

IGNITE CHANGE. GO GREEN.

Faculty Spotlight:

Tracy L. Oliver, PhD, RDN, LDN, Associate Professor,
College of Nursing

In this interview series we bring you inside the world of Villanova's faculty and explore how their work relates to creating a sustainable future. In this issue we hear from Dr. Tracy Oliver, an associate professor in the College of Nursing.

What is your academic background?

My undergraduate degree is in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics from the University of Pittsburgh. Both my Master's degree and PhD are from Temple University in Kinesiology with a concentration in Exercise Physiology. My Dissertation Title was Cross sectional and Longitudinal Comparison of Self-Report versus Objective Measurement in Physical Activity among Women.



How long have you been teaching at Villanova?

I have been at Villanova University since the fall semester of 2016. Prior to coming to Villanova, I was a faculty member in a Nutrition and Dietetics program at Immaculata University for six years.

In your own words, how would you define sustainability and why is it important to you?

When I think of sustainability, I immediately consider the role that food and food production has on the overall environment. All too often, we as consumers are focused on what we are buying at the supermarket. However, consumers also need to consider what practices are in place prior to that food being available for purchase, and perhaps being more versed in what is going on behind the scenes. Consumers need to appreciate how food is grown, transported, processed, and the way in which each aspect of food production impacts the environment as a whole.

What is your current research focused on?

I am a Registered Dietitian by training. Weight management and obesity are my areas of research and expertise. I have worked on obesity prevention and treatment aspects within children and adults through various delivery modalities. One current area of interest is integrating cooking programs into after school programs for children to educate them on preparing healthy meals and snacks. If children are equipped with making healthy food choices at an early age, they may develop healthier food preferences throughout childhood. This may also benefit their overall wellness and disease prevention as adults.



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Do you collaborate with others on your research?

Presently I am working to coordinate efforts with the College of Nursing's MacDonald Center for Obesity Prevention and Education. The Center's mission is to serve as a model for education and research that promotes healthy weight management and the prevention and reduction of obesity-related diseases across the lifecycle. I feel collaboration would be mutually beneficial and together we can have a greater impact in the individuals' lives we are trying to reach.

Have you been able to incorporate sustainability into your course work?

Yes, it is introduced in my Principles of Nutrition course. We focus on topics such as food insecurity, sustainable agriculture, organic foods, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), and reducing food waste to name a few.

If you could create any course, what would it be?

I would enjoy teaching a course on the complexities of weight management and obesity. Obesity interfaces with numerous disease states and other comorbid conditions. Delving into physical as well as psychological effects obesity has on an individual's life may provide an opportunity for advancing the healthcare they may receive.

What are your favorite outside of the office activities?

Spending time with my family! I feel very fortunate to have chosen a career that is such a big part of my everyday life. I love getting my family involved in trying new foods, new recipes, and new types of cuisines. Getting my children involved in the kitchen and being involved in nutrition is a true highlight. I enjoy getting to 'test' various aspects of nutrition on my family on a daily basis and I love to watch my children's palates and food preferences develop on a daily basis.



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