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December 1, 2014

Michael E. Marshall
Secretary of the Senate
State Capitol Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

Carmine Boal
Chief Clerk of the House
State Capitol Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

Re: University of Iowa College of Dentistry Residency Program in Geriatric Dentistry

Dear Members of the Iowa General Assembly:

HF 2463, Sec.133(2)i directed the University of Iowa College of Dentistry to “develop and submit a proposal to offer a residency program in geriatric dentistry that prepares dentists with the specific skills needed to treat geriatric patients and provides incentives for the participants to remain in the state to practice dentistry on completion of the program.”

The College’s proposal is attached on the following pages.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Robert Donley
dg/h/aa/GA/dec14/Geriatric

cc: Glen Dickinson, LSA
Robin Madison, LSA
David Roederer, DOM
Dave Fardal, DOM
Legislative Liaisons
Legislative Log

The following proposal has been developed for consideration in response to the following request (HF 2463), received by the College of Dentistry (COD) at the University of Iowa in Spring 2014:

“The University of Iowa, College of Dentistry shall develop and submit a proposal by December 15, 2014, to the individuals identified in this Act for submission of reports and to the chairpersons and ranking members of the joint appropriations subcommittee on education to offer a residency program in geriatric dentistry that prepares dentists with the specific skills needed to treat geriatric patients and provides incentives for the participants to remain in the state to practice dentistry on completion of the program. The proposal shall include at a minimum, the curriculum to be utilized, the number of residency positions to be made available, the incentives for participants to practice dentistry in the state upon completion of the residency, the projected cost of the program, and any potential funding sources.”

Rationale

Iowa currently ranks 6th in the nation regarding the percentage of the population age 65 and older (14.9%, representing over 450,000 people). By 2030, this percentage is expected to rise to almost 21% [1]. In addition, Iowa is tied for the highest percentage of population age 85 and older, with that figure expected to double by 2050 [1]. Currently, there are 462 nursing facilities in Iowa that house over 25,000 residents; and an additional 152 assisted living centers with over 6,000 residents [2]. There also are many frail, relatively homebound older adults who receive in-home services from various agencies.

The substantial growth of Iowa’s elderly population has greatly outpaced our ability to provide proper oral health care for that group, which experiences high levels of both oral disease (e.g., dental caries, gum disease, and tooth loss - which can lead to pain, infection, and poor nutritional intake) and general health conditions. These vulnerable populations encounter numerous barriers to receiving oral health care, including inability to pay, lack of transportation, and significant medical and cognitive impairment, among others. For these reasons, we propose a one-year post-graduate Certificate Program in Geriatric Dentistry (that also includes instruction in the care of adult Special Needs patients) aimed to provide much-needed oral health care services to this growing but greatly underserved segment of the state’s population.

Existing Geriatric Dentistry Programs

The COD was one of the first dental schools in the U.S. to provide distinct clinical coursework in dental care for geriatric populations. Since the early 1980s, the COD has operated the “Geriatric and Special Needs Clinic” for medically, physically and intellectually compromised patients on an outpatient basis at the COD, and also the “Geriatric Mobile Dental Unit” (GMU) for residents of nursing facilities. The GMU currently provides comprehensive dental care to residents of 10 nursing facilities in Johnson, Linn, Iowa and Washington counties using mobile and portable dental equipment “on site.” Care is delivered by faculty, staff, and pre-doctoral dental students. While this program has provided a necessary introduction to the needs of this population, it has a limited scope due to the novice status of the pre-doctoral students and the inherent difficulties in treating geriatric patients.

Recognizing the need for more advanced training than it could provide at the pre-doctoral level, the COD recently developed a one-year graduate Certificate Program in Geriatric and Special Needs Dentistry that has received formal recognition from the University of Iowa Graduate College. We developed this program for two major reasons: 1) To train graduate student dentists in the comprehensive oral health care of this population; and 2) To provide clinical experiences that would enable graduates to be seriously considered for academic positions in Geriatric and Special Needs Dentistry throughout the country. We enrolled our first graduate student in July 2011 and to date have had five enrollees in the program (see Appendix A). Expenses during the first two years of the program averaged \$71,744 per graduate student. The curriculum is shown in Appendix B.

As successful as this Certificate Program has been thus far, there are many (understandable) reasons why the program would not appeal to everyone - the most important being the financial burden involved. Thus far, the program has been supported solely by clinical receipts brought in by the graduates themselves, which enable them to earn a stipend of only \$20,000-\$24,000 per year after program expenses are paid, depending on the productivity of each individual student. This is not a sustainable model, due in large part to the debt burden borne by new dental graduates, which currently averages \$241,097 [3] (it would take \$1,757 per month for 20 years to pay off this amount of debt at 6.21% interest, a rate typical for today's graduates.) The only other graduate dental program offered by the COD that trains dentists in comprehensive dental care is the UI's General Practice Residency, which is financially supported by the federally-funded Graduate Medical Education (GME) program. Its yearly stipend of \$49,000 for 2014-15 [4] is what all UI medical residents receive. Very few other Geriatric Dentistry graduate programs are available nationally, and none is financially self-supported. GME funding is not available for the Geriatric and Special Needs Certificate Program, so additional funding is necessary for the program to be competitive with other post-graduate programs.

