

PittDental Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
WINTER 2022

A large group of dental students in blue scrubs walking down a set of stairs outdoors. The students are diverse in age and ethnicity, and many are carrying backpacks. The scene is bright and sunny, with greenery visible in the background.

Leading the Way

In October 2021, University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine alumni, faculty, students and staff once again volunteered at Mission of Mercy Pittsburgh, a free, two-day dental clinic offered each year by A Call to Care, Inc. In addition to offering prompt, free and much-needed care, the event serves to make members of the community aware of the affordable services that Pitt Dental Medicine offers year-round.

At the clinic, faculty members oversee teams of third- and fourth-year students who have just one goal: to provide quality care quickly.

More than 90% of the Pitt Dental Medicine fourth-year class volunteered for the clinic, with 190 pre-doctoral students signed up, said School of Dental Medicine Interim Assistant Dean for Clinical Affairs Sarah Grafton. Read more at

pi.tt/missionofmercy.



PittDental Medicine

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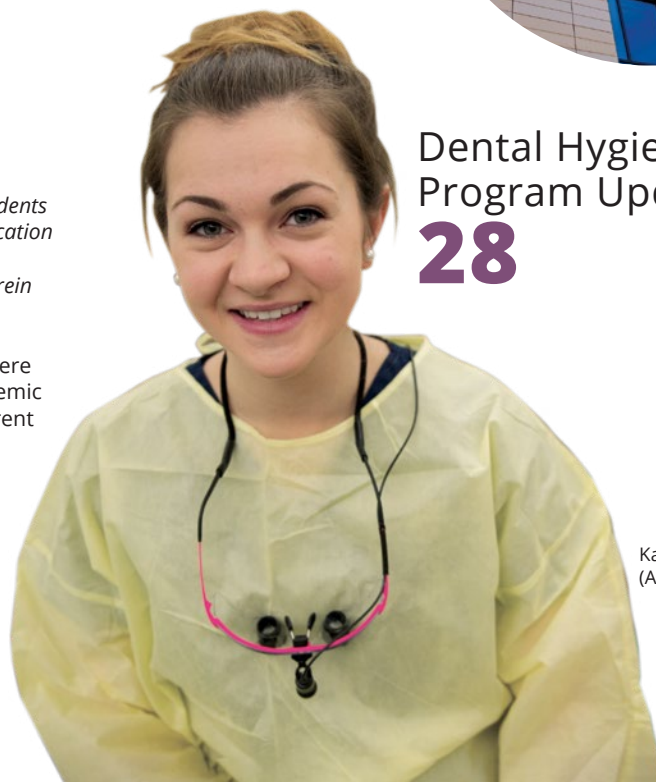


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Kate Snyder,
(AS '17)

Dear colleagues and friends,

I am thrilled to present the current issue of our Pitt Dental Medicine magazine to you. As the cover describes, the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine leads the way by modeling the way forward—particularly while we celebrate the school’s 125th anniversary year. Our University is fundamentally a place where reinvention never stops. We innovate because we are the crucible for creating what is new and for challenging what we think we know. As one of my mentors quipped recently, “We are not here to just answer questions; we are also here to question the answers.”

In this issue, you will see several topics highlighted, including many of the “wins” that Pitt Dental Medicine has achieved—like innovation and research success, the grit and determination that are helping to bring us out of the pandemic, novel educational programs, building a strong culture, the community impact of more than \$3 million worth of free and reduced care, a very strong representation of leadership in our fields, and so much more. We also are focusing on building on our existing strong culture and doing so with the broader University community in new ways. I am proud of what the school has been able to accomplish and confident in what is ahead of us. Our students, staff and faculty have supported each other, worked exceptionally hard throughout the pandemic and now have a way forward to emerge stronger than ever.

Also in this issue, you will find faculty profiles; student news; staff achievements; and information about events for our school, our alumni and our community. You will see new arrivals, accolades and retirements to celebrate. Our people are having a tremendous impact in their fields and communities. I encourage you to reach out to them to help them to celebrate their successes.

Please also consider coming to and supporting the Dean’s Scholarship Ball on March 26, 2022, which helps to support scholarships for our most promising students. Some of our awardees will be there, and I hope you will have the chance to meet the future members of our Pitt Dental Medicine family. Additionally, we will have several online events featuring many aspects of our community. Please also see our social media accounts for the most up-to-date information.

We look forward to telling you more in person as we capitalize on new opportunities and look forward to partnering with you to make our goals happen. As we move ahead, you can help us to achieve our potential by contributing to these efforts. Please help us to engage the local community and the world. Consider donating to support our students at this critical moment when they need our help to become superior clinicians and work their way toward beginning their professional careers.

Yours in service,



Bernard J. Costello, DMD, MD
Dean and Thomas W. Braun Endowed
Professor

*Follow us on Instagram, Twitter, Flickr
and Facebook.*



“We are focusing on building on our existing strong culture and doing so with the broader University community in new ways. I am proud of what the school has been able to accomplish and confident in what is ahead of us.”

—Bernard J. Costello

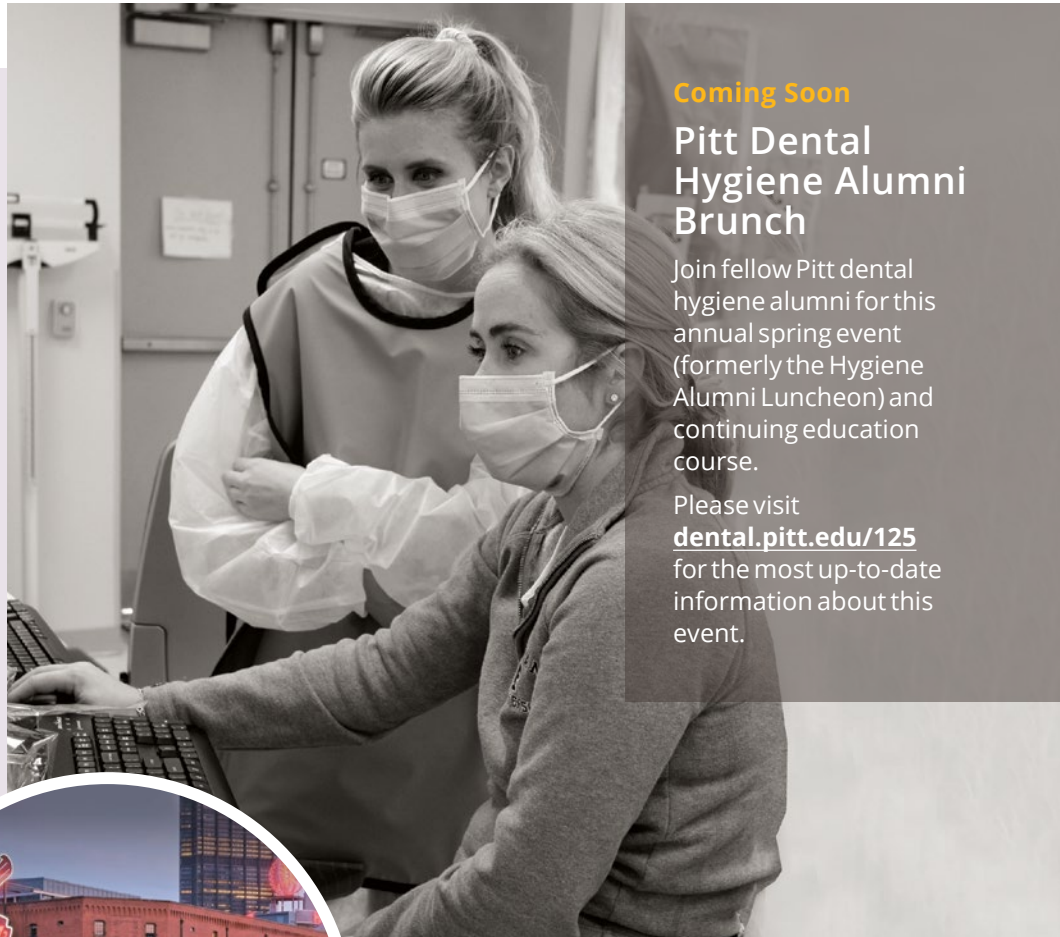




Bridging Our Proud Past to a Bright Future

Celebrating our 125 years of improving oral health through education, patient care and innovative research

Help us to celebrate by joining



Coming Soon

Pitt Dental Hygiene Alumni Brunch

Join fellow Pitt dental hygiene alumni for this annual spring event (formerly the Hygiene Alumni Luncheon) and continuing education course.

Please visit dental.pitt.edu/125 for the most up-to-date information about this event.



us during our upcoming events.
Save the Date

20th Annual Dean's Scholarship Ball

Bridging the Next 125 Years!

Saturday, March 26, 2022

6 p.m.

Senator John Heinz History Center

Formal invitation to follow



Alumni Weekend events have been postponed. Please visit dental.pitt.edu for updates.

To learn more or to register for events,
visit dental.pitt.edu/125.

