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Sarah Francis PhD, MHS, RD to Receive SNEB Research Achievement Award

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 1, 2022) The Society of Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) will honor Sarah Francis PhD, MHS, RD with the Research Award at the 2022 SNEB Annual Conference. This award will be given to acknowledge notable research achievements in the field of nutrition education and behavior. The award will be presented at the 2022 SNEB Annual Conference during the opening session on July 29, 2022, in Atlanta, GA.

Dr. Francis is an associate professor in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at Iowa State University. She has worked in the area of community health and nutrition education for 18 years, internationally and domestically. Over her career, she has secured nearly \$3 million in funding; published 36 research articles, developed 15 Extension programs and created 143 original Extension publications and materials. According to nominator Tovah Wolf, PhD, “This demonstrates a record of achievement in the field of nutrition education and behavior,” that the Research Award recognizes.

Dr. Francis served as a key evaluator for the nutrition education program, Fresh Conversations which is now designated as a nationally recognized evidence-based program. Her Extension and outreach efforts reach over 20,000 Iowans annually. Among the other programs created by Dr. Francis to improve health and well-being of Iowans is Latinos Living Well (LLW). LLW is the first Latinos-focused food and health program offered through Extension in Iowa. In 2021, Dr. Francis partnered with a Medicaid provider to pilot-test a collaborative effort to expand LLW.

In addition, she developed ‘Stay Independent’, a healthy aging series composed of six lessons to address the behaviors adversely impacting the nutritional risk of older Iowans. The program reached over 500 older adults since 2017. Further focusing on health risks of the older population of Iowa, Dr. Francis created two programs, The Wellness and Independence through Nutrition Program (WIN) in 2012 and the Nutrition Education With Seniors You Can Use Program (NEWS) in 2013. Since the emergence of each program, WIN has reached over 12,000 older adults, and NEWS, the newsletter-based nutrition program, informs approximately 4,000 older Iowans.

Most recently, Dr. Francis’ collaborative research efforts with the Iowa Department on Aging (IDA) over the past decade are credited for enabling the IDA to be the first State Unit on Aging to win a five-year collaborative agreement to oversee the National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging. In her letter of support Carlene Russell, MS, RDN, LDN, FADA, Iowa Department of Aging, writes, “The outcomes of Dr. Francis’ research provide practical strategies for program improvement.”

Dr. Francis is active with the USDA Multistate Project NE-1939 that focuses on improving the health span of aging adults through diet and physical activity. One project member shared, “Sarah is someone who can see the forest and the trees and thinks of how to do our research so that there are broad impacts. Sarah has been instrumental in facilitating a coalescing of NE1439 to identify common measures to use across all our related research – and to identify common measures that Extension Specialists can use.”

Dr. Francis' research and Extension resulted in her appointment to the USDA National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economic (NAREEE) Advisory Board from 2018-2021. In Summer 2019, she was elected to the NAREEE Executive board. In this capacity, she advocated for funding, research, and policies that supported research-based nutrition practices and recommendations.

Dr. Francis encourages emerging researchers, "My advice for new and emerging researchers is to understand your personal research mission and vision and choose projects that support these; be open to new ideas and partnerships which will help you broaden your reach and diversify your funding streams; find mentors who offer support and guidance to foster your professional development; and finally, believe in yourself."

She is an active member of SNEB for 10 years. During this time, she has served as a conference abstract reviewer and served on the annual conference planning committee. She has served as chair-elect, chair, and past chair while creating and leading the Healthy Aging Division (HAD) newsletter committee for three years. On behalf of SNEB and the Division, she was selected to co-author the published joint position paper "Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the SNEB: Food and nutrition programs for community-residing older adults," published in 2019.

Dr. Francis writes, "The smaller size of the SNEB provided me with opportunities that would have likely not be available in other larger professional organizations. My various leadership positions within the Healthy Aging Division have fostered my professional development in so many ways—I expanded my professional network, discovered my leadership skills in a safe and supportive environment, and became a more confident nutrition education researcher."

ABOUT THE SOCIETY FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOR

The Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) represents the unique professional interests of nutrition educators worldwide. The Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior advances food and nutrition education research, practice, and policy that promote equity and support public and planetary health and has a vision of people worldwide empowered by food and nutrition education to change behavior, food systems, and policy.