

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[1/16/2026]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Family,

Welcome back to Ostrow for the Spring 2026 Trimester! I truly hope you had a restful and restorative winter break. We've got a lot to look forward to as we begin a brand-new trimester, which will culminate in just a handful of months with the graduation and celebration of the **Class of 2026**.

Speaking of the Class of 2026, we recently held — or, in some cases, will so imminently — mock ADEX examinations for our fourth-year DDS and second-year ASPID students to better prepare them for their actual ADEX exams coming later this spring. The mock exams, which took place earlier this month, were organized and administered by **Anita Tourah, Theresa Laksmana** and **Yaara Berdan**. Several faculty members helped (or will help in the near future) with the evaluation and feedback process, including **Sarah Alsaleh, Kim Austin, Emad Bassali, Nissim Benbassat, Cristy Boehm, Kuan-Ming Chiu, Joanna Chao, David Datu, Nazanin Forghani, Pedro Gonzalez, Margaret Hou, Stuart Lee, Waad Mzain, Naomi Nguyen, Lisa Oshiro, Mirali Pandya, Ivan Pinto, Lisa Popkoff, Jordi Llana Prats, Jenny Son** and **Ahn Tran**. Additionally, staff members from the **Facilities, Dispensary** and **Instrument Management System teams** were on-hand to assist with the mock exams. Thank you to all who helped pitch in to make these mock exams a success.

Before I move on from the Class of 2026: Students, there is still an opportunity for members of the **DDS Class of 2026** and the **ASPID Class of 2026** to gain valuable experience, taking part in our Community Clinics Selective program. The Community Clinics Selective program gives our students the chance to provide oral healthcare to patients outside the school's clinics. At the community clinics, fourth-year DDS and second-year ASPID students (only) can finely tune their skills and provide comprehensive care. The experience, which [you can read about here](#), places students in real-world community settings where their skills are tested, their confidence is built and their commitment to serving others is affirmed. There will be two upcoming information sessions for interested students — one on Tuesday, January 20 in Room 160A (with pizza!) and another on Wednesday, January 21 on Zoom. [You can register here](#) for one of these information sessions. You can also reach out to [Daniel Romo](#) or [Kathy Polanco](#) to gather more information. Time is of the essence, so make sure to take action right away.

As we finished up last year, the **USC Mobile Dental Clinic** completed a clinic event in Lindsay, California, an agricultural community located in Central California that is home to a predominantly Mexican/Latino agricultural worker population. Working in partnership with Migrant Education Region 24, the Mobile Clinic provided free

comprehensive care — radiographs, cleanings, restorations, extractions, pulpotomies and fluoride treatments — to children and young adults, aged 5 to 20. In all, the students and faculty completed 269 appointments and 1,412 procedures — all during periods of heavy rain and cold temperatures. I'd like to thank the faculty, staff and students who participated in this week-long clinic. Your dedication to treating underserved patients inspires us — all year-round!

Finally, over the holiday break, the Norris Dental Science Center was abuzz with plenty of activity, including much-needed infrastructural upgrades. I would like to thank **Jill Yoshimi**, **Marshell Miller-Barber** and their team for their efforts throughout the break, remaining onsite to assist workers and ensure the facility upgrades went off without a hitch.

With that, I wish you all a great Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend.

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD

Dean

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