

What are the best things about attending the University of Iowa College of Dentistry?

Iowa provides both strong and early clinical experience for their students. First year students begin performing cleanings on patients at the end of the school year. Second year students perform cleanings as well as minor restorative procedures during second year. Third and fourth year students are primarily full-time clinic like most other schools.

Iowa also has a strong supply of patients for students to be able to complete requirements. This is partly because of the school's good reputation in the community and also because of the state's Medicaid program. Patients on Medicaid are able to get much more done beyond emergency treatment including operative, root canals, crowns, bridges, etc. Obviously, there are limits to what is covered but this also gives more opportunity to students to provide care to individuals who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford it.

Basic science courses during the first two years are taught by professors from the medical school. However, they are dental-focused classes that are designed to teach what is needed for dental board exams. This setup provides the opportunity to learn from experts in each field (i.e., microbiology or physiology), but only receive the information required for dental boards and curriculum requirements.

Having every specialty gives you access to many knowledgeable specialists as your everyday faculty, which is an advantage in its own.

What are the worst things about attending the University of Iowa College of Dentistry?

Students do not have the opportunity to place implants, although they have the opportunity to restore them.

Because the University of Iowa has every dental specialty (except for dental anesthesia), the school is compartmentalized into departments. This makes it so dental student training seems segmented. For example, you are taught Prosthodontics by Prosthodontists and Restorative dentistry by faculty who have complete operative residencies, etc. This can feel like a fragmented education where you struggle to see the bigger picture in the early days of your education. It does come together well after your first two years. However, it can be frustrating in the earlier days trying to grasp the 'why' and the 'how' of everything.

What do students need to know/what do you wish you knew before attending the University of Iowa College of Dentistry?

The curriculum at Iowa is unique. Third year students complete “clerkships” where they rotate through each department performing those procedures only for their allotted duration. For example, for 5 weeks in your third year you are in the Oral Surgery clerkship and you do nothing but pull teeth. Then, for 5 weeks you move on to the next “clerkship”, which could be Pediatrics, Endodontics, or any of the other areas of dentistry. The fourth year is your traditional family dentistry experience where the student provides comprehensive care for their patients.

Overall, students are happy here. Student life is easy going and students are able to have fun outside of school. It is also very doable to have balance family time, and even to have kids during school here at Iowa. Students also get good summer breaks after both first and second (around 8 weeks off) and after third year you get between 3-4 weeks.