

Note: Because The Dental College of Georgia at Augusta underwent substantial curricular changes in the past year, we have two reviews: the first written by an older student (with no experience regarding the updated curriculum but many valuable insights about more clinical aspects of the program) and the second, written by a younger student that experienced the change in curriculum.

What are the best things about attending The Dental College of Georgia?

Cost: If you're paying in-state tuition, DCG is one of the cheapest schools you can attend. If you're paying out-of-state tuition, your total cost of attendance including living expenses will be around \$110-120K per year.

Graduate feeling ready: Most schools have "competency" exams where students have to prove that they can perform certain exams/procedures at a clinically passable level. This is a qualitative measure of how well a student can perform a procedure. DCG has that too, but they also require their students to complete a list of requirements before moving on to the next year or graduating. These are quantitative measures of how many procedures the student has performed. For example, we have to complete at least 4 crowns (6 to get an A) during our junior year before we can move on to senior year. This is also why DCG has a reputation for being very strong clinically – the students get a lot of extra experience. When I was interviewing at other schools, I always made it a point to ask senior students if they felt ready to practice. I was surprised at how many said the closer they got to graduating, the more they felt they didn't know anything about dentistry. I had the opposite experience at DCG. Seniors told me they felt like they could handle most things that came their way. Some other things DCG does to ensure its students are ready to practice include:

- DCG drills its students with classes on treatment planning
- Students conduct an oral exam at the end of D2 year to verify clinical competence before starting D3 year clinic
- Students take many of their complex patients through "treatment planning board" where the treatment plans they put together for the patient are critiqued by faculty before treatment actually begins.

Side note: you'll start seeing your first patients in your D2 year by doing simple exams, cleanings, and very small restorations.

Strong prosthodontics program: If you like prosthodontics and think you might want to do a residency in it, DCG is a great place for you. Their pros residency program is supposedly really good.

Facilities: The dental building is new and the clinic is nice. Patients are usually really impressed when they visit it for the first time.

What are the worst things about attending The Dental College of Georgia?

Requirements: As I mentioned previously, students have to complete a lengthy list of requirements in addition to competencies in order to move on from D3 to D4 year and from D4 year to graduation. The requirement system makes DCG students clinically prepared, but it is a MAJOR double-edged sword. In 2019 about 50% (I wish that was an exaggeration) of the D4 class was still in clinic finishing requirements *after* their graduation date. About 50% of the D3 class was also still trying to finish D3 requirements when they should have moved on to D4 clinic. That creates serious problems for those starting jobs, residency programs, or military commitments immediately after graduation. It's a HUGE source of frustration for students.

When 50% of a class is late in graduating or moving on to the next year, that indicates a problem that is not the students' fault. DCG has a responsibility to complete its curriculum in 4 years and if they can't do that, something has to change. The reason that so many students get held back is they don't have the right kinds of patients to complete their requirements (or maybe the requirements are too high). There's also a "luck of the draw" factor where many students get stuck with patients who are unreliable or drop out of the program. There is very little that students can do about that. Unfortunately, the administration is aware of the problem but hasn't attempted to resolve it.

Appointment Scheduling: Scheduling appointments for patients is a lot like Hunger Games. There are scheduled "chair release" days that happen at 12:15pm during lunch where the entire class will race each other to reserve operatories in the departments that they need (Operative, Pros, Perio, etc.), and on the days that their patients are able to come. If your internet was slow and your classmates grabbed the spots you needed first, too bad. If your morning appointment went into the beginning of lunch and you were late to the chair release party, too bad. Getting the appointment types that you need is a regular struggle. On the bright side, you can trade appointment slots with classmates to help each other out. During D3 year you'll spend a lot of your time in class trading appointments and scheduling patients rather than listening to the lecture.

Lack of patients: DCG recently increased their class size to around 96 students. Unfortunately, the population of the Augusta area is unable to support the increased class size, especially considering the demanding requirements (explained previously) that students are required to complete to move on to the next year/graduation. Both students and faculty are upset by this, but faculty will only express their frustration off the record. Students can request the types of patients that they need to finish specific requirements, but if there are no patients to be had, too bad. There is NOT a waiting list for patients to be seen at DCG. Many, many students in my class are waiting to be assigned new patients, but we've been told that there aren't any (also off record).

Attitude Problems: Take this with a grain of salt because it's not true about everyone, but many students share this concern. For some reason, certain faculty and staff have a superiority complex. Students walk on egg shells to do everything just right, but mistakes are inevitable. I've seen some of my classmates get walked out of class and cussed out by faculty for not following instructions. There seems to be an expectation

that students should be something more than human. I wish that more of the faculty would treat students as colleagues as I've heard they do at other schools. That being said, many of the faculty members and most of the staff are fantastic people.

