The American Dietetic Association, the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals, will change its name effective January 2012 to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The announcement of the name change was made September 24, by ADA President Sylvia Escott-Stump, MA, RD, LDN, at the Opening Session of the 2011 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo in San Diego, Calif.

“ADA has been in existence since 1917, after working to feed the troops healthfully during World War I. Protecting the nutritional health of our citizens is the highest priority of ADA. Consumer confusion about where to find the most qualified nutrition expert has led to unfortunate consequences and added expense,” Escott-Stump says. “The name Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics promotes the strong science background and expertise of our members, primarily registered dietitians. Nutrition science underpins wellness, prevention and treatment.”

“An academy is ‘a society of learned persons organized to advance science.’ This term describes our organization and immediately emphasizes the educational strength of our advice and expertise,” says Escott-Stump. “Adding ‘nutrition’ communicates our dedication to improving the nation’s health. Keeping ‘dietetics’ supports our history as a food and science-based profession. Thus, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics quickly and accurately communicates our identity—who we are and what we do.”

In 2010, ADA’s Board of Directors announced it was considering a name change. Surveys were conducted to solicit member recommendations and a work group was convened to study the issue further. Members, staff and the Board of Directors spent more than a year deliberating on a name that best reflects the science-based expertise of registered dietitians, who comprise the majority of members, in the areas of treatment and wellness alike.

The Academy’s award-winning website will remain www.eatright.org, and the colorful Eat Right logo will stay a part of the Academy’s graphic identity.

“In addition to increasing external awareness of our mission, vision and goals, changing our organization’s name will have an important effect internally, for each of us,” says Escott-Stump. “Do we possess the self awareness to adapt to an organizational name that draws upon where we have been, and projects forward a vision for where are and where we want to be? Of course I believe the answer to be yes.”

“The American Dietetic Association served us—and served the health of the public—for nearly 100 years,” says Escott-Stump. “I hope every member will now draw upon the strengths and values that have defined us since 1917, be aware of the universe of opportunities that await us, and each in our own way go forward and show the world what it means to be the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.”