



Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Oral Health Program

Findings from a survey of representatives of academic institutions to assess interest and perceived capacity to establish a dental therapy degree program in Michigan.

December 2024



Introduction

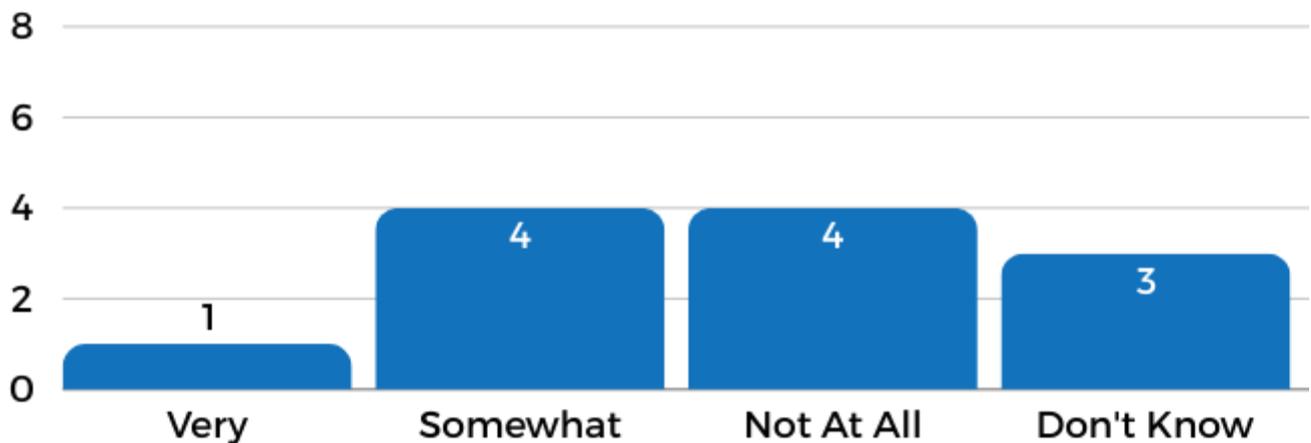
The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Oral Health Program (OHP) received funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HRSA) to address the dental workforce needs of designated dental health professional shortage areas (DHPSAs). As part of this initiative, MDHHS OHP developed the Michigan Oral Health Workforce Innovation Network (MI-OHWIN) to carry out activities to develop or improve dental therapy programs. A primary strategy within this objective is to provide technical assistance and resources to facilitate the commitment of a comprehensive and accredited dental therapy program in partnership with an educational institution in Michigan. To identify technical assistance needs, academic institutions with and without dental programs were surveyed to learn more about representatives' interest and perceived capacity to establish a dental therapy degree program.

Representatives from 16 academic institutions with dental programs were invited to participate, in which representatives from 12 institutions completed a survey (75% response). Representatives from 54 academic institutions without dental programs were invited to participate, in which representatives from 19 institutions completed a survey (35% response). In total, representatives from 31 of the 70 invited academic institutions in Michigan provided information (44% response).

