Dental hygienists are health care professionals who detect, prevent and treat diseases of the mouth. The dental hygienist works as a team member with dentists, dental assistants and dental lab technologists. Dental Hygienists may work in a variety of settings including:

- Private Dental Office
- Dental Supply Company
- University or Research Center
- Public Health
- School System
- Long-term Health Care Facility
- HMO
- Another Country

For more information on dental hygiene careers, licensure, and accredited Dental Hygiene Programs consult the American Dental Hygienists’ Association.

The **Dental Hygiene Associate in Science** degree program is designed to prepare students to be competent dental hygiene professionals, capable of providing quality, contemporary dental hygiene care in a variety of settings within a changing healthcare system, and a culturally diverse society.

Our graduates learn to practice in a manner consistent with the highest standards set forth by ADA/CODA, ADEA, ADAA, OSHA, CDC, and the General Laws of Massachusetts pertinent to health care provider settings, including the State Dental Practice Act. Graduates are qualified for the written National Dental Hygiene Board Examination and subsequent clinical licensure exams. They are also prepared to pursue a bachelor’s degree in dental hygiene or a related field.

This advising guide includes information that will help you to explore your academic and career interests and determine whether the Dental Hygiene major program of study will support your long-term goals.

### EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS WITH ACADEMIC ADVISING

Throughout each semester, meet with your advisor so that he/she can guide you through a self-exploration process that will help you identify your academic and career interests.

**Beginning of Semester:**

___ Schedule an appointment to meet with your academic advisor during the first few weeks to discuss future plans and how a **Dental Hygiene Associate in Science** degree can help you achieve your goals.

___ Explore your personal interests by completing Focus2, an online career assessment tool:

`https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices/focus2.aspx`

**Mid-Semester:**

___ Schedule an appointment with academic advisor review your academic progress, Focus2 results and create an academic plan in Degree Works.

**Before Semester Ends:**

___ Schedule an appointment to discuss and register for the classes you will take the following semester. (early November for spring, early April for fall and summer).

___ Visit the Academic Career & Transfer Center or call 1-800-818-3434 to schedule an appointment.
DENTAL HYGIENE ASSOCIATE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Graduates of the program are prepared to:

- Promote the values of oral and general health with respect for diversity;
- Assess, plan, implement and evaluate community oral-health programs in a variety of settings;
- Provide and document dental hygiene care to diverse populations based on the scientific literature and according to accepted standards of care;
- Collect and analyze assessment data;
- Utilize comprehensive assessment data and problem solving strategies in determining a dental hygiene diagnosis;
- Collaborate with the patient/client to establish realistic goals and treatment strategies which facilitate optimal oral health;
- Provide dental hygiene treatment that includes preventative and therapeutic services directed by the care plan;
- Evaluate the extent to which treatment goals were achieved;
- Apply self-assessment skills to prepare for life-long learning;
- Represent and support the profession through service activities and affiliations with professional organizations;
- Apply ethical, legal and regulatory concepts to the provision and/or support of oral health care services;
- Communicate and interact effectively with patients, colleagues and other professionals.

CRIMINAL OFFENDER RECORD INFORMATION (CORI) CHECKS:

In order for a student to be eligible to participate in an academic, community or clinical program that involves potential unsupervised contact with children, the disabled, or the elderly, the student may be required to undergo a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check. Students found to have certain criminal convictions or pending criminal actions will be presumed ineligible to participate in such activities.
WOULD I MAKE AN EFFECTIVE DENTAL HYGIENIST?
For every statement below that you consider to be true give yourself 1 point. Then consult the scale at the end for results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>TRUE</th>
<th>FALSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am good at following strict rules and guidelines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy chemistry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find biology challenging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not mind putting my hands inside a stranger’s mouth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I struggle with writing papers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer clerical work over working directly with people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find calculating math problems challenging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would never volunteer to be a group leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am calm in stressful situations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to successfully take exams in multiple subjects on the same day</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable speaking to groups of people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My notebook is organized and easy for someone else to read and follow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use a calendar to organize my responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like to work on group projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to finish school, secure work and never have to study again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I need information, I research it on my own</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I put myself first before others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work well with my hands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not enjoy working one on one</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRADING THE QUIZ:

- **Questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19:**
  Give yourself **1 point** for every question that you answered TRUE; **0 points** for every question that you answered FALSE.

- **Questions 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16, 20:**
  Give yourself **1 point** for every question that you answered FALSE; **0 points** for every question that you answered TRUE.

If you scored between:

- **0–10:** You should think seriously about whether or not this is the right job for you. Talk to some dental hygienists or dentists to see what they like about their jobs and what they dislike about their jobs. There are many different job opportunities for dental hygienists, but you will need to find the right one to make yourself happy.