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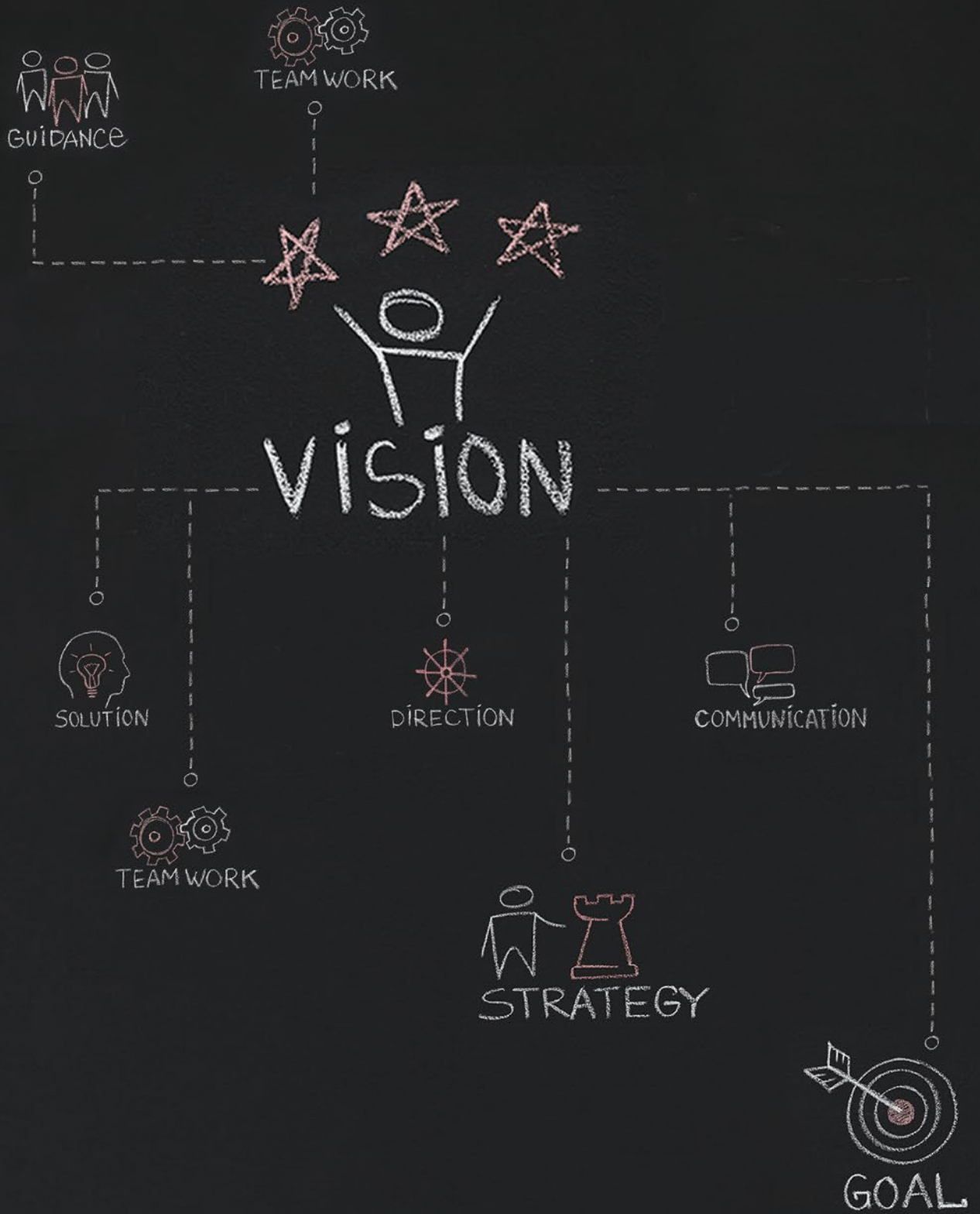
PittDental Medicine

Reinvention never stops.

Neither do we.

Pitt Dental Medicine is celebrating
125 years of education, innovation
and service.





“In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.”

—Harry S. Truman

Leading the Way

Pitt Dental Medicine Grows through Strong Leadership

The history of leadership at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine is, in many ways, the history of dentistry itself. Since the earliest days of the school 125 years ago, notable faculty leaders have paved the way in surgical education, anesthesia delivery, dental education, research and a number of other innovations.

Today, the Pitt Dental Medicine clinical enterprise provides high quality patient-centered care and is recognized as the region’s premier dental resource because of its capable, effective and courageous clinical leaders. Recently implemented clinical efficiencies, with increased use in the main clinic, have provided patients with superior treatment and students with improved and more frequent clinical experiences. Now emerging leaders are expanding and improving both education and clinical and translational research at Pitt Dental Medicine by incorporating the approaches that have been so successful in the clinical space.

FACULTY LEADERSHIP

Defending Anesthesia in Dentistry

Paul J. Schwartz (DMD '82) believes strongly that all dentists should maintain their ability to provide anesthesia care to their patients. He has worked tirelessly in professional societies and activities at the state and national level to advocate for and advance the field for every oral and maxillofacial surgeon.

His passion and leadership will culminate next year, when he's installed as president of the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS), as well as the following year, when he becomes president of the American Dental Society of Anesthesiology.

"Our anesthesia model is under attack," Schwartz says, "and it's important that we defend our ability to provide anesthesia care for our patients. We must continuously elevate the training and competence of the anesthesia team. The reputation of our anesthesia model must be beyond reproach and universally respected throughout the anesthesia community."

Schwartz worked in private practice as an oral and maxillofacial surgeon in the metro Washington, D.C., area for more than 30 years and is now a full-time faculty member in the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine Departments of Dental Anesthesiology and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

"I became active in organized dentistry because I felt the need to represent my practice in what I saw as a lack of representation for [oral and maxillofacial surgeons] in state government," he says. His early efforts to represent the field involved serving



"I became active in organized dentistry because I felt the need to represent my practice in what I saw as a lack of representation for [oral and maxillofacial surgeons] in state government."

—Paul J. Schwartz



as an officer and then president of the Maryland Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons. He also served the American Dental Association and on the AAOMS Committee on Anesthesiology and functioned as a liaison to the American Society of Anesthesiologists. At Pitt Dental Medicine, he sits on the Dean's Council and committees that focus on admissions, infection control, patient privacy and

collaboration among the schools of the health sciences.

Now, as president-elect of AAOMS, he aims to defend the specialty's anesthesia delivery model and improve emergency preparedness training among the anesthesia team, including establishing a robust simulation program.

"I plan to listen closely to our members' and residents' concerns and lead with honesty, transparency and accountability," he says.



Going on “Walkabouts” to Lead Change

Larry Cunningham is an oral and maxillofacial surgeon and Fellow of the American College of Surgeons who holds several formal positions of leadership in his field. He is chair of the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine and president of the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

But some of his most meaningful contributions as a leader have come about through more informal spheres of influence.

“Leadership is not just about having a title. It’s about letting people know you care about the patients and the learners. There are many times when you can’t just say, ‘Do this or do that,’ but rather you have to go on ‘walkabouts’ to inform, collaborate and get everyone on the same page,” he says. “Collaboration and negotiation are very important aspects of leadership in academia and dentistry.”

He has used his walkabout approach to accomplish many things throughout the school:

- **Establishing a resident clinic:**

“It was a sea change as far as workflow, and everyone thought it would flop,” he says. But it’s evolved from one chair one day a week to now three chairs five days a week.

- **Adapting to COVID:**

As part of a team, Cunningham led efforts through the early days of the pandemic to provide urgent care via tele-dentistry, use remote treatment when possible and establish a team approach to shift coverage to mitigate infection and facilitate contact tracing.



Cunningham



- **Instituting a competency-based medical curriculum for dental medicine residents:**

This helps residents to graduate at the end of the third year of medical school, saving them money and shortening their path to practice.

- **Tackling administrative challenges:**

Cunningham had to negotiate to ensure that the dental clinic at UPMC Montefiore was covered despite staffing shortages in the rare subspecialty of maxillofacial prosthodontics.

As he leads in both formal and informal ways, Cunningham hopes that he is passing along genuine leadership lessons to his residents: “Modeling is the most powerful way to transfer leadership ideas. I try to share with mentees how I have to go about some things. I detail the effort, and I confide in them how hard it can be sometimes.”

Shaping Our National Reputation in Organized Dentistry

University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine leaders are having a unique and profound impact on dentistry at the national level. Pitt Dental Medicine faculty members have or have had the distinction of leading prestigious national dental organizations for oral and maxillofacial surgeons: Larry Cunningham, associate dean for hospital affairs and chair of the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, served as the 2020-21 president of the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, while Assistant Professor Paul Schwartz is president-elect of the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons.

While serving in these important national professional roles, these two faculty members also are making a difference locally as part of the Pitt Dental Medicine team that contributes more than \$3 million in free and reduced-cost dental care to our community annually.

We congratulate Cunningham and Schwartz for their contributions to their profession, the community and the University’s reputation.

FACULTY LEADERSHIP



Faculty Chosen to Guide National Sections

Two University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine faculty members were recently selected to serve in leadership positions in the American Dental Education Association (ADEA), an organization representing academic dentistry throughout the United States and Canada.



Balakrishnan

Nyla Balakrishnan, clinical assistant professor in the school's Department of Dental Public Health, was elected secretary of the ADEA Section on Educational Research, Development and Curriculum, a role that will progress to chair-elect and then chair. The section provides a forum for leadership, quality and innovation in the areas of research, educational methods and curriculum and supports programs designed to facilitate the development of faculty skills.

"I enjoy working with others and bringing a team together, developing a full connection, integrating honesty and delivering quality work," she says.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Balakrishnan, who holds advanced degrees in both dental medicine and public health, also codirects SCOPE (Student Community Outreach Program and Education), which introduces dental students to community service and provides oral health care to rural Pennsylvania and neighboring states. As a public health dentist, she is passionate about serving those who do not have access to health care. Through SCOPE,

she is able to send student dental providers out to care for many people who may not otherwise have access to these professionals.



Malik Chopra

Balakrishnan also serves on the school's predoctoral admissions committee and on the Internal Operations Committee of the PA Coalition for Oral Health.

Anchal Malik Chopra, assistant professor in the Departments of Dental Public Health and Restorative Dentistry and Comprehensive Care, is taking her place among ADEA leaders as chair of the ADEA Section on Minority Affairs, Diversity and Inclusion. In this position, she is working to strengthen and facilitate an integrated vision and shared responsibility for diversity and inclusion. She embraces a passionate commitment to develop and advance the section's long-range plans and programs to ensure, promote and recognize the participation and accomplishments of minority leaders.

Malik Chopra also was nominated and selected by the American Dental Association (ADA) Council of Scientific Affairs to be part of an expert advisory group for an ADA Science and Research Institute project. She serves as a board member of the American Academy of Cariology.

"I enjoy working with others and bringing a team together, developing a full connection, integrating honesty and delivering quality work."

—Nyla Balakrishnan

"The core value of all I do and plan to do is to be inclusive, effective and efficient with a humanistic touch that adds value to the institution, the community and those I interact with."

