College launching new Dental Assisting program

Beginning this fall Rogue Community College will offer a one-year Dental Assisting certificate.

“We will admit two cohorts each year and offer classes both during the day and in the evenings,” said Robert Felthousen, lead instructor for the new program, which recently won approval from the State Board of Higher Education.

Evening classes will be held at the RCC’s Riverside Campus in Medford. Daytime sections will be offered starting spring term at a location to be determined. A full-time student could complete the requirements in four terms, Felthousen said. Participants are eligible for financial aid such as student loans.

“We are also working out agreements with sponsoring dental offices to provide working internships for students,” he added. The program will include 100 hours of chair-side assisting experience per term. American Dental Association accreditation requires students to have 300 hours before graduating.

“This is an excellent way for students to build a quality resume and hone their skills before seeking employment,” Felthousen said. “It’s also an opportunity to experience firsthand what they're learning in class and to meet potential employers.”

All classes have been designed using ADA standards for accreditation, which RCC will seek once the program becomes established, he added. There are currently only seven ADA-accredited dental assisting programs in the state and none in southern Oregon. Statewide the employment outlook for dental assistants through 2014 is projected to be much higher than average occupations, according to the Oregon Labor Market Information System and Oregon Employment Department.

For southern Oregon the growth rate is projected to be 37 percent with total job openings (including replacement positions) projected to increase by 71 percent – both considerably higher than average for the region. Median wage is $13.50 with some assistants earning as much as $18 per hour.
Students must apply for entry into the program; however, once accepted they are allowed to attend part time or even stop attending and return at a later time (in which case they would have to be able to meet current program requirements).

Completion of the program allows students to take the Dental Assisting National Board's Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) and Expanded Functions Dental Assistant (EFDA) exams.

“The EFDA certificate is the apex of dental assisting credentials and can only be obtained after completing the CDA,” Felthousen said.

For more information contact Arlene Dowell at 956-7116, or visit the RCC Web site at www.roguecc.edu.