



CENTRAL OREGON
community college

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June 11, 2024

Dear Lynn and Dental Assisting Faculty,

Thank you for taking part in this inaugural year of the Department & Program Review (DPR). The focus of the DPR redesign was to simplify the compilation process, to highlight successes and voice critical needs, and to connect the College plan to a department or program's vision. Your engagement in this process is important, and we applaud the time and effort you spent reflecting on your program and analyzing the work you are doing.

Strengths of your program

Lynn's leadership last year amongst Oregon community college Dental Assisting (DA) programs during the legislative session was impressive. She tracked two proposed bills that could have been extremely detrimental to DA should they have passed. Due in large part to Lynn's efforts including research, letter writing to legislators, and collaboration with the other DA programs, the first bill did not pass, and the other was significantly modified to not negatively impact DA programs in Oregon.

Your community outreach efforts are fantastic from attending career events at local high schools to providing dental services for low-income patients through your on-campus dental clinic. And we note that the DA program has a higher percentage of BILAPOC students than the college average. It is obvious that you see diversity efforts as an ongoing process, not a "quota" to fill. In other words, we appreciate you being so proactive about diversity and equity in your program.

We commend you on incorporating different teaching modalities to enhance access for DA students (combining online and in person learning that allows students to complete clinicals in regular business hours but also keep up with classroom learning). It is clear that you care deeply about your students as individuals first and foremost. Lastly, we appreciate that your DA graduates go into the workforce having obtained the most current sought-after skills, for example retraction cord placement and soft denture relines certificates that you recently added into your program. These efforts surely contribute to your 100 percent employment rate for DA program graduates.

Challenges of your program

We note that the clear successes of the DA program have not come without their challenges. In particular, we know that enrollment continues to be an area of focus for your program as you both seek greater diversity in the gender and age range of your students, as well as the need for the program to keep pace with local workforce needs. We also know that enrollment issues are not new for your program, and we encourage you to

continue your efforts to partner closely with local high schools and the Allied Health Outreach Coordinator to increase interest in this in-demand, well-paying career.

We imagine that the economic data and outlook for dental assistants remains one of the more compelling points of evidence for potential students and their families, so continuing to share that information widely is sound practice for increasing enrollment. That information is even more compelling when it is combined with the relatively short length of the dental assisting program, which also translates to a lower cost to students. In other words, the clear return on investment for students enrolling in the DA program should continue to be one of your strongest recruiting tools – even with the potential development of a new dental hygienist program at COCC.

Goals and needed resources

Your report had only one goal: to increase enrollment in the Dental Assisting program, and we are supportive of this goal. In our response meeting we discussed that it would be helpful to know and analyze data on the number of dental assistants needed in Central Oregon annually. The College will be investing in some systems that can better help us determine local need and begin to understand how to market the program to attract a more diverse set of students, so work with your dean on accessing that analysis.

In particular, you indicated you would like to see more male students in the program. You have already had two former students who identify as male serve as models in our ads and be ambassadors for the program. We encourage you to work further with your dean and the marketing and recruitment departments to discuss how to reach some of the untapped potential in the region.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to student readiness. Together, we can build on our achievements, address the challenges ahead, and meet the evolving needs of our students.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, please reach out. We look forward to working collaboratively to enhance the quality and impact of the Dental Assisting program.

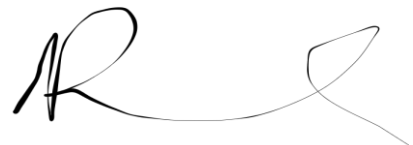
Sincerely yours,



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Vice President of Academic Affairs



Julie Downing
Instructional Dean



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Director of Assessment and Curriculum