



California Dental Hygienists' Association
The Voice of Dental Hygiene

October 28, 2014

Marshall Drummond
Chancellor of the Community Colleges
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Dear Mr. Drummond,

California Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA) is writing to express our strong support for the selection of Dental Hygiene as one or more of the pilot programs implemented under SB 850, which would allow for applied baccalaureate degrees in areas of high workforce demand at the community college level in California.

Given the increasingly complex health histories of those who seek dental hygiene care across their life span, the growing evidence connecting oral health and systemic health, and the public's increasing need and demand for the prevention of oral disease and promotion of health, there is a great need for dental hygiene students to further their knowledge in case-based science as it applies to oral health care. Having community colleges confer a Bachelor of Science degree in Dental Hygiene, Applied Science will better prepare students for patient care in California as well as provide them with the necessary foundation to enter a variety of employment settings that require the baccalaureate educated graduate.

Dental hygiene baccalaureate degree programs in California are only being offered at private colleges and universities, yet all dental hygiene programs in California must meet the same national accreditation standards, whether at public or private institutions, regardless of whether they confer a certificate, an associate degree or a baccalaureate degree upon graduation. Most California community college dental hygiene students graduate with over 150 quarter units, yet only receive the Associate of Science degree. Regardless of where students graduate, they must all pass the same National Dental Hygiene Board examination and the same clinical licensing board exams as students from baccalaureate degree programs.

In terms of workforce and future job opportunities, the dental hygienist has multiple opportunities and may work in the fields of research, education, the corporate oral health industry, public health, administration, as well as in clinical practice. Most of these positions, including the advanced clinical practice of California's RDH in Alternative Practice, require a

minimum of a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent. California's public educational institutions have a responsibility to prepare their dental hygiene graduates for the highest level of practice as well as all arenas for gainful employment.

With the evolving models of healthcare occurring across the nation, dental hygienists in California are positioned to assume even greater roles and responsibilities in the delivery of cost-effective, preventive oral health care and to increase access to care. The California Dental Association, in their recent Access to Care Report, reported that 30% of Californians are not being served or are underserved by our current dental workforce. Given the increasingly complex and varying needs of the public, baccalaureate degree dental hygiene programs in California public education institutions are vitally important to the future of oral health.

CDHA is confident that any of the accredited community colleges that offer dental hygiene programs and submit an application for consideration in the pilot project are well placed to develop a successful baccalaureate degree program.

Best regards,



Karine Strickland, RDHAP, BS

President, California Dental Hygienists' Association