Given the financial discrepancy between what our current program can offer and what graduating dentists could earn during their first year in dental private practice (~\$80,000-\$120,000), depending on the situation [5], only students with a sincere passion for serving geriatric populations would realistically consider our program with the remuneration we currently can offer. **To underscore the need for additional funding: Over the last two years, seven fourth-year UI dental students inquired about the Certificate Program, and all seven stated that the stipend was insufficient to make ends meet** (four went into private dental practice; two went to community health centers; and one enrolled in the UI General Practice Residency program). Additionally, we lost one junior faculty member in part due to lack of a student loan forgiveness program. Our ability to retain one current junior faculty member has been facilitated in part by a Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation loan forgiveness program restricted to UI dental school faculty in Pediatric or Geriatric and Special Needs Dentistry, but this program is now unavailable to additional faculty.

In summary: The need for qualified, trained Geriatric Dentists is obvious, but treating this complex patient population is not financially rewarding because the time-intensive nature of the care and the increased risk for complications are not recognized by any reimbursement model. We believe there are a number of newly-graduating dentists who would treat this population, but the burdens upon graduation are an extremely significant deterrent due to both the need for additional education and the competition from higher salaries available in private dental practice.

Proposal

Given the background described above, coupled with the details specified in HF 2463, we propose that the State of Iowa provide financial support to the COD's existing Graduate Certificate program in Geriatric and Special Needs Dentistry, as follows:

1. The COD will enroll 1-2 qualified applicants per year into the one-year program, and will use the curriculum already developed (Appendix B).
2. The State of Iowa will subsidize enrolled students in the amount of \$40,000 per year, per student, through annual state appropriations. This amount, coupled with \$20,000 expected to be covered by clinical receipts by each student (after expenses), provides a total of \$60,000 per year, per student to cover stipend and fringe benefit costs at a rate competitive with other programs that train graduate dental students in the delivery of comprehensive oral health care.
3. The State of Iowa also will provide an additional \$20,000 per year in loan forgiveness for up to three years after graduation from the Certificate Program to each student who remains in Iowa to practice dentistry or becomes a full-time faculty member at the COD. To qualify for this incentive, graduated dentists must demonstrate that their dental practices have treated a certain proportion or number of patients (to be decided) age 65 or older during the previous year, including an affiliation with at least one nursing facility as their "dentist of record."
4. Recipients of incentives will be required to present ongoing documentation to verify:
 - a. Number of patients age 65 and older treated in their practice, including those with Medicaid (Title XIX) and Iowa Dental Wellness Plan benefits;
 - b. Formal affiliation with at least one nursing facility, including the number of patients treated; and
 - c. Involvement with local and/or state dental societies or other aging networks supporting the oral health care of the Iowa's aging population.

Failure to provide adequate documentation could result in discontinuation of further funding and/or payback of funds already received.

References

1. Older Iowans: 2014. Newsletter, May 2014. State Data Center of Iowa and the Iowa Department of Aging.
2. www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Aging_Statistics/future_growth/future_growth.aspx. Accessed 9/14/14.
3. <http://www.asdanet.org/debt.aspx>. Accessed 9/15/14.
4. <http://www.dentistry.uiowa.edu/education-graduate-programs>. Accessed 9/9/14.
5. Dr. Larry Squire, email communication 9/15/14.

Appendix A

Graduate Students in the Geriatric and Special Needs Certificate Program
 at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry

Year	Name	Dental Degree	Position(s) Upon Graduation
2011-12	Lindsey Cosper	U of Iowa	Faculty in GSN Dentistry, U of Iowa (July 2012 – August 2013) General Dental Practitioner, Fort Collins, CO (September 2013 – present)
2012-13	Jennifer Hartshorn	U of Iowa	Faculty in GSN Dentistry, U of Iowa
2012-13	Abbey Ambroson	U of Iowa	General Dental Practitioner, Clarinda, IA (July 2013 – June 2014) General Dental Practitioner, West Union, IA (July 2014 – present)
2014-15	Melody Dawson	Medical U of South Carolina	Currently enrolled
2014-15	Jirakate Madiloggovit	Faculty of Dentistry, Thammasat University, Thailand	Currently enrolled (part-time)

Appendix B
 Coursework for the Geriatric and Special Needs Certificate Program
 at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry

Course Name	Credit Hours	Sites
Advanced Clinical Geriatric Dentistry	8	Geriatric & Special Needs Clinic (COD)
Outreach: Advanced Clinical Geriatric Dentistry	6	Geriatric Mobile Dental Unit (10 nursing facilities in Johnson, Linn, Iowa and Washington counties)
Interdisciplinary Geriatric Patient Assessment	4	UI Hospitals and Clinics (Iowa City); Veterans Administration Medical Center (Iowa City)
Advanced Topics in Geriatric Dentistry	4	College of Dentistry
Geriatric Dentistry Case Study Seminar	4	College of Dentistry
Teaching Practicum: Geriatric & Special Needs Dentistry	3	Geriatric & Special Needs Clinic (COD); Geriatric Mobile Dental Unit (10 nursing facilities in Johnson, Linn, Iowa and Washington counties)
Advanced Clinical Training for Developmentally Disabled Adults	4	UI Hospitals and Clinics, Center for Developmentally Disabled Adults (Iowa City); UnityPoint / St. Luke's Hospital (Cedar Rapids)