

# SARAH L. RUIZ, PhD, RD, LD, CDCES

## EDUCATION

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2017-2021	PhD in Interdisciplinary Health Sciences The University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX Research Topics: obesity, diabetes, nutrition, and culinary-based interventions Dissertation: Determination of Perceived Calorie Content of Common Foods. Dissertation Advisors: Leah Whigham, PhD, FTOS; Maria Duarte-Gardea, PhD, RDN; Nikhil Dhurandhar, PhD, FTOS; Holly Mata, PhD, CHES, CPH & Ximena Burgos, PhD
2014-2017	Master of Public Health in Nutrition University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA Research Topics: nutrition epidemiology, acculturation, public health policy development
2013	Dietetic Internship/Graduate Certificate Iowa State University, Ames, IA
2008-2013	Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition and Dietetic Science New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM
2006-2008	Associate of Applied Science Le Cordon Bleu, Austin, TX

## PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

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2016-present	Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist (CDCES), Certification #21600535
2014-present	TX Licensed Dietitian (LD) License #DT83186
2014-present	Registered Dietitian (RD) Registration ID #86020786

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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2017-2021	Investigation of the relationship between calorie perceptions and body composition. Mentor: Dr. Leah Whigham  Nutrition education and culinary-based curriculum development. Faculty Mentor: Dr. Leah Whigham
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2017-2019

Graduate Research Associate  
Institute for Healthy Living at UTEP, El Paso, Texas

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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2024-present	Assistant Professor in Family and Consumer Sciences New Mexico State University Courses Taught: Community Nutrition, Lifecycle Nutrition, Human Nutrition, Food Systems and Policy, Applied Nutrition Research
2021-present	Community Field Experience Preceptor The University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX
2016-present	Adjunct Faculty in Health Sciences The University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX Courses Taught: Nutrition Assessment, Fundamentals of Nutrition, & Sports Nutrition Courses Developed: Sports Nutrition, Applied Culinary Nutrition
2014-present	Dietetic Internship Preceptor New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM Keith and Associates Distance Internship, El Paso, TX Nutrisource Distance Internship, El Paso, TX Utah State University, Salt Lake, UT Iowa State University, Ames, IA Wellness Workdays, Hingham, MA University of New England, Portland, ME Illinois State University, Normal, IL  Rotations: Community, Medical Nutrition Therapy, Clinical & Business

## GRANTS & CONTRACTS

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2025-2026	<b>Primary Investigator.</b> Sabrosa Vida Reimagined. Funded by the Paso del Norte Health Foundation; 23,070.
2025-2028	<b>Co-Program Director.</b> (PI: Carrie Durward). Western Region Nutrition Security Collaborative: Interdisciplinary Solutions for Expanding Access to Culturally Relevant Health-Promoting Foods. (Funding Retracted) by National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2025-68015- 44281; \$1,500,000.00.
2024-2025	<b>Co-Investigator.</b> (PI: Maria Duarte-Gardea). UTEP Diabetes Awareness Training Program for Community Outreach Phase III. Funded by the Paso del Norte Health Foundation; \$29,416.

2023-2025	<b>Consultant.</b> (PI: Yok-Fong Paat). REACH (Resilience, Education, Action, Commitment, and Humanity): Using Critical Media Literacy, Civic Learning, and Arts-Based Approaches to Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence on the US-Mexico Border Region and Beyond. Funded by Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program, DHS-23-TTP-132-00-01, The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (OTVTP); \$296,806.
2023-2024	<b>Program Director.</b> Superior Health Provider Grant. Funding supported Sweet Solutions diabetes management support group cooking classes; \$2,500.
2023-2024	<b>Co-Investigator.</b> (PI: Maria Duarte-Gardea). UTEP Diabetes Awareness Education Training Program for Community Outreach. Funded by Paso del Norte Health Foundation; \$55,529.
2023	<b>Co-Investigator.</b> (PI: Maria Duarte-Gardea). UTEP Diabetes Awareness Education Training Program for Community Outreach Handbook Development. Funded by Paso del Norte Health Foundation; \$9,915.
2022-2023	<b>Co-Investigator.</b> (PI: Maria Duarte-Gardea). UTEP Diabetes Awareness Education Training Program for Community Outreach. Funded by Paso del Norte Health Foundation; \$33,790.
2021-2026	<b>Consultant.</b> (PI: Yok-Fong Paat). Healthy Families Healthy Kids Initiative. Funded by Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children Program, HRSA-21-031, Health Resources & Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of Maternal and Child Health Workforce Development; \$250,000.
2020-2021	<b>Program Director.</b> Superior Health Provider Grant. Funding supported virtual and in- person cooking classes for participants of the Diabetes Self- Management Program (DSME); \$2,500.

