



Howard College Dental Hygiene Applicant Handbook 2026–2027



Admissions Process and Program Information

Howard College – Big Spring Campus
1001 Birdwell Lane, Big Spring, TX 79720

<https://howardcollege.edu/academics/health-professions-programs/dental-hygiene/>

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Before You Apply

Students interested in the Howard College Dental Hygiene Program are encouraged to:

- Schedule an appointment with an academic advisor first.
<https://howardcollege.edu/come-to-howard-college/advising/>
- If you have questions specific to dental hygiene or are preparing to apply to the program, students are encouraged to:
 - Visit the Dental Hygiene Program website for current information.
 - Attend a Dental Hygiene Information Session before applying.
 - Schedule an appointment to speak with a Dental Hygiene faculty member.
 - Read this handbook carefully to understand the admissions process and program expectations.

Disclaimer:

Although every effort is made to keep this handbook up to date, it is the student's responsibility to verify all information with program faculty.

For questions, contact the Dental Hygiene Program Office at (432) 264-5065 or email dentalhygiene@howardcollege.edu

Non-Discrimination and Accessibility Statements

Howard College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs or activities. The college complies with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services as early as possible to facilitate timely implementation.

Value Statement

Howard College seeks to maintain an educational environment free from any form of discrimination or harassment including, but not limited to discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, or national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Administrative Rule

Howard College prohibits discrimination or harassment of all forms, including but not limited to behavior such as physical, verbal, or nonverbal misconduct based on a student's race, color, or national origin that is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the misconduct:

- Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

Howard College shall exercise reasonable care to prevent and promptly correct discriminating or, harassing behavior and shall develop preventative or corrective measures to address these behaviors.

Howard College also prohibits retaliation against anyone for reporting discriminating or harassing behavior or for participating in discrimination or harassment investigations or lawsuits.

Discrimination or Harassment

Discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, or national origin may be based on intentional conduct that constitutes disparate treatment of a student or may be based on disparate impact or disparate effects of a facially neutral procedure or policy.

Intentional conduct occurs when similarly situated students are treated differently because of their race, color, or national origin.

Disparate impact occurs when facially neutral procedures or policies have a disproportionate adverse effect on persons on the basis of their race, color, or national origin without substantial legitimate justification.

Notice of Student Rights and Complaint Process

Any student who believes he or she has observed or been the object of discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, or national origin has the right to file a complaint with the Title VI Coordinators:

Howard College Big Spring

Christi Fenter

1001 Birdwell Lane

Big Spring, TX 79720

cfenter@howardcollege.edu

432-264-5029

Howard College: Vision, Mission, Motto, & Values

Vision

We will be known for enriching the lives and futures of those we serve as a unique rural community college national model of success that includes a campus specializing in deaf education.

Role, Mission, and Purpose

The Howard County Junior College District provides oversight for its two-year institution Howard College Big Spring campus and extension campuses in Lamesa and San Angelo as well as the Southwest College for the Deaf. The district primarily serves the communities of its local taxing district of Howard County and the twelve other Texas counties in its state-legislated service area (Dawson, Martin, Glasscock, Sterling, Coke, Tom Green, Concho, Irion, Schleicher, Sutton, Menard and Kimble) as well as the deaf and hard-of-hearing community-at-large in its state-legislated responsibility for the Southwest College for the Deaf. (Texas Education Code 130.084, 130.183 and 131). Students who choose to attend the college district from places outside of its designated responsibility are integrated into the college community. Based on Texas Education Code 130.0011 and 130.003, the role, mission and purpose of the campuses are to provide preparation for a career or for transfer to a senior college or university as follows:

- Career Technical programs up to two years in length leading to associate degrees or certificates;
- Vocational programs leading directly to employment in semi-skilled and skilled occupations;
- Freshman and sophomore courses in arts and sciences;
- Continuing adult education programs for occupational or cultural upgrading with certifications as appropriate;
- Compensatory education programs designed to fulfill the commitment of an admissions policy allowing the enrollment of disadvantaged students consistent with open admission;
- Workforce development programs designed to meet local and statewide needs;
- Adult literacy and other basic skills programs for adults; and
- Such other purposes prescribed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or local governing boards in the best interest of post-secondary education in Texas.

