



Student Experience During COVID-19



Starting in March 2020, the UNMC College of Dentistry has taken important steps to continue educating students while keeping the college community safe and helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



MARCH & APRIL

Remote learning begins and many ingenious ideas surface that will forever change the way faculty teach and students help pave the way for new methods of learning.

Students study in real time how COVID-19 affects health care practitioners in a **pandemic response course** offered through a partnership with the UNMC College of Medicine and the UNMC College of Public Health.



"It was great getting to hear alums share their uncensored fears, plans and advice regarding these unprecedented times. The discussions about new protective equipment protocols and how dental businesses have been affected financially gave great insight into our futures in post-COVID-19 dentistry. Not to mention, the course was a great means of staying connected with our UNMC family."

- Mariah Heft, fourth-year dental student



MAY

All dental and dental hygiene students **graduate on time**. They faced unexpected challenges head on and completed their requirements and competencies with the assistance of their dedicated faculty, staff and administration.



"I want to express my sincere thanks to all those who made graduation possible. Thank you to the faculty, staff and administration at the College of Dentistry for your guidance and support for the last four years and especially the last two months."

- Brock Lewis, DDS, '20

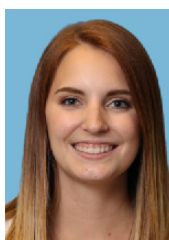


SUMMER SESSION

Reopened onsite labs and workshops on June 1 following UNMC guidance.

Dental hygiene faculty offered students **one-on-one skills sessions** that were so successful that faculty and students want to continue these sessions post-COVID.

Students were able to **continue to practice hand skills at home** because the college purchased electric handpieces and other equipment.



"The Optima units were incredibly helpful when we were learning remotely. We got the chance to practice crown preps for our board exam and were able to keep working on our hand skills with weekly restoration exercises. With the uncertainty of when we would be able to see patients again, I was so glad that UNMC was able to provide us with a solution so that we could still get a clinical learning experience from home."

- Brooke Appelhans, fourth-year dental student



JUNE & JULY

The college's clinic reentry task force, along with college administration and faculty, worked hard to determine how to get students back in the clinics while keeping everyone safe. Following are the changes that were made so students could resume their clinical educational experiences in the safest environments possible.

Clinic changes to create the safest possible environments:

- 1. Redesigned service operation and flow** from the time a patient is contacted to the time they exit the college
- 2. Made changes to deal with airflow and clinic spacing** to conform with the ever-changing guidelines and recommendations from organizations such as the CDC
- 3. Made changes in treatment approaches** to minimize aerosol generating procedures; purchased high evacuation suction units to assist in minimizing such aerosols
- 4. Made changes to student scheduling** so students are paired up and there is an assistant for procedures
- 5. Made changes to clinic workflow** so runners are available to get needed supplies and alert faculty and staff when students need assistance
- 6. Secured an adequate PPE supply** of gowns, face shields, masks and respirators; provided fit testing of N95 respirators for all students and staff
- 7. Provided PPE training for students and staff** on new donning and doffing procedures
- 8. Trained providers on nasopharyngeal swab collection** and partnered with the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory to test patients for COVID-19 before they are scheduled for aerosol generating dental procedures (using the gold standard in COVID-19 testing)
- 9. Redesigned the electronic health record** to add patient screening questionnaires
- 10. Created a clinical manual** to use as a guide for treating patients during the pandemic; designed in collaboration with the UNMC Infectious Disease department
- 11. Received the NE CARES Response and Recovery Award** to create nine airborne isolation infection rooms for safety (3 rooms in Lincoln Dental Clinic; 3 rooms in Omaha Dental Clinic; 3 rooms in Munroe-Meyer Institute)



"I'm thankful for our clinic faculty and staff who have worked so hard to make this new situation more manageable for everyone. Our GPCs and scheduling clerks are always working to get our patients scheduled as much as possible. The assistants and dispensing staff

have had to work through so many changes and do so with a positive attitude. And the doctors overseeing us understand how these new changes are affecting us and have been nothing but encouraging and helpful. Everyone deserves a huge thank you!"

- Olivia Straka, fourth-year dental student



"The COVID-19 era of dental school is organized very differently compared to pre-COVID-19 times, and while it has expected drawbacks, I know the college is doing everything they can to provide us with the best experience possible.

Though our patient flow has slowed down due to many factors, many of us are still getting near daily clinical experience, whether we are first or second operator. When we are not in clinic, we are able to use the extra time to get lab work done, study for boards, or use the new Simodonts, something I did not think we would get to use prior to graduating! A well-timed and innovative purchase by the college.

The new normal is an adjustment for everyone, but at the end of the day, I feel confident I will graduate with the skills needed to be a competent clinician."

