

TRODENT

USC DENTAL



**REPRESENTING
USC DENTISTRY**
Meet Ostrow's Dental Ambassadors

★ AMBASSADOR ★

A GRAND ENTRANCE

Blonde wood panels with sleek, new touchscreens greet patients, after a lobby renovation was completed earlier this year. Instead of waiting in line, patients will check in at the touchscreens, typing in their last name and birth date. Once checked in, new patients will be sent text messages with an assigned window number to see a patient service representative. When returning patients check in, their student doctor is alerted that they've arrived. Other waiting area upgrades include removing the cashier's office (financial transactions now take place at each patient service representative's desk); adding plush, modern seating and installing two giant display monitors with digital content for Ostrow patients. For more information on the upgraded customer experience, visit tinyurl.com/agrandentrance.

PHOTO BY NATE JENSEN



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[Click here to visit our frequently asked questions about HTML5 video.](#)



DEAN'S MESSAGE



Welcome to the Fall 2019 issue of *TroDent*!

This trimester has been particularly eventful, giving us a lot of exciting news to share with you.

Earlier this fall, we announced the installment of six faculty members into chair and professorship appointments. As many of you may know, being named a chair or a professor is one of the highest honors a university can bestow upon a faculty member. And this group of faculty members — Sillas Duarte; Sunny Fereshteh DDS '09; Diane Melrose MA '11; Cheryl Park '07, DDS '13, PROS '16; Gelareh Ronaghi PROS '14; and Doug Solow — is truly most deserving. Read more about the installments on [p. 6](#).

We also were notified that Associate Dean of Community Health Programs and Hospital Affairs Roseann Mulligan MS '87 has received a [2020 Geis Award for Achievement for Dental Educators](#), a tremendous honor reserved for individuals who have meaningfully advanced oral health and dental education. With the tireless work that “Nan” has done to expand Ostrow’s reach into underserved communities across the region, she has inspired generation after generation of dental professionals to practice dentistry with compassion and give back to their communities in ways large and small. Read more about this well-deserved award on [p. 8](#).

And on [p. 12](#), you can read about Professor Janet Oldak, who received a [Distinguished Scientist Award](#) from the [International Association for Dental Research](#). It is one of the most prestigious awards granted by the IADR and is meant to stimulate, encourage and recognize excellent research. Just as we were going to press, Oldak received further great news, being named a Fellow of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#). Congratulations, Janet!

In our cover story, “Representing USC Dentistry” ([p. 22](#)), we recognize our student ambassador program, a brigade of nearly 70 students who give their precious little time to serve as mouthpieces for Ostrow. They take part in admission activities, answering questions from prospective students and offering candid, trusted insight into what it means to be a USC dental student. Many dental students say they made their decision about whether or not to attend USC based on their first interactions with the dental student ambassadors. They are an invaluable resource for us. Of course, it is our hope that, like you all in our community, they go on after graduation to continue to be great Ostrow ambassadors, demonstrating for the world what it means to be a successful Trojan dental practitioner.

There’s a little bit of something for everybody in this issue — from the Yearbook Game ([p. 17](#)) to a brief Q&A with ADA President-Elect Daniel Klemmedson DDS '80, OMFS '83, MD '85 ([p. 19](#)) to a feel-good feature about three faculty members who were awarded grants to pay off their student loan debt in five years ([p. 28](#)). So please read on and enjoy this issue of *TroDent*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Avishai Sadan".

Avishai Sadan DMD, MBA
Dean

G. Donald and Marian James Montgomery Professor of Dentistry
Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

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Ostrow's Got Talent **13-14**

Eric Ennuson DDS '22
FILMMAKER



INTERACTIVE PDF
LIVE LINKS

FEATURES

A MOMENT OF JOY | 28-33

They've devoted their careers to inspiring future generations of dental professionals to give back to their communities in meaningful ways. Now, Alexander Alcaraz PEDO '07; Mehdi Mohammadi DDS '12, MS '18; and Sunny Fereshteh DDS '09 are on the receiving end of such generosity, with a life-changing grant.

PAID IN FULL | 34-35

She paid off nearly \$400,000 in student debt in just a little more than four years. Now, Sahar Hamedani MPH '08, DDS '13, PEDO '15 wants to share with you just how she did it.

DH 2.0 | 36-39

While the incoming dental hygiene class still has access to some of the profession's greatest leaders, their educational experience will be different from previous cohorts, with smaller class sizes and side-by-side patient care experiences with dentistry students. Find out how USC is preparing graduates for a changing world.

CONTRIBUTORS



SAHAR HAMEDANI
MPH '08, DDS '13,
PEDO '15
FINANCIAL WHIZ

Ostrow alumna Sahar Hamedani shares how she was able to pay off \$389,000 in student loans in a little more than four years in "Paid in Full" (p. 34).

What do you hope our readers take away from your article? Paying your student loans doesn't have to be a life-long burden. I don't think my situation is unique. I made sure to work as many days as I could and spend as modestly as possible. I was able to pay it off in less than five years, and you can too!

Now that you are "Paid in Full," what are some of your next financial goals? The next goal would be to

purchase a home! My husband and I are expecting our first child this coming spring so we are hoping soon to be homeowners as well.

As an alumna, what advice would you give to current students? Take advantage of all the opportunities that are available. There are so many conferences, lectures and symposia that are free or heavily discounted for students. Not only will you learn something new, but you will also be exposed to amazing networking opportunities. Get involved with organized dentistry as well.



TABAN MILANI
DDS '23
INSPIRED
COLUMNIST

In this issue's "Inspired" column (p. 40), first-year dental student Taban Milani shares how past religious discrimination inspired her to a career of providing dental treatment to underserved communities.

What did your experience fleeing your home country teach you about yourself? I have learned not to let anyone or anything set limits for me. When I broke the limits and set my own rules, I started to believe in myself and my abilities. I believe that, inside each and every one of us, we have a rough diamond that won't shine unless we polish it.

Where would you like to be in five years? I'd like to be someone who dedicates most of her time to helping in nonprofits or health centers. I also plan to take on leadership responsibilities. I have been lucky enough to work with some amazing mentors at USC Mobile Clinic and the JWCH Dental Clinic, and so developing into a great leader myself is something I'm really excited about.

What was the process like writing your story? It wasn't easy, but I wanted to pass on the courage and empowerment to those who are being victims of discrimination of any kind to listen to their heart, follow their dreams, and don't let anything or anybody to stop them from what they want most to accomplish.



JAYA NICELY
ILLUSTRATOR

For this issue's "Friends in High Places," (p. 19) illustrator Jaya Nicely put pen to paper to immortalize ADA President-Elect Daniel Klemmedson DDS '80, OMFS '83, MD '85.

Work has appeared in: *Bon Appétit*, *the Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, *GQ*, *Entertainment Weekly* and *Billboard*

How did you first get started in illustration? I've been drawing since I was a child and just never stopped! When I was in high school, I decided to pursue art as a career. After checking out all the programs at ArtCenter College of Design, I felt like illustration was the best fit.

How long does it take you to do a headshot illustration? If it's a full-color portrait, then it would take me around 8-15 hours from sketch to finish — depending on the complexity. Every portrait is a little different, and sometimes it goes faster or longer than I expected.

What do you do when you're not working? In my free time, I work on a biannual magazine I co-created called *Compound Butter*, which has been a passion project for a long time. Otherwise, I like to go on walks, travel up to the Bay Area or Big Sur, or just constantly rearrange and buy new furniture for my apartment. It's never finished.

TRODENT

FALL 2019

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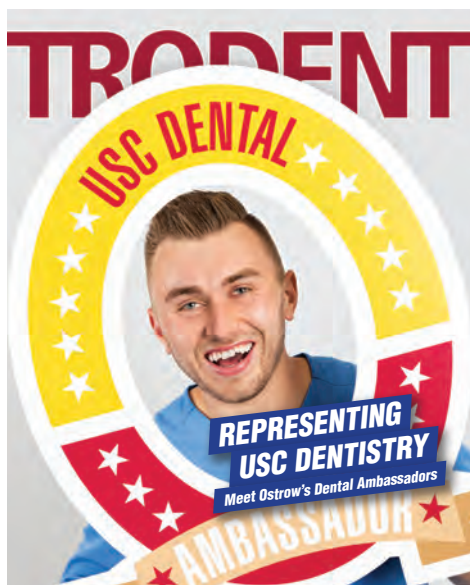
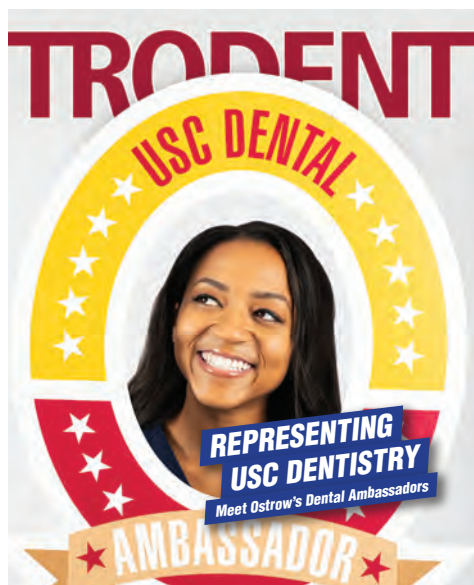
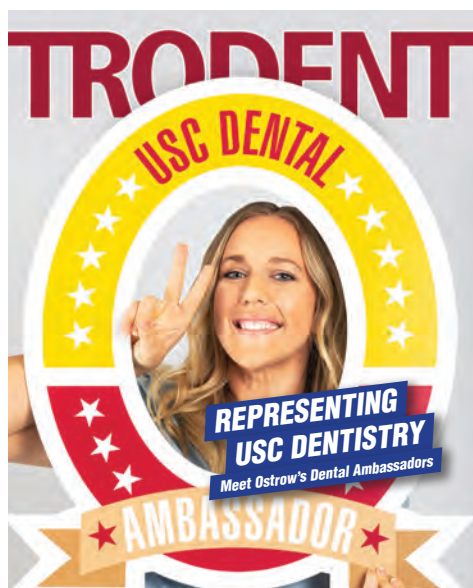
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REPRESENTING USC DENTISTRY | 22-29

Every year, Ostrow deploys a brigade of nearly 70 student ambassadors to serve as a powerful admissions tool, offering prospective students candid, peer-to-peer opinions about what it means to be a USC dentistry student. Meet some of our most active student ambassadors.

