Dear Alumni & Friends,

In 1976, we graduated our first class of Gator Dentists. Their education began in trailers and portable classrooms and clinics dotted around the University of Florida campus. They didn’t move into the newly built dental tower until their junior year. In May 2021, our current junior class will graduate as the 45th class of Gator Dentists.

Through the years we have grown in all aspects of our mission. Our education program now includes 364 predoctoral students, 154 advanced education residents and fellows, a research enterprise that ranks 4th in the U.S. in federal funding, and a patient care network that completed 139,121 patient visits during the last fiscal year.

Our school is recognized nationally and internationally as one of the best in education, research and patient care. Our faculty include preeminent researchers, clinicians and educators. During the last year, 24 new faculty members have joined the college, bringing with them a wide range of teaching, clinical and research experience.

Our excellence is reflected in so many ways and I am happy to share that exciting steps are being taken right now to prepare a future home for our dental school that also reflects our excellence.

During its June 2019 meeting, the UF Board of Trustees approved a 10-year, $2.2 billion capital improvement plan that includes $183 million for a new UF College of Dentistry building. This is a “concept” approval, without specific plans or funding identified yet, but marks an exciting first step for our school. With the trustees’ approval, we are officially on the path to creating a physical environment that mirrors the excellence of our people and our programs.

There are countless processes and projects ahead of us, including identifying needs and space, planning and funding streams. We are working with an architectural firm and with the university to draft initial building concepts and then will refine the initial plans with more detailed assessments of space and program needs to begin working on a funding plan.

I will keep all of you updated as we move forward through another exciting year with some wonderful possibilities on the horizon. Go Gator Dentists!

Regards,

Dean Isabel Garcia
The impact he’s left on lives across Gainesville is as omnipresent as the colors orange and blue. Dolwick has spent the last 35 years treating dental patients and instructing students and residents as the chair of the UF College of Dentistry’s department of oral and maxillofacial surgery.

Dolwick’s storied career was recognized during the 2019 Celebrating Distinction ceremony, held Oct. 22 in the DeVeweese Auditorium of the McKnight Brain Institute of UF, where Dolwick was named the Academy One Hundred Eminent Scholar.

“Dr. Dolwick’s expertise and dedication as an oral and maxillofacial surgeon, teacher, researcher and leader has created a lasting legacy of healing and excellence and has made a difference for patients, oral surgery residents, dental students and colleagues,” said UF College of Dentistry Dean A. Isabel Garcia, D.D.S., M.P.H. “I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this honor than Frank Dolwick.”

Dolwick said his life’s calling feels more like a passion than work. “I truly love what I do. I’m one of those people who feel like they’ve never worked a day in their lives. I enjoy improving quality of life for my patients and taking away their pain,” he said. “I’ve enjoyed teaching nearly 4,000 dental students my personal philosophy on compassionate care: Doing what’s best for the patient will always be the right thing to do.”

David R. Nelson, M.D., senior vice president for health affairs at UF and president of UF Health, opened and closed the eighth annual ceremony by expressing his gratitude for the contributions of the 21 UF Health faculty members recognized and their donors alike.

“Of all the events I get to attend, this is probably my favorite. Looking around the room and thinking about the impact that each of you has created in science and health care is a privilege,” Nelson said. “Our benefactors who support what we do every day at UF Health give us a sustainable plan to advance science.”

By TYLER FRANCISCHINE

M. Franklin Dolwick, D.M.D., Ph.D., was one of 21 faculty members honored during the 2019 UF Health Celebrating Distinction event which recognizes UF Health faculty members receiving endowed professorships and chairs.

DOLWICK STEPS DOWN AS DEPARTMENT CHAIR

After 23 years and four “tours of duty” serving as chair of the UF Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, M. Franklin Dolwick, D.M.D., Ph.D., stepped down as department chair in January 2020.

“While we are truly going to miss his tremendous leadership, both in the department and as a senior college administrator, we are fortunate that he will remain in the college as a full-time professor, educating our predoctoral students and residents, and providing world-class patient care,” said A. Isabel Garcia, D.D.S., M.P.H., dean.

Dolwick joined the University of Florida College of Dentistry in 1984, bringing with him an already-impressive reputation that has only grown over the past 35 years. His dedication to education, patient care and research has benefited the field of oral and maxillofacial surgery and his talents have had a lifelong impact on the careers of predoctoral dental students and residents, as well as the patients he treats.

Garcia appointed John Hardeman, D.D.S., M.D., to serve as the interim chair of the department until a permanent chair is appointed. Hardeman, a clinical associate professor, is currently serving as the director of the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Residency Program.

“I am confident that Dr. Hardeman has the vision and expertise to continue to grow the strength of the program and the department, and I know we will all work together to support him as interim chair,” Garcia said.
Saying Goodbye to Sposetti

Venita Sposetti, D.M.D., started as a high school science teacher and quickly realized that she was on the wrong career path. She found a passion for dentistry and stuck with it for 39 years.

“I had no idea what a perfect fit academic dentistry would be for me,” she said.

After a varied career at the UF College of Dentistry, Sposetti retired in October as the associate dean for education and an associate professor in the UF Department of Restorative Dental Sciences Division of Prosthodontics.

In addition to her administrative leadership, she has worked tirelessly to create and foster interdisciplinary education opportunities for our predoctoral students as well as teaching courses throughout her tenure at UFCD. Dr. Sposetti has played a significant role in the education of all Gator Dentists who have graduated over the past four decades and made a difference for the oral health of Florida as a result,” said Isabel Garcia, D.D.S., M.P.H., dean.

Sposetti graduated from Florida State University in 1973 with a degree in biology and a minor in chemistry. She taught high school students in Bainbridge, Georgia, for one year until she determined it wasn’t a good fit for her. She began shadowing professionals from various medical professions and decided that dentistry matched her skills and interests the most. “I thought, I like to make things, and I like people and I like science,” she said. She then spent the next year preparing to attend the UF College of Dentistry.

