

THE COMPASS

Charting
New Directions
for the
University of
Connecticut
School of
Dental
Medicine

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Take This Job, and Love It!

by Tinashe Chapfika, D'09

From July 21 to July 26, 2006, I had the pleasure in attending the 34th Annual Student National Dental Association (SNDA) Conference in Nashville. Since 1970, the SNDA has recognized and addressed concerns of underrepresented minority dental students, as an adjunct to the National Dental Association. Thanks to the determined students at Meharry Medical College, SNDA is the largest minority student dental organization in the US. Its mission remains: recruitment, retention, and professional transition of underrepresented minorities into dentistry. As UConn's representative, the conference encouraged me to explore further my role as a dental professional on a national, as well as a global, perspective and to return here to encourage our members at UConn.

There were business seminars for our professional development, table clinics and scrapbook competitions. I also presented a chapter report on UConn's SNDA progress, and we were granted the "Smallest Chapter Award" at the Awards/Induction Ceremony! With the conference location being in Nashville, the "Music City," we had our fair share of fun.

The most memorable event was the Rites of Passage Ceremony featuring former US Secretary of Health and Human Services/ Founding Dean of Morehouse School of Medicine, Dr. Louis Sullivan. Dressed in traditional African attire, SNDA delegates attended this event that focused on graduating SNDA members, and also welcomed them into our "parent" organization, the National Dental Association (NDA). Revering our diverse, yet common global African history and experiences, the theme challenged us to consider our opportunities and honor the sacrifices those before us



(R to L) Dr. Arteaga, Tinashe Chapfika DSII, and Dr. Hodge attend the National Dental Association (NDA) Convention.

have made. As dental students and professionals we are role models in the community. The SNDA graduates are committed to encouraging and mentoring the next generation of dentists. It is with this in mind that the SNDA looks toward a promising future.

After surviving my first year at UConn, attending the SNDA conference was rewarding and highly motivating. I express my utmost gratitude to the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) at UConn, as well as the School of Dental Medicine, particularly Dr. Arteaga, Dr. Hodge, and Dr. Hurley. They provided me with the support and funds to ensure my participation was an unforgettable and most essential one. As I prepare for a second year of academic challenges at UConn, I keep in mind the lessons I have learned, and acknowledge the individuals who have ensured my opportunities for success, and to pass on that torch of good fortune. I am honored to take this (dental) job, and love it!



Message from the Dean

Peter Robinson, DDS, PhD

I wish to say a fond farewell as the Dean of this magnificent dental school. It has been a special privilege for me to have the opportunity to lead the School of Dental Medicine for the past nine plus years. The School has experienced an amazing amount of success because of the outstanding support I have received from my deans, the faculty, staff and students throughout my tenure as Dean.

We set several ambitious goals for the School over the past nine years and together we have accomplished most of them including: (1) improving the School's funded research activity and making research a major part of faculty activity; (2) improving both the perception and reality of the students' clinical experience, as well as ensuring that the graduates have positive feelings about their dental school clinical experience; (3) having greater synergy with the Health Center and University with more effective cross-discipline activity in education and research; (4) achieving a more diverse student population that more closely mirrors the population of Connecticut; (5) gaining greater state and national recognition as the best dental school through improving measurable outcomes and providing exceptional care to the traditionally underserved citizens in the state; (6) encouraging and providing opportunity for faculty to develop strong leadership skills; (7) improving the productivity of the entire clinical enterprise; (8) developing and implementing a fair and equitable faculty evaluation and incentive plan; (9) creating a meaningful development effort that can be reflected in an increased endowment and improved annual giving.

Some of the above goals have not been fully achieved and are still in progress. However, I believe through our cooperative efforts over the past several years we have not just achieved "Good to Great," but we have accomplished "Great to Best." Thank you all for this special leadership opportunity you have allowed me to have, and I know you all will work with and support the new leadership to continue these and new initiatives.

JUNIOR FACULTY RESEARCH

Dr. Bina Katechia, Division of Pediatric Dentistry, Department of Craniofacial Sciences has recently been awarded a grant from The CT Health Foundation totaling \$67,366 over a 19- month period. The grant, titled "Enhancing General Dentist's Pediatric Dental Skills," will allow Dr. Katechia to work with six community health centers across Connecticut improve access to care for pediatric dental patients.



