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Mdental

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY | SUMMER 2025



**MEET
THE 2025
RECIPIENTS OF
THE DEAN'S
SCHOLARSHIP FOR
LEADERSHIP &
EXCELLENCE**



Photo by Bezi Mostoufi

OfNote

A group of University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) students spent their spring break volunteering at the school's walk-in Urgent Care Clinic — allowing it to stay open and providing uninterrupted access to care for community members.

From March 12-14, the students treated walk-in patients under direct supervision of faculty, providing triage, diagnosis, and care including simple and surgical extractions, multiple extractions, wisdom teeth extractions, and management of odontogenic infections. They also assisted residents from the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

"Their hard work, dedication, compassion, and willingness to step up made a huge difference. Their support not only kept the clinic operational but also ensured that we could serve those in need without interruption," said Bezi Mostoufi, DDS, MDS, assistant professor, clinical director, and division chief of Urgent Care/ER Diversion, UMSOD, and medical director, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Ambulatory Clinic, University of Maryland Medical Center. "I'm incredibly proud of these students for their commitment and service," Mostoufi added. "They've made a positive impact, and we are deeply grateful for their efforts." **M**

— HOLLY SELBY

LEFT TO RIGHT: Kobi Igwilo, Madeleine August, Ayesha Malik, Noor Al-Shalabi, Elliana Singh, Safa Ahteshamuddin, and Lindon Thompson. Additional volunteers not pictured: Rewa Hazim, Amirabbas Amindarolzabzi, An Le, Gurneet Sandhu, Alex Prokopenko, Joshua Weeks, and Serge Kens.

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Introducing the 2025 recipients of the Dean's Scholarship for Leadership & Excellence.



Every day at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), I'm reminded of the extraordinary legacy our institution has created — and how that legacy continues to grow through the work of our alumni, students, faculty, and staff. Whether in a private practice, clinic, classroom, community event, or lab, our community members are advancing oral health care with passion, innovation, and a deep commitment to service.

Recently, I've had the honor of celebrating that spirit in many ways — from recognizing the achievements of our 2025 graduates at the Honors Convocation and congratulating the four recipients of UMSOD's annual Distinguished Alumni Awards, to exploring new global partnerships with colleagues at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok and recognizing the achievements of our faculty. All these successes speak to the enduring impact of the UMSOD community.

This issue of *Mdental* highlights some of the ways the School of Dentistry is thriving. You'll find a feature on the Universities at Shady Grove Dental Clinic and Patient Care Facility in Montgomery County, where students gain clinical experience in serving diverse communities — thus fostering cultural competence, improving communication, and ultimately leading to better health outcomes.

You also will read about the accomplishments of our faculty members who are pushing the boundaries of discovery. Among them is Emily Chu, DDS, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Biomaterials and Regenerative Dental Medicine, who recently was named the 2025 William Butler Fellow by the American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research. Her work in combating periodontal disease reflects the kind of research excellence that defines our school.

Additionally, Hanping Feng, PhD, professor and vice chair, and Yongrong Zhang, PhD, research assistant professor, both in the Department of Microbial Pathogenesis, received a nearly \$3.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to support their goal of developing therapeutic antibodies and novel antibody delivery platforms aimed at preventing the transmission of *Clostridioides difficile*.

And for the fifth year, I am proud to announce the recipients of the Dean's Scholarship for Leadership & Excellence. This year's four honorees exemplify the values that have long defined UMSOD students: academic excellence, leadership, and a deep commitment to improving lives through dentistry.

Last, but certainly not least, UMSOD expresses its gratitude annually to the members of the Dean's Faculty by listing their names in the magazine. These talented professionals volunteer their time and expertise to the next generation of oral health leaders by working as mentors and teachers in our clinics. I extend my deep appreciation to each of them.

As part of the UMSOD community, your ongoing support and involvement help make all of this possible. Thank you for being part of our story — and for helping shape the next generation of oral health leaders.

Warm regards,

Mark A. Reynolds, DDS '86, PhD
Dean and Professor

Mdental

ON THE COVER

The 2025 recipients of the Dean's Scholarship for Leadership & Excellence: Longhui Gao, DDS '25; Cameron Watson, Class of 2026; Elvia Jimenez Ciriaco, DDS '25; and Benjamin Hung, Class of 2026.