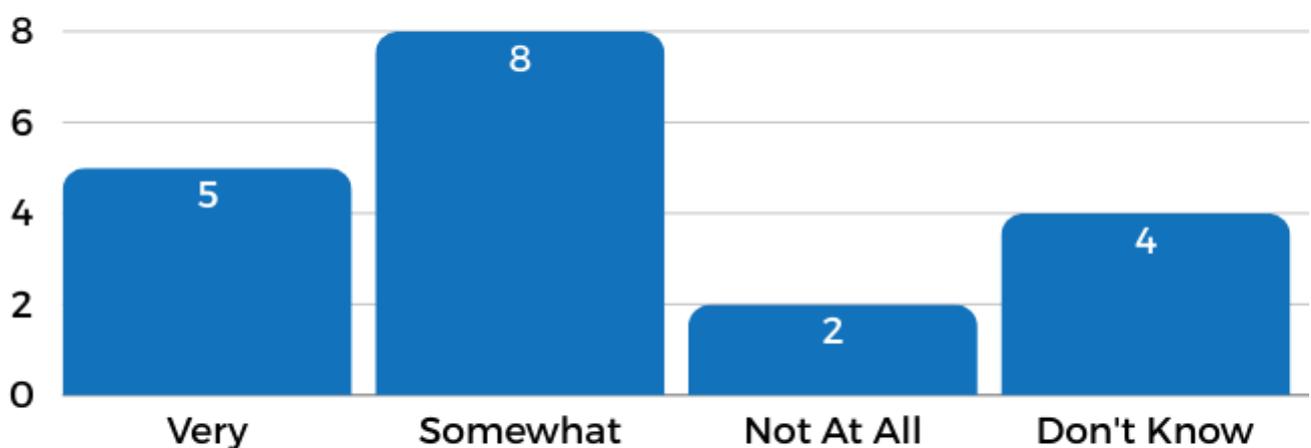
Interest

Nearly half of representatives from institutions with a dental program (5 of 12) and over two-thirds of representatives from institutions without a dental program (13 of 19) said they had a lot or some interest in establishing a dental therapy program in partnership with MDHHS OHP.*

Level of Interest Among Respondents from Institutions With a Dental Program (n=12)



Level of Interest Among Respondents from Institutions Without a Dental Program (n=19)

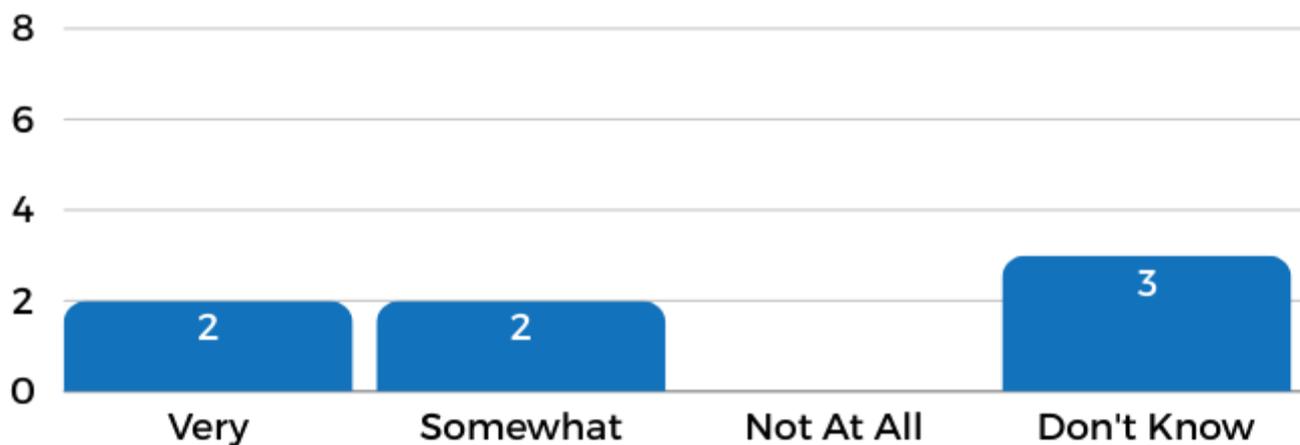


*Respondents were asked "How interested do you think your institution is in establishing a dental therapy program in partnership with the MDHHS OHP?"

