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## Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[3/1/2024]



### DEAN'S MESSAGE

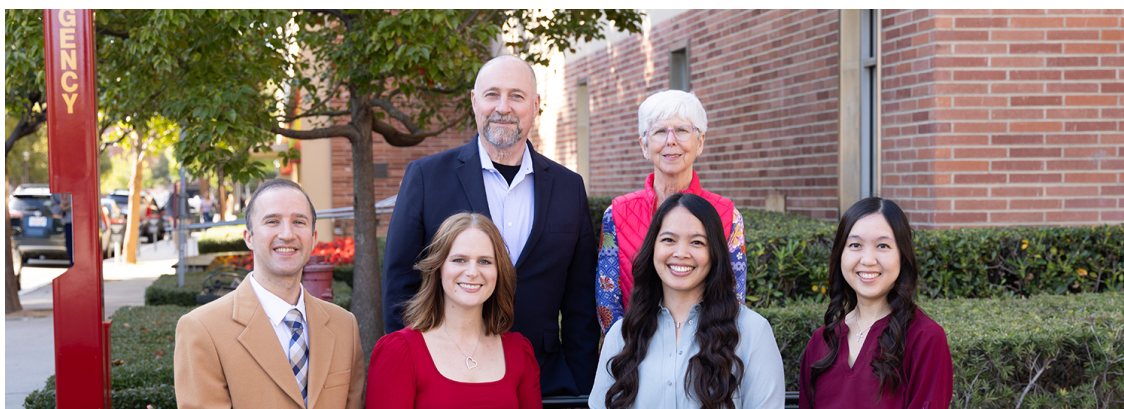
Dear USC Dentistry Community:

As March arrives, it seems spring has officially sprung over the Norris Dental Science Center, with so much activity.

Earlier this week, we received some very exciting news. Ostrow's own Associate Dean of Research **Yang Chai** has been named a National Academy

of Inventors (NAI) senior member, joining 10 others here at USC to comprise this year's incoming class of inventors. The senior membership is meant to recognize remarkable innovation producing technologies that have brought — or aspire to bring — real impact to society at large. Citing Chai's lifelong scientific inquiry into the molecular and cellular mechanisms behind congenital birth defects, the NAI acknowledged Chai's work developing 3-D printed scaffolds seeded with stem cells to regenerate craniofacial and dental tissue for patients as one of the projects earning him this accolade. As far as we can tell, Chai is the first Ostrow faculty member in history to earn such a distinction. This follows on the heels of his being elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 2018. He also made history becoming Ostrow's first appointed University Professor in 2020. Please join me in congratulating Yang on this impressive achievement! You can read more about that at [USC News](#).

Speaking of impressive achievements, one of our students recently applied the knowledge she had gained as a Dr. STAT/IV team member outside the clinic to save an innocent life. **Deena Fatehi** had attended her first Fit4Mom class when another attending infant, Reya, began discreetly eating a fallen tree leaf from the park's playground during socialization time. When Baby Reya started choking on the leaf and turning red, Deena sprang to action and performed lifesaving back blows to the infant to extricate the leaf from Reya's mouth. It's impressive enough that Deena had the knowledge to save this baby's life but add to that the focus, strength and confidence that she exhibited, it's just phenomenal. Please join me in congratulating Deena on this accomplishment and read more about it on [the school's website](#).





## WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION

As I had made reference to before, we did — thanks to the hard work and dedication of **Roseann Mulligan**, **Stella Kim** and the **Community Oral Health Programs staff** — once again earn a Health Resources Service Administration grant to help pay student loans off for a few of our most dedicated faculty members working in the community. In 2019, we were happy to award **Alex Alcaraz** and **Sunny Fereshteh**. This time around, **Elizabeth Brummel**, **Amirali Mirenayat**, **Kristine Parungao** and **Catherine Pham** earned the award. The grant, called the Dental Faculty Loan Repayment Program, is awarded to one or more full-time faculty members (U.S. citizens or permanent residents with a valid work permit and California dental license), who have both a history of working in dental public health and pediatric dentistry as well as a current focus on dental public health and pediatric instruction. The HRSA grant process is incredibly selective, with only a handful of schools receiving the funds nationwide. Please join me in congratulating these four very deserving faculty members on this prestigious honor. You can [read all about their award here](#).

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(continued from above)

We recently finished our Strategic Vision, meant to guide us over the course of the next few years. The Strategic Vision — last updated in 2019, right before the University's leadership change — aligns us with the University's priorities.

Additionally, the aspirational goals set within consider dentistry an ever-evolving field, so the document remains flexible enough to include both the legacy and achievements as well as the challenges that are related to innovation and the continuous development of the understanding of the human body and technology. Finally, the document considers the school's commitment to the community as well as diversity, equity and access for all community members, including students, faculty, staff and patients. I'd like to thank **Mariela Padilla**, who in her role as the new Associate Dean of Strategic Planning and Outcomes Assessment, led this group of school representatives to craft this document that will serve as our north star moving forward the next several years. My appreciation also goes out to **Malcolm Snead** and **Mahvash Navazesh** for their valuable input during this process. If you would like to review the document, you can find it currently on the school's intranet under "Strategic Plan."

Finally, last week, we were honored to be joined by the **Slavkin Family** to celebrate the life, times and myriad contributions of Harold Slavkin who passed away in late December. It was really a touching ceremony, listening to all the stories that everyone had to share about the former dean. I'd like to thank our **Office of External Relations and Student Life** — especially **Christie D.C. Van Paepeghem** and **Kim Eeles** under the leadership of **Michele Cesca** — as well as **Rena Robles** for their work in putting this event together.

With that, I wish you a nice, relaxing weekend.

Fight On!

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