

Meeting the Challenge

UCLA School of
Dentistry
Magazine | Spring 2025



UCLA's Special Patient Care Clinic set to expand with new state funding



The Power of Grants

**From the desk of Dr. Paul H. Krebsbach,
Dean and Professor**

Recently, I was reflecting on how dental school budgets have changed over the years. When I enrolled at the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry in the early 1980s, the state covered most operating costs, supplemented by nominal student tuition. For many reading this magazine, your UCLA School of Dentistry experience was similar.

Fast-forward to 2025, and the financial landscape for oral health institutions is now a dynamic mix of public funding, philanthropy, grants, private partnerships, ancillary revenue like CE, and, of course, tuition.

In this message, I'd like to highlight the transformative power of grant funding. Grants enable scientific breakthroughs, expanded clinical care, and enhanced training for future oral health leaders. Thanks to a steady stream of successful proposals, the School has built a robust contracts and grants portfolio that exceeds \$95M. This includes the largest NIH award in our School's 60-year history—\$20.6M over five years to fund the Human Virome Characterization Center. As I told Dr. Yvonne Hernandez-Kapila, associate dean of research and lead PI on this ambitious, interdisciplinary effort, I'm most proud that of the five nationwide HVCC grants, ours is the

only one awarded to a dental school.

Discoveries in our labs are put into practice in our clinics ... and beyond. UCLA clinicians have secured funding to benefit underserved communities, from oral health literacy programs in low-income schools to subsidized care for patients living with HIV and AIDS. As you'll read in these pages, a \$4.2M state grant will enable the Special Patient Care Clinic to vastly expand care for our most vulnerable patients.

Public-private partnerships also play a growing role. A recent award from the American Dental Education Association allows our oral radiology faculty to integrate an AI diagnostic system into their training, giving students greater exposure to X-ray samples and stronger diagnostic skills.

As we pursue major research, clinical, and teaching grants, we must not lose sight of the human aspect of dental education. In this magazine, you'll also learn about the two-decade growth of our Professional Program for International Dentists, which has helped hundreds of foreign-trained practitioners gain U.S. licensure. Another feature reflects on the first year of an initiative promoting mental and physical wellness among UCLA D.D.S. students.

From grant-funded lab discoveries to tech-forward clinics and courses to after-school yoga, we remain committed to empowering the next generation of oral healthcare leaders.

Sincerely,

Paul H. Krebsbach, D.D.S., Ph.D.
Dean and Professor

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A Vision Rooted in Kindness

Julio Frenk brings a public health perspective to his role as UCLA's new chancellor.

When Dr. Julio Frenk stepped onto the UCLA campus as its seventh chancellor in January, he brought with him not just an impressive résumé but a leadership philosophy shaped by empathy, global awareness, and public service.

Chancellor Frenk visited the School of Dentistry on April 4 as part of his campuswide *UCLA Connects: Listening Exercise* series. During an opening conversation with Dean Paul H. Krebsbach, he recalled choosing public health over medicine after college. "So you're not going to see patients?" a classmate asked.

His response more than 35 years ago embodies the personal north star that has taken Dr. Frenk on a journey to academic leadership positions at the University of Miami and Harvard and as an executive with the World Health Organization in Geneva: "No, I am, except that now society is my patient."

That mindset led him to serve as Mexico's Secretary of Health in the early 2000s, where he launched *Seguro Popular*, a national insurance program that brought coverage to over 50 million uninsured people. Importantly, Dr. Frenk's model prioritized access to oral health, recognizing that dentistry is not a luxury but a vital part of whole-person care.

"When you measure the importance of a health problem by the combination of mortality and disability – the pain it produces, the way it disables people – oral health

shoots to the top," he explained to the audience of trained dental professionals nodding in agreement. "There was already fluoridation of water in Mexico, but very little access to early detection and preventive dental services. That became a core part of the design of *Seguro Popular*."

Now, the nation's top-ranked public university and its diverse constituents comprise the micro-society under Chancellor Frenk's care ... but his big-picture thinking remains.

"We get money from the hard work of taxpayers. Our duty is to make sure that money invested by the people in us – as a public institution – we return with a higher value than what that money could have produced elsewhere."

Delivering that return on investment is critical as UCLA faces budget cuts, inflation, and aging infrastructure. He has already formed what he calls the Strategy Execution Team (SET), "because strategy and execution are two sides of the same coin."

Meeting the Challenge

A \$4.2M state grant to expand the UCLA School of Dentistry's Special Patient Care Clinic will address a critical need for medically complex patients.

BY NANCY SOKOLER STEINER

Jo Ashline faced a quandary. Her son Andrew has rare, genetic *SYNGAP1*-related disorders that cause severe intellectual disabilities and complex medical conditions, including epilepsy. He hit his front tooth during an atonic seizure “drop attack,” when his muscles went limp and he fell. It looked like he might need a root canal. The Tustin, Calif., resident had been taking her son to Children’s Hospital of Orange County for dental work under anesthesia, but Andrew, then 21, had aged out of pediatric dental care.

Ashline called several local practices that provided treatment under sedation, but “the minute they heard the severity of Andrew’s diagnoses, they said they couldn’t touch him.”

“They weren’t comfortable,” she recalls. “It’s shocking just how limited the availability of care is for our more medically complex population.”

She eventually called the UCLA School of Dentistry’s Special Patient Care Clinic, which assured her it could provide care to Andrew. However, the Clinic’s extensive wait list meant Andrew would have to wait a year for an initial appointment.

The School of Dentistry’s expertise, a dearth of practices willing or able to treat special needs patients, and the vast need among this population all factor into the long wait times.

“We are one of the strongest specialty care programs in California,” says Eric Sung, D.D.S., professor and holder of the Momentum Endowed Chair in Special Patient Care, who has directed the small, six-chair clinic since 1992. “We get referrals from all other Southern California institutions. We’re often the provider of last resort.”