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SIX FACULTY MEMBERS HONORED WITH CHAIR, PROFESSORSHIP APPOINTMENTS



Such appointments are the highest honor a university can bestow.

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

Six Ostrow faculty members are slated to be installed into chair and endowed professorships at an official ceremony taking place in early 2020. "Endowed faculty positions represent one of the most prestigious and permanent investments that philanthropic partners can make in any university," said Dean Avishai Sadan, in a schoolwide announcement sent out in early November. "We are delighted to celebrate each of these individuals and their impact on our USC Dentistry community."

The faculty members are:

SILLAS DUARTE

Associate Professor Sillas Duarte has been installed into the Rex Ingraham Chair in Restorative Dentistry. "I am profoundly honored," said Duarte, who referenced Ingraham's contributions to restorative dentistry for inspiring him in his own career. "Our focus on tooth preservation through minimally invasive dentistry, adhesion and cutting-edge digital technologies has provided our students a unique experience to develop their knowledge and skills that can only be found at USC." Duarte earned his doctor of dental surgery degree in Brazil before going on to pursue a fellowship in operative dentistry and a master's and PhD in restorative dentistry. He joined Ostrow in 2011 and has served as chair of the Division of Restorative Sciences since 2012. He is also the director of the advanced program in operative and adhesive dentistry.

SANAZ "SUNNY" FERESHTEH DDS '09

Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Sunny Fereshteh has been installed into the USC Associates Assistant Professorship of Dentistry. "I cannot tell you how much this accolade has touched my heart," Fereshteh said. "I will work extremely hard to be deserving of this endowment and represent this incredible institution for the coming years." Fereshteh earned her bachelor's degree in chemistry from Dickinson College in Pennsylvania. She went on to earn her DDS from USC in 2009. Afterward, she began working in Ostrow's externship community clinics, teaching dental students to provide the best quality dental treatment to underserved populations. In 2015, she became director of the USC Mobile Clinic program.

DIANE MELROSE MA '11

Professor of Clinical Dentistry Diane Melrose has been installed into the inaugural Violet S. Bonney Professorship in Dental Hygiene. "I'm extremely honored," Melrose said. "My heart is warmed, knowing my husband [the late Professor Emeritus Raymond Melrose] would be so happy and proud of me." Melrose earned her bachelor's degree and a certificate in dental hygiene from the University of Iowa. She joined Ostrow in 1976 as an assistant clinical professor in the dental hygiene department and steadily worked her way up the ranks. In 2006, she was named director of the dental hygiene department. While working at USC, she earned a master of arts degree in gerontology from the USC Davis School of Gerontology.

CHERYL PARK '07, DDS '13, PROS '16

Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Cheryl Park has been named the inaugural Carl Rieder Professor of Restorative Dentistry. "This moment gave me a chance to reflect on what it means to have a career in academics," Park said. "I feel tremendously grateful for all the guidance and support that I've received, and I feel lucky that I can be part of students' building blocks in their lifelong careers." Park is a triple Trojan graduate, having completed her bachelor's degree in biological sciences, her doctor of dental surgery and her advanced residency in prosthodontics at USC. She joined Ostrow as a faculty member in 2017 and currently directs the DDS and ASPID modules in fixed prosthodontics.

GELAREH RONAGHI PROS '14

Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Gelareh Ronaghi is the inaugural holder of the Robert K. Avakian Endowed Professorship of Restorative Dentistry. "This is a real honor," Ronaghi said. "It also brings with it an immense sense of responsibility to achieve the highest result and pave the way for the next leaders in our field." Ronaghi earned a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of British Columbia, followed by a bachelor's degree of dental surgery from the University of Sydney. In 2014, she received a prosthodontics certificate from Ostrow. She is the director of the integrated restorative dentistry preclinical module.

DOUG SOLOW

Professor of Clinical Dentistry Doug Solow has been installed into the G. Donald Montgomery Professorship of Dentistry. "Dr. Montgomery contributed immeasurably to the dental profession and the development of the USC School of Dentistry," Solow said. "I am honored to be associated with someone who has been so impactful on the history of our school." Solow earned his bachelor's degree in biology from New York University before going on to earn a doctor of dental surgery from Stony Brook University and a master's of business administration from Duke University. He joined the Trojan Dental Family in 2014 as the associate dean of clinical affairs.

NEWS BRIEFS

■ DEAN SADAN AWARDED ELLIS ISLAND MEDAL OF HONOR

Earlier this year, Dean Avishai Sadan was awarded an [Ellis Island Medal of Honor](#) for his continued contributions to the dental profession. The prestigious award is meant to honor native-born or naturalized citizens who share their wealth of knowledge, indomitable courage, boundless compassion, unique talents and selfless generosity with those less fortunate. “Dean Sadan exemplifies these values ... while maintaining the traditions of his ethnic heritage and embodying the American Dream,” wrote Ostrow Board of Councilors Chair Carol Gomez Summerhays DDS ’78 in her nomination letter. Summerhays earned the Ellis Island Medal in 2017, joining a group of honorees that includes seven U.S. presidents, three world leaders and several Nobel Prize winners.

■ DENTAL ANESTHESIOLOGY RECOGNIZED AS 10TH DENTAL SPECIALTY, THANKS TO USC ADVOCACY

Dental anesthesiology has become the 10th recognized dental specialty, thanks in large part to advocacy work done at Ostrow. The effort, which began more than 30 years ago, was most recently spearheaded by Clinical Associate Professor James Tom DDS ’99, who is president of the [American Society for Dentist Anesthesiologists](#). Training would resemble that undertaken by physician anesthesiologist residents, who complete a three-year program, with 12-18 months spent in a hospital operating room, delivering anesthesia for all types of cases. “It’s great to have USC associated with the establishment of the newest dental specialty,” Tom said. “Hopefully, we can increase awareness of advanced pain and anxiety control to our diverse patient population.”

■ CHAI RECEIVES FIVE-YEAR EXTENSION GRANT FOR CLEFT PALATE RESEARCH

Associate Dean of Research Yang Chai PhD ’91, DDS ’96 has received a five-year, nearly \$2-million grant from the [National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research](#) for research focused on better understanding the molecular regulatory mechanisms of cleft palate. It’s the fourth time the grant has been renewed, continuously supporting Chai’s research for more than 20 years. “It shows how important this problem is and gives us a great sense of responsibility to do something to improve treatment for these patients,” Chai said. As a result of the continued support, Chai’s research team is now developing scaffolds to direct muscles and soft tissue into the right position to aid in the repair process after cleft repair surgery.

■ OSTROW RESEARCHERS, A STEP CLOSER TO DEVELOPING TEETH

In an [article published in eLife](#), Associate Dean of Research Yang Chai PhD ’91, DDS ’96 and his team shared their discovery that tooth root patterning and development could be controlled by “turning off” certain genes rather than altering the genetic code altogether. The discovery brings researchers closer to being able to develop teeth in a laboratory. They are currently working toward regenerating a molar root that would be capped with an implanted crown. “It would be the best of both worlds: a natural integration of the root with the jawbone with the periodontal ligament in place, and a reduction in the amount of time we need by using just a crown to restore function,” said Chai, who is the George and MaryLou Boone Professor of Craniofacial Molecular Biology and director of the [Center for Craniofacial Molecular Biology](#).

■ OSTROW RESEARCHER INVESTIGATING CAUSES OF MICROCEPHALY

Microcephaly is a rare condition, in which the circumference of an individual’s head is smaller than normal. It can be caused by fetal exposure to drugs; alcohol; certain viruses, like Zika; and toxins, but genetic abnormalities can also play a part. It’s the latter cause that Assistant Professor Jianfu “Jeff” Chen aims to better understand. In a recent [Nature Communications](#) article, Chen shared his discovery that the mutation of a specific gene (WDR62) resulted in dramatic brain size differences. “Basically, we discovered a new mechanism to explain why microcephaly develops,” Chen said. Ultimately, Chen aims to elucidate the causes of microcephaly and identify potential sets of treatments. Chen joined the Ostrow faculty in 2017. His research is focused on pediatric brain disorders and neurodegeneration.

