

Testimony from Patricia Moulton, President, Vermont Technical College

May 1, 2018

Senate Government Operations

Vermont Technical College's Dental Therapy program

Good afternoon, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today.

On the phone is Dr. Ellen Grimes who is our Director of Dental Hygiene.

Also part of this program is Dr. Chyenne Warren, the Dental Therapy Program Director.

As you may recall, the Legislature passed legislation in 2016 after multiple years of considering and strong support from the Vermont Oral Health Care of All Coalition.

Since that time, we have been working to develop the program curriculum.

Develop a budget and work on accreditation through the Commission on Dental Accreditation.

When we started the program, we did not have funding to launch it by hiring a program director.

Dr. Grimes was able to attract grant funding to help us launch.

Through the support of the Kellogg Foundation, we have been able to find Dr. Warren.

That took a bit of time to find the right person for this program and we are delighted to have Dr. Warren on the team.

She has been working with Minnesota and other colleges that offer dental therapy to develop the curriculum.

We have also been working through the approval process for new program development at VT Tech and through the VT State Colleges process.

We are through almost all of that process.

We have also recently applied for a federal grant through the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) to help cover operating expense for the first many months of operation.

This grant is important as the college does not have "risk capital" to launch new programs.

I wish that was different but given Vermont is 50th in the nation for public support of public higher education, and the changing demographics, we have very limited ability to carry the costs of starting a program until enrollment can cover those costs.

So if this grant does not come through, it will slow down our implementation.

As of now, we are planning on launching in the program in the summer of 2019.

We will be offering it in Williston where our existing dental hygienist program is located.

We have the existing labs that we can use for start up.

When the program becomes more popular, we will likely need to expand the lab/clinic space in Williston but that is a few years off.

This will be a master's level program.

Dr. Grimes can correct me if I am wrong, but we have two pathways here.

One for existing dental hygienists that can come back to obtain their Masters in 2 years or 4 semesters.

The second if for folks coming in "green" who can do the program in 4 years, with summers each year.

I would like Ellen Grimes to provide more detail about the program.

Then we would be happy to take questions you may have.