



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: Jeff Jessee, Dean of the College of Health and Vice Provost of Health Programs

Cc: Stephanie Olson, Committee Chair & Professor of Dental Assisting  
Jessica Ross, Term Instructor of Dental Hygiene

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

**Program/s in this review:** Dental Assisting UC & Dental Assisting AAS

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** The Dental Assisting UC is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association (CODA).

**Campuses where the program is delivered:** Anchorage

**Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role:**

The mission of the UAA Dental Assisting Program is to provide a high quality academic program which encourages the maximum involvement and achievement from Dental Assisting students. Graduates of the Dental Assisting Program are able to demonstrate skills and knowledge necessary to be competent in the dental assisting field. As dental assistants, they will assist dentists, set up equipment, prepare patients for treatment, and keep records. The employment growth for dental assistants in Alaska is expected to be robust (+24%). The average number of annual openings is expected to be very high (+168). Since fall 2019, the Dental Assisting Program at UAA can accept 24 students per year (up from 18). Although postsecondary education is not currently required to become a dental assistant in Alaska, this program is central to the mission of the College of Health to advance the health and wellbeing of people and communities. It also provides a supporting role to the Dental Hygiene BS.

**Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity:**

Program demand has varied by fiscal year. Overall, program demand is modest, with an average of 15 majors and 14 graduates per year according to IR data (and an average of 16 majors and 13 graduates, according to program data). The program is expensive, with full tuition revenue only covering about half of the instructional costs. FY2019 was a particularly difficult year, with only nine majors (four in the UC and five in the AAS). Full tuition revenue declined by 31% and the instructional costs were 164% higher than the full tuition revenue. Additional revenue is generated from the dental clinic, extramural funding, and continuing education course offerings.

**Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success:**

The Dental Assisting UC is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association (CODA). The Dental Assisting AAS is not accredited, but the same Dental Assisting courses

are required for both programs (the AAS requires additional courses outside the program, including general university requirements). Program faculty recently updated the curriculum. The program also updated its Assessment Plan. Assessment outcomes are used to identify key recommendations for program improvement (recent recommendations included placing more emphasis on the need for students to demonstrate ethical behavior and competency with radiographic skills). Students participate in dental assisting experiences in external clinical settings and in UAA's Dental Clinic. Overall, the program provides a high quality education. Students will now take the Dental Assisting National Board exam as part of their educational experience. This will allow them to become nationally certified dental assistants.

**Program Duplication / Distinctiveness:**

The University of Alaska Fairbanks also offers a Dental Assisting UC and AAS. Neither is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation. Southcentral Foundation offers an accredited Dental Assisting Technology Program in partnership with Salish Kootenai College. While program duplication exists, the industry need for dental assistants in Alaska continues to far exceed our collective capacity to produce dental assistants.

**Commendations and Recommendations:**

The Dental Assisting UC and AAS provide students the knowledge and training necessary to become competent dental assistants. Program quality is high. Employment growth is projected to be robust, but program demand has been modest. As noted by the program, there is a "disconnect between program enrollment and employment demand." The College of Health and the Dental Assisting program will need to invest in recruitment efforts to promote this program. Student enrollment will need to increase to meet industry needs and to improve the program's efficiency and productivity. Developing further opportunities for distance and continuing education may also be useful to increase program demand.

**Decision:**

Continuation.