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Find *Mdental* online at dental.umaryland.edu/Mdental.

OnTheCusp

Seminar Highlights the Need for More Dental Professionals in Maryland

BY HOLLY SELBY

In a seminar Jan. 27 at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), two guests from different areas of the oral health profession highlighted the need to increase the number of dental professionals in areas of Maryland where there is a shortage of health care practitioners.

Speakers Diane Romaine, DMD, and Allen Schiff, CPA, told an audience that included UMSOD dental and dental hygiene students about opportunities to provide care in areas such as Baltimore, Western Maryland, and the Eastern Shore, while also extolling the rewards of practicing in the oral health professions.

Organized by UMSOD and the Maryland Department of Health, the lunchtime event — titled “Where Are Dental Professionals Needed Most?” — included tips on how to launch a practice and the advantages of serving patients in underserved areas.

Romaine, a dentist in Frostburg, Md., is a longtime advocate for increased access to dental care in Maryland. Among her many honors, she was recognized by the Maryland State Dental Association in 2019 with its Distinguished Service Award and in 2022 with its Humanitarian Award.

Schiff, the managing member of Schiff & Associates, an accounting and management consulting firm in Towson, Md., has more than 40 years of experience in dental practice management and serves as president of the Academy of Dental CPAs and board member of the Maryland State Dental Association Foundation. **MD**



Guest speakers Diane Romaine and Allen Schiff described opportunities for dentists and dental hygienists in underserved areas in Maryland at a lunchtime seminar in January.



Diane Romaine, guest speaker and longtime advocate for increased access to oral health care, speaks to UMSOD students.

UMSOD Celebrates 'Extraordinary' Class of 2025

Doctor of Dental Surgery and Dental Hygiene Grads Represent One of the 'Most Diverse and Accomplished Classes in the Nation'

BY LAURA LEE



UMSOD Dean Mark Reynolds stands with Tintu Chandy, DDS, MS, clinical assistant professor, Division of Prosthodontics, who received the 2025 Frank J. Sinnreich Jr. Award for Excellence in Teaching, which recognizes humanitarianism, understanding, and compassion for student concerns.



University of Maryland, Baltimore President Bruce E. Jarrell presents UMSOD alumnus Robert Morris with an Honorary Doctor of Public Service degree in recognition of his five-decade commitment to providing care to vulnerable populations around the world.

The University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) graduated what Dean Mark Reynolds, DDS, PhD, called “one of the most diverse and accomplished classes of dental graduates in the nation” during UMSOD’s Honors Convocation at the Hippodrome Theatre on May 23.

The 137 new dentists and dental hygienists represented a blend of backgrounds, experiences, and motivations, from first-generation immigrants to those continuing family legacies in health care.

“Faced with unprecedented social and public health challenges over the course of their academic careers, this extraordinary class has contributed thousands of hours of volunteer service over and above their academic requirements in communities in Baltimore, Maryland, and beyond,” Reynolds said.

Among the graduates was Jamaica native Alanzo Aris, DDS, who became the first dentist in his family while honoring the memory of his late mother.

“She passed away when I was a junior at Rutgers,” Aris said. “She’s a big influence of why I’m doing this. She gave me the courage and strength to actually come and finish what I said I was going to do.”

His journey from nervous student to confident practitioner exemplifies the transformation that many of Aris’ fellow graduates underwent during their four years of dental school.

“I remember shaking the first time I anesthetized a patient,” said Aris, who is headed to a dental practice in Oklahoma. “Now, I’m ready to go. I’m laser-focused and ready to be a super general practitioner.”

Another graduate, Nila Lahijan, DDS, represented the continuation of a family tradition, following her mother’s path at the same dental school from which she graduated nearly 30 years ago.

For Lahijan, watching her mother practice dentistry provided the blueprint for her own career aspirations.

“It’s very emotional,” Lahijan said. “I grew up in her office, sitting in the chair looking up at her.”

In a touching moment during the ceremony, Lahijan’s mother, Mahvash Zulfaghary, DDS ’96, performed the traditional hooding for her daughter.