After graduation and a one-year residency program at UF, Sposetti was hired as a visiting instructor in prosthodontics, which led to a faculty position in 1980. During this time, she also began providing dental care in the college’s faculty dental practice, where she saw patients at least once each week. Faculty practice was a highlight for her because of the connections she made with patients, similar to the interactions she had while teaching at the student dental center.

“Patients are awake, they’re conscious. To be a skilled clinician, you have to have multiple skillsets and definitely one of them is learning how to put people at ease and dealing with people who are frightened that they’re going to be hurt,” she said. “In the act of doing so, you develop deep relationships and they feel comfortable and keep coming back because they feel safe and they know you won’t hurt them.”

About 20 years later, Sposetti shifted into administrative work for the College of Dentistry. She said it was said to leave patients she had known for so long, but she was excited thinking of the impact she would be able to make for students.

She started as the assistant dean for admissions, a position she held from 2001 until 2011, when she was named associate dean for education. Sposetti said she was interested in helping to diversify the D.M.D. program, and she feels she accomplished a personal goal of helping the college enroll and graduate a more diverse class across multiple dimensions of diversity. She said she loved being able to help students avoid the struggles she faced as a dental student when she was one of only five women in her graduating class.

In 1997, she and some colleagues, helped by a grant from the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, created a program for first-year health professions students to learn about substance abuse. She is proud that after all of these years, the program is still alive.

Looking back on her career, she said she is so grateful for all of the connections she has made within the dental community and within the greater UF community. Saying goodbye to those friends and colleagues is one of the hardest parts of retirement, she said.

“Dr. Sposetti has greatly enriched our college, with her strong commitment to the high levels of ethics and excellence for which our college is known. I know we are happy that she’ll have more time to spend with her family and friends, and no doubt we will see her out in the community, making a difference for others with her many talents,” Garcia said.

Goodbye was also difficult for her friends and students at UFCD. Olga Luaces, D.M.D., a clinical assistant professor in the department of community dentistry and behavioral science, said Sposetti played a very influential role in her career. “Dr. Sposetti took the time to connect with each and every person at the UF College of Dentistry,” Luaces said. “She exemplified what it means to be a true professional, and her dedication and work ethic have greatly contributed to the stellar reputation of the college.”

Sposetti has now traded her dental probe for a garden hoe, and she will look back on all of the memories she made at UF while checking things off her bucket list in her retirement. She and her husband, Larry Rooks, M.D., who retired from the UF College of Medicine several years ago, are planning to spend time traveling across the U.S.
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know what causes it,” said John K. Neubert, D.D.S., Ph.D., an associate professor in the UF College of Dentistry
Department of Orthodontics. “It’s lightning bolt pain going off in your face hundreds of times a day. TN is 10-out-of-10
pain, the most pain one can experience. We are thankful for the support of the Facial Pain Research Foundation. They
do a lot to fund research for this horrible disease, enabling us to pursue research aimed at a cure.”

For Michael Pasternak, Ph.D., the mission of the Facial Pain Research Foundation is personal. After a long and illustrious career, Pasternak found himself suffering from trigeminal neuralgia. A founding trustee of the foundation, he was one of the lucky ones: surgery helped cure his
hearing pain. A majority of people are not so lucky.

Considered a rare disease, TN occurs most often in people over age 50 and, according to the National Institute of
Health’s Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the incidence of new cases is approximately 12 per 100,000
people per year.

The FPRF is the brainchild of seven professionals across the United States, including Pasternak, who created the
first international consortium of scientists from 14 different U.S. universities and two international institutions to work
together to cure the disease. The foundation funds the most innovative research projects aimed at finding a cure
to end the electric shock-like pain caused by irritation of the trigeminal nerve, whose branches extend to the
forehead, cheek and lower jaw.

The foundation has no employees; all monies raised through grassroots fundraising efforts coast-to-coast in the U.S. and overseas go straight toward trigeminal neuralgia research.

“The money we raise has character,” Pasternak said. “It has dignity and heart.”

The FPRF is currently funding two UFCD researchers, Neubert and Robert M. Caudle, Ph.D., for over $330,000
this year toward research projects to investigate TN. Neubert’s project, “Mapping Towards a Cure – Identification of
Neurophysiologic Signatures of Trigeminal Neuralgia Pain,” and Caudle’s study, “Exploring Neuropeptide Guided Botulinum Light Chain for Use in Blocking Pain Transmission,” are two related ongoing studies.

“We have a couple of interesting and exciting findings from our neuroimaging studies that may give us some
insight into what’s causing TN,” Neubert said. “We look forward to publishing those findings.”

Now, Caudle, Golde, Ding, Febo and Neubert are collaborating on testing novel treatments for TN.

“People overuse the word hero, but these guys are heroes. They are outstanding scientists.” — Michael Pasternak, Ph.D.,
Founding Trustee of The Facial Pain Research Foundation

The overall end goal? A cure for TN pain, and Neubert’s passion for the cause is palpable.

Translational research continues, incorporating integrated techniques with both human and preclinical models and cross-country partnerships like a new academic, private company partnership between Neubert and Cory Nicholas, Ph.D., founder and chief executive officer at Neurona Therapeutics.

“I like the fact that we can try different things to see how it works,” Neubert, the 2015-16 UFBC Basic Sciences Teacher of the Year, said. “I’ve been treating pain patients for over 20 years now, and so you learn a lot from talking to the patients that you just can’t get from a petri dish with cells on it, or from a preclinical model. I feel fortunate that I can do both the clinical care and research because I learn a lot from both sides. We typically think of translation going from an idea, to a molecule, to a cell model, to an animal model, to a person. There’s also reverse translation that is just as important for discovering new treatments for patients.”