Curriculum Change and D1 year: I didn't experience this myself because the curriculum change happened after I finished my D1 year, but many underclassmen seem to be overwhelmed by the amount of tests and coursework. The first year is very front-loaded and the end of the year is more relaxed. **(Note: This curriculum change is discussed by another student in the review just below this one)**

Mandatory attendance at lectures: Recordings of every class session are available, but students are still required to attend class. A regular day goes from 8AM – 5PM. Usually the day is split between classes and lab/clinic work with one taking up the morning and the other in the afternoon.

Limited time to study for boards: At the beginning of D3 year you have to balance classes/clinic time from 8AM-5PM and lab work + studying for your classes in the evenings. If you're lucky enough to be busy with patients during the day, you won't have many gaps in your schedule from 8-5. Most people take boards sometime around the end of that semester, so the rigorous workload makes it difficult to find extra time to study for boards. Many schools give students a few weeks off from courses/clinic to study for and take boards, but that doesn't happen here.

Out-of-state acceptance: If you're not a Georgia resident and don't have a connection to Georgia, you probably won't get in - good or bad depending on who you are.

What do students need to know/What do you wish you knew before attending The Dental College of Georgia?

Anatomy: It's a big part of the curriculum and boards, but it's not a prerequisite class for most dental schools. My classmates who didn't take it before school regretted it. The more exposure you can get, the better.

Don't study before school starts: Some people try to get ahead by studying for their D1 year classes before they start school. Don't do that. There's too much material to cover. Your time will be better spent finding out the specifics that your professor wants you to learn for his/her class when school starts. Besides, you're going to spend the next 4 years studying.

DCG is a huge time commitment: You won't have much of a life outside of dental school unless you're a genius who doesn't have to study (they exist). Enjoy life before you come. If you don't get in your first year, that's okay. If you take a year off to make a life memory, that's great. You won't have time to do that during dental school because it goes year-round (mine does. I'm pretty sure most do). Once you finish dental school you'll be a professional with responsibilities to patients and employees. Things like

month-long hiking trips won't be as easy to fit in as they were during undergrad so make those memories before you start.

Hand skills: The students who develop sculptural artistic skills before coming to dental school have a much easier time in lab courses. We had some very smart people in my class repeat their D1 year because they failed a hand skills class. Whatever you can do to enjoy and excel at anything dealing with hand skills will be a huge help to you.

What are the best things about attending The Dental College of Georgia at Augusta?

The admissions board seems to do a really great job at selecting students from all backgrounds, races, cultures, ages, etc. They didn't just select those with the best GPAs and highest DAT scores--they looked at the whole person. My classmates are my favorite part of DCG, and we work really well together.

The dental school building is beautiful, and the Sim Lab is well-maintained. Even with beautiful facilities, tuition at DCG is extremely cheap. I expect to graduate with less than \$250,000 loans.

Since DCG is the only dental school in Georgia, there is a lot of alumni support.

We have some really great professors who love teaching and who want to see us succeed. They put a lot of time and effort into our education.

We start lab classes on day one at DCG, so students are very prepared for clinic. Being in the sim lab and working on actual dental skills also makes dental school more exciting.

What are the worst things about attending The Dental College of Georgia at Augusta?

DCG adopted a new curriculum and they are still working out the kinks, and there are A LOT of kinks. We have had different courses scheduled at the same time, professors unaware of what we have/haven't been previously taught, weeks of unrelenting daily tests/quizzes, and overall inefficiency. I'm sure things will be worked out as time goes on but right now students are frustrated.

Most classes are recorded and available for later viewing, but attendance is still mandatory. This is frustrating since we're in class 8-5 almost every day and it is impossible to pay attention and stay focused for that long. Many people have stopped attending didactic classes and have developed study schedules that are most productive for their learning styles. The faculty and administration do not like this and remind us regularly that we should be in every class every day. But 35-40 credits per semester is an insane workload.

We have some professors who obviously do not want to be teaching. They make fun of students, get easily frustrated at students who struggle, spend all lab/clinic on their phones, etc.

It is not uncommon for at least 1-2 students to fail the first semester of the D1 year and the end of the D2 year. Students are only failed for lab classes (there is remediation available for those who fail didactic classes.)

Seniors routinely do not have enough patients to be finished with clinic by graduation. It's been over a month since graduation and there are still seniors trying to get enough "experiences" to complete their senior year. As you can imagine, this is a major frustration for the new seniors and a few for underclassman.

What do students need to know/what do you wish you knew before attending The Dental College of Georgia at Augusta?

DCG is now on a two-semester per year curriculum. We have three weeks off at Christmas and only two weeks off in the summer. (We also have a week at Spring Break and a week at Thanksgiving.)

The administration talks as if they are very concerned about the students but their actions don't always reflect their words. The dean talks about wanting to get to know students and that the school can't exist without us, but I have literally been on an elevator with the dean and she didn't say a single word to me. It was an awkward ride.