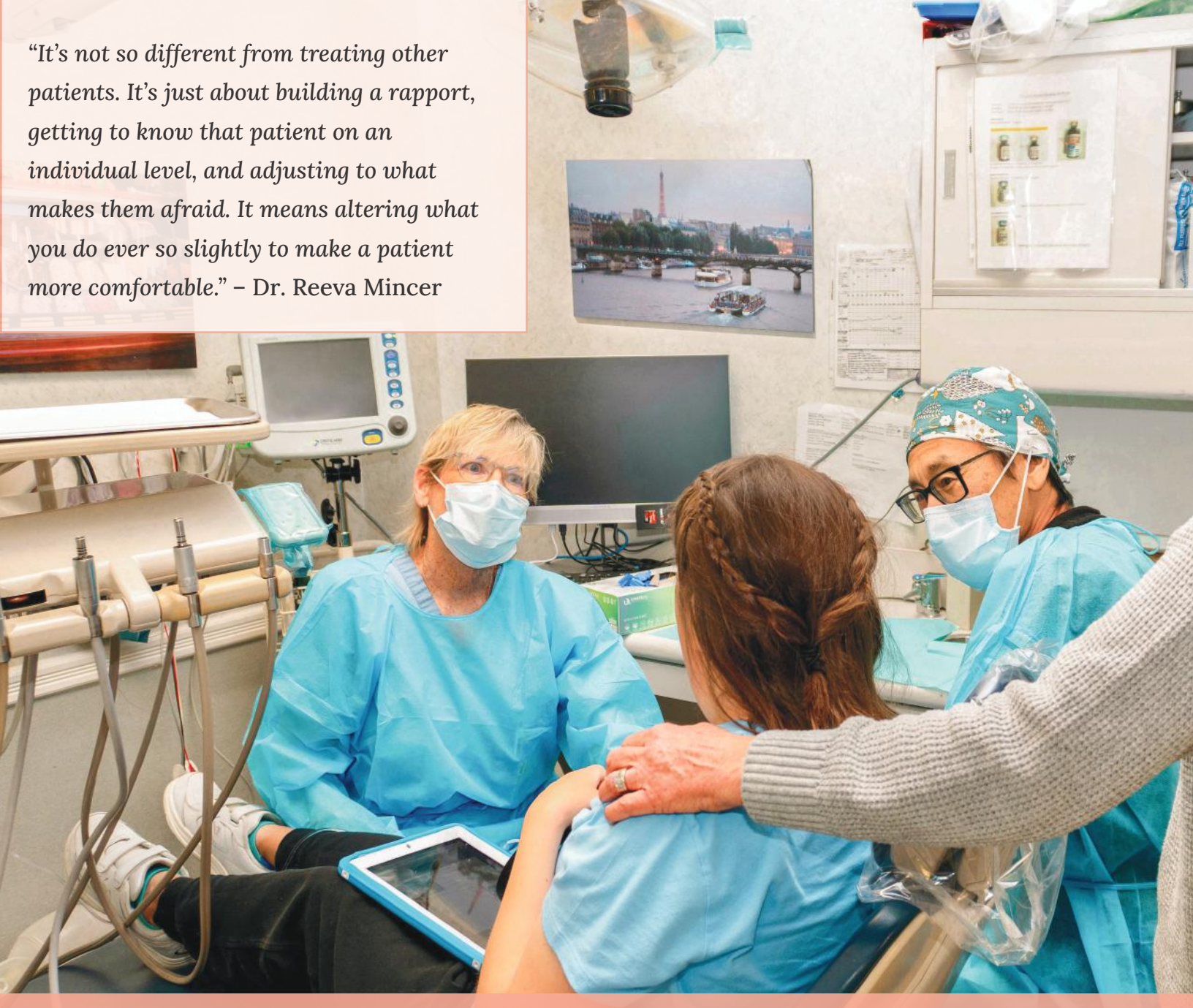
The Special Patient Care Clinic, formerly known as Hospital Dentistry, provides advanced comprehensive oral health care for patients with severe medical, physical, and intellectual concerns. Care ranges from cleanings to biopsies, root canals, and dental surgery.

Those six dental chairs occupy a cramped 209 square feet, allowing for the training of six residents annually. In 2024, more than 3,500 patient visits were administered to 1,745



◀ *Members of the Special Patient Care Clinic team include (l-r) Kelly Vitzthum, M.P.H., D.D.S. '20, G.P.R. '21, Eric Sung, D.D.S. '90, G.P.R. '92, Reeva Mincer, D.D.S., G.P.R. '19, and Steph Tuazon, L.C.S.W. '15.*

“It’s not so different from treating other patients. It’s just about building a rapport, getting to know that patient on an individual level, and adjusting to what makes them afraid. It means altering what you do ever so slightly to make a patient more comfortable.” – Dr. Reeva Mincer



patients. Nearly 60% of patients with special healthcare needs require dental appointments taking between two to four hours, often involving sedation.

Later this year, Special Patient Care at UCLA will undergo a radical transformation, dramatically reducing those long wait times while increasing the Clinic’s ability to meet the needs of this patient population.

In February, the School was allocated \$4.2 million from the California Health Facility Financing Authority (CHFFA) to physically renovate and expand the Clinic.

In a previously unused 2,377-square-foot space on the A level of the School’s Westwood Clinics, eight additional

patient chairs will be installed, including two in quiet rooms for patients triggered by stimuli such as noise or bright lights. The new facility will also include office space for faculty and resident practitioners as well as support staff. State funds will allow for the purchase of furniture and specialty equipment needed for this population, such as a wheelchair tilt, Hoyer lift, and vital signs monitors.

“With the exciting expansion of our Clinic’s size and capacity, we’re unlocking new opportunities to recruit and train even more dedicated providers while significantly increasing care for patients with special healthcare needs,” says Dr. Sung. “This growth also means we can offer additional residency slots in our General Practice Residency program—empowering more future dentists to



◀ *Dental Anesthesiologist Dr. Christine Quinn and Dr. Sung prepare Corinne Eisler for her bi-annual cleaning, with support from mom, Michelle.*

show increased confidence and willingness to treat this population in their own practices.

Dr. Mincer believes many of the patients seen for routine and less complex procedures at the Clinic could be served in community dental settings and would benefit from having the same provider over time.

“It’s not so different from treating other patients. It’s just about building a rapport, getting to know that patient on an individual level, and adjusting to what makes them afraid. It means altering what you do ever so slightly to make a patient more comfortable.”

Thanks to their willingness to take time with and gain patient trust, Clinic practitioners are able to transition 89% of patients previously put under general anesthesia for routine dental care to more moderate intravenous sedation. In addition, the Special Patient Care Clinic partners with the Department of Social Welfare at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs to provide social work services to patients and their families.

Corinne Eisler, who has cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, and autistic behaviors, has received treatment at the Clinic for the past 21 years. She accumulates plaque quickly and visits every six months for cleanings. Her parents, Michelle and Fred, make the trek with Corinne from Santa Clarita, which requires the family to leave their home at 6 a.m.

“We’re incredibly thankful UCLA has this program. We don’t know how else we’d get her the care she needs,” Michelle says. “I’m so happy they are expanding the program.”

confidently care for patients with special health care needs across both hospital and community-based settings the moment they earn a certificate.”

The massive expansion has implications for D.D.S. candidates as well. Currently, third-year dental students complete a one-day rotation in the Clinic, with only an hour spent chairside. Dr. Reeva Mincer, director of the General Practice Residency program, says the expansion will allow students to do more than just observe.

“We hope to create a selective, or possibly mandatory, rotation where fourth-year students can actually treat patients.” She says student dentists who experience firsthand clinical exposure to special care populations

UCLA Special Patient Care has created new digital resources to help families feel more comfortable with dental visits. These include desensitization videos, photos of the clinic, comfort item ideas for appointments, and tips for healthy smiles using adaptive oral hygiene tools.

