

ALLIED HEALTH DEPARTMENT/DENTAL ASSISTING PROGRAM DEPARTMENT & PROGRAM REVIEW (2023-2024)

To better align academic and operational reviews, Academic Program Reviews (APR) and Administrative Unit Reviews (AUR) are now known as Department & Program Reviews (DPR).

Section 1: Report on Previous Goals & Requests

What goals did you set in your last APR/DPR? What requests did you make? Briefly explain the status and/or outcome of these goals and requests.

The Dental Assisting (DA) program set two new goals at the last Academic Program Review.

1. “Enhancing teaching and learning in the dental assisting laboratory by accommodating the appropriate number of students for the learning space, and thereby, facilitating quality student learning.” This was thought to be accomplished by making the Dental Assisting cohort 16 students rather than the current 24 that are accepted each year. There was no change to be made by the college to reduce the number of students accepted into the DA program. However, this was accomplished through an unfortunate means, COVID-19. We believe fear during the COVID-19 pandemic played a role in the drastic reduction of students applying to the Dental Assisting program, as dentistry was shut down during that time due to aerosols that are generated during dental procedures.

Dentistry now has such a severe shortage of dental assistants, that our goal of reducing enrollment to 16 has been put aside in favor of being responsive to our dentist stakeholders. Our goal is to provide well educated and certified dental assistants to the dental community, and offer opportunity to students looking for a high wage career in health care.

Enrollment at the start of this year was 16 students, and with attrition for various reasons we now have 12 students. We are not sure how numbers will rebound as we move away from the COVID-19 years. However, as promotion of the career and program continue we hope it will rebound to the numbers during the 2021-2022 academic year.

2. The DA program requested the replacement of shelves in the Dental Assisting laboratory with cabinets that would give the lab (that we also use for patient treatment in Dental Clinics) a more professional appearance and reduce the anxiety noted by patients at seeing the skulls and other learning models. Through advocates such as our Dean, Julie Downing, and financial support from the Program Director of Licensed Massage Therapy, Alan Nunes, this was accomplished. The laboratory now looks very professional and patients are more at ease.

Section 2: Fulfilling Your Mission

What is your program or discipline mission statement, and how have you fulfilled this mission since your last APR/DPR?

The Dental Assisting program's mission is, "To empower students to achieve academic and career success through multifaceted approaches of delivering course content, hands-on learning, and service-learning experiences." Additionally, students earn the certifications necessary to provide safe patient care while realizing a professional income.

Since our last APR, the Dental Assisting program has met our goal to deliver course content through a multifaceted approach. The program has increased the number of courses offered in an online format. Meaning most of the didactic curriculum is now taught in an online format, with two courses being offered in hybrid format. The laboratory content is of course still hands-on learning taught in-person.

By delivering course content in a variety of modalities, it has allowed students to balance program course load with their other responsibilities such as work and family commitments, while accomplishing the accrediting body's requirement of 300 hours in dental offices, with less stress and pressure from previous years. This new format also allows students to be in dental offices during regular working hours and complete course requirements after hours at their preferred time.

Students are provided with service-learning opportunities through the Dental Clinic at COCC. In the clinic volunteer dentists provide needed dental services to community members who are experiencing financial hardship, with our students assisting the dentists and faculty providing direction to students. This has been a win-win-win opportunity, with DA students getting hands-on experience in patient care, volunteer dentists earning continuing education (CE) credits, and patients receiving needed dental care. This has been a life-changing opportunity for the underserved who cannot afford the high cost of dental care, and it has been rewarding for all dental providers and the students involved, both personally and professionally. Last year the Dental Clinic at COCC provided over \$83,000 worth of dental services to low-income patients.

Since our initial APR in 2019, the Dental Assisting program has included two additional certificates that students can earn while in the program. These are Retraction Cord Placement and Soft Denture Relines. Students can now graduate with eight certifications! These State and National certifications demonstrate that COCC's graduates are able to provide safe and efficient patient care, and provide them with the ability to begin earning wages at the highest rates in the field.

The employment rate of graduates is usually 100% of those seeking a career as a Dental Assistant. Some graduates continue their education and become Dental Hygienists or Dentists.

In prior years new graduates started their careers at \$20 per hour. Graduates' starting wages are now between \$25-\$27 and increase from there with experience in the field.

Students are empowered and reaching their goals to find a fulfilling career and a professional income.

Section 3: College Goals and Initiatives

How has your program or discipline participated in fulfilling the College's plans and priorities, attaining campus-wide goals, or participating in broad initiatives (e.g., strategic plan state or grant initiatives) since your last APR/DPR?

The Dental Assisting program has demonstrated that it aligns with the College's mission, vision and values.

