



NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM PROPOSAL

Institution: Southeast Community College (SCC)

Program: Dental Hygiene

Award: Associate of Applied Science (AAS)

Mode of Delivery: Face-to-face on the Lincoln campus; hybrid

Institution’s Existing Degree(s) in Same or Similar Discipline: Dental Assisting: AAS and Diploma

Proposal Received by Commission: November 26, 2024

Proposed Start Date: Fall 2026

Description

The proposed program would prepare students to work as dental hygienists who assess, diagnose, plan, implement, evaluate, and document treatment for prevention, intervention, and control of oral diseases (versus dental assistants who assist practitioners, prepare patients, and provide administrative support, among many duties). The program would provide students with the requirements to successfully complete the written National Board of Dental Hygiene Examination and complete regional and state clinical board examinations for professional licensure.

SCC would seek programmatic accreditation from the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). CODA requires program delivery to be a combination of classroom/online didactic instruction with laboratory practice and clinical experiences to ensure students meet competencies and are well-prepared for the workforce.

The proposed program would require 66.5 credit hours: 48.5 hours in the dental hygiene core (all new courses), 17 hours of general education, and one hour of College Success. See page 4 for the curriculum.

Consistent with Institutional Role and Mission? YES NO

Consistent with Statewide Comprehensive Plan? YES NO

REVIEW CRITERIA

A. Need for the Program

High-----Low
√

SCC provided information from the Lightcast Q2 2024 Data Set to demonstrate need. In the SCC service area, there has been a 32.1% growth in dental hygiene jobs between 2020 and 2024—from 365 jobs in 2020 to 482 in 2024. Lightcast also reported that the 365 jobs posted in 2020 averaged a salary of approximately \$88,432.

The Nebraska Department of Labor reported 28 job openings on December 29, 2024, with eight candidates available. Their projection for annual openings in Nebraska from 2022 to 2032 is 103.

In the “2023 Status of the Nebraska Healthcare Workforce Report” the number of licensed dental hygienists in the state decreased in 2023 to 1,270 from 1,292 in 2021, although that figure was greater than the 2017 number of 1,220. The report also showed 16 counties with no dental hygienists. There were 24 counties with no dentists. Combining these figures, there were 11 counties with neither a dentist nor a dental hygienist. Five of these counties were in the Sand Hills.

To become a registered dental hygienist (RDH) in Nebraska, state statutes require a person to have passed the licensure examination given by the Joint Commission on National Board Dental Hygiene Examinations with a score of 75 or above; passed the practical examination administered by the Central Regional Dental Testing Services with a score of 75 or above, and passed the state’s jurisprudence examination with a score of 75 or above. An RDH license is required to practice in a dental office or clinic in Nebraska.

The need for dental hygienists exceeds the number of students graduating from Nebraska programs (see Section B).

B. Demand for the Program

High-----Low
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The proposal cites Gray & Associates’ evaluation of student interest in a dental hygiene program. The program placed in the 97th percentile ranking of student demand. SCC states that the program would appeal to high school graduates as well as adult learners seeking to reskill or upskill in the industry.

SCC reports that the Health Sciences Division has had increasing inquiries for a dental hygiene program over the past five years. In 2023-2024 the division had 53 inquiries from prospective students interested in an associate degree in dental hygiene.

SCC anticipates beginning with 10 students in year two (the first year of enrollments), adding an additional 24 students in year three, and 14 more students in year four.

Although the projected enrollments are high, the number of inquiries regarding a dental hygienist program supports student demand.

C. Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication

High-----Low
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There are two AAS programs in dental hygiene in Nebraska and one BS degree. In 2022-23 Central Community College awarded 15 associate degrees, Western Nebraska Community College awarded three AAS degrees, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center awarded 24 BS degrees, for a total of 42 degrees. In 2021-22 there were 34 degrees granted, in 2020-21 there were 38 degrees, and in 2019-20 40 degrees were awarded.

Although there are three programs in the state, one is a baccalaureate degree. Even with the BS program included, the institutions are not producing enough graduates to meet the demand (see Section A). In addition, the proposal states that CCC and UNMC routinely have more applicants than they are able to accommodate. Consequently, the proposed program would not be an unnecessary duplication.

