Dental Hygiene

Degree Offered

- Master of Science in Dental Hygiene

The Profession

Dental hygiene is an exciting profession with many rewarding and challenging career opportunities which include clinical/patient care, administration, education, research, and sales/marketing. Dental hygienists are employed in diverse settings such as private dental practices; clinics; hospitals; long-term care facilities/rehabilitation centers; dental hygiene education programs; national, state, and local government agencies; and private business/industry. As a licensed health professional and oral health educator, the dental hygienist has an important role in the overall health and welfare of the public. The dental hygienist is an integral part of the dental team, providing direct patient care based on the prevention of disease. The duties and responsibilities of dental hygienists vary from state to state but may include oral prophylaxis (removing stains and deposits from teeth); root debridement; exposing radiographs; application of preventive and therapeutic agents; local delivery of antimicrobial agents; nutritional counseling; oral, head, and neck cancer screenings; monitoring nitrous oxide sedation; and administration of local anesthesia. The educational background of a dental hygienist provides the knowledge, attitudes, and skill necessary to be successful in a wide variety of careers. From providing clinical care to research to public administration, dental hygiene opens the door to many successful career options. For more information concerning licensure, please visit: http://dentistry.hsc.wvu.edu/education/programs/dental-hygiene-programs/licensure/.

Nature of the Program

The Master of Science Program in Dental Hygiene provides the terminal degree for the dental hygiene profession. The program is designed to provide both full-time and part-time students with the advanced education in dental hygiene necessary to assume roles in teaching, administration, research and management. Emphasis is also placed on preparing graduates to conduct the evaluate research and to continually advance their knowledge and skills through self directed learning. Graduates from this program will assist in meeting the dental health care needs of the community, the state of West Virginia, and the nation. The program seeks to maintain high quality dental hygiene care by offering a curriculum that provides students with the ability to:

- attend school on a full-time or part-time basis and gain an advanced education in dental hygiene necessary to assume roles in teaching, administration, research and management;
- achieve competency in the development and evaluation of a research project;
- acquire the initiative to grow in his/her capability for independent thought, responsible action, and the motivation to continue professional development.

The dental hygiene program has a strong commitment to providing care and educational programs to residents of West Virginia, which is demonstrated by the required 25 hours of service learning. To provide students in dental hygiene program with the necessary clinical experience that is required, the School of Dentistry maintains and operates dental clinics in the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center School of Dentistry. Through the West Virginia University Institute for Community and Rural Health (WVUICRH), students may be provide direct patient care for the citizens of West Virginia at a rural site. Please visit http://dentistry.hsc.wvu.edu/education/programs/dental-hygiene-programs/ for more information.

The dental hygiene program has an excellent reputation for producing outstanding clinicians and many faculty members as well as graduates are recognized as leaders in dental education and organized dentistry. Please visit http://dentistry.hsc.wvu.edu/education/programs/dental-hygiene-programs/master-of-science/ for more information.

Academic and Professional Standards

The Dental Hygiene Academic and Professional Standards, including the Student Rights and Responsibilities, are available at: http://dentistry.hsc.wvu.edu/education/programs/dental-hygiene-programs/academic-professional-standards/

FACULTY

DIRECTOR

- Amy D. Funk - M.S.D.H.

PROFESSOR

- Christina B. DeBiase - Ed.D. (West Virginia University)  
  Curriculum and Instruction, Special Patient Care

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

- M. Suann Gaydos - MSDH  
  (WVU)
- Alcinda K. T. Shockey - BSDH, MA, DHSc
Admission Requirements

To apply to the program, please go to http://dentistry.hsc.wvu.edu/education/programs/dental-hygiene-programs/master-of-science/apply-now/ and follow the directions provided. You do not need to complete a separate application for WVU, you must choose Dental Hygiene in the WVU on-line application to be considered for the Program.

The program’s admission requirements are as follows:

- Meet WVU requirements for admission to graduate study. Applicants who do not meet the minimum requirements for admission must gain provisional acceptance into the program. All provisions of admission must be met no later than completion of the eighteenth credit hour to be reclassified as a regular student. A student who fails to meet the provisions of admission or who fails to meet the required GPA will be suspended.
- Possess a baccalaureate degree in dental hygiene from an accredited dental hygiene program or a baccalaureate degree in another field of study from an approved institution of higher education while holding a certificate or associate’s degree in dental hygiene from a program fully accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation.
- Demonstrate evidence of scholastic and clinical achievement to indicate the applicant’s ability to progress in a program of this nature. Generally, a minimum grade point average of 3.0 or above on a 4.0 scale on all college work attempted is required.
- Complete the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) with an acceptable score within the last five years.
- Submit all information requested in the graduate application to the Office of Academic and Postdoctoral Affairs.
- Consent to and pass a criminal background investigation prior to final acceptance.

Degree Requirements

Minimum overall GPA of 3.0(*)

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Thesis

Oral defense of thesis

1 semester of student teaching in the undergraduate clinic

Total Hours 37

(*) Students must achieve an overall grade point average of a 3.0 GPA in all work attempted in the master's program. A grade of C or below in one course will require a faculty review of the student’s progress. A second C or below will result in dismissal from the program. A student may repeat only one course one time to bring the GPA up to the 3.0 requirement. Credit hours for courses with a grade lower than C do not count toward degree requirements.
Major Learning Goals

DENTAL HYGIENE

The goals of this program are to provide graduates with the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to be competent in the:

1. Design, implementation, administration, and evaluation of dentally-related educational courses (i.e., nutrition, radiology, histology, pharmacology, pathology, and periodontics) and programs a) in schools of dentistry, dental hygiene, dental assisting, b) public or private institutions or groups requiring in-service, and c) in elementary and secondary schools;
2. Design, implementation, administration and evaluation of dental health care delivery programs; i.e., patient services rendered in professional schools, hospitals, institutions for the mentally and physically disabled, geriatric centers, public health departments etc.;
3. Administration of office/personnel management related areas such as a) group dynamics, collaboration, b) accounting issues, e.g., computerized recall, billing, inventory, third party payment, and insurance, and c) legislation and public policy;
4. Design, obtaining of financial support, conduct, management, evaluation, and presentation of research projects;
5. Development of independent thought, responsible action, and the motivation to continue professional development.