Collaborating to Cure Trigeminal Neuralgia Pain

The Facial Pain Research Foundation, or FPRF, and researchers at the University of Florida are collaborating to combat a chronic facial pain disorder, trigeminal neuralgia, or TN, through translational research such as human imaging and magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, studies to get a better understanding of the mechanisms involved in the debilitating disorder.

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 130 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose as opioid-related deaths continue to increase in the United States amid an epidemic that now spans more than two decades. Researchers at the UF College of Dentistry, including John K. Neubert, D.D.S., Ph.D., are working tirelessly to understand pain and investigate new therapies that are both effective for reducing pain and substance use liability.

Two of Neubert’s currently funded projects focus on the intersection of substance use and pain. The UF Center for Research to Investigate Substance Use and Pain, UF-CRISP, and UF’s Office of Research Opportunity Seed Fund Award are providing a combined $132,000 toward Neubert’s opioid and cannabinoid interactions in pain and reward research projects through the next two years.

“What we’re trying to understand is if there are other available substances, including cannabinoids, that may be useful for pain control or for reducing opioid use,” Neubert said. “We’ve partnered with experts in addiction research and pharmacology to look at better options for addressing this problem.”

Both pilot projects are cross-college collaborations, featuring researchers from four colleges at UF. UFCD’s Robert Caudle, Ph.D., Alexander J. Grenning, Ph.D., from the UF Department of Chemistry, Barry Sellof, Ph.D., from the UF Department of Psychiatry, Jenny Wilkerson, Ph.D., from the UF Department of Pharmaceutics, and Lance McMahon Jr., Ph.D., M.S., chair of the UF Department of Pharmaceutics, are all involved in Neubert’s UF Opportunity Seed Fund award, focusing on drug discovery and a novel cannabinoid compound. Cannabinoids consist of the constituent compounds derived from plants such as cannabis and hemp.

Research on the UF-CRISP funding is focused on looking at the effects of existing cannabidiol, or CBD, treatments. Neubert has partnered with Caudle, Sellof and Adriaan W. Bruijnzeel, Ph.D., and Marcelo Febo, Ph.D., both from the UF Department of Psychiatry, to look at pain measures, substance abuse measures and neuroimaging to see what parts of the brain change given a certain combination of drugs. “We’ve done preliminary studies in preclinical models looking at cannabis smoke, tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, and CBD that have provided us with some very interesting results and insight,” Neubert said. “Our goal is to establish careful experiments and good scientific studies to either prove or disprove if these drugs work. Either answer is very important. If they don’t work, people need to know that.”
I am trying to live out my faith. God has blessed me with a lot and I’m trying to listen to what I should be doing with my career and my life,” Garvey said. “In some way, shape or form, I’m trying to use the skills I’ve been given to help people and make the world better.”

Garvey is a servant leader, quite literally, throughout the world. From his church home at St. Patrick Catholic Church, to his office at the Tacachale Center in Gainesville, to the community dental clinics he leads and attends throughout the entire state of Florida, south across the Atlantic Ocean in rural Dominican Republic, and beyond.

Garvey, father of 24-year-old boy-girl twins, is a double-Gator graduate, first earning his bachelor’s degree in chemistry from UF in 1976, then his dental degree from the UF College of Dentistry in 1980. He learned to work in the hospital setting, earning a certificate at Mount Sinai St. Luke’s in New York City in 1981 before working in private practice and eventually landing right back in Gainesville in 1987 teaching pharmacology at Santa Fe College.

“Dentistry is unique relative to other health care professions,” Garvey said. “I think dentistry provides the opportunity and ability to do things other health care professionals can’t do. In a one-time episodic visit, you can’t fix problems like diabetes or hypertension; if I see you for 30 minutes, I can’t fix that. But in dentistry, you can. I have an immediate impact and can improve your life right here, right now.”

He was appointed to run the Tacachale Dental Clinic in 1989, the oldest and largest state-operated residential facility for Floridians with developmental disabilities. What’s special about Garvey is that he takes on the most challenging patients, the toughest and most complex cases. Those with special needs, sick, disabled, scared. As a general dentist with hospital-based residency training he is well equipped to deal with complex health needs of persons with disabilities.

“We take care of people who have nowhere to go, adults that need general dentistry,” Garvey said. “Most are disabled, many can’t talk or sit still or open their mouths; they present in dire straits, some are very sick and can’t cooperate. The dentistry is the same, but we do it in a different place.”

Garvey went on his first educational service trip to the Dominican Republic in 1987 when he was 32 years old at the urging of the late Frank Stout, D.M.D., one of Garvey’s mentors.

“I’ve never done anything like that in my life,” Garvey reflected. “I was amazed at what I was seeing. We take so much for granted here, and it took me several days to decompres after coming back. No paved roads, taking teeth out with flashlights as the sole source of light. I had absolutely no idea what I was getting into.”

Little did Garvey know at the time, it would be the first of 33 service trips to the Dominican Republic, one every single year since.

Locals have become like family and the facility once used as dormitories has been renovated into a true dental clinic with an office and multiple operatories exclusively for the college and its constituents, thanks to a generous surprise from Gator Dentist alums Roger Phanord, D.M.D., and Reinol Gonzalez, D.M.D., and Martha De La Iglesia, D.M.D., parents of D.M.D. Class of 2020 students Kevin and Kyle Phanord and R.J. Gonzalez, changing the scope and quality of care provided by Garvey and UFCD in the Dominican Republic.

