* Samantha James
* 29, Philadelphia
* Class of 2014
* BS in Dietetics
* Registered Dietitian
* Questions:
  + How long have you known that you wanted to work as a Dietitian or at least get your degree in Dietetics?
  + As a counselor for the people you work with, I am sure you have traversed some emotional or sensitive situations. What is the most or one of the most profound impacts a patient has had on you?
  + I see that you were a frequent name on the Executive Board of UDance which of course still exists today at UD. What about UDance left the most long-lasting impressions on you from the quality and fulfillment even to the skills you learned on the board?
  + I did a little research and the dietetic internship that you took part in seemed to be a very hands-on program, with 1200 hours of “documented supervised practice”. What did a day in the life of a dietetic intern here at UD look like?
  + How would you compare your time at UD as a student to the time you spent as a dietetic intern?
  + Have those 2 environments better prepared you for work as a registered dietitian?
  + Your LinkedIn said that you had hoped to become a National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach after taking an exam in October 2021, did you end up following this plan?
  + How will being a Certified Health and Wellness Coach better your career?
  + If you could go back, knowing how you carried out your education, what would you do differently, if anything?
  + From what I could see on your LinkedIn you’ve almost exclusively worked as a “registered dietician” at different companies besides a stint as a research assistant through Penn Medicine. What inspired you to leave Family Health Centers of San Diego to work in research?
  + What sort of research did you work with as an assistant at Penn Medicine?
  + What caused you to not go back?
  + What kind of people do you work with? (Type 1, Type 2, Weight Loss, Eating Disorder)

1. Using Mara Reinstein's profiles as a guide, write what you think would be the first sentence of a profile about your person.

Samantha James became a dietician after watching her father spend a lifetime living with Type 1 diabetes. She specializes in working with teenage and college-age clients, and said the biggest challenge for them is dealing with sugar and carbs – sometimes in the form of beer and pizza.

1. Tell me what question worked out the best and the answer they gave?

I asked what she would have done differently, if anything at all, towards the end when the interview got a bit more natural and she seemed to really open up. James still seems to be unsure where she wants to be in her professional life, between her passion for health coaching and dietetics, and it seems to be a result of having to put more effort into assimilating into the real world. She had two main points as her answer to my question.

First off she said to learn about how finances work. She said that she had missed the part in her upbringing and education where she learned about balancing a checkbook and other sorts of adulting things. I followed that up with a question of whether she was like that out of her own ignorance through earlier years or just a lack of resources to learn it.

She said that she didn’t know what she didn’t know and didn’t even bother to look. It was a non-issue for her until it wasn’t. Her next part of the answer was that she wished she learned more about social politics. James saw Delaware as a bubble and she stated that she had just missed the train on all of the social media aspects that allow my generation to be more socially aware and well-versed. It was very interesting to hear her almost admit her mistakes and hear how she had

to almost make up for the lost time. That question was one that I ripped right from class because it was just too good not to ask, especially in a very nonspecific interview like this one was and I am happy it worked as well as it did.

1. What was the best story they told?

I prompted James about the most profound experiences counseling and she told me about a lady she is working with concurrently and James has drawn lots of similarities between this patient and herself. Between COVID and graduating as a dietitian only five years ago to have a person like this is rare. As a newbie or even just having little time to create one-on-one relationships it would be difficult to make these kinds of relationships but she seems to have made an important one, which is impressive and, naturally, interesting. She spoke about how the dynamic between sisters her patient is comparing herself to is very similar to James’ history and she spoke on that a bit.

Once again, James has not been a part of the workforce for very long but having something like this made for a good story. From this point onward in the interview, we both were far more relaxed, those natural awkward pauses were less frequent and felt less awkward. Her telling this story definitely took quite a bit of weight off of the interview and turned it into a more casual and more effective interview.

1. What did they say that surprised you? OR that you found most interesting?

I was surprised to hear about James’ interest in wanting to be a health coach and I have caught myself feeling her struggle for purpose in the work world beyond the interview. James recently tested to become a “Certified Health and Wellness Coach”.

