



# Bluestem Health

1021 N 27th St, Lincoln, NE 68503 | (402) 476-1455 | [bluestemlincoln.com](http://bluestemlincoln.com)

Bev Cummins, Ed. D.  
Vice President Program Development  
Lincoln Campus Executive Director, SCC  
8800 O St., Lincoln, NE

Subject: Letter of Support – Dental Hygiene Program

Date: February 12 , 2025

Greetings Ms. Cummins,

I am writing to express my support for the proposal to establish a Dental Hygiene program at Southeast Community College. As the Dental Clinic Administrator at Bluestem Health, I have witnessed firsthand the critical shortage of dental hygienists in our community, significantly impacting our ability to provide timely and effective dental care.

This shortage has led to extended wait times for patients and increased pressure on existing staff, ultimately affecting the quality of care we can offer. Establishing a Dental Hygiene program at Southeast Community College would be a pivotal step toward addressing this shortage. By training and preparing new dental hygienists, the program would provide students with valuable career opportunities and help ensure that our community has access to the dental care it needs.

I wholeheartedly support this proposal and urge the administration to approve establishing the Dental Hygiene program. This initiative will have a lasting positive impact on our community's health and well-being.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Brodecky  
Dental Clinic Administrator

To be a trusted resource for excellent medical,  
dental and behavioral health services.


Public Information



Wed 2/12/2025 11:50 AM

Rachel Brown-McDonald <rachelbrowndds@gmail.com>

SCC Hygiene Proposal

To  Bev Cummins

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Ms. Cummins,

Hello! My name is Dr. Rachel Brown-McDonald and I'm a general dentist in Grand Island. I am writing in support of SCC implementing a hygiene program as the shortage and need is significant. So many clinics, mine included, have struggled to find adequate hygiene coverage, both part time and full time. It's absolutely necessary to expand opportunities for students to enroll in dental hygiene otherwise this problem will continue and continue to restrict patient's access to care. Thank you.

*Rachel Brown-McDonald, DDS*

Cottonwood Dental

Biological and Functional Dentistry

[cottonwooddentalne.com](http://cottonwooddentalne.com)

308.382.1890

**From:** Sally Clark <[sallyclark@bluestemlincoln.com](mailto:sallyclark@bluestemlincoln.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2025 10:07 AM  
**To:** Bev Cummins <[BCummins@southeast.edu](mailto:BCummins@southeast.edu)>  
**Subject:** RDH needed

*New*

You don't often get email from [sallyclark@bluestemlincoln.com](mailto:sallyclark@bluestemlincoln.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Good morning,

Sally Clark DDS here from Bluestem Dental, Lincoln, NE. We have had really great students through the SCC DA program.

I understand you are investigating the possibility of adding a RDH program.

I just wanted to express my great support for this idea.

We have such a need right here in Lincoln for RDH, and I can only imagine an even greater need in the surrounding communities.

I also know of many young people that have struggled trying to find RDH programs with openings.

Please, do what you can to help support our SE corner of Nebraska!

Sally Clark DDS

Wew

**Robin M. Dettman, RDH**

2-13-2025

**Subject:** Letter of Support for the Establishment of a Dental Hygiene Program

**To:** Southeast Community College,

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of a Dental Hygiene program at Southeast Community College. Our community is facing a significant workforce shortage in the dental hygiene profession, and this program would provide a vital solution to address the increasing demand for qualified dental hygienists in Nebraska.

Access to quality dental care is essential to overall health, yet many dental offices in our region struggle to find skilled hygienist to meet patient needs. By developing and maintaining a CODA accredited Dental Hygiene program, Southeast Community College can play a critical role in training and equipping future dental hygienists, ensuring that our local dental practices have the workforce necessary to provide essential services.

This program would not only benefit students seeking stable, rewarding careers in the dental field but also enhance the overall health and well-being of our community by expanding access to preventive and therapeutic oral healthcare. Additionally, it would strengthen the local economy by creating job opportunities and retaining skilled professionals within our region.