Students are empowered and reach their goals. They are achieving excellence and excelling in their chosen field as demonstrated by the awards of National and State certifications in Dental Assisting, and the wages students merit upon graduation.

Students are engaging in the community through service-learning in the Dental Clinic at COCC, and with patients and dental providers during 300 hours of Practicum experience in local dental offices.

Graduates are contributing meaningfully in this high-demand workforce as attested by the 100% hire-rate, and the high regard of program graduates by dentist stakeholders.

The Oregon Board of Dentistry and the Oregon Legislature have designated dental assisting as being a field in which there is a severe workforce shortage. The Dental Assisting program provides workforce development through the education, training, and certification of students who fill these high-demand positions.

In addition, due to the severe need of dental assistants, the goal of Workforce Development is being addressed by the Dental Assisting program through collaboration between faculty and high school students. Allied Health is fortunate enough to have an excellent Healthcare Outreach Coordinator, Jill Ridling, who recruits for our programs. Dental Assisting faculty partner with Jill to provide high school students from all over with hands-on experience in the dental lab. We have had very positive feedback from participants of these introduction to dental assisting offerings.

In addition, faculty attend and present at numerous venues in Central Oregon to promote dental assisting and the Dental Assisting program. Through these activities and collaborations, the Dental Assisting program has built and strengthened stakeholder partnerships.

Section 4: Diversity and Inclusion Insights

When you review Institutional Effectiveness data for this report, note that many dashboards include the ability to filter data by location, race or ethnicity, gender, Pell eligibility, veteran status, and other options. At COCC, we honor individual strengths and needs, celebrate different cultures and viewpoints, and strive for equity that addresses systemic injustices. As you review data that illustrates this rich diversity, what insights have you gained about your students and how you might help them achieve their goals? What are your area's strengths in terms of student equity? Challenges? How might your faculty learn more about any equity gaps represented in the data?

Pell Eligibility

The number of students entering the Dental Assisting program who are Pell eligible is increasing with many more students having some, or all, of their education covered by grants or scholarships.

In addition, the number of those who are receiving financial aid in the Dental Assisting program is increasing drastically when compared to all students at COCC.

Pell Eligibility by year

Academic Year	% of Students with Pell Eligibility At COCC	% of Students with Pell Eligibility in DA
2021-2022	47.92%	47.26%
2022-2023	43.25%	53.33%
2023-2024	45.12%	87.5%

The current academic year is not yet in Tableau, however the report submitted to the Commission on Dental Accreditation for this year shows 87.5% of this year’s cohort is receiving grants or scholarships with all or part of their educational costs covered.

Ethnicity BILAPOC Students

The percentage of students who identify as BILAPOC who enter the Dental Assisting program is higher than that of the college overall.

BILAPOC by year

Academic Year	% of BILAPOC Students At COCC	% of BILAPOC Students Entering the DA program
2021-2022	18.75%	23.81%
2022-2023	22.61%	40.00%
2023-2024	24.65%	25.00%

The current academic year is not yet in Tableau, however the report submitted to the Commission on Dental Accreditation for this year shows 25% of this year’s cohort identifies as BILAPOC.

Age of Students

The age of the Dental Assisting program students over the last couple of years is overwhelmingly the 20-24 year-old demographic. The program is lower overall compared to COCC at serving the older, non-traditional 30-39 year old population.

Age of Students by year

Age in Years	Academic Year 2021-2022		Academic Year 2022-2023		Academic Year 2023-2024	
	COCC	DA	COCC	DA	COCC	DA
19	10.28%	0%	12.75%	6.67%	8.84%	0%
20-24	42.36%	42.86%	39.61%	73.33%	40.93%	68.75%
25-29	19.44%	23.81%	16.54%	20.00%	21.40%	18.75%
30-39	19.72%	19.05%	21.55%	0%	19.07%	12.50%

Gender

Though the Dental Assisting program does have male students on occasion, the role of Dental Assistant has traditionally been a position held by females, similarly to the way nursing was in the past. We would like to change that. Male students have done quite well for themselves with one (from 2019-2020)

managing a busy pedodontics office (for children) and another (from 2021-2022) is a patient favorite in an orthodontic office in Bend. The Dental Assisting program has photos of a male student that we use in promotional materials for the program and for the Dental Clinic at COCC, with the goal of increasing the interest of males entering the program.

Section 5: Strengths and Accomplishments

Briefly share your department's strengths and major accomplishments, noting that this should not be an exhaustive list, but rather the most important or significant accomplishments your program has achieved since the last APR/DPR.

In the 27 years that the Dental Assisting program has been fulfilling its mission and providing students with a professional career and dentists with highly trained and certified employees, there have been both challenges and successes along the way. Program faculty and college administrators have worked together to meet these challenges. From the one room in Ochoco Hall that was the lab-clinic-sterilization area-trim lab-teaching area, with fold up walls so we could teach radiology, to obtaining and maintaining accreditation and so much in between.

