Coastal Bend College:

How the switch to axiUm Ascend reconfigured its dental hygiene program for the better.

One of the top priorities for educators is to create a promising career path for their students after their graduation. Dental hygiene program directors and instructors want to provide the tools students need while imparting the necessary knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

Facilitating the path to success is one of the top priorities for educators across the country. When it comes to dental school, the notion is equivalent — instructors want to give students the tools and knowledge they need to have a favorable career path when finally exposed to the real world. But when the Coastal Bend College Dental Hygiene Program noticed significant issues with its software imaging system — during a pandemic, no less — Lynn Southerland, the Director of Dental Hygiene knew the college needed to make a change if it wanted to provide students with adequate training and education to use in the real world.

The problem

Since 2015, Coastal Bend had relied on its on-premises dental software, Dentrix, the system students would most likely use in private practice. Dentrix is the most common commercial private practice dental software in North America, used in **60%** of dental offices. However, Dentrix is not designed for higher education. Instead, it is a practice management solution, making Dentrix functional in only some of the school's clinic areas. When Southerland realized that the school was using the software solely for imaging, she decided it was time to change.

"It just wasn't user-friendly for our college or program, which is why we only used it for X-rays," Southerland said. *"At one point, we couldn't even use the X-ray feature — the IT department tried to keep it up and running but it was a constant battle. When students couldn't do X-rays, which is a major program requirement, we knew we had to do something."*

Additionally, although the software was being used for X-rays, instructors and students still relied heavily on paper records. Not only did this make grading more difficult and tedious for instructors, but it increased the risk of human error during documentation. It made it more challenging for students to understand their records. Southerland wanted to find a solution that would facilitate their clinic's transition to being 100% paperless.

The technical difficulties with the software caused a ripple effect in other academic and clinic management functions. For example, Southerland, instructors, and IT staff noticed that the software became even more challenging to navigate when upgrading Windows 7 to Windows 10. Although the commercial private practice software managed smaller clinics, it was unequipped to service higher education dental hygiene programs with more than ten operatories. Southerland found that their current on-premises solution strained their systems more, so she looked to the cloud for a solution.

Timeliness, efficiency, and quality education standards are a few of the areas that Southerland knew she could not achieve to the highest level, without switching to a new cloud dental software with academic features. That is when she decided to reach out to Exan.

The solution

Southerland explained that she was familiar with the cloud-based Dentrix Ascend. Both Dentrix Ascend and axiUm Ascend are part of the Henry Schein family of products, so Exan built axiUm Ascend off Dentrix Ascend and added academic features for dental higher education. Since Exan has 20 years of experience in dental software for academia, axiUm Ascend seemed like a natural fit for Coastal Bend College's Dental Hygiene Program. Plus, axiUm Ascend's likeness to the private practice software Dentrix Ascend helped fit Coastal Bend's need for a tool that would prepare their students for private practice post-graduation.

Southerland noticed three significant benefits from axiUm Ascend:

Enhanced education

Improved overall efficiencies by going paperless

Revised grading capabilities

In addition to the added academic value of competency evaluations, Southerland was *"most excited that students are also being exposed to treatment plans the same way they would in private practice,"* she said. *"This will make them better hygienists right off the bat. It really helped increase the quality of the experience of the college."*

The most significant relief to the organization strain at the clinic was the ability to go entirely paperless with axiUm Ascend.

"Going paperless has had a major impact on grading," Southerland shared. *"Instead of going back and forth during the grading process on handwritten papers, where students were expected to revise mistakes and return to their instructors, we now enter evaluations directly into the program. With software, it's streamlined and easier for students to understand the connection and how to document properly."*

The axiUm Ascend Difference

When Coastal Bend was using Dentrix, they needed a Dexis bridge for image acquisition; this meant that the clinic had one computer with a camera set up for imaging that needed to be shared across all operatories for students and faculty. Before the transition to axiUm Ascend, Southerland described the clinic and academic process as "chaos"; with IT staff responsible for assisting students, solving daily problems that required support, and trying to keep up with the single-camera access, the program was unsustainable. With axiUm Ascend's built-in imaging acquisition device, Southerland and her instructor team can grant all students personal access to a camera while they work. X-ray drivers are installed on all computers, and students can easily access the required equipment to complete their curriculum. Now, all computers have access!

Today, the students at Coastal Bend College can easily retrieve and view X-rays, charts and treatment plans. Southerland is confident in her decision to make axiUm Ascend a key component of their educational experience.

Southerland and the staff at Coastal Bend College found the transition to axiUm Ascend incredibly easy and beneficial.

Adopting a new software platform can be daunting, but Southerland described the experience as very smooth. One of the major benefits she recalled was the helpful Exan staff. The training during implementation was comprehensive, and they were always willing and welcome to take on question-and-answer sessions.

There is comfort knowing that Exan will support Coastal Bend College through any workflow changes or minor issues that arise. Coastal Bend College continues to trust axiUm Ascend, as a key partner in how they deliver top-notch training and education to their dental hygiene students.

"With axiUm Ascend, we have everything we need in one software," remarked Director Southerland. *"It makes everything run so much smoother for us. We're so thankful to utilize this software because it takes students out of the school setting — it shows them what it's like in private practice, such as understanding insurance codes and what types of treatment plans they provide to the patient. Grasping all of the different details that charting records entails is phenomenal for students. There's a huge benefit to having the level of visibility we have and getting a holistic view of the patient experience."*

axiUm Ascend

For More Information

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