



School of Dentistry
Office of the Dean

October 22, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I understand that California has approved a pilot project in which a select number of community colleges will be granted permission to offer a Bachelor degree. West LA College is pursuing this opportunity and hopes to offer a Bachelor Degree in Dental Hygiene. I wholeheartedly support their efforts.

In the rationale for the bill, it is noted that there is demand for education beyond the associate degree level in specific academic disciplines that is not currently being met by California's four-year public institutions. That is clearly the case in dental hygiene. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics identifies dental hygiene as a growing field. The Surgeon General has noted that there are great disparities in access to oral health care and dental hygienists play a role in providing access to that care. California does have dental hygiene programs, but the majority of those grant an associate degree. Recently, the regulating board for dental hygienists in California, the Dental Hygiene Board of California, proposed a new regulation requiring teaching credentials to be at Bachelor degree level for dental hygiene classroom faculty. Dental hygiene programs are struggling to hire dental hygiene faculty with this level of education.

There are no State colleges or Universities that offer a Bachelor of Science degree in Dental Hygiene in California. All bachelor degree programs in California are private institution-USC, West Coast University, Loma Linda University, the University of Pacific, resulting in programs that will cost as much as \$100,000 a year, limiting access to students who cannot afford the high educational costs, and a high level of student debt for those who can. West Los Angeles College Dental Hygiene is seeking the opportunity to gain approval to offer a Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene.

As Associate Dean of the UMKC School of Dentistry and a former accreditation site visitor, I know that all accredited dental hygiene programs in U.S.A must meet rigorous curricula requirements, which often result in graduates with 80-90 credit hours. The West LA College program already requires 61 units during the DH curriculum to be completed to achieve an AS degree. Most applicants to our program must complete at least 30 units for prerequisite courses, but most of them already have 60 units prior to applying to the dental hygiene

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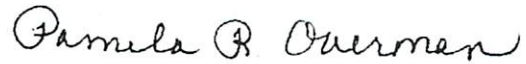
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an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution

program. The opportunity to earn a bachelor degree will help assure that the existing dental hygiene programs have more candidates for faculty positions and allow dental hygienists to take leadership roles in securing access to oral health care.

Please let me know if you have any questions or any clarifications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pamela R. Overman". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Pamela R. Overman, Ed.D.
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs