

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[1/30/2026]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Family:

Late last year, we received some exciting news from the NIDCR-NIH about Ostrow's ongoing work with the TMD Collaborative for Improving Patient-Centered Translational Research (TMD-IMPACT). Ostrow researchers have been [awarded a prestigious \\$4.3-million grant](#) to conduct Broader Evaluation of TMD Treatment Efficacy and Response (BETTER TMD). This study picks up where our researchers

left off with [TMD IMPACT](#) to translate research about temporomandibular joint disorders into even more effective interventions to improve patient outcomes. As part of the grant, our researchers will follow 5,000 patients over time to better understand which TMD treatments are the most efficacious for whom — and why? The research team, led by **Jianfu Chen**, **Glenn Clark**, **Anette Vistoso**, **myself** and others, will use the new AI-powered SmartNote system to collect this data. With AI, the more data we have, the more accurate and effective TMD diagnoses, treatments and outcomes are likely to be. You can [learn more about the SmartNote app here](#). I am very proud of the work that our scientific investigators have done to bring this grant to fruition and improve our profession’s knowledge base surrounding TMD. Congratulations to all involved!

Speaking of **Jianfu “Jeff” Chen**, we recently received word that his promotion to Professor with tenure has been approved by the President. Jeff joined us as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in 2017. A leading authority on neural development and related disorders, Jeff has branched off into other research areas since joining our faculty, including studying how skull-brain interactions maintain cranial suture patency; the cellular mechanisms of craniosynostosis; temporomandibular joint disorders; craniofacial lymphatic vasculature in regeneration and pain. His discoveries help lay the foundation for stem cell-based therapeutic interventions that will one day lead to improvements in human health. Jeff is currently the principal investigator of five NIH-funded grants as well as co-investigator on two more. In 2020, he was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure. A year later, he was appointed to the position of Director of the Craniofacial Biology PhD Program, which has since become the nation’s largest craniofacial biology program. Additionally, he took on the appointment of Interim Associate Director for the Center for Craniofacial Molecular Biology in 2024. Jeff serves as a great example of the extraordinary faculty that we are proud to have here at Ostrow. Please join me in congratulating him on this much-deserved promotion.





IT'S A MATCH!

Last week, we celebrated the members of our **ASPID/DDS Class of 2026** who successfully matched with their preferred advanced dental education programs. The **Office of Student Life** helped organize a photo opportunity for students to share with our community where they intend to pursue their advanced dental educations. Congratulations to all who matched, and thank you to those who participated as well as the Office of Student Life (especially **Vianca Marquez**) for their efforts in coordinating this event acknowledging our students' success.

Ostrow's **Office of Student Life** will be hosting its annual Business Symposium on

Saturday, February 7 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Geared toward current students, the conference brings together experts from a variety of fields to better prepare students for the business, financial and legal aspects of becoming an oral healthcare

for the business, financial and legal aspects of becoming an oral healthcare professional. This year, we will be joined by special guests **Jennifer Haddad DDS '08**; **Narges Mirjalili DDS '24** and **Ali Oromchian JD, LLM** and **David Rice DDS**. Topics to be covered include branding for the modern dentist, the associate-to-owner journey, and legal tips for success with employment agreements. The event will also include breakfast, lunch, raffles, a vendor fair and plenty of networking opportunities. If you're interested in attending, please [register here](#). In conjunction with the Business Symposium, the Office of Student Life will also host a special course for alumni looking to retire. *Mastering Practice Transition Success: Avoid HR Pitfalls, Strengthen Your Financial Future and Prepare for a Smooth Practice Sale* will address the real-world issues that practice owners face as they begin to think seriously about a future transition. If you are interested in attending the course and meeting some of our students and recent alumni (who attended the Business Symposium), [sign up here](#). Thank you to the Office of Student Life for putting together these events as well as the **Century Club Alumni Association**, **Dental and Medical Counsel**, **FIGS** and **Patterson Companies Inc.** for their participation as event sponsors.

Finally, Ostrow's Research Day is scheduled for April 8, 2026 at the USC Hotel. This is the largest such event dedicated to scientific inquiry and discovery at USC. While we have a few months yet before the actual event, the deadline for abstract submissions is upon us. Make sure that you [submit your abstracts here](#) no later than February 1. And, as a reminder, the clinics will be closed during the afternoon of April 8, which should allow for many in our community to attend. If you have any questions about abstract submission, reach out to **Stephanie Jones** at sjones99@usc.edu.

With that, I wish you a great weekend. Fight on!

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD

Dean

G. Donald and Marian James Montgomery Professor of Dentistry

University Professor of Dentistry, Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, and

University Professor of Dentistry, Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, and
Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery



Copyright © 2020 Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

925 W. 34th Street DEN 202

Los Angeles, CA 90089

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)