

DEPARTMENT OF DIETETICS AND NUTRITION NEWSLETTER

Message from the Chair

Dear friends and colleagues,

It's been a year of exciting growth and milestones for our department. For the first time, we hired a full-time dietetic internship coordinator and another assistant professor (tenure-track). We also celebrated a successful ACEND accreditation visit this year.



We are proud to share that many of our faculty members received important recognitions and awards this year. Our students have also been honored with several awards, and our alumni have been recognized for their achievements. All these honors and awards are highlighted in this newsletter.

I would also like to highlight the activities and contributions from the Student Dietetic Association, they have been amazing! I hope you enjoy this year's newsletter as much as we do.

Sincerely,

Cristina Palacios, Ph.D.

Professor and Chair

Department of Dietetics and Nutrition

Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work

In this Issue

Department Highlights

At a Glance

Professor Achievements

New in the Department

In the News

Ph.D. Student Awards &
Presentations

Student Dietetic Association

Congrats to Recent Grads

Recent Publications

Alumni Highlights

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Ph.D. Potluck



Celebrating our Ph.D. students with a potluck.

Bring Your Child to Work Day



Our students prepared the “Sugar Shock” activity for all children from Stempel College.

Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (FANS) 2025



Faculty, staff and students attended and presented at this year’s FANS conference

Farewell to Scarlet



Scarlet Figueroa, program coordinator, completed her MPH and landed a position with the Florida Department of Health. We wish her success as she embarks on her next journey!

OUR DEPARTMENT AT A GLANCE

Number of Students in Spring 2025

- Undergraduate: 171
- MS: 75
- Ph.D.: 17
- DI interns: 29

Rankings



#11

Best dietetics major among public universities



#1

Best dietetics major in Florida

#3

Best Master's in Dietetics Programs

PROFESSOR ACHIEVEMENTS



Dr. Cristina Palacios was awarded the Excellence in Nutrition Fellows 2025 from the American Society for Nutrition and the FIU HFA Contribution to Hispanic Community Award.



Dr. Pia Henfridsson was invited to speak at the International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity (IFSO) - 2025.

For the **first time** in our department's history, **three** of our professors hold **elected leadership positions** at the state and local levels of organizations that oversee the profession of dietetics and nutrition.



Dr. Catherine Coccia is the president-elect of the Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2025-2026.



Dr. Nadine Mikati is the president of the South Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2024-2025.

Dr. Tania Rivera is the president-elect of the South Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2025-2026.



NEW IN THE DEPARTMENT



Janet Diaz Martinez,
Ph.D., RD, LD/N
Assistant Professor



Alyssa Fernandes,
MS, RDN, LD/N
Dietetic Internship
Coordinator



George Grau
Program Coordinator

IN THE NEWS



Dr. Marianna Baum was featured in the [FIU Research Magazine](#) for her research on communities (page 50).

Dr. Jacqueline Hernandez and **Dr. Cristina Palacios** placed a story in [The Washington Post](#) that focuses on the Vitamin D results from the MetA-Bone Trial.



Dr. Cristina Palacios was interviewed by [The Wall Street Journal](#) on the importance of daily breakfast.

Gabriela Proaño, Ph.D. candidate, shared her experience on obesity prevention strategies in Colombia. [Stempel Instagram](#)



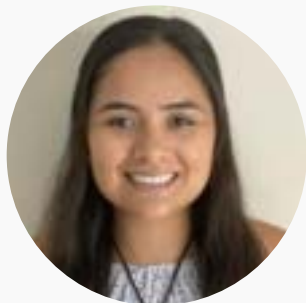
Dr. Tania Rivera was interviewed by [FIU News](#) on GLP-1s.

Adriana Yndart, Ph.D. candidate, was highlighted in the [FIU Research Magazine](#) for her innovative research (page 10).



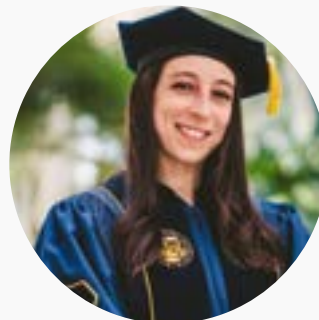
Dr. Catherine Coccia shared how to prepare a healthy meal on a budget. [Stempel Instagram](#)

PH.D. STUDENT AWARDS



Gabriela Proaño

Delores Auzenne Fellowship 2024-25
Commission on Dietetic Registration
Doctoral Scholarship, Academy of
Nutrition and Dietetics 2024-25
Stempel Travel Award 2025