—Anchal Malik Chopra

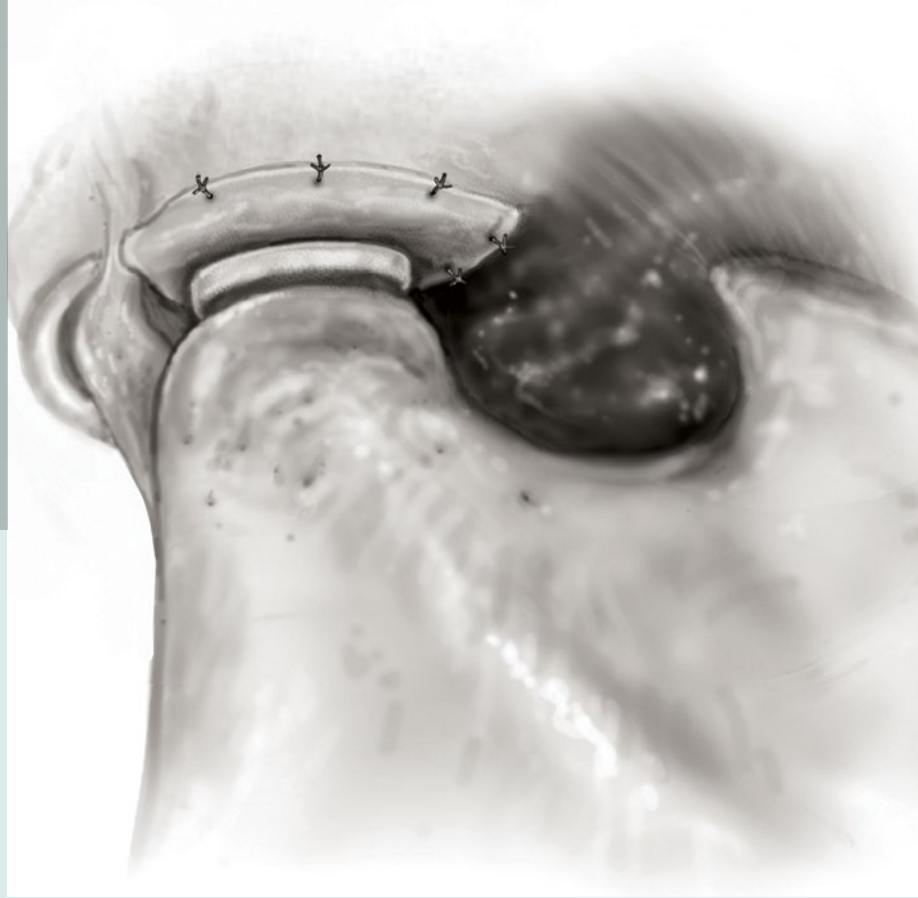
"It is an honor and privilege to be able to represent [the] University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine in esteemed state, national and international organizations," she says, noting that the opportunities to support the missions of the school and the organizations that she serves have introduced her to some extraordinary and inspirational individuals.

At the school level, she serves on multiple committees, including predoctoral admissions, diversity and inclusion and planning and budget. She also is the dental school's representative on the University Senate. Malik Chopra, who earned advanced degrees in both dental surgery and health policy and management, is actively involved in teaching the predoctoral students and is leading the efforts at Pitt Dental Medicine in training and calibrating students and faculty in an evidence-based caries detection and assessment system using the International Caries Classification and Management System, which builds on the International Caries Detection and Assessment System.

"The core value of all I do and plan to do is to be inclusive, effective and efficient with a humanistic touch that adds value to the institution, the community and those I interact with," she says. "I'm a dentist, but I chose to be in education because I can learn as well as support learning. All of us have our own unique experiences and backgrounds that shape our thinking and who we are. Recognizing, understanding and respecting all the ways we differ helps me to value and utilize the knowledge and experiences of other people while also making me more self-aware."



Faculty Partners Lead Change in TMJ Disease Treatment



A research team at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine has won a prestigious \$100,000 grant that will help them to advance the development of an off-the-shelf solution for patients with temporomandibular joint (TMJ) meniscus disease.

The Osteo Science Foundation awarded a Peter Geistlich Research Award to a project led by **Alejandro Almarza**, associate professor in the Department of Oral and Craniofacial Sciences, and **William**



Almarza

Chung, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon, clinician and professor in the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and the McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine.

The scientist/surgeon duo is part of the team that developed the use of an extracellular matrix scaffold from the tissue of pig small intestines, stripped it down to a layer with great regenerative potential, removed cells from it and created a scaffold that can be implanted in the jaw. The biologic scaffold is designed to replace the TMJ meniscus by inducing the body to create new, patient-specific functional tissue. The device is biodegradable, eliminates the need for tissue harvesting and mimics the shape and size of the native TMJ meniscus.

“This award will fund research that will get us one step closer to getting this



Chung

technology into the clinic. We’ve had a lot of success in animal models, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires long-term follow-up data for up to one year,” Almarza says. “With this award, we will be able to document long-term data, and then we can consider first-in-human trials.”

The award is the most recent high point in a decade-long collaboration between

Chung is involved with the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons’ Committee on Anesthesia. Almarza earned his PhD from Rice University, where his research on tissue engineering approaches for the TMJ disc was the first to apply various technologies used in orthopedics.

Almarza and Chung.

“We’ve been at it for many years and would not be where we are without each other,” Almarza says. He focuses on the research and administrative aspects of the project, while Chung performs the surgeries necessary to test the technology and continuously improve its design and implantation. “Without one or the other, nothing gets off the ground and



it's nothing more than an idea on a piece of paper," Chung reiterates. "The fact that we are respectful of each other's personal and professional backgrounds and beliefs facilitates the research."

In addition to leading this innovative research to evolve the TMJ treatment paradigm, both faculty members help to lead their fields in other ways. Chung is involved with the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons' Committee on Anesthesia, specifically as a content expert on the use of simulation in anesthesia to promote patient safety in the office setting. Almarza earned his PhD from Rice University, where his research on tissue engineering approaches for the TMJ disc was the first to apply various technologies used in orthopedics. He is chair of a biannual conference on TMJ that brings together opinion leaders from many disciplines, such as orthopedic surgery, tissue engineering, biology, molecular science, chemistry, biomechanics and tissue regeneration. He also serves on committees for the Orthopaedic Research Society; the American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research; and the University of Pittsburgh.

"These activities give me more exposure to the science, and they inspire what I do in the lab," Almarza says. "I can see what others are thinking in the field—I can see the pulse."



STAFF LEADERSHIP

Left to right: Angela Novak, department administrator; Lisa Swedowski, clinic control manager; and Debora Whitfield, assistant patient services manager

Employees Leading by Example

While studying child development at the University of Pittsburgh, Fred Rogers

noticed that children most enthusiastically played with clay when they watched a sculptor immersed in their work, not when they were instructed to mimic the behavior.

"There's a world of difference between insisting on someone's doing something and establishing an atmosphere in which that person can grow into wanting to do it," he would go on to write.



The ability to rouse others to action at any age is what distinguishes the following individuals as role models among their peers. Their penchant for leading by example helps to set the standard needed to inspire the next generation of leaders who will guide the instruction, research and service at the heart of the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine.



Our Staff Is Like Family



Typically, a person's first job out of college is a stepping stone toward a more permanent career, a way to test the waters and gauge one's professional desires. On rare occasions, it's a match from the start.

Conor McCollum started at Pitt Dental Medicine in January 2014, a few months after graduating from Pennsylvania State University with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Understanding that he might need a graduate degree to find a fulfilling career in that field, he took a job at Pitt, one that he believes has been easy to maintain thanks to a familial work environment where individuals take a genuine interest in each other.

"It's the environment here," said Conor. "I love the people I work with and the work itself. Everybody, from my coworkers to the managerial staff, my supervisors, all the way up to the dean, everyone is just extremely inclusive, extremely personable," he says. "And I'm sure you probably have a lot of people who talk about their workplace like that, but I really do think it's unique to everybody here."

In his role as lead patient experience specialist, McCollum supervises about a dozen

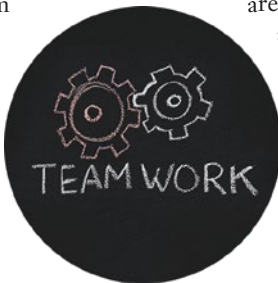


McCollum

staff members who manage student schedules and handle financial counseling of patients to make sure they understand their fiduciary responsibilities.

When a disruption inevitably occurs, be it a staffing shortage or a worldwide pandemic, he tries to lead by example by filling in as needed and being as present and supportive as he can for his staff. His hope is that others will emulate his behavior to create a mutually supportive work environment.

"Being right there in the trenches is important to me. I do like to have staff see that I'm there doing the same thing that they are, that I'm up to date on all these processes. I don't want to seem removed from everything they're doing. So I do like for them to be able to see me working on the same things that they're working on, pitching in and helping out as needed."



"It's the environment here. I love the people I work with and the work itself. Everybody, from my coworkers to the managerial staff, my supervisors, all the way up to the dean, everyone is just extremely inclusive, extremely personable."

—Conor McCollum

STAFF LEADERSHIP



Inspiring Others

Tammy Smith's relationship with the School of Dental Medicine began in the late 1980s, when she was enrolled as a dental hygiene student.

After more than 30 years in the field, first as a dental assistant and hygienist and later in various managerial roles both inside and outside dentistry, Smith finds herself having come full circle as someone who supervises dental assistants and oversees student-assisted procedures, among other duties. She strongly believes that her varied and extensive time in the field gives her credibility with new students.

"I think all of my background experiences and my other education beyond dental hygiene have helped to mold the way I supervise both staff and the students," she says. "I try not to ask anybody to do anything that I wouldn't do myself. I try to put myself in their shoes as much as I'm able to."

Smith returned to Pitt Dental Medicine five and a half years ago in pursuit of new opportunities and to take advantage of tuition benefits for her two sons. One of her proudest moments came roughly two years in, when she received a promotion from dental assistant to her present position of dental assistant coordinator.

