

# Edison College gets top marks for dental program

**SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY**

Edison College's program for dental assistants and dental hygienists recently received accreditation with commendation by the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation with no recommendations for improvements.

The review was voluntarily requested by the college three years prior to its regular accreditation visit in 2009.

"The report by the Commission visiting committee commended the leadership and faculty as being exemplary," said Dr. Mary Lewis, associate dean of health professions at Edison College in Fort Myers. "This is something the dental program has worked very hard to achieve together — the leadership team, faculty, and students."

The dental program is relatively new, the first students graduated in 1995. Now, local students and those from as far away as Marco Island, Sarasota and Arcadia make up a maximum of 36 freshmen and sophomores in the dental hygiene program and 12 in the dental assistant program. They receive instruction at Edison from six full-time faculty members each with a master's or doctorate degree. The faculty members work hand in hand with the students to guide them through the rigorous program.

The college's dental hygiene students have boasted a 100 percent pass rate on national board exams since the program's inception 12 years ago with student scores putting them in the top 15 percent of similar schools in the country. From the beginning, 97 percent of the students have scored an A or B on the national board exams.

"It has been a professional and personal goal of mine to play a hand in bringing

this program to the very top," said Karen Molumby, director of the dental program. "I am mostly pleased for the citizens in the community that these well-trained students serve or will soon serve in area dental offices."

"I can attest to the quality of the students in the Edison College program," said Dr. Mark Kraver, a Cape Coral dentist. "The hygienist employed in my office is an Edison graduate, and we are all very pleased with the training she has had. She is knowledgeable, gentle and people really like her."

The dental program instruction takes place in the classroom and in the Edison College Dental Clinic. The dental clinic, housed in the new Health Sciences building on the Fort Myers campus, served 2,330 patients in the last 12 months and still has a waiting list. The clinic offers the community \$15 cleanings, x-rays and sealants; children under age 17 receive these same services free.

The clinic looks like any fine area dental office or clinic with a nicely appointed waiting room, exam rooms and treatment bays equipped with all the latest dental tools.

However, this dental clinic is staffed by students from the front office to the dental chair with the oversight and guidance of a resident dentist and other faculty, each student honing skills for work in the "real world," the dentist's office. Students learn about patient relations, computer software and office management at the clinic along with their technical training in dental care.

Dental Clinic Supervisor Richard Olitsky, DDS, a retired periodontist (a specialist in treating gum disease), is among the faculty, and one of few periodontists teaching in a dental assistant /dental hygiene program in



COURTESY PHOTO

**Edison College dental students work in state-of-the-art facilities at the Fort Myers campus. The College's dental program recently received top marks from the American Dental Association for its dental assistants and dental hygienists programs.**

the country.

"Working with the students is most rewarding," said Dr. Olitsky. "In addition, patients get good care and good service that they probably wouldn't get otherwise."

Dental program graduate Alicia Jarvis Carbonell, 23, of Fort Myers, has been working in a dentist's office since high school. She then continued her education to become a dental hygienist and graduated nearly two years ago.

"Edison did a lot for me," said Carbonell, whose son, now age 6, was able to stay in the Edison day care center while she attended school. "Our program at Edison is tops in the nation, and I left there very well prepared."

Carbonell plans to continue her education and earn a bachelor's degree at Edison, and she hopes to someday teach or even do research.

"What they are doing at Edison College makes me very proud to be associated," said Charlotte County Dentist Carol Stevens, DDS, a member of the advisory board for the Edison College dental assistant and hygiene programs. "What Karen (Molumby) and Dr. Olitsky and the others are doing for that program — making it the best in Florida and one of the best in the country — it's certainly worthy of the commendation they have received."

The Edison College Dental Clinic is open for appointments. Summer hours are Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 985-8334 to schedule an appointment.

Edison College offers a 10-month certificate program for a career in dental assisting and a two-year Associate in Science degree for dental hygiene. For information on applying to the program, call 489-9054. ■

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