Class of 2025 president Keon Manesh, DDS '25, offers well wishes and congratulations to his fellow graduates.

“Faced with unprecedented social and public health challenges over the course of their academic careers, this extraordinary class has contributed thousands of hours of volunteer service over and above their academic requirements in communities in Baltimore, Maryland, and beyond.”

— DEAN MARK REYNOLDS, DDS, PHD

University of Maryland, Baltimore President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS, conferred the degrees, with academic honors going to top performers including Artemis Metaxa-Kakavouli, DDS, who received summa cum laude recognition from the Doctor of Dental Surgery program, and Bahar Ademoglu, who was summa cum laude for the Bachelor of Science Dental Hygiene Program.

Jarrell also conferred an Honorary Doctor of Public Service degree on Robert E. Morris, DDS '69, MPH, FICD, in recognition of his five-decade commitment to providing care to vulnerable populations around the world.

“Dr. Morris’ career exemplifies the highest ideals of service and compassion,” Reynolds said before the ceremony. “His varied lifelong contributions have significantly improved the health and quality of life for vulnerable populations throughout the world.”

The graduates concluded their academic journey by reciting the convocation oath, pledging to serve humanity and maintain the highest standards of professional ethics and patient care.

James Cope, DDS, clinical instructor in the Division of Prosthodontics, Department of Advanced Oral Sciences and Therapeutics, offered final remarks to the graduating class, sharing a story about a 5-year-old patient who reminded him what truly matters in dentistry.

Cope recounted examining Danny, who opened wide “like any crocodile” and suddenly sat up to tell his mother, “This is a really good day.”

“I left the room that day with my spirits a little brighter and my smile just a little bigger,” Cope said. “As you move forward, I hope you’ll make space for a different kind of focus, the kind that doesn’t come from loupes or microscopes, but from within.”

Cope encouraged the new dentists to pay attention to moments that make their eyes light up, beyond the technical aspects of their profession.

He concluded by asking everyone in the theater to stand and give their neighbor a high-five, saying “This is a really good day” — echoing young Danny’s joyful declaration. **MD**



LEFT TO RIGHT: Gabrielle Coltrane, Stephanie Benitez, Erobomhan Agbonkhese, and Bahar Ademoglu celebrate after receiving their bachelor’s degrees in dental hygiene.



Leon Wright III, DDS '25, gets a little help from his father, Leon Wright, Jr., MD, as his uncle, Anthony K. Wutoh, PhD, RPh, provost and chief academic officer at Howard University, looks on.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Class of 2025 Doctor of Dental Surgery graduates Sophia Heitzig, Sara Hedari Zadi, and Jacob Heath celebrate at UMSOD’s Honors Convocation on May 23 at Baltimore’s Hippodrome Theatre.

Long-Distance Partnerships

Scholars from Bangkok and Baltimore Discuss Collaborative Opportunities

BY HOLLY SELBY

Scholar-clinicians from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand, visited Baltimore in March to explore the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), connect with their Maryland colleagues, and discuss collaborative educational and scientific opportunities.

Their itinerary included visits to UMSOD's classrooms and simulation and research labs as well as walking tours of the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) campus and Dr. Samuel D. Harris National Museum of Dentistry.

The Chulalongkorn group also met with Mark A. Reynolds, DDS, PhD, UMSOD dean, and heard overviews of UMSOD's curriculum and academic programs from Patricia Meehan, DDS, BSN, associate dean of academic affairs, and clinical teaching and international partnerships from Qoot Alkhubaizi, BSc, BChD, MFD RCS (Ireland), MS, clinical associate professor assistant dean of clinical affairs, and director, global partnerships and educational initiatives in Rwanda.

Man-Kyo Chung, DMD, PhD, professor, Department of Neural and Pain Sciences, and assistant dean of research and graduate studies, also offered a brief summary of ongoing research at the school.

