



TO: Dr. Randy Smith, Vice Provost, Office of Academic Affairs

FROM: Patricia Gardner, Assistant Director for Academic Studies
Division of Dental Hygiene

DATE: October 2, 2009

RE: Program Format Change for Dental Hygiene

Proposed Change: To change the dental hygiene program format from one year of prerequisites and three years in the professional program (1:3) to two years of prerequisites and two years in the professional program (2:2). This change would be concurrent with the change from quarters to semesters and would be implemented for freshmen entering the university in autumn 2010 for the Dental Hygiene Class of 2014.

The Division of Dental Hygiene Curriculum Committee and faculty have discussed this option in conjunction with our discussions regarding the conversion to semesters. We have reviewed the curricula of other schools that offer the baccalaureate degree and found excellent examples of the 2:2 model on the semester system. While this change will make our transition to semesters more complex than if we retained the 1:3 model, we think the advantages of this change are worth the extra work required.

Rationale and considerations:

We believe the proposed change will decrease the time to graduation for many students in the dental hygiene program. The program is by necessity a lock-step program and students cannot take classes out of sequence. The dental hygiene major requires 102 credit hours distributed over nine quarters for an average of 11-12 credits each quarter. While this is an appropriate load for students who are completing basic sciences and GECs concurrently, students who have completed these requirements prior to entry to the major are not able to progress at a faster rate. This program was designed for students who have completed only one year of prerequisites, but the majority of students entering the dental hygiene major have earned two or more years of college credit. Of the students who entered the program in the past five years, only 43% had less than two years of credit at program entry; 37% had between two and three years of previous college, and 20% entered with three or more years of credit. There are a number of factors that cause students to enter the program with more credit hours than required, but in most cases the students who entered the program with two or more years of previous credit would have been able to graduate one year earlier under the 2:2 model.

We also believe that this change will improve the quality of educational experience for our students. Dental hygiene requires extensive hands-on work in laboratory and clinic, and these have to be scheduled when the laboratories, clinics and patients are available. Coordinating these schedules with the variety of GECs that students need to complete is complex, and sometimes a student's GEC choices are greatly limited by these schedule restraints. The need for occasional special labs and rotations outside of the OSU clinics also causes conflicts for some students who are enrolled in GECs. We believe we could deliver a better program to our students if they complete their basic sciences and all or most of the

GECs in advance of admission to the major so they can focus on dental hygiene for the last two years of the degree.

There are 44 programs in the US that offer the bachelor degree in dental hygiene, and over half use the 2:2 model. These include benchmark schools including The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Missouri - Kansas City, and the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

The primary drawback we anticipate is that students who are denied admission to the major may receive this notification later in their academic career than under the current program structure. Currently students apply as early as their first year of college, are reviewed after receipt of spring quarter grades, are notified of their admission status by July 1 and enter the program the following autumn. Under the proposed 2:2 program structure some students may not be notified of their admission status until we receive grades for the first semester of their second year, which may delay their transition to alternative majors or other dental hygiene programs if they are denied admission. The dental hygiene curriculum committee and admission committee will take these concerns into consideration and make every effort to notify students of their admission status as early as possible.

The Curriculum Committee, Semester Conversion Group and Faculty of the Division of Dental Hygiene have used the semester conversion challenge as an opportunity to thoroughly review and plan improvements to our curriculum. We believe that the change to 2:2 will be an improvement in our program and that the best time to make this change is concurrent with the semester conversion.

Proposed curriculum:

The details of the new curriculum are still under development. In general, we will expect students to complete all basic sciences (30 credit hours) and all or most GECs and electives (55 hours in addition to basic sciences) prior to admission to the major. The dental hygiene major (88 credit hours) and area of specialization (13 credit hours) will be completed during the last two years. All students will be required to attend May term of the first year in the program. Students who need to complete GECs or electives after admission to the major may need to enroll in the summer semester, but summer semester will not be required for most students.

The Dental Hygiene Semester Conversion Group has drafted a plan to teach the content of the current dental hygiene major in semesters under the proposed new structure. This plan still needs considerable work and refinement, but we are hesitant to proceed any further until we know that our proposal to change to 2:2 will be acceptable. For this reason, we are seeking approval now to move forward with the semester conversion under the 2:2 model.