The ‘reward’ for Garvey comes in droves. From the annual video students assemble with highlights from their Dominican Republic educational service trips, to success stories after a team of students navigate a particularly difficult case treating a scared patient with special needs in a church pew ‘operatory’ in the Dominican Republic, to seeing the same uninsured residents of the Gainesville community repeatedly attend his clinics striving for optimal oral health despite their limited economic means.

“The outcomes are pretty amazing,” Garvey said. “It’s like the commercials you see on television: PRICELESS. You can’t put a value on the appreciation you receive. It’s cliché, but you really do receive so much more than you put into it.”
So do the students. For instance, one Gator Dentist who graduated 14 years ago is now a part-time dentist at Tacachale, alongside Garvey, because she missed taking care of those who are underserved. Or Susie Perry, D.M.D., a Cuban-American who graduated from UFCD with her dental degree in 2005 and put her Spanish to use during multiple trips to the Dominican Republic. After working a particularly tough case on an anxious and scared child with Down syndrome, Perry’s pain-free patient embraced her in a big hug. It was the moment she declared she wanted to be a pediatric dentist. Now she’s a Diplomate of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry and practicing in Jacksonville.

“How can you put a value on that,” Garvey reflected.

“The love for what he does is palpable, his personal impact as a community dentist is immeasurable, but perhaps what makes Garvey the most proud is the ripple effect service has on those who serve alongside him.

“It’s like planting seeds,” Garvey says. “Somebody else does something, then another person does something else. It’s amazing.”

His awards and service activities are aplenty. Every other Wednesday you can find him at Santa Fe College running the We Care Clinic, in partnership with the Alachua County Department of Health, for low-income, uninsured residents in the county who qualify, free of charge. Almost every month, he serves at the FreeD.O.M. Clinic, which offers free dental, optical and medical services to low-income, uninsured and underserved residents in Marion County. In November, Garvey brought the FreeD.O.M. Clinic to Gainesville and helped provide care for over 140 dental patients.

After Hurricane Matthew caused devastation in the Panhandle of Florida, Garvey, students and colleagues from UFCD partnered with Remote Area Medical for a free clinic in Callaway, Florida. Then there’s the Florida Dental Association’s Mission of Mercy, Project Haiti, The Migrant Farm Worker Clinic, the Baptist Van, Gainesville Community Ministries, Super Sealant Saturday. The list goes on.

Garvey goes a million miles a minute and pushes the boundaries on what it means to serve. He elevates those around him, has a heart of gold and a “can’t stop, won’t stop” mentality.

And he won’t stop. Next on the horizon, he’ll be a part of UF Health’s new Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment, a partnership between the College of Medicine’s Department of Psychiatry and UF’s Center for Autism and Related Disabilities that has the goal of providing a collaborative, integrated approach to high-quality care across multiple specialties to improve the lives of individuals with autism and other neurodevelopment disorders.

In Garvey’s eyes, it’s just another opportunity to make the world better.

“It’s my calling in life,” Garvey said. “And I enjoy it.”
2019 Dental Fall Weekend

With over 260 registered attendees, 2019 Dental Fall Weekend exceeded all expectations. We enjoyed seeing our Gator Dentists and their family members and friends, and were grateful for everyone who participated to make the weekend unforgettable and fun, and also were happy to enjoy a UF Gator Football win over Vanderbilt.

It was wonderful to welcome back our D.M.D. classes of 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014 for our reunion festivities at University House on campus, and the weekend was complete with our continuing education course and tailgate brunch prior to kickoff of the Gators vs. Commodores game at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

Patrick Abbey, D.M.D. class of 1989, won a helmet signed by Gator football coach Dan Mullen, a prize that may become even more valuable in the years ahead if Mullen continues to lead our football team to championship seasons with amazing victories.

Our alumni, friends and supporters of the College of Dentistry truly strengthen our programs and set the precedent for future generations of Gator Dentists and the greater dental community.
The Dr. Darshan Patel — Maverick Award Scholarship Fund

The Dr. Darshan Patel — Maverick Award scholarship fund was established by the Patel family in memory of Darshan Patel, D.M.D., who graduated in the UF College of Dentistry D.M.D. Class of 2015. Patel was a free-spirited person with a unique sense of creativity and a knack for understanding and establishing relationships with people from all walks of life. He was a person who not only created his own path forward in the face of adversity, but also challenged norms for the betterment of others. Patel practiced at his family’s practice, DeLand Implant Dentistry, after graduation and passed away on August 16, 2018, after a courageous battle with brain cancer. The Maverick Award scholarship will recognize third and fourth year dental students in good academic standing who have overcome great personal adversity and demonstrated extraordinary determination and perseverance in pursuit of a dental education, while also demonstrating compassion, leadership and creativity for serving patients in dental clinics and through community engagement.

If you are interested in supporting the Dr. Darshan Patel — Maverick Award scholarship fund or contributing to the Dr. Raymund Kwong endowed scholarship fund once details are finalized, please contact Rick Miller, senior director of advancement with the UF College of Dentistry at 352-273-5779.

Honoring the Memory of Dr. Raymund Kwong

The D.M.D. Class of 2003 is in the process of raising money to create an endowed scholarship fund to honor the memory of their beloved classmate, Raymund Kwong, D.M.D., who passed away July 17, 2019.

Chang Receives Volpe Research Fellowship

Jia Chang, D.D.S., M.S., Ph.D., an assistant professor in the UF College of Dentistry’s department of periodontology received the 2019 Volpe Basic Science Research Fellowship from the American Academy of Periodontology Foundation during the 2019 American Academy of Periodontology, or AAP, Annual Meeting in Chicago.

The Volpe Award was established by the AAP in 2013 to address the retention of top periodontal basic science researchers and educators early in their careers. The fellowship was funded by the Colgate-Palmolive Company in honor of the contributions of Dr. Anthony Volpe, who was a driving force within dentistry during his long career. The fellowship provides personal funding and support to individuals who may be facing educational debt while striving to establish themselves in an academic role.