■ SCHNEIR EARNS GOLDEN APPLE AWARD

Professor Michael Schneir has received the 2019 Golden Apple Award by the [American Medical Writers Association](#) (AMWA). This award is meant to recognize consistent, outstanding excellence in teaching AMWA workshops. The AMWA is the leading professional organization for medical communicators, with more than 4,000 members across 32 countries. Schneir has been a workshop leader since 1991 and has taught nearly 50 workshops with consistent high evaluation scores. He has also created new workshops, including “Taxonomic Analysis of Medical Writing” and “Semantic Analysis of Medical Writing.” At USC, Schneir teaches oral biochemistry to dental hygiene students, facilitates problem-based learning groups for dentistry students and teaches systematic research writing to craniofacial biology graduate students and residents from the periodontics and orthodontics programs.

Roseann Mulligan earns 2020 Gies Award for Achievement for Dental Educators



PHOTO BY NATE JENSEN

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

Associate Dean of Community Health Programs and Hospital Affairs Roseann Mulligan MS '87 has received a 2020 Gies Award for Achievement for Dental Educators from the [ADEAGies Foundation](#).

This prestigious award is meant to pay tribute to individuals who meaningfully advance oral health and dental education.

"We are tremendously proud of 'Nan' for this honor," said Dean Avishai Sadan. "She has long inspired Ostrow faculty, staff and students with her tireless leadership in making sure hundreds of thousands of underserved individuals in Southern and Central California receive the dental care they so desperately need."

A CAREER DEDICATED TO THE UNDERSERVED

Mulligan first became interested in providing treatment to the underserved as a UCLA dental student, when she traveled with her school's mobile dental clinics, providing treatment to the children of migrant farm workers in Central California.

In 1982, she joined Ostrow's faculty, hoping to share this same passion with USC dental students.

Just three years later, Mulligan helped found USC's Special Patients Clinic, which was the first of its kind in the nation — providing treatment to those least likely to be treated elsewhere (patients with developmental delays and physical disabilities, the frail elderly and patients living with HIV/AIDS).

In 2000, Mulligan took the reins of Ostrow's [Community Oral Health Programs](#). As the program's leader, she managed to expand the school's many community-based programs

to include more service locations and patient demographics, including school-aged children, foster children, migrant workers, Skid Row residents and elderly and abused adults. Today, as a result of these efforts, Ostrow provides treatment to more than 75,000 underserved patients every year.

EXPANDING PATIENT POPULATIONS

Under her leadership, USC established an eight-chair dental clinic at [Union Rescue Mission](#) in 2000 that caters to homeless and underserved populations. In 2010, a second seven-chair dental clinic was established across the street at [John Wesley Community Health Institute](#).

In 2015, on what was the 30th anniversary of the Special Patients Clinic, Mulligan and her husband, Assistant Dean for Distance Education Glenn Clark, [endowed and named the Dr. Roseann Mulligan Special Patients Clinic](#), ensuring its continued existence long into the future.

"I believe these patients deserve the very best oral health care we can provide," Mulligan said in 2015 news article about the gift. "They often have so many other conditions going on that can be impacted by poor oral health care."

THE LARGEST CIVILIAN MOBILE DENTAL CLINIC FLEET

Under Mulligan's leadership, the USC dental school — long known for its mobile dental clinic program — has managed to amass the largest civilian mobile dental clinic fleet in the nation. In 2016, she oversaw the acquisition and deployment of [the world's then-largest mobile dental clinic](#), thanks to a \$3-million gift from the Hutto-Patterson Charitable Foundation.

Mulligan also helped establish a partnership with QueensCare, a nonprofit health-care provider for low-income Angelenos. The collaboration led to the establishment of the first QueensCare mobile clinic, which provides free comprehensive dental care to low-income elementary school children. Since then, the [USC/QueensCare Mobile Dental Program](#) has grown to include several mobile dental clinics, providing treatment at two different schools simultaneously.

Mulligan also manages relationships with more than 200 sites, including public schools; federally funded health and nutrition programs for women, infants and children; community health clinics; and retirement communities to further expand Ostrow's reach into underserved communities.

EFFECTING POLICY CHANGE

In addition to providing care to underserved populations, Mulligan's research publications have led the public to better understand the link between school absenteeism and poor oral health and the ensuing costs to public school systems. Her research has effected policy change to bring greater financial resources to underserved communities through public and private support.

All of these efforts have been the result of the more than \$70 million in private and public funding that Mulligan has helped raise throughout her career.

Mulligan has a joint appointment with the USC Davis School of Gerontology. She is the chair of the Division of Public Health & Pediatric Dentistry and the Charles M. Goldstein Professor of Community Dentistry.

She will officially receive the Gies Award on March 16, 2020.



**TOOTH
BE TOLD,
USC IS
THE BEST.**

#WEARFIGS

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of **USC**

FUELING TRANSFORMATION

Friends of Dentistry Scholarship Recognition Dinner

Celebrating scholarship donors, student recipients
and the impact of a USC dental education

With special remarks by USC President Carol L. Folt

Friday, January 31, 2020

Cocktail Reception ~ 6 p.m.

Dinner & Program ~ 7 p.m.

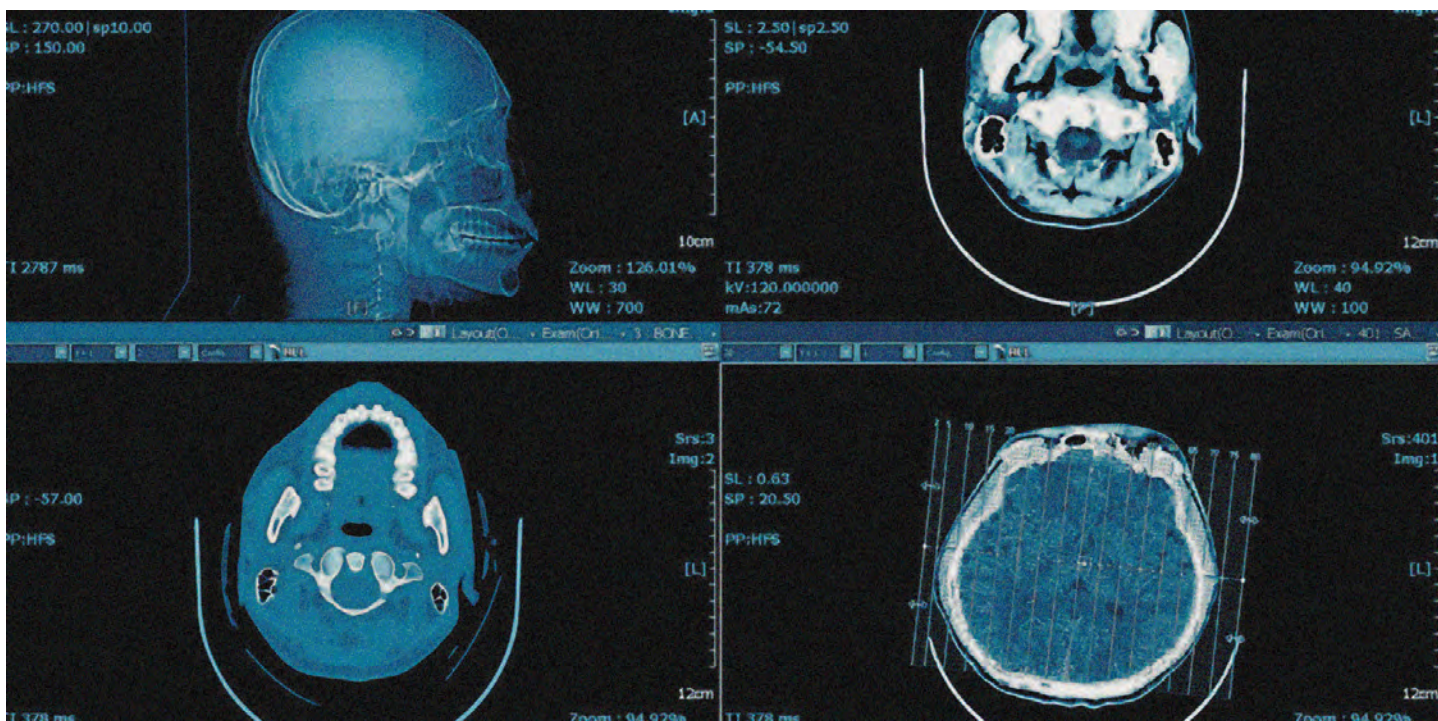
Vibiana Downtown Los Angeles

Tickets \$80 | Black tie (optional) | Complimentary valet parking

Kindly respond by Wednesday, January 22
at dentistry.usc.edu/scholarshipdinner

Questions, please contact the Office of External Relations & Student Life
at **(213) 740-0428** or **ostrow.friends@usc.edu**





Ostrow researchers receive \$12.5 million grant to build out unique facial database

The project seeks new research data for FaceBase, a freely available collection of DNA samples, data and images related to abnormalities of the head and facial bones.

BY LEIGH HOPPER

You're a researcher who wants to learn more about cleft lip and cleft palate, which are common but not well-understood birth defects. You could start with the vast online holdings of the National Library of Medicine, but what if instead you find a special collection devoted to all abnormalities of the head and facial bones?

Not only is the collection incredibly rich — containing manuscripts, images, videos, scans of human faces, DNA samples and datasets of genetic information — it also comes with a community of experts eager to guide you and collaborate. That's what Ostrow aims to create with FaceBase III, a collaboration with the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, which was recently awarded a \$12.5 million grant from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR).

