
Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[9/12/2025]



DEAN'S MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community,

Welcome back to Ostrow for the Fall 2025 Trimester. I hope everyone got an opportunity to take some much-deserved time during our trimester break to relax, reenergize and refresh for the exciting trimester ahead. Here's a little of

what you might've missed since my last missive.

The school has been abuzz recently with a number of orientation activities meant to prepare the **DDS Class of 2029** to begin their dental school journey here at the Norris Dental Science Center. In late August, we welcomed the new cohort during Orientation Week. While it might seem straightforward enough to orient new students, it does take a great deal of effort from everyone — faculty, staff and students, alike. From some true milestones like being fitted for their first set of scrubs and receiving their equipment/materials for their first trimester to more general trainings and orientation sessions, there's a lot to take in for our students that first week. I'd like to thank all the individuals who took time to truly make these new Trojan Dental Family Members feel welcome, including the **Office of Admissions** (especially **Christine Wade**), the **Office of Academic Affairs** (particularly **Jessica Ostroff**), the **Office of Technology Services**, the **Office of Student Life and Well-Being** (particularly **Kim Eeles** and **Vianca Marquez**), the faculty members who helped begin some initial instruction (**Joyce Galligan**, **Mahvash Navazesh** and **Jin-Ho Phark**) and the **Operations Team**. We couldn't have done it without the collective effort of everyone who participated in Orientation Week.

This past weekend, the new **DDS Class of 2029** was joined by the **ASPID Class of 2027** for the annual White Coat Ceremony, taking place at Bovard Auditorium. It was such a terrific event — so terrific, in fact, that we actually exceeded capacity for the first time in recent history. We were joined by three excellent speakers — ASB Executive President **Asha Green** DDS '26, Perio Resident **Sabrina Alterman** DDS '24 and Interim Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs **Jimmy Tom**, who delivered some really inspiring remarks. Then, our class was “coated” by faculty volunteers **Narine Danielian**, **Mahvash Navazesh**, **Jin-Ho Phark**, **Elham Radan** and **Jimmy Tom**. You might not know, but we recently started having faculty members help “coat” students on stage — in small groups — giving family, friends and loved ones a better opportunity to cheer on their loved ones. Names are read individually — this year by **Anita Tourah** (DDS) and **Corey Berry** (ASPID) — so that each student can truly revel in the moment. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the efforts of our **Student Ambassadors**, **Office of Admissions** and **Office of External**

Relations as well. It really does take a village and a lot of effort to host this lovely evening. Thank you to all who participated behind the scenes, to those who attended and, most importantly, congratulations to our **ASPID Class of 2027** and our **DDS Class of 2029** for achieving this milestone. You can get to know a little more about [class demographics here](#).



WELCOMING THE NEW CLASS

Dean Yang Chai and the DDS Class of 2029 and the ASPID Class of 2027 pose for the annual class photo in front of Bovard Auditorium before the White Coat Ceremony begins. Would you like to see more pictures from the event?

[Click here](#).

The festivities didn't stop there, though. During the first week of classes, the **Office of Student Life** partnered with **FIGS** to hold a "welcome back" pop-up event for all students, featuring ice-cold slushies (perfect for the summery weather!), and partnered with the **Ostrow Business Club** to bring a Dental Success Symposium to our students. The event was meant to give our students a better understanding of the business environment behind oral healthcare. Guest presenters included dental entrepreneur, author and speaker **Mark Costes** and nationally recognized dentist, humanitarian and author **Jay Grossman** and was sponsored by the Los Angeles Dental Society, Bank of America and Henry Schein. Thank you to both the Office of Student Life as well as the Ostrow Business Club for holding these events!

In other news, we hosted a "Meet the Dean" event on Thursday, September 4, at the private residence of Friends of Dentistry boardmember **Ali Modarres** and his spouse **Julie Modarres**. The event offered a perfect opportunity to re-introduce myself to the alumni community and share my vision for the school — emphasizing innovation; collaboration; and continued excellence in dental education, patient care, research and community outreach efforts. It was a great evening, with lots of thought-provoking discussion. I'd like to thank the Modarreses for their warmth and hospitality, willingly opening their beautiful home up to us for this intimate gathering. I would also like to thank the **Friends of Dentistry boardmembers** for their help and ongoing support in holding these events. Finally, I'd like to thank those who attended as well as the **Office of Development** for their efforts in hosting this successful event.

Finally, we got some exciting news from our dental clinic at the Union Rescue Mission. Their work was recently shared — as a cover story, no less! — in their *Lighting the Way* newsletter. Inside, there's a story about a senior who received a new smile thanks to the dental team at Union Rescue Mission plus a few other articles detailing all the work that we do to ensure our city's unhoused residents — from children to seniors — have access to oral healthcare. I am so proud to read about the success of our team. Congratulations to **Mehdi**

Mohammadi as well as the entire **URM Team** (faculty, students and staff) for doing such inspiring work that it lands on the cover of a newsletter! You can [read all about it here](#).

With that, I wish you a relaxing weekend.

Stay safe, and fight on!

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD

Dean

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