

Dental Hygiene Students Questions and Answers

- **What did you think dental hygiene was all about when you started school?**
 - A. Cleaning teeth.
 - B. I thought it was all about teeth and gums!
- **What things surprised you once you were enrolled in the program?**
 - A. The link between systemic health and oral condition.
 - B. The depth of study and many other subjects to be mastered in DH was amazing.
- **What do you wish someone would have told you before you started school?**
 - A. Patient management would be a huge aspect of the daily workday. It takes all kinds to make the world go around and many of them will sit in your dental chair.
 - B. To clean every corner of my house and train my boys better because there was no looking back.
- **What courses taken prior to enrolling in the dental hygiene program (college and high school) supported you in the program?**
 - A. Anatomy and physiology (hands down)
 - B. The Science courses including A & P, Chemistry, Microbiology as well as Psychology, Speech and Communications were all very helpful and necessary.
- **Do you think about the profession of dental hygiene differently than you did two years or even a year ago?**
 - A. Yes, it can be very involved or not, depending on how the hygienist chooses to work with the patients. You can just clean teeth or you can work with the patient to achieve optimal health.
 - B. Yes, my thoughts are full of WOW's as the profession changes daily with technology updates and patients as well as Physicians being more informed and willing to see the whole body connection. Two years ago I was still trying to survive in the clinical setting after transitioning from school.
- **What gave you a tough time that you wish you would have received more help with?**
 - A. More time with the ultrasonic would have been helpful. After four years of work I finally feel pretty effective with the ultrasonic. Also, sharpening the instrument was a challenge. I have worked very diligently to become proficient at this skill.
 - B. The two biggies for me are coding and scheduling as I had no prior dental experience.
- **What do you see yourself doing next year at this time?**
 - A. Working in clinical setting four days a week. Volunteering at the Rescue Mission utilizing the LAP.
 - B. I'll continue to work in the clinical setting with my eyes open for new avenues to practice dental hygiene in the community.
- **Do you think all the time and energy you have put into this program was worth it?**
 - A. Most definitely, this is a great profession, flexible, great income, challenges me every day.

- B. The time and energy spent were well worth it as I am able to help my family and friends and work on a part time basis. I wonder now how I juggled family and school full time and survived.
- **Do you have any aspirations of going beyond the clinical aspect of dental hygiene?**
 - A. My hope is to some day work part time out of clinical office such as representative for a company or an educator, possibly adjunct faculty at the school. I believe I will always work clinical.
 - B. Working in the medical/hospital setting is my goal. Combining my teaching background and my dental hygiene knowledge in a wide range of hospital settings is where I'm headed. I'm looking at a master's degree program in public health but haven't broken the news to my husband yet!
- **Favorite or most difficult courses or projects.**
 - A. Periodontics was the most difficult, due to the big picture aspect to the disease. I didn't really understand how it all came together until I got into the work force. Through experience I began to see patients who had health issues that affected their perio status. Working with full blown perio cases brought it all together for me.
 - B. My favorite and most difficult classes were Histology/Embryology and oral pathology we had fun memorizing, questioning and doing a few projects. The most difficult thing for me was to work on group projects. And yes I survived group projects (not a fan of these). I can now admit that these were very beneficial when working with a small group or staff every day!
- **Would you recommend this program to others and why?**
 - A. Yes, I do all the time. MSU COT program was so exceptional. The faculty very caring and looking out for the best interest of hygiene, and the student. This AAS degree can give a student a life long career that is rewarding, flexible, and intriguing.
 - B. I do recommend this program to others on a regular basis because the opportunities are endless, the pay is good for our area and a student should be able to find a job easily in Montana or surrounding states. The program is small and very family like and supportive.
- **How did being enrolled in the program affect your personal life...family?**
 - A. It was a challenge to balance family and school. Due to a supportive husband I was able to succeed in the program and spend much time studying. I knew a few years of hard work would pay off many years to come so it was easy to keep pushing through.
 - B. Well, my husband thought I was having a mid life crisis going back to school at 40+ and our son who was in the 5th grade always finished his homework before I did! I think I forgot how to cook balanced meals and had to let the laundry pile up on occasion but the semesters flew by!
- **Did progressing through the program as a cohort provide you strength and a sense of belonging?**
 - A. Yes, working so close with others who are struggling right along side you brings you very close. There was always someone you could call and ask questions of, different people had strength in different areas so each individual became part of the whole. It formed life long friends with a common interest.

- B. Our class became a supportive family away from home. When you felt overwhelmed with change or projects or tests or clinic there was always the round table to flop down and talk things through and cheer each other up. We threw some fun in to break up the stress by playing volleyball and softball in a city recreation team which really brought us together as a group.
- **Is prior dental experience necessary to be successful in the program?**
 - A. I came in with 200 hours of volunteer work. It was very helpful but I don't think it is necessary. It makes for a smoother transition into hygiene but again I believe I would have been successful without the prior experience.
 - B. Prior dental experience is not necessary but may help in a couple of classes as well as in the clinical setting.
- **How will completing this program change you life?**
 - A. This program gave me a passion for a career. It will allow me to complete my working years with a purpose and a drive I had never felt before.
 - B. Completing the program has changed my life in many ways. The most evident change was in the wonderful people I have met and had the privilege to learn from and work with. Being able to contribute to my family and friends from the financial aspect has been very rewarding also. Having the opportunity to be part of the MDHA and continued contact with the students in the dental hygiene school has kept me motivated as a clinical hygienist.
- **Why did you choose hygiene as a profession?**
 - A. I knew health care was one of the fastest growing career areas, good pay, flexible hours. I didn't expect to love the work as much as I do.
 - B. I wanted to be in a profession that I could apply my communication skills to teach people of all ages how to be healthier. Hygiene chose me!
- **Memorable experiences?**
 - A. Completing my class IV patient. It was very rewarding.
 - B. Wow every experience was one to remember.