

THE COMPASS

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

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An Enviable Experience

by Cynthia E. Hodge, DMD
Associate Dean for Community and Outreach Programs



Damian Findlay (D '06) discusses provider-patient concordance at conference.

On October 7, 2005, four students from various Dental Pipeline programs were selected to present their award winning essays at the Fourth Annual Dental Pipeline Grantee Meeting held in Washington DC. **Damian Findlay's** (D '06) essays on provider-patient concordance was one of the four selected. In addition to presenting an essay at the conference, each winner received round-trip airfare, hotel and a \$500 award. The essay contest encouraged dental students to write about their externship experiences at community health clinics and how this experience changed their views on oral health care disparities. Students could also write about initiatives launched at their respective schools to address access to care barriers or programs that would increase the matriculation and retention of underrepresented minorities in dental medicine. Findlay's essay entitled "An Enviable Experience" was impressive in its depth of understanding and articulation of an important health care issue.

The essay briefly described his experience at Charter Oak Community Health Center in Hartford, Connecticut where he recently completed a six-week rotation, and how it changed his view of oral health disparities. The majority of the patients seen at Charter Oak are Spanish speaking.

According to Mr. Findlay, "the presentation at the meeting highlighted some of the salient points in my essay. One of the major points was that concordance between the provider and the patient led to greater quality of care. Even with the help of an interpreter, I had to gather all the pertinent information about the patient's medical history, decide how this history affects treatment, relay information to the patient and render treatment within an hour all under the constraints of a language barrier."

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Message from the Dean

Peter Robinson, DDS, PhD

I'm pleased to report to all that progress with the reorganization of the School is succeeding at a much faster rate than I expected. Consolidating nine departments into three is a huge undertaking, and much has been accomplished since the Board of Trustees approved this change November 2004. Surprisingly, much of the change has been seamless. In very effective and rapid fashion, the three new department heads searches were completed and their appointments made. This was followed by reorganization and redistribution of the support staff. The new distribution of staff enabled the School to develop an Office of Research which has resulted in enhanced support for the faculty in research administration activities. Independently, each new department under the leadership of their new department head decided on the type of division structure they believed would provide the best organizational structure for their respective department (the range is from two to seven divisions/departments). I am more than encouraged by several of the improved opportunities that are emerging out of the reorganization. The departments are developing enhanced programs to provide better and more consistent faculty mentoring. Departments implemented more efficient departmental-wide methods of utilizing laboratory space. The "silo" barrier has been cracked in getting the new department heads together in tackling curriculum and Faculty Practice issues. Much more needs to be accomplished on a school-wide basis to truly demonstrate the effectiveness of the reorganization, but substantial progress has been made. I want to praise and thank the faculty and staff for the high level of cooperation they have shown throughout this challenging transition.

SNDA/HSDA Ambassador Program

by Trevann Lyn (D '08)

A recent trip as an alumnus to my alma mater, Benedict College in South Carolina, was organized to fulfill multiple goals. The percentage of under-represented minorities (URM) in dentistry is still far below the percentage of URM in the population. UConn has



Prince Morgan (D '08) and Trevann Lyn (D '08).

been actively recruiting URM to matriculate in the School of Dental Medicine. The number of students in the past two years is nearly equal to the total number of students enrolled from 1999-2005. Although our Office of Health Career Opportunity Programs and the Office of Community and Outreach Programs offer multiple avenues to attract students, what better way to reach a student about dentistry as a career than through a recent graduate?

One of our goals with this visit was to educate this particular undergraduate campus about the career possibilities available in dentistry and another was to inform them about UConn as a source to fulfill these goals. Prince Morgan (D '08), also an alumnus from Benedict College and I began our day at the career fair. We exhibited a UConn Health Center Banner, dental career pamphlets, Health Career Opportunity summer program brochures and an interactive PowerPoint presentation via laptop at a provided booth. We experienced a large turnout with many students and faculty displaying an interest on some level as to what our school and dentistry was about, even if they had not considered the career in the past. We felt we accomplished our goals by dispelling the misconceptions and bringing luster of our profession to light by properly introducing and elaborating what dentists do and the rewards of the career choice. A smaller group session geared towards students majoring in biology allowed us to present a PowerPoint presentation on the specialties in dentistry, sparking further interest and accomplishing our goals.

