‘We believe the establishment of a dental college in Maine will increase access to oral health education and services.’
— Tom Raffio, Northeast Delta Dental

approach to dental education and population-based health research.
Kathleen Taggersell, director of marketing and communications at UNE, said the dental college is in its fund-raising stage of planning and that UNE must first secure the funds to make the college a reality.

“Our estimated project start-up costs are $15 million, and hiring of senior faculty and administrators to prepare for accreditation, curriculum, recruitment and clinical affiliations would begin in 2011, with an anticipated first class in 2012,” Taggersell told Dental Tribune.

“Centralized early education of dental students will take place at our Portland campus and third-year practice at the college’s Portland teaching clinic,” Taggersell said. “Students will then have fourth-year extensive community-based clinical experiences in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.”

Northeast Delta Dental is the largest provider of dental benefits in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. Its gift is the largest to date that UNE has received in support of the establishment of a college of dental medicine, which reflects Northeast Delta Dental’s tri-state commitment to this initiative.

“Good oral health and access to oral health care are two significant public health concerns,” said Tom Raffio, president and CEO of Northeast Delta Dental, announcing the financial contribution.

“Northeast Delta Dental is proud to provide this leadership gift in support of the UNE College of Dental Medicine,” he said.

Delta Dental Plan of Maine has donated $2 million, the Northeast Delta Dental Foundation provided a $100,000 grant and Delta Dental Plan of Vermont and Delta Dental Plan of New Hampshire have recently awarded an additional $100,000 each in support of the college, bringing the total gift to $2.3 million.

“This substantial and incredibly generous gift from Northeast Delta Dental provides a huge boost to our effort to make the UNE College of Dental Medicine a reality,” said Harley Knowles, UNE vice president for institutional advancement.

The Maine legislature in April approved a $5 million bond package that goes to voters Nov. 2 for the purpose of increasing access to dental care in Maine. Of that $5 million, $3.5 million is to be used for a community-based teaching dental clinic affiliated with or operated by a college of dental medicine to be matched by $3.5 million in other funds.

Another $1.5 million is to be used to create or upgrade community-based health and dental care clinics across the state to increase their capacity as teaching and dental clinics.

“If voters approve the referendum, UNE will be in a strong position to compete for the $3.5 million to be used for a college of dental medicine clinic,” Taggersell said. 

The University of New England’s campus in Portland, Maine, is where the College of Dental Medicine will be located. (Photo/University of New England)