
Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[11/14/2025]



DEAN'S MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community,

It is with great excitement that I announce we were recently awarded a \$4.3-million, five-year multi-institutional grant from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research to continue funding the Temporomandibular Disorder Collaborative for Improving Patient-Centered Translational Research (TMD IMPACT). We were first awarded a planning grant back in 2023 — along with eight other research groups from across the nation — to develop an interdisciplinary

research collaborative that would improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of TMD by coordinating resources, data and expertise. From that initial group, just three were selected to proceed with the next stage funding, including Ostrow! The study's co-PIs are **Glenn Clark** and **Jianfu Chen**, with the two co-investigators being **Anette Vistoso** and myself. As part of the data collection for this project, we will be using some new AI technology, developed here at Ostrow, that assists oral healthcare providers before, during and after treatment to ensure they are zeroing in on the correct diagnosis, hopefully making misdiagnosis a thing of the past. You will be able to read more about that project in the upcoming issue of *TroDent*. In the meantime, please join me in congratulating the researchers involved!

We also recently received some exciting news concerning **USC Orthodontics**. After completing a fundraising campaign begun a few years ago and led by ortho alumni **Ralph Allman** and **Glenn Sameshima** and managed by the **Office of Development**, we have raised the necessary funds — \$2 million in total — to create the Dr. Sakae Tanaka Graduate Orthodontic Endowed Clinical Professorship. The new professorship will provide ongoing support for a new clinic director position in the Advanced Orthodontics Specialty program, which will ensure that USC Orthodontics will continue to produce the top clinical orthodontists in the world. For those unfamiliar, Sakae Tanaka (or “Dr. T,” as he was affectionately known) was a legend in USC Orthodontics. He completed his advanced orthodontics training at USC in 1955 and stayed on to serve as a full-time faculty member, working alongside the late Harry Dougherty, who chaired the USC Orthodontics department for many years. Generation after generation of orthodontists received their training under Tanaka, who died in 2022. It is fitting that we’ve found a way to honor him all these years later with a permanent professorship, in some ways carrying on his legacy here at Ostrow forever. Thank you to all of our friends — particularly those in the orthodontics alumni community — for helping us bring this endeavor to fruition! Congrats to the Office of Development and USC Orthodontics on this accomplishment.

In late October, the **Office of Admissions** held our annual ASPID interviews, complete with problem-based learning sessions and a bench exam, so that we could ensure that we select the best and brightest students to fill the incoming **ASPID Class of 2028**. This comprehensive weekend-long event requires a great amount of effort, with the **Office of Admissions** (particularly **Corey Berry**, who oversaw the

process), the **Office of Operations**

Management (Facilities, Dispensary, Instrument Management Systems) and several faculty and students stepping in to make sure the events were successful. Thank you to all who took the time to help with this initiative.

You might have seen that the Good Neighbors Campaign (GNC) was kicked off earlier this week at Ostrow with a [Zoom meeting](#) for faculty and staff. Presenting at the meeting was Kaelynn Perez, a first-generation USC freshman, who is one of the inspiring GNC benefactors. She was joined by GNC Executive Director Carolina Castillo, who spoke about the campaign, its mission and how USC faculty and staff can continue making a difference in the lives of the underserved living in the communities around USC. Thank you to **Kim Austin** and **Corey Berry** for hosting this kick-off session, and thanks to all who joined. If you'd like to participate in the campaign, you can visit the USC [Good Neighbors Campaign website](#) for more information.

Last week, Ostrow's **Operations Management Team** launched their [official intranet website](#). (It's the second such site for a department at Ostrow, with the [Human Resources site](#) having launched prior.) The newest site offers Ostrow community members a secure place (you must log in using your @ostrow.usc.edu email address) to submit service orders, request renovation projects, access lost and found as well as many other services. There are also sections to learn more about the **Instrument Management Services** and **Dispensary Services teams** as well as a place to familiarize yourselves with emergency protocols. I encourage you to take a look at this site when you have a moment. I would like to thank the Operations staff leaders who had a hand in facilitating the buildout of this site — **Marshall Miller-Barber, Chris Camacho, Tami Oshiro, Tom Sirikulbut, Mei Tse** — all under the leadership of **Jill Yoshimi**. Thank you all for your hard work in bringing this project to fruition.

As we near the end of the trimester, we all know that life can get incredibly hectic. Final exams. Fitting in last-minute procedures before the holidays. Travel home. Not to mention that some can feel down around the holidays, particularly if they have lost loved ones or simply can't travel to see their families. USC is offering students a chance to prioritize their mental health and well-being *now*, before the maelstrom of the end of the trimester with the [My Mental Health Assessment tool](#). Students simply fill out a mental health assessment questionnaire. Based on their responses

...take a mental health assessment questionnaire. Based on their responses, students can receive individualized mental health recommendations, access to free mental health services and be entered into a raffle for an Amazon e-gift card. It's a great way to ensure you are prioritizing your health and well-being and living a healthy school-life balance. It's also the perfect way to practice self-care. You can also learn more here about the [My Mental Health Initiative](#).

Finally, you might have seen a collection box in the East Lobby for oral hygiene kits to be donated to our city's unhoused residents. The initiative represents the efforts of a number of student clubs here at Ostrow, including the **Armenian Dental Student Association**, the **Chinese Dental Student Association**, the **Korean Dental Student Association**, the **Persian Dental Student Association**, **Smile USC** and the **Vietnamese Dental Student Association**. Most-needed items are unopened toothbrushes, toothpastes, mouthwashes and floss. You can make donations anytime between now and December 1. Thank you to the student groups spearheading this effort. You make us proud!

With that, I wish you a nice, relaxing weekend!

Stay safe, and fight on!

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Dean

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