Nicole Vitale

National Science Foundation Award
2024-2027

Stempel Travel awardees participating in Nutrition 2025

Maryam Nadery



Alex Briceño



2nd place awardee at the
2025 Stempel Research Day

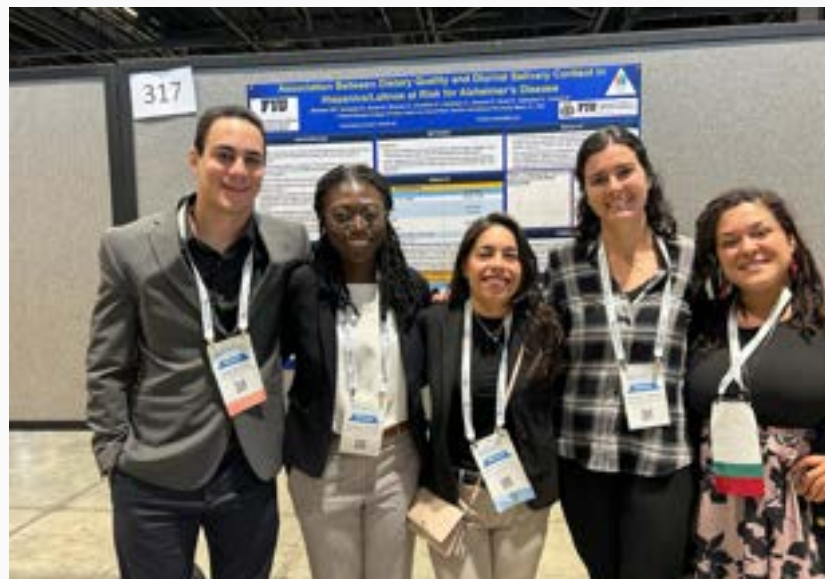
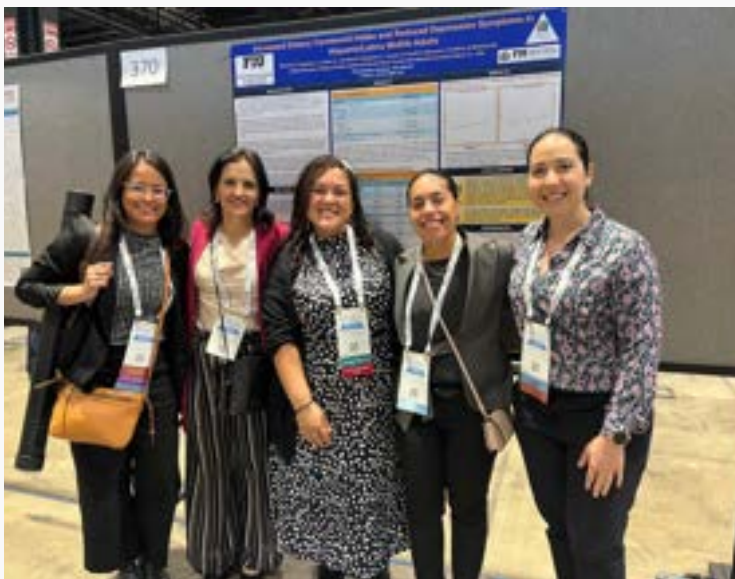
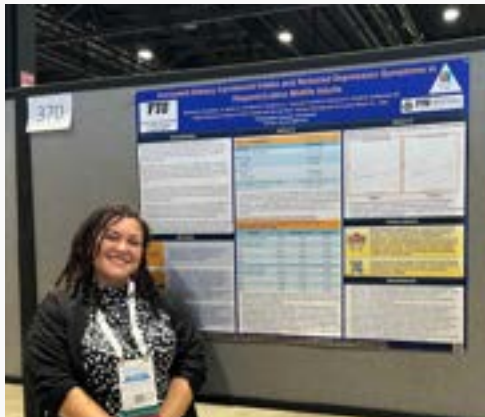
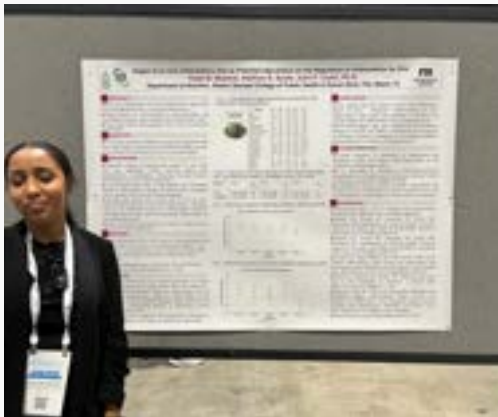
Ayodele Tindall



Gilda Stanco



PH.D. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS AT ASN 2024



PH.D. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Juan Liuzzi and Ph.D. student **Kathryn Ayres** at the UGS Conference.



