

Program Review – Annual Program/Discipline Update  
**Administrative Response and Follow Up**  
**Winter 2021-2022**

**Program/Discipline: Dental Assisting**

SAC Chair(s): Renee DeMallie

SAC Administrative Liaison (Director or Program Dean): Josette Beach

Other Dean(s) or Director(s): Pathway Dean, Janeen Hull

Department Chair(s): N/a

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This section is for Administration to provide feedback.

To be prepared by Program Dean(s) and reviewed by Pathway Dean and Associate Vice Presidents(s).

1. Strengths and successes of the program as evidenced by the data, analysis and reflection:

I commend the Dental Assisting SAC for their hard work and focus on student success. The following comments address areas of strengths and successes that I would like to highlight and celebrate in this administrative response.

**Enrollment:**

During a pandemic, having just moved to a new location, adjusting to two new FT faculty members and starting a unique part-time cohort all at the same time, provided many challenges for the DA SAC to overcome. The faculty members of the DA SAC rose above the challenges to not only successfully graduate one cohort of students (39 students at the end of December 2021), but also accepted another new cohort to start during that same term (43 in September of 2021). During this time period an additional 14 students were also enrolled in the new part-time hybrid DA cohort. In a typical academic year (pre-Covid) the DA program would have a maximum of 45 students enrolled. During this past year, Fall term enrollment was nearly 100 students. The SAC is to be commended for increasing enrollment amidst the many challenges they were faced with and for their dedication to the college and dental community where dental assistants are in extremely high demand. Additionally the SAC should be praised for very intentionally doing outreach with the Hillsboro Chamber High School Students, the Beaverton High School Health Programs, the Migrant Farm Workers Youth Program and the Portland Metro School Counselors by presenting information on the benefits of becoming a dental assistant. Their efforts have resulted in a continuous rise in numbers of applicants over the past few years.

**Course Success Rates:**

Course success rates are extremely high, as reported at nearly a 100% success rate. I can attest first hand to the strategies that the SAC faculty members utilize in order to help students be successful, while still upholding the high quality standards of graduates that the dental community has come to expect from the PCC program. During the pandemic the faculty recognized the necessity of being flexible and also pivoting as the situation called for it in order to meet the students' needs. In order to meet the students where they "were" during the chaotic time, the faculty utilized the following strategies to support student success:

- a. Extending due dates for quizzes, assignments and clinical/lab requirements when students were out ill, quarantining or caring for family members during covid
- b. Utilizing laptops and zoom sessions where a student who was unable to come to class for labs/clinics, could attend virtually and not miss important demonstrations and course material.
- c. Continuous communication with students regarding their status in their courses, deficiencies, and opportunities to make up missed work
- d. Developing remediation plans that consisted of clear feedback, timelines and scheduling for review and demonstration of competency
- e. Engaging with the dental community, the dental hygiene program and OHSU School of Dentistry to ensure every student had a rotation site (Summer Term 2021) and Externship Site (Fall 2021) when mandates were put in place regarding Covid 19 Vaccinations. Students were in the middle of their training when the mandates from OHA came into effect and those students who requested religious and/or medical exceptions would have been in jeopardy of not finding rotation/externship sites without the advocacy of their instructors.

#### Retention:

As previously stated, the SAC works tirelessly to help each student succeed. At times, due to circumstances beyond the student's control, attrition may occur. Most common reasons in the past two years have been due to the student's health, unforeseen family responsibilities and the sudden need to move. One student was unable to continue in the program because of the need to work and another student was unable to continue due to the rigor of the program. In both of these cases, each student was invited to return with the next cohort and they are both now re-enrolled in the 2022 cohort and/or new PT cohort that will begin in the Spring of 2022. Any student who has the desire to graduate from the dental assisting program, is always assured a spot in the program with the next cohort. This becomes a partnership between both the student and faculty and provides for even sweeter satisfaction when the student's eventual graduation occurs.

#### Faculty Training:

New FT Faculty, Rochelle Mascarenhas began her role with the DA SAC in August 2021. With a very short time for training, Rochelle completed the necessary online onboarding in order to teach the part-time DA program on-line and hybrid courses. All faculty members have undertaken online training courses to improve their remote teaching techniques, as well as worked tirelessly to take a fully In-person 9-month program and develop it into a hybrid 15 month program. The amount of time that each FT faculty member has devoted to providing excellent course materials to students during the pandemic both remotely and in a hybrid manner has been outstanding.

#### Curricular Innovation:

Collaborating together, the SAC developed the pilot program for the hybrid PT DA Program. They could not have done this without the extensive guidance from the

Distance Learning advisors. Change is never easy. This SAC was asked to take a program that has only been taught a certain way for fifty years and revise its length, sequencing, teaching modality and with new faculty members. This was quite the feat for the SAC to accomplish. Through this last year they continuously assess how the new part-time cohort might be modified in order to align the curriculum in a way that promotes student success. Faculty have also found themselves challenged by teaching courses out of sequence from their normal course of study, and while the dental hygiene program who they collaborate with greatly each term, was also off sequence. No matter what the challenge, the group worked together as a team to find a solution.

#### Resiliency:

There is not much that can stop this group of faculty members. I can't think of any other time over my forty years of working at the college where the DA program has had to deal with as many roadblocks as the current DA SAC has. The SAC meets weekly to address concerns or issues with the program and I believe this is a great part of their success. They see their SAC as a team that works together as a whole throughout the students journey in the program. As colleagues they support each other, as employees, they are excellent examples of support to the students, department and college.

