
Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[7/25/2025]



DEAN'S MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community,

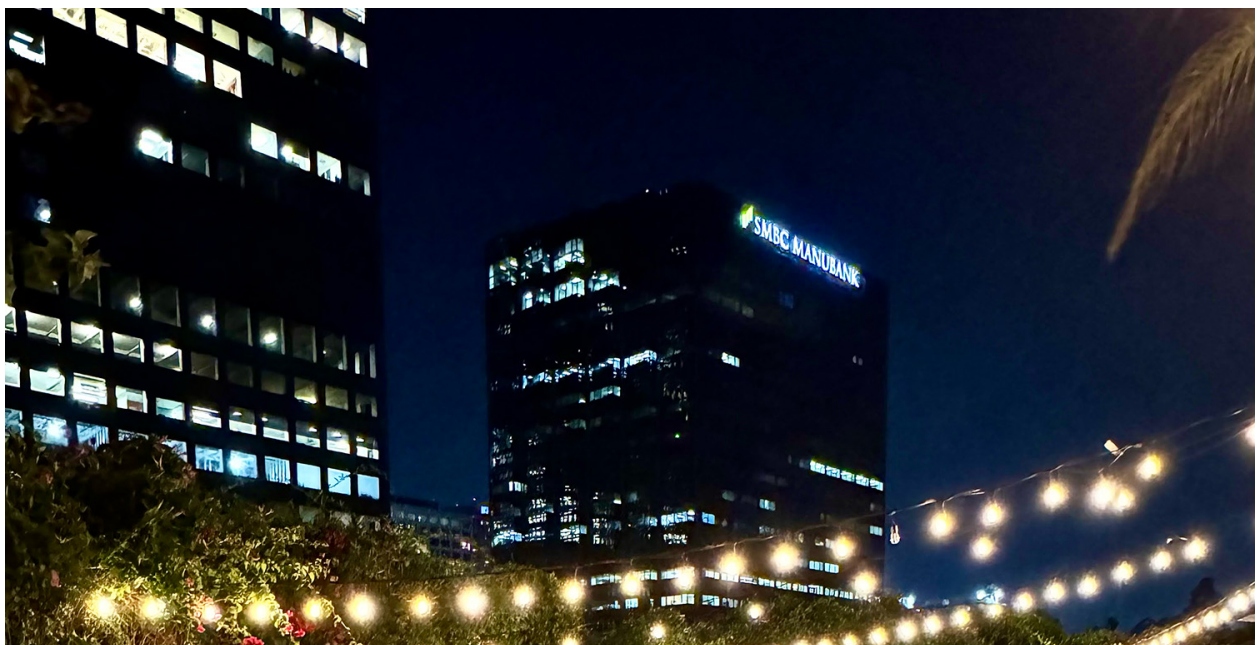
The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research recently released their funding numbers for fiscal year 2024, and Ostrow's research program went from the No. 3 top-funded school by the federal agency to No. 2! It's the highest we've appeared on the list, up from No. 14 in 2018. The new spot on the list is such a testament to the intellectual curiosity, hard work and dedication of our researchers

that we have earned the full faith of the NIDCR in our research endeavors. I hope that this news will continue to energize our researchers, inspiring them to think big, ask the challenging questions and tackle the most vexing of social ills. Rather than feeling complacent that we are doing a great job, we should work even harder to continue our rise through the ranks. We want to grow our translational research program and make significant impacts in improving human health. Our faculty will continue to explore unique opportunities that will allow us to collaborate with others to advance our research programs. Thank you to all the faculty who have worked tirelessly to advance our research programs at Ostrow. Thank you also, **Amy Merrill Brugger**, our Acting Associate Dean of Research for your continued leadership. Keep up the great work, everyone!





This week, we welcomed the 2025 cohort of **Dental Explorers** to Ostrow. Dental Explorers is an annual summer program that gives exceptionally motivated undergrads and bachelor's degree graduates an opportunity for a hands-on introduction to the oral healthcare profession. During the four-day program, nearly 40 students spent time learning all about our program from current students, faculty and staff members. They had the opportunity to learn how to administer injections (on fruit, of course), suture wounds and learn about the aesthetics of teeth with a tooth sketching exercise. They also took tours of both the dental school as well as the USC campus and attended panel discussions with ambassadors and former Dental Explorers who are now students here at Ostrow! This program is really quite popular, with a record 400-plus students applying this year. Some of the Explorers joined us from as far away as Florida, New York and Massachusetts. We even had an Explorer hailing from Ontario, Canada! I'd like to thank all our community members who worked to welcome these inquisitive young people to our school. I'd like to especially acknowledge the **Office of Admissions** (including **Christine Wade** and **Gabriel Zanipatin**) for their efforts every year in teaching these students all about our profession.





Finally, our **DDS Class of 2027 Associated Student Body** hosted a Golden Midnight Gala to celebrate the completion of their preclinical studies as they begin their transition onto the clinic floor. The event, which took place July 11 at the Bonaventure Brewing Company in Downtown Los Angeles, was attended by more than 125 students who enjoyed breathtaking city views from the venue's rooftop, a chef-hosted pasta bar, a live DJ and, of course, some quality time with their peers. I'd like to congratulate our **DDS Class of 2027** on this milestone into clinical education and wish them the best of luck as they continue their studies here at Ostrow. You can see [more photos from the event](#) at the link.

With that, I wish you a relaxing weekend.

Stay safe, and fight on!

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD

Dean

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