

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[6/12/2026]



COMMUNITY MESSAGE

FROM THE DESK OF DEAN YANG CHAI

Dear Trojan Dental Family,

We were recently notified that five **DDS Class of 2027** students were selected for the 2026 Dr. Rodolfo Montes Memorial Scholarship. Awarded by the USC Graduate School, the scholarship was established years ago by Ostrow alumnus Rodolfo Montes and meant to honor the self-made professional. To be eligible, full-time graduate students must possess a demonstrated need for financial assistance,

outstanding academic records and a history of community involvement. Students are nominated by their programs or schools. I'd like to thank faculty members **Kim Austin, Sunny Fereshteh** and **Ramon Roges** as well as staff member **Kim Eeles** for their work providing nomination materials on behalf of these deserving students to the selection committee. Please join me in congratulating **Lior Colina, Bryan Fedchun, Jose Pineda II, Liliana Ramos** and **Kayla Thompson**, who were awarded scholarships ranging from \$3,250 to \$15,000 to apply toward their educational costs. Congratulations, and fight on to all our Montes scholarship recipients!

In other good news, Professor **Jianfu “Jeff” Chen** and his research team, including doctoral student **Yang Shu**, had a study published recently in the journal *Nature Communications*. The article details the impact of synovial fluid drainage on temporomandibular joint disorders. Using a genetically modified mouse model, the researchers were able to demonstrate that the failure to properly drain synovial fluid (the lubricating fluid located in one's moveable joints) can lead to dysfunction in the lymphatic system, which drives TMJ arthritis, bone loss and pain. The discovery could lead to a new treatment paradigm for TMD treatment, where a clinician specifically targets the lymphatic system to lessen joint pain and degeneration. You can [read more about their discovery here](#). Congratulations to Jeff and Yang on this prestigious publication!

Finally, the 2028 Olympic/Paralympic Games will be taking place here in Los Angeles, with events scheduled on the University Park Campus. In fact, USC has granted exclusive usage rights to the Olympics, which could impact building access from July 12, 2028 through September 2, 2028. While it might seem far off in time, we are already hard at work, drawing up plans to ensure the least amount of disruption to class, clinic and lab schedules. We are looking at all options, including modifying clinical schedules, utilizing trimester and winter breaks and potentially offering night and weekend clinics. With input from our program directors and senior leadership members, our goal is to maintain continuity in didactic, clinical and research education while adapting to the unique circumstances surrounding the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We will share more information as the dates draw nearer, but we wanted to make sure this was on your radar. Thank you to **Jill Yoshimi and her team** for getting ahead of this challenge.

With that, I wish you a nice relaxing weekend.

Fight On!

Yang Chai, DDS, PhD

Dean

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