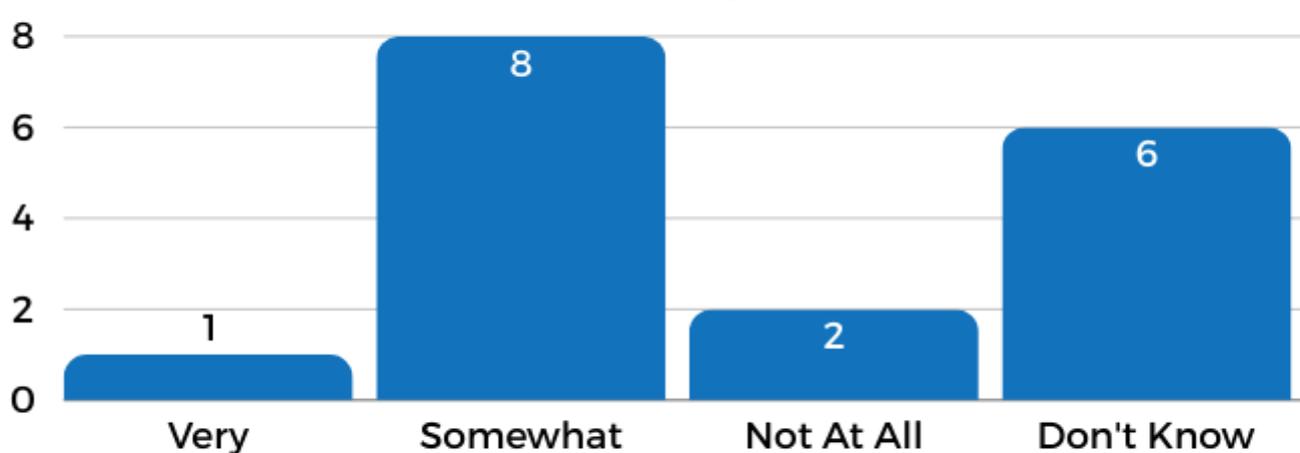
Capacity

Nearly 60% of representatives from institutions with a dental program (4 of 7) reported their institution was very to somewhat capable and 53% of representatives from institutions without a dental program (9 of 17) reported their institution was very to somewhat capable to establish a dental therapy program.[^]

Perceived Capacity Among Respondents from Institutions With a Dental Program (n=7)



Perceived Capacity Among Respondents from Institutions Without a Dental Program (n=17)



[^]Respondents were asked, “What do you think is your institution’s current capacity to establish a dental therapy program?” Respondents who said they were not interested in a dental therapy program or did not provide an answer about interest were not asked about capacity.

Aspects of Capacity

Respondents were asked to assess their institution's capacity to establish a dental therapy program across 10 different aspects.