Appropriate student services to include counseling and guidance are also provided. The campuses strive to enhance economic, community, cultural and personal development across the service area and to the deaf community through appropriate partnerships and services in meeting its public service mission. Although research is not a primary function as a community college, research in innovative teaching and student development practices to enhance learning, including best practices in deaf education, is encouraged, and supported using appropriate resources. Excellence in all academic areas- instruction, research, and public service, as well as student success with a specialization in deaf education, is expected.

Values

A family culture based on:

- Students
- Community
- Diversity
- Unity
- Excellence
- Integrity

Motto

Howard College ... for Learning, for Earning, for Life!

Department Of Dental Hygiene: Vision, Mission, Goals, & Philosophy

Vision

It is the vision of the Howard College Dental Hygiene Program to become a model program, which will meet the future needs of an ever-expanding service area. Our model program will provide comprehensive dental hygiene education utilizing innovative, flexible technology, delivery systems, and partnerships.

Mission Statement And Goals

The Mission of the Howard College Dental Hygiene Program is to be a dynamic center of learning that serves the educational and economic community by developing competent dental hygiene practitioners. Our Program will provide innovative and traditional instruction to develop ongoing learning skills that demonstrate the best and most ethical patient care, research, and service.

To advance the mission the Dental Hygiene Program will:

- 1) Provide a comprehensive dental hygiene program that is sensitive to meeting the needs and requirements of the dental care community of West Texas and the Howard College service area.
- 2) Provide program facilities for clinics, laboratories and classrooms that are conducive to learning, and a learning climate that emphasizes social and ethical development as well as technical competence.
- 3) Provide clinical and didactic curricula incorporating current scientific innovations in dental health care and delivery.
- 4) Recruit and retain faculty motivated to deliver and evaluate curricula in relation to student success; provide access to continuous professional development.
- 5) Stimulate students to critically analyze scientific information and develop ongoing skills and interest in learning.
- 6) Educate students about the various roles of the dental hygienist including private practice, institutional practice, education, research, and administration.
- 7) Monitor and evaluate goals and outcomes for the continuous improvement of our Dental Hygiene Program.
- 8) Incorporate critical thinking processes with evidence-based provision of care.

Philosophy

The faculty and staff of the Howard College Dental Hygiene Program, in harmony with the vision of Howard College, believe in the worth and dignity of the individual students, patients and fellow staff members, and that an education in dental hygiene will provide an opportunity for growth in service to both the individual students and to others. We believe in providing students access to the information and support they will need to begin and sustain a career.

Section 1: Program Overview

The Howard College Dental Hygiene Program is a two-year, limited-entry program leading to an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree. The program is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) and prepares students to provide comprehensive, ethical, and evidence-based dental hygiene care to patients of diverse backgrounds.

The program was envisioned by local dentist Dr. Charles O. Warren, whose commitment to advancing oral health in our community led to the creation of the dental hygiene program.

Our first graduating class, consisting of five students, completed the program in December 1984, followed by the second class of four graduates in May 1985.

Nearly four decades later, we continue to build on Dr. Warren's vision — empowering students with the clinical expertise, professionalism, and confidence to make a lasting impact in the dental field and beyond.

Section 2: Admission

Admissions Process

The Dental Hygiene Program at Howard College has limited enrollment. Admission is competitive and based on academic performance, testing, and other criteria outlined below. Meeting minimum requirements does not guarantee admission.

Our program is a 5-semester program consisting of Fall, Spring, Summer, Fall, and Spring. Only one cohort starts each cycle in August. Students will graduate in May of their final semester. Each student will receive an Associate of Applied Sciences Degree in Dental Hygiene.

Class times vary by semester, but you can expect to be on campus Monday – Thursday. Classes are taught in person and online. Occasionally there could be assignments or required events on evenings, Fridays, or some weekends.