As a current Southeast Community College student currently taking Physics with Kent Reinhard as my instructor, I have first hand experience at the quality of education Southeast Community College is providing and I'm very confident in the ability to implement a hygiene program and maintain its long term success.

I attended Central Community College in Hastings, NE completing the Dental Assisting Program in 2008 and years later completing the Dental Hygiene Program in 2015. Without the opportunity to receive an education at Central Community College I would not have been able to peruse my passions and accomplish my goals. I was a single mother and it was pertinent to factor in the amount of time spent in school as well as the cost of tuition. Attending the University of Nebraska Medical Center Dental Hygiene Program was not a realistic option for me considering my situation.

I strongly encourage Southeast Community College to move forward with the implementation of this much-needed program. Your leadership in this endeavor would demonstrate a commitment to meeting the evolving needs of both students and the broader community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further support for this initiative.

Sincerely,

Robin M. Dettman, RDH

Registered Dental Hygienist

Current Southeast Community College Student

Former Community College Graduate from an accredited dental hygiene program in Nebraska


Pre-Dental Student



Tue 2/11/2025 6:59 PM

Candi Filbrandt <candidds@hotmail.com>

Support of a hygiene program

To  Bev Cummins

You don't often get email from [candidds@hotmail.com](mailto:candidds@hotmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Bev

I am in strong support of a hygiene program. Let me know if and how I can help.

I am a general dentist. Since covid it has been impossible to get help, esp in the hygiene area. I have not been able to find another hygienist part time or full time. There are so few candidates even available.

The few that are moving around to different offices are asking a crazy amount of money. Sometime more than we are getting from ins from there hygiene appt.

I know I am not the only dentist in a difficult position. I have been told of many dental offices that the Dr's have to do there own hygiene.

Thank for your help to help the dental community and the patients the are being affected from a lack of hygienist

Dr Candi Filbrandt  
402-960-5974

**From:** Kendra Gosch <[goschk81@yahoo.com](mailto:goschk81@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 16, 2025 8:01 PM  
**To:** Bev Cummins <[BCummins@southeast.edu](mailto:BCummins@southeast.edu)>  
**Subject:** Hygiene program support

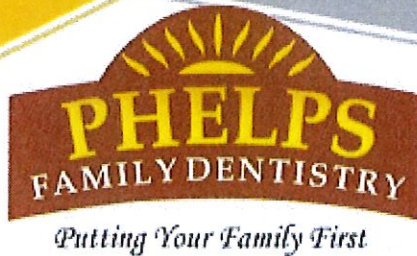
سندس

You don't often get email from [goschk81@yahoo.com](mailto:goschk81@yahoo.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

I am in support of the proposed hygiene program at Southeast Community College. It is difficult, if not impossible to find full-time hygienists for patient care. As a consequence, patients are suffering from the inability to have their healthcare needs met. I will be following this proposal closely and hope it is passed.  
Kendra Gosch DDS



سند ل



To whom it may concern,

I am Dr. Kellie Hansen a dentist in North Platte, NE. We have been looking for a full time or even part time hygienist for the last several years and due to the shortage in Nebraska are unable to find one. The number of ads out for hygienists in Nebraska far exceeds the amount graduated into the work field each year and unless new programs open or current programs increase class size, we will have no end to the shortage. I am writing in support of the new program that is proposed to start at SCC. The need for new dental hygienists state wide is huge. We are facing an even greater shortage out here in western Nebraska as very few if any hygienists are interested in practicing out here. As an office we have went to many hiring fairs at the colleges even going into Iowa and no hygienists would even entertain the idea of coming to western Nebraska. If there wasn't such a shortage, we would be able to hire hygienists to practice out here. Again, I am writing in support of the proposed new program at SCC and am hopeful that this could help with the current shortage of hygienists in Nebraska.

Thank you,

Kellie Hansen, DMD

Phone: 308-534-4040

Fax: 308-534-1087

[www.phelpsdds.com](http://www.phelpsdds.com)

221 South Jeffers Ste#1

PO Box 846

North Platte, NE 69103



*New*

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Natalie Hittner  
9423 Benziger Dr.  
Lincoln, NE 68526  
February 13, 2025

**Subject:** Letter of Support for the Establishment of a Dental Hygiene Program

**To:** Southeast Community College,

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of a Dental Hygiene program at Southeast Community College. As the owner of a local Dental Hygiene staffing agency in Lincoln, Nebraska and a practicing Registered Dental Hygienist, I am very well aware that our community and dental hygiene field is facing a significant workforce shortage.