Achieving Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) standards



Facility upgrades and/or expansion



Alignment with the institution's mission or departmental goals



Interests from potential students



Clinical partnerships



Marketing efforts



Curriculum development



Regional employment potential for dental providers

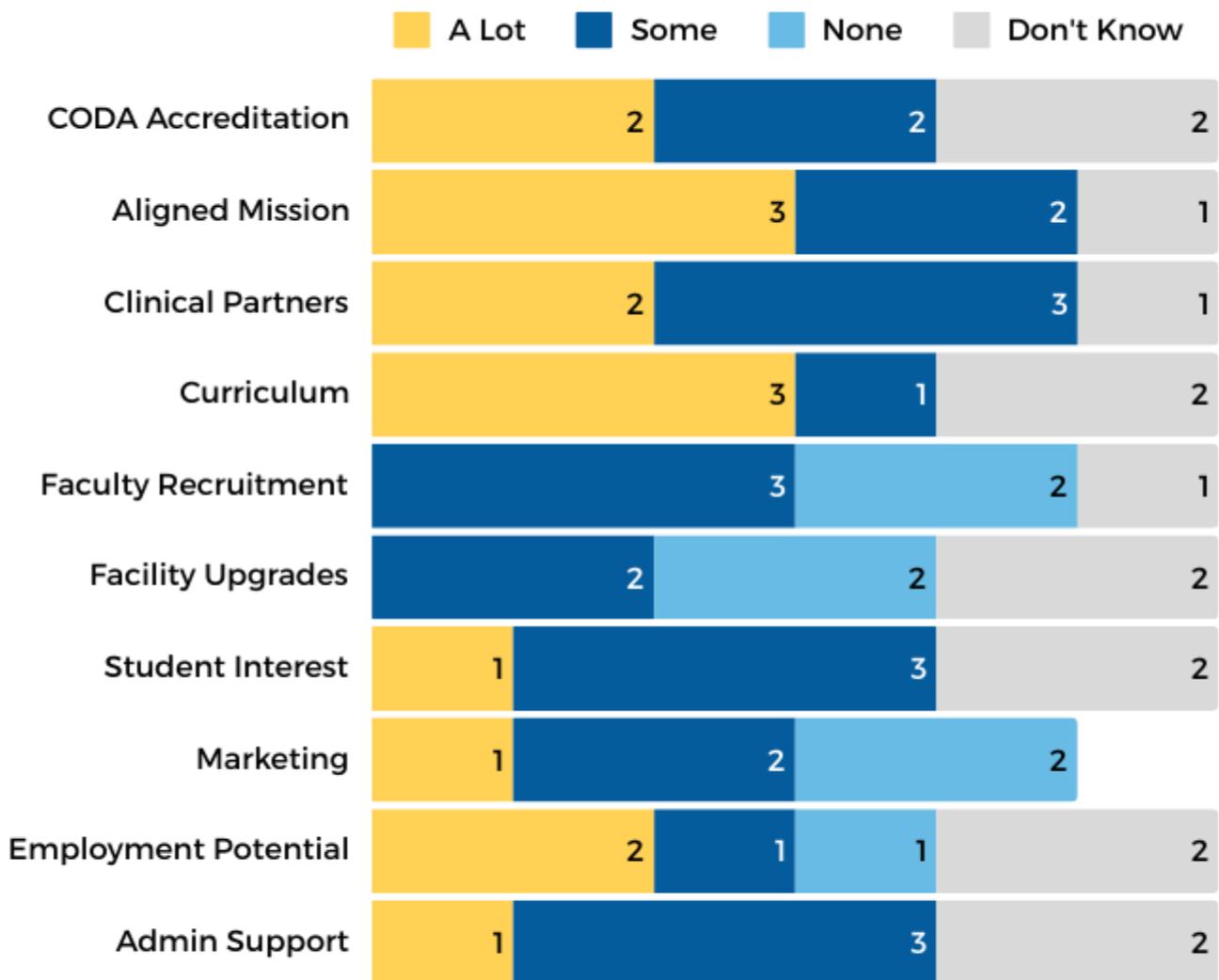


Faculty recruitment



Support from current faculty and administrators

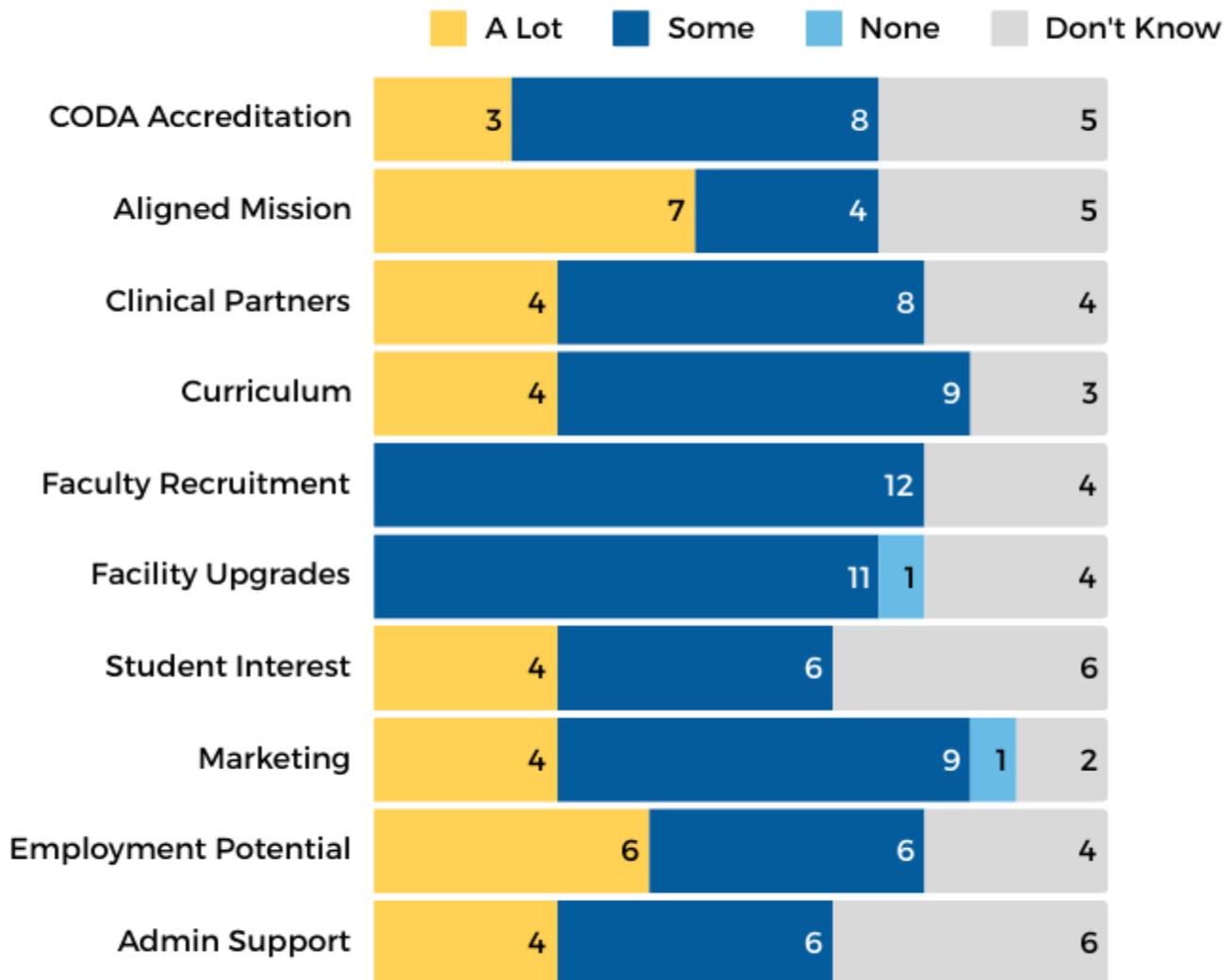
Perceived Capacity Among Respondents from Institutions With a Dental Program by Capacity Aspect (n=6)