D. Resources: Faculty/Staff

High-----Low
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SCC states that they have no faculty qualified to teach in a dental hygiene program. The college would conduct a national search initially for a program director who meets the Commission on Dental Accreditation requirements.

The director would need to be hired one year prior to student enrollment. At least one additional faculty member would be hired prior to initiating the program. Two to three adjuncts would also be needed as the program moves into its second year and beyond. The Health Science Division would provide support for staffing and administrative oversight.

The proposal included a timeline for the accreditation process, starting in spring/summer 2025 and ending in spring 2027 with the college’s first report to CODA.

SCC reports that they have verbal commitments for clinical placements within dental offices for clinical rotations from over twenty-five dentists in the SCC 15 county service area. Formal affiliation agreements would need to be signed to ensure placement of accepted students prior to enrolling and the start of the program in 2026. The agreements would require accreditation review and approval.

E. Resources: Physical Facilities/Equipment

High-----Low				
	√			

SCC has a dental assisting program with a dental lab in the Health Sciences building on the Lincoln campus. The lab has the capacity for 24 students in the skills lab and 16 students in the operatory lab (2 per chair) that would be shared with the proposed dental hygiene program. The programs would coordinate scheduling to maximize utilization of the labs for students from both programs.

The didactic portion of the program would be delivered in an online/hybrid format. The Health Sciences building has eight engaged learning classrooms with seating for up to 30 students, which would provide enough space for a cohort of 20 dental hygiene students.

The program would require only minor equipment purchases since most of the major durable equipment is already installed in the dental lab. However, students would have fees of about \$6,900 for instrument kits, uniforms, books, etc.

F. Resources: Library/Information Access

Acceptable				
yes	√		no	

SCC reports that sufficient library staff, library resources, and information technology resources are in place at all campus locations to support the students and program. The program would utilize the current student services advising and support staff without the need to increase staffing.

G. Budget

**PROJECTED COSTS AND ANTICIPATED REVENUES FOR THE FIRST FIVE YEARS
As reported by SCC**

PROJECTED COSTS		ANTICIPATED REVENUES	
Faculty and Staff ¹	\$1,030,487	Reallocation of existing funds ²	\$176,250
General Operating	\$341,000	New State Funds	
Equipment	\$58,000	New Local Funds	
Initial Accreditation	\$21,850	Tuition and Fees ³	\$622,908
Annual Accreditation	\$10,700	Other: Perkins funds	\$41,000
Five-Year TOTAL	\$1,455,237	Five-Year TOTAL	\$840,158

¹ One full-time faculty/program director in year one, a second faculty member in year two, and adjuncts in years two through five.

² \$176,250 of internal funds.

³Based on 10 students in year two, 34 students in year two, and 48 students in years four and five; taking 33 credit hours per year at \$127 per credit hour with a 3% increase annually in tuition and fees (approximately \$139 in year five).

Committee Recommendation: That the proposal be forwarded to the full Commission without a recommendation pending further details on revenues.

First Program Review: Due June 30, 2025 (for this reporting year only, report solely on the progress of accreditation)

Dental Hygiene, AAS

Course Number	Course Name	Credit Hours
ACFS 1015	Success@SCC	1.0
DENH 1000	Dental Hygiene Clinical 1: Pre-Clinic	4.0
DENH 1100	Dental Radiography	2.5
DENH 1200	Head & Neck Anatomy	2.0
DENH 1300	Dental Hygiene 1	3.0
DENH 1400	Dental Materials	2.0
DENH 1500	Dental Hygiene Clinical 2	4.0
DENH 1600	Dental Pathology	3.0
DENH 1700	Dental Hygiene 2	3.0
DENH 1800	Pharmacology for the Dental Hygienists	3.0
DENH 1900	Advanced Dental Pathology	2.5
DENH 2000	Dental Hygiene Clinical 3	5.0
DENH 2100	Dental Hygiene 3	3.0
DENH 2200	Advanced Dental Hygiene	2.0
DENH 2300	Dental Specialties	1.5
DENH 2400	Dental Hygiene Professions	2.0
DENH 2500	Dental Hygiene Clinical 4	6.0
	Dental Hygiene Core	48.5
	General Education Core	17.0
	Total Credit Hours	66.5