This does not necessarily contribute to higher pay or even help her in all situations of her work, but she has a passion for it and wanted to do this as a way to show either herself or the people around her that it is a passion of hers.

She told me that she had done a lot of work, even postgraduate to become a dietitian and to become a health coach would be a knowing downgrade. She now is struggling between keeping the more deserved and higher grade and education requirement job as a dietitian and what she is drawn to, health coaching. This dilemma always comes up when I consider those who change majors or jobs. Personally, I would think that there is a major benefit, beyond monetary, to doing something you love as work. This is not to say that JAmes does not love being a dietitian, but she may find herself more fulfilled in ways that are not fiscal through a change in career. It is just an interesting topic to me and it stuck with me after the interview.

1. How did you feel about doing the interview going in?

I was excited about the interview going in, I had made many preparations and set up my multitude of questions. When the interview actually started I was startled by how awkward it was. It was nowhere near the level of a Zoom breakout room, but there were definitely some awkward silences and neither of us had caught the feeling of the interview yet. I wish I had powered through the awkwardness more than I did, because I used a large portion of my good questions toward the front of my interview and the lack

of ease of conversation got in the way of some possibly great and insightful answers. I wish I had poised my background a bit better, I know that I mentioned that the easiest conversation starters are the zoom backgrounds, whether it be a green screen effect or just the room itself. My zoom background was the semi-messy room my roommate and I shared with a Soulja Boy tweet on the wall. James was not very amused by it and I fully believe that contributed to the poor start the interview got.

1. How do you think you did after?

I am very happy with how the interview went as a whole. For my first ever interview it definitely did not fail my expectations, but I could always do better. I liked how I spaced my questions out, with the more surface-level ones at the front so we could get comfortable with one another for the more loaded or theoretical questions that made the interview click toward the end. It went as planned besides the aforementioned start that was not ideal. I think the interview could have gone on, had I not cut it at 22 minutes which is a great sign that it was a good interview. I would have been worried had she said something about wrapping it up early, because then I may not have done as well as I thought, but that didn’t happen. I am hoping that she enjoyed the interview as much as I did. I said it before, there are parts of that interview that I still think back to and reference in my day. I have been taking into consideration her mistakes and successes and applying them to my decisions especially since we are both people who have small or tight-knit majors that are generally ostracized from the rest of the university. Even taking these Journalism courses is helping me break out of the ignorance shell that James may have found herself in, in certain aspects of her life.

1. What would you do differently next time?

I would definitely have looked away from her LinkedIn a bit more and have picked a theme or a tone to set the interview to. More than half of the questions were in reference to a job or some form of secondary education on her LinkedIn. I think I could have based the interview more around her time in UDance, there was much more to unpack there as it was a large part of her college experience here at the University of Delaware. Due to the general nature of the interview, it felt necessary to prod at all parts of her life, from college to postgraduate, to early career, and even current career. I could have focused more on specific topics. On the bright side there was definitely a lot of ground covered, but nothing that has a hook to it. If I had looked away from the plethora of questions and honed in on intriguing topics such as her father and that inspiration for dietetics, or UDance I could have made an interview that was concise and more impactful. There was really no kicker to the interview. It exists only as a general biography of James’ life after high school. That previous thing aside, even keeping the format of questions as is, I definitely should have asked about her experience with COVID as a dietitian. It was untapped gold. It came up naturally and I let it slip away as I went for the next question, which is a shame. COVID times were volatile for health.

Many people were polarized in the world of health, especially the world of health that dietetics revolves around. Many people either joined health kicks or gained a few more pounds in quarantine than they expected which makes work plentiful for a dietitian. I

should have asked about COVID times and their effect on her work, but hindsight is, of course, 20/20 (no pun intended).

What grade do you think your person will give you?

I think, or at least would like to think that James enjoyed the interview and would give me full credit… but a man can dream.