

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[3/27/2026]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Community,

Earlier this week, the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) held its annual Session and Exhibition in Montréal, Canada. ADEA's annual session is a great opportunity to network with colleagues, learn about the latest in oral health education and brush up on professional skills. Ostrow had a delegation in attendance,

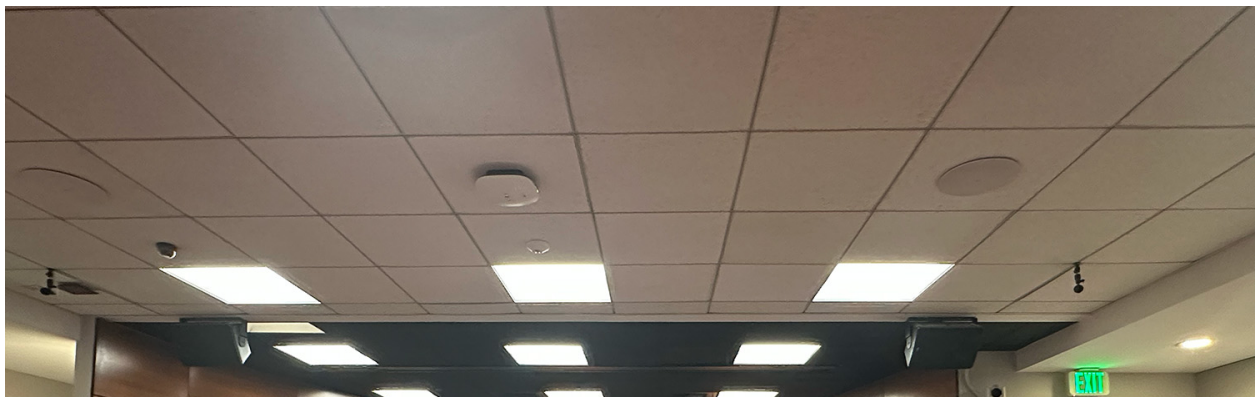
consisting of faculty members **Emad Bassali, Nasrin Bahari Chopiuk, Sibel Dincer, Theresia Laksmana, Hannah Schilperoort** and **Arezou Shahbazi**; staff member **Corey Berry**; and students **Nicholas Hy, Jasmine Punn, Nadine Shaker** and **Nathan Yousefi** (see group shot below). While at the conference, Theresia successfully completed the ADEA Leadership Program, Hannah presented two research posters (“Advancing Information Literacy and Citation Accuracy in the Age of AI” and “Bridging Health Equity Pathways: Empowering Student Research to Address Oral Health Disparities”), and Nasrin and Arezou co-authored and presented “Calibrating Excellence: The Effective Use of Rubrics” as part of a seminar called “Breaking Barriers to Transparent Assessments.” Congratulations goes to Nasrin and Arezou, who earned a 2026 Thomas Nowlin III Award for Outstanding Performance by a Section for their work with ADEA’s Integrated Clinical Applied Biomedical Sciences Section. This section, formerly known as the ADEA Section on Oral Biology, aims to provide a forum to address the integration of the basic sciences across the entire dental curriculum. Nasrin was named section councilor (after having recently completed her three-year term as chair), and Arezou took the position of chair (after a term as chair-elect). Thank you to all who attended and for representing Ostrow so well!





L-R: Nicholas Hy, Nasrin Bahari Chopiuk, Nadine Shaker, Arezou Shahbazi, Nathan Yousefi, Jasmine Punn, Hannah Schilperoort, Emad Bassali and Corey Berry (Not pictured: Sibel Dincer and Theresia Laksmana)

In other news, we were recently notified by USC's Office of Research and Innovation (OORI) that an Ostrow research proposal has received an OORI Research Catalyst Program award. The research project, led by principal investigator **Dechen Lin**, with co-principal investigators **Parish Sedghizadeh** and **Anette Vistoso**, aims to look at the effects of topical imiquimod on organoids derived from a patient's own cells to define how *TLR7* activation reverses oral dysplasia. It's truly exciting work that could one day help us establish an individualized chemoprevention for patients living with oral leukoplakia. Early results from a prospective clinical trial have already shown rapid lesion regression, durable responses and excellent tolerability. This is an exciting update that shows the confidence and enthusiasm that our fellow USC researchers have in Ostrow's research team and its endeavors. Please join me in congratulating Dechen, Parish and Anette!





FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Ostrow's chapter of the **Student National Dental Association (SNDA)** recently held its first Impressions Day since 2019. The one-day outreach event is part of a nationwide SNDA initiative to encourage and prepare underrepresented undergraduate students to pursue careers in oral healthcare. At Ostrow, we were proud to welcome 30 attendees, who traveled to us from across the Golden State as well as from more distant locations, including Georgia, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Washington D.C. The students received plenty of hands-on experiences (periodontal scaling in the Sim Lab and taking alginate impressions) as well as insight about working in oral healthcare from Ostrow alumni (**Christopher Acone, Mia Harrison** and **Abiola Oladele**). Thank you to the SNDA — particularly student leadership **Ezinne Abba, Abisola Atilola** and **Kayla Thompson** as well as advisors **Kim Austin, Corey Berry** and **Joni Forge** — and event sponsors **Angel City Dental Society, Bootcamp.com, the California Dental Association** and the **Los Angeles Dental Society** for their participation in Impressions Day. Finally, I'd like to thank our alumni panel representatives for sharing your own journey with our participants and the **student volunteers** who helped facilitate the day's events.



CELEBRATING NOWRUZ

Last week, the **Persian Student Dental Association** crafted a *haft-sin* table and displayed it in our East Lobby. For those of you who do not know, the *haft-sin* is an arrangement of seven items, symbolizing rebirth, renewal and harmony with nature, created for Nowruz, the Persian New Year. Nowruz coincides with the spring equinox and is celebrated in more than 20 countries. This year, a sign on the table reminds us that light endures even during the darkest of times. Thank you to the PSDA for their work on this table, sharing a bit of their culture with the rest of us.

With that, I wish you a nice relaxing 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
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](#)
