Dental Hygiene

Overview

As licensed oral health care professionals and educators, dental hygienists, as members of the dental team, often work in collaboration with other health care providers. Dental hygienists integrate knowledge of biomedical, dental, clinical and social sciences to assist individuals and groups in achieving and maintaining optimum oral health. The dental hygienist provides preventive services, preliminary examinations, radiographs, sealants, nonsurgical periodontal therapy, fluoride treatments, and patient education. Depending upon individual state laws, the role of the hygienist has expanded to include procedures that are beyond this traditional scope of responsibility, such as the administration of local anesthesia and nitrous oxide analgesia and restorative therapy. As a specialist, the dental hygienist is an integral co-therapist in helping consumers prevent oral disease, arrest existing oral disease, and maintain oral health.

Philosophy, Mission, and Goals

The fundamental philosophy of the Idaho State University Department of Dental Hygiene is threelfold. First, its members are committed to excellence in all academic endeavors. Second, the program is progressive in instituting ongoing change to prepare for the future of dental hygiene. The program also places priority on basing these changes on evaluation findings while maintaining essential traditional values. Third, as a component of the university’s primary emphasis area, the program serves statewide, regional, and global needs by providing access to quality education in the discipline as well as meeting the employment demands and oral health needs of the public.

The primary mission of the Idaho State University Department of Dental Hygiene is to provide global leadership and scholarship in educating dental hygienists who will improve the quality of health for diverse populations by advancing the delivery systems and science of dental hygiene through interprofessional collaboration while adhering to professional standards. Pursuant to the broad philosophy and mission statement, the Department of Dental Hygiene seeks to positively impact the education of its students and the delivery of dental hygiene services to the public by fulfilling the following interrelated program goals:

- **Goal 1.** Provide quality progressive baccalaureate and graduate dental hygiene education preparing individuals for the future needs of a global society.
- **Goal 2.** Increase the visibility of the department and profession through leadership and scholarship.
- **Goal 3.** Expand oral health care for diverse populations through interprofessional and community outreach experiences using advanced delivery systems.
- **Goal 4.** Enhance resources to support the department mission, vision, and goals.

Baccalaureate Program Description

The Department of Dental Hygiene awards a Bachelor of Science degree. Students apply to the professional curriculum after completing prerequisite courses in science and general education. The professional program is two years in length. Prerequisites can be completed at the institution of the student’s choice.

The Department of Dental Hygiene has transfer information posted on its website at: https://www.isu.edu/dentalhygiene/.

The program is designed to foster student growth, promote development of critical and ethical judgment, and encourage life-long learning. The curriculum includes didactic, laboratory, and clinical instruction sufficient to graduate competent clinicians who are capable of practicing contemporary dental hygiene procedures. Students are educated to clinical competency in both traditional and advanced procedures, with emphasis placed on preventive, therapeutic, and nonsurgical services essential for providing total patient care to the public. As a result, graduates possess an increased understanding of dentistry and dental hygiene, expanded capabilities as members of the oral health team, and greater career mobility. Graduates of the Idaho State University dental hygiene program also are prepared to pursue graduate studies in dental hygiene or related areas. The dental hygiene program is fully accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation.

Employment Opportunities

Upon completion of the dental hygiene curriculum, graduates are qualified to take the Dental Hygiene National Board Examination and regional and state licensure exams. Graduates are eligible for positions in private dental offices, public health programs, school health programs, dental hygiene education, and research. In addition, the dental hygiene program provides instruction and experience in advanced procedures to broaden capabilities for clinical practice.

Master of Science in Dental Hygiene

The graduate program is designed for licensed dental hygienists with baccalaureate degrees. Graduates are prepared for more complex roles in the discipline such as dental hygiene educators, researchers, and advanced rural and community oral health practitioners. The program provides an online graduate curriculum with minimal on-campus visitations required. For more information, please see the Dental Hygiene (http://coursecat.isu.edu/graduate/healthscience/dentalhygiene) page in the Graduate Catalog.

Accelerated B.S. to M.S.D.H. Degree

B.S. degree-seeking students enrolled in the dental hygiene program at Idaho State University are eligible to apply to the B.S.-M.S. Accelerated Track option during their senior year and complete 6 credits of graduate coursework. Contact the department for more details.

DENT Faculty (http://coursecat.isu.edu/undergraduate/college-of-health-professions/dental-hygiene/faculty)

DENT Courses (http://coursecat.isu.edu/undergraduate/allcourses/dent)