Chang is involved in teaching predoctoral students and residents, and he also provides patient care in the UF Health Faculty Dental Practice. He earned his dental degree and completed oral and maxillofacial surgery resident training in China, and then attended the University of Michigan for his periodontal residency. Chang is a Diplomate of the American Board of Periodontology. His research interests are in bone biology and tissue engineering to repair bone loss in inflammatory disease, such as periodontitis and peri-implantitis. Chang has published more than 20 articles related to bone inflammation and tissue regeneration in top dental and medical journals such as Nature Medicine, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, and the Journal of Dental Research.
After 18 years leading the UF Department of Oral Biology as chair, Robert Burne, Ph.D., stepped down in January 2020, and will continue serving the college as the associate dean for research.

Burne earned his bachelor’s degree in 1981 from Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pennsylvania, and his doctorate in 1987 from the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York. He served on the faculty of the University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry from 1990 to 2001, when he joined the University of Florida as a professor and chair of the department of oral biology. In 2010, he took on the additional role of serving as associate dean for research.

“Dr. Burne has been unflagging in his strong leadership of the oral biology program in particular, and of the overall research enterprise for the college. He ushered the department through some “lean years” in terms of federal funding for research, consistently building the program to where it is today,” said A. Isabel Garcia, D.D.S., M.P.H., dean.

A few highlights of Burne’s tenure as department chair include:

- For more than 15 years, UFCD has ranked in the top 10 for National Institutes of Dental and Craniofacial Research, or NIDCR, funding to all U.S. Schools of Dentistry.
- The Oral Biology Research and Training programs and the overall research program are both top 10 programs based on NIH and NIDCR rankings.
- During the last fiscal year, oral biology faculty secured $7,555,131 in extramural funding (mainly NIH), which represents over 45 percent of the total funding generated by the College of Dentistry during the same period.

In addition, Burne has recruited and retained top-level faculty to add to the respected researchers already in our college, creating a program that is known for its breadth and depth of oral health research and commitment to scientific advancements.

“We are truly fortunate as a college, a university and a profession to have Dr. Burne on our team and I am grateful that he will continue to play a vital role in our research program in the future,” Garcia said.

Mary Ellen Davey, Ph.D., was appointed interim chair while the college searches for a permanent replacement. Davey joined the college in January 2013 as an associate professor in oral biology. She earned her bachelor’s degree in 1982 from the University of Vermont in Burlington, and her doctorate in microbiology in 1999 from Michigan State University in East Lansing. She served on the faculty of the Forsyth Institute and the Harvard School of Dental Medicine from 2003-2013. Her research interests are in biofilm-based infections and host-pathogen interaction.

“I am very appreciative that Dr. Davey was willing to accept the challenge of leading the oral biology department during this time of transition and know that everyone will work to help her navigate as an interim chair,” Garcia said.
Pereira Focuses on Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

In early 2019, when Patricia Pereira, D.D.S., Ph.D., learned that long-time Associate Dean for Education Nini Sposetti, D.M.D., would retire in the fall, she didn’t immediately consider applying for the position. A clinical associate professor in restorative dental sciences, Pereira is the director for the certificate and master’s in operative and esthetic dentistry program, and provides patient care in UF Health Faculty Practice as a general dentist. She was happy and comfortable in her role contributing to the educational and patient care missions of the college. Several colleagues approached and encouraged her to apply, so she started looking into what this position entailed and soon realized that she was very interested, and thought that she could further contribute to the College of Dentistry’s missions.

After careful deliberation, she applied for the position and, following a competitive national search, was appointed in August 2019 as the new Associate Dean. Pereira before Sposetti’s retirement, was able to spend time with Sposetti before Sposetti’s retirement, which helped ensure a smooth transition in the academic leadership position.

“I was extremely fortunate to have several years of training with Dr. Sposetti to absorb as much from her as possible. She opened her office, her mind, and her heart to me, helping prepare me for the road ahead,” Pereira said.

That’s not to say Pereira was daunted by the responsibilities ahead, rather that she was energized by the challenges and opportunities for professional and personal growth.

One clear point of immediate focus is preparing the college’s newest predoctoral students, the D.M.D. Class of 2023, for the Integrated National Board Dental Exam, or I-NBDE. The class will be the first to sit for what will be a dramatically different testing scenario from that of decades of foregone new dentists.

The traditional exam is in two parts. The first part is taken after students’ second year of dental school and covers the basic sciences. So basic science courses have been front-loaded into the beginning of dental school curriculums throughout the U.S.

The second part tests graduates’ knowledge and skills relating to the clinical realm and providing direct patient care. While the American Dental Association has given more than 10 years’ notice to dental colleges about the advent of the integrated test, balancing the requirements of changing the D.M.D. curriculum with continuing to teach for the original test has required a great deal of finesse, one that UFCD as a whole, and Sposetti in particular, took to heart.

“This college is known for providing one of the best dental educations in the U.S.,” Pereira said. “Our students are exceptionally prepared to deliver patient care, so we are confident that our current curriculum already creates dentists with the integrated knowledge and skills they need. The integrated test, however, is sort of a great unknown at this point, but we are doing everything we can to ensure our D.M.D. Class of 2023 enjoys the same success on the I-NBDE that previous classes have had with the NBDE.”

The college’s D.M.D. curriculum has been moving in the right direction to prepare students for the I-NBDE for more than six years, by shifting clinical experiences earlier in course constructs with a goal of achieving the all-important balance between the art and the science of dentistry.

“The beauty of the new boards is it requires moving students into the clinical setting earlier so they can associate their science learning with patient application,” Pereira said.

Pereira also wants to bring the curriculum, allowing for more time for our students to learn the way that’s best for them which is typically in a more active-learning format rather than the traditional lecture format.”