"At that point, I think, they recognized that I was able to do a little bit more than what I had been doing."

She believes that leading by example comes from the top at Pitt Dental Medicine, and she credits her supervisors in the Department of Restorative Dentistry and

Comprehensive Care with being role models and inspiring others with their demeanor and work ethic.

"We have a fantastic team, and everybody works so well together," she says. "It's so much better for the students and the patients, and everything works smoother and it's more efficient when everybody comes to work with a positive attitude. We have great personalities, and I want to maintain that."

Although she's been employed at the School of Dental Medicine for more than

19 years, **Kristen Felser** knew she was working in a supportive environment from the very beginning.

"I was walking through the halls on the day I interviewed, and the dean of our school at the time,

Dr. Thomas Braun, stopped and introduced himself and welcomed me to the Pitt Dental Medicine family. And so it started there, with the dean of the school finding time to say hello."

Today, as the instrument management service manager for the school, Felser oversees four satellite dispensaries and a dozen staff members as well as the instrument management system and central stores for the School of Dental Medicine. She also cochairs the school's Infection Control Committee and serves on Pitt's Staff Council.

This year, she was nominated to attend the American Dental Education Association's Emerging Leaders Program.



Smith



Felser

"I know that people appreciate having someone who will listen and work hard to find ways to help them get past their hardships. I'm proud to work somewhere where I can see the impact of the services we provide to our students, faculty, staff and patients."

—Kristen Felser

"I was honored to be recognized for my contributions to our school," she says. "I am grateful to be a part of our mission, to treat each other with respect and kindness and to work collaboratively with other leaders to make Pitt Dental Medicine better every day."

Felser is immensely proud of her colleagues for pulling through to overcome tremendous challenges both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and believes that the effort is always worth it when it comes to administering care and serving the needs of the school community.

"I always feel proud when someone expresses how much relief they feel from receiving help from my team and me," she says. "I know that people appreciate having someone who will listen and work hard to find ways to help them get past their hardships. I'm proud to work somewhere where I can see the impact of the services we provide to our students, faculty, staff and patients."

Rethinking Leadership Goals

Prior to coming to Pitt, **Debbie Whitfield** spent 15 years working for a federally qualified community health center, where her entry into the world of dental medicine was quite sudden.

“One day, the director said to me, ‘We’re transferring you to the main office, and we’re going to put you in charge of all of the dental centers,’” she recalls. “And at that point, I had no experience with dental whatsoever.”

With tenacity and by learning from her colleagues along the way, Whitfield helped the clinic to streamline its operations and increase its revenue. After five years in that position, however, she was looking for a new challenge, and in 1998, she took on a financial counselor position at the School of Dental Medicine.

She sees the obstacles that have arisen over the years as stepping stones that have prepared her for bigger challenges ahead, including major departmental restructuring and, after her promotion to assistant patient services manager, a period of early retirements that shifted responsibilities and increased the workload for many who remained.

Whitfield values the open dialogue that exists between supervisors and staff and makes it a priority to treat patients with empathy and understanding, keeping in mind the stress that comes when dental treatment needs and financial considerations don’t immediately align.

In her spare time, Whitfield volunteers with Pitt’s United Way campaign and serves on Staff Council. Her proudest moment came in 2010, when she received a Pitt Chancellor’s Award for Staff for Service to the Community. It wasn’t the award, she says, that was most meaningful but the corresponding letters of endorsement she received from her colleagues.

“I don’t think you [volunteer] for the recognition; you do it because it’s what’s right,” she says. “But then when you realize that you are impacting other people and you are influencing other people and you’ve earned the respect of your peers, I mean, that means so much to you.”



Whitfield



From left: Gabriella Summa, Brett Becker, Vivian Villasenor, Shahriar Riazi and Tara Appiah

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Students Pursue Passions, Become Leaders

There are many student-based organizations, clubs and groups within the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine that allow students to follow their passions and at the same time flourish in leadership roles. Students are encouraged to broaden the scope of their learning by participating in such clubs and programs and to cultivate their personal leadership skills for use now and throughout their careers.

Some of the student leaders profiled here were new to the experience of leading their peers, while others have held many leadership positions in the past. All of them, however, agree that both dentistry and leadership require many of the same qualities and approaches.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP



Strong Student Voices

Throughout her four years in the DMD program, **Ariana Kelly** (DMD '21) served as class president, acting as spokesperson for her fellow students and a liaison between her classmates and school administrators. Kelly considers herself to be a leader, although she says it was not always her intention to become class president. She was hesitant at first because of the amount of work it required, but because she had completed her undergraduate education at Pitt, her familiarity with the campus and the research experience she gained at Pitt Dental Medicine drove her to become a leader and share her knowledge with her classmates. As president, she held monthly meetings with the dean and the associate deans for academic affairs and clinical affairs to discuss both areas of satisfaction and concerns about didactic and clinical classes.

Kelly and the other class officers worked together to fundraise for their class, collect comments and concerns from classmates to relay to the deans and department chairs and help with the organization of events such as clinical board exams. She believes that her organization skills and ability to work with others contributed to her success as a leader, and her confidence in delegating tasks made it easy to work with her fellow officers. Kelly says that holding the position also improved her communication skills.

“At first it was daunting as a student to talk to the dean of the school and suggest things that need to be changed,” she says, “but eventually it became easier to efficiently explain what we wanted in a respectful manner.”

The role came with its challenges and the realization that it is impossible

to please everyone, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when there was added stress and the confusion of the unknown. Her success in navigating those unprecedented times is an achievement that made Kelly proud and further strengthened her leadership skills.

Brett Becker is a fourth-year DMD student, a dean's scholar and a Dean's Scholarship recipient. He is the immediate past president of the University of Pittsburgh chapter of the American Student Dental Association (ASDA). ASDA is a national organization that connects all dental schools in a multifaceted national body. Seeing the positive influence that ASDA has had on not only the dental school and the University but on Pittsburgh as a whole was something that encouraged Becker to run for president of the organization.

As an ASDA chapter president, Becker was exposed to the intricacies of the school, including its rules, regulations, restrictions and policies. During his second year in the position, Becker was responsible for overseeing the 13 different committees that constitute ASDA and organizing educational and social events sponsored by the group.

After leading an organization of this size (every dental student is a member of the Pitt ASDA chapter), Becker knows the importance of relying on a trustworthy support system. He finds that overseeing the division of tasks is the most efficient way to reach the group's goals. He believes that being personable and

creating relationships are integral parts of successful leadership and says that relationships with both students and faculty “helped me to mold my leadership style for the future in both community involvement and larger settings.”

The organization is always evolving, so adaptability is something that Becker tries to maintain, especially as he adjusts plans to keep everyone healthy during the pandemic. Now Becker is working on ensuring that the transition of power within the organization runs smoothly by meeting and connecting with the incoming officers and members. His involvement in leadership with ASDA fostered a passion for organized dentistry, and he anticipates participating in similar organizations after earning his DMD.

Gabriella Summa is beginning her third year of the DMD program and has been a student ambassador since the spring of 2020. Student ambassadors act as representatives of the school and interact with prospective and incoming students by taking them on tours, conducting student panels and answering questions about the day-to-day experience of a dental student.

They must be at least second-year students in good academic standing and are selected through an interview process. Summa realized that she would like to be a student ambassador after interacting with them when she was an undergraduate student. She loves interacting with others and discovered that she could naturally step into the role.

Most recently, ambassadors assisted during orientation week for incoming students in the Class of 2025. Summa realized that it was many students' first time on campus (due to the pandemic-prompted virtual application cycle), and she wanted them to feel excited about their next four years at the school.

Summa has found that leadership and dentistry both require structure



Kelly



Becker



Summa



and communication and involve the execution of a plan. “That’s something I didn’t expect to enjoy about dentistry,” she says. “We follow a treatment plan, so it’s nice to have an idea of what the next step is and have a plan in place to achieve an objective.” She is grateful for her role as an ambassador because she is reminded of how hard she has worked and how far she has come when she interacts with new students.

Being a student ambassador allows Summa to encourage students and give them the tools they need for their next step, whether it be helping them to revise a personal statement, giving them study tips, encouraging their research projects or recommending activities in which they could participate. She looks forward to working as an ambassador for the remainder of her dental school career.



Rana

Sohail Rana (DMD ’21) is cofounder of ZeroDK, Inc., a company that integrates hardware and software to track oral hygiene. Rana is passionate about making dental care more inclusive and targeted. As CEO of ZeroDK, he has led his team to build an iPhone app to track brushing and flossing habits and ultimately decrease the cost of dental care. The goal of ZeroDK is to intervene in a patient’s dental care early enough to prevent illness, create good oral hygiene habits and positively impact patients’ health beyond the dental chair. Rana believes that the ability to prevent illness is empowering and that prevention, rather than treatment, is the key to healthy dentistry.

“My mission through ZeroDK is to create a world with zero tooth decay,” Rana says. “That’s a really big goal, but the good news is [that] we know how this can be accomplished: by providing patients with excellent oral hygiene

“While in school, we were told that if we want to be exceptional doctors, we need to diversify our field of knowledge beyond the dental school. That push gave me the wherewithal to take a look at different areas like business and tech.”

—Sohail Rana

and regular, affordable dental care.”

ZeroDK began as a business project that gained momentum as the team and interest grew. Rana does not have a technical background, so he chose to

work with individuals with technical and entrepreneurial expertise. Pitt Dental Medicine allowed him to explore these facets during his education, he says.

“While in school, we were told that if we want to be exceptional doctors, we need to diversify our field of knowledge beyond the dental school. That push gave me the wherewithal to take a look at different areas like business and tech.”

Rana acknowledges the challenges of managing and motivating a team when the initial excitement diminishes and the prospect of building something of value seems impossible. Even as ZeroDK grows, it is important to him that he continues to practice dentistry to further hone his skills and gain credibility.

To learn more about ZeroDK, visit zerodk.com or follow @zerodkinc on social media.

