Welcome to the on-line information session for the Dental Hygiene Program at Austin Community College.

The purpose of this presentation is to provide you with information about the field of dental hygiene, introduce you to our program here at ACC, and discuss the Program application and admission process.
The objectives of this information session are to define and describe the field of dental hygiene and provide you with the program admissions requirements so that you can prepare a complete admissions application packet.

Objectives

Upon completion of the information session you should be able to:

- Define/describe dental hygiene
- List the requirements for consideration for enrollment to the Dental Hygiene Program
- Submit a complete admissions application packet
Further information about the content areas covered by this presentation can be found by accessing the menu listed on the left side of the Program web page.

You might find it helpful to write down your questions as they arise so that if they aren’t answered in the presentation you can see if the information is located within the Frequently Asked Questions section or have them available to ask a representative of the Office of Health Sciences Admissions.
A dentist by the name of Alfred Fones is often called the “father of dental hygiene” when in 1906 he trained his chairside assistant (and cousin) to clean teeth and perform other preventive treatments on children. He chose the name dental hygiene instead of dental nurse because his vision was to emphasize preventive education.

Current research is validating his vision by showing that the treatment and prevention of oral diseases is critical for the management of systemic problems like cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Thus the dental hygienist is about the job of identifying, treating, and preventing oral diseases for the overall well being of the patient.
Even though the field of dental hygiene has its roots in public education and the public health arena, 95% of today’s graduates work in the private practice setting. In the private practice setting the dental hygienist works in partnership with his/her dentist employer to meet the dental health care needs of their patients.

When considering the dental health care delivery team, dental hygienists are often confused with dental assistants. The confusion is understandable since dental hygienists and dental assistants do perform some similar functions such as obtaining dental radiographs.

A simplified way to compare the 2 fields is that a dental hygienist will typically be the one that cleans the patient’s teeth whereas the dental assistant is the one that is located chairside during a dental procedure passing materials and instruments to the dentist.

In the state of Texas both the dentist and the dental hygienist are required to complete accredited educational programs and be licensed to practice, whereas a dental assistant is not required to attend a formal educational program.
Dental hygienists utilize the dental hygiene process of care which consists of assessment activities like interviewing the patient about his/her medical history, documenting oral findings such as dental decay and gum disease, and taking dental x-rays.

What is dental hygiene?

- The roles and responsibilities of the dental hygienist include:
  - Gathering, reviewing, and monitoring patients’ medical and dental health histories
  - Performing head and neck cancer screenings
  - Obtaining and assessing dental x-rays
Based on the assessment findings the dental hygienist will develop a dental hygiene diagnosis and a corresponding treatment plan. Then he/she will implement the plan which almost always includes removing biofilm plaque and hard calculus from the teeth.
In addition to cleaning the patient’s teeth, the dental hygienist may apply therapeutic agents like specialized antibiotics and preventive agents like fluorides and dental sealants.

Throughout the process the dental hygienist is educating the patient on the conditions of his/her mouth, the treatment needed, and the related necessary maintenance and preventive measures.
As mentioned earlier, 95% of dental hygiene graduates choose to work in the small business setting of dentistry referred to as private practice.

Additional settings include hospitals and special care facilities, public health, and related business areas like corporate sales. An important employment setting that needs experienced dental hygienists is the category of dental hygiene education.

Job prospects are expected to remain excellent as dental hygiene continues to rank among the fastest growing occupations. More information about the career can be accessed through the menu listed on the left side of the Program web page and the link to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook.
With the encouragement and some financial assistance of the local dental society, the Dental Hygiene Program at ACC opened its doors in the fall of 2003.

Classroom activities and clinical training all occur on the Eastview Campus. Since dentistry is a small business profession, dental hygiene students are not sent off-campus to clinical sites like let’s say the nursing students. Instead our patient care experience occurs on campus in a well equipped 16-chair dental clinic.