“ ‘It has created a shift in the way that we, as faculty, learn to teach,’” she said.

Pereira joined UFCD in 2015 as a clinical associate professor in the UF Department of Restorative Dentistry Division of Operative Dentistry. She earned her dental degree from the University of the Planalto Central, Brasilia, Brazil, in 1993, her doctorate in operative dentistry from Tokyo Medical and Dental University in 1998, and a certificate in prosthodontics from the Pontos de Minas Educational Association in Minas Gerais, Brazil, in 2014.

Pereira has been on faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Brasilia. While in Brazil, she co-founded a continuing education institute, the Integrato Specialized Education, which posted over 120 courses and trained over 1,100 dentists.

In 2019, Pereira was one of three faculty to earn the UFCD Sustained Exemplary Teaching Award; in 2017, she won the Exemplary Teaching Award and was elected as Clinical Sciences Teacher of the Year by the dental students.

Pereira has other ideas for transforming the predoctoral curriculum, including encouraging faculty to make didactic course information available online so students can access it at any time, while reserving classroom and traditional-lecture time for interactive discussion-based sessions. Evidence shows that people learn best when they can bring their own experiences into a learning scenario and discussion groups allow for a back-and-forth dialogue between faculty and students.

I think of it as de-cluttering the curriculum, allowing more time for our students to learn the way that’s best for them which is typically in a more active-learning format rather than the traditional lecture format.”

— Patricia Pereira, D.D.S., Ph.D.

This GATOR DENTIST TODAY is sponsored by UFCD’s Office of Academic Affairs.
Elonora Bakri, D.D.S., a clinical assistant professor in endodontics, was appointed program director for the Endodontics Predoctoral Program in August. As program director, she is responsible for oversight of the endodontics didactic, preclinical and clinics predoctoral curriculum. She also provides endodontics care for patients in the UF Health Endodontics Faculty Practice.

Alex J. Delgado, D.D.S., M.S., was accepted as a 2019-20 American Dental Education Association Leadership Institute Fellow, an honor bestowed annually to the nation’s most promising dental educators. Delgado was also appointed division director of operative dentistry effective January 28, having served as interim director since May 2016.

Richard Donastill, D.M.D., an assistant professor in orthodontics, was appointed program director for the Orthodontics Residency Program in August. His duties include directing all aspects of orthodontics advanced education, including compliance with Commission on Dental Accreditation standards, developing and implementing curriculum, evaluating resident performance and clinical outcomes.

Cesar Migliorati, D.D.S., M.S., Ph.D., took over as president of the American Board of Oral Medicine during the annual meeting of the American Academy of Oral Medicine in May 2019. He will serve a one-year term.

Marcelle Nascimento, D.M.D., M.S., Ph.D., received a 2019 UF Research Professorship Award in recognition of her distinguished record of research, particularly in the area of cariology. She is one of 32 UF faculty who received this three-year award, which includes a $50,000 annual salary supplement and a one-time $3,000 grant. In August, Nascimento was appointed the program director of the Dental Clinical Research Unit, or DCRU. She is responsible for managing the DCRU and assisting colleagues with developing clinical research protocols and preparing institutional Review Board applications. She will also ensure clinical research projects are compliant with regulations and protocols.

Carol Stewart, M.S., D.D.S., a UF professor emeritus, received the Distinguished Faculty Award from the Organization of Teachers of Oral Diagnosis during the President’s Awards Banquet at the American Academy of Oral Medicine Annual Meeting in Louisiana in May 2019. The award recognized her distinguished record of leadership and service in oral medicine.

Charles Widmer, D.D.S., M.S., was appointed to the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine following the retirement of Ventia Sospetti, D.M.D., in fall 2019. To learn more about her and her plans for the DMD curriculum, see our full story on page 20 of this issue.

Committee on Evidence-based Clinical Practice Guidelines for Prescribing Opioids for Acute Pain. The committee contributes to the development of guidelines for prescribing opioids for acute pain.

FILLINGIM RECEIVES UF FOUNDATION AWARD

Roger Fillingim, Ph.D., received a 2020 University of Florida Foundation Term Professorship Award, created in 2013 to invest in the research endeavors of UF faculty members whose work is transforming lives. “I am very honored and humbled to have been selected for this award,” Fillingim said.

Fillingim, a distinguished professor in the UF College of Dentistry Department of Community Dentistry and Behavioral Science, is the director of the UF Pain Research and Intervention Center of Excellence, or PRICE, and joined UF in 2000. His research investigates biological, social, and psychological factors that may influence the experience of pain, perhaps the most widespread and expensive health problem in the United States. One major area of focus for Fillingim’s research is how women and men experience pain differently.

The UF Foundation awards two $25,000 term professorships annually, for the duration of three years. Awards must have substantial research assignments and outstanding records of accomplishment.

Mary Ellen Davey, Ph.D., was appointed the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine Chair for 2019-2020. As chair, she will represent the academy on the UF Foundation Board of Trustees, or BOD, effective July 1, 2019.

The Spotlight on Dental Education awards recognize those who contribute to making our educational programs excellent. The college hosted its third annual Spotlight on Dental Education reception in 2019 to celebrate the accomplishments of our award-winning faculty.