This project is supported by the WITH Foundation, CareQuest Institute, and Harbor Regional Center.

[Click here to start exploring!](#)



◀ Dr. Mincer instructs third-year D.D.S. candidates. With the forthcoming Clinic expansion, UCLA dental students will experience more immersive special patient care rotations.

When Jo Ashline – whose son Andrew hit his tooth during a seizure – came to the Clinic for Andrew’s initial appointment, she says, “Even though it was hard for us, the staff was extremely kind, very patient, very professional and very accommodating. Dr. Sung addressed Andrew with dignity and respect. Andrew doesn’t understand cognitively, but Dr. Sung didn’t make assumptions. He spoke kindly and not as if Andrew was not there.”

In February, during Andrew’s first treatment under sedation, he received a thorough dental cleaning and X-rays. While Dr. Sung determined Andrew did not need a root canal, his inflamed gums were protruding considerably down his gumline, and Dr. Sung treated them with cauterization.

“We didn’t know that was possible. His smile looks amazing now.” Individuals with developmental disabilities and medical complexities, like Andrew, are very much whole human beings. They deserve the same level of care and the same beautiful, healthy smiles that other people deserve.”

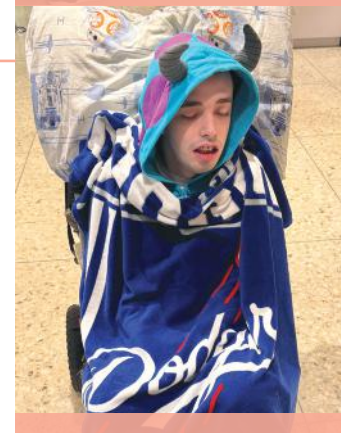
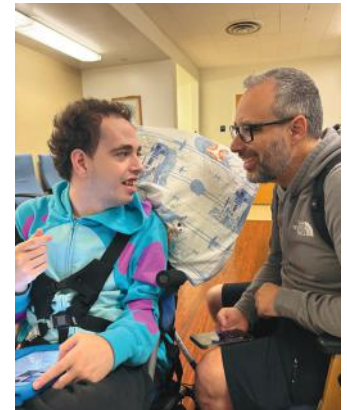
▶ *Andrew Ashline before (with dad Michael), during, and after his appointment. Approximately 15% of Clinic patients undergo sedation.*

The UCLA School of Dentistry was one of only four dental schools awarded a CHFFA grant. A total of \$47.2 million will be dispersed to support 13 projects in private and community-based clinics statewide, which were selected from 110 total applicants.

The grant criteria focused on caring for patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, and dementia. However, the Clinic also serves patients with significant medical complexities, such as end-stage organ disease, which hinder their ability to obtain routine dental care. With most patients at the Clinic being Medi-Cal beneficiaries, it is one of the few special care facilities in the region that accepts public health insurance.

While this transformative state grant covers construction and furnishings—and donors have provided critical support for services like on-site social work—the Clinic still has financial needs. The CHFFA funding does not provide for additional staff or the extra faculty needed to teach larger resident cohorts. For that reason, Dr. Sung says he will start with two additional residents per year, gradually bringing the Clinic to full capacity over the next five years.

Equipment also degrades more quickly because patients sometimes damage it. The Special Patient Care Clinic has depleted its reserve, called the Angel Fund, that helped families with expenses such as gasoline or lodging. It furnished comfort items to soothe anxious patients, such as noise-canceling headphones and stuffed animals. Collectively, such efforts make a big impact on patients and their families, but they require continual funding.





Welcoming the World to Westwood

Drs. Audrey Yoon and Ausama Gargoum share how UCLA's Professional Program for International Dentists transformed their careers and inspired them to lead, innovate, and give back.

BY ELIAV APPELBAUM

Audrey Yoon, D.D.S. '04, O./P.D./M.S. '08, and Ausama Gargoum, D.D.S. '20, O./M.S. '26, began their journeys in dentistry nearly two decades and thousands of miles apart. Yet both paths led to and even converged at the UCLA School of Dentistry's Professional Program for International Dentists (PPID), a rigorous 25-month curriculum designed for foreign-trained dentists seeking licensure and advanced education in the U.S.

Dr. Yoon, from South Korea, was among six students in the program's inaugural cohort entering in 2002.

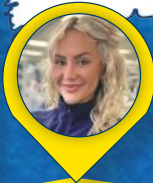
Dr. Gargoum, a Canadian with Libyan roots, entered nearly two decades later. Both have embraced the UCLA ethos of leadership, service, and excellence—and both credit PPID with shaping their professional paths.

Raised in a family that emphasized discipline and academic achievement, Dr. Yoon chose to pursue further education in the U.S. to expand on the clinical skills she had developed in Korea. "Orthodontics in America is very advanced," she said. "I was eager to gain a broader and more global perspective of the field."

Dental Bruins, Spanning the Globe



JOVANA CANACEVIC, D.D.S. '26
TORONTO, CANADA/NOVI SAD, SERBIA
"Being guided by some of the most respected clinicians and professors in the country has pushed me to raise my standards, stay curious, and continue growing."

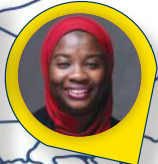


UCLA



LUIS ACOSTA, D.D.S. '26
TIJUANA, MEXICO
"I've had the opportunity to get involved in advocacy through CDA, witnessing decision-making in legislation to increase our patients' opportunities for dental care."

ADEDOYIN MALIK, D.D.S. '25
OSOGBO, NIGERIA
"One aspect I love about my experience at UCLA is learning from highly skilled faculty who have greatly influenced my professional growth."



BRYANNA CABARITI HUBBARD, D.D.S. '19, G.P. '20
UBERLÂNDIA, BRAZIL
"My PPID experience equipped me with the clinical skills, cultural understanding, and professional confidence to seamlessly integrate into the U.S. dental workforce, and now thrive as a practice owner."

Participants in the Professional Program for International Dentists' 22 cohorts (2004 through 2026) have ventured to Westwood from every inhabited continent. Meet a cross-section of alumni and current students, reflecting on PPID and how it prepared them to practice dentistry in the United States.



JUSTE RUZELYTE, D.D.S. '18
ROKIŠKIS, LITHUANIA

"PPID allowed me to form meaningful relationships with other international and national students, who continue to offer support as we navigate our careers together."



DELIA TUTTLE, D.D.S. '09
TURDA, ROMANIA

"My favorite aspect of PPID training was learning strong periodontal clinical and surgical skills. Few dental schools are teaching students the surgical aspect of gum disease."



SINA REFOUA, D.D.S. '22
TEHRAN, IRAN

"PPID was a key milestone in my education, preparing me for further training in my desired specialty, oral surgery."



