

JCC teams with Monroe CC on dental program

■ Pact eliminated usual startup costs with a new course of study

By JOHN T. EBERTH
OLEAN TIMES HERALD

OLEAN — The Cattaraugus County Campus of Jamestown Community College has found a way to offer a new degree program to its students without the usual costs that come with expanding a college's course offerings.

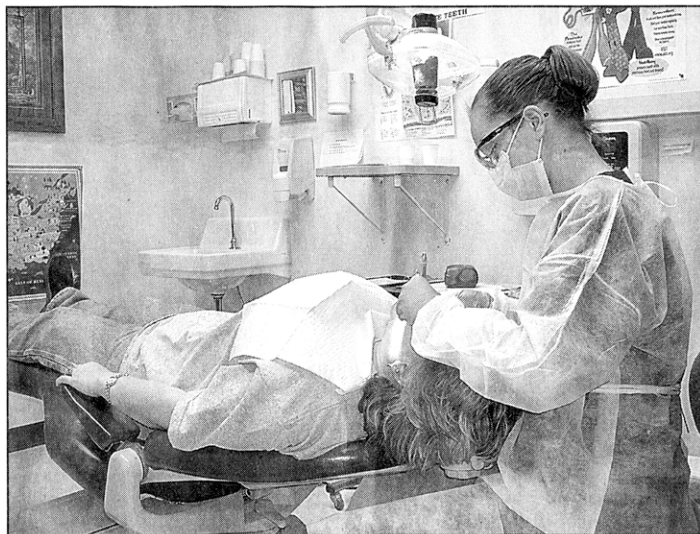
Last fall, JCC entered into an agreement with Monro Community College of Rochester to offer a dental hygienist's degree to Olean-area students.

Larry Sorokes, dean of JCC's Cattaraugus County Campus and dean of collegewide planning and development, said the agreement has helped meet students' needs without forcing JCC to build new facilities or hire new faculty.

Monroe Community College has an established dental studies program. When JCC students in the program get their diplomas, their degree will be from Monroe Community College.

For student Amy Vollmer, the program has given her a chance to pursue her degree without disrupting her life. Mrs. Vollmer lives in Port Allegany, Pa. Her husband works as an electrician and they have two young sons, 5 and 9. She has worked as a dental assistant for 14 years for a dentist in Portville and has long dreamed of getting her associate's degree as a dental hygienist.

"I was already accepted at Erie Community College when I found out about this program," she said. "This way, I don't have to drive three hours to take classes. Most of my classes are online so I can do a lot of my work from my home."



JOHN T. EBERTH/Olean Times Herald

Dental hygienist student Barbara White (right) cleans a patient's teeth at a clinic in Cuba. Ms. White, a Jamestown Community College student, is working toward her dental hygienist's degree.

The farthest she has to drive is Cuba.

Instructors from the Monro Community College Dental Studies Program have an agreement with a dental clinic in Cuba to use their facilities for the lab portion of the program.

Mrs. Vollmer said that with the cooperative degree program, she's able to pursue her degree without disrupting her young family as much.

MARIE WILLOVER, a student in the program from Cuba, said she was thinking of traveling to Buffalo or Rochester to earn her dental hygienist degree, the closest cities in which the course is offered.

"This program was just a great opportunity for me to do this closer to home," she said.

Dr. David Lawrence, director of the Monro Community College Dental Studies Program, said the cooperative degree program was borne out of community need.

"What happened was the dentists in the area came to JCC and said, 'We really need hygienists,'" he said. "But the programs are very costly because you need a clinical facility and the student-to-faculty ratios tend to be very low as

opposed to other courses, like English literature."

So there are fewer students paying for the instructor's time.

Dean Sorokes said that for those reasons, JCC reached out to Monro Community College to see if it would be willing to enter a cooperative degree program to offer a dental hygienist degree to JCC students.

"It's attractive because we can build a program faster and cheaper this way," Mr. Sorokes said. "We didn't have to go and get approved by SUNY and the State Education Department because Monro Community College already had an approved program and we didn't have to build a new lab for the students."

Dr. Lawrence said Monro Community College had nine years of experience offering a dental assistant certificate program via distance learning so he knew a dental hygienist's course could succeed.

Professor Barbara Ellis, an adjunct with the Monro Community College Department of Dental Studies, is program instructor. The American Dental Association Council on Dental Accreditation reviewed the course cre-

program not only benefits the students but their home communities as well.

"The hope is that if you educate the students in their hometown, they will stay in their hometown," he said.

Dr. Lawrence said he's received e-mail inquiries about the program from across the United States and even internationally.

"I believe this can serve as a model for other programs," he said.

Now that the agreement is in place with Monro Community

College, JCC can offer the dental hygienist degree any time there is a need, Mr. Sorokes said.

"So one year we might graduate 20 dental hygienists and then drop the program for a while," he said.

While the dental hygienist program is a success, it's not the college's first collaborative degree program. In August of 2005, JCC and Corning Community College joined forces to offer a college-level paramedic course at JCC's Cattaraugus County Campus in Olean.

ated by JCC and Monro Community College. An inspector from the ADA visited the lab in Cuba.

Following the review, the ADA gave the program full accreditation.

"The quality of the program is exactly what we offer at the Monro Community College campus," Dr. Lawrence said. "What we've found is the grades are comparable. But it does take a special student as well. They have to be motivated."

DR. LAWRENCE

said that because much of the course work is done by students at home, those in the cooperative degree program have to discipline themselves to undertake the work. That hasn't been a problem for the JCC students. Many of them are classified as non-traditional students — adults with families and years of experience in the working world. They want to succeed.

Dr. Lawrence said the