

# Transforming Vision into Action Award, 2018

**T**HE COUNCIL ON FUTURE Practice's Transforming Vision into Action Award is given in recognition of outstanding collaborative contributions of Academy members and their teams. The purpose of this award is to recognize innovative programs or products that transform a vision into nutrition and dietetics practice and/or education with outcomes relevant to the future.

The Council on Future Practice is pleased to announce that the project titled "*Lao-American Nutrition Institute: Nutrition Education that Changes Lives*" was selected as the 2018 Transforming Vision into Action Award. The project was submitted by Joanna Cummings, MS, RD, CNSC, from Oregon Health & Science University.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

"*Lao-American Nutrition Institute: Nutrition Education that Changes Lives*" describes an innovative nutrition education campus and curriculum in Vientiane, Lao PDR, that was established through a collaborative partnership between the Lao Ministry of Health, Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), and the US government. The Lao-American Nutrition Institute (LANI) addresses the need for capacity-building in nutrition education at the individual, organizational, and governmental levels in Lao PDR, a developing country where malnutrition affects nearly 40% of children under the age of 5 years. Funding was provided by the US government for the construction of the buildings. The OHSU Foundation, Bangkok Dusit Medical Systems (BDMS), and private philanthropists supported the curriculum development and clinical nutrition education program.

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Prior to 2017, nutrition education, nutrition intervention, and nutrition support did not exist in Lao PDR. In its first year, the LANI graduated 12 clinical nutrition specialists working at seven hospitals in four provinces in the country. Each of these graduates provides nutrition support, intervention, and education on a daily basis to an average of 11 patients; a cumulative 2,600 patients monthly. Nutrition specialists are part of inter-professional health care teams that treat patients of all ages, from neonates through elderly people, and in all wards, from outpatient clinics to intensive care units. In addition, the nutrition specialists share their knowledge with their colleagues.

Coursework begins with basic nutrition education or "Fundamentals of Nutrition" and quickly builds on this foundation to cover nutrition through the lifecycle, acute/chronic and communicable/noncommunicable diseases, physiology, nutrition-focused physical exam, and maternal and infant nutrition. The final 2 months of course work focus on medical nutrition therapy, addressing specific needs of individual patients and their disease. Each student presents two patient case studies as their capstone project before graduation. The case study presentations are open to all hospital physicians, nurses, administrators, government staff, international workers, nongovernmental organizations, and the general public to attend. Upon graduation, students use a peer-reviewed nutrition resource website, [www.lani-online.org](http://www.lani-online.org), to access nutritional job reference material, recently published articles that have been translated in the Lao language, infographic education material, and ongoing educational modules to support continued learning and development.

The LANI campus will open in the first quarter of 2019 and will house

student-centered active-learning studios, simulation labs, research labs, a nutrition-focused library, demonstration and research kitchens, clinical facilities, and demonstration gardens highlighting innovative farming techniques. In addition, the LANI will promote a collaborative environment for the multi-sectoral community to pool resources and provide education on farming techniques, water and sanitation, and environmental concerns.

The vision for LANI is that it will benefit Lao for generations to come and also offer the opportunity for dietitians and nutritionists to help build nutritional knowledge capacity and expand their cultural competency. In addition, the Institute hopes to act as a template to be adapted and scaled for use in other developing countries.

## Team Members on the Project

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