Individuals from the public agree to serve as patients for our students and in turn they receive quality care supervised by licensed dentists and dental hygienists.
The Department of Dental Hygiene is staffed by experts in the field of dentistry and dental hygiene and supported by excellent administrative staff.

Our mission is all about the success of the individual. We have designed a learning environment focused on developing quality entry-level competent dental health care providers.
To date we are successfully demonstrating our mission with program outcomes that meet and more often exceed the national and state averages.

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Program Accreditation

- Our dental hygiene program is accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA CODA)
  - The Program was granted the status of approval without reporting requirements in 2005. The next full site review will occur in 2012.

The process of college and program accreditation serves many functions one of which is to assure a quality program. The Dental Hygiene Program at ACC meets college, state, and national requirements.

At the national level, the accrediting body is the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation. The scope of the Commission encompasses dental programs, advanced dental programs, and allied dental education like dental hygiene.
The dental hygiene educational standards have been developed to protect the public welfare by ensuring quality and continuous improvement of dental hygiene education. You may obtain a copy of the Accreditation Standards for Dental Hygiene Education Programs and/or submit your comments and complaints by contacting the Commission.
In order to practice dental hygiene you have to obtain a license. To be eligible for a license you need to attend and graduate from an accredited program like the one we have at ACC.

ACC offers the Associate of Applied Science degree which is an entry-level degree for the profession. There are also bachelors entry level programs. AAS and BS degree programs both have to meet the same accreditation standards so the core 2 years are basically the same. The BS degree however will require additional general education courses such the second semester of English composition. The BS degree offers no real advantage for the job in private practice. It is however required for some of the job positions in corporate sales, public health, and teaching.

In addition to successfully completing a program of study, you will also have to pass a couple of exams.

In the spring of the last year in your dental hygiene program you will take a written exam called the Dental Hygiene National Board. It tests the theory part of dental hygiene through case studies and multiple choice questions. Once you pass that exam you are considered a Registered Dental Hygienist.

Then just about the time of graduation you will take a clinical examination. ACC students participate in the exam provided by the Western Regional Examining Board and administered at the 3 dental schools in the state of Texas. For this exam you will be required to produce diagnostic dental radiographs, perform an assessment and a periodontal scaling (or teeth cleaning) for a patient you provide.

Lastly you are required to take an exam on the rules and regulations that govern the practice of dentistry in Texas.

Once that’s done you submit your proof of graduation, proof of passing the National Board, proof of passing WREB, and submit your licensing fee and the State Board of Dental Examiners issues you a license to practice dental hygiene.
Every health care program requires that the students possess skills in 5 basic areas: observation, communication, motor, intellectual, and behavioral and social attributes. The skill level in these areas will vary depending on which program of study you are considering.
A motor skill typically refers to doing something with a part of your body, like using your hand to grasp a hammer. A gross motor skill refers to large muscle movements.

Dental hygiene is one of the professions that requires fine motor skills with both hands. We use small dental instruments below the patient’s gum line and use our finger pads to feel vibrations through the instrument handle.

In addition to using our sense of touch, we need to be able to see the various colored tissues in the mouth, read small markings on instruments, and employ depth perception.

Because we are in a primary health care role, we need to be able to relate to the patient, interpret information provided by the patient, and work effectively as a team-member.
You will find more information about the technical standards required to be a successful dental hygiene student on the Program web page under the menu item “Program Requirements”.

www.austincc.edu/health/dhyg

The Office for Students with Disabilities is available to provide you with assistance evaluating how the technical standards relate to you.
Dental hygiene is a profession that marries being people-focused with lots of science. There is evidence that individuals that like the biological science courses have the potential to successfully complete the dental hygiene program of study. So if you like courses like anatomy and physiology, dental hygiene may be a good match for you.
The study of dental hygiene is challenging and rewarding. Even for the experienced dental assistant, your first year of study is similar to learning a new language. Additionally, material is presented at a fast pace.

In the clinical environment, learning new hand skills can be frustrating. For a multiple-choice test, you can study your classroom materials and read the textbook to prepare for the exam. Whereas learning a new hand skill requires a lot of repetition, humility, and patience.

