1. **Reflect on a lesson you were taught by one of your patients or clients. What was the situation? How was their care impacted? How will you apply what you learned moving forward in future SEL and patient/client interactions? (400 words)**

One lesson that was evident during this food service SEL rotation was the importance of active listening. This was an area that Lauren, my preceptor, excelled in. Whether she was talking with food service staff, helping a patient, assisting long-term residents, or interacting with other health professionals, she used many active listening skills in her conversations. An example of Lauren’s active listening was when she interviewed a candidate for a food service position. First, she spent time reviewing the application and interview questions she wanted to ask during the interview. We had already revamped the questions for the interview. During the interview, she would listen, paraphrase, and use verbal affirmations.

I heard her paraphrase using the words, “what I hear you saying is that you have had several experiences with conflict resolution.” Her body language and gestures during the interview conveyed her interest. She also made eye contact during the conversation and asked clarifying questions when needed. I remember her asking if the candidate could clarify what she had done in her last position as the candidate’s first response was very short and did not give much detail. Finally, she paid attention to the tone the candidate used, especially when she described her relationship with her last job. Her active listening skills helped create a positive interview experience and ensured that Lauren fully understood the candidate's responses.

By actively listening, Lauren was able to gain a deeper understanding of the candidate’s work experience and how she would fit into the hospital food service culture as an employee in the kitchen. Overall, I feel her active listening led to a more robust conversation during the interview. Lauren’s active listening skills can also help when talking with patients and residents in the attached long-term care facility. Her approach helps build trust, improves patient satisfaction, and leads to more effective and personalized care plans.

This lesson has some key takeaways that I can use in my own future interactions as a dietitian. First, active listening uses empathy and understanding. In future applications, taking the time to listen to my patients can reveal important details about their nutritional status and their emotional state. Active listening also builds trust. Patients are more likely to trust and engage with me if I am truly listening and validating their concerns. Finally, active listening can lead to more tailored and effective nutritional treatment plans. This lesson highlights the value of empathy and communication in healthcare, which are essential components of both SEL experiences and future interactions as a dietitian.

1. **Looking back on your weekly reflections, what did you notice about yourself in your writing? What attributes did you identify that will help you be successful moving through the program as a future RDN? What personality traits did you notice that enhanced your self-awareness? Did any themes emerge for you personally as you progressed through your SEL? (400 words)**

Looking back on my writing during this rotation, I noticed that I continued to strengthen my writing style. Though I am a strong writer, I do tend to overuse run-on sentences. Dr. Bigelow pointed this out on one of my reflection pieces. I appreciate this feedback as it is valuable in helping improve my writing. The better my writing becomes, the more confident I will be in later written communication. Feedback can also help with consistency, dedication, and attention to detail in my writing style. Using this feedback to reflect on how I write indicates a strong sense of responsibility and dedication to my own growth. The more thorough and detailed my written reflections are, shows my ability to observe and analyze my experiences carefully.

Some attributes I noticed that will help me as a future RDN are my empathy, communication skills, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills. During this rotation, I could recognize moments where I showed understanding and compassion towards patients, which is crucial for building trust and rapport. Additionally, using both effective written and verbal communication helps with guiding, enhancing, and educating conversations with patients and other healthcare staff. I also used critical thinking skills to effectively solve problems. For example, I could identify areas in Lauren’s interview questions that needed revamping to make the questions more applicable to the food service position. Lauren and I also spent time creatively addressing challenges to the schedule which demonstrates my ability to think critically and adapt. We revised the task by time for each food service position, so it was easier to read and had more clarity in what was expected of each position. This helped all the positions also know timelines for various tasks to make the whole kitchen runs smoothly.

Some emerging themes I noticed in myself were my growth mindset, patient centered care, and wellbeing. Each SEL experience is another opportunity to learn from the experience and seek improvement. Introspecting and evaluating the experience, the actions of others, and my own actions are key to continuous improvement. A desire to learn and understand more about how to efficiently run food service hospital productions drives better self-growth and development.

These food service rotation hours are also an opportunity to collaborate with a diverse team of professionals. One key experience was working with Lynnie on the budget. This gave me the opportunity to understand budgeting, cost analysis, and selecting quality inventory to meet the nutritional needs of the patients. This required effective communication and a deep understanding of inventory control. Through this process, I learned the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between all the food service staff, food suppliers, as well as other healthcare professionals in providing high-quality nutritional care. Moving forward, I will continue to prioritize these aspects in my practice as a future RDN.