Tara Appiah is a fourth-year DMD student who has held leadership roles in the Pitt chapters of both the Student National Dental Association (SNDA) and the Dentist Anesthesiology Club for Students (DACS).

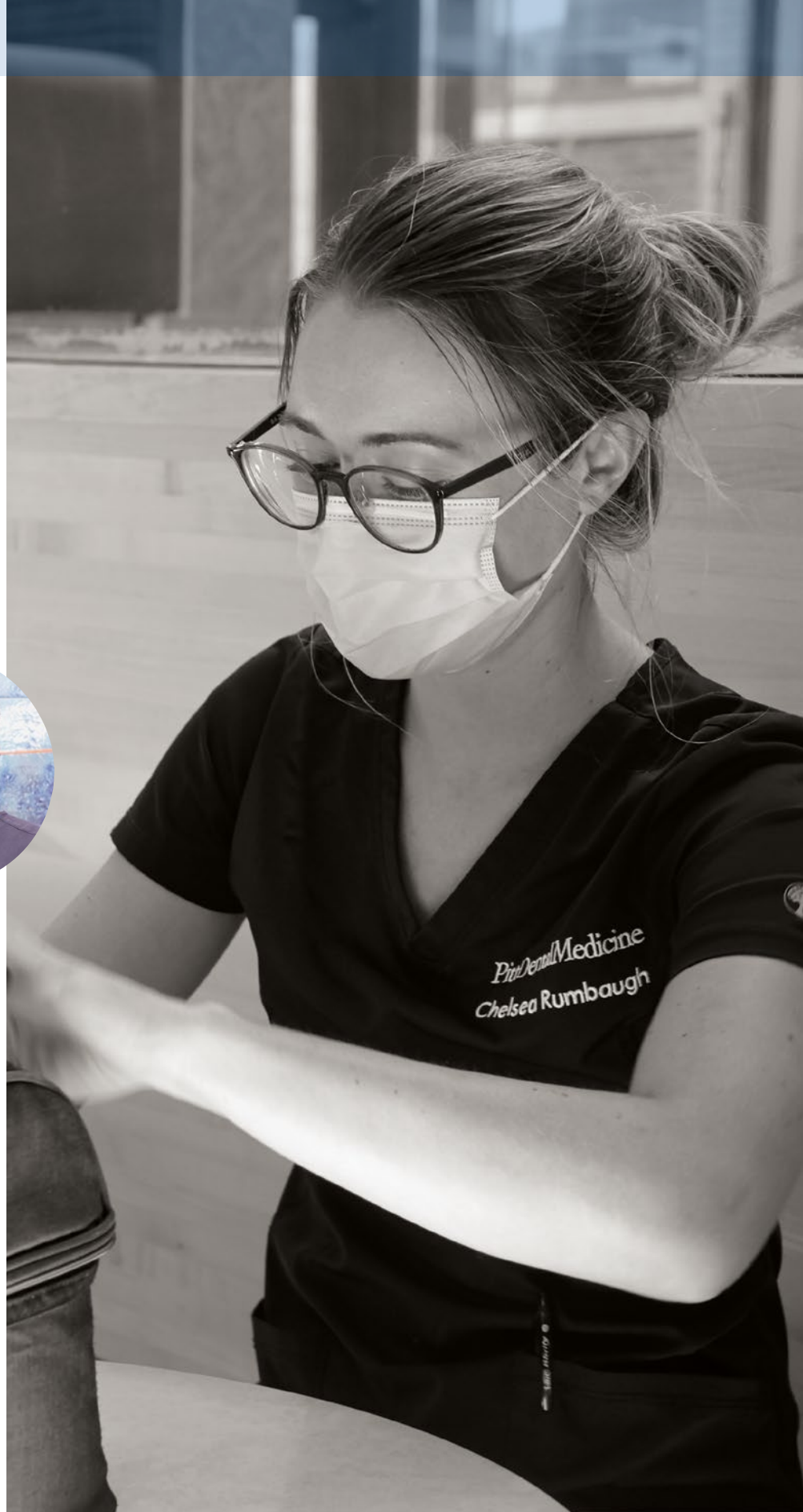


Appiah

Balancing two leadership roles requires organization, a quality that Appiah possesses. As a leader, she is encouraging to others, attentive and a good listener, which are all skills she learned from her grandmother in Ghana. “I was raised in Africa in a different way,” she says. “[You] don’t talk over someone. Being raised like that, I’ve learned a lot because now it’s easier for me to listen and not interrupt.”

SNDA is an organization that encourages diversity initiatives within the dental school through activities that include diversity panels and lectures and orientation activities and seeks to inspire high school and middle school students to become dentists. Appiah’s interest in this organization began during her second year, when she saw how the students in the club connected with and supported one another. As vice president of Pitt’s SNDA chapter, Appiah plans events with the president and organizes their meeting schedules.

Appiah also is a member of DACS, for which she recently arranged a presentation that discussed how to treat dental anxiety in children. Appiah’s other activities in the organization include planning programs





Riazi, left, and Villasenor

with the help of the Department of Dental Anesthesiology to teach students about patient sedation, IV placement and intramuscular injections. The anesthesiology department was an important part of what drew Appiah to Pitt Dental Medicine; dental anesthesiology is the area in which she plans to specialize. She knew she could learn more by becoming involved with the club, which she continues to do by observing residents practice dental anesthesiology.

Appiah's progress as a leader has grown because she is not afraid to ask others for help and admit when she is overwhelmed. She realizes that each student has different priorities and activities, and she believes that her ability to allocate responsibility is crucial to her success as a leader now and in the future.

Vivian Villasenor and Shahriar "Sean" Riazi, both fourth-year DMD students, are leading the way to a more sustainable and efficient future in dentistry. Their idea, ProSil, won third place in the 2021 Randall Family Big Idea Competition at Pitt. Since 2009, this competition has awarded cash prizes to cross-disciplinary student entrepreneur teams for their innovative ideas.



Villasenor and Riazi designed ProSil, a sustainable alternative to plastic covers that will improve infection control efficacy and even cost less than current plastic covers. The extensive research they did for this project involved acquiring marketing and business knowledge in addition to basic science and dentistry. This should help them to translate ProSil from a concept to a viable business.

Villasenor and Riazi developed ProSil after learning about the environmental concerns facing dentists today. In the dental clinic, plastic covers act as barriers to protect dental instruments and surfaces in compliance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. In a country that is becoming more

environmentally aware and also facing a global public health crisis, Villasenor and Riazi felt that an improvement in these barriers would contribute to a cleaner and healthier future.

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Villasenor and Riazi feel strongly about challenging the way things are typically done, especially when it benefits the industry in which they work. Spending time on ProSil while also working on their dental degrees full time was an obstacle both had to overcome.

The experience, however, yielded more benefits than challenges. Both agree that developing their creativity and gaining confidence in their idea were part of the growth they gained through their project submission. They are now working on other ideas that will complement their main product and are turning their attention to prototyping, solidifying their material and finding their first customers.



Akintonde

Dr. Bessie Delany Scholarship Awardee

Cecilia Akintonde, a Pitt Dental Medicine pediatric dentistry resident, recently was selected by the National Dental Association Foundation to receive the Dr. Bessie Delany Scholarship. Akintonde earned her DDS at the Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry.

The Dr. Bessie Delany Scholarship is named in memory of Annie Elizabeth “Bessie” Delany, who earned her Doctor of Dental Surgery degree in 1923 at Columbia University. The only Black female in her class, she was the second Black woman licensed to practice dentistry in the state of New York. Delany treated many of Harlem’s poor and, in 27 years of practice, never raised her fees.



"It took me a hundred years to figure out I can't change the world. I can only change Bessie."

Annie Elizabeth "Bessie" Delany (1891–1995), dentist and author

ALUMNI LEADERSHIP

Tackling Animal Advocacy with Humanity



Bonsteel

When practicing dentist and University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine alumnus **Brian Bonsteel** (DMD '96) saw that animal rescue efforts alone were not solving many of the problems faced by both pets and wild animals, he founded Humane Action Pittsburgh (HAP), a nonprofit group that educates the public about animal welfare and works directly with local legislators to enact policy and legal changes to improve animal and environmental issues humanely.

As HAP president, Bonsteel is a model of the organization's mission to advance the protection of all animals by empowering people to effect change through education, policy and community action. HAP members are in the community creating relationships, empowering supporters, and successfully protecting animals.

But, as Bonsteel notes, "Rescuing animals is not enough. We need a collective effort to keep them safe from harm in the first place. To do that, we need to legislate. To date, HAP has initiated 17 local ordinances into law, several being the first of their kind in the state. Our goal is to shape Pittsburgh into a model humane city and establish policies and laws that all cities can emulate."

Among its victories, HAP cites the following:

- In 2015, the first retail sales ban in Pennsylvania made it illegal to sell commercially bred dogs, cats and rabbits within city limits. Following the passage of Pittsburgh's puppy mill ordinance,

the city of Los Angeles used similar language in its own law, and a ban eventually took effect statewide in California.

- In Dec. 2017, the Bullhook Plus Ban was passed in Pittsburgh. This ban protects animals from the brutality of the circus by prohibiting the use of bullhooks, hacksaws, whips and other training instruments that inflict pain on wild or exotic animals in the city of Pittsburgh. Without such instruments, animal circuses are inoperable.

- HAP developed a sentient being proclamation recognizing that all animals have feelings and biological needs that can be used by mayors across the state and country. The proclamation starts a dialogue for cities to evaluate how their policies impact animals. In Feb. 2018, Sharpsburg, Pennsylvania, Mayor Matt Rudzki became the first mayor in the country to implement this proclamation.

- Following years of behind-the-scenes work by HAP leadership, the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium announced in March 2021 that it was beginning the process of achieving Association of Zoos and Aquariums accreditation once again. This accreditation would place the Pittsburgh Zoo once again among the best zoos in the world, improving living conditions and protecting animals and humans alike.