The program now has a state-of-the-art dental clinic with a sterilization area and a separate trim lab for demonstration and student practice of clinical skills. The Dental Assisting program was excited to receive funds last year to replace two 30-year-old donated chairs that were moved from the original room in Ochoco Hall, with brand new A-dec chairs and delivery units.

In addition, the program was awarded funds to purchase much needed digital oral scanning units. Most dental offices now use oral scanners, and the purchase of this technology was highly recommended by our Dental Assisting Advisory Committee.

The students will now be trained in a new set of digital scanning skills that are greatly sought after by employer dentists. With support from the college, the Dental Assisting program now meets or exceeds industry standards regarding equipment and technology. Given the advances in dentistry this is no a small feat. The college has been very responsive and supportive of the program, dentist stakeholders, and student needs.

The Dental Assisting program has a strong partnership with local dentists. This partnership is essential; allowing volunteer dentists to provide dental services in the Dental Clinic, and to provide assisting experience to students in their dental offices where they gain essential real-world experience in a dental practice.

In addition to Oregon specific certifications there are also National certifications students can earn through the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB). Students take the Infection Control Exam (ICE) toward the end of Fall Term, the Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) exam toward the end of Winter Term, and the General Chairside (GC) exam toward the end of Spring Term. This allows students to graduate with eight certifications.

- Expanded Functions Dental Assistant
- Expanded Functions Orthodontic Dental Assistant
- Soft Denture Reline Certified
- Retraction Cord Placement Certified

- Infection Control Certified
- Radiation Health and Safety Certified
- General Chairside Certified
- Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) certification

Students graduating from COCC's Dental Assisting program are well educated and highly certified individuals and prepared for careers in General Dentistry or any specialty of dentistry.

Section 6: Challenges

Briefly share your program or discipline's challenges.

The Dental Assisting program no longer faces challenges for equipment. There is only one challenge we would like to continue to address.

- 1) To increase enrollment

First to increase enrollment in the Dental Assisting program. There is an extreme shortage of Dental Assistants which is of concern for dentists across the state and nation. Due to this shortage a member of the Oregon House of Representatives put forth 3 bills that though not intended, would have created an even more severe shortage of Dental Assistants by removing all certifications and steps on the career ladder for dental assistants. If passed these bills would have posed a risk to patients (with assistants that have not proved competence in doing so, performing more risky procedures on patients). While making dental assisting a low-paying, short term, non-respected job. Dental Assisting educators, dentists and dental assistants across Oregon, with the assistance of the Oregon Dental Assisting Association (ODAA) and the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB), fought long and hard against these bills and for dental assistants.

Two of the bills did not pass, the other was changed significantly to remove the risk to patients and maintain the career ladder for dental assistants. With this came a requirement from the Oregon House of Representatives that a new committee, the Dental Assisting Workforce Shortage Advisory Committee (DAWSAC), be formed of dental assistants and dentists to make suggestions to the Oregon Board of Dentistry as to how to increase interest in the career of Dental Assistant.