Teachers of the Year

- Alex J. Delgado, D.D.S., M.S., clinical associate professor
- Donald M. Cohen, D.M.D., M.B.A., M.S., Basic and Clinical Sciences

Exemplary Teaching Award Recipients

- Annetty Soto, D.M.D.
- Olga Luaces, D.M.D., M.P.H.
- Panagiotis Zoidis, D.D.S., M.S., Ph.D.
- Patricia Pereira, D.D.S., Ph.D.
- Mary Ellen Davey, Ph.D.
- Kesavalu Lakshmyya, B.V.Sc., M.Sc., S.C.C., professor, Periodontology
- Thomas Porter, D.M.D., clinical professor
- Mary Ellen Davey, Ph.D., tenured associate professor
- Oral Biology
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WELCOMING NEW FACULTY

Diego M. Ardenghi, D.D.S., M.A., M.Sc., joined restorative dental sciences as the division director of prosthodontics in June. He moved to Florida from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, where he was an assistant professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Dentistry. Ardenghi teaches and mentors predoctoral and graduate students, provides patient care in the UF Health Dental Faculty Practice, and is pursuing his research interests.

Tridib Ganguly, Ph.D., M.S., joined the faculty in April as a research assistant scientist in oral biology after working for 4 years as a research assistant scientist in the laboratory of Associate Dean for Research Robert Burne, Ph.D. Ganguly earned his bachelor’s degree in science in 2000 and his master’s in marine biology in 2006. He completed her doctoral degree in 2014 at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in Kolkata, India. She came to UF in 2015 as a postdoctoral research associate before joining UFCD’s faculty this year.

Brinta Chakraborty, Ph.D., M.S., joined oral biology on April 2 as a research assistant scientist in the laboratory of Associate Dean for Research Robert Burne, Ph.D. Chakraborty attended the University of Calcutta, India, where she earned a bachelor’s in zoology in 2004 and a master’s in marine biology in 2006. She completed her doctoral degree in 2014 at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in Kolkata, India. She came to UF and is working in the Jose Lemos laboratory investigating molecular factors that mediate virulence in the opportunistic gram-positive pathogens Streptococcus mutans and Enterococcus faecalis. S. mutans is a major pathogen in dental caries and a leading causative agent of infective endocarditis.

Dayane Oliveira, D.D.S., M.Sc., Ph.D., became a clinical assistant professor in the operative division of restorative dental sciences in August. Oliveira is providing didactic, preclinical and clinical instruction to predoctoral students and residents in the Operative Master’s Program. In addition, she is pursuing her research interests as well as providing dental care in the college’s faculty dental practice.

Fata Moradali, Ph.D., is a research assistant scientist working in the laboratory of Mary Ellen Davey, Ph.D. in oral biology. Moradali joined the faculty in September 2019, but has been with the college since 2017, working as a postdoctoral associate in oral biology.

Hamrick is also providing patient care in the OMFS resident center, the Student Oral Surgery Center and the UF Health Implant Center.

Fata Moradali, Ph.D., is a research assistant scientist working in the laboratory of Mary Ellen Davey, Ph.D. in oral biology. Moradali joined the college in July 2019 as a visiting clinical assistant professor in oral and maxillofacial surgery, or OMFS, where he is focused on didactic and clinical instruction for predoctoral dental students and residents in the department’s advanced education program.

Hamrick attended Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in 2006. He then came to the University of Florida and earned his dental degree in 2012, his medical degree in 2016, completed the OMFS resident program at UFCD in 2018, and then earned a general surgery internship certificate from the UF College of Medicine in June 2019.

Diego M. Ardenghi, D.D.S., M.A., M.Sc., joined restorative dental sciences as the division director of prosthodontics in June. He moved to Florida from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, where he was an assistant professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Dentistry.

Yoniel Cruz-Almeida, MSPH, Ph.D., transferred from the UF College of Medicine to dentistry in June as an assistant professor in community dentistry and behavioral science. Her primary focus is research related to understanding mechanisms involved in age-related pain perception and modulation in humans.

Cruz-Almeida earned her bachelor’s in microbiology and cell science from UF in 2001, her master’s in epidemiology and public health in 2004, and her doctorate in neuroscience in 2011, both from the University of Miami. In 2012, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship in translational pain research at UF. Cruz-Almeida also teaches graduate courses in the colleges of dentistry and medicine, and serves as the director of training and career development for the UF Pain Research & Intervention Center of Excellence.

Clayton Hamrick, D.M.D., M.D., joined the college in July 2019 as a visiting clinical assistant professor in oral and maxillofacial surgery, or OMFS, where he is focused on didactic and clinical instruction for predoctoral dental students and residents in the department’s advanced education program.

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Fata Moradali, Ph.D., is a research assistant scientist working in the laboratory of Mary Ellen Davey, Ph.D. in oral biology. Moradali joined the college in September 2019, but has been with the college since 2017, working as a postdoctoral associate in oral biology.

Moradali attended Massey University in New Zealand, earning his doctorate in 2014 in molecular microbiology and biochemistry from the University College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Tehran University in Iran. He then attended Massey University in New Zealand, earning his doctorate in 2014 in molecular microbiology and genetics from the Institute of Fundamental Sciences. His thesis work focused on the molecular mechanism of alginate polymerization and modifications in Pseudomonas aeruginosa.

At UFCD, Moradali has been studying health/disease-associated oral microbiome and pathoadaptive mechanisms: the physiology/lifestyle of anaerobic pathogens, host-microbe interaction, and polymicrobial biofilms.

Hamrick attended Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in 2006. He then came to the University of Florida and earned his dental degree in 2012, his medical degree in 2016, completed the OMFS resident program at UFCD in 2018, and then earned a general surgery internship certificate from the UF College of Medicine in June 2019.

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Marc Ottenga, D.D.S., rejoined the faculty of the UF College of Dentistry in August as a clinical professor in the operative division in restorative dental sciences. He is focused on didactic, preclinical and clinical teaching with predoctoral students and residents in the Operative Masters Program. Ottenga first joined UFCD in 2004 and was voted Teacher of the Year in 2006 and 2014, and served as faculty advisor for the Class of 2009. While at UF, he was appointed to a variety of administrative and leadership roles and was serving as the program director in operative dentistry before joining the LECOM School of Dental Medicine in Bradenton, Florida, in 2017. At LECOM he served as the assistant dean of preclinical education and then the assistant dean of education.