## PUBLICATIONS

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- Ruiz S.L.**, Perez D, Chacon-Portillo DN, Del Rio K. The Business of Virtual DSME and MNT Implementation. *ADCES in Practice*. 2025;0(0). doi:[10.1177/2633559X251351023](https://doi.org/10.1177/2633559X251351023)
- Paat, Y.-F., Garcia Tovar, D., Myers, N. W., Orezza, M. C. E., Giangulio, A. M., **Ruiz, S. L.**, Dorado, A. V., & Torres-Hostos, L. R. (2025). Leveraging an Arts-Based Approach to Foster Engagement, Nurture Kindness, and Prevent Violence. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(6), 799. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15060799>
- Morera, O. F., Dane'el, M. I., Smith, B. A., Redelfs, A. H., **Ruiz, S. L.**, Preacher, K. J., & Whigham, L. D. (2023). Discretizing continuous variables in nutrition and obesity research: A practice that needs to be cut short. *Nutrition & Diabetes*, 13(1), 20. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41387-023-00248-0>

Paat, Y.-F., Camacho, E., **Ruiz, S. L.**, Garcia Tovar, D., Núñez-Mchiri, G. G., Duarte- Gardea, M. O., Corral, G., Oviedo Ramirez, S., Markham, C., Torres-Hostos, L., Singh, K. C., Zamora, H., & Myers, N. W. (2023). A socio-ecological approach to a community-based health promotion intervention on the U.S.-Mexico border: Insights and lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Applied Social Science*, 18(1), 62-77.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/19367244231202715>

\*The second and third authors contributed equally.

Redelfs, A. H., Leos, J. D., Mata, H., **Ruiz, S. L.**, & Whigham, L. D. (2021). Eat Well El Paso!: Lessons learned from a community-level restaurant initiative to increase availability of healthy options while celebrating local cuisine. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 35(6), 841–844. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890117121999184>

Redelfs, A. H., Aguilera, J., & **Ruiz, S. L.** (2019). Practical strategies to improve your writing: Lessons learned from public health practitioners participating in a writing group. *Health Promotion Practice*, 20(3), 333–337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839919838398>

## PUBLICATIONS IN PROGRESS

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Paat, Y.-F., Dorado, A.V., Garcia Tovar, D., Myers, N.W., **Ruiz, S.L.**, Perez, D.A., Ramirez Vara, B.L., Camacho, E., Núñez-Mchiri, G.G., Zamora, H., Jr., Singh, K.C., & Polanco, R.A. Toward a Sustainable Future: Advancing Health Promotion in Underserved Populations Through Collaborative Engagement. *Sustainability*. [Manuscript in press].

Del Rio, K., **Ruiz, S.** Relationships of acculturation and obesity outcomes among Hispanic adults of Mexican descent in the U.S. [Manuscript in preparation].

## PUBLISHED ABSTRACTS

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**Ruiz, S.**, Aguilera, J., A., Redelfs, A., Perez, D. A., Swartz, D. M., H., Dhurandhar, N., & Whigham, L. (2024). Association of BMI With Accuracy of Estimating Calorie Content of Food: Dietetic vs. Non-dietetic Professionals (Abstract). *Current Developments in Nutrition*, 8(Supplement\_2), 103569. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cdnut.2024.103569>

**Ruiz, S.**, Aguilera, J., Perez, D. A., Redelfs, A. H., Dhurandhar, N., & Whigham, L. (2019). Accuracy of calorie perceptions in individuals who are attempting to lose weight (Abstract). *Current Developments in Nutrition*, 3(Supplement\_1), 1465. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdn/nzz050.P16-062-19>