1. **How did you practice empathy with your patients or clients and yourself throughout this lab? How will you continue to enhance your ability to be empathetic with your patients, clients, and yourself? (400 words)**

Practicing empathy during this food service management rotation involves understanding and addressing the needs and feelings of both staff and patients. To practice empathy with staff I used active listening just like I saw Lauren use. Some ways I did this are by paying attention to what my preceptors were saying without interrupting, writing down key information, and keeping interested with my facial expressions and gestures. Another way I showed empathy is to acknowledge their ideas and concerns and use affirmations to show I valued their input. I spent time getting to know each of the kitchen staff that I worked with and expressing genuine interest in their lives and what they were teaching me. I also tried to offer support where I could.

One other way to show empathy is to respect differences in backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and perspectives. Some of the staff had been there for over 25 years and some had been there for just a few months. I worked with staff of each age group as well. I find that different generations bring different, fresh perspectives to a job. For example, millennials are more tech savvy while gen x is more resilient and flexible. I fall into the gen x category and appreciate my own ability to adapt to different situations easily. I also am open to learning a new way of doing something and enjoy learning new things from others.

Not only did I practice empathy with the hospital staff, I also practiced empathy with the patients. While working on the tray line or in the long-term care facility, I took the time to understand their needs. For example, during the resident meeting on menu planning for St. Patrick’s Day, I listened with dietitian Katie to the resident’s dietary preferences, restrictions, and concerns. Katie showed she cared about their well-being by tailoring the menu recommendations to their specific wants and needs. Since many of the residents were older in age, I practiced empathy by using simple and clear language when explaining dietary plans or changes. Katie did a fantastic job of ensuring that the residents felt comfortable asking questions and expressing their concerns. I used compassion to acknowledge the challenges the residents may face in adhering to dietary recommendations. An example of this is concern for texture modified diets not being made accurately in the kitchen. Katie and Lauren had a meeting with food service staff to better educate on these diets and put new laminated visuals in the kitchen after the meeting.

 One thing that is often not discussed is the patience that is needed as a dietitian or food service manager. It is helpful to understand that making dietary changes can be difficult for patients in the hospital and residents in long-term care. Lauren and Katie are so patient with the residents and good at providing ongoing support and guidance.

 As I move forward in future SELs and career choices, I want to continue to regularly reflect on my experiences and emotions to better understand myself. I want to use these reflections to build on my strengths and acknowledge areas for improvement without judgment. Finally, I want to continue learning and stay informed about the best practices in empathy and patient care. By practicing empathy in these ways, I hope to create a positive and supportive environment for both staff and patients.

1. **What changes did you notice happening within yourself as you progressed through these SEL experiences in this lab? What were some positive changes you noticed that brought about feelings of confidence or happiness? What were some that caused you a bit of worry or anxiety? Were there any dichotomies that presented themselves that you processed as a future RDN? (400 words)**

Reflecting on my food service management SEL can reveal a lot about my personal and professional growth. Some changes I have noticed include increased confidence and enhanced skills. I was able to successfully manage tasks and responsibilities while in the SEL, in the classwork, and in my personal life that boosted my confidence. I also enhanced skills by gaining practical experience in menu planning, leadership, food safety, inventory control, HACCP compliance, and patient interactions. Additionally, positive feedback from my preceptors reinforced this confidence and my belief in my abilities. This of course made me proud of my work and invoked positive feelings. Of course, a theme of this reflection is the empathy learned during this SEL. I had so many moments to build empathy by interacting with patients, residents, and staff to better understand the dietary needs of hospital patients. I also appreciate the diverse perspectives in the people I met during this rotation.

As I reflect on these 60 hours of food service management, I also noticed a few challenges and worries as well. First, the more I advance through the program, the more evident the stress is. Balancing multiple responsibilities, classwork, family obligations, coaching responsibilities, and work deadlines caused added stress. On top of that, we were also given new deadlines for our prospectus that will be due in the next rotation. This prospectus will be the key to getting into the capstone for the summer. Finally, navigating complex situations, such as dietary restrictions or food safety issues are sometimes challenging. Although the workload and stress are overwhelming at first, once I adjusted to a new SEL environment and workload of the class, I was able to adapt and overcome this challenge.

One dichotomy I notice in all my SELs is balancing compassion and professionalism. It can be difficult to find the right balance between being empathetic and maintaining professional boundaries. Another dichotomy is ensuring that patient care is both compassionate *and* evidence based. In this food service rotation specifically, it was difficult to provide high-quality food and service while also being mindful of cost, budget, and inventory control. It can also be difficult to manage the tension between meeting nutritional standards and catering to patient preferences. This was evident in the week seven menu as well. I learned that planning a modified menu for a renal diet needs to make nutrition the priority, but consumer preferences for taste, variety, texture, appearance, and more also factor into the menu decisions.

**Screenshot** (highlighted in blue)

