

2021 UC ANR CE Position (Specialist)

Position Title: UCCE Specialist in Nutrition and Health Equity

Position: The Specialist will focus their research and outreach on critical issues that support community health and well-being for all Californians. They will identify and address gaps in health equity, health skills and education, access to healthful foods and other factors that contribute to health and community resilience and chronic disease risk reduction. The Specialist requires a PhD or equivalent degree in nutrition or other closely related discipline, with additional post-doctoral or work experience. The candidate must have a record that documents productivity in applied research and/or education as evidenced by publications in peer-reviewed journals and potential to secure extramural research funding. Priority will be given to candidates with expertise in community nutrition, health equity, and nutrition and health education; social determinants of health; community-based program experience, and interest in food systems and health resilience work. The Specialist will be located in the UC Davis Nutrition department with responsibilities to ANR NFCS, county directors and advisors, CE specialists, and ANR statewide programs.

Justification: Top issues to address are 1) Access to healthy, nutritious food across the lifespan for vulnerable Californians, 2) Improved nutrition, food security and chronic disease risk reduction, and 3) Building capacity to design, implement and evaluate equitable strategies to improve nutrition and health outcomes at multiple levels, from community scale to family, individual, and school levels. The U.S. leads the world in rates of nutrition-related chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, as well as in COVID-19, all of which disproportionately impact low-income and communities of color. It has been estimated that two-thirds of COVID hospitalizations are related to pre-existing nutrition-related chronic conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and exacerbated critical issues of food and nutrition disparities that disproportionately impact vulnerable and underrepresented groups. Our society is experiencing rising social, economic and health inequalities, resulting in increased hunger, food insecurity and adverse disease outcomes. Equitable access to healthy and culturally relevant foods across the lifespan is a fundamental aspect of chronic disease risk reduction and health resilience. Nutrition expertise within the food system is important to ensure inclusive food access and availability and to evaluate the impact on nutrition and health outcomes. Science-based solutions, tools and programs to address these challenges can promote healthy, thriving people and communities. The intended outcomes and impact of community-based actions will be to translate research into effective policy and programs to address issues of food insecurity, equitable food and health information access, nutrition and food literacy and to build capacity for community nutrition and health resilience. This position contributes to 3 UC ANR public values: 1) Safeguarding abundant and healthy food for all Californians, 2) Promoting healthy people and communities, and 3) Developing an inclusive and equitable society. The expected condition changes (impacts) will be in improved food security, increased health and quality of life for all through reductions in chronic disease risk factors, improved community health and wellness, and increased inclusiveness, diversity, equity and cultural competency in California's ANR programming.

Extension: The Specialist will provide an essential link between consumers, stakeholder groups, community organizations, the UC campus and UCCE ANR personnel. They will provide leadership via multiple channels: participatory-based engagement, sharing information through in-person presentations, web-based resources, active social media presence, and print publications targeted to broad audiences such as *California Agriculture* and UC Davis Nutrition Department, and health information public outreach.

Research: The specialist will develop an applied program in nutrition and health equity that aims to 1) Understand fundamental factors influencing community and individual health, 2) Develop intervention programs and conduct research to evaluate the impact of food access on health status, and 3) Develop

intervention programs and conduct research to evaluate the impact of nutrition and health education on disease risk factors among populations disproportionately affected by food insecurity and nutrition-related chronic conditions. This includes: 1) identification of predictors of nutrition-related health equity and resilience and effective strategies to improve these conditions; 2) applied research to improve communication of science-based nutrition and health recommendations, 3) evaluations of the differential impact of nutrition interventions on diverse populations. Publication is expected in peer-reviewed scientific journals such as: *Journal of Nutrition*, *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, *American Journal of Public Health*, *Journal of Extension*, and others.

ANR Network: Additional ANR CE Nutrition Specialists are needed to provide scientific leadership and collaboration with county academics. None of the existing Nutrition Specialists covers nutrition and health equity at the community level with a focus on chronic disease risk reduction. This innovative proposal is specifically directed toward a future vision of expanded nutrition and healthy living activities and societal impacts for ANR academics across the continuum. We propose this specialist as a cluster hire in Community Nutrition and Health Equity and Resilience with up to 4 county advisors. This cohort provides a network of colleagues with shared purpose, expertise and ability to collaborate on programs for greater depth and impact. This cohort and Specialist will strengthen and expand the existing UC ANR network by directly addressing grand challenges, critical needs and current gaps as identified by the SI and Program Team panels: DEI, healthy and nutritious food access, and improved health outcomes. They will provide expertise to build capacity in critical programmatic areas not currently addressed, accomplished through statewide leadership with AES Scientists, UCCE Specialists and Advisors, and as a crucial partner in the cluster areas of Health Resilience and Food Systems Resilience. Examples of potential collaboration include engagement in ANR DEI efforts, BIPOC cluster hires and with UC Cal Fresh-Healthy Living, EFNEP, and NPI, as well as multidisciplinary UC Davis Specialists.

Network External to ANR: Potential partners include schools, public health agencies, community clinics and groups serving diverse populations, food banks and food hubs, food security coalitions, implementation of edible food recovery through recently enacted SB 1383, and at the state level: Health and Human Services, and California Departments of Agriculture and Social Services. UC ANR is a partner organization in the Artificial Intelligence Institute for Next Generation Food Systems (AIFS). AIFS is the only A.I. research institute in the country to have a nutrition component. There is a unique opportunity for collaboration with AIFS partners to apply the latest A.I. technologies to assist with Smart food banks, health prediction and evaluation of health impacts and outcomes.

Support: The UC Davis Nutrition department will provide support of office space, administrative and IT support. Research and outreach efforts will be facilitated through the business cluster.

Other support: The Specialist will be expected to obtain external funding for their applied research program from: federal agencies such as USDA NIFA and NIH, CDFA, and from non-governmental organizations: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Packard Foundation and California Endowment.

Headquarters and Coverage Area: The position will be located in the UC Davis Department of Nutrition to enable close contact and collaboration with department AES faculty and graduate students and colleagues throughout the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, including Specialists in Food Science and Technology, Human Ecology, Agricultural and Resource Economics, and others.

Developed and proposed by: The Nutrition department developed and strongly supports this position with extensive input and support from ANR Program Teams (FLHL and CC), CE Nutrition Specialists, Statewide Program leaders, Directors of NPI and UC Cal Fresh, Assistant Vice Provost of UCCE, and UCCE Directors in Fresno, Madera, Tulare, Kings, Inyo, Mono, Kern, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and the Central Sierra Counties.