Dr. Liisa Kuhn, a materials scientist in the Department of Oral Rehabilitation, Biomaterials and Skeletal Development, is establishing her program in drug delivery and controlled release methodologies. She was selected for two years of

funding in 2005 by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation to develop a lymph node targeted chemotherapy system for breast cancer metastases using calcium phosphate nanoparticles.

In a related project, she was the recipient of a CIRWH pilot study grant that allowed her to obtain preliminary data in mice on the use of radiotherapy in combination with localized chemotherapy delivered by calcium phosphate particulates. In addition to the delivery of chemotherapy, Dr. Kuhn is developing systems for the controlled release of osteogenic agents, such as PGE2, for stimulating bone growth around dental implants. Dr. Kuhn is leading up the drug delivery component of an industry sponsored project for which **Dr. Martin Freilich** is the principal investigator with **Drs. David Shafer, J. Robert Kelly and Mei Wei** (Storrs) as co-collaborators.

Rajesh V. Lalla, BDS, PhD has been notified of the award of two research grant awards. He is the principal investigator of a five-year K23 Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award from the NIH. This research examines the role of the cyclooxygenase pathway in radiation-induced oral mucositis in head and neck cancer patients.



Dr. Lalla was also awarded a two-year Clinical and Community Health Issues grant from the Donaghue Foundation. This research examines the role of vitamin deficiencies in recurrent aphthous stomatitis.

In addition, Dr. Lalla is in the process of starting up a new industry-supported clinical trial that will test a novel treatment for oropharyngeal candidiasis in HIV patients.



Julie A. Wagner, PhD (Department of Oral Health & Diagnostic Sciences) received a 3-year national Clinical Research Award from the American Diabetes Association to study

depression as a cardiovascular risk factor in postmenopausal women with type 2 diabetes. Co-investigators on the study include Dr. Howard Tennen and Dr. George Mansoor. Clinical depression and diabetes covary, and a woman who has either one is at increased risk for heart disease. This study will explore the pathways through which a history of depression is associated with heart disease in women with diabetes. Findings from this study may suggest that it is important to prevent depression and its recurrence in women with diabetes. It may also suggest physiological and behavioral clinical targets to decrease heart disease risk in depressed women with diabetes.

Also, Dr. Wagner received a one-year grant from the Center for Elimination of Health Disparities in Latinos (CEHDL) in Storrs. The grant funds a pilot study to investigate how cumulative lifetime exposure to perceived discrimination is related to day-to-day stress reactivity in African American women with type 2 diabetes. Results from this pilot will be used to design and obtain funding for a larger study. Co-investigators on the study include Drs. Howard Tennen and George Mansoor.

Welcome to the Class of 2010

by Edward Thibodeau, DMD, PhD, Assistant Dean for Dental School Admissions

The School of Dental Medicine is pleased to welcome 39 new students into the Class of 2010 for the coming academic year. Incoming students were selected from a highly competitive pool of over 1350 applicants that applied to the School for the 2005-2006 admissions cycle. The Class is distinguished in that it has the highest enrollment of Connecticut residents (50%) in recent School history with another 36% from Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Similar to National averages women comprise 44% of the incoming Class. The new students also present with very strong academic credentials based on overall GPA and DAT scores which place them in the top 15% of dental school applicants for the current year.

Almost one third of the Class (31%) participated in one or more special programs offered through the University and Health Center including HCOP, RWJ, Combined BS/BA and DMD Degree Program, and the Storrs campus Pre-dental Society. The Class also exemplifies the School's commitment to cultural and ethnic diversity by welcoming students who were born in or are current citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, Korea, Portugal, India and Iran. Furthermore, 18% of the Class are members of minority groups classified as other than white or asian.