"While details are still being finalized, we are excited about potential partnerships in student exchanges and faculty development, including continuing education, and research collaborations," Reynolds said.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Thanaphum Osathanon, associate dean, Academic and Graduate Affairs; Thantrira Porntaveetus, associate dean, Research Affairs, both of Chulalongkorn University; Mark Reynolds, UMSOD dean; Pornchai Jansisyanont, dean, Faculty of Dentistry; Supreda Suphanantachai Srithanyarat, assistant dean, International Affairs; and Tanit Arunratanothai, Dental Education Unit, all of Chulalongkorn University

Noting that in 2001, Pornchai Jansisyanont, DDS, MSc, PhD, professor and dean of Chulalongkorn University, earned a Master of Science degree in Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology at UMB, he added: "I am pleased that Dean Jansisyanont was able to visit our campus again and that our Chulalongkorn colleagues had this opportunity to connect with our faculty and staff and explore collaborative opportunities." **MD**



International Connections

Robert Windsor, DDS, FICD, director of clinical operations, Division of General Practice, Department of Comprehensive Dentistry, University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), led a group of doctors and professors from Wannan Medical College in Wuhu, China, on a tour of UMSOD on Dec. 9.

The delegation from China visited UMSOD to explore collaborations between University of Maryland, Baltimore schools and Wannan Medical College. While on campus, the delegation also toured the University of Maryland Medical Center and Children's Hospital.

UMSOD's Robert Windsor, standing at center left, led about 20 professors and doctors from Wannan Medical College on a tour of the School of Dentistry's clinics.

UMSOD Building Receives Upgrades Inside and Out

Outside the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), construction workers are placing bricks and enhancing the building's west façade. Inside, workers and technicians are laying new flooring, installing X-ray machines, and positioning cabinetry — upgrades aimed at enhancing clinical efficiency, student learning, and patient experience.

The exterior work, launched in September 2024 and scheduled for completion in late 2025, encompasses repairs to the brick work for the west side, outer wall of the building. The interior work, launched in May 2024 and scheduled for completion in late September, is a continuation of the school's commitment to ensuring that its clinics are state-of-the-art while supporting a superlative learning environment for students and the highest-quality care for patients.

During the first phase of interior work, UMSOD's Advanced Education in General Dentistry and General Practice clinics on the second floor were renovated, and its three Simulation Labs received new, state-of-the-art equipment as well as fresh paint and flooring.

The second phase encompasses the General Practice, Orthodontics, and Pediatric Dentistry clinics on the third floor and the Endodontics, Periodontics, Prosthodontics, Special Care and Geriatrics, and Plus clinics on the fourth floor.

"The ongoing work is more complicated than that of the last phase because in specialty areas such as Endodontics and Periodontics that require the use of microscopes, we need to keep about half of the rooms online at all times for patient care," said Kent Buckingham, MS, executive director, Office of Information Technology and Facilities.



"A goal as we launched this project was to ensure that we continued to provide excellent oral health training to our students and superlative care to our patients. I feel confident that we are succeeding."

— MARK A. REYNOLDS, UMSOD DEAN

Newly installed upgrades to UMSOD's clinics include new flooring, X-ray machines, and cabinetry.

As with the previous phase, the scheduled work is occurring during the summer months between 4 a.m. and noon to minimize its impact. To keep everyone informed about the plan, in-person and virtual town halls have been held and a webpage was created to highlight updates. "A goal as we

launched this project was to ensure that we continued to provide excellent oral health training to our students and superlative care to our patients. I feel confident that we are succeeding," said Mark A. Reynolds, DDS, PhD, UMSOD dean. **MD**

— HOLLY SELBY



We'd Like to Hear from You!

Magazines, like so much else in life, can benefit from being refreshed and rethought. With that in mind, we'd love to hear what you like most about your alumni magazine and what you'd like to read about more often.

Stories about students? News about cutting-edge research? Updates about your fellow graduates? Features about faculty successes?

Please let us know what you're most interested in reading about your alma mater by taking this six-question, online survey that can be found here: www.dental.umaryland.edu/MDental_Survey.