THEODORE KAO, D.D.S. '25
TAIPEI, TAIWAN

"I have received invaluable exposure to diversity and techniques, strengthening my confidence and efficiency in this profession."



NOHA NOUR, D.D.S. '14
KHARTOUM, SUDAN

"PPID connected me with mentors, colleagues, and professional networks that were instrumental in my transition to practice ownership in the U.S."



NIDHI TANEJA, D.D.S. '14, P.D.
NEW DELHI, INDIA

"Activities organized on campus made me feel welcomed as an international student, and made it a rich experience while establishing a new home in the U.S."

She was accepted into every U.S. dental program she applied to but ultimately chose UCLA with encouragement from Dean Emeritus Dr. No-Hee Park, a fellow Seoul National University alumnus. Even during the program's four-month intensive "boot camp" of accelerated coursework, she embraced UCLA, her new academic environment, and never felt like an outsider.

"We were fully integrated into the third-year class. It's why I chose UCLA. There were only six of us, and we fused with the other 100 dental students and became part of a cohesive environment," said Dr. Yoon, who deepened her immersion in student life as the Associated Student Body's social chair.

This culture of support between PPID students and their peers on the traditional four-year track continues today. Jay Patel, D.D.S. '25, a past student body president, said, "PPID students are some of the most impressive people imaginable. They leave everyone and everything they know for a small shot at getting into dental school here. They bring an inspiring outlook not just on dentistry but also on life."

Dr. Yoon credits UCLA for strengthening her research foundation and instilling a lifelong commitment to inquiry.

"Dental education in Korea is fast and advanced but a little more segmented," she explained. "UCLA facilitated such a good environment if you want to ask questions. It's a good environment to seek answers to your 'Why?'"

Today, Dr. Yoon owns three practices in orthodontic and pediatric dentistry. She is widely recognized for her innovative approach to obstructive sleep apnea. A clinical professor at Stanford University and the University of Pacific, she serves as founding president of the World Dentofacial Sleep Society.

"UCLA gave me everything ... I met incredible mentors and colleagues who continue to inspire me."
– Dr. Audrey Yoon

Despite her success, Dr. Yoon remains grounded in mentorship and collaboration.

"Innovations, collaboration, and proper mentorship are very important," she said. "If anyone has a new idea and wants to collaborate, my arms are open. That's how we



A celebratory moment for the PPID cohort of 2026 following the School's White Coat Ceremony in July 2024.

advance our field—through interdisciplinary teamwork."

Reflecting on her UCLA experience, Dr. Yoon remarked, "UCLA gave me everything - dental school, pediatric and orthodontic residencies, sleep apnea research. It's truly special. I met incredible mentors and colleagues who continue to inspire me."

Like Dr. Yoon, Dr. Gargoum realized that one UCLA degree wasn't enough. After practicing dentistry, he returned to pursue a three-year combined orthodontics residency and M.S. in oral biology. But his path to Westwood was anything but ordinary.

Born in Vancouver, he chose to study dentistry in Libya, inspired by the goal of improving oral health infrastructure in his parents' home country. His education, however, was disrupted by the ongoing civil unrest that stemmed from the Arab spring uprising of 2011, which continued to impact the country for years. He continued treating patients amid the conflict—often studying by candlelight as artillery shook nearby buildings—before completing his degree in Egypt.

"Being there at a heightened time in Libya is something I will always remember," he said.

It was the success of the Bruin men's basketball team that first put UCLA on his radar. After learning about PPID, Dr. Gargoum applied with help from program coordinator Genevieve Cedillo. He still vividly remembers the day he got the call from Dr. Steve Lee, D.D.S. '92, associate dean of student services.

A Year of Holistic Student Support

Integrative Mind-Body Wellness Initiative Reminds Bruins to Step Back and Breathe

Launched in April 2024, the Integrative Mind-Body Wellness Initiative (IMBWI) at the UCLA School of Dentistry has completed a highly successful first year, becoming a key resource for student well-being and community connection.

IMBWI's First Year, by the Numbers:

180 available counseling hours

43 yoga classes

30 breathwork sessions

8 lunchtime lectures

3 therapy dog visits

Created in response to student feedback, the initiative is spearheaded by Group Practice Director Dr. Sheila Yaghmai with support from Dean Paul H. Krebsbach and Apollonian Society funding. IMBWI quickly took root with weekly yoga sessions, wellness workshops, and on-site counseling services.

"I wanted to bring wellness directly into our environment, rather than expect students to seek out campus services," said Dr. Yaghmai. "We've created a space where students feel empowered to find balance, reconnect with themselves, and support each other."

Since May 2024, UCLA Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) therapists have hosted twice-weekly drop-in sessions. Wednesday yoga classes through UCLA Recreation often reach capacity. Programming has expanded to include breathwork in the Botanical Garden, reiki healing, mindfulness seminars, and therapy dog visits—especially welcome during finals week. Student clubs like Flossin' and Fitness and the Healthy Dentist Initiative have partnered on hikes and cooking classes.

"IMBWI showed me that wellness looks different for everyone," said Ayato Shigihara, D.D.S. '27. "The mix of offerings lets us explore what feels personally sustainable."

The first-year D.D.S. class of 2028 is the first to have IMBWI woven into its curriculum through IDS 105: Wellness Practices in Everyday Life, spanning all four years.

"Embedding wellness into our academic framework is a culture shift," Dr. Yaghmai added. "We're not just training excellent dentists—we're nurturing mindful, resilient professionals."