"We're looking at really challenging problems, which can't be solved by a single group or one person's expertise," said Associate Dean of Research Yang Chai PhD '91, DDS '96. "To accelerate the science and better serve families at risk for these conditions, we need a comprehensive and systematic understanding of how faces form in healthy children and what goes wrong to cause common malformations."

INSPIRING A COMMUNITY TO TRANSFORM CRANIOFACIAL RESEARCH

Nearly half of all birth defects involve the face and skull. For the most part, scientists remain unclear as to why they occur. The most common craniofacial abnormality is cleft lip or cleft palate; another is craniosynostosis, in which the sutures — or soft spots — in an infant's skull fuse too early and lead to a misshapen head along with dangerous pressure on the brain. Treatment may require the skills of dentists, plastic surgeons, neurosurgeons, audiologists, genetic counselors and ear, nose and throat specialists.

"We're trying to create a community of researchers around the exchange and organiza-

tion of data, and transform the way craniofacial research is done," said USC Viterbi Professor Carl Kesselman. "This could be an exemplar. Not many dental schools have access to the largest computer science research institute in the country."

The NIDCR launched the first version of FaceBase in 2009, focusing on the middle region of the face and the genetics related to developmental disorders like cleft lip and cleft palate. The data collected from these projects created a unique, freely available resource for the scientific community. Since 2014, USC scientists have been developing FaceBase's central data hub, which in its second phase expanded to encompass other genetic disorders and the development of the entire craniofacial complex.

This third phase focuses on motivating craniofacial researchers around the globe to share their own research data, continuing work on the data repository and fostering a community of active users through outreach activities and dissemination of new features and available data sets.

Past FaceBase contributors have included researchers from more than 24 universities nationwide.



PHOTO BY PHIL CHANNING

Oldak receives Distinguished Scientist Award

The award is one of the most prestigious bestowed by the International Association for Dental Research.

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

Professor Janet Oldak received a 2019 Basic Research in Biological Mineralization Award at the International Association for Dental Research's (IADR) General Session and Exhibition in mid-June.

The award — one of 17 Distinguished Scientist Awards — is one of the most prestigious awards bestowed by the IADR. It is meant to stimulate, encourage and recognize basic research in the field of biological mineralization.

"This is extremely rewarding and allows me to reflect on all those years of doing experiments, writing grants and manuscripts and presenting in conferences while running around

to come up with new ideas — and doing all of this while being a mother," said Oldak, who was quick to credit the students and postdocs, who have been working alongside her.

"We are very proud of Dr. Oldak's scientific accomplishments and her continued success with her research projects," said Associate Dean of Research Yang Chai PhD '91, DDS '96. "This award is a demonstration of the impact our scientists are making at Ostrow. We will continue to expand our effort in translating our research discoveries into clinical treatments in order to benefit our patients."

A LIFE OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

Oldak has published more than 120 peer-reviewed manuscripts that have significantly advanced scientific understanding of enamel biomineralization and biomimetic approaches for enamel growth and repair.

Her research has led to a number of

patents, including one for a hydrogel that promotes the growth of an enamel-like surface on teeth and remineralizes dentin. Since 1998, Oldak's research has been consistently funded by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, part of the National Institutes of Health.

She has also served as president of the IADR/American Association for Dental Research (AADR) Mineralized Tissue Group, as president of the AADR Southern California Section and as chair of the American Association for the Advancement of Science Dentistry Section.

Oldak earned a master's of science degree in structural chemistry and a doctoral degree in structural biology from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.

She has been with Ostrow since beginning her post-doctoral degree in 1992. She also has a joint appointment in the biomedical sciences and bioengineering division at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.

FRONT DESK

SECRET LIVES, OSTROW'S GOT TALENT,
GAMES AND MORE!

OSTROW'S GOT TALENT
Eric Ennuson
DDS '22

FILMMAKER



PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET



PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

« continued from page 13

Eric Ennison DDS '22 got his first video camera when he was a 13-year-old boy.

That Sony Digital8 Camcorder would become a constant presence in the Ennison family's life as the teen used it to chronicle everything from graduations to church conferences to birthdays to funerals. "I made a film for a family that was celebrating the life of a member that was dear to them," Ennison says. "Although it wasn't a major production, it meant a lot to me that I could provide a lasting memory for a grieving family. The experience really showed me that I could make an impact through film."

Filming these events helped sharpen Ennison's talents to take on bigger projects. In 2016, he shot a short film called *Titan*, a short rendition of a scene from *Remember the Titans*. He also shot a music video for a North Carolina musician who sang a cover of Carrie Underwood's "Church Bells."

But Ennison's talents are not limited to behind the camera. In addition to filmmaking, he counts music and acting as passions of his as well.

"I started playing the drums at age 6, and I taught myself to play the piano at age 13," says Ennison, whose favorite genres of music are hip-hop and gospel. "I want to start delving into jazz more, too, because I believe

the tools and progressions used in jazz are building blocks to what I could add to hip-hop and gospel."

It was in high school that Ennison was bitten by the acting bug, when a teacher asked him to audition for their school play.

"To my surprise, I was actually good at scene study, character development and other various components of preparing for a role within a production," he says.

It was this interest in acting that brought the Atlanta native to Tinseltown for dental school. While pursuing his DDS degree, he's been taking acting classes at night, hoping to further develop his acting chops. He can also be found at many USC Dentistry events, with camera in hand, capturing it all.

Despite his creative interests, when it came time to pick a career, Ennison, who is first generation Ghanaian-American, chose dentistry.

"I've always told myself in life you have to do what you need to do in order to do what you want to do," he explains. "Dentistry provides me the opportunity to serve people while ensuring my ability to service my family financially as well."

QUOTED



“Teeth grinding is a multifactorial condition, and there is not a magic wand to get rid of it. First, it’s imperative to discover the cause, or at least, the contributing factors.”

—Associate Professor of Clinical Dentistry Mariela Padilla offers a dental perspective in an *Elemental* article about how stress contributes to bruxism. Read more at tinyurl.com/stressandbruxism.



“If we can get them to have some positive experiences at the dentist early on, that can shape the way that they think about dentistry in general in the future.”

—Associate Professor of Clinical Dentistry John Morzov DDS '00 talks to KTLA's Gayle Anderson earlier this summer about the treatment being provided in the QueensCare mobile clinic. See more at tinyurl.com/queenscareonkltla.



100 Candles

Lyle Buffington DDS '43 celebrated his 100th birthday this year. The Trojan centenarian has five children, 17 grandchildren, 34 great grandchildren and four great-great grandchildren. His secret to continued good health? A Hershey's Milk Chocolate Bar with Almonds and five Diet Cokes every day.



FLASHBACK
1994



The Fall 1994 issue of *TroDent* took a quantum leap forward as it highlighted the school's Alumni Day, during which Marilyn Miller was to give a speech titled, “Emerging Technologies,” where she would be discussing CAD/CAM, intraoral cameras and imaging systems, voice-activated charting systems, microbiology testing and much more. During the event, George Higue DDS '40 received the Alumnus of the Year award, and Charles Goldstein and Robert Ibsen DDS '58 received Presidential Awards. Other news included the conferral of a Thor Award to Cecil Casillas of Proma, Inc., for his continued donation and maintenance of dental units to USC's mobile clinics and a call for photographs, stories and volunteers for the *USC Centennial*, a hard-bound book commemorating the school's first 100 years.

A portrait of Yaara Berdan, a woman with blonde hair pulled back, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark blazer over a white top. The background is a solid red color.

FIVE THINGS

Yaara Berdan MBA '22

Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry

When asked to describe a typical day, Yaara Berdan humbly replies, "It is busy, but I enjoy every minute." Keeping with the USC tradition of life-long learning, the full-time faculty member is a part-time MBA student at the USC Marshall School of Business. Here are five more things to know about Berdan:

- 1 She's been teaching at Ostrow since 2008.**
"I started working as a volunteer one day a week in 2008. I had no idea what to expect from being a dental educator, but I really enjoyed it right away. Now, more than 10 years later, I'm here daily serving as the director of preclinical endodontics."
- 2 She was a pediatric dentist before starting her endodontics residency.**
"Endodontics was my least favorite area of dentistry when I was a dental student. How ironic, but it just shows that you never know where your interests, or disinterests, will take you. Now with my pediatric dentistry background, I am usually more involved when there are children treated in the endodontics clinic. We have a great collaborative relationship with the pediatric dentistry clinic at Ostrow."
- 3 She decided to pursue an MBA to expand beyond dentistry and be a better educator.**
"My goal is to use my MBA to improve my current skills, view dentistry from a business perspective and be a better educator. Becoming a student again has really made me more understanding of what Ostrow students are going through."
- 4 She has yet to bump into her son, a fellow USC student, on campus.**
"My son is a third-year undergraduate student at Viterbi. With all the time I spend here, it's crazy I've never bumped into him on campus by chance!"
- 5 She held a few different jobs outside of dentistry before entering dental school.**
"I went to UCLA for undergrad and majored in kinesiology so, after graduating, I worked as a personal trainer at Sports Club LA. But my favorite job was as a California Pizza Kitchen server before dental school."

