

2015

Dental Hygiene

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Recommended Citation

Penney, Deb; Geis, Tena; and Brown, Lori, "Dental Hygiene" (2015). *Academic Program Histories*. Paper 16.
http://openspace.dmacc.edu/program_histories/16

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Dental Hygiene

Dental Hygiene was among the early health occupations programs at the college. It is an example of a program that was thoroughly researched with the assistance of accreditation agencies. Initially the program was supported with federal and state grant monies as an expansion of options in dental programming. The chair of the program had been hired several months before the program was launched and benefitted from the active involvement of a knowledgeable and dedicated advisory committee. Few college programs had the benefit of these factors during its development stage.

In February 1970, the college sent a letter to the Commission on Dental Education (CODA) of the American Dental Association, stating an interest in developing and offering a program in dental hygiene at DMACC. The Commission responded by encouraging the college to complete a feasibility study for its consideration.

In 1972, a consultant was contracted to conduct the study. A feasibility committee comprised of dental hygienists and dentists was appointed to assist the consultant with the study. It actively carried out its assignment, the study was completed and a report of the findings was presented to the Iowa Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

The DPI approved operating the program in 1972, based in part on its positive response to the feasibility study and offers of support from the dental community for the program. This encouraged the college to take the next steps to establish the program.

The American Dental Association Commission on Dental Education granted "accreditation eligible" status to the program in August 1973, following submission of their regional consultant's positive report. With the help of the DPI and the consultant, a grant request was prepared and submitted to the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) to fund a grant to offset some of the startup costs of the program. The request was awarded to the College through a training grant for \$156,000 to fund salaries, equipment and supplies for FY 1975 and 1976.

Barbara Johanningsmeier, RDH, was selected as the program chair in January of 1974. She was the former Program Chair of the Dental Hygiene Program at Ferris State College in Big Rapids, Michigan. Ms. Johanningsmeier immediately started carrying out the tasks that were required to develop, equip and staff the program, which would be a two-year, five-semester program, including a summer term. Many of the members of the earlier feasibility committee were appointed to the program advisory committee, which was chaired by David Llewelyn, DDS, who also served as an adjunct clinical faculty member from the program's inception until 2011.

Shortly before Ms. Johanningsmeier's arrival, the college began planning a 15,000 sq. ft. addition to the Ankeny Campus Health Building, which would provide additional classroom, clinical, and office space for the dental assistant and the proposed dental hygiene program, including a lab and a dental clinic with 12 fully equipped clinical teaching units. The addition was to be operational by September 1974.

In the summer of 1974 Jane Jinkinson RDH and Leone Young RDH joined the program as faculty members.

The first 14 students were selected and enrolled in the fall term of 1974 with 12 students graduating from the two-year program in the summer of 1976. The program continued to admit 12 students each fall term.

In 1977 the program received “conditional approval” by the Council on Dental Accreditation. This accreditation was not granted until a program had graduated its first class.

Soon after the program began, the need for continuing education for all dental professionals (dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants) was identified by the advisory committee. The faculty of the dental assistant and dental hygiene programs and advisory committees of the Dental Department’s programs requested that the College apply for a grant to fund the development of curriculum and compensate instructors to address the need for hands-on experience for those practicing in the field to remain current on materials, procedures, and regulations. The grant was funded.

Carol Coates, RDH, was employed as a consultant to implement the grant and worked closely with the DMACC Dental faculty to develop the necessary continuing education modules and publicize the availability of the classes and their content. The target geographic area was the 11 counties in the college district, although ultimately the classes included dental professionals throughout the state. Faculty members Jinkinson, Young, and Diane Schroder, CDA and several dentists mostly from the program advisory committees, developed and taught the modules. They also conducted seminars, assisted by dental experts in different dental specialties. The continuing education units were approved by the ADA, ADHA and ADAA for credits toward renewal of license/certification.

In 1986, a dental consultant assisted the faculty and advisory committee in planning for modernization of the dental facility. The three-phase project was completed over seven years and was managed by Sandra Leggett, RDH, MA, program chair at that time. It was funded with an Iowa State Department of Education modernization grant for \$118,088, supplemented with an equal dollar match from the college. As a result of the remodeling, four more clinical teaching units were added, and the student program capacity was increased to 20 students in the fall of 1990.

In the Fall of 2005, with the program under the direction of Deborah Penney, RDH, MS, a second update included Dentrix software, digital radiography, and new flooring, completed in December 2006. DMACC Systems Integration purchased and installed the computers. The approximate cost of this remodel was \$97,000. At this time, the student capacity was increased to 24 students.

In 2008, the Dental Materials Lab was remodeled to include adequate ventilation and new countertops. The cost was approximately \$90,000.

In the summer of 2011, the northwest part of the Clinic was remodeled. The original four clinical teaching units, the large darkroom, and the two adjacent x-ray exposure rooms were demolished and replaced with eight new fully equipped teaching units. Since all patient images had been converted to digital images in 2006, the room, which had been used to mount and evaluate dental films, was no longer needed, so it was converted into a central sterilization room, which considerably improved the traffic flow in the main clinic. A grant from Delta Dental of Iowa and donations from individuals provided the initial \$175,000, which was supplemented by DMACC to complete the project at a total cost of \$245,000.

The move to electronic patient records and digital x-ray imaging was probably the biggest challenge the program ever faced. All full-time and adjunct faculty attended additional training sessions scheduled in the evening, and the clinic manuals had to be rewritten for students. As the electronic records management software continues to be updated, training continues to be needed.

The program has been successful in renewing its accreditation status as “accredited without reporting” with CODA every seven years, with the most recent external accreditation site visit in October 2007. The next CODA site visit is scheduled to occur in July 2014.

Interest in DMACC’s Dental Hygiene program remains strong. According to the Admissions Department, over 500 students apply for the program each year and approximately 90 students are on the wait list with all requirements to start the program completed.

Since the program started in 1974, 100% of graduates have passed the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination and 99% of graduates have passed the regional practical board exam they elected to take. On the most recent Alumni Survey, 88% of respondents said they were able to find employment as a dental hygienist within two months of graduation. Additionally, employers reported that 98% would hire another DMACC dental hygiene graduate when a position in their office opened.

The Dental Hygiene Advisory Board continues to meet twice a year and provide support for the program in the following ways:

- Preparing students through course work and related experiential education for success in their dental hygiene careers;
- Providing for or advising on the selection of experiential opportunities for students;
- Providing and soliciting assistance from the dental and business community in fund raising for improvement;
- Providing or enlisting the expertise of individuals in the dental community to assist with development and evaluation of curriculum, student selection, and professional development for faculty, and
- Advocating on behalf of DMACC.

One member of the Advisory Board, Dr. Gary Amerman, has served on the Board since it was formed in 1976. Dr. Richard Hall has served as Board Chair since 1984.

DMACC’s Dental Hygiene Program continues its history of excellence, attracting highly effective faculty, offering students excellent experiences in the classroom and clinical facility, and providing the highest quality of dental hygiene care for the more than 2,500 active patients.