Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

SHAPING THE FUTURE

Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

STRATEGIC VISION

education ■ outreach ■ patient care ■ research
Since 1897, the Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC has shaped talented students into outstanding dentists and dental hygienists. Our challenging clinical education and our expert faculty members provide future oral health professionals with the skills they need in order to become the best.

Dentists and dental hygienists are consistently viewed as some of the most trusted and respected professionals that serve the public, and our graduates are part of the reason. The Ostrow School of Dentistry not only educates excellent clinicians but also produces professionals who earn their patients’ trust with unyielding commitment to exemplary ethical standards. Our graduates also earn the respect of their colleagues, taking active leadership roles in the organized dentistry community from local to international levels.

In addition, our diverse research activities present students with opportunities to maximize the depth and breadth of their educational experiences. The Ostrow School of Dentistry is home to some of the best minds in oral and craniofacial biology, stem cell science, biofilm research, clinical investigation and more. Many of our students take advantage of this rich scientific environment, taking their dental education to the laboratory and emerging with a deep appreciation of the science behind the latest advances in dental treatments.

The Ostrow School of Dentistry is also renowned for our community outreach efforts. Our students, faculty, staff and alumni provide oral health services and education to thousands of people in need, whether across international borders or right here in Los Angeles. Caring for the less fortunate not only gives assistance to vulnerable populations but also provides our students with valuable clinical experiences and inspires a lasting dedication to service.

Fight On!
Our Mission

Education, scholarship and outreach to advance oral, dental, craniofacial and general systemic health and well-being

Our Vision

- We are an intrinsic part of a research-intensive university and are dedicated to scientific discovery and evaluating and translating our discoveries into improvements in health.
- We are leaders in educational innovation and patient care, including outreach programs that have a direct impact on the health of the local and regional community.
- We will expand our research program in craniofacial development and genetics, tissue regeneration, stem cell biology, bio-mineralization and infectious diseases.
- We will continue to develop collaborations locally, nationally and internationally, furthering our standing as global educators and researchers.
- We strive for excellence in research and education, sharing our innovations with the larger community.
- Our goals of offering outstanding dental educational and providing comprehensive and compassionate care for our patients are inseparably linked.

Our Values

- Our students and patients are the focus of our commitment.
- Patient care is transformed by scientific discovery, and scientific discovery informs and enhances patient care.
- We improve the oral, dental, craniofacial and general systemic health and well-being of our local, national and global communities through our discoveries.
- We celebrate diversity, demonstrate empathy and respect for others, and adhere to the highest standards of our profession.
- We are committed to lifelong learning and to training students who are lifelong learners.
Our faculty members are committed to learner-centered education and training critical thinkers. In learner-centered education, faculty and students are active partners in the learning process, through a curriculum that integrates contemporary biomedical, behavioral and clinical sciences. Student engagement in learner-centered education is critical. Students are not simply recipients of faculty knowledge; they acquire skills in independent thinking, self-direction and problem solving. A range of pedagogic tools support the learning process, including small group learning and self-directed learning. Faculty act as both instructors and facilitators and provide the framework to support students throughout the learning process.

The learning process necessarily includes continuous assessment of student learning, self-assessment by faculty and students, and assessment of the learning process itself. Assessment must be measurable and flexible, evolving as biomedical science, evidence-based clinical practice, and teaching methodologies are found to demonstrate measurably-improved learning outcomes. Advancing the health of our local, national and international communities is a critical component of the educational experience through service-learning experiences.

The curriculum incorporates contemporary biomedical knowledge, emphasizing diagnostics, evidence-based treatments and therapeutics along with health promotion and disease prevention strategies. Our graduates are prepared to act as independent dental general practitioners, providing comprehensive care for patients, identifying and assessing new technologies as they apply to patient needs, and capable of attaining leadership roles in academia, the industry and the community at large.

Students are not simply recipients of faculty knowledge; they acquire skills in independent thinking, self-direction and problem-solving.
To support and expand our teaching, clinical, research and outreach activities, our faculty members must possess the knowledge, tools, and skills to educate dental health professionals. We must attract and retain faculty of the highest caliber who bring a range of perspectives and/or prior experiences to the School.