The nature of dental hygiene care requires blocks of clinical instruction. Therefore, students need to expect to spend basically 4 days on campus per week and plan that their days will be scheduled from 8am till 5pm.

A student that resides within the ACC taxing district can expect to spend somewhere around $9,000-$10,000 to complete the dental hygiene program. That estimate does not include the costs of the required prerequisite courses, but it does include the costs of books, materials, uniforms, dental instruments, and the fees for the exams like the National Board and the WREB clinical.

The College is committed to keeping the costs as reasonable as possible. One way that is done is assigning an equipment lease/use fee for each clinical course. It is not uncommon for a dental hygiene student to be required to purchase something like a dental handpiece that costs $600. Upon graduation, the handpiece ends up in a closet because the hygienist will go to work for a dentist-employer that provides the necessary handpieces. Based on that reality, the Department of Dental Hygiene has purchased the handpieces for the students to borrow. The corresponding equipment lease/use fee provides a portion of the funds needed to maintain and replace the handpieces.
Other things to consider: continued

- For every one hour in lecture a student should expect to spend 2-3 hours in preparation and study time.

It is important to repeat here that the study of dental hygiene is challenging and rewarding. The successful completion of the program requires a significant time commitment which can take its toll on family and relationships.

Students often work in addition to attending school even though we encourage that work schedules be kept to a minimum. We don’t encourage students to go into debt however financial aid should be a serious consideration in order to allow the time to be successful. The Office of Financial Aid located on each campus can provide related information. For your further information, local dental groups have made several scholarships available to dental hygiene students once they complete their first year of study.
Ok – you want to submit your application for the program.

Visit with someone in the Office of Health Sciences Admissions to assist you with your planning and application process. They can provide you with information about immunizations, deadlines, etc.

Speaking of immunizations, like all of the health sciences programs start your immunizations early!

It can take up to 6 months to complete all immunizations and your program application is not considered complete until all immunizations are complete. If you need assistance go to the Health Sciences web site to obtain the immunization form, which lists the specific immunizations required by law. You can also find a listing of the community sites that can help you with these immunizations if you do not have a complete record and/or do not have health insurance.
Refer to the degree plan listed in the “Degrees and Accreditation” area of the Dental Hygiene Program web site. All of the required prerequisites need to be successfully completed by the February 1st application deadline. If a course is in progress then your application packet will not be considered qualified for consideration.

Your overall college grade point average needs to be at least a 2.0 on the 4-point scale to be considered for admission. We do not use that GPA in our selection process, rather we will look at the grades of your required prerequisite courses and any non-DHYG courses you have successfully completed by the February 1st deadline.

Since dental hygiene is a desirable career, there is stiff competition for the 18 positions selected each year. A competitive GPA for the required prerequisites state-wide is about 3.5. At ACC it has been edging up such that the majority of the 18 selected have straight A’s in these courses. We hasten to say that this does not mean that the entering students are straight A students but rather that they have created competitive applications usually by retaking a course to obtain a higher grade. For example, a C grade is a very acceptable grade for Introduction to Microbiology however it is not competitive. So if the applicant retakes the course, the Department of Dental Hygiene Admissions Committee will accept the higher grade in the selection process.

Before you begin retaking lots of courses, you need to counsel with an ACC advisor so that you understand what that means in terms of costs and related state requirements.
The criminal background check is not a part of the admission's selection process however, it is a condition of enrollment for all health sciences students. So when a student is offered admission to the Program, it is at that time he/she will be asked to complete the criminal background check process in addition to some other requirements like the CPR course.

You probably noticed at the beginning of this information session the title page also has tabs for you to visit on this topic along with tabs for immunizations, and student services.
Our class size is 18 students in order to match the size of our clinic. The enrollment process is selective and applicants compete against those in that year’s applicant pool. So each year it is a new competitive process.