- In Sept. 2017, HAP partnered with the Pittsburgh Pirates to host

"Rescuing animals is not enough. We need a collective effort to keep them safe from harm in the first place. To do that, we need to legislate. To date, HAP has initiated 17 local ordinances into law, several being the first of their kind in the state. Our goal is to shape Pittsburgh into a model humane city and establish policies and laws that all cities can emulate."

—Brian Bonsteel



Vegan Night at PNC Park, the first event of its kind at any ballpark in the country. Upon learning about Vegan Night, "Titanic" director James Cameron sent a crew to film the event for the documentary film "The Game Changers."

"There is an inextricable link between how we treat animals and our quality of life on Earth," Bonsteel says. "My education at Pitt Dental Medicine gave me a career that I love and also provided [me with] opportunities to do something far beyond restoring smiles just for my patients. I'd like to think I make animals smile, too."

To learn more about the positive impact HAP is having on pets and wild animals regionally and nationally, please visit humaneactionpittsburgh.org.

Message from the Dental Alumni Association President



I hope this message finds you all healthy and well.

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce myself to you as the new Dental Alumni Association president. My name is Samir Singh, and I am a graduate of the Class of 2012.

I am a private-practice oral and maxillofacial surgeon at North Pittsburgh Oral Surgery and have been practicing for five years. I also hold an adjunct assistant professor position at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental

Medicine in the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, which affords me the opportunity to mentor residents in training. I have been fortunate enough to be recently inducted as a fellow of the American College of Surgeons, a prestigious organization for surgeons of all specialties in medicine.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the immediate past president, Cheryl Rosato, for her efforts and mentorship. It has been wonderful to connect with her and other alumni, especially during these challenging times. Though we all had doubts and uncertainty about what the future held for dentistry during the pandemic, it has been great to see how providers in the field have adapted and improved. In times like these, we look to our leaders for strength and courage.

Throughout this issue, you will see a common theme of leadership in dentistry. We have seen many leaders in our field emerge during the pandemic, both locally and nationally. It has been inspiring to see. I hope this trend carries on as we continue to weather the storm.

I look forward to serving you all and count on seeing your smiling faces, shaking your hands and giving you hugs one day soon.

Samir Singh, DMD, FACS
President, Dental Alumni Association

**"If your actions
inspire others
to dream more,
learn more,
do more and
become more,
you are a leader."**

—John Quincy Adams

UNIVERSITY DENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology Biopsy Service

For more than 40 years, the Pitt Dental Medicine Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology Biopsy Service has provided consultation and tissue diagnostic services to the dental and medical communities of Western Pennsylvania. Our board-certified oral and maxillofacial pathologists provide rapid, accurate diagnosis of your biopsy specimens.

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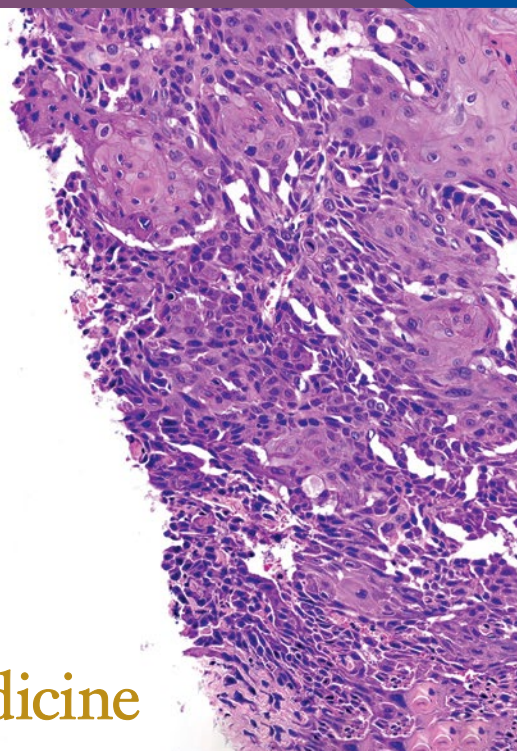
Oral Medicine/Clinical Pathology Services
412-648-9100

Oral & Maxillofacial Radiology Services
412-648-8612

Visit dental.pitt.edu/dental-professionals to see more of the services we provide to dental and medical professionals.

We accept Medicare and many commercial insurance programs, including Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield and UPMC insurance.

Pitt Dental Medicine



Why I Give:

The Family of George Joseph Shia

George Joseph Shia (DDS '55) spent most of his professional life practicing orthodontics in Austin, Texas, but the University of Pittsburgh always held a special place in his heart. After earning his undergraduate degree in biology at the University's Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, Shia graduated cum laude from the School of Dental Medicine in 1955. The time he spent at the University, and the education he received, impacted his career as a dentist, orthodontist and advocate for people with special health care needs.

After graduating from dental school, Shia served as a dentist in the U.S. Air Force. He then completed specialty training in orthodontics at Columbia University.

In 1962, he began his private practice in Austin, where he practiced orthodontics for more than 50 years. He treated thousands of children, adolescents and adults. Shia was one of the first orthodontists in central Texas to be a Medicaid provider, and for many years, he was the sole provider of this care.

Throughout his career, Shia treated many patients who were born with cleft palates or had physical or mental disabilities. He believed that the treatment of and care for these patients was lacking within his profession, and he wanted to do as much as he could to change the situation. He also had a personal connection to the work: His youngest daughter was born with a cleft palate and special health care needs.

In 1966, Shia was awarded a U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare Traineeship Grant at the Lancaster (Pennsylvania) Cleft Palate Clinic. Later, he became a founding member of the Central Texas Cleft Palate Team. For more than 30 years, he wrote and lectured to various orthodontic societies throughout the United States and the world on the Broussard two-force technique. He was a diplomate of the American Board of Orthodontics and a fellow of the International College of Dentists. As a member of the American Association of Orthodontists, Shia served on the Council on Practice Administration and Council on Insurance for 14 years.



While practicing orthodontics full time, he earned an MBA at the University of Texas at Austin in 1984.

Shia passed away on November 22, 2019. Before he died, he expressed an interest in supporting the University of Pittsburgh. Bearing this in mind, his wife, Claire, and their six daughters sought to create a memorial gift that would honor him in a unique way. The family knew that while Shia strongly believed in education, he also was mindful of its rising costs and the burden of student debt.

In speaking with the University of Pittsburgh, the family discovered that Pitt Dental Medicine had a long history of and commitment to caring for people with disabilities. Its Center for Patients with Special Needs was among the first such centers when it was established in 2008, but the school had been providing care of this kind for more than half a century. After learning more about the school's Department of Pediatric Dentistry and the growing demand for treating the functional needs of adolescents with disabilities, the family focused on this effort.

Combining Shia's dedication and commitment to service and his love for education, the family established the Dr. George Joseph Shia Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship partially funds the tuition expenses of two second-year pediatric residents. Recipients of this scholarship will be granted additional time to provide care for adolescent patients with disabilities throughout the Pittsburgh community.

This scholarship at Pitt Dental Medicine is the first of its kind to focus on such patients. The family hopes that this scholarship will encourage other donors and schools to seek creative ways to support people with disabilities. There is great pride and joy in knowing that Shia's legacy will touch the lives of many deserving residents and help those patients to whose care he was so committed.


If you would like to learn more about scholarship support at Pitt Dental Medicine or contribute to the Dr. George Joseph Shia Memorial Scholarship, please contact Erin Belitskus at ebelitskus@pitt.edu.

Top-10 NIDCR Ranking

The University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine once again has been ranked in the top 10 nationally for dental schools receiving National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) funding. This ranking is a validation of our commitment to exploration, investigation and analysis and to the quality of the innovation being created here. Pitt Dental Medicine has been ranked in the top 10 for nearly a decade.

The groundbreaking research performed at Pitt Dental Medicine establishes our national and international prominence among dental schools and is responsible for maintaining a steady improvement in rank over nearly two decades. It also promotes high-quality instruction and sharing of research knowledge, encourages students to develop critical thinking skills and contributes to improving the lives of our patients.

To see a complete ranked listing of U.S. dental institutions receiving NIDCR grants, please visit pi.tt/dentalgrants.



“Once again, Pitt Dental Medicine is ranked in the top 10 of all dental schools for NIDCR funding—now climbing to number six! Our investigators have been among the top institutional researchers consistently using team science and collaboration. This success reflects the quality of their science and the creativity of our investigators. We have built a strong team of scientists, and the repeated national attention is validation of their hard work and determination to answer our toughest scientific challenges. It is another proud moment for this talented team of innovators and scientists.”

—Bernard J. Costello, dean

“This ranking is important to the dental field, our school and our basic and clinical faculty, as the new knowledge generated through this funding will improve patient care and the health of the whole population. This is a testament to the talent of our faculty and staff, support from our administration and our belief in the school’s research mission. Our cutting-edge research is important to patient therapy and the knowledge that patients will receive the most advanced care because of the research performed here. Our students and alumni should feel a sense of pride in their Pitt Dental Medicine home.”

—Charles Sfeir, associate dean for research

“Pitt Dental Medicine has been engaged in top-notch world-class research for many years. Being in the top six dental schools in terms of NIDCR funding is particularly rewarding because it is a major metric of U.S. dental school research strength. Our research is at the cutting edge, applying state-of-the-art approaches within our major research programs in craniofacial regeneration and craniofacial genetics. These programs, as evidenced by our success in getting grants, are widely recognized by other researchers outside Pitt. Contributing to our research strength are the many productive collaborations with faculty investigators at Pitt, across the country and worldwide.”

—Mary Marazita, codirector of the Center for Craniofacial and Dental Genetics

“The rankings validate the effort and talent of our faculty and staff and demonstrate that we, as an institution, are all in with our support of the research missions of the dental profession and the University of Pittsburgh. Unquestionably, the new knowledge that our research generates will be important to improving patient care and population health. The top-six ranking is certainly something that brings attention to our school and will support our efforts to establish a sustainable research infrastructure. Maintaining that status is a worthy goal and one that, ideally, will continue to motivate us to continue achieving at the highest level.”

