Grant saves Cabrillo’s dental hygiene program

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF REPORT

APTOS — Two months after announcing that its popular dental hygiene program would be slashed, Cabrillo College on Wednesday said that a grant will help keep it afloat.

The program will accept 22 students in fall 2015, thanks to a $100,000 donation to the Cabrillo College Foundation from Richard and Theresa Crocker.

The Crockers are longtime donors to Cabrillo College, and a theater on the Aptos campus bears their name.

Richard Crocker called the program “an asset to our community,” and added that Theresa Crocker is a dental program alumna.

“...so it is especially important to us to see their great work continue,” he said.

The donation was a boon in a time when declining enrollment and reduced state and federal funding forces colleges to make tough budgetary reductions, said Cabrillo College Vice President of Instruction Kathie Welch.

“We are thrilled about the Crocker donation, which, combined with streamlined efficiencies in the dental hygiene program, will allow us to continue accepting the full cohort of 22 students in the year 2015-16,” she said. “Cabrillo’s faculty, staff, administration, the local dental community and now private donors, realize the importance of this program in the students it trains to work in dental offices throughout the greater Santa Cruz County.”

As the college plans for the upcoming year, it is also looking to fund the program into the future, estimated at $135,000 per year.

“We are so very grateful to Richard and Theresa Crocker for their generous donation,” said Bridgete Clark, Chair of Cabrillo’s Dental Hygiene program. “The Cabrillo College Dental Hygiene program serves a critical need in the community and has a stellar reputation — our graduates have a 100 percent pass rate on their state board examinations, and upon graduation they secure gainful employment, often within the greater Santa Cruz County community, at comfortable living wages.”

“Cabrillo College is incredibly grateful to the Crockers for their continued generosity and support of Cabrillo College,” said Melinda Silverstein, Executive Director of the Cabrillo College Foundation. “Richard and Theresa are the kind of donors that see a critical need and recognize the importance to the community, then bring the college community together to retain the continuity of the program.”

The Crockers in 2007 also gave $1 million to the Visual, Applied and Performing Arts Complex.

The two-year associate in science degree in Dental Hygiene at Cabrillo College is nationally accredited by the Commission on Dental Association, and prepares graduates for the Dental Hygiene National Boards as well as the California State Board examinations.

Cabrillo’s Dental Hygiene program also offers low-cost dental examinations, as well as teeth cleaning services, dental x-rays, scaling and root planning, and sealants, which provide Cabrillo’s Dental Hygiene Students the opportunity to receive practical experience.