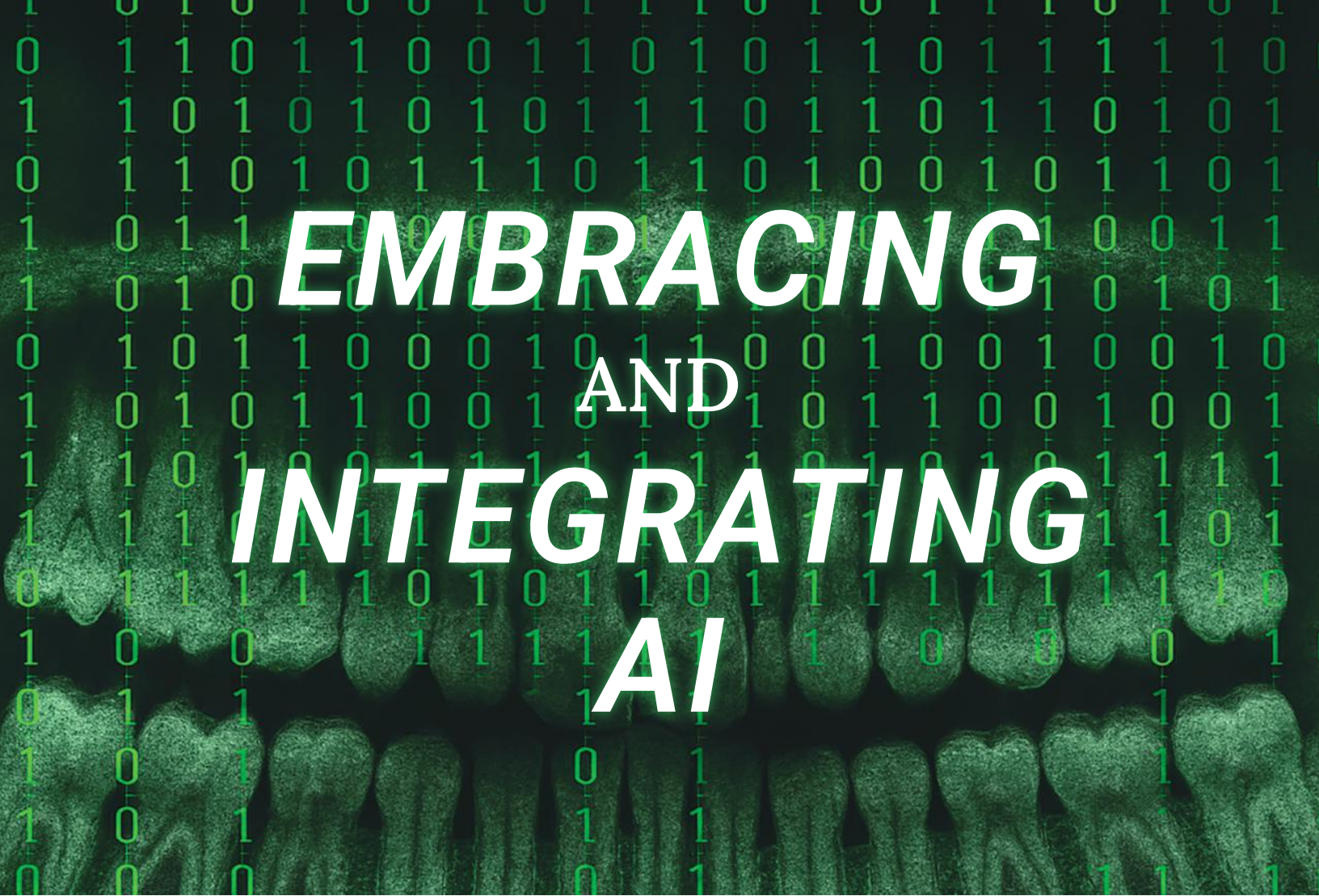
In early 2025, the Southern California wildfires upended campus life and forced a week of remote learning. As a way to reconnect, IMBWI organized *Taco 'Bout Community*, serving tacos and fresh fruit in the CHS Courtyard—welcoming students, faculty, and staff alike.

"IMBWI encourages us to connect on a human level, not just through clinical roles," said Dean Krebsbach. "That shared understanding strengthens who we are."

With momentum heading into its second year, IMBWI is redefining what it means to thrive as a UCLA dental student.

Learn more at dentistry.ucla.edu/imbwi





EMBRACING AND INTEGRATING AI

ADEA Grant for New Calibration Tool Means Greater Accuracy, More Cases, and Less Time Teaching the Nuances of Oral Radiology

BY NANCY SOKOLER STEINER

Teaching dental students to evaluate dental X-rays is laborious ... for both educators and pupils.

Students honing their skills “require repeated viewing of a variety of patients and contexts,” notes Dr. Sanjay Mallya, chair of the UCLA School of Dentistry’s Section of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology.

Moreover, consistency in calibration can vary even among faculty.

“There can be subjectivity in interpretation leading to intraoperative variability,” says Dr. Kumar C. Shah, professor of clinical dentistry and residency program director for advanced prosthodontics.

Artificial intelligence has the potential to remediate

these issues dramatically. This year, the UCLA School of Dentistry received a grant from the American Dental Education Association Gies Foundation to incorporate and evaluate the first AI-powered clinical calibration tool. The Calibrate system from dental AI company Pearl combines a pathoses detection tool with an evaluation platform.

Before applying the system to D.D.S. student and resident education, Dr. Shah noted that a faculty team used it to look at consistency and calibration. “We had four different faculty looking at the same set of radiographs individually and with the assistance of AI, and we found that when the faculty used the AI as an aid, they were a lot more consistent among themselves,” he says.

They then used images calibrated by faculty to explore how the Calibrate system could help train students to

interpret dental X-rays.

“You can teach anatomy and general principles of how caries might occur and how bone loss might appear. But student learning must be accomplished by repeatedly seeing radiographs from different patients with different anatomies in different contexts,” says Dr. Mallya. “It requires enabling students to refine their skills over time.”

Teaching these skills is faculty-intensive, and the investigators believe the program could alleviate some of that demand. “By enabling students to learn and calibrate themselves with less faculty oversight, we could address and alleviate bandwidth constraints as well,” says Dr. Shah.

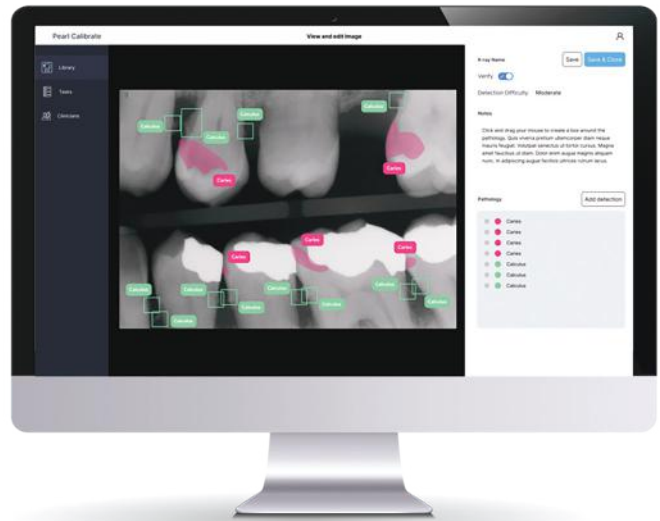
The extensive built-in library of X-rays has undergone initial AI review, and these are validated by faculty for later use in a testing environment.

“Students see a limited patient pool over the course of their training, whereas the AI system can expose them to a wide range of images they can interact with in a one-on-one experience,” says Dr. Mallya.

The system can be used to have students identify common dental pathoses including decay, periapical infections in the jaw, and bone loss from periodontal disease. The program can be used to have a student identify dental decay, specify whether the decay occurs only in the enamel or has penetrated the dentin, and describe the depth of the decay. Faculty can then see whether a student tends to under or overestimate the area of decay, and the students themselves receive immediate feedback. “It lets them see not just that they went wrong but where they went wrong,” says Dr. Mallya. He says faculty have given positive feedback regarding Calibrate’s impact on their time and effort, as well as its potential for developing standard assessments.