Mateus Garcia Rocha, D.D.S., M.S., joined the college in August as a clinical assistant professor in restorative dentistry’s operative division after spending time at the college as a visiting scholar since 2018. Rocha educates predoctoral students and advanced education residents in dental biomaterials, provides care in the Faculty Dental Practice and conducts dental biomaterials research. Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Rocha earned his dental degree in 2013 from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro; completed an internship in biomaterials at the Oregon Health and Science University’s School of Dentistry in Portland, Oregon, in 2015; and earned his master’s and Ph.D. at the Piracicaba Dental School, State University of Campinas, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2016 and 2019, respectively.

Elena Yarmola, Ph.D., is a research associate professor in oral biology, working in the research laboratory of Janine Brady, Ph.D. Before joining UFCD in September 2019, Yarmola worked in the UF College of Medicine’s department of medicine from 2003 to 2011, and the department of biomedical engineering from 2011 to 2015. She earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the Moscow Institute of Physics and Engineering, specializing in Molecular Biophysics. She then earned a doctorate in mathematical and physical sciences with specializations in molecular biophysics and biochemistry from Moscow State University.

Yarmola’s work focuses on developing and advancing magnetic nanoparticle technology for the collection of joint-level molecular biomarkers termed magnetic capture. This technology provides the ability to develop diagnostic and prognostic osteoarthritis biomarkers to improve outcomes for osteoarthritis patients.

Karin Schey, D.M.D., M.S., returned to the University of Florida College of Dentistry in June as a clinical associate professor in periodontology, having earned her dental degree at UF in 2016. In addition to providing patient care in the college’s faculty practice, Schey teaches periodontology residents and predoctoral students, with an emphasis on periodontal education. She is also pursuing her research interests. Schey earned a bachelor’s in biology from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, in 2009, and a master’s in biology from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton before attending UF for dental school. Following graduation from UFCD, she attended the University of North Carolina to pursue an advanced education in periodontology program that she completed in 2019.

UFCD Named AAWD Student Chapter of the Year

The American Association of Women Dentists, or AAWD, named the Student Chapter at the University of Florida College of Dentistry the 2019 Chapter of the Year in July 2019. The chapter formed in 2005 with 25 members and now has a membership of almost 100. Susan Nimmo, D.D.S., M.P.H., the chapter’s faculty advisor, said, “I am proud of UFCD’s AAWD Student Chapter, not just today, but for all the women dental students at the University of Florida, who started this chapter 15 years ago and developed it into the powerhouse student organization it is today.”

One of the most active student organizations in the college, the AAWD chapter hosted more than 30 community service and social events last school year.
In June 2019 the UF College of Dentistry launched an innovative clinical research study in which oral medicine, oral pathology, and oral and maxillofacial surgery researchers are working with HT BioImaging Technologies to test a new way to detect premalignant and malignant oral lesions using an infrared device. HTOScan 2

The device, HTOScan, was designed by engineers and doctors at HT Bioimaging Technologies, an Israeli startup company that chose UFCD to run the first-ever clinical trial of the device. The technology is based on the measurement and registration of heat diffusion and dissipation in the examined tissue, leveraging the unique heat-flow properties of various tissues, for diagnostic purpose. This process is followed by a comprehensive signal analysis, further translated into an image, depicting the probability for cancer in the examined tissue.

**HTOScan Research Team**

The study will run for a year with a goal of enrolling 300 patients in the trial with a clinically suspicious lesion in the oral cavity, needing a biopsy. Prior to the biopsy performance, the HTOScan will be used to assess the lesion, and later be compared with the pathology report at UF. This detailed analysis will enable the continuous ongoing amendment of the analytical algorithms for increased detection capabilities.

UFCD researcher Zsolt Toth, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the department of oral biology, received a four-year, $792,000 grant from the American Cancer Society, or ACS, to study the oncogenic herpesvirus infection.

“I am honored to receive funding from the American Cancer Society, which will help our research to better understand how an oncogenic herpesvirus establishes life-long infection in humans. Our ultimate goal is to eliminate the spreading of cancer-causing herpesviruses in the human population,” Toth said.

The ACS annually awards Research Scholar Grants for promising research projects that may lead to the elimination of cancer as a major health problem. Toth, now regarded an ACS Scholar, was recognized at the inaugural American Cancer Society award ceremony at the ACS Hope Lodge in Gainesville, along with co-investigator Bernadett Papp, Ph.D., research assistant professor at UFCD, and their research team.
A word about COVID-19

Gator Dentist Today was in production when the COVID-19 situation emerged. The college, along with UF Health and the entire University of Florida, is actively engaged in a coronavirus response. As you read and enjoy the stories in this issue, please know that we at the college are committed to patient and provider safety, and to the safety of our entire community both within the college and throughout the state. We appreciate everyone’s patience during this trying time and ask that you refer to our website, dental.ufl.edu, for updates including those regarding events, continuing education and more.

DEAN
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44th Annual UF College of Dentistry Commencement

During the college’s 44th annual commencement on May 17, 2019, at the Curtis M. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts on the University of Florida campus, Dean Isabel Garcia, D.D.S., M.P.H., conferred 94 D.M.D. degrees, one D.M.D./Ph.D. dual-degree and 58 advanced and graduate degrees and certificates. Of the 94 new dentists, six went on to serve as commissioned officers in the U.S. Armed Forces: Dr. Byron Amador, Dr. Gabrielle Klatt, Dr. Shane Mobley and Dr. Long Nguyen will serve in the U.S. Navy, and Dr. Tanner Brunworth and Dr. Cam Tran Nguyen will serve in the U.S. Air Force.