—Yasmine Pezeshkpour MCM '16

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

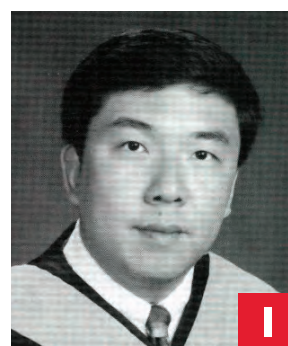
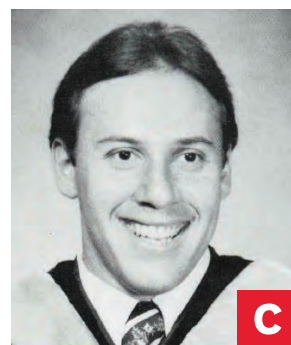
the yearbook game



Match the Ostrow notables with the headshots from their dental school yearbooks.

FRONT DESK

- 1 BALDWIN MARCHACK DDS '71**
Member, Board of Councilors
- 2 BRAD BAUM DDS '79, ORTHO '81**
Board Member, Friends of Dentistry
- 3 CHRIS ACONE DDS '01, PERIO '04**
President, Century Club Alumni Association
- 4 ED LEW DDS '58**
Member, Board of Councilors
- 5 GARY HARMATZ DDS '69**
Member, Board of Councilors
- 6 GLENN SAMESHIMA ORTHO '90, PHD '92**
Associate Professor
- 7 RICHARD GREEN DDS '79**
Adjunct Professor of Clinical Dentistry
- 8 RICHARD KAHN DDS '64**
Associate Professor Emeritus
- 9 VICTORIA HO DH '74**
Ostrow Alumna
- 10 YANG CHAI PHD '91, DDS '96**
Associate Dean of Research



Ostrow yearbooks are viewable online at the USC Wilson Dental Library website. Stroll down memory lane by visiting tinyurl.com/ostrowyearbooks.



Doodle it for the 'Gram

Throughout her adolescence, Viviana Han DDS '21 felt like she never fit in.

Born from Korean parents but living her entire life in Argentina, she regularly found herself the object of ridicule. "I was bullied by my classmates, got picked last in school and almost never got invited to my classmates' birthday parties," Han says.

When her grandfather gave her \$100, one of her first purchases was a set of 40 coloring pencils that she had seen on her way home one day.

"I started to draw and practice coloring inside the lines," she says. "Eventually, drawing became my hobby, and this talent became very useful in dentistry for me."

Han, an ASPID student, completed her bachelor's degree in dentistry at the Universidad del Salvador. It was there that she began to doodle in her notes as a way to remember what she had learned during lecture.

"I used to have a long bus ride home, so during that time, my mind would wander," Han says. "That is when my imagination would sometimes get out of control, and I'd imagine my main character, Molar Moe, meeting new friends like a toothbrush or a tongue. I would create different scenarios to remember the lectures."

These study aids would eventually morph into "The Drooling Tooth," Han's dentistry cartoon Instagram account, with nearly 36K followers.

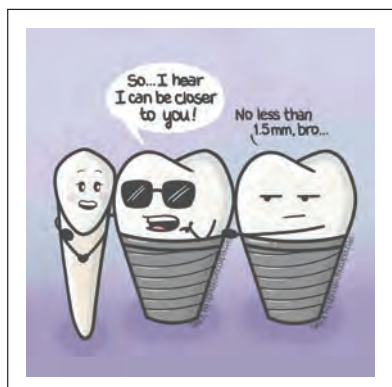
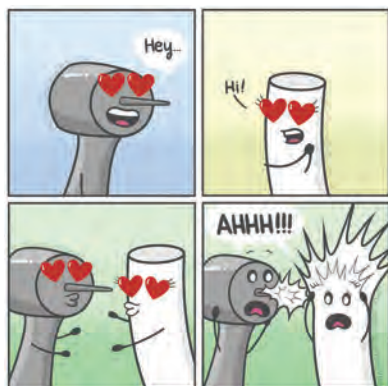
"Dentists from all over the world started to share my drawings and kept sending their followers to me," says Han, who began the Instagram account two and a half years ago. "I will forever be thankful to those people who shared my work and were kind enough to give me all the credit."

Having created this community of followers, Han says she's not feeling so left out anymore.

"Through this community, I feel like we are all friends getting the same inside joke that I got to draw and post on this platform," she says.

But the validation doesn't stop there. "My favorite comments are the ones that my followers tag their friends and say 'This is sooo you!' or 'This is so us!' she says. "Dental school is not easy. If you don't have a support system, it is almost impossible to get through. So when people tag a friend, I get excited to see that I made someone think of their own support system."

Follow Han at [@thedroolingtooth](https://www.instagram.com/thedroolingtooth) on Instagram, or visit her site thedroolingtooth.com to see some of the Molar Moe merchandise Han sells.



Ctrl-Alt-Del

Ostrow's Technology Refresh Project, which replaced all computers aged 3 years or older, meant more than 600 computers across the school went dark. But, rather than a complete shutdown, it's better described as a restart for the discarded PCs, thanks to a partnership with human-I-T. The SoCal-based nonprofit organization takes computers otherwise destined for landfills, repairs and repurposes them and gifts them to underserved communities. It's just another way Ostrow works to give back to communities across the Southland.



FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES



ILLUSTRATION BY JAYA NICELY

DANIEL KLEMMEDSON DDS '80, OMFS '83, MD '85

PRESIDENT-ELECT, AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN ORGANIZED DENTISTRY?

So much of what affects a dentist's ability to deliver quality care in a viable healthcare business model is independent of the doctor-patient relationship. Our ability to affect that environment is solely dependent upon our ability to act collaboratively and collectively. Organized dentistry provides that collective influence.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT STUDENTS IN REGARDS TO GETTING STARTED IN ORGANIZED DENTISTRY?

The primary emphasis of a student should be on acquiring the intellectual and clinical skills to be a competent professional. Knowledge of dental practice and general healthcare environments, and how it affects a student's future, is equally important and most effectively acquired through involvement in ASDA. The advocacy of organized dentistry protects every student's future. Join early, get engaged and reap the benefits for an entire career.

WHAT ARE SOME KEY AREAS/INITIATIVES YOU WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT DURING YOUR PRESIDENCY?

Many of our profession's issues are not new, but their nature is changing rapidly due to technology, communication, consumerism and the economics of healthcare. I hope to stimulate narrative that will encourage the innovation necessary to advance quality oral health care in this new paradigm.

CATCH YOUR CLASSMATES UP ON YOUR LIFE SINCE LEAVING USC.

After residency and medical school, I returned to Tucson, Ariz., and fulfilled my wife's request to "get a job." It was good advice. A successful oral and maxillofacial surgery practice, broad in scope, was the result. My involvement in organized dentistry is just icing on the top.

Thank You

Friends of Dentistry is the premier philanthropic support group for Ostrow. Your membership and financial support drives academic, clinical, research and service activities here at USC Dentistry and in turn advances the future of the dental profession. Thank you to our members. Your generosity plays a vital role in our dental community.

If you are interested in becoming a Friends of Dentistry member or would like to upgrade your membership, please contact the Office of External Relations & Student Life at (213) 740-0428 or ostrow.development@usc.edu.

2020 USC Friends of Dentistry Board

BOARD CHAIR

Derick Tagawa DDS '68, ORTHO '71

BOARD MEMBERS

Brad Baum DDS '79, ORTHO '81

Mark Collons DDS '68, ORTHO '75

Frank Enriquez DDS '73, PEDO '75

Kenneth Ho DDS '77

Kent Ochiai DDS '87, PROS '89

John Yekikian DDS '83

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friends of Dentistry Scholarship Recognition Dinner Friday, Jan. 31, 2020

*Celebrate scholarship donors, student recipients,
and the impact of a USC dental education.*

With special guest, USC's 12th president, Dr. Carol L. Folt

RSVP TODAY

dentistry.usc.edu/scholarshipdinner

SEE RECENT EVENT PHOTOS

dentistry.usc.edu/ostrowcommunity

Mark Whalen '77

Marching Band Member

It's an annual tradition that Mark Whalen '77 has kept for more than 40 years.

Every fall, the adjunct instructor of clinical dentistry suits up in his best cardinal and gold, polishes and oils his clarinet and joins the USC Trojan Marching Band on the football field to relive the glory of his days performing with the Spirit of Troy.

"For Homecoming every year, they allow past musicians to come and perform with the band again," Whalen explains. "You just go and show off, and you just smile the whole time you're up there because you're so happy."

In some ways, Whalen was always destined to feel this passionate about music. His father was a concert pianist, who taught piano lessons all the time; his mother, a soprano. The Whalen house was always draped in melody.

It was at his parents' urging that Whalen picked up his first musical instrument. "I didn't have much of a voice, and I couldn't play piano, so I grabbed the clarinet," he jokes.

Whalen kept playing clarinet throughout high school, joining his school's marching, concert and basketball bands. "When you enjoy music as much as I did, you play whenever you can," he says.

It was during high school that the Southern California native first saw the USC Trojan Marching Band performing. During a Marching Band performance at Bovard Auditorium, the teen envisioned himself wearing his own USC Marching Band uniform one day.

"I thought maybe one day, I could be good enough to play my clarinet in Bovard," Whalen says. "After getting into USC and joining the Marching Band — sometimes we performed in Bovard — that dream came true."

Whalen counts his days with the Trojan Marching Band as some of his finest.

"The four years I had with the band were just wonderful," he says. "I enjoyed all the camaraderie with like-minded people who just wanted to use their unique talents to celebrate the university."

It was with these people — many of whom are still his best friends — that Whalen was able to have experiences that many can never claim.