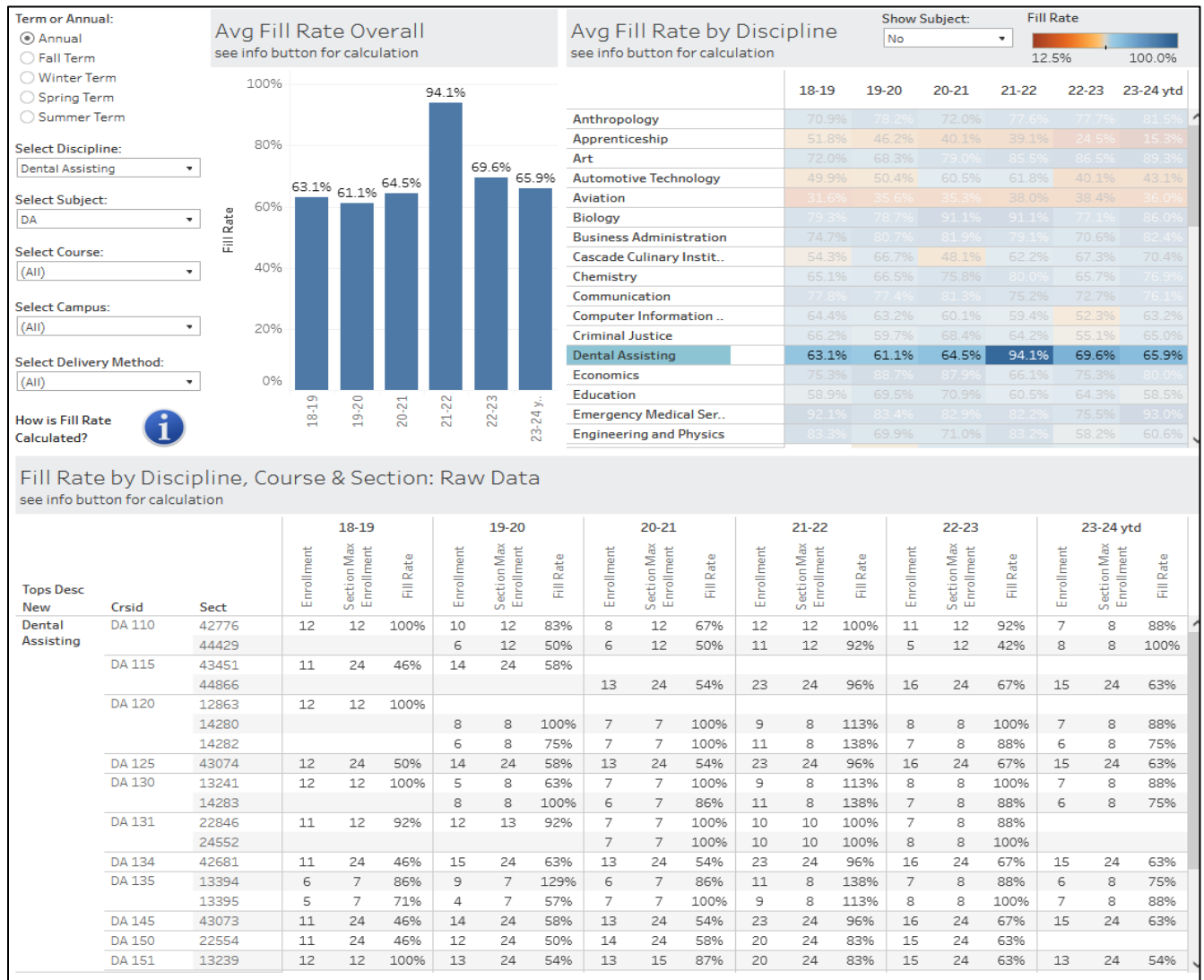
To underscore the concern for the severe need of dental assistants in the field, and the loss of dental assisting programs across the country, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), the accrediting body for dentist, hygienist and assistant education, recently published this statement in its Unofficial Report of Major Actions dated February 1, 2024.

“The Commission directed development of educational materials for the public and academic institutions to emphasize the value of CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. The Commission also directed a formal communication to the American Dental Association’s Council on Dental Education and Licensure (ADA-CDEL) to urge CDEL and the ADA to support and encourage students to attend CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs as a pathway to the profession.”

Program enrollment is not a new challenge at COCC. Since 2018-2019 our fill rate has been about 63%, until just before the COVID-19 Pandemic when we made headway and reached 94% capacity. The

pandemic greatly dropped our enrollment once more. COCC had been working to increase enrollment by working with the high schools and other stakeholders to advance interest in Allied Health programs.

We believe in time this challenge can be met and enrollment will increase with 1) continued dedication to outreach by the college through our Healthcare Outreach Coordinator, 2) presentations by faculty, 3) instituting new outreach strategies to non-traditional students, and 4) the rise of wages of dental assistants in Central Oregon.



Section 7: New Goals

As noted above, Dental Assisting is a high-demand career in our Central Oregon community and across the nation. Dentists call Dental Assisting faculty continually looking for graduates to hire. Some dentists are in desperate need of one or more dental assistants. The greatest need our dentist stakeholders tell us is to graduate more students from the Dental Assisting program. To do this we need to increase enrollment.

Therefore, we have just one goal –

- 1) To increase enrollment in the Dental Assisting program to fulfil the needs of dentist employers and students seeking a well-paid health career in dental assisting.

Section 8: Resource Needs

Because of continued grant funding of the Healthcare Outreach Coordinator position, funding of social media outreach approaches, and presentations/events hosted by Dental Assisting faculty, we are confident that we will continue to reach many potential traditional students.

The area we seem to be missing though are those who would be non-traditional students. Employers value these individuals for their life experience and the maturity that they bring to the profession.

With the current earning potential of dental assistants, an increasing enrollment of male students would benefit that demographic as well.

We still have work to do in Central Oregon as many of our community members, who could be the non-traditional students we would like to reach, are unaware that COCC has a Dental Assisting program. We would like to advertise the program to these individuals through billboards and other means that would promote the Dental Assisting program.

It is a good time to get the word out to our community through advertisement of the Dental Assisting program in media with a focus on non-traditional students. Billboards would be a way to advertise to those looking to change careers. We would recommend using a male, minority, non-traditional student/graduate to promote non-traditional age and diversity in dental assisting.