

## President's Council of Cornell Women | **Monthly eNews** | December 2013

### Member Interview

**Debra A. Wein, BS HE '90**, Hingham, MA, PCCW member since 2012



Debra Wein '90, MS, RD, LDN, NSCA-CPT\*D, CWPD is a nationally recognized expert on health and wellness and has designed award-winning programs for individuals and corporations across the country. Her mission is to inspire individuals to make simple and positive changes in their lives that improve their health. She is president and founder of Wellness Workdays, a leading provider of worksite wellness programs, and president and co-founder of Sensible Nutrition, Inc., a consulting firm that provides nutrition and wellness services to individuals.

With more than twenty years' experience, Debra develops custom-tailored, scientifically based, resource-focused programs based on the latest nutrition and fitness research. She teaches at the undergraduate and graduate levels at several well-known Boston universities and is often called upon to speak at national and regional conferences. Debra was appointed to the Wellness Planning Committee of the New England Employee Benefits Council in 2013 and to the President's Council of Cornell Women in 2012. She is a Certified Wellness Program Director through the National Wellness Institute and WebMD, and is certified as a personal trainer by The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM-HFI) and The National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA-CPT\*D). Debra has worked with hundreds of companies, including Putnam Investments, Brown University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Rockland Trust, Perkin Elmer, Old Mutual Asset Management, Waters Corporation, the Town of Westwood, Bentley University and Harvard Business School. She is Program Director of the Wellness Workdays Dietetic Internship and offers the only ACEND-approved worksite wellness focused internship for dietetics students interested in becoming Registered Dietitians. Debra holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in nutritional sciences and applied physiology from Cornell '90 (Nutritional Sciences) and Columbia Universities, '93 (Applied Physiology and Nutrition).

### **What's one of the biggest advances in your industry over the past five years?**

Over the past five to ten years, wellness has evolved from a focus on fitness—offering gym membership reimbursements and onsite fitness classes—to a focus on the overall health of employee populations and how it impacts a company's bottom line. Employers are facing large increases in health insurance premiums and are passing costs on to their employees while also taking steps to ensure employees get healthier. Almost half of the nation's businesses offer wellness programs, and many of the companies are now measuring and requiring results.

Employers have expanded their offerings to include mental and emotional wellness, stress reduction and financial fitness, as well as programs that target metabolic syndrome and smoking cessation. Many businesses also offer programs to improve the health of spouses and children.

These days, companies with comprehensive wellness programs conduct biometric screenings and analyze trends in insurance claims to evaluate the health of their employees and determine the health challenges facing their population. They build on this information by finding out what types of programs their employees are interested in and then create programs that target both the needs and the interests of their population. Employers often provide incentives for participation such as winning an iPad, a paid day off or receiving a significant reduction on monthly health care premiums.

Wellness Workdays provides a full range of creative programs that achieve results. We offer the strategic design, evaluation and assessment that companies need to ensure that their programs are successful, and we track results and calculate the return on investment for each program. Our wellness programs have won a number of awards from industry organizations and the media.

**What are some of the technology trends impacting your business? Can you explain the impact, if any, that social networking and Web 2.0 has made on your organization or you personally?**

Technology is having a big impact in the wellness field. A number of companies are using creative technology to engage employees in wellness, while making it fun and easy to track progress and results. Wellness Workdays uses technology in almost every program we run, and we have been on the cutting-edge of some incredible initiatives over the past few years.

A number of our programs use accelerometers, which measure a person's movement and track calorie and physical activity. This information is uploaded to an employee's personal dashboard and allows the employee access to his/her own performance and progress while allowing in-depth tracking, giving employees the capacity to monitor their goals, calories burned, body composition, weight, health status, physical activity and nutrient intake on a daily, monthly and yearly basis. Nurses, coaches and other health professionals can be granted access to the information.

The Wellness Workdays health kiosk is the "gold standard" of health assessment and monitoring and provides a full array of clinical-grade health measurement tools, including total body composition (lean mass, body fat, hydration), total body weight, blood pressure, blood oxygen level, body temperature and respiration. The kiosk delivers powerful benefits to individuals committed to improving their health, as well as employers committed to helping them do so. Our technology is now available for employees to use in 3000 supermarkets nationwide and delivers a level of accuracy previously unattainable outside the clinical environment. The health measurements are automatically transmitted through HIPAA-compliant servers and uploaded to each registered user's secure, personalized health record. Records can be accessed both at the kiosk and at any web-enabled computer, allowing employees to monitor and analyze progress toward attaining their health and fitness goals.

We've also developed a portal that is being rolled out to our corporate clients. Employees will have access to the portal, which includes the employee's personal dashboard, access to their personal health assessment, screening data and a personal health record. It will also track the programs the employee is participating in and provide access to a wellness community which features reliable resources, exercise videos, ask the expert and email coaching. Employers can develop a reward system for employees based on their participation. The portal also includes a system, accessible on any smartphone, that promotes healthy grocery store purchases for employees by tracking and grading the food (on a 0-100 scale), which allows them to make informed buying decisions at the point of purchase.

With regard to Web 2.0, it has been a great tool for engagement with our clients. It allows us to create interactive, privately-branded Internet sites for each of our clients, including an online internet community, a feature on current technology (apps, health trackers, websites, etc.), interactive polls, weekly discussions on various topics, support from Registered Dietitians, personal trainers, coaches, etc., and hosted webinars with experts.

**What's an accomplishment that you are proudest of?**

I am really proud of developing the Wellness Workdays' Dietetic Internship (WWDI) Program, which is the only worksite wellness focused internship for dietetics students that is approved by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). The WWDI is a 1,200-hour distance program with a concentration in worksite wellness/health promotion and addresses an emerging field in dietetics, creating more opportunities and awareness for students interested in the field of prevention and wellness. Successful completion of an internship is a key requirement for students who hold an under/graduate nutrition degree from a nationally accredited college or university and who would like to sit for the national exam to become a Registered Dietitian.

I began the rigorous accreditation process two years ago when I realized that half of nutrition graduates were not getting placed in an internship. I also wanted to give students who are interested in nutrition areas besides clinical another option for their career upon graduation. The WWDI meets strict competencies and learning outcomes through a combination of worksite wellness, acute clinical, long-term care, food service, elective and community rotations. In addition to the traditional clinical and food service nutrition training, students learn how to design and deliver strategic worksite wellness programs and gain experience in biometric screenings, nutrition and fitness classes, wellness seminars, lectures and cooking demonstrations while also learning about innovative wellness technologies, engaging in social media opportunities, and assisting in the creation of marketing and programming tools that promote wellness.

The first class of interns applied this year and we had more than 200 applications for 20 spots. Our interns are currently working their way through various rotations and will complete the program next year. I've been promoting the program at a number of school and nutrition fairs and the interest from students has been high.

**About the President's Council of Cornell Women (PCCW)**

PCCW is a group of highly accomplished alumnae working to enhance the involvement of women students, faculty, staff, and alumnae as leaders within Cornell University and its many communities. The Council seeks to engage accomplished alumnae who have not been active in alumni organizations. Learn more at [alumni.cornell.edu/pccw/](http://alumni.cornell.edu/pccw/).