I'm very confident that this program would provide a vital solution to address the increasing demand for qualified dental hygienists.

Access to quality dental care is essential to overall health, yet many dental offices in our region struggle to find skilled hygienist to meet patient needs. By developing and maintaining a CODA accredited Dental Hygiene program, Southeast Community College can play a critical role in training and equipping future dental hygienists, ensuring that our local dental practices have the workforce necessary to provide essential services. This program would not only benefit students seeking stable, rewarding careers in the dental field but also enhance the overall health and well-being of our community by expanding access to preventive and therapeutic oral healthcare. Additionally, it would strengthen the local economy by creating job opportunities and retaining skilled professionals within our region.

I strongly encourage Southeast Community College to move forward with the implementation of this much-needed program. Your leadership in this endeavor would demonstrate a commitment to meeting the evolving needs of both students and the broader community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further support for this initiative.

Sincerely,

Natalie K Hittner, RDH  
9423 Benziger Dr.  
Lincoln, NE 68526  
303-522-5186



## SCC hygiene proposal

New



mimi mebarek <mimimebarek@gmail.com>

To Bev Cummins

You replied to this message on 2/13/2025 8:31 AM.

Reply	Reply All	Forward	...
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Wed 2/12/2025 3:55 PM

You don't often get email from [mimimebarek@gmail.com](mailto:mimimebarek@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Bev,

I am wanting to send a support letter in regards to SCC beginning a dental hygiene program. As a dentist practicing in Lincoln for 10 years, as well as being involved with the UNMC GPR residency program for 8 years, I strongly have seen the increased demand for dental hygienists in our community, as well as the Nebraska community. Unfortunately I've experienced the shortage in my practice first hand—we had to increase our wages significantly to meet the community demand, making it nearly impossible to do more than break even in the hygiene department without jeopardizing standard of care. Which in my office we opt to take a financial hit versus do 30 minute hygiene appointments or assisted hygiene. Additionally patients wait times in a standard private practice are lengthening significantly for basic care, and that is not what is needed for Nebraskans. I can only echo my colleagues in Medicaid offices and FQHCs about their struggles to meet their even higher demands with less and less hygienists available.

I think we can all say the tipping point was Covid, where a number of hygienists retired early or changed professions. But unfortunately this shortage has been a long time coming, as more and more dental schools are opening, enrollment increases and the number of graduating dentists in Nebraska grossly outnumber hygienists for years. As you may know know, for a successful private dental office, 1 dentist benefits most from 2 hygienists at minimum, so this disparity has been a long time coming.

I personally have seen such high quality assistants graduate from SCC, so I'm more than confident that having a hygiene program would have students doing high quality work. I am I'm also confident they would hold high standards in asepsis/OSHA as well as ethics.

I know there have been opposition from prominent hygiene instructors at UNMC, but I hope the outreach from other professionals in the community can show you the high need for our community and how impactful this program can be for our state. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any other questions or have further discussion if needed.

Malika "Mimi" Long, DDS

## Dental Hygienist Shortage



Marty Matz <martymatz@mac.com>  
To Bev Cummins

[↩ Reply](#) [↩ Reply All](#) [→ Forward](#) [⋮](#)

Wed 2/12/2025 9:07 AM

You don't often get email from [martymatz@mac.com](mailto:martymatz@mac.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Marty Matz. I have been practicing dentistry for 37 years and have been a solo private practice owner for 32 years. I don't believe I have ever seen a bigger drought in dental hygienist profession than what we are experiencing now. I remember a time when an Iowa community college was proposing a doubling of their class size. All my dentist friends were wondering how they all would get jobs.