—Robert Weyant, associate dean for dental public health and community outreach

Faculty News of Note

Edward C. Adlesic, assistant professor of oral and maxillofacial surgery and dental anesthesia, has been elected to a two-year term as vice president of the American Dental Society of Anesthesiology.



Adlesic

Joseph A. Giovannitti Jr., professor and chair of the Department of Dental Anesthesiology, has been appointed to the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) representing the specialty of dental anesthesiology. He also has been appointed chair of CODA's new Dental Anesthesiology Review Committee and will assume its responsibilities in January 2022.



Giovannitti

duties requested by its chair. He will serve as chair-elect and chair of the section in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

"I feel honored and humbled to be elected secretary for the oral and maxillofacial radiology section in ADEA," he says. "It is very exciting to be part of [this] ADEA section as it gives us a voice at the table to guide oral and maxillofacial radiology education at predoctoral levels."

Vijayan also was selected to participate in the Pitt Ventures First Gear program along with his team, second-year DMD students Matt Palmer and Brian Schafer. Their project involves

creating a model of teeth that can be 3-D printed with multiple materials. They are in the process of printing and evaluating the tooth model for further development.

"The Pitt Ventures First Gear program was exciting, as it provided us with seed funding for our research and gave us detailed lessons on the customer discovery process," explains Vijayan. "Matt and Brian had played a pivotal role in this aspect of the research, and we hope to continue expanding this research."

Vijayan has been on the faculty at the Pitt School of Dental Medicine since 2018 and is responsible for preclinical teaching, radiology labs and clinics along with supporting the school's 3-D printing and digital dentistry initiative. His research interests include cone beam computed tomography, 3-D printing, artificial intelligence/machine learning in radiology and dental educational research. He completed his Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree at Mahatma Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Dental Sciences in Pondicherry,

India, in 2009. In 2012, he received his master's in public health at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health. Vijayan earned a certificate in oral and maxillofacial radiology and a master's in oral sciences in 2018 from the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics.

Mapping Water Fluoridation

FLUORIDE

Joanne Prasad, associate professor and assistant dean for academic affairs, has been part of a multidisciplinary team making water fluoridation data more accessible.



Prasad

Together with Merrilynn Marsh and Helen Hawkey of the PA Coalition for Oral Health and Dan Bain and Megan Guy of the Pittsburgh Collaboratory for Water Research, Education, and Outreach, Prasad created a water briefing and a publicly accessible interactive community water fluoridation map for the state of Pennsylvania. Development of the map was assisted by Emma Mader, a graduate student at Mercyhurst University.

By entering an address, map users can learn more about their water supplier and water fluoridation status. The search can be customized to include information such as the school district, voting district and municipality. The map also is available within Pitt Dental Medicine's electronic health record software so that dental students and residents can quickly and easily determine a patient's home fluoridation status.

To learn more about the water briefing or access the fluoridation map, please visit pi.tt/watermap.



Advancing Digital Dentistry

Vijayan, center, with dental students

Suvendra Vijayan, assistant professor in the Department of Diagnostic Sciences, has been elected secretary of the American Dental Education Association Section on Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology, for which his duties will include recording the minutes of section meetings and disseminating them to its membership, submitting the minutes and current officer contact information to the section councillor for the section's annual report, publishing and disseminating a section newsletter and performing any section-related

Vieira Receives ORCA Prize

Alexandre R. Vieira, professor of oral and craniofacial sciences at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine, is the 2021 recipient of the prestigious European Organisation for Caries Research (ORCA) Prize.

“Being the 2021 recipient of the ORCA Prize recognizes me for almost two decades of work in dental caries. It highlights my research focus on the person who is affected by dental caries and their biology instead of the traditional focus on the bacteria, fluorides and other oral hygiene strategies, sugary diets and restorative materials. I started by focusing on poorly explained dental caries incidence in certain individuals and transformed that approach into the concept of a multifactorial disease that indeed requires a susceptible host,” said Vieira. “I hope the award calls attention to a disease that is highly prevalent in Pittsburgh. We at Pitt Dental Medicine have an opportunity to call for a model of taxation of sugars similar to what was imposed on cigarettes, which will further help [to] control the disease in the most vulnerable segments of the population.”

The ORCA Prize has been given in recognition of outstanding contributions to the field of dental caries research since 1964. Since that time, only three Americans have received this award. This year’s award ceremony took place virtually on July 8, 2021.

Vieira has been on the faculty at Pitt Dental Medicine since 2005. A native of Brazil, he earned his dental degree as well as his Master of Science and PhD at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and later completed certificate programs in patients with special needs



Vieira, right, with dental students

and pediatric dentistry. Vieira practiced as a pediatric dentist specializing in children with HIV prior to following his interest in genetics. Relocating to the University of Iowa, he completed a postdoctoral associate in 2005. Vieira is the creator of the Dental Registry and DNA Repository (DRDR) at Pitt Dental Medicine and directs a number of research projects at the school involving caries in populations with special needs. He also is involved in work analyzing the genetics of facial clefting with populations around the world. In 2019, Vieira was recognized for his outstanding achievements in dental medicine by the Brazilian Academy of Dentistry, a member of FDI World Dental Federation. The academy conferred upon him Ad immortalitatem and Chair 87. Vieira also was recognized with the 2019 Gies Award for Vision—Dental Educator for his forward thinking in creating DRDR.

About ORCA: ORCA is a scientific organization promoting oral health through research in the field of cariology. ORCA was founded in 1953 in Germany and since then has been expanded to include dental professionals worldwide.

Congratulations

Inductees to the American College of Dentists and International College of Dentists

American College of Dentists

2020 Inductees

Alene M. D’Alesio (DMD ’04)

Marnie Oakley (DMD ’92)

Michael J. Parenti (DMD ’83)

2021 Inductees

John M. Burnheimer (DMD ’81)

Jean O’Donnell (DMD ’90)

Kimberly Zaremba-Rabatin (DMD ’89)

International College of Dentists

Dale H. Cadwallader (DMD ’73)

Daniel M. Gindi (DMD ’99)

Geoffrey Paul Herzog (DMD ’11)

Michael T. Kolodychak (DMD ’96)

Tara Levesque-Voge (DMD ’02)

Anitha Potluri (DMD ’10)

Erin Taylor (DMD ’02)

Juan Teodoro (DMD ’02)

Christine Wankiiri-Hale (DMD ’02)

Michael Dean Webb, ADCT DSANE 1991



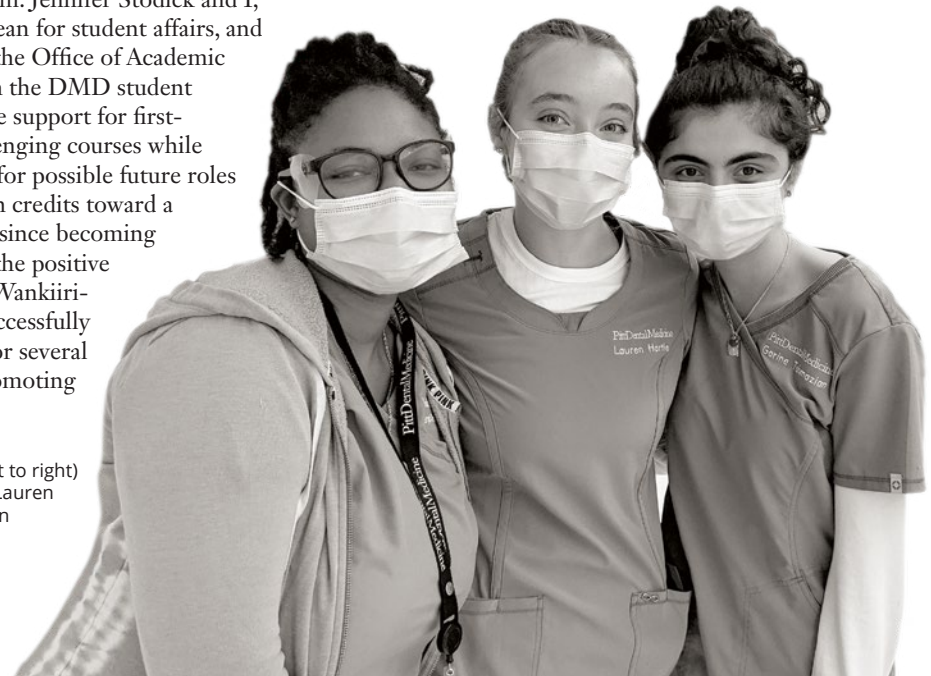
Dental Hygiene Program Update

By Kelly Wagner, Dental Hygiene Program Director

Give Kids a Smile Day took place in June 2021. Second-year dental hygiene (DH) students provided 25 patients with cleanings, fluoride varnish treatments and radiographs and placed more than 50 sealants. A special thanks goes to Pitt Dental Medicine faculty members Matthew Cooke, Jacqueline Burgette, Deborah Studen-Pavlovich and Pamela Tisot for volunteering along with dental students to complete dental exams on all the patients.

A new initiative that Sarah Grafton, assistant professor, interim assistant dean for clinical affairs and chair of restorative dentistry, and I are focusing on is increasing the collaboration between DMD and DH students in the school's clinics. We have made great progress, with DMD students working alongside DH students to complete patient exams in our clinic. DH students now are members of the patient care teams with DMD students as part of the school's effort to streamline clinical efficiency and improve patient care. Additionally, we continue to develop the advanced clinic that aims to provide a private practice-like experience for DMD and DH students so that they can work more independently and collaboratively in providing patient care prior to graduating.

A new DH peer tutoring program begins this term. Jennifer Stodick and I, with help from Christine Wankiiri-Hale, associate dean for student affairs, and Zsuzsa Horvath, associate professor and director of the Office of Academic Career Advancement, have modeled this program on the DMD student peer tutoring program. The program aims to provide support for first-year DH students who may be struggling with challenging courses while simultaneously preparing second-year DH students for possible future roles in education. Second-year DH students also can earn credits toward a BS degree. This is something that I have envisioned since becoming the program's director, and I'm really excited to see the positive outcomes from it. It was of great help to work with Wankiiri-Hale and Horvath on this, as they have been very successfully directing peer tutoring courses for DMD students for several years, and I only expect it to keep improving and promoting student success.



