
Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of **USC**

[1/31/2025]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF INTERIM DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community,

I'd like to start this edition of the Dean's Community Message with some exciting news. We are thrilled to announce that the Henry Schein Cares Foundation has made a donation of \$500,000 worth of equipment and supplies to Ostrow to help us further our efforts in the realm of digital dentistry education as well as support our work providing treatment to underserved communities

through the **USC Mobile Dental Clinic**. This gift was a long time in the making — and we're thrilled that it has come to fruition. I'd like to thank **Michele Cesca** and the **Office of Development** for their diligence in securing this gift. We will continue nurturing this partnership with the Henry Schein Cares Foundation as well as other corporate, foundational and individual partners to propel us forward, further fortifying our efforts to provide care for underserved populations and cementing our long-standing legacy as one of the nation's top dental educational institutions. Kudos to our development team!

You might have seen that the **Student National Dental Association (SNDA)** has started a donation drive for residents impacted by the catastrophic wildfires that took place earlier this month. The student group has placed bins in the East Lobby to collect donated items such as oral hygiene products, toiletries, non-perishable food, clothing and undergarments, blankets and bedding, and baby and dog food. Donations will go to the FEMA Disaster Recovery Center, the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Evacuation Shelter and the Downey Animal Care Center. I would like to thank SNDA for taking the initiative to care for fellow Angelenos in their time of need. At Ostrow, we strive to impart a deep sense of empathy and responsibility in our students. Seeing efforts like this is not only heart warming but also a real demonstration of that empathy and responsibility in action. For those looking for a way to help, you can drop off donations in those bins until February 10.

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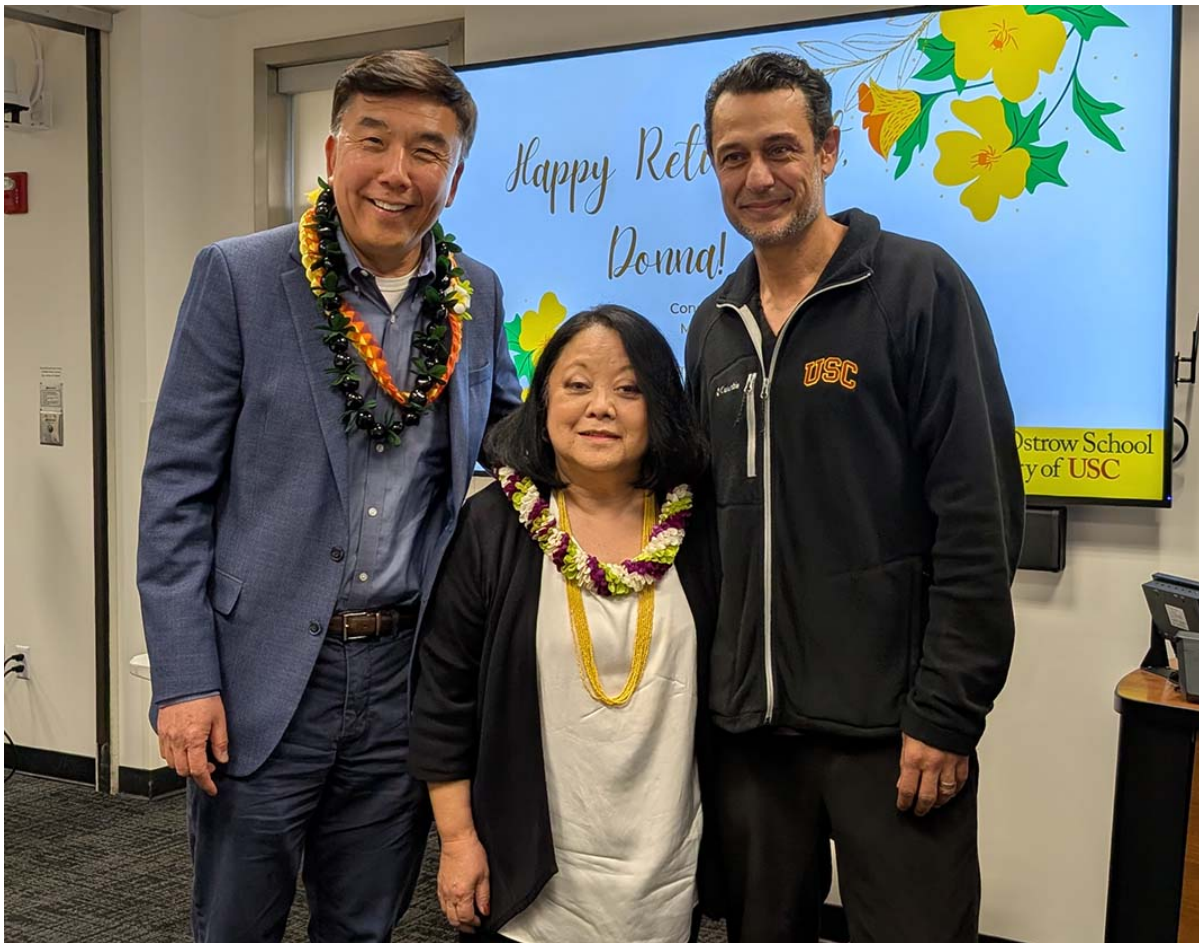
Putting the Unity in Community

Last week, we held a welcome-back luncheon for faculty, staff and students in the Blair Rooms. With the year beginning with the devastating impacts of the wildfires on our community, it felt like a good time to come together, enjoying a Mediterranean style lunch and, most importantly, each other's company. I'd like to thank the **Office of External Relations and Student Life** (in particular, **Christie D.C. Van Paepeghem**) for their hard work in putting this event together. It was great to see so many of our community members drop by.

The latest issue of *TroDent* dropped recently, with a cover story — “The Beating Heart of the Community” — focused on the important work that we do in the

community. From infants and struggling mothers to veterans to special-needs patients to the elderly, local patients of all stripes rely on the services provided by the **Community Oral Health Programs** for their oral healthcare. It's a great collection of patient care vignettes from the front lines in underserved communities, reminding us of the huge impact we often have on the lives of Southern Californians. Additionally, there are features on Friends of Dentistry top scholarship winner **Andrea Woywitka**, who will deliver an address at the upcoming Friends of Dentistry Scholarship Recognition Dinner; four community-focused faculty members — **Elizabeth Brummel**, **Amirali Mirenayat**, **Kristine Parungao** and **Catherine Pham** — who each received Health Resources and Services Administration grants to pay off their student loans; and a feature about a recent graduate (**Deena Fatehi**) who used skills she learned as a Dr. STAT/IV team member to save a baby's life. If you haven't yet seen the issue, you can [flip through the pages here](#). I want to thank **John Hobbs** for doing such a fantastic job in putting together this beautiful edition of *TroDent*.

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Saying Aloha to Donna Castillo

Yesterday, we said farewell to **Donna Castillo**, who served Ostrow for more than 20 years, as she begins her next adventures in retirement. Donna was truly instrumental in helping us grow our research program here at Ostrow. In particular, she oversaw the massive growth of Research Day, helping it grow from an event that took place in one of the Blair Rooms (with maybe 20-30 research posters) to its current incarnation (last year, we had more than 150 research posters, and we've upgraded location size to now fit the USC Galen Center!) We all wish Donna the best as she sets off into the sunset. At her retirement party, Donna treated us to a very moving farewell hula dance, which was a treat. Thank you to all who made it out yesterday.

Speaking of Research Day, this year's event is scheduled for Wednesday, April 9. It's an exciting day rife with opportunities to learn from our fellow colleagues in dentistry as well as biokinesiology and physical therapy and occupational science and occupational therapy. There is an imminent deadline, though, for those interested in presenting a poster and having their abstracts published in the award-winning [The Explorer](#). You must submit your abstracts by no later than Sunday, February 2, and [you can do so here](#). The deadline has already been extended, but time is ticking, so make sure to submit your abstracts today. If you have any questions or problems accessing the submission link, contact **VyVy Nguyen** by [email](#) or phone [(323) 442-1577.]

Finally, this weekend, we will hold the ADEX Dental Examination here at the Norris Dental Science Center. I'd like to wish our **fourth-year DDS students** and **second-year ASPID students** the best of luck. I am sure you have prepared well and will do a terrific job. I'd also like to thank in advance **Anita Tourah, Tami Oshiro** and the **Instrument Management Services (IMS), Dispensary** and **Facilities** staffs for their hard work and diligence in pulling off what I am confident will be a successful exam.

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

Stay safe, and fight on!

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD
Interim Dean

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