Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this research was threefold:
1. To determine if graduates of online bachelor degree completion programs based in dental hygiene actually pursue different professional roles
2. To verify the requirement of an internship by the online bachelor degree completion program the student attended and if a relationship exists between a role change and the internship completed
3. To confirm that the learning environment of the internship was perceived as student centered by both the online degree completion graduate and the online degree completion program director.

Methodology
Confidential electronic surveys were distributed to the two purposive sample populations:
• Online Degree Completion Graduates
• Online Degree Completion Directors

Results were compared to determine differences and relationships between sample populations.

A mixed methodology design was used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. (p .05)

Statistical Procedures Applied:
• Descriptive
• Comparative
• Chi-square
• Mann-Whitney U Test
• Correlation
• Spearman’s rho

Data Generating Samples:
17 Online Program Directors
93 Online Program Graduates

Survey Results:

### Professional role changes of graduates from an online degree completion program based in dental hygiene

**Kristin Minihan-Anderson, RDH, MSDH**
Fones School of Dental Hygiene
University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT

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- 93 Online Program Graduates

### Survey Results:

**Professional roles of most interest prior to starting and upon completion of a Bachelor Degree Completion Program Based in Dental Hygiene**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional role of most interest</th>
<th>Pre-degree</th>
<th>Post-degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dental hygiene educator</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical dental hygienist</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health dental</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygienist</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sales/marketing manager</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental hygiene advocate</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Results

- 59% of directors indicated internship is a curricular requirement
- 87% of graduates were clinical dental hygienists before program, 61% after
- No relationship was found between internship completed and role change
- 48% completed internship in DH education
- 13% currently DH educators
- Samples not in agreement regarding structure of internship

### Structural Components of the Internship Studied

- Culture of the internship: work or learning-orientated
- Primary role of the internship site mentor; evaluator vs. coach
- Provision of an internship site orientation prior to the start of the experience

### Conclusion

As the profession of dental hygiene seeks to prepare individuals for alternative professional roles outside of clinical practice, online degree completion programs must create effective student-centered internships that provide the experience necessary for graduates to facilitate a role change.

### Survey Results: Internship Site Structure According to Graduates and Program Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internship Site Structure</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Program Directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural orientation</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary focus of internship</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary role of the internship site mentor</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of an internship site orientation prior to the start of the experience</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Respondents to Internship Section of Surveys:

- 10 Online Program Directors
- 66 Online Program Graduates