Dental hygiene students (left to right) Donnika Davenport-Bowie, Lauren Hartle and Garine Tahmazian

We are continuing our efforts in student recruitment with a focus on diversity. The dental hygiene profession is largely composed of white females, with few male applicants and few people of color. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of male applicants and applicants of color. The current classes in the Dental Hygiene Program have students from all over the United States, including two from Hawaii; an increased number of students of color; and several students who earned previous degrees. We will continue to work toward growing the dental hygiene profession with graduates of different races, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and gender identities and from various geographic areas to better reflect the patients we treat.

Student Achievements

Pitt dental hygiene students have been working hard inside and outside the classroom and have made some notable achievements this year.

Soomin Yi, a member of the Class of 2022, is working with Jacqueline Burgette, Pitt Dental Medicine assistant professor of pediatric dentistry and dental public health, on a qualitative research study with the Center for Oral Health Research in Appalachia. The research is focused on mothers of 3-5-year-old children who were invited to share how their social networks impact oral health. Their research paper is being submitted to *The Journal of the American Medical Association's Network Open* to be published.

Dental hygiene informative poster presentations were held in July 2021. First place was awarded to "Dental Care Professionals Are the Key in Preventing Childhood Obesity and Dental Caries" by Maria Jose and Chasity Galanto. They presented at the annual Keystone Dental Health Conference in October 2021.

Pitt dental hygiene students' first-time pass rates on both the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) and the Commission on Dental Competency Assessments clinical exam continue to be high. First-time pass rates for NBDHE have remained above 95%, while the Class of 2020 had a 100% first-time pass rate despite the challenges it faced because of the interruption of its

"We will continue to work toward growing the dental hygiene profession with graduates of different races, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and gender identities and from various geographic areas to better reflect the patients we treat."

—Kelly Wagner

final term due to COVID-19. Students worked extremely hard and put in extra time, as both their graduation and board exam dates were pushed from June to August 2020.

Faculty Achievements

Victoria Green, a clinical instructor, earned a master's degree in public health from A.T. Still University School of Dentistry & Oral Health in August 2021.

Matthew Jarembek, a full-time instructor, earned an MS in adult education from the University at Buffalo, State University of New York, in May 2021.

Candice Kieffer, a full-time instructor, contributed 10 chapters to the textbook "Periodontal Instrumentation for the Dental Hygienist: Basic and Advanced Techniques," which has an anticipated publication date of January 2023.

Faith Mahan, a full-time instructor, earned an MS in health and physical activity programming and planning from the Pitt School of Education in August 2020.

Alumni Updates

Linda Straub-Bruce, who earned Pitt Dental Medicine certificates in dental assisting and oral hygiene in 1988 and 1989, respectively, addressed the members of the dental hygiene Class of 2022 at their White Coat Ceremony in August 2021, as they were unable to participate in a ceremony last fall. She currently serves as president of the Pennsylvania Dental Hygienists' Association (PDHA) as well as public relations chair for the organization's

Northwest Component. She is an author and continuing education lecturer and has been recognized with several leadership awards in recent years.

Helen Hawkey (BS '08) was appointed chair of the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions in May 2021. She also was recognized by Achieva with its 2020 Excellence in Professional Service Award for her work to improve oral health for people with disabilities. Hawkey currently serves as executive director of the PA Coalition for Oral Health and is a current board member of the Pennsylvania Rural Health Association.

Alyssa Stiles, who received a certificate in dental hygiene in 2013, recently was elected to the International Association of Orofacial Myology board of directors. Stiles was previously a faculty member in the Pitt Dental Hygiene Program, and in addition to currently working in private practice, she is the owner of Pittsburgh Orofacial Myofunctional Therapy, LLC. She currently serves as a PDHA trustee.

Two recent Pitt dental hygiene graduates, **Chelsea Rumbaugh** (AS '18) and **Mitavaben Patel** (AS '19), are continuing their journey in dental education. Rumbaugh is a fourth-year DMD student and Patel is a third-year DMD student here at Pitt Dental Medicine.

Lisa Tovcimak-Smith, who earned a certificate in dental hygiene in 1994, has built a mobile hygiene business to promote mental and physical health and wellness within the community. In addition to being a registered dental hygienist, Tovcimak-Smith is a registered behavioral technician and a trained myofunctional therapist. She hosts tobacco cessation courses and provides preventive dental care to a large population, including individuals in shelters and group homes and many patients with special needs.

White Coat Ceremony

On August 27, 2021, we welcomed more than 100 new students to the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. The White Coat Ceremony is an important rite of passage at which our students begin a new chapter of their lives and where each incoming predoctoral, advanced standing, and dental hygiene student is presented with a personalized white coat to wear throughout dental school. Due to University restrictions on gathering size, the number of attendees at the ceremony was limited.

You can watch a recording of the event at dental.pitt.edu/white-coat.



Speakers at the ceremony included Marnie Oakley, senior associate dean; Donald A. Stoner, former president of the Dental Society of Western PA; Samir Singh, Dental Alumni Association president; John Ference, president of the Beta Chapter of Omicron Kappa Upsilon; Charles Sfeir, associate dean for research; and Kelly Wagner, director of the Dental Hygiene Program. Presenting white coats were Oakley; Christine Wankiiri-Hale, associate dean for student affairs; and Sarah Grafton, interim assistant dean for clinical affairs.

In lieu of a reception, blue and gold Eat'n Park Smiley Cookies were made available for takeaway.

The White Coat Ceremony receives support in part from the Harry K. Zohn (DMD '84) and Cecile A. Feldman, DMD, White Coat Endowment Fund as well as contributions from our alumni and friends.

To support the White Coat Ceremony, please contact Erin Belitskus at ebelitskus@pitt.edu.



Thank You

for Your Support on Pitt Day of Giving

Members of the University of Pittsburgh community came together in February 2021 to support the areas of the University that are most important to them. Their response to the fifth annual Pitt Day of Giving set new records, engaging more than 11,100 donors—the most ever—committed to strengthening scholarships; research; academic programs; student organizations; athletics; and other vital initiatives such as the Pitt Fund, the Student Emergency Assistance Fund and Panthers Forward. Donors from all 50 states and 31 countries supported hundreds of funds representing every University of Pittsburgh school, college and campus and raised nearly \$2.5 million during the daylong event.

Responses to this annual effort from the School of Dental Medicine community also were outstanding. A total of 375 gifts were made in 2021, an 81% increase in unique donors from 2020, representing all 50 states and 31 countries. A total of \$228,240 was raised—a whopping 1,142% increase in total dollars—and included a very generous gift from the family of George J. Shia (DMD '55) to support pediatric dental residents (see “Why I Give” on page 23).

To learn more about supporting Pitt Dental Medicine, please contact Erin Belitskus at ebelitskus@pitt.edu.



In Memoriam

1940s

Harold S. Dexter Jr. (DDS '46), Jan. 12, 2021
Richard A. Kiman (DDS '43), 2020
Norman E. Mann (DDS '45), March 8, 2021

1950s

Joseph S. Azar (DDS '56, MS '60), July 16, 2021
Jan Beck (DDS '53), June 18, 2021
John Lee Bidwell (DDS '59), Oct. 11, 2020
John B. Bubeck (DDS '57), March 9, 2021
Eugene W. Chianelli (DDS '58), April 22, 2021
Paul T. Fleming (DDS '51), Dec. 28, 2020
Thomas A. Foreman (DDS '57), June 9, 2020
Allan Gastfriend (DDS '59), Jan. 22, 2021
J. Forrest Hylton (DDS '59), May 29, 2021
John N. Kraus (DDS '52), April 11, 2021
William W. Martin (DDS '54), June 27, 2021
Robert C. Reed (DDS '54), March 4, 2021
William D. Schmitt (DDS '58), Feb. 21, 2021
Oscar A. Schmitt (DDS '54), Feb. 20, 2021
M. Alfred Seltman (DDS '56), Jan. 15, 2021

1960s

Warren R. Clark (DDS '65), July 22, 2021
Richard M. Dobrowolski (DMD '67), May 1, 2021
Joseph F. Gallo (DMD '66), March 15, 2021
Daniel J. Hovorka (DMD '69), Jan. 10, 2021
Richard A. Johnson (DDS '62), July 4, 2021
J. Darwin King (DDS '60, MDS '72), Oct. 11, 2020
Gerald E. Kolavic (DDS '62), April 19, 2021
Charles W. Marion (DDS '65), Dec. 6, 2020
Donald C. Santora (DDS '62), Jan. 15, 2020
Joseph E. Smith (DDS '60), May 13, 2021

1970s

Dennis E. Borodaty (DMD '73), Jan. 15, 2021
Jonathan H. Croll (DMD '74), March 31, 2021
James Culclasure, (Endo '72), June 22, 2021
Samuel L. Earley Jr. (DMD '76), Dec. 11, 2020
Juliana Santoro Kelly, (DH '70), Dec. 31, 2020

1980s

John M. DePaul Jr. (DMD '80), Dec. 3, 2020
Joseph A. Giovinazzo (DMD '82), June 8, 2021

Faculty and Staff

Louis DeFabio, former staff member, May 2, 2021
Rees C. Flannery, former faculty member, Jan. 19, 2021
David H. McKibben Jr. (DMD '68, MDS '70), former faculty member and acting chair of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Jan. 11, 2021
Donald J. Pipko (DDS '60, MDS '67), former faculty member, Aug. 2, 2021

Forging **new paths.** Building better **futures.**

February 22, 2022, will be the sixth annual **Pitt Day of Giving**. Alumni, faculty, students, parents, staff and friends will come together to drive Pitt forward to the next era of achievement, innovation and discovery. Your Pitt Day of Giving donation will help to fund scholarships, the full student experience, research, and everything that makes Pitt—rated the #1 public university in the Northeast by Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education—**extraordinary**. In addition, **Pitt Dental Medicine** was ranked #6 in the nation for National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research funding.

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School of Dental Medicine

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