## ORAL PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

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**Ruiz, S.**, Acosta, L., Sanchez, M., & Hopkins, P. (2023, August 4-7). *Overcome cultural and technology challenges when providing virtual DSMES* [Conference presentation]. ADCES 2023, Houston, TX, United States. <https://www.eventscribe.net/2023/ADCES23/fsPopup.asp?Mode=presInfo&PresentationID=1208319>

**Ruiz, S., Gonzalez, S., & Martinez, M.E.** (2022, August 12-15). *Applications of a theory- based community (Sabrosa Vida) cooking program in addition to Diabetes Self- Management Education and Support* [Conference presentation]. ADCES 2022, Baltimore, MD, United States. <https://www.adces22.org/2022/adces22/fsPopup.asp?PresentationID=1048430&mode=presinfo>

**Ruiz, S., Joy, L., Redelfs, A., Mata, H., & Whigham, L.** (2020, March 17-22). *Leveraging partnerships to improve our community food environment: Lessons learned from a healthy restaurant initiative in the US-MX border region* [Conference oral presentation abstract]. SOPHE 2020, Atlanta, GA, United States. [https://www.sophe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SOPHE\\_2020ConferenceProgram\\_web\\_final.pdf](https://www.sophe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SOPHE_2020ConferenceProgram_web_final.pdf)

## POSTER PRESENTATIONS

**Kirzner, S.J., Wilkerson, J.M., Gallardo, K., McCurdy, S., Rodriguez, S., Whigham, L.D., & Ruiz, S.** (2025). Program evaluation and study protocol of a culinary curriculum for substance use recovery housing residents [Poster Abstract]. TSOPHE 2025, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, United States.

**Chacon-Portillo, D.N., Ruiz, S., Burgos-Monzon, X., Wittenburg, C., Ferreira-Pinto, J.B., Kelly, M., Garcia A., Robertson, W.H., Duarte-Gardea, M.** (2025). Training the Next Generation of Diabetes Advocates While Bringing Awareness to Diabetes in the Southwest Region of Texas [Poster Abstract] ADCES 2025, Phoenix, AZ, United States.

**Ruiz, S., Aguilera, J., A., Redelfs, A., Perez, D. A., Swartz, D. M., H., Dhurandhar, N., & Whigham, L.** (2024). *Association of BMI with accuracy of estimating calorie content of food: Dietetic vs. non-dietetic professionals* [Poster abstract]. Nutrition 2024, Chicago, IL, United States.

**Hopkins, P. V., Ruiz, S., Lourdes Asiain, M. D., Dhurandhar, N. V., & Whigham, L. D.** (2022, November 1-4). *Barriers and facilitators to adolescent obesity care: Practical guidance for providers* [Poster abstract]. Obesity Week 2022; San Diego, CA, United States.

**Hopkins, P., Aguilera, J., Redelfs, A., Hassan, A., Perez, D., Ruiz, S., Dhurandhar, N.V., & Whigham, L.** (2019, November 3-7). *Determining the association of fruit and vegetable intake between dieters and non-dieters* [Poster abstract]. Obesity Week 2019, Las Vegas, NV, United States.

**Ruiz, S., Perez, D., Aguilera, J., Redelfs, A., Dhurandhar, N., & Whigham, L.** (2019, November 3-7). *Associations between calorie perception accuracy and body-fat percentages* [Poster abstract]. Obesity Week 2019, Las Vegas, NV, United States.

**Ruiz, S., Perez, D., Aguilera, J., Redelfs, A., Dhurandhar, N., & Whigham, L.** (2019, June 8- 11). *Accuracy of calorie perceptions in individuals who are attempting to lose weight* [Poster abstract]. Nutrition 2019, Baltimore, MD, United States.

**Ruiz, S., Perez, D., Redelfs, A., Dhurandhar, N., & Whigham, L.** (2018, November 11-15). *Calorie perceptions are more accurate in dietetics professionals vs others except in mixed meals* [Poster abstract]. Obesity Week 2018, Nashville, TN, United States.

**Ruiz, S. & Whigham, L. (2018, April 13).** *Applications of the Institute for Healthy Living curriculum development and evaluation tool in the Sabrosa Vida cooking program* [Poster abstract]. HEAL U 2018 Clinical and Research Symposium, El Paso, TX, United States.

