

Back to Hands On Learning

Dental hygiene students return to downtown clinic

A year ago, like the rest of the world, Portland Community College’s Dental Hygiene and Assisting students were thrown a curveball. When the pandemic hit, PCC was forced to transition to virtual operations that resulted in it closing in-person classes indefinitely.

The move was devastating. Dental students need in-person practice on real patients in order to have the skills and experience to join a workforce that is in desperate need of qualified workers.

“We all kind of panicked,” remembered Jennifer Osawa, a dental hygiene student. “We wondered, ‘How can this be? What happens if we lose our skills?’”

When PCC went to remote operations, 38 Dental Hygiene Program students were enrolled — 20 in their second year and 18 in their first.

Working with college resources, Dental



Dental Hygiene and Assisting students at Portland Community College practice on real patients in order to have the skills and experience to join a workforce that is in desperate need of qualified workers.

Director Josette Beach was able to help the second-year students graduate at the end of summer. Staff worked hard to help the students complete the required externships at local dental offices and wrap-up

their certificates, a mere one term later than usual.

But the first-year hopefuls couldn’t practice their skills on actual patients as they were forced to study remotely online.

“I was stressed about all of my classes and my life at home,” said student Laura Loaiciga Ulloa. “I was OK with a few

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WELCOME BACK!



Oregon schools are ready for in-person learning. Using steps like physical distancing, cohorts, face coverings and airflow, our teachers and staff are working hard to keep your children and family safe. Learn more about these steps at Oregon.gov/readyschools.



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