#### Continuous Program Improvement:

Throughout the DA Program's Annual Update, the SAC developed several concrete areas that they would like to address. I am in agreement with their remarks that data analysis could be improved if somehow the part time and full time DA cohorts could be reported separately. Efforts to research whether institutional effectiveness is able to report the data in this way should be explored. Until then, I encourage the SAC to develop a way to determine the critical information that they are wanting to track between the two groups, in order to be able to learn where gaps in the curriculum, course modality, time allotted etc. can be compared and revised as necessary.

## 2. Areas of challenge or concern, if any:

Due to the pandemic, move to the new downtown location and continuous teaching from September 2019 until June of 2022, the faculty face the challenge of exhaustion and the need to simply survive during difficult times. I am thrilled for the faculty to once again have a Summer Break in 2022, something that they are so deserving of. I am concerned however, for the long-term effect that will occur to the program due to the SAC's inability to attend to some matters that had to be placed on the sidelines for now. As discussed in the annual report the following are causes for concern:

- a. I want to take a moment to recognize our amazing part-time instructor Sandy Crawshaw. Sandy stepped up to serve in a one-year temporary FT position while we had a FT faculty out on professional development. This one year temporary position has now turned into two years. We are grateful for Sandy remaining with us. We are not quite sure if our FT faculty will return or continue to pursue a career in the direction with the PD experience, nevertheless, we need the position and really need it to be a full-time position in order to provide continuity and consistency for our students. The uncertainty of all of this just adds to the

ever changing landscape for dental and the anxiety and stress for faculty, staff and students.

- b. The program has been interested in taking a deep dive into the curriculum to research where credits and curriculum might be revised in order to ensure each course is being offered with the appropriate amount of time and workload for instructors. The ability to do this deep dive has not been able to occur over the last two years as intended and should be a part of future attention.
- c. The reaccreditation self-study and site visit will be occurring in 2025 through the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). While 3 years may sound like a great deal of time to prepare, it will go by quickly when factoring in the time that curriculum changes and degree/certificate changes will take in order for all courses, syllabi, requirements and instructor assignments to be in place as needed when the self-study is due and site visit occurs.
- d. How to meet the high demand for dental assistants in the dental community is a continuous and growing concern. A recent continuing education course revealed that 40% of dentists nationwide had postings out to hire dental assistants. We experience this from reports from our advisory committee, from Diane Jantze, our PCC Career Specialist's data on dental practices who reach out to her to post their openings, from OHSU, Willamette Dental, the Oregon Oral Health Authority and any dentist we talk to. The plea is always the same, as they request that we graduate more dental assistants. The possibility of increasing the FT cohort to a class of 60 students annually was suggested when plans to move the department to the Vanport Building were being developed, but to date, this has not been able to be discussed due to the situation the program is in due to Covid. This will be a concern that the SAC will want to address in the future. Much planning and course redesign will need to take place due to space constraints in the location. It is most likely that sixty students would need to be broken into 4 groups of 15 (instead of the current three groups). Developing an adequate schedule for this will take a great deal of planning.

### 3. Reflection on goals and resources:

#### Goals:

The section above addresses the administrative reflection of the goals as stated in the DA Annual Program Updated.

#### Resources:

The SAC has been supported in many ways over the past year with resources that have helped improve the program. This includes the support of the taxpayers in providing the funding for the beautiful new Vanport Building that the program now resides in. Additionally, the generous support from Willamette Dental and the Skourtes family by

providing one-million dollar endowed scholarships over the next 25 years allows many students who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to reach their career goals, find their way to graduation. Further, the college has supported the program to grow by allowing the part-time cohort to be developed under the guidance of the distance learning department and has also funded an additional FT faculty member in order for the program to be adequately staffed.

Resources that the program now finds itself needing are in the area of equipment and supplies as listed below:

- a. Recently, two X-ray machines that are at least 15 years old were moved to the Vanport Building, but have now needed to be replaced unexpectedly.
- b. With the increase in dental x-ray rooms and students in the program, there is a higher rate of supply/small equipment replacement that needs to take place including digital sensors, digital sensor holders and the connectors that connect the sensor to the computer. The program finds itself in a continuous shortage of these items.
- c. Unfortunately, at the same time that we have increased the number of rooms in our x-ray lab, the company that makes the "real skull" manikins has changed their working mechanism so that we can no longer send in our manikins for repair (\$3,500-4,000 each time we send a manikin for repair) as compared to what we will now have pay to totally replace the manikin when they are broken, at the cost of about \$20,000 each. The program currently has two of these manikins that are unrepairable.

These concerns should be strategically addressed with the faculty, new Director and Pathway Dean.

4. Recommended next steps:

Proceed as planned on program review schedule

Follow up conversation needed with SAC, Dept Chair(s) and Dean

5. Additional comments/questions:

The Dental Assisting Program at PCC is highly respected throughout the dental community. It is routinely noted during conversations that "PCC has the best DA Graduates" and "We only want to hire PCC Graduates." This is due to the dedication, knowledge, skills and professionalism of

the faculty who teach them. I applaud them all for their efforts and know that the program will continue to succeed under their guidance.