
Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[8/2/2024]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF INTERIM DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community:

As we near the end of the summer trimester and the end of the 2023-2024 academic year, I am happy to share some exciting updates with you all before you take some well-deserved rest and relaxation in anticipation of the fall trimester.

Earlier this summer, we said farewell to our graduating classes of 2024 — the majority of whom began their dental educations in the midst of a once-in-a-lifetime

pandemic — as they turned the page onto a new chapter in their professional lives. Despite the turbulent times they faced, the **DDS and ASPID Class of 2024** is a truly accomplished group of future dental professionals. There's perhaps no better illustration of their academic and clinical strength than their performance on certain key metrics. The cohort boasted an astounding 96 percent on-time graduation rate and, better still, 99.3 percent of them passed the Integrated National Board Dental Examinations on their first attempt. I can't describe how proud I am of them, and I'd be remiss not to thank every single faculty and staff member for their hard work, dedication and support of this group of students. So, thank you all!

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DENTAL EXPLORERS CLASS OF 2024

Last week, our **Office of Admissions** hosted the **Dental Explorers Class of 2024** for our annual summer program introducing traditionally underrepresented populations to the dental profession. Over the course of four days, the group took part in informative lectures (an admissions presentation, a mock PBL session and info sessions on advanced specialty programs) and exciting hands-on experiences, ranging from injection demo and nitrous administration to fabricating a 3-D printed tooth. The group of nearly 40 students ranged in age from 19 to 28 and came from as far away as Chicago. Thirty-three of them were first-generation college students, an exciting data point demonstrating the power of this program to expand the professional horizons for these participants. Historically, it's not been uncommon for some of our Dental Explorers to show up on our actual class rosters after having participated. I'd like to thank all the faculty members who took time to lead these informational sessions and, of course, our Admissions Team (especially **Marlin Banelos** and **Christine Wade**) for all their efforts.

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Assistant Professor and Ostrow Researcher **Dechen Lin** recently had a paper published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, wherein he and his team demonstrated that a particular amino acid, found in shrimp, eggs and beef, could have a connection to the development of oral cancers. It's an exciting paper that could lead to both drug- and diet-based interventions for oral cancer. [Read more about their findings here](#). Congratulations to Dechen and the entire research team for their work on this study!

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A SWEET TREAT

In July, the **Talent Acquisition Team** held a staff appreciation event on the West Lawn, where they treated our hardworking staff to customizable açai bowls from Açaiholic. I'd like to thank our human resources team for showing our community's appreciation to our staff members and add my gratitude too for all the work done to keep the school running, day in and day out. Your efforts do not go unnoticed! (Pictured here: Tina Stafford and George Rosado enjoy açai bowls!)

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Last week, members of our **Building Emergency Response Team (BERT)** held two training sessions brushing up on emergency preparedness techniques in the face of a 7.1 magnitude earthquake. Dental puns aside, I use the term *brush up* quite intentionally as much of the imagined scenario — the sudden interruption of patient care, education and research here at Ostrow — is more than a simple intellectual exercise. The techniques necessary during an earthquake were the same ones we used more than four years ago to successfully continue our mission in the face of COVID-19's abrupt intrusion into our lives. It was heartening to know that our BERT team — and our community at large — had the experience to weather such a dramatic upheaval of life before and would come together again in strength and solidarity to deal with whatever Mother Nature might have in store for us. I'd like to thank all who participated as well as **Jill Yoshimi** and **Mei Tse**, who led the training sessions.

With that, I wish our students the best on their final exams and a restful trimester break.

Fight on!

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD
Interim Dean

Associate Dean of Research

George and MaryLou Boone Chair in Craniofacial Molecular Biology

Director, Center for Craniofacial Molecular Biology

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