
Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[2/13/2026]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Family,

Last week, it was announced that **Beong-Soo Kim** would become the 13th President of USC! We are tremendously proud and excited to work with President Kim as he takes on this new position. As Interim President, Beong

has been incredibly attentive and thoughtful, taking time to make special appearances at a few of our events already and meeting with our faculty. As most of you know, President Kim is laser-focused on striving toward academic excellence — an initiative we are more than happy to align ourselves with.

To do that, though, it is essential that we share a clear understanding of where we are headed as an oral healthcare educational institution and how we intend to get there. We recently created a **Strategic Initiatives Taskforce** to help us spearhead these efforts. Led by **Mariela Padilla**, the Taskforce is composed of **Yaara Berdan, Mina Habibian, Jin-Ho Phark, Jian Xu** and **Jill Yoshimi**. The Taskforce is starting its work to gather broad input from the entire Ostrow community on our Strategic Initiatives, which will help us cultivate our vision at Ostrow, aligning our priorities, resources and actions in support of a shared mission. In striving toward these goals, it is also important that we can measure our progress and assess our accomplishments.

We need your help, though. Starting later this month, we will begin hosting a series of validation sessions, inviting members of our academic community to participate. Your perspectives and insights are vital to ensuring that these Strategic Initiatives are meaningful to our community, relevant and reflective of our shared goals. We encourage your participation and engagement.

Several session dates and times (listed below) are being offered to accommodate varied schedules. Additional dates will be added as soon as they become available. Please [register here](#) for one of the following upcoming sessions:

- Tuesday 2/17 5-6 p.m. (Zoom)
- Wednesday 2/18 12-1p.m. (Zoom)
- Wednesday 2/25 7-8 a.m. (Zoom)
- Monday 3/2 6-7 p.m. (Zoom)

- Tuesday 3/3 12-1 p.m. (Zoom)
- Thursday 3/10 12-1 pm (In-Person)

Thank you in advance for your participation and, once again, thank you to our Strategic Initiatives Taskforce for their efforts.

In other news, we recently held this year's first ADEX Dental Exams (January 30-February 1) for our **DDS/ASPID Class of 2026** at the Norris Dental Science Center. Hosting these exams every year is no easy feat — especially in a way that so often garners compliments from ADEX representatives about how clean, organized and detail-oriented our school is. I'd like to thank **Anita Tourah** for her extensive efforts in making sure our students were prepared for the exam, **Tami Oshiro** for helping facilitate the exam and **Jill Yoshimi** for her leadership over several teams whose help is essential to the administration of a successful exam: **Facilities (Silvestre Guzman and Jonathan Lopez)**, **Dispensary (Vivian Amaya and Ramon Solano)** and the **Instrument Management Services Team**. I'd also like to acknowledge the efforts of our **Student Runners**, who transported completed typodonts to the ADEX reps. Thank you all for your time and hard work. The next scheduled ADEX exam is February 28 and March 1.

Ostrow's **Office of Continuing Education** recently released its latest episode of the podcast *Louped In*, available where you catch all your podcasts. The episode, "Passion and Professionalism," features **Diane Melrose**, who shares with host **Alon Frydman** her origin story (she first was inspired to oral healthcare as a 9-year-old, watching her father deal with tooth loss) and early-career adventures, the importance of interpersonal skills in the oral healthcare field and some details about the upcoming Ruth Ragland Symposium, taking place Saturday, March 14, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. These discussions are always so interesting, and I congratulate Alon on another great episode. You can [catch the episode here](#). If you'd like more information about the Ruth Ragland Symposium, please [visit here](#) and to register, visit the [Continuing Education page](#) on our website.

Finally, you might have seen the latest issue of *TroDent* is out now. The issue's cover story commemorates the 50th anniversary of Ostrow's premier support group, the **Friends of Dentistry**, whose impact over the years has been felt across the school. We are so incredibly grateful for the continued assistance and guidance provided by our alumni support groups, including the Friends of Dentistry (and, of course, the **Century Club Alumni Association**). Inside, there are features about the introduction of AI into various aspects of our curriculum, a story about Ostrow's Community Clinics Selective Program (formerly known as the Community-Based Clinical Education Program) as well as a patient-care success story about the save-a-tooth kits that every DPS officer now carries with them. Additionally, there's plenty of news items spanning the entire calendar year of 2026, an Ostrow's Got Talent about beach volleyball player/dental student **Luciano Jimenez** and "Five Things" about our new IMS unit, Uncle Maurice, set to hit streets later this year. I'd like to thank the **Office of Communications** (especially **John Hobbs**) for the work put into this issue. You can find physical copies at distribution points around the school, but if you'd like to see the digital version, [it's located here](#).

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

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD

Dean

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