Application Timeline

- **Application Opens:** September the year before application due
- **Application Deadline:** For 2026 this will be February 28, 11:59 PM central time
- **Program Start:** August (Fall Semester)

Steps to Apply

1. **Apply to Howard College** and meet general admission requirements. Submit a copy of your acceptance letter to Howard College to the Dental Hygiene Department.
2. **Submit the online Dental Hygiene Program Application** by the posted deadline. Make sure you have all required documents at the time of application that will need to be submitted.
3. **Complete all prerequisite coursework** before the deadline. All core science courses need to be completed with a grade of C or higher.
4. **Take the TEAS Exam** prior to the application deadline.

5. **Attend an Information Session** (virtual or in-person). We will offer two per cycle. One in November and one in January. You will RSVP at a link posted to social media, and it will be posted online.
6. **Submit official transcripts** from all colleges attended.
7. **Complete and submit supporting documents** (if applicable, e.g., proof of RDA certification or prior degree, transcripts, Howard College acceptance, observation hours, dental exam form, medical exam form).
8. If chosen as a **finalist**, you will be contacted for an **interview**.
9. **Submit all immunizations** to Castlebranch. Complete all immunizations per their report. Cost is \$60 for the student. Information is linked on Dental Hygiene website under “Resources”. Do not do this until instructed.
10. **Complete background check** via Castlebranch for \$35. Do not do this until instructed.

Prerequisite Courses

All Core science courses must be completed by December prior to the year applying.

All core science courses must be completed within the last 5 years before admission to the program.

Core Science Courses

Codes	Title	Credits
BIOL 2301 BIOL 2101 BIOL 2401	Anatomy & Physiology I	4
BIOL 2302 BIOL 2102 BIOL 2402	Anatomy & Physiology II	4
BIOL 2320 BIOL 2120 BIOL 2420	Microbiology	4
CHEM 1405	Intro to Chemistry	4

General Courses

Code	Title	Credits
ENGL 1301	English	3
PSYC 2301 PSYC 2314	General Psychology	3
SOCI 1301	Intro to Sociology	3
SPCH 1315	Public Speaking	3
	Language, Philosophy, & Culture (Humanities), or Creative Arts	3

Informational Session: You must attend an informational session to receive full points for your application. This session will include:

- 1. Program Overview**

- a. Degree, accreditation, licensure pathway, cohort size

- 2. Admission Requirements and Rubric**

- a. Prerequisites, GPA, deadlines, documentation checklist

- 3. Program Expectations**

- a. Weekly schedule, professionalism, clinical and didactic expectations

- 4. Finalist Process**

- a. Interview overview, sample prompts, evaluation process

- 5. Acceptance Process**

- a. Orientation, compliance, supplies, and onboarding checklist

- 6. Q&A Session**

Admission Point System (95 Total Points + Bonus)

Year **2025-2026** Date Attended Info Session _____ Interview Invitation Yes/No Attended Yes/No

Name: _____

HC ID #: _____

Email: _____

Contact Phone : _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Zip Code: _____ SS#: _____