- **11–20:** You are an excellent candidate to become a dental hygienist.
IS THE DENTAL HYGIENE MAJOR THE RIGHT FIT FOR ME?
Think about whether you have the following personality traits and abilities that dental hygienists must posses:

- **Memory Processes**
The field of medical and dental knowledge is immense and constantly changing. Health professionals must acquire and remember a tremendous number of details, making memory processes critical. The successful student cannot take a course, memorize the information for exams, and then forget it. The knowledge you learn in each dental hygiene course is important for subsequent courses, passing your National Board exams, and most importantly — providing the highest quality care to your patients.

- **Learning Strategies**
It is important to be smart in the way you approach your studies so that you maximize your learning. Each of us learns in a different way and you should think about what study strategies work best for you. Some ideas are: taping lectures, forming study groups, re-writing notes at home after class, reading before the lecture so you are familiar with the material, flash cards, drawing pictures or diagrams, etc. Keep assignments on a calendar, schedule study time and don’t procrastinate.

- **Self-directed in Learning**
Healthcare education extends over the lifetime of the individual. Health professionals must be self-directed in their learning activities and be able to relate new information to their own experiences. You are just beginning a lifetime of dental hygiene education.

- **Decision-making, reasoning and problem-solving**
Dental hygiene practice requires critical thinking processes and skills. You must apply the information you learn in class to a clinical setting. Each patient is unique, requiring that you, the student, are able to reason and problem-solve each situation in consultation with your instructor. We expect the student to look up information and research topics as needed rather than asking your instructor for the answer; this is the hallmark of a professional.

- **Sensory-motor ability**
Dental hygiene requires a very high level of sensory-motor ability and manual dexterity. You will learn to use surgically sharp instruments that must be manipulated in a safe and effective manner for health and safety reasons. The inability to safely perform dental hygiene instrumentation skills is grounds for dismissal from the dental hygiene program for health and safety reasons. Practice intentionally when in clinical labs and at home on your typodont (tooth model). Prior to starting a dental hygiene program it is beneficial to develop manual dexterity and physical strength in the hands and arms.

- **Ability to deal with anxiety and professionalism**
The health care environment is very stressful. The health care professional needs a calm, professional demeanor to establish trust & rapport with patients. During the dental hygiene program there are several oral presentations, clinical evaluations, and patient interactions that may be stressful. The ability to handle stress is an important factor in successful completion of the program. Copyright: Phyllis Sprage 2007, Foothills Community College

- **Wear protective equipment such as surgical gloves, face masks, and goggles.**
- **Be aware of possible exposure to hazards such as radiographic rays and materials, dental materials and medicaments, blood and bodily fluids.**
THE CAREER PATH

There are numerous career opportunities for licensed dental hygienists. Those who choose to enter private dental practice work in collaboration with a licensed dentist performing preventive dental services. Many hygienists select other non-traditional work settings to practice dental hygiene. Examples of such settings might include: health centers, hospitals, nursing homes, and home health services. Some dental hygienists also function as managers or consumer advocates. With an advanced degree, dental hygienists might consider employment in public health or as instructors or administrators of educational programs. Dental hygienists interested in science and the challenge of research can utilize their skills in both clinical and laboratory research.

Career Planning Activities:
___ Work with career advisor to create resume, cover letter and help improve your interview skills
___ Identify internship and volunteer opportunities in your desired field
___ Attend career workshops and job fairs

THE TRANSFER PATH

Graduates of the Dental Hygiene program are prepared to pursue a bachelor’s degree in dental hygiene or other related fields.

Transfer Planning Activities:
___ Work with an advisor to discuss MassTransfer, Articulations and transfer agreements.
___ Visit your selected campuses in person. Every college looks good online or in a glossy photo, but you can get a better feel when you visit.
___ Meet with a transfer counselor to identify transfer scholarships.
___ Research admissions requirements and deadlines at four-year colleges and universities.

MCC ADVISING RESOURCES

We invite you to visit MCC’s website http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/Home.xml which has general information about all aspects of the college; and the dental program’s website at https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/dentalprograms/or, if you wish to contact the dental hygiene office directly, please call 978.656.3054 during regular business hours.

Career Services:
https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices

Transfer Services:
https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/transfer

MassTransfer:
https://www.mass.edu/transfer/

Financial Aid:
https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/financialaid

Foundation Scholarships:
https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/foundation/scholarships

College Board Match Maker:
http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/search/adv_typeofschool.jsp

You can find more information about careers and salaries at: www.bls.gov.

DENTAL RELATED RESOURCES

American Dental Hygiene Association:
www.adha.com

Massachusetts Dental Hygiene Association:
www.massdha.org

American Dental Education Association:
www.adea.org

American Dental Association: www.ada.org

Hispanic Dental Association:
http://www.hdassoc.org/