"I was fortunate enough while I was an undergraduate that the football team went to the Rose Bowl three out of four years," he says, fingering three rose pins on his lapel. "We also had a chance to play at the Academy Awards and at the Hollywood Bowl."

With so many great memories, it's no wonder Whalen would feel such a deep affinity for the band after all these years.



REPRESENTING



USC DENTISTRY

Ostrow's student ambassador brigade serves as a powerful tool, offering prospective students candid opinions about life as a Trojan dental family member.

BY JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04



When Nadege Lum DDS '21 was deciding between Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC and another program, one factor tipped the scales.

"My student ambassador talked about how he had time to visit friends and family and surf — and I'm from Hawaii," she says. "I wanted to make my decision based on academics, but the two schools were neck and neck."

Through talking with and emailing her student ambassador, Lum learned that in addition to a quality clinical education and access to expert faculty members, USC's curriculum is designed to allow students a greater work-life balance.

"I chose USC because I thought I would have better quality of life," she says. "Now as a third-year dental student, I can say that everything he told me was on point."

REACHING OUT

Each year, Ostrow selects a group of 66 students across all four DDS classes to volunteer as ambassadors. In addition to providing campus tours and assisting during high-profile events and galas, ambassadors meet prospective students on admissions interview days to answer questions and offer insights into life as a USC dental student.

"I think that providing an honest opinion is one of the most important aspects of our job," says student ambassador Helen Yuan '15, DDS '21. "Choosing a dental school is a bit like choosing a partner for a four-year relationship; it's as much about making sure you're a good fit for the dental school as the dental school is a good fit for you."

Student ambassadors, who are selected based on interviews with the Office of Student Life and the Office of Admissions, must be in good academic standing, as well as knowledgeable, personable and feel a true passion for Ostrow.

"Ambassadors are the face of the school; they have significant interactions with our prospective students, alumni, donors and special guests," says Kim Eeles '00, director of events & student life. "As a staff member, I'm paid to be here and say good things about the school; the ambassadors are not paid. They do this out of the goodness of their hearts and their passion for the profession and the school."

By offering potential students an unfiltered look into life as a USC dental student — beyond the more glossy brochures and polished presentations — ambassadors help students navigate an important decision.

"The majority of our applicants always mention that ambassadors help solidify their decision of coming to USC — or at least help them decide on which dental school to attend — thanks to all the insightful guidance and advice," says Anita Tourah DDS '08, PROS '12, assistant dean for admissions and student affairs & assistant professor of clinical dentistry.

Ambassador Alex Tryon DDS '22 adds, "I've had a few of the current first-year students tell me that I played a role in their decision to attend USC; it's always nice to hear that something I said during their interview day resonated with them."

[continued on page 26 »](#)

MEET THE 2020 AMBASSADORS

Every year, Ostrow selects 66 students across all four doctor of dental surgery classes to volunteer as ambassadors. This year's group includes:

Anna Adjei DDS '22
Maria Aiello MS '17, DDS '22
Soleil Amini DDS '22
Kimia Azizi DDS '22
Ara Bakian MS '18, DDS '22
Edward Baum DDS '21
Natalie Black DH '19, DDS '23
Hayley Botwin DH '19, DDS '23
Yael Breziner DDS '22
Evan Bronner DH '17, DDS '21
Golden Broughton '07, DDS '23
Ana Zapata Caceres DDS '21
Angelica Chaghouri DDS '20
William Chakar MS '16, DDS '21
Sopuruchukwu Chima DDS '21
Alexander Chin '14, DDS '20
Kristeen Chu DDS '20
Calvyn Clatanoff DDS '23
Aida Dadashzadeh DDS '23
Deeba Danesh DDS '22
Donna Davami DDS '22
Christa Demos DDS '22

Anthony Deza DDS '21
Saja Fadda DDS '23
Carole Farah DDS '23
Favio Gallegos Jr. DDS '20
Rita Garabet DDS '20
Jacob Gurstein DDS '23
Melika Haghighi DDS '20
Leila Hakim DDS '21
Nayiri Hartounian '16, DDS '22
Valerie Hernandez '17, DDS '21
Jesslyn Hodge DDS '21
Margaret Hou DDS '23
Aaron Huang DDS '23
Duc Huynh DDS '23
Debora Jeong DDS '23
John Lamp DDS '21
Nuriel Lavi MS '18, DDS '22
Cindy Li DDS '22
Hailey Logan '15, DDS '20
Rebecca Long DDS '22
Nadege Lum DDS '21
Brandee Ma DDS '22

Ashley Mach DDS '21
Nicole Mahdavi '15, DDS '21
May Manswer DH '16, DDS '21
Bilyana McLeod DDS '21
Adrian Menendez '17, DDS '22
Parisa Moussavian DDS '21
Padi Nazarian '18, DDS '22
Nathan Nourian DDS '20
Abiola Oladele DDS '23
Damilola Osibamowo DDS '23
Derek Patao '15, DDS '20
Ryan Pham DH '19, DDS '23
Francisco Ramirez DH '18, DDS '23
Steven Rifkin DH '19, DDS '23
Ashley Robbins DDS '20
Lina Shahinyan MS '17, DDS '21
Gabrielle Torgerson DDS '20
Kim Yen Tran DDS '20
Alexander Tryon DDS '22
Nicholas Young DDS '20
Helen Yuan '15, DDS '21
Courtne Yun '15, DDS '20



ACTIVE DUTY

Our cover models represent the most active student ambassadors, volunteering for a number of activities over the course of their dental school careers.

 **GABRIELLE TORGERSON DDS '20**
20 ACTIVITIES

 **HAILEY LOGAN '15, DDS '20**
15 ACTIVITIES

 **NATHAN NOURIAN DDS '20**
20 ACTIVITIES

 **ALEX TRYON DDS '22**
28 ACTIVITIES

 **HELEN YUAN '15, DDS '21**
14 ACTIVITIES



« continued from page 23

A GOOD FEELING

Through ambassadors, potential students can get a feel for the school — something difficult to express through traditional marketing materials.

“I was coming all the way from New Jersey, and I wanted to be somewhere I knew would feel like a home away from home,” says Abiola Oladele DDS ’23. “What truly resonated with me was how personable and honest my ambassador was ... She was being extremely genuine about her experiences. She was extremely happy to be at the school, and it showed.”

Calvyn Clatanoff DDS ’23 had a similar experience with his ambassador.

“When we walked around the halls on my interview, she said ‘Hi’ to nearly everyone she passed. Everyone knew each other’s names, and everyone had a smile on their face,” Clatanoff says. “Other dental schools that I had visited and interviewed with seemed extremely tense and serious. There seemed to be competition, but no collaboration. The opposite is true at USC.”

From the curriculum to the campus, ambassador Gabrielle Torgerson DDS ’20 strives to be an approachable, positive resource for prospective students. “I always say that, as an ambassador, I’m like the older sibling that they can talk to openly and ask questions before they go talk to ‘Mom and Dad,’” she explains.

Torgerson also uses the opportunity to share her own personal journey to Ostrow. “I wanted to be an ambassador because I felt like my story was unorthodox,” she says. “I didn’t get into dental school the first time.”

Torgerson took community college classes to boost her GPA, worked in a dental office four days a week and volunteered at a community health dental office.

“I was told I’d never get into dental school and then, all of a sudden, it just happened,” she says. “I felt defeated but was persistent in the pursuit. I want to use my adversity to inspire others not to give up.”

For students visiting from outside Los Angeles, ambassadors offer insight into what the SoCal is like.

“I’ve been around the proverbial block a couple of times,” says Yuan, who also attended USC for undergrad. “I not only know a substantial amount about the dental school, but I am quite familiar with USC and all of the opportunities it offers, as well as how it is to live in L.A.”

Ambassador Hailey Logan ’15, DDS ’20 adds, “I am quite familiar with aspects of the school that dental

students from other colleges may not be aware of and felt I could use that perspective to help other students embrace all that USC has to offer — even outside of Ostrow.”

Ambassadors and prospective students often exchange contact information so conversations can continue long after a campus tour.

“To my surprise, I have gotten countless emails from applicants, both thanking me for my help and honesty, as well as numerous additional questions,” says ambassador Nathan Nourian DDS ’20. “Additionally, I’ve stayed in contact with many of these applicants who are now Ostrow students and help them with their current dental courses and in the simulation lab.”

WORK PERKS

In addition to access to special Ostrow events, student ambassadors can practice certain skills that might not be taught in a traditional classroom or clinical setting.

“As an ambassador, you help calm the nerves of applicants,” Assistant Dean Tourah says. “This skill can then be translated into the clinic when they treat nervous patients.”

Through his work as an ambassador, Tryon has gained confidence speaking to larger groups.

“Public speaking is something that I really struggled with throughout high school and undergrad,” he says. “Being an ambassador has helped me become more comfortable talking to a room full of people. I think this is because my interactions aren’t scripted presentations, but instead, just casual conversations about my experiences and why I chose Ostrow.”

Logan has learned how much she enjoys meeting new people from across the country and learning their stories. “In such a short time, I am able to get a feel for where the prospective students are from and what they like to do,” she says. “It’s so interesting to get a glimpse of the different personalities Ostrow may have in the next class.”

However long or short the interaction, ambassadors often leave a lasting impression with students making a life-changing decision. “It makes me super happy to know that, no matter how big or small, I was a part of someone’s journey to achieve their dreams,” Yuan says.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Ambassadors can make a huge difference on prospective students' choices for dental school. Just ask these USC dental students.

