

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[1/17/2025]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF INTERIM DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community,

Welcome back to the 2025 Spring Trimester.

For many in our community, the year has begun on a solemn note as the L.A. region experienced unprecedented wildfires last week that decimated entire neighborhoods in Altadena, the Pacific Palisades, Sylmar and their surrounding

environs.

While some may have simply contended with dangerous air pollution, there are others in our community who lost their homes and everything inside them, including their important documents, a lifetime of mementos and even their clothing. The strength of the Trojan Dental Family is that, during these life-changing moments, we all can rely on each other. Any tragedy visited upon one member of the Trojan Dental Family — faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends — is one that is visited upon all of us. We are here to support those members in our community impacted by these wildfires.

Because both UPC and HSC campuses fell outside areas of concern, we have been able to continue operations as usual, beginning our spring trimester without a hiccup. Relying on some of the lessons learned from COVID-19, Ostrow was able to maintain its responsibility to patients and students. Our educational programs, research activities, patient care and community outreach programs continue to operate normally in our school and beyond. We offered faculty, staff and students the flexibility in their schedules to work remotely; moved necessary meetings to virtual settings; and even managed to finalize our self-study in anticipation of the OMFS accreditation later this year. This community continues to inspire me with its ability to take care of its own.

It's during these challenging times — just like during the COVID pandemic — that we can see the strength of our community members in real time. We had faculty members who lost their homes to the fires, who showed up the next day to treat patients, relieving them of unnecessary pain, and staff members who continued to work through medical emergencies. These efforts are certainly laudable, showcasing the ways in which we can find our strength in the bleakest of times.

The fortitude, selflessness and dedication to Ostrow's mission (to both patients and students) demonstrated by our community members is awe-inspiring. In the face of such adversity, it's easy to throw one's hands up in the air and give up, but not for Trojan Family members. Individually, we persevere with strength, resilience and dedication. But together, we are an unstoppable force, pulling together during times of tragedy to support one another. To that end, the University has established the [Trojan Family L.A. Wildfire Relief Fund](#), which will provide Trojans impacted by the fires with basic necessities like groceries

and clothing, support for evacuation expenses and resources to cover unexpected costs like health care and child care. If you would like to donate to the Wildfire Relief Fund, you can [do so here](#). (If you're in need of those support funds, applications open Tuesday). Further info can be found on the [Community Resources for Emergency Response Support](#) page.

For those needing additional emotional support through this tragedy, we encourage you to learn more about the following resources that are available to you:

- The Campus Support & Intervention staff team is available at (213) 740-0411 or uscsupport@usc.edu.
- The WorkWell Center staff is available for emotional support for faculty and staff at (213) 821-0800 or email at workwell@usc.edu.
- Counseling and Mental Health staff at Student Health is available for emotional support for students at (213) 740-9355 (WELL).

While the year might have started off with loss, I am certain that brighter days lay ahead for us. I wish you and your family safety and security as we continue navigating the fallout from the wildfires.

Stay safe, and 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
University Professor of Dentistry, Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative
Medicine, and Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery



Copyright © 2020 Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

925 W. 34th Street DEN 202

Los Angeles, CA 90089

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)