When a class enrolls in the fall, that group basically moves through the Program together. Dental hygiene is what we refer to as a lock-step curriculum, which means the courses in one semester serve as the prerequisites for the next semester. For example in the fall of the first year the students take a preclinic course where they learn how to use their instruments on mannequins and on each other. Then in the spring they move into the Clinic I course where they provide care to basically healthy adults patients. In the fall of the 2nd year the Clinic II course requires the students to provide treatment for more medically compromised patients with more extensive dental hygiene needs. So by the last semester, Clinic III requires treatment of advanced dental hygiene cases.

So in addition to enrolling only one class per year, there is no way to hurry up the clinical educational process.
Each Program application is thoroughly reviewed and a corresponding ranking score is created. The ranking score is grade driven and is a combination of the prerequisite GPA and the consideration of the completion of the non-DHYG courses in the degree plan.

It will be helpful to look at a copy of the ranking worksheet used to counsel prospective students.

1st we calculate a GPA for the required prerequisites
2nd we multiple that GPA by 200
3rd we award 20 bonus points for each non-DHYG course successfully completed by February 1st, like Introduction to Sociology
4th we award grade recognition points for each non-DHYG course successfully completed, awarding 3 points for each A; 2 points for each B; and 1 point for each C grade
5th we award miscellaneous bonus points. An example here is where, if an applicant applied last year and was qualified but not selected then he/she would be awarded 10 bonus points for reapplying.

As an example, let’s say the applicant is minimally qualified with grades of C in each of his/her required prerequisite courses; has not completed any of the non-DHYG courses, and is not eligible for any additional bonus points.

The ranking score for the application would be (2.0 GPA X 200) + 0 bonus points = 400

Then let’s take the applicant that obtained A grades in all of his/her required prerequisite courses; has completed all of the non-DHYG courses with A grades and is not eligible for any additional bonus points.

The ranking score for the application would be (4.0 GPA X 800)+ (6 X 20 bonus points) + (6 X 3 grade recognition points) = 938

With the trend in our applicant pool, it is reasonable to expect that a score of around 900 will be considered competitive.
Once all the ranking scores have been computed, they are listed in rank order. The top 18 are offered admission to the Program. Approximately the next 10 are placed on an alternate list. It is common for applicants to apply to multiple programs. Typically 2-3 persons each year reject their ACC offer in order to attend another Program. When that happens we contact someone on the alternate list to fill the opened position.

Initial offers for admission are offered in writing from the Department Chair and will not be communicated over the telephone or Email. Letters have typically been going out within the first 2 weeks in April. So it is important that you keep your contact information current with the Office of Health Sciences Admissions.
Usually the notification that the criminal background check requirements have been met is received in early July. After that occurs then the Department Chair and Clinic Coordinator begin sending a series of orientation emails to the new DH 1 entering class. An on-campus orientation is usually scheduled the week before the fall semester begins.
The College offers multiple resources via the web site, especially in terms of the Student Support, & Success Systems.

Keep in mind the tab with the orientation to the Student Support, & Success Systems provided with this information session as well.
Additional resources you may find helpful are the professional links included on the Program web site, like the American Dental Hygiene Association. If you click on their Education and Careers links you can get to a page that will let you see the information about the 21 dental hygiene programs in the state of Texas with links to their respective college or university.
We are hopeful that this on-line session met your information needs.

Understanding that you may need clarification of some of the information presented or have additional questions, you are encouraged to contact the Office of Health Sciences Admissions. If the Health Sciences Admissions staff are unable to answer your questions you will be referred to the Department of Dental Hygiene for further academic counseling.
Other ways to manage your questions can be accomplished by using the “Frequently Asked Questions” page on the Program web site. If you would like to see the teaching and clinic in action, volunteer to serve as a patient for a dental hygiene student. It may take them a long time to clean your teeth, since we check every step along the way but be assured that you will receive quality care.
In closing, thank you for considering Austin Community College and our Dental Hygiene Program.

We offer our best wishes as you plan your future.