“When we walked around the halls on my interview, [the student ambassador] said ‘Hi’ to nearly everyone she passed. Everyone knew each other’s names, and everyone had a smile on their face.”

—Calvyn Clatanoff DDS '23



“My student ambassador talked about how he had time to visit friends and family. I chose USC because I thought I’d have better quality of life. Now, as a third-year dental student, I can say that everything he told me was on point.”

—Nadege Lum DDS '21

“What truly resonated with me was how personable and honest my ambassador was ... She was extremely genuine about her experiences. She was extremely happy to be at the school, and it showed.”

—Abiola Oladele DDS '23



A MOMENT OF



Three Ostrow faculty members have been awarded grants to pay off their student debt, so they can continue to inspire generations of dental students to give back to underserved communities.

BY MICHELLE MCCARTHY



Alexander Alcaraz PEDO '07
Interim Director, Pediatric Dentistry

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

On

a recent evening in the home of Alexander Alcaraz PEDO '07, there was a sudden eruption of emotion. His two daughters, ages 5 and 8, ran into the room where their parents were to find out what the commotion was all about.

"They were like, 'Why are you screaming and laughing in here?'" recalls the assistant professor of clinical dentistry and interim director of the advanced program in pediatric dentistry. "They didn't quite understand what was going on, but they were thrilled that we were thrilled."

The cause for the celebration? Alcaraz had just told his wife that he was one of three Ostrow faculty members who had been awarded a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant to pay off his educational loans over five years. The other recipients were Mehdi Mohammadi DDS '12, MS '18, and Sanaz "Sunny" Fereshteh DDS '09.

The HRSA grants were given as part of an effort to attract and retain the best faculty and award those working with underserved communities. "We greatly appreciate the skills our faculty bring to the school and the commitment they show to our students, but many have tremendous student loan debts that burden them and their families," says Niel Nathason, associate professor emeritus, who helped bring the grant to fruition. "This project is one way of helping some of our exemplary faculty."

NOW IN THE MARKET FOR A HOUSE

After working at a private practice for five years and finding it a bit monotonous, Alcaraz started teaching one day a week at USC and fell in love with it. "With teaching, I'm constantly being pushed to be on top of my game," he says. "I feel like I'm giving back and helping the future of pediatric dentistry like my mentors did for me. Also, we serve a lot of patients at the hospital on Medicare. There's a different level of appreciation they have for the care we're providing than I got in private practice."

Thanks to the loan repayment, Alcaraz and his wife are now in the market to buy a home. "We haven't been able to afford that up to this point," he says.

TIME FOR MORE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mohammadi, director of the JWCH Dental Clinic on Skid Row, says the stress of the years it was going to take to pay back his student loan was always in the back of his mind. "The burden is something you feel on a daily basis. If you want to plan for any enjoyment, or travel, or want to buy things for the family, you always have to keep in mind, 'OK, I have to pay this amount of the loan.'"

"I always thought I was blessed because I enjoyed doing dental treatments for underserved populations and, at the same time, teaching our students in that environment," he continues. "These two elements came together and made it a dream job for me. But, obviously,

continued on page 32 »



Sunny Fereshteh DDS '09

Director, USC Mobile Dental Clinic

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

« continued from page 30

getting this good news was a very joyous moment.”

In addition to working full-time at JWCH, Mohammadi still puts in a full day in private practice to earn more income for his expenses. This grant will allow him to dedicate more time to his research interests, attend seminars and take mini-courses. “Now that I know my loans will be forgiven, I can totally plan to do something else to build up my career,” he says.

It’s a sentiment Nathason echoes: “By supporting our faculty, professionally, financially and personally, they in turn will be able to grow in their educational roles and stay on with the school. We anticipate having them work with us over long academic careers, mentoring our dental and dental hygiene students and pediatric residents and providing quality care to indigent communities throughout Southern California.”

Mohammadi is enthusiastic about what the grants will mean for future students as well. “I’m really appreciative of the people who applied for this grant and made this available for us because the next generation will know this opportunity is there for them,” he says. “I hope it will make them more interested in going to underserved and underprivileged areas to provide care for people who are in need.”

“We anticipate having them work with us over long academic careers, mentoring our dental and dental hygiene students and pediatric residents and providing quality care to indigent communities throughout Southern California.”

—Neil Nathason,
Associate Professor Emeritus

MORE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF

Fereshteh, director of the [USC Mobile Dental Clinic](#), was cleaning one of the mobile trailers when she found out her loans would be paid off. “I was in sweats and scrubbing the floors,” she recalls. “Then I see this email, and I squealed as loud as possible. It was just surreal.”

The first thing she did was call her mother to tell her the amazing news. “We were both crying,” Fereshteh says. “We lost my grandmother a few weeks before this, so my mom was very emotional. She’s the one I’m actually even more happy for because she was so worried about me and my loans.

“The night before, she had a dream about my grandmother — her mother — swimming in the ocean and smiling at her,” Fereshteh continues. “My aunt told her that means you’re going to get good news. So when I called the next day, she burst into tears and said, ‘This was from her!’”

Often working seven days a week to make ends meet, Fereshteh says the grant will allow her to cut back on work and take care of herself for the first time in a long time. “I’ve spent the past 10 years so focused on community health

dentistry that I haven’t been able to put myself first, or even second or third,” she says. “I moved six minutes away from the ocean a year ago and haven’t been to the beach yet.

“It’ll allow me to take care of myself to last a little bit longer. This kind of job is physically demanding, and I really want to last a long time. So I need to do things like yoga. I need to go running. I need to take better care of myself and give myself that kind of time, which I didn’t have before.”

Even though she might get one day a week to herself now, Fereshteh’s passion is likely to always be on her mind. “I can’t imagine not doing community health,” she says. “But also being able to do it with the mobile clinic is very much a gift. I’ll be honest, even if they didn’t give me this five-year gift, I would still be here. They can’t get rid of me.”



Mehdi Mohammadi DDS '12, MS '18
Director, JWCH Dental Clinic

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

Balance

¢ 389,000

385,139

380,561

374,718

368,747

364,82

358

35

34

3

3

3

291

291,4

86,238

74,405

62,635

51,073

45,172

39,281

195

72

29

5

3

3

29

¢ 3

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

Paid *in* Full

She paid off her student debt in a little more than four years.

Now, Sahar Hamedani MPH '08, DDS '13, PEDO '15 shares with our readers the way she was able to do it.

In 2013, I received my DDS degree from Ostrow. Two years later, I finished my residency, becoming a pediatric dentist and fulfilling a childhood dream.

Once in the professional world, I committed myself to paying off, as quickly as possible, the \$389,000 in student loan debt that I had accrued. I just recently sent in my last payment and want to share with you the way I was able to pay off my debt.

IF POSSIBLE, LEAN ON PARENTS AND LOVED ONES FOR SUPPORT.

I was fortunate enough to have my parents pay for my undergraduate coursework, but we had an agreement that any educational expenses beyond that would be taken on by me. The goal was for me to focus on getting the best possible undergraduate education to then be able to get into the best possible dental institution.

We were elated when I was accepted into Ostrow. As a SoCal native, I knew USC was a top dental school. I also knew it wasn't the most affordable option. The opportunity to attend a top dental institution while staying close to my family outweighed any of my financial concerns. "I will make it work," I told myself.

After receiving my DDS degree in 2013, I moved home and commuted from Orange County for my pediatric residency. Even when I completed my residency and started working full-time, I continued to live at home. That eliminated costs associated with rent, utilities and many meals so, when I began working full-time, I was able to make large payments towards my loan, versus living expenses.

I feel very fortunate to have been able to have the support of my parents during this time. It allowed me to take out the right loan amount for my situation during dental school, rather than the maximum amount.

MINIMIZE YOUR SPENDING, AND KEEP TRACK OF BUDGETS.

I was raised by immigrant parents who instilled in me the value of a dollar. This helped me be fiscally responsible and disciplined throughout dental school, without having to make too many sacrifices. My parents, especially my dad, were also the ones who really encouraged and motivated me to pay off my loans as quickly as possible.

During dental school, I minimized my spending and kept a tight budget. I didn't even have a credit card. So, the money I had on me was all I had, and it helped me stay disciplined.

Another simple way of sticking to a budget is by bringing your own lunch and coffee. Buying meals and eating out regularly can really add up.

Of course, life happens. I didn't give up traveling to friends' weddings or seeing family and friends in other states. I allowed myself these experiences, but buckled down financially in other areas of my life.

Even after graduating and making a steady income, I didn't have a lavish gym membership, go on long vacations for the first couple years or drive a fancy car. Funny enough, I drove the same car I had since college. This helped in the long run because there was no car payment I had to deal with. Just gas and minor upkeep.

AS ONE OF MY MENTORS SAID, "DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE MONEY, THE MONEY WILL COME."

A pediatric faculty member and mentor, Scott Fishman PEDO '94 would always have very real conversations with us about budgeting and money management during our residency.

His best advice was to try not to worry about money. Dental school is the time to get as much clinical experience as possible, learn to treat your patients right and become the best dentist you can be.

Now, after working for a couple of years, I've seen how true it is. Treat your patients right, with top-notch care, and they'll continue to come back. They will even spread the word to help you get other patients. You will be successful in that way.

IF SOMEONE OFFERS YOU A JOB, TAKE IT.