Calibrate enables images to be presented in a real-world context. It can also limit the time students have to analyze a particular image, preparing them for the time and

“Students see a limited patient pool over the course of their training, whereas the AI system can expose them to a wide range of images they can interact with in a one-on-one experience.” – Dr. Sanjay Mallya



A user's view of the Pearl Calibrate system.

productivity demands they’re likely to face in practice. The ADEA-funded study involves recruiting dental students and examining the impact of using AI-based caries detection to facilitate student radiographic diagnostic skills. The next step of the grant involves piloting the program with entering third-year students and tracking student performance in their oral radiology rotation over the course of the year. It is expected to help faculty better identify student challenges and weaknesses and tailor lessons accordingly.

Nathan Fok, D.D.S. ’25, O.M.R. ’27, is in an advantageous position to fully explore Calibrate’s capabilities. Having already conducted predoctoral research on AI applications in detecting caries, he will now leverage the technology – and mentor UCLA dental students – while enrolled in the School’s two-year Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology residency program.

“Dental students starting out in the clinic may struggle to confidently detect cavities on radiographs on their own,” Fok said. “Calibrate can serve as a valuable training tool, reinforcing their interpretations, building diagnostic confidence, and helping them calibrate their eye to real clinical findings.”

Dr. Mallya notes that Calibrate has the potential to perform other types of assessments, such as faculty calibration across the School or across institutions. He envisions the School of Dentistry’s instructional models being potentially shared and adapted by other universities.

Meet Our Endowed Chairholders

Dr. Reuben Kim
Naomi and Jim Ellison
Endowed Chair

Dr. Flavia Q. Pirih
Tarrson Family Endowed
Chair in Periodontics



Dr. Yvonne Hernandez-Kapila
Felix and Mildred Yip
Endowed Chair

Dr. Nadia Chugal
Dr. Jack A. Weichman Chair
in Endodontics

Dr. Peter K. Moy
Nobel Biocare Endowed Chair
in Surgical Implant Dentistry

The School's **philanthropic champions** empower these elite faculty members to teach, research, and mentor others.

Dr. Fariba S. Younai
Bob and Marion Wilson
Endowed Chair

Dr. Hung Ton-That
Dr. No-Hee Park
Endowed Chair

Dr. Marc Hayashi
Alumni and Friends
Presidential Endowed Chair

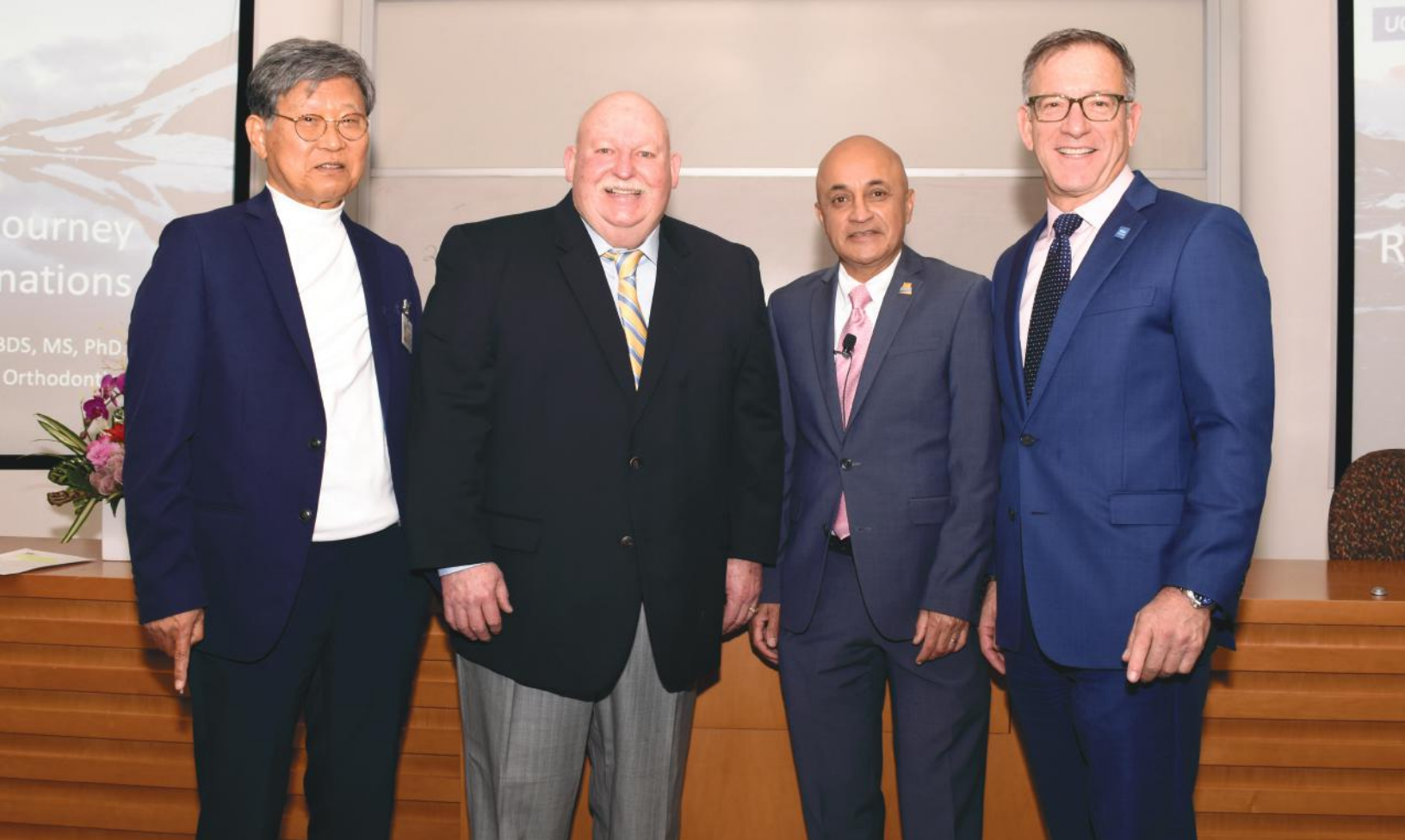


Dr. Sunil Kapila
Dr. Thomas R. Bales Endowed
Chair in Orthodontics

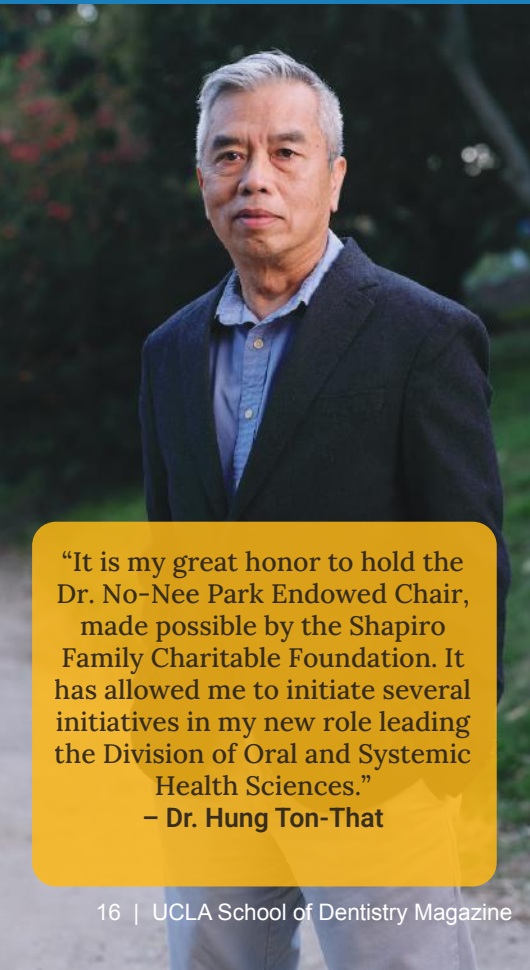
Dr. Payam Afzali
Alumni and Friends Oral
and Maxillofacial Surgery
Endowed Chair

