

# news release



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **EIGHT DENTAL SCHOOLS RECEIVE FUNDS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE, INCREASE STUDENT DIVERSITY**

March 3, 2008, Princeton, N.J. — The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) today announced the names of eight dental schools (see list below) that will receive grants of up to \$200,000 each to improve the diversity of their student body or to increase access to dental care in underserved areas by enhancing the knowledge of students through community-based education.

This second round of funding for the *Pipeline, Profession & Practice: Community-Based Dental Education* (Dental Pipeline) program will provide 27-month grants that will “replicate best practices learned from the experiences of the 15 dental schools funded during the first round of grants,” said Denise Davis, Ph.D., senior program officer at RWJF.

The first five-year phase of the Dental Pipeline program, which ended in August 2007, demonstrated that the 15-funded dental schools could improve access to care through its education program and address the dearth of minorities entering the dental profession through recruitment efforts to interest students of color and students from disadvantaged backgrounds into the profession. The schools developed service learning programs, enabling all students to gain a keener understanding of the oral health problems of the underserved living in low-income urban and rural regions of the nation.

The Dental Pipeline program was initially conceived after the U.S. Surgeon General issued the groundbreaking national report in 2000 entitled, “Oral Health in America.” The report showed that while the oral health of Americans improved in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, “there was a ‘silent epidemic’ of oral disease affecting poor children, the elderly and many members of racial and ethnic minorities.” In 2004, the Sullivan Commission Report: *Missing Persons, Minorities in the Health Professions*, noted that only about 200 African Americans and 200 Latinos graduate from dental schools each year (out of over 4,000 graduates). This “severe and persistent” low representation of minorities in health profession schools is “hardly enough to replace those minority dentists that are dying or retiring,” the report states.

In the second round of funding, dental schools funded through the Dental Pipeline program will continue to work to counteract these disturbing trends. Almost half of the nation’s dental schools will have participated in the two rounds of the Dental Pipeline program by the end of Round 2 in 2010.

“This second phase of the Dental Pipeline program will permit additional dental schools to put into place strategies learned to increase the enrollment of underrepresented minority and low-income students,” said Program Co-Director Allan Formicola, D.D.S., M.S. at Columbia University. “The first-year enrollment of underrepresented minority students almost doubled from 6.5 percent of the entering class to 12 percent over the last five years.”

Co-Director Howard Bailit, D.M.D., Ph.D., University of Connecticut Health Center, said: “In this second phase, the schools can draw upon the experiences from Round 1 to design educational programs that provide senior dental students and residents with improved knowledge, skills and attitudes to assist those in high need of care. Schools were able to send students into community clinics. Their time increased in those settings from two to ten weeks during Round 1.”

The *Pipeline, Profession & Practice* national program office is based at Columbia University under the direction of Formicola and Bailit. Kim D’Abreu, M.P.H., serves as the program’s deputy director.

The RWJF was joined by the California Endowment in funding the first round of the program. The California Endowment will continue to pursue the goals of the Dental Pipeline program with the five dental schools in California.

For more information about the program, please visit [www.dentalpipeline.org](http://www.dentalpipeline.org).

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years we’ve brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those we serve. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.

The Center for Family and Community Medicine (CFCM) at Columbia University, founded in 2007, is located at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center campus in northern Manhattan. CFCM is home to several major national programs working to eliminate the racial and ethnic disparity in general health status including the Dental Pipeline Program. CFCM also seeks to enhance the health of Northern Manhattan communities through education, service, research and academic-community partnerships.

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**Texas A & M Health Science Center**  
**Baylor College of Dentistry**  
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