Through USC's Trojan Family, I was fortunate to be exposed to many alumni, specifically pediatric dental alumni. Many of them had opportunities in their private practices, and, if they approached me with a position, I took it.

When I first started, I was working at four to five different offices, six days a week. Now that I'm more established in my career and my abilities, I am working as an associate at two private practices, but the learning experiences I had working at the other practices were invaluable to the provider I am now.

My advice to new graduates is to give all opportunities a try and see if they're a right fit for you, whether it's corporate, private or group practice. You just won't know until you're actually working in the environment.

A photograph of two dental hygiene students in a clinical setting. The student on the left is wearing a white lab coat, a blue surgical mask, and safety glasses. The student on the right is wearing a blue lab coat, a blue surgical mask, red safety glasses, and blue gloves. They are both looking down, focused on a task. The background is slightly blurred, showing clinical equipment and lights.

DH 2.0

Ostrow transforms its dental hygiene program with a number of changes meant to better prepare graduates for an ever-evolving world.

BY MICHELLE MCCARTHY

As part of the curriculum change, dental hygiene students work alongside dental students in the clinic, reflecting life in actual dental practice. Here, Alisha Lee DH '20 teaches Cindy Tashiro DDS '22 and Taylor Purks DDS '22 different methods for brushing teeth.



Starting with the fall 2019 semester, USC's dental hygiene program underwent a number of noteworthy changes.

First off, the class size is smaller, with 20 students comprising the Class of 2021.

"We're very excited because there's going to be more personalized education and more one-on-one time between students and faculty," says Diane Melrose, professor of clinical dentistry and director of the dental hygiene program. "The program is clinically the best in the United States, but we're enhancing it and making it even better than it has been."

There are 330 accredited dental hygiene programs across the nation, with 27 located in California. The majority of them provide an associate's degree at a lower cost, but none of them offer students the vast opportunities available at a major university like USC. Only two other dental hygiene programs in California are housed within a dental school.

"We want to emphasize our dental hygiene program's level of expertise and the advantage we have with it being within the dental school," Melrose explains. "We're continually collaborating and keeping up with the latest technology in every part of dentistry. Because our students are so involved in communication and explaining things to patients, it's vital. And they get to have this information firsthand from world-renowned faculty members."

USC's dental hygiene faculty are considered experts in the profession and often travel nationally and internationally, teaching the latest techniques and innovations. It is this expertise that sets the USC program aside, giving students face-to-face opportunities to learn from the profession's thought leaders.

A USC education also gives graduates an advantage when it comes time to look for a job. "We get so many calls because people know what our program's like, so students have a great network," Melrose continues.

Integration is Key

The new model's goal is to integrate dental hygiene and dental students, so they are working side by side as they would in a dental office. Dental hygiene and dental students will also take courses and seminars together.

"It'll be a win-win situation for both the dental students and the dental hygienists, because it's really important they learn to work together as a team in order to have a successful practice and provide optimal care to the patients," Melrose says. "Our clinic is on the first floor and most of the dental students are on the second floor, so we're hoping that we will eventually move up and actually be in clinics that are right there with the dental students."

The dental hygiene students can teach dental students about scaling, root planing and assessment, while dental students will teach dental hygiene students the different procedures they perform. "They'll collaborate and be there with the same patient and work together on assessment," Melrose says.

The experiences will serve as perfect networking opportunities. Melrose hopes the relationships developed will transition from the classroom into the student's careers. "They can learn from each other what their roles are and how they can collaborate and work together when they leave the school," she says.


There will also be a push for students in the dental hygiene program to collaborate with residents from different specialties at USC, including occupational therapists, pharmacists, physical therapists, physician assistants and social workers. This will better prepare students for the future of the workplace, since that's where the profession is going. "When they meet a patient, all the disciplines will be there," Melrose says. "They'll collaborate to see what would be the best treatment. The dental hygienist can educate the others in the group about oral care and some other aspects to be aware of. The pharmacists can help with the medications if there's dry mouth."



PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

Long History of Adaptation

Dental hygiene was added as a certificate program at USC in 1928. In 1962, the program required its entrants to have two years' college experience and began awarding bachelor's of science degrees. The first graduating class consisted of nine women. The class size fluctuated between nine and 15 students until the war years when it dropped to two or three. In 1945, 15 students were enrolled, and the



One of the changes made to the dental hygiene curriculum includes smaller class sizes, allowing for more a personalized, one-on-one education.

class size gradually increased to 38 in 1956. The class size was increased to 50 in 1969 and remained the same until 1996, when 53 students were accepted into the dental hygiene program.

Program founder Cora Ueland remarked in an American Dental Hygiene Association presidential address (she was president from 1929-1930) that “we urge on our dental hygiene schools the conduct of such courses of study as will not only make technically proficient dental hygienists, but also produce

women who can educate and think in terms of highest service, remembering that education is not a static thing, but is ever changing to meet the requirements of the people.”

A 2018 median salary for dental hygiene is \$74,820. Job outlook is expected to grow 20 percent between 2016 and 2026, much faster than the outlook for all other occupations, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Whichever transformations occur with the dental hygiene program at USC, the main

focus is always on student success. The program has always placed a big emphasis on its students becoming leaders in the field, whether that’s going on to pursue a master’s degree or applying to dental school.

“We want them to develop programs and really advance our profession in different ways, such as through advocacy or creating community programs,” Melrose says. “We are excited about our new model and the opportunity to graduate students who will advance our profession for the future.”



Taban Milani DDS '23 fled Iran to pursue a higher education. Now, she aims to give back to underserved communities.

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET

Growing up in the Islamic Republican of Iran and being raised Baha'i presented its own unique challenges.

Since its conception, Baha'i followers have been subject to religious discrimination. The majority of Iran is Shia Muslims, and many do not agree with other religious principles.

The persecution and discrimination faced by these other religious communities only intensified after the Islamic Revolution in 1978. Iranian Baha'i people are not allowed to attend higher education institutions, own their own businesses or vote.

So, growing up, my family and I did not have the same rights and privileges as other citizens. We were consistently discriminated against.

At school, I was a victim of bullying from a young age. The schoolmaster even tried to have me kicked out of school on multiple occasions solely because of my religious beliefs. But he failed because I had high grades and a history of good behavior.

Regardless of all the obstacles — specifically in regard to obtaining an education — I tried to stay focused and remind myself of my goals.

Since a high school diploma is the highest degree a Baha'i youth can obtain in Iran, upon graduating from high school, my mother and I decided to migrate to America to further my education. Even though I knew there would be different obstacles awaiting me in the United States — language and cultural differences — I was grateful for the opportunity. Like most immigrants, I had to start from the very beginning — learning the language and adopting the culture.

I am a person who prioritizes other people's needs. Moving to the United States presented me with an opportunity to pursue the highest level of education possible. Such a chance to improve my life motivated me to participate in various community projects to

meet people's needs.

In 2016, I started volunteering at [USC Mobile Clinic](#) and the [JWCH Dental Clinic](#) as well as other various nonprofit health clinics, serving underserved communities.

What captured my heart and directed me to this profession was the children of the immigrant farm worker families. I understood their unique problems, especially in terms of their inability to express themselves effectively.

Most of the children were very shy and learned to hide their smiles due to various dental problems. But, what I learned those years before dental school was we are here to encourage them to stay positive and to assure them that there is someone out there who understands their struggles. We are here to give them the added confidence needed to interact freely and smile cheerfully. To this day, I feel like they are my little siblings, and the only difference between them and me is where we grew up.

It's amazing to me to see how much children change — not only aesthetically, but temperamentally, when they are given access to dental care through these nonprofit clinics.

I chose USC because of the passion, love and care I saw afforded to the underprivileged whose dental problems led to a host of other issues.

Being in this unique environment has given me a strong desire to help the disadvantaged through my work and to provide a variety of services, which can have a long-lasting, positive impact upon people.

Lastly, I want to serve as an example to students from any community who feel they are trapped in an environment that blocks them from achieving their goals. You can succeed if you believe and strive to overcome different obstacles.

MEMORIALS & TRIBUTES

MAY 2019–OCTOBER 2019

The following were gifts made in honor of or in tribute to individuals who have made a lasting impact on the USC dental community:

**In Honor of Dr. and Mrs. Ralph
and Sigrid Allman**

Dr. and Mrs. Derick and Yoko Tagawa

In Honor of Ms. Sandra A. Bolivar
Dr. M. Marlene Godoy

In Honor of Dr. Terence E. Donovan
Ms. Laila Donovan Hebert
Dr. Gustavo E. Mahn
Dr. Caroline Nguyen Ngoc

In Honor of Dr. Arman Torbati
Dr. Tae Hyung Kim

**In Memory of
Ms. Mary Moudy Arsenian**
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In Memory of Dr. Gerald DeFreece
The Covington Residents Association
Dr. and Mrs. Derick and Yoko Tagawa

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Ms. Carole Nese
Ms. Ada Plattus
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**In Memory of
Mr. Jeffrey Aaron Weichman**
Dr. Mark A. Collons

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Mr. Ken Young

In Memory of Dr. Robert Ziehm
Dr. M. Marlene Godoy

IN MEMORIAM

MAY 2019–OCTOBER 2019

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DH '76

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DDS '80

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DDS '48

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DDS '43

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DDS '55

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DDS '36

Kirkland H. Malan
DDS '58

Albert V. Markarian
DDS '44

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DDS '52

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DDS '56

John E. Quandt
DDS '71

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DDS '68

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