To further raise our visibility and prominence, we will expand the School’s research portfolio by increasing the number of faculty with research-intensive profiles encompassing cross-disciplinary biomedical, translational and community-based research. We would like to increase the School’s ability to recruit, support and retain such faculty. To further expand our research and faculty horizons, we embrace partnerships with all segments of the University as well as nationally and internationally.

We must ensure that all faculty members have the tools to be successful. Faculty development is critical to the success of the institution. Faculty mentoring is the shared responsibility of all established faculty and should be available to all faculty, regardless of title or track. Mentoring junior clinical and non-clinical faculty is a critical role that can be played by senior faculty.

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{Excellence in Research}

Our research environment has a strong biomedical foundation that fosters the development of effective interventions to improve oral, dental, craniofacial and general systemic health. Basic discoveries should be translated from scientific insights into clinically relevant therapies. Our unique environment, where clinical and biomedical scientists work together, can be further enhanced through increased translational research.

We wish to further expand and diversify our research portfolio, focusing on existing strengths in craniofacial biology and our unique position in a research-intensive university. We will build strength in research internally as well as through increased collaboration and partnerships. We are confident that focusing on research, which enhances and promote quality of life will increase support from NIH, other federal agencies, state and local agencies and from industry and foundations.

The School’s expertise in providing oral health care to local and regional communities in need is longstanding; we provide high visibility to our University and align with values of the Trojan Family in general and USC Strategic Vision in particular. Building upon this strength, we will continue to demonstrate that we have made a difference in the underlying health of our patient populations through our translational and clinical research, including the
Dental students who participate in research will gain even deeper knowledge that will benefit them throughout their careers.

Increased collaboration with international entities is also a priority for us, further demonstrating the School’s global leadership role in dental research. Critical to expanding our research program is a concomitant expansion in the size of the tenure-track faculty, as noted in other sections of this Plan. We would like to attract the finest junior faculty; their accomplishments will, in turn, enable us to recruit the highest caliber of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows and residents. Excellent students who support the research enterprise will then be positioned to become the next generation of scientific and clinical leaders.

Instruction in evidence-based dentistry tools and skills will enable dental students to independently evaluate new technologies and changes in clinical care paradigms. Dental students who participate in research will gain even deeper knowledge that will benefit them throughout their careers. For students who are interested, faculty-mentored research opportunities will be made available to them.

The ongoing constraints of federal funding, especially the NIH, put young investigators at a disadvantage in seeking to establish careers that include a strong record of research funding. Taking advantage of the unique intellectual resources of USC, we would like to increase our research collaborations with faculty in other academic units of the University. Similarly, we would like to attract faculty from other parts of the University to the areas we have traditionally studied.
We are committed to providing comprehensive care at every stage of life, and for patients with special needs. Offering exemplary patient care requires student and faculty clinicians to apply the evidence base for treatment recommendations, assess patient needs, develop a comprehensive treatment plan to meet those needs, and provide treatment in a professional and compassionate manner.

The School provides comprehensive patient care through individualized student learning with faculty experts. Throughout the curriculum, students have clinical learning opportunities that integrate biomedical, behavioral and clinical knowledge and skills, from prevention to therapeutics. Optimal patient care includes evaluating and applying new discoveries and technologies.

A comprehensive lifespan approach to patient care requires collaboration with and referral to dental and medical specialists. Dental students and practitioners working as part of health care teams with students and practitioners from other health professions may improve the coordination and efficiency of patient care. USC offers a unique environment to foster and sustain inter-professional training activities through collaboration with the Keck School of Medicine; the USC Schools of Social Work, Gerontology and Pharmacy, and the programs in Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Kinesiology. Existing collaborations will be expanded and new collaborations will be developed to benefit patients and also students from multiple disciplines.

We enjoy a unique partnership with our patients. We make every effort to deliver care as efficiently and effectively as possible through the creation of evidence-based, comprehensive treatment plans that meet patient needs. Measuring our effectiveness by demonstrating improved health of individuals and groups served by our programs is a priority. Our faculty will continue to cultivate relationships with community-based health-related organizations and seek to expand opportunities to serve new communities throughout L.A. County. Identification of health outcomes and patterns of disease will guide the development of interventions, effect changes at the policy level and ultimately improve the oral health of populations.