



NOMINATION FORM

CHE SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT COMPETITION

Institution York Technical College

Title of Project Summer Dental Care Clinic

Director of Project Kathleen Peter

Address and Phone Number of Project Director _____

452 South Anderson Road, Rock Hill SC 29730

Establishment Date of Project May 1998

Unit That Administers Project Dental Health Professions Department

Total Number of Students Involved 30-35 each year

Signature of Institutional President *Austin J. Merrell*

CHE SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

1. For purposes of this competition, the Commission on Higher Education defines service learning as college student learning at any level and in any situation that is linked in a direct, hands-on fashion to the resolution of a problem or concern in a target community outside the institution. Briefly, how does your project meet the parameters of this definition?

The Summer Dental Clinic at York Technical College Dental Health Professions Department is an ideal model of Service Learning. As dental health professionals, the faculty have great concern over the lack of dental health clinics in the three county area. There are no facilities providing care to individuals who cannot afford to see a private dentist. There are nine public assistance dental clinics in South Carolina, the closest is over seventy miles from the Rock Hill area.

Faculty are trying to resolve this health issue by providing basic dental care services to patients first seen in the dental hygiene clinic who demonstrate financial need, do not have private dental insurance, and have not been seen by a private dentist during the past year. Once patients qualify, they are seen in the Summer Dental Care Clinic for restorative care at a minimal fee. The clinic is open for nine weeks on Fridays from 8 am till 1 pm. During "phase one," dental hygiene students perform a diagnostic workup and clean the patient's teeth, expose dental radiographs, and provide oral hygiene instruction and nutritional counseling as needed. During "phase two," the dental assisting students assist the clinic dentist while restorative procedures are being done on the patient. This actual working environment enhances student learning, provides necessary dental work to needy patients, and contributes to the overall health of the individuals in the community.

2. Specifically, which segments of the college/university community does your project involve?

The oral health care program involves all students, staff, and faculty in the dental health professions department. Dental hygiene students provide the first phase of care as described above. Appointments are made and confirmed by the Business Office Manager. During the summer clinic, volunteer dentists in the community provide dental care while the dental assisting students assist in all dental procedures (further described in question #6). All phases of patient care are performed under the direct supervision of the clinic dentist with instruction, guidance, and evaluations done by the faculty.

3. How many students (please specify degree levels to the extent possible) does the project affect?

Each year there are 30-35 students and 15-20 dentists involved in this project. Dental hygiene students see clinical patients an average of 12 hours for four semesters. Dental assisting students see patients during the summer clinic for five to six hours a week. The Dental Hygiene program leads to an Associate Degree, and the Dental Assisting Program leads to a one-year diploma.

4. Can you please describe the target community or communities that your project services?

The project specifically targets patients living in the three county service area who have an immediate need for dental restorations. They do not have insurance, they have not seen a private dentist in the past year, and they demonstrate a need for financial assistance. These patients are usually the "working poor" who do not qualify for federal aid, yet cannot afford a private dentist. In the three county area (Lancaster, Chester and York counties) the total population is 265,823, with a median income of \$33,830 per family according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

5. Can you please describe your project's effectiveness in helping to solve the problems or concerns in the target community?

The clinic has made an impact on the immediate need for affordable dental care in the community. No public facility provides dental services other than York Technical College. The Summer Clinic has been in progress since 1998. The clinic is open on Fridays during summer semester when the clinic is more available for use. During the five years the clinic has been in operation, 77 dentists have volunteered their time to see 310 patients and perform 478 different dental procedures on these patients. The clinic has helped families receive dental care they otherwise would not have been able to afford.

6. Can you please describe the degree to which your project enhances student learning?

Student learning during these sessions is invaluable. The dental hygiene students gain on-site clinical experience providing comprehensive dental hygiene services. Each dental assisting student receives hands-on, real life experience with different dentists each week. Students master all phases of patient care from appointment planning, collecting fees, reviewing medical histories, checking vital signs, preparing instruments for various procedures, briefing the dentists on their findings, and assisting chair-side. They also gain experience with documentation of patient records, post-op instructions, follow up appointments, treatment room disinfection, instrument re-circulation, and all components of the curriculum in one clinic. Students are given feedback, assistance if required, and evaluations on their performance. They learn confidence, clinical judgment, patient assessment, and above all, they learn to value their education.

7. Is there academic credit associated with the project (not necessary for submission)? If so, please explain the particulars.

Yes. The Summer Dental Clinic is one of the rotation sites for the capstone clinical procedures course, DAT 177, which is a 7 credit hour course for dental assistants. Dental hygiene students in DHG 175, a 5 hour credit hour course, participate in the clinic by providing screening and dental hygiene services to patients.

8. If funding is required, how is the project funded and what is the approximate annual budget for the project?

The project is dependent upon volunteer dentists in the community to support the educational partnership at York Technical College. Without their help, the clinic would not be able to provide the care. Very often, dentists will come and bring their "favorite" supplies, leaving them for others to use. They were helpful in getting dental supply companies to donate dental materials for the start-up of the clinic. Other necessary supplies come out of the annual clinic supply budget, which is enhanced through fees charged to patients if they are able to pay. The patient fee is \$30.00 per visit during the summer clinic, but the clinic never turns patients away if they are unable to pay. Usually they will pay all or a portion of the fee. Because of the volunteer dentists, the supplies they provide, and the funds collected through patient fees, the cost of the clinic to the college is minimal.

9. Feel free to add any other comments you may have about your project.

Since the dental hygiene clinic opened its doors ten years ago, it has been a long-term goal of the department to be able to provide dental care to those in need. Patients seen in the clinic are primarily those who cannot afford private dental care. They include children with rampant decay in permanent teeth and people who have chronically neglected their dental health. Realistically, the clinic cannot address the entire problem, but it can make a difference for some people. And, one by one, that's what is happening.

The faculty hope that the summer dental clinic and other department projects completed throughout the academic year will someday serve as the foundation of data needed to establish a public dental clinic in this area. The community has no resource to serve children and adults with hurting teeth, but York Technical College does not have the ability or desire to become an emergency clinic for the area. The Dental Department's main goal is to teach the students a profession they can use to become productive citizens in the community. But in doing so, the Department has enhanced the relationship with the dentists in the community, met the dental needs of some citizens, and collected a resource of data supporting the need for further assistance in this area of healthcare. The "Partnership in Education" demonstrated by the students and the dentists in this area is one of the greatest assets of the department in supporting student learning while providing a needed community service.