Recently I have had a reduction in my hygiene staff of 50% due to a two hygienists retiring and another taking a contract offered by a nearby dentist that promised an unreasonably high wage. I have reports of large hiring bonuses and excessive hourly wages. I don't believe a dental hygienist should receive a wage higher than a NICU nurse. Additionally, I have first hand reports of more dentists performing their own hygiene appointments. My partner and I are performing several hygiene appointments every day to accommodate the shortage.

In addition to reaching out to the dental grapevine we have used online hiring websites for several months to no avail. We have not even received one inquiry.

The bottom line is: Demand is high and supply is low.

Respectfully submitted,

Marty J. Matz, DDS



**The Tooth Doc**  
*Anxiety Free Family Dentistry*

Marty J. Matz, D.D.S  
15751 W. Dodge Rd.  
Omaha, NE. 68118  
Mobile: (402)616-7577  
Work: (402)397-8050



Wed 2/12/2025 12:02 PM

Alex Mayhan <wamayhan@gmail.com>

Support for SCC's New Dental Hygiene Program

To  Bev Cummins

You don't often get email from [wamayhan@gmail.com](mailto:wamayhan@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Bev Cummins,

I am writing to express my strong support for the new dental hygiene program at Southeast Community College set to launch in 2026. As a general dentist in Omaha, I have personally experienced the ongoing shortage of dental hygienists, making it increasingly difficult to meet the growing oral health needs of our community.

This program will play a crucial role in addressing the workforce gap, ensuring that more well-trained hygienists enter the field and allowing dental practices like mine to continue providing high-quality care. Additionally, expanding access to dental hygiene education will benefit not only practitioners but also countless patients who rely on preventative care to maintain their oral health.

I encourage all efforts to support the construction and successful implementation of this program, and thank you for your time and dedication to strengthening Nebraska's dental workforce.

Best regards,

W. Alex Mayhan, DDS

Quality Dental Care Bennington; Plattsmouth Dental



Wed 2/12/2025 12:17 PM

Samantha Blaha <sami.blaha@gmail.com>

Support for SCC's New Dental Hygiene Program

To  Bev Cummins

You don't often get email from [sami.blaha@gmail.com](mailto:sami.blaha@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello Bev,

I am writing to express my strong support for the new dental hygiene program at Southeast Community College set to launch in 2026.

As a general dentist in Bennington, I have personally experienced the ongoing shortage of dental hygienists, making it increasingly difficult to meet the growing oral health needs of our community. This program could play a crucial role in addressing the workforce gap, ensuring that more well-trained hygienists enter the field and allowing dental practices like mine to continue providing high-quality care. Additionally, expanding access to dental hygiene education will benefit not only practitioners but also countless patients who rely on preventative care to maintain their oral health.

I encourage all efforts to support the construction and successful implementation of this program. Thank you for your time and dedication to strengthening Nebraska's dental workforce.

Best regards,

Samantha McKenna, DDS  
Quality Dental Care Bennington






Wed 2/12/2025 11:43 AM

Sean Pauley <seanpauley@me.com>

SCC Hygiene Program

To  Bev Cummins

[You don't often get email from [seanpauley@me.com](mailto:seanpauley@me.com). Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

Hi Bev,

My name is Sean Pauley and I'm a dentist here in Lincoln. I graduated from UNMC in 2017 and back in October of 2023 I purchased my own practice. Upon purchasing this practice the existing hygienist had planned on retiring as well. I have been looking for a hygienist ever since October of 2023.

I look at the job postings on Indeed, LinkedIn, Facebook and I see that I am not the only practice looking for help in this area.

Nebraska could greatly benefit from more hygiene graduates. I am in support of the SCC Hygiene program and wanted to drop you a quick note.

Thank you for your time and please reach out if you would like to talk more.


Sean Pauley  
402.540.6124




Wed 2/12/2025 8:14 AM

Tanya <tanyawanda@yahoo.com>

New hygiene program

To  Bev Cummins

 We removed extra line breaks from this message.

