

# Bellingham Technical College to Offer Dental Hygienist Program

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BELLINGHAM - After three years of discussion and planning, Bellingham Technical College is finally unveiling its newest program - dental hygiene.

The new dental hygienist program, the only two-year-degree program in the field north of Shoreline Community College, will start in January.

Students in the seven-quarter program will receive a mixture of classroom instruction and hands-on experience in the dental clinic on campus. Program graduates will receive an associate of applied science-transfer degree and be eligible to take the National Board Examination, a certificate that is accepted all over the country.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

**Program requirements include:** grade point average of at least 2.7, a score sheet from the Health Occupations Basic Entrance Test and satisfactory oral health.

**Pre-requisite courses include:** Human Anatomy and Physiology 1 and 2, Intro to Organic Chemistry, Microbiology, Human Nutrition and Introduction to Sociology.

**Applications due:** by Friday, Nov. 14.

**To apply:** go to [www.btc.ctc.edu](http://www.btc.ctc.edu) and click on "Dental Hygiene Program" link on the right side of the page.



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Bellingham Technical College offers a NEW Dental Hygiene Program

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Application Deadline November 14

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Bellingham TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Only 12 students will be accepted into the program this winter and the college will not accept any more applicants until after summer 2010, when the first students complete the program. This will allow school officials to work out any problems with the program before enrolling more students.

After summer 2010, the program will be put on the college's regular admission schedule, with multiple opportunities each academic year to enter the program, said Mary Humphries, executive director of college advancement.

The college already has a dental assistant program, which trains people in how to help dentists with sterilizing utensils, prepping stations and assisting them through procedures. Dental hygienists will be trained to do oral checks, cleanings and other types of prevention work that doesn't require dentist supervision.

"We know this is a very high demand occupation and for good reason," Humphries said. "It pays well."

According to the national Bureau of Labor Statistics, dental hygienists are one of the fastest growing occupations in the U.S., with employment expected to grow by 30 percent through 2016. Washington employed about 5,200 dental hygienists in May 2007 and has a mean wage of about \$42 per hour, the second highest in the country, behind Alaska.

The college's dental clinic, which is open to the public Thursdays and Fridays, has about 620 patient visits each year. When the clinic component of the dental hygiene program is in full swing, probably around the end of the spring quarter 2009, school officials plan to open the clinic to the public extra days each week, which could more than double patient visits, Humphries said.

"One thing I like about this is we're not just training students for a good profession," Humphries said. "They're able to provide dental care for those who can't afford it."