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## Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[6/13/2025]



# COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF INTERIM DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community,

After much anticipation and even more preparation, last week we were happy to host the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) site visitors to evaluate both the **Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (OMFS)** and the **General Practice Residency (GPR)** advanced dental education programs. (In 2023, a larger successful CODA site visit for DDS/ASPID and six of our advanced specialty programs took place.) I am pleased to share that both OMFS and GPR did really well. These site visits are

never easy; by design, they are a rigorous examination of our programs, challenging our faculty and staff in ways large and small. I'd like to commend everyone who had a hand in this endeavor, especially OMFS Program Director **Nam Cho** and GPR Program Director **Rebecca Dayanim**. I'd also like to acknowledge **Mark Urata**, **Mahvash Navazesh**, **Mei Tse** and **Sharon Bautista** for their roles in this undertaking. With these CODA site visits in our rearview mirror, we can all breathe just a little bit easier, knowing we did a terrific job showcasing our programs. Of course, we never rest too long, always working to keep our educational programs on point to deliver the best oral healthcare education for our students and residents.

Speaking of students, we recently learned that five of our students have been chosen to receive Dr. Rodolfo Montes Scholarships. The students — **Jocelyn Figueroa**, **Karina Gutierrez**, **Emily Barcenas Perez**, **Kiana Rodriguez** and **Hannah Torres** — have each received scholarships in varying amounts of up to \$23,500. The awards — named after dental alumnus Rodolfo Montes DDS '45 and awarded by the USC Graduate School — are available to Ostrow students as well as those from the USC Gould School of Law, the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the USC School of Cinematic Arts, who have exemplified leadership, or demonstrated a strong potential for leadership within the local community. Each school gets just five nominations, meaning all five of ours (!) were awarded funds. I'd like to thank **Carlos Sanchez** for his work in nominating these outstanding students for this well-deserved award. And, of course, congratulations to our scholarship recipients!

We also have some very exciting news from our **Office of Development**. As you may know, we launched a fundraising campaign awhile back with the goal of raising \$1 million for the **USC Mobile Dental Clinic**, with a primary objective of funding a new Instrument Management System (IMS) unit to allow us to more effectively treat even more underserved patients. Thanks to the generosity of so many donors, we have reached that goal! I would like to thank all who helped support our efforts, including **Mark Tarica** and **Sam Tarica** who donated \$500,000 toward the goal through the Maurice Amado Foundation — named for their great uncle — as well as the **Envista Smile Project** (\$250,000) and **Roseann Mulligan** and **Glenn Clark** (\$100,000) whose donations helped put us over the top. Finally, thank you to **Michele Cesca** and her team for their work in bringing this initiative to fruition! The

new IMS unit should be hitting SoCal's open roads in the future.

In a memo distributed earlier this week to faculty and staff, I announced the appointment of **James “Jimmy” Tom** as the Interim Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs effective July 1 after **Doug Solow** begins his retirement. Jimmy will remain in this position for up to one year while the ongoing search for a permanent Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs continues. Jimmy wears many hats within the school (Department Co-Chair of Diagnostic Sciences, Anesthesia and Emergency Medicine; Chief Compliance Officer; and Director of Anesthesia Selective/Dr. STAT), the university (University Clinical Services [UCS] Peer-Review Subcommittee Chair; Ostrow representative on UCS' Clinical Quality and Patient Safety meetings) and the profession at large (Former American Society of Anesthesiologists Task Force member and Dental Anesthesiology Commissioner for the CODA Board of Commissioners), so I'm incredibly grateful that he has agreed to take on these added responsibilities as well as for the continued support of the **search committee**. Please join me in congratulating Jimmy as he takes the reins. And Doug, thank you once again for your years of service to Ostrow. We are indebted to you for all of your great contributions.

Finally, last week, Ostrow's own **Mehdi Mohammadi** made a guest appearance on *Just Help 1*, the Union Rescue Mission's official podcast. During the 45-minute episode (Mehdi's part, beginning at 11:25, is about 12 minutes long), Mehdi discusses the origins of our decades-long partnership with the faith-based community center for L.A.'s unhoused neighbors. Afterward, the podcast host talks to a URM patient who has USC Dentistry to thank for her new smile. It's a great, uplifting episode bound to make you feel proud to be a member of the Trojan Dental Family. Fight on, Mehdi, and the faculty, students and staff who make us so proud doing this all-too-important work! You can [listen to the entire podcast here](#).

With that, I wish you a relaxing weekend.

Stay safe, and fight on!

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD  
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