

**Docket Item:**

Community College Approval: Central Oregon Community College, Certificate of Completion in Medical Assistant, within 51.0801, Medical/Clinical Assistant.

**Summary:**

Central Oregon Community College proposes a new Certificate of Completion in Medical Assistant. Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff completed a review of the proposed program. After analysis, HECC staff recommends approval of the degree as proposed.

**Staff Recommendation:**

The HECC recommends the adoption of the following resolution:  
RESOLVED, that the Higher Education Coordinating Commission approve the following degree: CC1 in Medical Assistant.



**Central Oregon Community College seeks the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's approval to offer an instructional program leading to a Certificate of Completion in Medical Assistant.**

**Program Summary**

The Medical Assistant program is a four-term program that trains individuals to assist with clinical and administrative procedures in outpatient medical settings under the direction of a health care provider. Medical Assistant prefix (MA) courses begin once per year in the Fall. All program courses offered each term must be taken together and in sequence. Upon successful completion of the program, students receive a certificate of completion from COCC and are eligible to submit an application to sit for the AAMA Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) certification examination. Upon passing the AAMA exam, medical assistants earn the CMA.

**1. *Describe the need for this program by providing clear evidence.***

This program proposal represents a revision of the existing Medical Assistant (MA) Program at Central Oregon Community College. This is a well-established, highly respected program. Changes focus on creation of a condensed prerequisite pathway in order to decrease time to graduation. Classes for the certificate can be completed in as little as 12 months, resulting in a one-year certificate. Flexibility was added to the prerequisite pathway to meet the needs of students who prefer to prepare for both the MA and Nursing Programs, or those who view the program as a portion of their career pathway.

Impetus for the changes derive from feedback provided by students, local employers and community partners. Employer feedback indicated that there was need for a larger pool of graduates from which to hire. Employers have been unable to meet the demand for trained medical assistants in Central Oregon. The increasing need for MA graduates is consistent with Bureau of Labor and Statistics data. The demand for medical assistants is predicted to grow much faster than average (approximately 29%) over the next several years.

According to Oregon employment data, the average salary for medical assistants in the East Cascades Region is \$37, 862. Additionally, approximately fifty percent of our current class have indicated longer-term educational goals such as nursing or physician's assistant (PA) training. Many PA programs require work in the healthcare field prior to admission. Our MA program, with its outpatient focus, provides ideal preparation for these students. Mid-level providers, such as PA's or Nurse Practitioners, can earn salaries over \$100, 000.

2. ***Does the community college utilize systemic methods for meaningful and ongoing involvement of the appropriate constituencies?***

Core components of the program, which is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), remain the same. CAAHEP accreditation enables students to test for the most widely recognized and respected medical assisting credential, the CMA. CAAHEP, in conjunction with the Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB), sets nationally recognized standards for curriculum content. Additional feedback and guidance is obtained through an advisory board with representatives from local employers, students, graduates, medical providers, faculty, administration and the general public. Our Medical Assistant Program Advisory Board has included representatives from the area hospital (St. Charles Health Systems) and large outpatient clinics such as High Lakes Health Care, The Center for Orthopedic & Neurosurgical Care & Research, Central Oregon Pediatric Associates and Summit Medical Group Oregon (formally Bend Memorial Clinic). The program maintains affiliation agreements with numerous local medical facilities to provide externship opportunities for students. Additionally, the program contracts with a physician to provide Medical Director services. These include guidance on protocols and standards.

Cultural inclusivity is a value of the program, and is integrated throughout the curriculum. A course in culturally competent communication has been added as an option to meet the state human relations requirement. The program actively recruits bilingual and multicultural students through outreach efforts in coordination with the campus LatinX and Native American student organizations. The program is currently collaborating with a group of rural nonprofit clinics to facilitate interest in the program. Additionally, an annual resource survey is performed to ensure that resources are adequate for all students.

3. ***Is the community college program aligned with appropriate education, workforce development, and economic development programs?***

As noted, the driving force behind program revision was feedback from our community partners. Information was gathered through collaboration with several workforce development, education and healthcare entities. These include East Cascades Workforce, St. Charles Health Systems (SCHS), the Oregon Employment Department, and the High Desert Educational District.

Completion of the program results in a COCC Medical Assistant Program Certificate with the ability to earn the CMA. Only graduates of CAAHEP accredited programs can take the CMA exam. The flexible prerequisite pathways offer opportunity for both lateral and vertical educational movement. The different prerequisite options are designed to meet the needs of three major groups of who students who commonly express interest in the program. All three pathways pose lower cost and time burdens than the previous options and are as follows:

1. A rapid pathway for direct entry into the field. Prerequisites are condensed and focused on the needs of the students seeking CTE coursework (Total prerequisite credits 14-18).
  - AH 114 Intro to Pathophysiology (5cr)
  - AH 105 Calculations for Allied Health (3cr)
  - BA 214 Business Communications (3cr)
  - BI 105 Essentials of Human Biology (3cr)
  - CIS 120 Computer Concepts Or Computer Competency Test (0-4)
2. A pathway with more transferable credits for those pursuing advanced degrees. Some classes can be completed in high school through college credit options. (Total prerequisite credits 25-29).
  - AH 114 Intro to Pathophysiology (5cr)
  - MTH 105 Math in Society (4cr)
  - WR 121 Academic Composition (4cr)
  - BI 231 & 232 & 232 Anatomy and Physiology I,II &III (12cr)
  - CIS 120 Computer Concepts Or Computer Competency Test (0-4)
3. A single-course option for students who have completed the COCC Nursing Program prerequisites.
  - AH 114 Intro to Pathophysiology (5cr)
4. ***Does the community college program lead to student achievement of academic and technical knowledge, skills, and related proficiencies?***

