

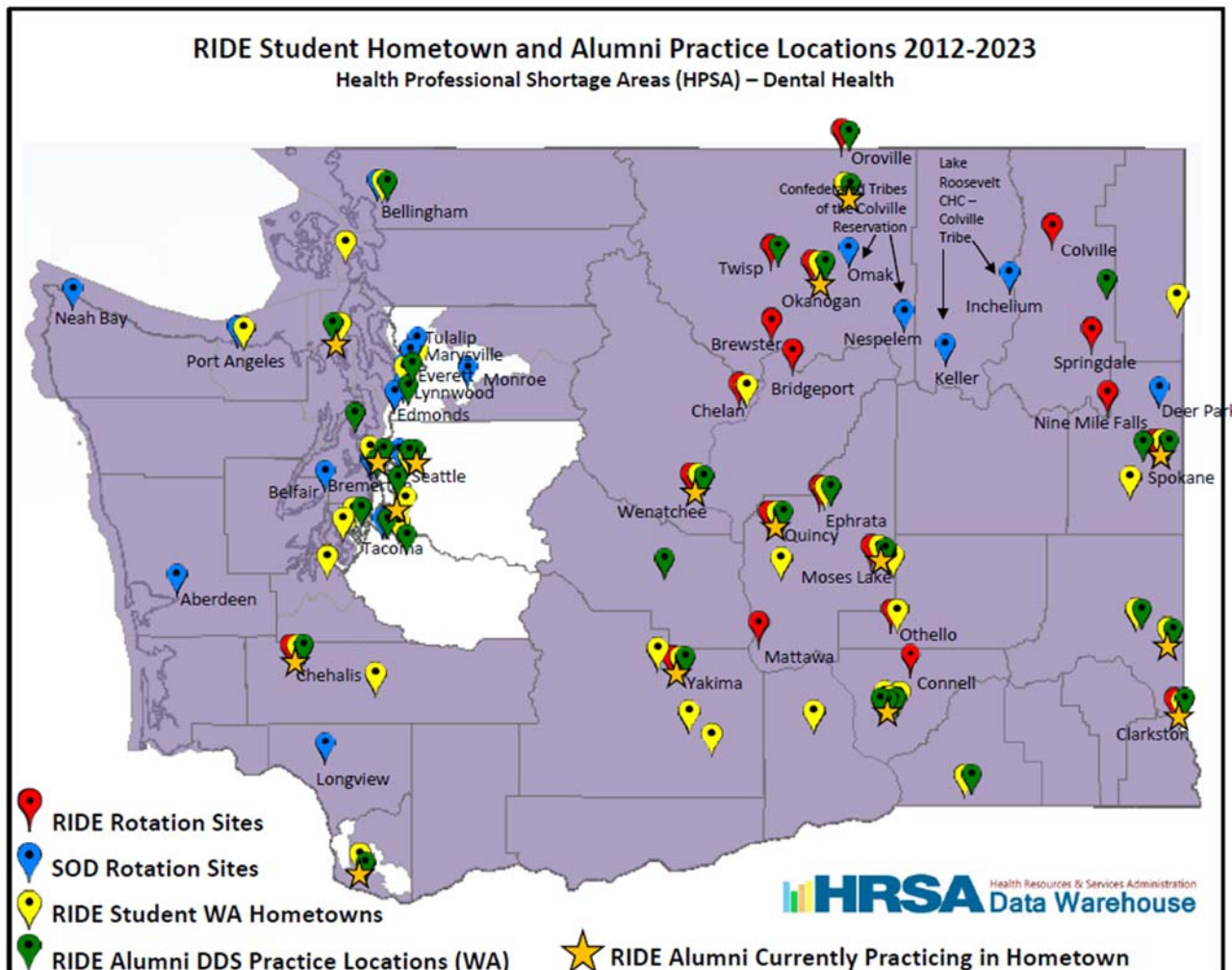
2024 UW Legislative Agenda: Expand Dental Education in Rural WA

The UW School of Dentistry Regional Initiatives in Dental Education (RIDE) program aims to develop dentists who are committed to practicing in Washington’s rural and underserved communities. The innovative training model immerses students in community-based clinics to gain valuable field experience while also providing high quality dental care to areas with access to care challenges. In the classroom, RIDE is co-located with Eastern Washington University’s dental hygiene program to maximize resources and enhance training.

RIDE has proven successful with more than 80% of graduates returning to rural and underserved communities in Washington and the region, with 48% of RIDE alumni currently practicing in Eastern or Central Washington. This is notable given the national rate of DDS graduates practicing in these communities hovers below 10%.

Currently, RIDE students spend their first year of dental school at EWU in Spokane and complete two clinical rotations at Community Health Centers in central and eastern Washington. To meet rising demand from students and local communities, **the UW requests \$2.5M in FY25 (ongoing) to enhance the RIDE program by increasing the number of DDS students trained from 32 to 64, adding a second year of curriculum to the educational program in Spokane by securing centralized space that supports a Regional Simulation Training lab and interprofessional programming.**

Notably, the UW has already secured \$1.5M in federal funds for dental simulation equipment for RIDE and EWU dental hygiene students.



Local Impact by RIDE Alumni



Mariany Morales Class of 2021

"Working with underserved communities has always been my plan and is a major reason I did dentistry, but my RIDE rotation helped solidify my plans. It was definitely clear to me that the need for dentistry in rural communities is high."

Dr. Mariany Morales is from Yakima and completed her rotation at Columbia Valley Community Health Center in Wenatchee. Dr. Morales now works at Quincy Community Health Center, a RIDE site.



Columbia Valley Community Health, Wenatchee Medical, Dental, & Behavioral



Gerardo Aragon Class of 2021

"My RIDE experience pushed me further to work in a Community Health Center, especially one near to my hometown. My experiences of being able to treat family and friends made my rotation very meaningful."

Dr. Gerardo Aragon is from Quincy and currently works at Quincy Community Health Center. He plans to become a RIDE preceptor and mentor to 4th year RIDE students.



Quincy Community Health Center



James Lovelace Class of 2021

"Being in rural Colville, WA for my RIDE rotation helped expose me to the population, landscape, and other practice opportunities in the surrounding communities. I believe this was a very enriching experience."

Dr. James Lovelace from Marysville, practiced dental hygiene at Tulalip Health Clinic on the Tulalip Reservation before joining RIDE. He will complete the UWSOD Periodontics Graduate Program in June 2024 and plans to move to rural Eastern Washington following his graduation.



NEW Health Colville Dental