- Jai Mediratta, fourth-year dental student



JUNE

The dental hygiene class of 2020 was the first class in the nation to complete the required clinical licensure examination using simulated manikins. This opportunity was made possible due to efforts by the dental hygiene faculty.



AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER

Students return to a **safe environment** because numerous safety measures were implemented, including temperature scanners, new room layouts and capacities, social distancing markings, cleaning protocols, etc.

First-year dental and dental hygiene students are onsite for 100% of their learning; upper classes have a combination of onsite and hybrid learning.

100% attendance onsite in all simulation laboratory classes in the newly renovated clinical and virtual simulation laboratory which allows for physical distancing; students are performing well because they were able to practice hand skills at home during the summer.



"In my opinion, the College of Dentistry has done a really good job giving us all of the resources we need to stay safe during the pandemic. The college has adapted its daily routine to follow all UNMC and CDC guidelines and still provide a quality onsite education for the first-year dental class. Faculty and staff have clearly proven their commitment to students; they lead by example through diligently following all safety measures. Their actions speak louder than words."

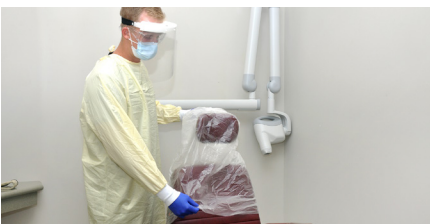
- Anne Steffen, first-year dental student



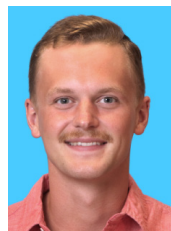
Students are able to **continue to participate in community outreach activities** that abide by safety measures, including providing patient care to the underserved at Clinic with a Heart, participating in virtual health fairs and helping to distribute oral health items and education throughout the state.



Students have the opportunity to use the **Simodont Dental Trainers** to build skills, insight and confidence. The Simodonts provide an effective learning and training environment for a wide range of dental procedures. Numerous new cases have been added during the fall semester.



In an effort to open as many clinic sessions as possible, the college is **piloting an evening clinic** at the Lincoln Dental Clinic starting in October. This evening clinic will provide important clinical educational experiences for our students and also benefit patients.



"Both UNMC and the College of Dentistry have gone above and beyond in adapting to the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty and staff have gone the extra mile to make sure that our education has not been impacted. By wearing proper PPE and maintaining social distancing, we have been able to work in the simulation lab, even outside of class time. This has allowed us to continue developing our clinical skills so we are ready to work with patients next semester. The college has done the utmost to adapt our educational experience to these changing times, and to maintain and nourish the sense of community that makes the college so special."

- Nick Hofmaier, second-year dental student

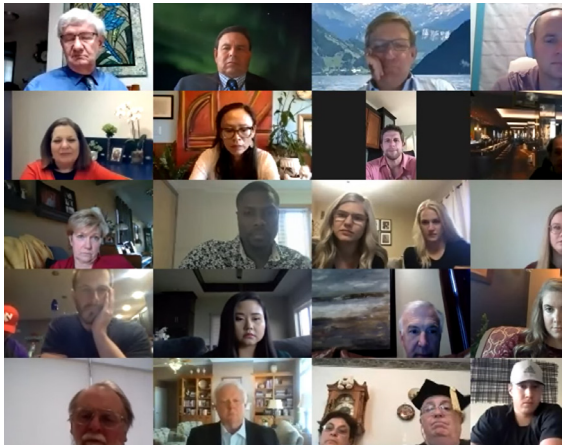
THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:



Students have been involved in the college's pandemic response

The dental and dental hygiene students and residents have shown how committed they are to becoming extraordinary oral health care professionals by helping the College of Dentistry overcome the challenges that have arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have demonstrated amazing resiliency and compassion – qualities that are going to serve them well in their careers. They have:

- attended town halls to brainstorm solutions to challenges, including how to welcome patients back to the college for comprehensive care and how to welcome new students;
- helped create training videos for the College of Dentistry community demonstrating proper PPE donning and doffing;
- organized a food drive as part of Support Your NEighbor, an initiative started by UNMC medical students to help those who are most susceptible to COVID-19 and promote positivity; and
- served on the clinic reentry task force to help plan for reestablishing comprehensive patient care.



Students have participated in a variety of virtual events

Students were encouraged to help find solutions to COVID-related challenges and budget challenges during brainstorming sessions and workshops held during town halls.

Student achievements were recognized at the May Commencement and Convocation, Senior Salute and All College Conference.

Students participated in a listening session and a workshop on inclusivity that empowered students, faculty and staff to work together to better promote diversity, inclusion and equity for all.