Nursing Ph.D. Colloquium: Ph.D. students **Alayne Gatto** and **Gabriela Proaño**.



Dr. Sabrina Sales Martinez and her Ph.D. students presenting at the Research Day on Aging and Health.



Dr. Pia Henfridsson's and **Dr. Cristina Palacios's** students presenting at the FIU Undergraduate Conference.



2025 Stempel Research Day



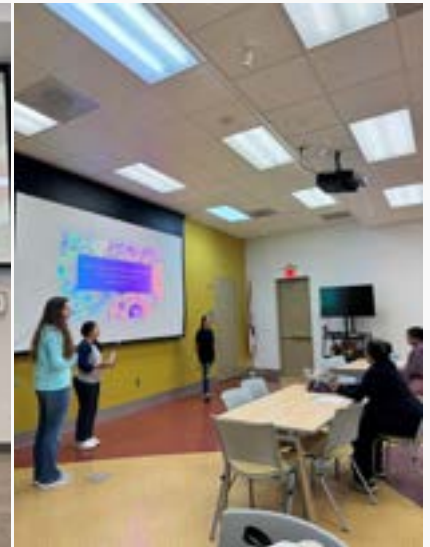
ACTIVITIES FROM THE STUDENT DIETETIC ASSOCIATION



FL FANS 2025 DPD Students and Dr. Deborah Abel.



Literary Bites: Educating the community on how to create healthy eating habits.



Baptist Health: Educating the future generations on the MyPlate guidelines with interactive activities.



Mexican Consulate: Assisting the Mexican community to create lifelong healthy habits by encouraging them to make informed food choices and achieve sustainable health improvements.

ACTIVITIES FROM THE STUDENT DIETETIC ASSOCIATION



Chapman Partnership: Teaching nutrition education to children and low-income adults who are on the path to becoming self-sufficient.



Community Garden: Giving back to the community and facilitating learning opportunities for students at the WOW Center.



Nicklaus Children's Hospital Symposium: Helped event organizers set up the venue for the annual symposium.



Diabetes Awareness Day: Raising awareness about diabetes, one of the chronic illnesses that affects thousands of Americans.



"Sugar Shock" activity for all children from Stempel College as part of the Bring Your Child to Work Day at FIU.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RECENT GRADUATES



RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Järvholm K, Janson A, Henfridsson P, et al. Metabolic and bariatric surgery for adolescents with severe obesity: Benefits, risks, and specific considerations. DOI: 10.1177/14574969241297517 | PMID: 39552134
- Hernandez J et al. Suboptimal Vitamin D status and Overweight/Obesity are associated with Gut Integrity and Inflammation in Minority Children and Adolescents... doi.org/10.1016/j.nutres.2024.11.006.
- Palacios C, et al. Effectiveness and costs of the recruitment strategies used in the MetA-Bone trial 2024 Oct 15;147:107715. doi:10.1016/j.cct.2024.107715.
- Petrie A, Trak-Fellermeier MA, Hernandez J, et al. Dietary acidity and bone mass in minority children and adolescents: a cross-sectional analysis from the MetA-Bone trial. doi:10.1007/s11657-025-01497-
- Trak-Fellermeier MA, Galvan R, Hernandez J, et al. Physiological and lifestyle determinants of bone mass in minority children/adolescents from the MetA-Bone Trial. doi:10.1038/s41390-025-03921-5
- Burke SL, Grudzien A, Li T, Garcia S, Martinez SS, et al. Substance use moderates relationships between apolipoprotein E genotype, hepatitis C, cognition, and depression i 2024 Aug 12. doi: 10.1007/s13365-024-01225-8. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 39134913.
- Gutierrez M, Palacios C, Narayanan V, George F, Sales Martinez S. Association between Depressive Symptoms, Physical Activity, and Health Factors in Hispanic Emerging Adults. 2024 Jul 14;21(7):918. doi: 10.3390/ijerph21070918.
- Hernandez J, et al. Suboptimal vitamin D status and overweight/obesity are associated with gut integrity and inflammation in minority children and adolescents. 2025 Jan;133:13-21. doi: 10.1016/j.nutres.2024.11.006. Epub 2024 Nov 22. PMID: 39662375.
- Yndart Arias A, Vadell K, Vashist A, Kolishetti N, Lakshmana MK, Nair M, Liuzzi JP. Cannabidiol, a plant-derived compound, is an emerging strategy for treating cognitive impairments. 2024 Sep 11;15:1403147. doi: 10.3389/fphar.2024.1403147.
- Bradley H, Luisi N, Carter A, Pigott TD, Baum M, et al. Assessing COVID-19 pandemic impacts on the health of PWID using a novel data sharing model" AIDS. 2024 November 28, 2024. doi: 10.1097/QAD.0000000000004076
- Jeune S, Graziano P, Campa A, Coccia C. (2024). The Mediating Effect of Eating Behaviors on Interoception, Self-Regulation and Weight Status Among College Students. Nutrients. 16(23). doi: 10.3390/nu16233986.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Sankar R, Coccia C, et al. (2025). The Impact of Employment Status and Children in Households on Food Security Among Syrian Refugees Residing in Florida. *Cureus*. 17(2):e78751. doi: 10.7759/cureus.78751.
- Areche FO, Cáceres CGM, Quispe VI, Jorge JLC, Llatasi FGC, Ticona DCP, Vilca OML, Rivera TJC, et al. Optimizing protein quality and bioactive peptide production in almond-based dairy alternatives through lactic acid fermentation and enzyme-assisted hydrolysis for cardiovascular health benefits. doi: 10.1007/s13197-024-06188-6.
- Trak-Fellermeier MA, Galvan R, Hernandez J, et al. Physiological and lifestyle determinants of bone mass in minority children/adolescents from the MetaA-Bone Trial. *Pediatr Res*. 2025 Feb 6. doi: 10.1038/s41390-025-03921-5.
- Burke SL, Grudzien A, Li T, Garcia S, Sales Martinez S, Jurich E, Jimenez DJ, Hernandez J, et al. Substance use moderates relationships between apolipoprotein E genotype, hepatitis C, cognition, and depression in Miami Adult Studies on HIV (MASH) participants. *Journal of Neurovirology*. 2024; doi:10.1007/s13365-024-01225-8
- Tamargo JA, Martin HR, Diaz-Martinez J, et al. Drug use and COVID-19 testing, vaccination, and infection among underserved, minority communities in Miami, Florida. *PLoS One*. 2024; doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0297327
- Martin HR, Brown DR, Fluney E, Trepka MJ, Marty AM, Roldan EO, Liu Q, Barbieri MA, Baum MK. Community-engaged research: COVID-19 testing, infection, and vaccination among underserved minority communities in Miami, Florida. *Vaccines*. 2024; 12(2):117. doi:10.3390/vaccines12020117.
- Bastida Rodriguez J, Huang Y, Hernandez J, Jasmin J, Seminario L, Tamargo J, Martin H, Johnson A, Narayanan V, Bursac Z, Martinez S, Baum M. Sex Differences in Gut Integrity in a Sample of Cannabis Users and Non-Users From the Miami Adult Studies on HIV (MASH) Cohort. 2024; 8. doi: 10.1016/j.cdnut.2024.103404.
- Prapkree L., Deringer, R., Coccia, C., Huffman, F., Palacios, C. (2024). Effect of using the snackability app on snack quality among US college students with overweight and obesity. 23:1-10. doi: 10.1080/07448481.2024.2337008.
- Jeune, S., Graziano, P., Campa, A. & Coccia, C. (2024). The causal associations between interoception, self-regulation, non-purposeful eating behaviors, and weight status in college women. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08870446.2024.2352062>.