Not pictured:

Dr. Thomas Lee, Lee Family Endowed Chair
Dr. Eric Sung, Momentum Endowed Chair in Special Patient Care



(l-r) Dean Emeritus Dr. No-Hee Park, Dr. Thomas R. Bales, Dr. Sunil Kapila and Dean Dr. Paul H. Krebsbach at Dr. Kapila's May 4, 2023, installation ceremony. The Dr. Thomas R. Bales Endowed Chair in Orthodontics was one of five established in the early 2000s to help recruit and retain top faculty. Today, UCLA's 13 endowed chairs are third-most among the 66 dental schools in the U.S.



"It is my great honor to hold the Dr. No-Nee Park Endowed Chair, made possible by the Shapiro Family Charitable Foundation. It has allowed me to initiate several initiatives in my new role leading the Division of Oral and Systemic Health Sciences."
 – Dr. Hung Ton-That



"I'm deeply grateful to the Tarrson family for their generosity and vision. Their support has fostered innovation, mentorship, and leadership in periodontics, ensuring continued, meaningful advancements in both patient care and scientific discovery."
 – Dr. Flavia Pirih



"The Alumni and Friends Presidential Endowed Chair has enabled me to provide critical support to our teaching efforts in both the predoctoral and postgrad programs, and also support our various research projects within our Section of Restorative Dentistry."
 – Dr. Marc Hayashi

One Final Send-Off

Recent Faculty Retirements



Russell E. Christensen, D.D.S., M.S.
48 Years of Service

Associate Professor Dr. Russell E. Christensen served as chair of the Section of Oral Pathology for over 30 years, developing a globally recognized practice while providing expertise in the field to national and international dentists through the School's Oral Pathology Lab. He published over 70 papers in his career. The years leading daily active learning sessions marked Dr. Christensen's favorite teaching accomplishment; students who participated in those small groups over 20 sessions – some far more frequently – became outstanding clinicians in differential diagnosis. Attending doctors in residency programs often said that UCLA graduates were the best prepared in oral pathology. The basis for his teaching came from two mentors at the University of Virginia, Dr. Elzay and Dr. Debiaggio, who required all clinical faculty to grade students' thorough findings at every chairside visit. "Dr. C." misses interactions with students and wishes all of them success as practitioners.



Cun-Yu Wang, D.D.S., Ph.D.
17 Years of Service

Dr. Cun-Yu Wang retired in October 2024 as chair of the Division of Oral and Systemic Health Sciences and holder of the the No-Hee Park Endowed Chair in Dentistry. Serving on the UCLA School of Dentistry's faculty since 2007, he also held an appointment in bioengineering at the Samueli School of Engineering. Dr. Wang's research focused on molecular signaling pathways in cancer biology, stem cell regulation, and inflammation. His groundbreaking discovery of NF- κ B's role in regulating cancer cell death was recognized as one of the top-10 scientific breakthroughs of 1996 by Science magazine. He has published over 150 peer-reviewed articles in leading journals such as Cell, Nature Medicine, and Cancer Cell. Dr. Wang has received numerous accolades, including the NIH MERIT Award and the AADOCR Irwin D. Mandel Distinguished Mentoring Award in 2023. He was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 2011 and the Chinese Academy of Engineering in 2013.

Recent Staff Retirements:

Sylvia Aquino | 20 years
Registered Dental Assistant,
Center for Esthetic Dentistry

Lorena De La Torre | 34 years
Registered Dental Assistant,
Pediatric Dentistry

Stacie McGovern | 16 years
Dental Assistant, Oral and
Maxillofacial Surgery

Pat Rowley | 15 years
Human Resources Analyst

Elizabeth Wilcox | 17 years
Registered Dental Assistant,
Center for Esthetic Dentistry

**The UCLA School of Dentistry
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– new job, award,
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and more – in our
Class Notes section
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next year!

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In Memoriam



Fermin A. Carranza, D.D.S.

Dr. Fermin A. Carranza, a pioneering figure in periodontology, passed away on March 9, 2025, at the age of 99. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he earned his D.D.S. from the University of Buenos Aires in 1948 and specialized in periodontics at Tufts University in 1952. Dr. Carranza's academic journey included roles as assistant professor at Tufts and professor and chairman at the University of Buenos Aires. In 1974, he joined UCLA School of Dentistry as a founding member of the Section of Periodontics, where he also established the periodontics residency program. He served as professor and section chair until his retirement in 1994, concurrently directing the Clinical Research Center for Periodontal Disease. His seminal textbook, *Carranza's Clinical Periodontology*, now in its 14th edition, has educated dental professionals worldwide and laid the foundation for evidence-based periodontal practice. Dr. Carranza received numerous accolades, including the Distinguished Scientist Award from the International Association for Dental Research. Dr. Carranza's wife of 65 years, Rita, passed in 2019. They are survived by three children – Fermin, Patricia, and Laura – and ten grandchildren.



Susan Gerski, R.D.A.

The longest-serving staff member in UCLA School of Dentistry history, registered dental assistant Susan Gerski, passed away on January 5, 2025, at the age of 76. She dedicated 56 years to the School, beginning as a dental assistant trainee in 1968, shortly after its opening. In 1999, Gerski achieved her registered dental assistant certification. Gerski played a pivotal role in the clinic operations, impacting thousands of students, faculty, staff, and patients. Her dedication, integrity, and deep care for generations of student dentists left a lasting legacy, and she was recognized during the School's 60th Anniversary Celebration in September 2024. A celebration of Gerski's life was held on February 10, 2025, in the Mildred E. Matthias Botanical Garden. She is survived by her husband, Jorge Maza, and daughter Elizabeth.



William Solberg, D.D.S., M.S.D.

