

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[3/21/2025]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF INTERIM DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community:

I'd like to start this message with an exciting announcement regarding Commencement. Ostrow's 2025 Commencement keynote speaker will be **Dana Goldman**, a founding director of the USC Schaeffer Institute for Public Policy and Government Service. Goldman has dedicated his professional life to

helping patients overcome obstacles to healthcare. In fact, it was our mobile dental clinic — and its ongoing work of bridging that gap to healthcare access — that really inspired him to address our graduates at their Commencement ceremony. In addition to his role at USC Schaeffer, Goldman is a University Professor of Public Policy, Pharmacy and Economics; an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine; and a special advisor to USC Provost **Andrew T. Guzman**. You can read more about [Goldman at Ostrow's Commencement Ceremony here](#). As a reminder, this year's [Commencement lineup](#) is a little different. Instead of taking place early Friday morning, USC's main ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, May 15 at 7 p.m. in the L.A. Coliseum. Traditionally, we have held our Senior Awards Dinner that evening. To accommodate the main ceremony's new time slot, we will be holding our Senior Awards Banquet at the Omni Los Angeles a bit earlier in the afternoon, with the awards portion taking place at 2 p.m. and a reception following at 3 p.m. Our satellite ceremony will take place the following day — Friday, May 16 at 4:30 p.m. — at the USC Village Great Lawn. If you have any questions, you can reach out to **Kim Eeles**, who oversees all aspects of Ostrow's Commencement ceremony.



ADEA ANNUAL SESSION AND EXHIBITION

Earlier this month, a group of more than 20 Ostrow students, faculty and staff members attended the 2025 ADEA Annual Session and Exhibition in National Harbor, Md., where they networked, attended educational sessions and even presented research findings. In total, Ostrow had four poster presentations related to academic administration and teaching experiences, facilitated two educational sessions related to sustainability and well-being, hosted a recruitment booth to continue bringing in the nation's best and brightest students and participated in governance and networking activities. Because they were in the area, some members of the group were also treated to a tour of USC's Capital Campus in Washington, D.C. (See picture above) I'd like to thank all who participated in the annual meeting, representing Ostrow so well.



AADOOCR/CADR ANNUAL MEETING AND EXHIBITION

Right afterward, the 2025 American Association for Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Research (AADOOCR)/Canadian Association for Dental Research Annual Meeting and Exhibition took place in New York, featuring oral and poster presentations, hands-on workshops, educational sessions, keynote addresses and symposia. A group of nearly 20 Ostrow students, faculty, postdocs and staff attended the AADOOCR. For the first time, one of our post-doctoral scholars, **Peng Chen**, earned a Hatton Competition award, taking home the first-place prize in the post-doctoral category for his presentation titled, "Suture-Dura Interaction Supports Coronal Suture Regeneration in Craniosynostosis." The study explores the therapeutic potential of using stem cells and biodegradable scaffolding to rescue skull deformity and brain functions in animals with craniosynostosis. This achievement qualifies him to compete this summer at the International Association for Dental Research (IADR) Hatton Competition during the IADR/Pan European Regional

Conference General Session and Exhibition in Barcelona, Spain. Please join me in congratulating Peng (pictured above with staffer **Janice Bea**, Acting Associate Dean of Research **Amy Merrill Brugger** and postdoctoral scholar **Sa Cha**) on this well-deserved award! And thanks once again to those who took time out of their schedules to travel to the Big Apple to represent USC dentistry.



SPRING HAS SPRUNG!

Thank you to the **Persian Dental Student Association** for putting together this beautiful *haftseen* table in the East Lobby to commemorate *Nowruz*, the

Persian New Year and the beginning of spring. The *haftseen* table is generally seen as the centerpiece of the holiday and is populated with at least seven items symbolizing new life and fresh beginnings. Nowruz Mobarak!

Last week, our **Neighborhood Mobile Dental Van Prevention Program** hosted a Give Kids A Smile Day at John Mack Elementary School. These events are so important in the ways that they educate children at an early age of the importance of caring for their oral health and is often one of the first opportunities many of these children receive any type of dental intervention. This year, our group of DDS, master's and predental students — led by **Elizabeth Brummel** — completed nearly 250 dental screenings and provided oral health education and dental kits to almost 300 children. Thank you to all who participated and helped spread the word about great oral healthcare.

Finally, Chief Health Officer **Joyce Galligan** recently sent out an email detailing the nation's recent uptick in measles cases, including L.A.'s first reported case. The measles virus is incredibly contagious. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control report that one can contract measles simply being in a room where someone infected with measles had been. As oral healthcare professionals, we are responsible for screening patients for measles and other aerosol-transmissible diseases before providing treatment. In some cases, one of the initial symptoms of measles can be tiny white spots that appear inside the mouth two to three days after symptoms begin, placing dental professionals in a unique position for early identification. To maintain a healthy facility, we ask that you maintain vigilance surrounding the school's aerosol transmissible disease policy (each patient is asked about cough and fever, and responses documented in axiUm) and, as always, students, faculty and staff experiencing respiratory symptoms should not come to work/school until their symptoms resolve. Let's do our part to keep our community safe and healthy.

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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