA:

I'm adding it to my list as we do it Excellent. Can you describe yourself in three words?

LORI:

Oh, tough, driven. I think I'm pretty empathetic, and then I'd say collaborative.

KARA:

Where did you go on your last vacation?

LORI:

I went to New York about a month ago to see a concert. If anyone's listening to this from my time at college. It was our favorite band in college, Dave Matthews Band and I went with my college roommate to see them in New York.

KARA:

Oh, I love that.

LORI:

Yeah! I promise when I'm saying our relationship still is real, it's real.

KARA:

That's fantastic. And my last question I ask everybody on the podcast Avantis gondola or pub cheese balls.

LORI:

My gosh, you guys are going to be so upset with me. I don't think I've ever been to Avantis. I know exactly where it is. I've walked past it a million times. Obviously, I've had the pub cheese balls. I was at ISU in 2021 and that's the first place I went. Was the pub for those cheese balls. So that's going to have to be my answer.

KARA:

Oh my gosh. Well, I'm sure somebody will ship you a gondola at some point.

LORI:

Hey, I'm here for it.

KARA:

And one last question for you, if you could give one piece of advice to a college student, what would you say?

LORI:

I would say, get involved wherever you can. And I hated when people would say that to me as a college student, so I just need to put that out there, because you're kind of like, what else can I possibly be doing? I'm studying. I'm doing this blah blah. But I have found, and I really feel like I did not do enough in college to network, but I've learned how important it is afterwards. And I I try to do everything I can, whether someone asked me to go to lunch, whether I volunteer in my community. I'm a runner, so a volunteer with something like that, like you just never know where those opportunities are going to come to you. And it's, it's really important to get your name out there. Especially, I feel like when I was first starting, I just volunteered for everything that I could. I rarely would say no to things, which I know is, is people are trying to look for work life balance now, and that's, you know, kind of a tough topic to tackle, but I think early on in your career, and especially as a student, say yes to as much as you can, you can actually take on reasonably, and you'll just see opportunities come your way.

KARA:

And I completely understand how difficult that can be and how intimidating it can seem as a student, and I'm totally with you that you know, you hear it, and then you're wondering how to put it into action. And so now that you're more of in this mentor, role model role, and people are asking you for advice and wanting to network with you. If you were a student, how would you encourage our students to reach out to professionals? What is helpful for you?

LORI:

When somebody reaches out to you, have a clear ask. But I would say, don't be scared. I most people are willing to help you. I actually just got a mentor last year, which has been incredibly helpful, and it's a CEO of an association. And you know, people are willing to help. Don't be scared. To ask. Make sure you know, though, what you're asking for. You could write to someone on LinkedIn, that may be the only place that you like way that you have a contact but don't be afraid to ask the question. Actually, something I learned early on in my dietetics career is that some of the dieticians that I looked up to the most because I thought they just had, like, the coolest jobs. They pitched jobs to people. They weren't even jobs that you would find on, like a LinkedIn or an Indeed, they are things that they were like, I think this be really cool. And I think, for example, a gal that was the dietitian for, I won't say the name of the company, but a company that sends you groceries so you can make your meals. She was like, You need a dietitian on staff. And you know what? They hired her. So like, I think you just have to ask. And it gets easier. I was so intimidated in college. I talked about Dr. Julie Schumacher, who I see at our annual conference every year, and she probably couldn't even remember who I was because I was so scared to talk up in class. And I was so shy, and it's the complete opposite of how I am now, but it gets easier the more you put yourself in those uncomfortable situations and just you just kind of get used to it, and you learn how to navigate it, and all that will become easier.

KARA:

That's great advice. Thanks again for being here. That was Lori G, senior director of lifelong learning and meetings operations for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Join us next time on the podcast for more stories from our cast alumni.