Dr. William Solberg, a leading voice in orofacial pain and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders, passed away on September 2, 2024, at the age of 88. He joined the UCLA School of Dentistry faculty in 1968, just four years after its founding, and served for 27 years. Dr. Solberg founded and directed the Orofacial Pain and Temporomandibular Joint Center for over two decades, retiring in 1995. A prolific researcher, he authored nearly 80 scholarly publications in his field. Beyond his academic contributions, Dr. Solberg was an avid sailor, woodcarver, pianist, and cyclist. He also engaged with public discourse through over 50 letters to the editor published in the *Los Angeles Times*. He is survived by his wife, Patricia Smiley; his son, Peter; daughter-in-law, Tatiana; and three grandchildren.

Faculty/Staff Retirements and In Memoriam will transition to the School's annual report, published each fall.

A Vision Rooted in Kindness continued from p. 2

To his point above, Chancellor Frenk emphasized during his School of Dentistry *Listening Exercise* that UCLA needs to create a stronger culture of continuous improvement and efficiency to obtain maximum value for the money it receives. Another goal is leveraging more partnerships with the private sector to develop technologies that not only generate revenue but also provide solutions for humanity while maintaining existing ethical guardrails.

His third proposal caused all ears in the room to perk up.

“The biggest financial engine of the university is UCLA Health,” Chancellor Frenk said. “It has grown from being a campus hospital to the most widely distributed health system in LA County and beyond. I think we need to figure out a way to expand that footprint and also include the School of Dentistry. That will benefit the population that we serve and will generate fresh revenue streams.”

In Chancellor Frenk, UCLA Dentistry finds a leader who views oral health not as an afterthought, but as a cornerstone of public health. Through his story, the Dental



Pediatric Dentistry Chair Francisco Ramos-Gomez with Chancellor Julio Frenk. Both of their paths led from Mexico City to UCLA. Dr. Ramos-Gomez is an alumnus of Harvard's Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health where Dr. Frenk served as dean from 2009 to 2015.

Bruin community is reminded: Compassion and excellence together can transform lives—and institutions.

Welcoming the World to Westwood continued from p. 10

“That was one of the greatest feelings I’ve ever had,” he recalled. “Dr. Steve Lee said, ‘Welcome to L.A. We’re excited to have you.’ Oh, my God, I was on top of the world. I realized all that hard work and struggle to get to your goals and dreams—it all paid off.”

Gaining admission to PPID has become incredibly competitive. The program now welcomes 30 students annually, chosen from nearly 1,300 applicants. Dr. Lee explained, “All applicants are motivated by obtaining licensure in the U.S., but the School seeks foreign-trained dentists who want a comprehensive dental education at UCLA, including the research and community service opportunities available here.”

Dr. Gargoum considers Dr. Lee a mentor, and credits Dr. Diana Messadi—Chair of Oral Medicine, Oral

Pathology, and Orofacial Pain, and herself a native of Egypt—for paving the path for his success at UCLA. Through school-hosted events, he’s had opportunities to connect with role models like Dr. Yoon, who continues to set an aspirational example for PPID alumni.

“She set the bar very high,” he said. “She made her dreams become a reality. She could have just owned her own practice—but no—she dreamed, and she dreamed big. She’s a prominent figure in the ortho world. She’s definitely an inspiration.”

Dr. Gargoum now hopes to follow in her footsteps.

“I have to say it has been one of the most beneficial and rewarding experiences of my dental journey,” he said. “Mentorship, guidance, and support are in abundance at UCLA. There’s a reason why UCLA is No. 1 in terms of public school rankings—and that’s why it’s one of the top dental schools in the world. They really push that envelope for students, residents, and faculty.”

Continuing Dental Education Calendar

June through October 2025

UCLA is widely recognized as the preeminent continuing dental education provider. We understand the needs of clinicians: From in-depth hands-on training programs to the latest scientific and clinical breakthroughs. Our courses are evidence-backed, unbiased, and presented by top clinicians and educators – covering a wide scope of topics and procedures.

Our goal is to provide you with the knowledge, skills, and experience to be more productive and successful, with a class schedule that minimizes disruption to your practice. We have trained some of the most sought-after clinicians in the world, and we look forward to helping you achieve your professional goals.

On-Demand

Online Video Courses

Restorative

- Bonding Agents: Materials and Techniques
- Composites in the Modern Practice
- Introduction to Dental Photography

Oral Medicine

- Cardiovascular Disorders and Dental Care
- Endocrine Disorders
- Pulmonary Conditions and Dental Care

Sleep Medicine/ Orofacial Pain

- Introduction to Sleep Medicine
- Introduction to Pain Theory

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On-Demand

Self-Study Online Courses

California Required Courses

- Responsibilities and Requirements of Prescribing Schedule II Opioid Drugs (2 units - DDS)
- California Infection Control (2 units)
- California Dental Practice Act (2 units)

Also available:

MATE Act: Substance Use Disorders and Pain Management

In-Person/Live Courses

May 31

Intro to Acupuncture Points and Needle Based Therapy in Everyday Dentistry

June 7 and July 19

Mandibular Advancement Devices in the Management of Sleep Disordered Breathing

June 23-27

Hawaii Symposium 2025 at the Hyatt Regency Maui

July 25-26 • August 22-23 • September 19-20

Temporomandibular Disorders and Orofacial Pain Diagnosis and Management

July 26

Soft Tissue Grafting Workshop for Functional and Esthetic Needs

August 16

Resilience in Dentistry - Integrative Burnout Prevention and Stress Management for Dental Health Professionals

September 6-7

Napa 2025 - Lectures and Evening Reception at the Westin Verasa Napa

September 7-9

Dental Rehabilitation Integrating Digital Dentistry - Single Tooth Restoration

October 4

Re-Certification in Pediatric Oral Sedation

October 4

Detection and Management of Oral Cancer

October 4

State of the Art Restorative Dentistry - Materials and Techniques Update



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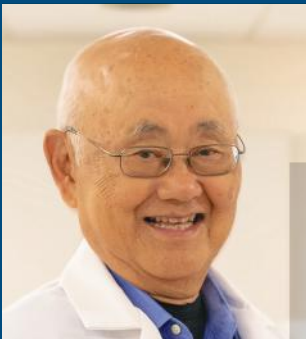
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Together, we are empowering the oral healthcare professionals of tomorrow.



For questions, please contact Associate Director of Development Daniel Castillo at dcastillo@support.ucla.edu. Please review UCLA and UCLA Foundation Disclosure Statements for Prospective donors at mygiving.ucla.edu/faq#disclosure. M48080



Henry Takei, D.D.S., M.S.
Distinguished Clinical Professor,
Section of Periodontics



Keynote Speaker:

Pierpaolo Cortellini, M.D., D.D.S.

Founder of Accademia Toscana di Ricerca Odontostomatologica(ATRO); European Research Group on Periodontology (ERGOPerio); Cortellini Perio Academy; President of the SidP Foundation; Visiting Professor in the Department of Oral Health Sciences at KU Leuven (Belgium)

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