DOB: _____

Scoring Table

Category	Criteria	Points																								
TEAS Exam	<table><tr><th>Points</th><th>Reading</th><th>Math</th><th>Science</th><th>Overall</th><th>Total – Up to 25 points</th></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>At least 70%</td><td>60-69%</td><td>40-49%</td><td>68-71%</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>80-89 %</td><td>70-79%</td><td>50-59%</td><td>72-79%</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>6.25</td><td>90% or higher</td><td>80% or higher</td><td>60% or higher</td><td>80% or higher</td><td></td></tr></table>	Points	Reading	Math	Science	Overall	Total – Up to 25 points	2	At least 70%	60-69%	40-49%	68-71%		4	80-89 %	70-79%	50-59%	72-79%		6.25	90% or higher	80% or higher	60% or higher	80% or higher		_____/25
	Points	Reading	Math	Science	Overall	Total – Up to 25 points																				
	2	At least 70%	60-69%	40-49%	68-71%																					
	4	80-89 %	70-79%	50-59%	72-79%																					
	6.25	90% or higher	80% or higher	60% or higher	80% or higher																					
Students must make a Reading Minimum of 70 for TEAS score to be considered for selection. *REQUIRED completion by the application deadline.																										
Core Science Courses	Anat & Phys I ____, Anat & Phys II ____, Micro ____, Chem ____ A = 15 pts, B = 10 pts, C = 5 pts If >2 attempts → use average *REQUIRED completion by the application deadline.					_____/60																				
General Education Courses	English ____, Psychology ____, Sociology ____, Speech ____, LPC/Creative Arts ____ A = 2 pts, B = 1 pts, C = 0 pt *RECOMMENDED completion by the application deadline.					_____/10																				
Subtotal						_____/95																				
Bonus	RDA Certification (proof required) = +1 pt Highest Degree: Associate = +1 pt, Bachelor = +2 pts, Master/Doctorate = +3 pts *Must be completed by the application deadline. Reside in HC service area = +1 pt (Howard, Dawson, Martin, Glasscock, Sterling, Coke, Tom Green, Concho, Irion, Schleicher, Sutton, Menard, and Kimble)					+_____/5																				
Deductions	Prior Program Dismissal = –5 pts Academic Dishonesty (state violation) = –10 pts Failure to attend Information Session (virtual or in-person) = –3 pts					-_____/18																				
Final Score	Subtotal (max 95) + Bonus – Deductions = Admission Ranking					Total _____																				

Interview Process

We will take the top 25 applicants and invite them to an interview over a two-day time frame. You will be asked questions about the following.

- 1. Interest in the Profession**
 - a. What inspired you to pursue a career in dental hygiene?
- 2. Understanding of the Profession**
 - a. Describe what you believe a dental hygienist's role is within a dental team.
- 3. Professionalism and Ethical Judgment**
 - a. If you observed a classmate or coworker breaking infection control protocol, what would you do?
- 4. Communication and Sensitivity with Patients**
 - a. How would you approach a patient who is fearful or anxious about dental treatment?
- 5. Cultural Competence and Empathy**
 - a. How would you provide respectful care for a patient from a culture different from your own?
- 6. Time Management and Stress Handling**
 - a. Tell us about a time you had multiple responsibilities—how did you stay organized and on schedule?
- 7. Teamwork and Collaboration**
 - a. Describe a time when you worked successfully as part of a team. What made it effective?
- 8. Receptiveness to Feedback and Willingness to Learn**
 - a. Tell us about a time you received constructive criticism. How did you respond?
- 9. Patient Recruitment and Community Engagement**
 - a. How would you encourage someone who is hesitant to come in for dental hygiene care?
- 10. Patient Care and Clinical Judgment**
 - a. What does “patient-centered care” mean to you?

Section 3: After Applying

If Accepted

After you have been accepted, students will be required to attend an orientation session before classes begin where we will discuss specific costs and deadlines. This will be mandatory to attend. Information regarding this will be released closer to time from our director, Jeri Farmer.

If Not Accepted / Reapplication Process

Applicants who are not accepted into the Howard College Dental Hygiene Program are encouraged to reapply for the next admission cycle. Because admission is competitive, students are advised to strengthen their applications by improving GPA, TEAS scores, or completing additional coursework.

Reapplication Requirements:

- Submit a **new Dental Hygiene Program Application** during the next cycle (previous applications are not retained).
- Provide **updated official transcripts** for all coursework completed since the last application.
- Attend a **new Information Session** to receive full points for your reapplication.
- Complete a **new physical examination and TB screening** (TB skin test, TB blood test, or TB chest x-ray) dated after January 1 of the year of reapplication.
- Update **immunizations** as required in the current application packet.
- Submit a **new background check** and compliance documents when instructed.

Optional Recommendations:

- Meet with a dental hygiene faculty member or advisor for feedback on strengthening your application.
- Consider obtaining additional observation hours or dental assisting experience to enhance competitiveness.