Over 90% of the Class majored in the biological sciences and graduated from 27 undergraduate institutions. Many in the Class (28%) attended schools in the State of Connecticut with the remaining students graduating from colleges and universities such as Bates, Bowdoin, Colby, Swarthmore, Trinity, Tufts, William and Mary, and the University of Richmond. As always the School is very fortunate to welcome a Class that has such a wide range of interests and life experiences that will complement and add to the quality and depth of the overall student body.

Student News...



Jessie Richter (D'08) and **Tim Levine** (D'08) were both nominated for the American Student Dental Association journalism award. We were very proud of both of them considering only four people nationwide were nominated. Jessie won "Outstanding Editorial Award 2005-2006" for her article on Alaska Dental Health Aid Therapists. Tim Levine was also



appointed as the Eastern Regional Legislative Coordinator for this school year.

Dr. Padma Mukherjee, a graduate assistant in Oral Rehabilitation, Biomaterials, and Skeletal Development received a Young Investigator Award at the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research meeting in Philadelphia for her work on the cherubism mouse model in **Dr. Ernst Reichenberger's** lab.

Vijay Parashar, PhD (Department of Oral Health & Diagnostic Sciences) has been informed that he has been selected to be the 2006 recipient of the prestigious Howard R. Raper Oral & Maxillofacial Radiology Award. This award is given to one resident each year in the USA or Canada Oral Radiology programs. The candidates for this award are always highly qualified, and the committee members often have a difficult task in selecting just one deserving individual. That, indeed, was the case this year. Dr. Parashar will be presented with a certificate and a monetary award at the November, 2006 annual session of the American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology in Kansas City, Missouri.

According to Dr. Parashar, "I am thankful to **Dr. William Upholt** for [his] mentoring and am grateful to **Dr. Alan Lurie** for his training and supporting me for this award.

Award Winning Poster

The University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) School of Dentistry sponsored the first Oral & Craniofacial Biology Symposium, October 9 and 10, 2006. **Colin Kong** (combined DMD/PhD '10) returned with an award for the "Most Outstanding Student-Translational Research Poster" for his presentation of Microarray Analysis of Osteosarcoma, co-authored by **Dr. Marc Hansen** of Molecular Medicine.

Held in tandem with the school's 125th anniversary, the symposium is a forum for scientists, clinicians, and students to learn directly from principal investigators about the most current advancements in oral biology, dental biomaterials, and translational and clinical research.

Director Named

Dr. David Rowe has been named the Director of the Center for Regenerative Medicine and Skeletal Development in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences in the School of Dental Medicine. The Center was created partly as a result of the research strategic planning process supported by the NIDCR research infrastructure grant as well as the school's reorganization plan that became effective in 2005. Dr. Rowe previously was a professor in the Department of Genetics and Developmental Biology in the UConn School of Medicine and holds the Physician Health Services Chair in Human Genetics.



Dr. Rowe is a pediatrician with a clinical specialty in pediatric endocrinology and diabetes. He completed his medical degree at the University of Vermont Medical School and is board certified in Internal Medicine and Endocrinology. Dr. Rowe's areas of specialization are Osteogenesis Imperfecta, regulation of bone collagen synthesis and somatic gene therapy of bone disease. He has served on numerous NIH study sections as well as serving as a grant reviewer for CT & New England Chapters of American Heart Society, VA Merit Review Board for Basic Sciences, Donahue Medical Research Trust, US Army, Bone Health and Medical Readiness and the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation and Children Brittle Bone Foundation. Dr. Rowe is a nationally and internationally recognized expert on Osteogenesis Imperfecta and osteoblast lineage. He has authored or co-authored 34 book chapters and more than 100 peer-reviewed articles. He is the principal investigator and co-investigator on several NIH funded studies and has been a leader in the State of Connecticut Stem Cell initiative at the Health Center.



Seven students have been accepted as freshman at Storrs into the BS/BA and DMD Combined Degree Program and include left to right: Sean Ghassemzadeh (CT), Naomi Levy (MA), John Walsh (CT), Viviane Trinh (CT), Donald Goudreau (WI), Shaylice Bragg (CT), Andrew Sholudko (MA).



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The Compass is written for the dental school. We strongly encourage everyone to participate by submitting articles, events, milestones, etc. If you have any suggestions, please drop us a line.

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