Through the Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student Dental Association, other students have also returned to their alma maters: Susanna Barraza (D '08) and Richard Haughton (D '09) returned to Central Connecticut State University to present dentistry as a career to a group, reaching more students with this message. Although in its early stages, we hope to continue to send other students as ambassadors to their undergraduate institutions and spark interest for URM to consider dentistry as a career choice.

Department/Faculty News



Dr. Sarita Arteaga, an assistant clinical professor in the Department of Oral Rehabilitation, Biomaterials and Skeletal Development, has been elected treasurer of the 2005-2006 Board of Trustees, Hispanic Dental Association. In addition, Dr. Arteaga is a faculty advisory for the combined Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student Dental Association.

Dr. Melanie Fisher and **Dr. Reza Seghatoleslami** were recently promoted from fellows to instructors in the Department of Oral Rehabilitation, Biomaterials and Skeletal Development.



Dr. Guy Huynh-Ba is a new Clinical Assistant Professor in Residence for the Division of Periodontology, Department of Oral Health and Diagnostic Sciences. Dr. Huynh-Ba was born in Pully, Switzerland in 1975. He graduated from the School of Dental Medicine in Geneva, Switzerland in 1999. He has worked in various private offices as an associate between 1999 and 2002. Dr. Huynh-Ba was a part time clinical assistant in the department of Oral Surgery at the School of

Dental Medicine, University of Geneva, Switzerland in 2001. Before coming to the University of Connecticut Health Center, School of Dental Medicine, he completed his postgraduate training in periodontology in the Department of Periodontology and Fixed Prosthodontics (Prof. N.P. Lang) at the School of Dental Medicine, University of Bern, Switzerland between 2003 and 2005.



Dr. Mina Mina, Division of Pediatric Dentistry, has been selected as the recipient of the 2006 IADR Distinguished Scientist Award for Craniofacial Biology Research. An IADR committee has recognized her significant contribution to the field of dental research and she will be presented this honor at the opening ceremonies of the 84th IADR General Session in Brisbane, Australia on June 28th, 2006.

Dr. Rajesh Lalla, Division of Oral Medicine, Department of Oral Health and Diagnostic Sciences, recently received a Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award (K23) from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This is a five-year grant with direct costs totaling \$587,273. His mentors

for this award are Dr. Douglas Peterson and Dr. Carol Pilbeam. The primary research project is a clinical study examining the role of the cyclooxygenase pathway in radiation-induced oral mucositis.



Finally, one of our recent (2005) orthodontic resident graduates, **Dr. Tara Savage**, has been selected to receive from the American Association of Orthodontists a Thomas M Graber Award of Special Merit for her basic science research project on "Mandibular Phenotype of p20C/EBP α Transgenic Mice: Reduced Alveolar Bone Mass and Site-specific Dentin Dysplasia." This award will be presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Orthodontists to be held in Las Vegas in May.

An Envable Experience cont'd. from p.1

Findlay expressed concern that the language barrier, in addition to the high volume of patients, led to decreased time spent with each patient, which in turn may have compromised information exchange between the patient and the provider. The language barrier also could have contributed to the decreased compliance with medication regimens and inconsistent appointment attendance, according to Findlay.

“This experience opened my eyes to the importance of patient-provider concordance. I propose implementing more programs to increase the acceptance and retention of underrepresented minorities in dental medicine, implementing cross cultural programs into dental school curricula, and some cross cultural courses should be mandatory for private practitioners.”

“Being enlightened from the presentations of my colleagues and having the opportunity to meet dentists involved in public health has also made my attending this meeting ‘an enviable experience’.”

It's A Girl!



Dr. Aikaterini-El Doufexi, a dental resident and PhD candidate in Periodontology, and her husband, Dr. Athanasios Kapetanopoulos, a cardiology fellow at Hartford Hospital, announce the birth of their daughter, Maria, born October 17, 2005. Maria was six pounds 12 ounces and 19 inches long. Vasileios (Billy), five years old, is the proud and protective big brother.



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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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