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**Orem school opens doors, mouths**

By Brian Wheeler *Daily Universe Staff Reporter* - 4 Feb 2005

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A new dental hygiene college in Orem is looking to alleviate the frustrations of long waiting lists, all too common for pre-dental hygiene students.

"We're very excited to see the program open," said Dr. Ken Molen, president and CEO of the Utah College of Dental Hygiene. "We believe it can provide access to a dental hygiene education for many students."

UCDH, scheduled to open this fall, will become the state's largest dental hygiene program. It will accept 48 students per year, three times more than some of Utah's existing programs.

"I just don't want to have to wait five years to be able to finally get into a program," said Dorinda Haderlie, a former BYU student trying to get into a dental hygiene program. "I'm a mom ... my time is very precious. I want to get into a program and get out."

Haderlie said she has applied to the UVSC dental hygiene program but was not accepted. She said she hopes to have better luck at UCDH, which she said will accept 34 more students per year than UVSC's 14.

Dr. Clark Crookston, director of the new program, said they chose Utah Valley for their school because of the caliber of students the valley draws.

"BYU and UVSC see a lot of top notch students move to the area to get their education," Crookston said. "They like the educational environment, they like the cultural environment that's here. What better place than here, to open another dental hygiene program."

Crookston said he thinks the college will have "highly qualified, experienced educators" with a lot of energy and a desire to be recognized as a premier institution. He also said the college hopes to attract the type of students that will assure the success of the program.

He said dental hygiene graduates can expect to make between \$25 and \$30 per hour in-state and even more in adjoining states.

"One statistic that I read recently said that the average [salary for dental hygienists] is about \$57,900 a year," Crookston said.

Crookston said he received excellent preparation for dental school from BYU's pre-dental program. He said, however, he was concerned about what he could do to support a family with a degree in zoology if he was not accepted into dental school.

Crookston said he thinks dental hygiene is a viable option for pre-dental students who want a good dental background and an employable degree to fall back on. He suggests students

interested in dental hygiene talk with a practicing hygienist or job shadow to gain a better understanding of the field.

Molen and Crookston, both BYU graduates, have practiced dentistry and been involved with dental education for many years. Crookston has spent 25 years in dental hygiene education, including the past 15 years as director of Colorado Northwestern Community College's dental hygiene program. Molen, who also holds a masters degree in education, has dedicated the past 24 years to service within education. Molen also has an operating dental assisting school in Orem, Careers Unlimited, which he said has graduated more than 500 dental assistants since 1997.

Haderlie said she believes dental hygiene is a great career because of the flexibility it can offer for individuals with families.

"Hygiene is a great thing, for a woman especially," she said. "The pay is good, the hours you get to pick. As a mom, I want my time away from my kids to pay."

Dr. Don Bloxham, the BYU health professions adviser, said he believes one of the reasons BYU doesn't have a dental hygiene program is the same reason they don't have a dental school.

"If our students are getting into dental school at a rate 25 to 30 percent above the national average, we're satisfying the dental needs within the church, we don't need a dental school," he said.

Bloxham said students interested in dental hygiene should first contact the specific program they're interested in. He said it is important to find out the prerequisites for that particular program because they are not standardized. Students may then satisfy the prerequisites for those programs to which they want to apply.

Molen said UCDH is accepting applications for the September class. For more information on the Utah College of Dental Hygiene visit their Web site at ucdh.edu or call (801) 226-1081.



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