Representatives from institutions with a dental program reported having a lot of current capacity with alignment of institutional mission and departmental goals and curriculum development but less current capacity with faculty recruitment, facility upgrades and/or expansion, and marketing efforts.

Of the seven respondents who were asked about overall capacity, one respondent did not provide an answer for any capacity aspects and one respondent did not provide an answer for marketing efforts.

Perceived Capacity Among Respondents from Institutions Without a Dental Program by Capacity Aspect (n=16)



Representatives from institutions without a dental program reported having a lot of current capacity with alignment of institutional mission and departmental goals and regional employment potential for dental providers but less capacity with faculty recruitment and facility upgrades and/or expansion.

Technical Assistance Needs

Respondents were asked about resources and support to help address capacity needs.

Information

Though it was clear that representatives from institutions had an overall understanding of the magnitude of work and resources needed to develop a dental therapy program, several representatives from both institution types expressed uncertainty with the process and had questions pertaining to the requirements and resources needed for program development.

Funding

Funding was noted as a key need. Representatives commented on the costs associated with establishing a program, including accreditation, faculty recruitment, curriculum development, clinic upgrades, and marketing, and they also stressed the need for financial support to students.

Community Support

A few representatives noted a lack of support of dental therapy within the dental community and mentioned this as a significant area of concern as it could limit the ability to place dental therapists upon graduation. Other representatives also recognized the need for community partnerships and mentioned these as an important resource to help recruit students and meet employment needs in the community.

Recommendations

The following recommendation were made for stakeholders to support capacity building and address the technical assistance needs of academic institutions developing dental therapy education programs in Michigan:



Identify avenues for individual support for academic institutions interested in building a dental therapy program, such as assistance with achieving CODA accreditation.



Make sources of funding available to assist with start-up costs for academic institutions and award subsidized tuition or grants for students of dental therapy programs.



Develop and promote educational resources and related guides for academic institutions and for potential employers and community partners to garner support for dental therapy.



Develop and use strategies to identify and engage partners that can help academic institutions meet their capacity needs.



MORE INFO

This report was developed in partnership with the Michigan Primary Care Association (MPCA). For more information about dental therapy in Michigan, go to: MiDentalAccess.org.



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