

Results of the ROTC and Nutrition/Kinesiology (RANK) Needs Assessment

Cody Cummins and Jill Joyce

Oklahoma State University

Objectives: Military officers report obtaining nutrition information most often from popular media and least often from doctors or dietitians. The majority of officers state the military places too little emphasis on nutrition and there needs to be greater focus on changing Soldiers' nutrition. They suggest increasing opportunities for nutrition education for military personnel. Collaborations between university departments and ROTC programs present as an ideal opportunity. Thus, the purpose of the RANK needs assessment was to determine interest, perceived importance, desired components, and foreseen challenges to a nutrition and physical training education program for university ROTC programs by cadets (students) and cadre (instructors).

Methods: Two focus groups were conducted in November 2020 with cadets (n = 5) and cadre (n = 5) in OSU ROTC programs. Questions

covered demographics, level of interest, perceived importance, class logistics, interest in additional services, and career impact. Thematic analysis was performed using video recordings and detailed notes.

Results: Out of 5 (highest interest), cadets scored interest as 4.8 and importance as 4.2. Cadre scored interest and importance as 5. Cadets and cadre were consistent in responses regarding class logistics. They recommended classes be offered in person, livestreamed, and recorded to maximize reach and include PowerPoint slides, but remain interactive. They reported no need for incentives. A health challenge aspect was desirable. Class length and frequency was suggested at one hour every week of the semester. Cadets foresaw several major benefits, while cadre provided a long list of benefits for cadets' future careers.

Conclusions: University departments collaborating with their respective ROTC programs to provide nutrition/physical training classes is of high interest and importance to cadets and cadre with countless significant benefits to the careers of these future military leaders.

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