



For Immediate Release

**Oxnard College's Dental Hygiene and Fire Academy Programs
Named 2021 Bellwether Award Finalists**

College is the only one in the state to have two programs as finalists

(OXNARD, Calif.) December 1, 2020 —The Bellwether College Consortium named Oxnard College's Dental Hygiene and Fire Fighter I/II Academy programs as 2021 Bellwether Award finalists. The college is one of 30 nationwide eligible for the award, which is a highly competitive and nationally recognized award focusing on cutting-edge, trendsetting programs worthy of replication.

Oxnard College is the only college in California to have two programs selected as Top 10 finalists. The Dental Hygiene program was honored in the category of Instructional Programs and Services; the Fire Fighter Academy in the Workforce Development category.

The programs are being recognized for their ongoing excellence and efforts in response to Governor Gavin Newsom's "Guidance for Essential Workforce." The order stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic colleges are to continue instruction in programs that support the essential critical infrastructure of the workforce, which includes fire and rescue services and healthcare.

"This is a great honor that not only one, but two of our programs were selected as finalists," said Oxnard College President Luis Sanchez. "Oxnard College and these two programs prepare students for the workforce even in the most challenging of situations. The ability to redirect during a pandemic demonstrates the commitment of our faculty and the resilience of our students."

"Being recognized as a Bellwether Award finalist reflects the immense dedication and determination of Oxnard College's faculty, staff and students," said Chancellor Greg Gillespie. "This accomplishment brings awareness of our rigorous programs that train students to be first responders and workers in our community and beyond."

The Fire Academy provides academic, behavioral, physical and manipulative skills that enable graduates to successfully compete for a firefighter position and to complete a department's probationary requirements. In response to the pandemic, the program's leadership developed a strong sustainable and replicable higher education model called RECOVER (Revisions Encompassing COVID Operations, Valuing Emergency Responders.)

"The program reimagined the delivery of an engaging and holistic learning experience for public safety students as a model that has been replicated

OXNARD COLLEGE

Ventura County Community
College District

CONTACT: JAMES SCHUELKE
Director of Outreach & Marketing

jschuelke@vcccd.edu

805-678-5275



4000 South Rose Avenue

Oxnard, CA 93033

oxnardcollege.edu

805-678-5000



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throughout California,” said Matthew Jewett, assistant dean, Public Safety Department.

The Dental Hygiene program trains students to become Registered Dental Hygienists and provides students the opportunity to work on patients at the Oxnard College Dental Clinic.

The program’s success stems from its Five P’s model, where its impressive 100 percent Pass and Placement rates for the past 11 years are attributed to Prerequisites, Performance and Planning.

“We take students who are told that they can’t do it and we show them that they can do it, and they can do it well,” said Dr. Armine Derdarian, interim dean of Career & Technical Education and former coordinator of the Dental Hygiene Program. The program resumed classes during COVID-19 with air-purifying equipment using the latest technology and stringent PPE guidelines.

“Oxnard College provides a quality education for all students and enables them to have rewarding careers. Students of all ethnicities and backgrounds--AB 540, Allies, veterans and those who are returning or first-generation--can all find their path at Oxnard College,” said Board Trustee Gabriela Torres.

The Consortium offers awards in three categories: Instructional Programs and Services; Planning, Governance and Finance; and Workforce Development. Oxnard College leaders will present at the 27th Annual Community College Futures Assembly with virtual day-long presentations on Jan. 25, 2021. The finalists will undergo a rigorous selection process with two rounds of judging by peers and leaders in higher education. The Bellwether Award Ceremony will be Jan. 26.

To learn more about the Oxnard College Dental Hygiene program, visit oxnardcollege.edu/departments/academic/dental-hygiene-program. For the Fire Academy, visit oxnardcollege.edu/departments/academic/public-safety-fire-technology/public-safety-regional-fire-academy.

About the Bellwether Awards

The Bellwether Awards are an integral part of the Community College Futures Assembly, established in 1995. The Assembly is sponsored by the Alamo Colleges District. The Bellwether Awards are given annually in three categories to colleges with outstanding and innovative programs or practices. The Bellwether College Consortium and CCFA are sponsored by the Alamo Colleges District in San Antonio, Texas. For more info, visit <https://bellwethercollegeconsortium.com/>.

About Oxnard College

Oxnard College is one of three colleges in the Ventura County Community College District and annually serves more than 7,000 students. Founded in



1975, Oxnard College is fully accredited and has been ranked the 4th Best Community College in California. It is also a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution. Oxnard College's signature programs include marine biology; culinary arts, restaurant management and hospitality management; auto technology and fire technology, among many other undergraduate study and career technical education programs. To learn more, visit oxnardcollege.edu and [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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