[You don't often get email from [tanyawanda@yahoo.com](mailto:tanyawanda@yahoo.com). Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

The dentists in Lincoln need hygienists! Been needing one for over a year and they don't exist, We need a program at SCC Tanya Powell DDS Sent from my iPhone

New



## Bluestem Health

1021 N 27th St, Lincoln, NE 68503 | (402) 476-1455 | [bluestemlincoln.com](http://bluestemlincoln.com)

2/18/25

**Subject:** Letter of Support for the Establishment of a Dental Hygiene Program

**To:** Southeast Community College,

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of a Dental Hygiene program at Southeast Community College. Our community is facing a significant workforce shortage in the dental hygiene profession, and this program would provide a vital solution to address the increasing demand for qualified dental hygienists. Access to quality dental care is essential to overall health, yet many dental offices in our region struggle to find skilled hygienist to meet patient needs. By developing and maintaining a CODA accredited Dental Hygiene program, Southeast Community College can play a critical role in training and equipping future dental hygienists, ensuring that our local dental practices have the workforce necessary to provide essential services.

This program would not only benefit students seeking stable, rewarding careers in the dental field but also enhance the overall health and well-being of our community by expanding access to preventive and therapeutic oral healthcare. Additionally, it would strengthen the local economy by creating job opportunities and retaining skilled professionals within our region.

I strongly encourage Southeast Community College to move forward with the implementation of this much-needed program. Your leadership in this endeavor would demonstrate a commitment to meeting the evolving needs of both students and the broader community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further support for this initiative.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Arathi Reddy, DMD  
Dentist  
Bluestem Health  
1021 N 27<sup>th</sup> street,  
Lincoln, NE 68503

## Support of new hygiene program

سہیل




Brent Rising <brent.rising@gmail.com>

To ● Bev Cummins

↩ Reply   ↩ Reply All   → Forward   ⋮

Wed 2/12/2025 9:19 PM

 You replied to this message on 2/13/2025 8:24 AM.

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Hello, I would like to offer my support for the new proposed hygiene program! I own a group practice in the Omaha Metro consisting of nine General Dentistry offices. We are continuously trying to recruit dental hygienists and currently have a shortage of six at the moment. I would be in full support of this program. Please let me know how I can help.

Thanks  
Brent Rising, DDS  
Omaha, NE





Tue 2/11/2025 6:59 PM

Paula Cohen <paulacohen.dmd@gmail.com>

Hygiene program at SCC

To  Bev Cummins

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Hello,

My name is Paula and I'm a periodontist in Lincoln, NE. We desperately need to graduate more highly trained hygienists. As one of the 5 practicing periodontists in Lincoln, I see periodontal disease at a much higher rate than most general dentists and other specialists. As people are living longer and keeping their teeth, it's become even more important that we have hygienists that can properly treat gingivitis and periodontitis, as well as, help educate patients on their overall oral health.

At this time, if I see a new patient referred for periodontal disease, it is at least 2-3 months before we have an opening to begin their treatment with our hygienists. Many of our referring general dental practices have been struggling to hire their own hygienists and have thus had to refer even more periodontal patients to us. Moreover, while the UNMC COD has increased its dental student class size, it has not added any additional hygiene spots, despite their being an overwhelming need for more hygienists, not dentists (both locally and nationwide).

I fully endorse and support the formation of another program at SCC and would be happy to help in any way that I can.

Paula Cohen Schlemmer, DMD, MS

سدر

From: Melissa Schuldt <[dr.melissaguerreroschuldt@gmail.com](mailto:dr.melissaguerreroschuldt@gmail.com)>  
Sent: Thursday, February 13, 2025 6:00 PM  
To: Bev Cummins <[BCummins@southeast.edu](mailto:BCummins@southeast.edu)>  
Subject: Hygiene program

You don't often get email from [dr.melissaguerreroschuldt@gmail.com](mailto:dr.melissaguerreroschuldt@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Bev,

Hi, I am dentist in Grand Island. I have been drastically effected by the hygiene shortage and know plenty of others as well. The hygienists are holding us hostage because of it.

I have been practicing for 13 years and opened my own practice. I started with 1 hygienist in 2019 and quickly added a 2nd in 2020. In 2023, we added our 3rd. Shortly after my 2nd hygienist left to another office and the 3rd new grad up and moved to Colorado after only practicing 3 months. That was in Sept and I immediately started looking for a hygienist. In Jan 2024 my hygienist that I started with left dentistry for real estate.

