Dentists diagnose, prevent, and treat problems with teeth or mouth tissue. They remove decay, fill cavities, examine x-rays, place protective sealants on children’s teeth, straighten teeth, and repair fractured teeth. They also perform corrective surgery on gums and supporting bones to treat gum diseases. It typically takes at least 8 years to become a dentist: 4 years of undergraduate college and 4 years of dental school. For some specialties, dentists need to train for additional years.

Degree: Dental schools award the Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD).

Admission: Acceptance to dental school is highly competitive. In order to compete for admission, students are advised to complete a Bachelor Degree at an undergraduate institution with a reputation for academic excellence. Although students come from a variety of undergraduate degree programs, majoring in Chemistry, Biochemistry or Biomedical Sciences is typical. It is important to contact the Pre-Health Advisor at your four-year college for further information.

MCC students are advised to prepare to transfer to a 4 year college or university for a science major such as Biology, Chemistry or Biomedical Sciences and then apply to dental school.

All U.S. dental schools require applicants to take the Dental Admission Test (DAT). The DAT is designed to measure general academic ability, comprehension of scientific information, and perceptual ability. Applications to dental school are often made through the American Association of Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS). See: www.adea.org/dental_education_pathways/aadsas/Applicants/Pages/default.aspx

Criteria of Importance for Acceptance Include:
- Undergraduate grade point average
- Dental Admissions Test (DAT) score
- Practical experience (ex. volunteering at a dental clinic, working at a dental office)
- Research activities
- Communication skills
- Evidence of maturity, integrity, service to the community
- Work experience, extra-curricular activities, proven leadership ability
- Letters of recommendation from Pre-Health Advisor and/or Professors at the 4 year college
- Personal Statement
- Personal Interview (by invitation)

Typical Prerequisite Courses for Dental School: two semesters of biology with labs; two semesters of physics with labs; four semesters of chemistry with labs including organic; two semesters of English, humanities, social and behavioral sciences. Check individual school websites for specific/recommended courses.

Dental Schools may prefer that some or all prerequisite courses be completed at a 4-year institution.

Advanced Placement (AP) credit will likely not be accepted for science coursework.
Additional Course Suggestions:
Calculus, additional biology courses, biochemistry, microbiology, speech/public speaking, foreign language, statistics, applied art course, business, computer course.

Colleges in New York State Offering a Doctorate Degree in Dentistry:
SUNY at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine
Columbia University College of Dental Medicine
New York University College of Dentistry
SUNY at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine

Note: The University of Rochester offers a post-graduate program for those who have already obtained a dentistry degree.

Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting

Dental Hygienists and Assistants work with dentists. Hygienists clean teeth, examine patients for signs of oral diseases such as gingivitis, and provide other preventive dental care. They also educate patients on ways to improve and maintain good oral health. They need an associate’s degree in dental hygiene. Often a Dental Assistant has a Certificate. MCC offers both dental hygiene and dental assisting programs.

Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting are not pathways to becoming a dentist.

Additional Information:
American Dental Education Association: Information on Admission to Dental Schools
American Dental Association (ADA)

Note: While every effort is made to ensure that the information in this guide is accurate, students are advised to contact transfer institutions for specific course requirements and the most up-to-date information.

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