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

Jose Bastida, Ph.D., RD'24



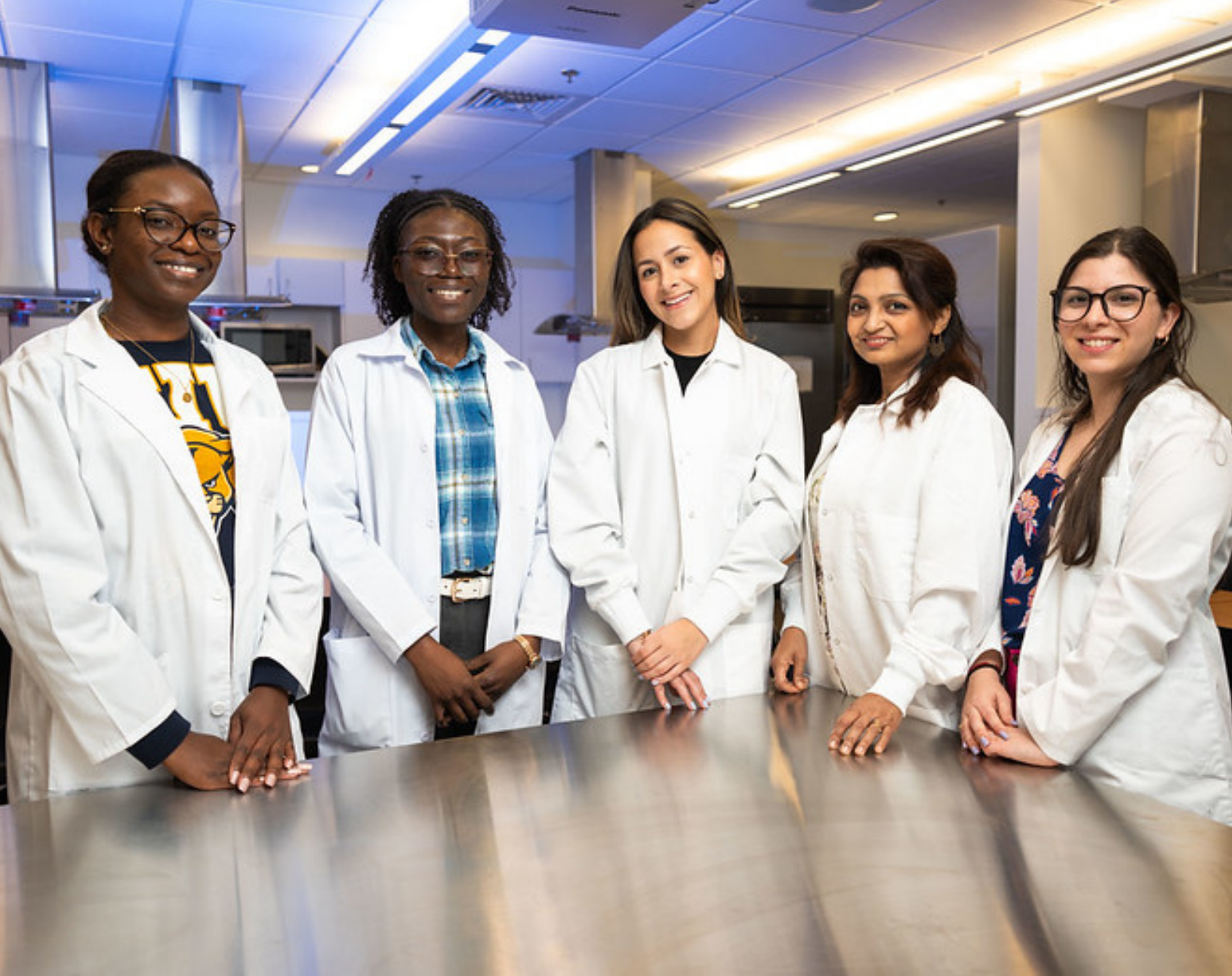
Dr. Jose Bastida is a member of Solara's Research and Innovation team, leading advancements in nutraceutical science. He is at the forefront of nutraceutical innovation, bridging scientific discovery with practical health applications. His expertise in clinical research, human metabolism, and evidence-based nutrition drives the development of high-quality, science-backed formulations designed to optimize health, longevity, and overall quality of life. He plays a critical role in identifying emerging trends, evaluating scientific literature, and synthesizing complex data to create the next generation of nutraceuticals.

Gisela Bouvier, RD, MBA'08



Gisela Bouvier is a bilingual, media-savvy Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, wife, TV show host, and busy mom of three based in Southwest Florida. Gisela worked at one of the best teaching hospitals in the country, where she was the lead dietitian in the trauma and burn intensive care units. In 2016, she founded Gisela Bouvier Nutrition, and co-created the Mindful & Instinctive Eating Approach. Now, her company is a consulting nutrition business for employee wellness, as well as menu development for child and adult care facilities. She regularly appears on national TV and media, sharing real and sustainable nutrition both in English and Spanish. She has recently been nominated for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics National Media Excellence Award.

Please send alumni updates to: crpalaci@fiu.edu



FIU

**Robert Stempel College
of Public Health
& Social Work**

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Department of Dietetics & Nutrition

Follow us

