

BENEFITS OF BEING A PRECEPTOR

Being a clinical preceptor introduces additional responsibilities and, for many RDs, it's hard to find time for that extra work. However, the benefits of being a clinical preceptor – whether it be in dietetics, nursing, or medicine – have been identified and are surprisingly consistent among the health professions. For those of you who have already had good experiences precepting, this information will not be new. If you have not precepted already, hopefully this will help you see the positive aspects of precepting. If you have precepted previously and not found it to be a good experience, maybe this will help you view the precepting role in a more positive light. The benefits are often intangible, so we hope talking about them will make them more concrete.

[Satisfaction of shaping future RDs](#) (Caldwell-Freeman 2000; Robinson 2002).

This is probably the most often cited benefit of precepting. Most of you have invested lots of effort in developing your skills and the best clinical practice. It is very satisfying to use that experience with interns and influence their development.

[Providing service to the dietetics profession](#). All RDs appreciate the preceptors who worked with them during their internship and realize the importance of supervised practice in dietetics. In articles in the dietetics (Robinson, 2002), as well as other allied health literature (Dilbert & Goldenberg, 1995), service to the profession is often noted as an intangible benefit of precepting.

[Makes the job more interesting](#). Having interns breaks the routine, hopefully, in a good way. Interns ask questions that provoke thought and discussion, and can often learn by doing some of the routine tasks that frees the RD up for the more interesting work.

[Recruitment of future colleagues](#). When a good intern has had a fulfilling rotation experience in your facility, they are much more likely to be interested in coming to work at your facility. This cuts recruitment costs, but it also reduces orientation costs since they are probably already very familiar with your operation (Caldwell-Freeman & Mitchell, 2000) and will be able to learn the job quicker and may need less orientation than most new employees. Having the interns rotate through your facility also provides information as to whether or not the 'personalities' of the intern and the staff work well together. Many of our interns take an entry-level position in a facility where they have completed a rotation.

[Interns can complete needed projects](#). This is very often cited as a benefit of having interns. Most RDs probably have multiple projects that are on the 'back-

burner'. Those projects can often be done by interns and generally also provide a good learning experience for the intern.

Increase awareness of new research. Interns are generally working on theses or master's projects and are reading the latest research articles (Robinson, 2002). They are also receiving information about new research in their courses.

Interns bring new ideas. Sometimes it is really helpful just to have someone view your practice and the challenges in your practice with 'fresh eyes'. Interns are also coming from other rotations and will often share new practice they have recently seen.

Teaching interns increases knowledge. Probably one of the best ways to learn something is to prepare to teach it to someone else. In a recent JADA article that surveyed preceptors about their perceived benefits of precepting interns, they rated "as a result of teaching interns, I have gained knowledge in my area of practice" as one of the intangible benefits that they valued highly (Jay & Hoffman, 2000). Interns may ask questions that cause the preceptor to look at their practice in a different light, often with the result of increasing knowledge.

Adds prestige to your job. Especially in teaching facilities, having interns is seen as a contribution to one's profession. Most preceptors add this role to their resume.

Staff relief. When interns reach the end of their rotations, they do staff relief experiences and The U of M interns also do a 3 week residency at the very end of their internship. These interns are essentially finished with their internship experiences and serve a staff relief function, freeing up the RD to perform other duties.