The new program was developed to promote quicker entry into the workforce while attracting more students through reduction in cost and time commitment. Revisions were specifically designed to maintain the quality of our accredited curriculum. Graduates of the current program are valued and in high demand. One hundred percent of our last cohort found employment after graduation. The five-year student satisfaction rating was 100% and the five-year employer satisfaction rating was approximately 95%. One hundred percent of the last cohort passed the CMA exam. Due to past success, our core program will remain the same.

Prerequisite options were designed to provide foundational knowledge needed for success in core program classes. The primary goal of the COCC Medial Assistant Program is to prepare competent entry-level medical assistants in the cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (behavior) learning domains as defined by the Commission for Accreditation of Allied Health Education. Course outcomes for core program classes mirror key competencies outlined within CAAHEP standards

and guidelines. Program outcomes reflect professional standards of behavior and the five major content areas taught within the program (Foundations for Clinical Practice, Applied Communications, Medical Business Practices, Medical Law and Ethics, Safety and Emergency Practices). Program Outcomes are as follows:

1. Apply foundations of clinical practice to provide evidence-based, quality care for patients.
2. Implement concepts of applied communication to optimize patient care and promote positive interactions in the professional environment.
3. Utilize knowledge of medical business practices in the provision of patient care and services.
4. Demonstrate medical law and ethics in the application of medical assisting practice.
5. Implement safety and emergency practices in the course of patient care delivery and outpatient practice.
6. Display characteristics key to the provision of safe, quality patient care.

Assessment of program outcomes occurs both prior to and after graduation. Assessment of outcomes during the program include:

1. Multiple measurement tools (e.g. tests, assignments and activities) assessing components of the outcomes are mapped to the five major content areas. Measurement of professional and behavioral standards (outcome six) are incorporated into skills checks and pointed behavioral standards designated in the syllabi. One hundred percent of key competencies identified by program accreditors must be demonstrated to a passing standard for students to enter practicum. Further documentation of affective and psychomotor skill acquisition occurs when students demonstrate entry-level ability on the minimum number of tasks needed to pass the practicum.

Assessment after graduation includes:

1. Acquisition of cognitive components of program outcomes are monitored through participation and passage rates on a national certifying exam. Additional measurement of outcomes occurs through graduate and employer surveys incorporating questions reflecting the three learning domains and overall satisfaction with the program.
2. The program must meet MAERB benchmarks for exam passage, graduation, retention, employer satisfaction and graduate satisfaction to maintain accreditation. Over the last decade, benchmarks were consistently surpassed indicating that the core curriculum is strong. Accreditation was renewed at our last site visit/review in 2015 with no recommendations for improvement.

5. ***Does the community college identify and have the resources to develop, implement, and sustain the program?***

Changes to the current program should not affect the school budget significantly. There may be a small decrease in revenue due to decreased prerequisite load on students. The current budget and fees cover costs, even at full capacity. The program will continue to maintain one to two fulltime faculty members depending on enrollment, and budget allows for supplementation with part time faculty as needed. All staff and faculty teaching or measuring key outcomes receive approval from the Medical Assistant Education Review Board before participation in the program. No additional supplies or tools will be needed for this well-established program. The program is housed in a state of the art Health Careers Center with a dedicated Medical Assistant Program lab. Students have access to the full range of services at our accredited college including computer labs, tutoring, extensive library and online services, on-campus dormitory, and professional advising. Students are provided with a minimum of 160 hours of hands-on practicum experience in their final term.

Program capacity is 24 students. Larger cohorts have been accepted in years with greater student demand.

***Assurances***

Central Oregon Community College has met or will meet the four institutional assurances required for program application.

1. ***Access.*** The college and program will affirmatively provide access, accommodations, flexibility, and additional/supplemental services for special populations and protected classes of students.
2. ***Continuous Improvement.*** The college has assessment, evaluation, feedback, and continuous improvement processes or systems in place. For the proposed program, there will be opportunities for input from and concerning the instructor(s), students, employers, and other partners/stakeholders. Program need and labor market information will be periodically re-evaluated and changes will be requested as needed.
3. ***Adverse impact and detrimental duplication.*** The college will follow all current laws, rules, and procedures and has made good faith efforts to avoid or resolve adverse *intersegmental* and *intra*segmental impact and detrimental duplication problems with other relevant programs or institutions.
4. ***Program records maintenance and congruence.*** The college acknowledges that the records concerning the program title, curriculum, CIP code, credit hours, etc. maintained by the Office are the official records and it is the college's responsibility to keep their records aligned with those of the Office. The college will not make changes to the program without informing and/or receiving approval from the Office.