## PROFESSIONAL REPORTS

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Redelfs, A. H., Mata, H., **Ruiz, S.**, Perez D. A., Whigham, L. (2019). *Eat Well El Paso by the City of El Paso Department of Public Health: HEAL evaluation final report*. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation.

**Ruiz, S.**, & Whigham, L. (2018). *Sabrosa Vida Curriculum*. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation Healthy Eating and Active Living Initiative.

Whigham, L., **Ruiz, S.**, Urrutia, C. & Lopez, V. (2017). *Paso del Norte Region Diabetes Asset Scan 2017*. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation.

[https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/cchi/assets/docs/Diabetes-Report-and-Asset- Scan-IHL-Dec-2017.pdf](https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/cchi/assets/docs/Diabetes-Report-and-Asset-Scan-IHL-Dec-2017.pdf)

## CURRICULUM DESIGN PROJECTS

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Duarte, M., **Ruiz, S.** & Burgos, X. (2022). UTEP Diabetes Awareness Program: Curriculum Design, Implementation, and Evaluation. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation Disease Prevention & Management.

**Ruiz, S.** & Paat, Y.-F. (2021-2024). Nutrition curricula design and implementation. Healthy Families Healthy Kids Initiative.

**Ruiz, S.**, & Perez, D.A. (2020). Sun City Diabetes Education Program curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation. American Diabetes Association Accreditation.

**Ruiz, S.**, Dorgo, S., & Whigham L. (2017). Golden Age cooking program curriculum design, implementation, & evaluation. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation Healthy Eating and Active Living Initiative.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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2019-present

Founder/Registered Dietitian  
Sun City Dietitians LLC, El Paso, TX

- Manage an American Diabetes Association (ADA) Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) accredited program.
- Develop nutrition clinic policies and procedures.
- Create medical nutrition therapy (MNT) protocols.
- Design evidence-based nutrition curricula.
- Mentor dietetic and public health students.
- Manage clinical and non-clinical nutrition teams.
- Handle specialty cases including gastrointestinal (GI), type1 diabetes, bariatric surgery, and high-risk pregnancies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present program evaluations of nutrition programs at local and national conferences.</li> <li>• Conduct presentations to medical residents on nutrition-related topics and evidence-based practices.</li> <li>• Collaborate and train local community programs on evidence-based nutrition programs, such as staff training on the Sabrosa Vida cooking curriculum.</li> </ul>
2017-present	<p>Certified Insulin Pump Product Trainer Tandem Diabetes, OmniPod (Insulet Corp), &amp; Medtronic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate and place insulin infusion sets.</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate patients using continuous monitoring devices.</li> <li>• Collaborate with endocrinologists to apply advanced diabetes care to patients (e.g., insulin titrations).</li> <li>• Educate diabetes care providers on diabetes-related technologies.</li> </ul>
2016-2019	<p>Registered Dietitian/Certified Diabetes Educator-PRN El Paso Children's Hospital, El Paso, TX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided diabetes education to youth and their families.</li> <li>• Developed policies and procedures for the ADA pediatric program.</li> <li>• Developed nutrition curricula for the ADA pediatric program.</li> <li>• Conducted in-services to nursing staff on insulin administration and treatment of hypoglycemia.</li> </ul>
2016	<p>Clinical Outpatient Registered Dietitian Caduceus Healthcare, Fort Bliss, TX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided medical nutrition therapy to military personnel.</li> <li>• Provided sports nutrition and dietary supplement education to military personnel.</li> </ul>
2014-2016	<p>Clinical Outpatient Registered Dietitian University Medical Center, El Paso, TX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided medical nutrition therapy to pediatric-adult populations.</li> <li>• Provided DSME to pediatric-adult populations.</li> <li>• Presented to medical residents on nutrition-related topics and evidence-based practices.</li> </ul>
2013-2017	<p>EatWell! El Paso Dietitian Consultant City of El Paso Public Health Department, El Paso, TX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted nutrient analysis on local restaurant menus.</li> <li>• Collaborated with local chefs to modify, revise, and tailor healthier menus for children.</li> </ul>

**RMENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE**

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2024	American Society for Nutrition Speed Mentoring Mentor-Chicago, IL◇ <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addressed graduate and doctoral student’s questions regarding career opportunities after graduation regarding interviewing, mentorship and applied research methods.</li></ul>
2022	Paso del Norte SOPHE Program Mentor* <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addressed student’s questions regarding how to select a specialty area within public health.</li><li>• Provided students with potential resources to advance their careers in public health.</li></ul>
2022	American Society for Nutrition Speed Mentoring Mentor-Virtual◇ <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addressed graduate and doctoral student’s questions regarding career opportunities after graduation regarding interviewing, mentorship and applied research methods.</li></ul>

\* Local, ◇ National

**STUDENTS MENTORED**

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2024-present	Derick Martinez Master of Science in Family and Consumer Sciences New Mexico State University Thesis: Assessing the effects of Low Energy Availability (LEA) on health and athletic outcomes in collegiate female athletes
2024	Christian Carbajal Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso ASPHN Health Equity Internship/Fellowship Program Project: Diabetes Awareness Training Program for Community Outreach
2024	Delina Wilkerson Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Project: Diabetes Awareness Training Program for Community Outreach
2023	Danielle Chaparro Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Project: Diabetes Awareness Training Program for Community Outreach



2023	Ana Jasso Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Project: Healthier Snacking Options for Adolescents
2022	Kathryn Caputo Doctor of Occupational Therapy Baylor University Project: Improving Quality of Life through DSMES
2022	Tandra Ghosh Master of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Teaching Assistant for Applied Culinary Nutrition & Sports Nutrition
2022-2025	Graciela Urueta Master of Applied Nutrition University of New England Dietetic Intern  Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Project: On the Road to Healthy Mealtimes
2022-2025	Damaris Aguilar Master of Applied Nutrition University of New England Dietetic Intern  Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Project: Including your Child in Meal Preparation to Decrease Selective Eating Among Children with Failure to Thrive
2022	Karmin Jurado Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso ASPHN Health Equity Internship/Fellowship Program Project: Promoting Health and Nutrition Pre-pregnancy, During Pregnancy, and Post-Pregnancy
2022	Savannah Pantoja Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Project: Mealtime Routines and Rituals

2022	Rosalie Diaz Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Project: Building Healthier Adolescents for the Future
2022	Gabriela Portillo Bachelor of Public Health The University of Texas at El Paso Project: Portion Tellers for Adolescents

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND AWARDS

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2025	Miner Trailblazer Business Award*
2025	SOPHE M. Elaine Auld Horizon Award◇
2023-present	Research Committee Member of Diabetes Dietetic Practice Group◇
2022-present	Society for Public Health Education Member◇
2022-present	American Society for Nutrition◇
2022	Paso del Norte Health Foundation Diabetes Champion*
2021-present	Advisory Committee Member of Healthy Family/Kids Initiative*
2020-present	El Paso and Southern New Mexico Diabetes Alliance Member*
2020-2021	Chair of The Diabetes Alliance (formerly Unidos for Diabetes)*
2020-present	Paso del Norte Health Information Exchange-Data Group*
2020-present	Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialist Member◇
2020	UTEP Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Ph.D. Candidacy Award*
2013-present	Texas Academy of Nutrition Member•
2013-present	Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Member◇

\* Local, • State, ◇ National

## PUBLIC SPEAKING EXPERIENCE

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2025	FACES of Diabetes Symposium
2023	Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics – El Paso Symposium

2021	New Mexico State University – Registered Dietitian Boot Camp
2019	“Vestido Rojo” from the American Heart Association
2018	West Texas Nutrition Spring Symposium
2017	FACES of Diabetes Symposium
2017	Texas Tech Pediatric Endocrinology School Nurse Conference
2016	Socorro Independent School District Staff Conference
2014	El Paso Association of Pharmacy Symposium
2014	FACES of Diabetes Symposium

#### PEER REVIEWER

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2023-2024	Handout Committee Member of Diabetes Dietetic Practice Group
2020-present	Health Promotion Practice Journal
2022-present	Nutrition and Diabetes Journal

#### SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

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2025-present	Southern New Mexico Diabetes Outreach Board Member
2021-present	Paso del Norte Health Foundation: Now What Diabetes Campaign Content Developer