I went 7mo with no hygiene and had never stopped searching. I did hire 2 hygienists straight out of school may of 2024 but one ended up backing out and going to FQHC for health insurance. The 2nd one struggled to pass her boards and finally passed Oct 2024. She's been great but I also added an associate so we could use 2 more still!

When I read this article from the NDA I was ecstatic. I will add that the assisting program at SCC is far superior to our local program that offers both assisting and hygiene programs! My new associate agrees! She asked why is there such a large discrepancy in training.

Thanks so much for your time! I gave a lot to read! But this is so important to me!!

Thanks  
Dr. Melissa Schuldt

New




Wed 2/12/2025 5:42 PM

Andrew Stadler <stadlerdentalcare@gmail.com>

Proposed Dental Hygiene program at SCC

To  Bev Cummins

 You replied to this message on 2/13/2025 8:29 AM.

You don't often get email from [stadlerdentalcare@gmail.com](mailto:stadlerdentalcare@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Dr. Cummins,

I wanted to express my strong support for an AAS dental hygiene program at SCC. I have the pleasure of working with a graduate of Southeast Community College's dental assistant program who is now my lead dental assistant. I have first hand knowledge of the strength of your college's health science programs. I was speaking with her today about the potential for this program. She said " I loved my time at SCC" She has been in pursuit of advancement into the dental hygiene profession and has been on a waitlist for an opening in a program of dental hygiene and has even been looking out of state for an opportunity. There is a workforce shortage in the state of Nebraska where demand far exceeds registered dental hygienist availability. I know have had times where I have had opportunities in my dental hygiene department that have gone unfilled due to lack of availability. My practice is located in Columbus, Platte County, Nebraska. My contact information is below.

--

Andrew Stadler, D.D.S.

C: (402)910-1508

O: (402)564-4093

Email: [Stadlerdentalcare@gmail.com](mailto:Stadlerdentalcare@gmail.com)



New

# LINCOLN PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY



February 10, 2025

**Subject:** Letter of Support for the Establishment of a Dental Hygiene Program

**To:** Southeast Community College,

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of a Dental Hygiene program at Southeast Community College. Our community is facing a significant workforce shortage in the dental hygiene profession, and this program would provide a vital solution to address the increasing demand for qualified dental hygienists.

Access to quality dental care is essential to overall health, yet many dental offices in our region struggle to find skilled hygienists to meet patient needs. By developing and maintaining a CODA accredited Dental Hygiene program, Southeast Community College can play a critical role in training and equipping future dental hygienists, ensuring that our local dental practices have the necessary workforce to provide essential services.

This program would not only benefit students seeking stable, rewarding careers in the dental field but also enhance the overall health and well-being of our community by expanding access to preventive and therapeutic oral healthcare. Additionally, it would strengthen the local economy by creating job opportunities and retaining skilled professionals within our region. We employ several people interested in a dental hygiene career who have to delay their education because there are not enough openings in the current programs. The addition of this program would help alleviate this shortage and get these students into their future careers much earlier.

I strongly encourage Southeast Community College to move forward with the implementation of this much-needed program. Your leadership in this endeavor would demonstrate a commitment to meeting the evolving needs of both students and the broader community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further support for this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi J. Stark, DDS".

Heidi J. Stark, DDS

Owner, Lincoln Pediatric Dentistry





New

Melanie A. Steckelberg, D.D.S., P.C.  
General & Cosmetic Dentistry For The Whole Family

www.steckelbergdental.com

February 13, 2025

Jill Sand, MEd, RRT  
Dean of Health Sciences  
Southeast Community College  
8800 O St  
Lincoln, NE 68520

Subject: Letter of Support for the Establishment of a Dental Hygiene Program

Dear Dean Sand,

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of a Dental Hygiene program at Southeast Community College. Nebraska is facing a significant workforce shortage in the dental hygiene profession, and this program would provide a vital solution to address the increasing demand for qualified dental hygienists.

