



NEWS RELEASE

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City of San Antonio awards \$500,000 to future Dental Hygiene program at Palo Alto College

[Photos courtesy of Palo Alto College](#)

[B-Roll courtesy of Palo Alto College](#)

In partnership with the City of San Antonio and the Metropolitan Health District, District 4 City Councilman Rey Saldaña announced \$500,000 in dedicated funds toward the implementation of a dental hygiene program at Alamo Colleges District – Palo Alto College. Pending accreditation approval, the two-year program is expected to launch in Fall 2021 and will offer an Associate of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene.

“This support from the City of San Antonio is vital because dental hygiene affects every person in our community, regardless of location, age, or income,” said Dr. Robert Garza, president of Palo Alto College. “As a pillar in south San Antonio, it is our responsibility to offer degree programs that will not only provide our students with marketable and employable skills, but also expand beyond the classroom to impact the daily lives of our community.”

Palo Alto College students will train in a state-of-the-art clinic and provide educational and clinical services to better the overall health of the south side community. Upon completion of the program, students must complete state licensing exams to become licensed dental hygienists. Additionally, students interested in pursuing a further degree could transfer to UT Health San Antonio’s School of Dentistry to complete the Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene, and, ultimately, a Master of Dental Science in Dental Hygiene.

Dental hygienists serve a variety of roles in dental clinics, including cleaning teeth; examining oral, head, and neck areas for signs of oral disease; taking and developing x-rays; applying fluoride or sealants; and providing education on proper oral hygiene. Nearly 12,600 dental hygienists were employed in Texas in 2014, and employment is expected to grow more than 25% by 2024. The average hourly wage for a dental hygienist is \$35.09.

“Partnering with Palo Alto College over the years has produced invaluable resources and increased access to opportunities greatly needed in our Southside community,” commented Councilman Saldaña, “The dental hygiene program will undoubtedly transform the educational aspirations and quality of life for our

residents. Future generations will remember this as another critical example of the importance of investing in people and the sustainability of communities.”

As part of the agreement with the City of San Antonio, students enrolled in the program will be required to complete community education about the importance of preventative oral health and provide in-clinic education sessions to patients. The learning space will also serve as a community clinic with fees on a sliding fee scale based on a patient’s ability to pay for services, not to exceed 25% of the cost of the same services at traditional dental clinics.

By the third year of the program, Palo Alto College will serve up to 1,000 uninsured or under-insured limited-income children and adults annually with significant risk for oral health issues. The American Dental Association reported 25% of limited-income adults self-reported their mouth and teeth are in poor condition, largely in part due to limited access to affordable dental care. For more information, visit alamo.edu/pac/dental-hygiene.

Palo Alto College, part of the Alamo Colleges District, is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and a recipient of the 2015 Texas Award for Performance Excellence, a finalist for the 2016 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and a top 10 finalist for the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. With over 10,000 students, Palo Alto College is accredited to offer associate degrees and short-term certificates. The College is located on the south side of San Antonio at 1400 W. Villaret Blvd. at I-410 and Texas Hwy 16 and online at alamo.edu/pac.

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