Access to quality dental care is essential to overall health, yet many dental offices in our region struggle to find skilled hygienists to meet patient needs. By developing and maintaining a CODA accredited Dental Hygiene program, Southeast Community College can play a critical role in training and equipping future dental hygienists. This would ensure that our local dental practices have the workforce necessary to provide essential dental hygiene services.

Many dental practices in Nebraska are booked out six to seven months for routine dental hygiene appointments. Our patients with periodontal disease must book two appointments at a time (3 months and 6 months out), otherwise we are not able to adequately stabilize their periodontal health. We need more dental hygienists in Nebraska so that we can provide dental services for Nebraskans in all socioeconomic levels.

This program would not only benefit students seeking stable, rewarding careers in the dental field but also enhance the overall health and well-being of our community by expanding access to preventive and therapeutic oral healthcare. Additionally, it would strengthen the local economy by creating job opportunities and retaining skilled professionals within our region.

Southeast Community College has a proven track record for providing an excellent education within their dental assisting program. I have the utmost confidence that SECC will uphold those same high standards within a dental hygiene program. SECC has an opportunity to provide an outstanding dental hygiene program for all Nebraskans that is affordable and will only improve similar institutions. Competition breeds excellence.

I strongly encourage Southeast Community College to move forward with the implementation of this much-needed program. Your leadership in this endeavor would demonstrate a commitment to meeting the evolving needs of both students and the broader community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further support for this initiative.

Sincerely,

Melanie A. Steckelberg, D.D.S.



W.ew

Ellie Volkmer  
2610 O Rd  
Syracuse, NE 68446  
402-432-1871  
ellievolkmer@gmail.com

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February 13, 2025

**Subject:** Letter of support for the Establishment of a Dental Hygiene Program

**To:** Southeast Community College

I am writing this letter to show support and passion in implementing the Dental Hygiene program at SCC. I am a former graduate of the Accredited Dental Assisting and Expanded Function programs. I know the value of an education from a Community College, as a large university is not for everyone. The relationships, small class size, and hands on experience from the SCC programs provided a solid foundation as I began my career.

An example of this experience was working with local specialty dental clinics as part of the Assisting graduation requirement. This allows students to put their education to real-life experiences while discovering what area interests them. Also, through working with local offices students are put in close connection for potential opportunities following graduation. These experiences at SCC sparked a passion in me for the dental field, and I would have pursued a career as a Hygienist if a program were available at the time.

Following graduation, I was fortunate to work at an incredible office for seven and a half years, in which I served several roles. This office takes pride in providing dental health care to patients. This care starts with hiring quality dental health care professionals, regardless of their educational background. I realized the importance of all roles from front staff, assistants, hygienists and dentists. Everyone involved in the office has gifts and talents that are needed to run a successful dental practice.

While working alongside Dental Hygienists, I witnessed the vital role they play through dental health education, performing oral health assessments, promoting good oral health practice, and preventing and treating periodontal disease. Dental Hygienists are a critical part of the dental office in being able to give quality care to patients. I am aware, and concerned of the shortage of Dental Hygienists that we have in our area. For example, the office I was formerly employed in, has been actively trying to hire a Hygienist for a month.

Sadly, they have not received any applications, and I understand this is the norm for a lot of local offices.

Despite stepping away to raise my family and support our family farm in eastern Nebraska, my passion for the dental field stays strong. Offering a Dental Hygiene program at SCC would allow individuals like me to pursue a rewarding career, without the burden of relocating. A program such as this will address the shortage of quality Dental Hygiene professionals who can attain a degree from an accredited program through a local community college. This will play a huge role in equipping our local dental practices with qualified Dental Hygiene professionals so dental healthcare can remain strong in our communities.

I strongly encourage Southeast Community College to move forward with the implantation of the Dental Hygiene Program. Your leadership in this commitment would meet the evolving needs of both students and the dental health community. Please do not hesitate to contact me as I would be happy to provide further support for this initiative. I would also be extremely interested in participating in the potential Dental Hygiene Program so I can further my education and career as a Hygienist.

Ellie Volkmer

Former SCC LCDA Graduate