Expert Care ByTheNumbers

The University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) Faculty Practice, located on the first floor of the school at 650 W. Baltimore St. in Baltimore, provides dental services that range from general dentistry and orthodontics to endodontics and sleep medicine. Here is a numerical snapshot of UMSOD's Faculty Practice:

8

Specialty services: general dentistry, endodontics, periodontics, prosthodontics, orthodontics, facial pain, sleep medicine, and oncology and diagnostic sciences

32

Full-time faculty oral health care practitioners

3

Full- or part-time dental hygienists

7

Full-time dental assistants

16

Operatories

3,444

Patients treated*

8,336

Patient visits*

15,250

Procedures completed*

** Data drawn from Fiscal Year 2024*

Brushing Beauty

UMSOD Graduate's Artistry Included in UMB Art Journal

BY HOLLY SELBY



UMSOD alumnus
Raman K. Jassal,
creator of "Cloudy
Reflections at Acadia"



The muted blues, grays, and greens of water, hills, and sky in Raman K. Jassal's painting seem to shimmer and hint of shoals and ripples, wind in branches, and passing clouds.

"Cloudy Reflections at Acadia," an oil painting on stretched cotton canvas by Jassal, DDS '85, was among the artwork made by members of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) community and featured in the latest issue of *1807: An Art & Literary Journal*. The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) publication showcases art created by its students, faculty, staff, alumni, and neighbors.

Other UMSOD artists whose work is included in the issue are Miles Delmar, electron microscopy research specialist, UMSOD and University of Maryland School of Medicine, whose striking photograph, "Farming the Wind," depicts a wind farm in eastern Oregon; Oksana Mishler, RDH, MS, DHSC, whose cheerful woodwork is titled "Sunflowers"; Janet Yellowitz, DMD, MPH, retired director, Special Care and Geriatrics, whose metalwork, "Twosome," uses recycled watch band parts to portray two intricately designed pigs; and Karen L. Faraone, DDS, MA, Dean's Faculty member, whose photograph, "Ginger Creek," captures the serenity of an Annapolis waterway at daybreak.

After privately practicing for more 37 years, Jassal, who also is a retired Air Force veteran, rediscovered his love of art. Noting that over the years the artistry involved in dentistry fueled his passion for precision and creativity, he says he is "inspired by my surroundings and the beauty of nature."

"I work primarily in oil on canvas, using a combination of thick impasto and delicate glazes to create depth and luminosity of my work. As I paint, I evoke my inner thinking or vibration and transfer that image on the canvas," said Jassal, who was inspired to paint the piece featured in *1807* after visiting Acadia National Park in Maine and coming across the beautiful scenery of mountains with entrhralling reflections in the lake.

Launched in 2019, UMB's journal has inspired four outdoor art galleries on campus designed to celebrate a selection of artworks from its issues. The latest contemporary art space, known as Pearl Gallery North, was celebrated May 1 with a festive reveal and includes works depicting a beaded mermaid, a series of images from the Super Blood Wolf total lunar eclipse, a colorful glass sculpture, and much more. **MD**

UMSOD Postdoctoral Students Receive National Award for Best Oral Research Presentation

University of Maryland School of Dentistry doctoral candidates Najwa Yousef, BDS, chief resident, Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology (OMP), and Shahd Alajaji, BDS, both in the Division of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Research, received the prestigious American Academy of Oral & Maxillofacial Pathology (AAOMP) Gorlin Award for Best Research Oral Presentation.

Yousef and Alajaji are under the mentorship of Ahmed Sultan, BDS, PhD, assistant professor; director, Advanced Program in OMP; and director, Division of AI Research, Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences.

Titled "Spatial Transcriptomic Characterization of Proliferative Leukoplakia," the doctoral candidates' presentation describes research informing the basis for redefining an ideal ground truth for AI research studies that are being conducted by the Division of AI Research. The honor was announced April 6, 2025, at the AAOMP Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh.

— HOLLY SELBY



LEFT TO RIGHT: Ahmed Sultan, assistant professor and director, Advanced Program in Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, and director, Division of AI Research; John Basile, DDS, DMSc, associate professor, Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences; and Najwa Yousef, BDS, chief resident, Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, at the AAOMP meeting. Not shown: Shahd Alajaji, PhD, BDS, former lab member, Division of AI Research.

Champion of Pediatric Oral Health, UMSOD's Dhar Honored with Excellence in Public Service Award

BY BETHANY PROBST

Vineet Dhar, BDS, MDS, PhD, clinical professor and chair, Department of Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry, and assistant dean of postgraduate and professional studies in dentistry at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), received a 2025 University System of Maryland (USM) Board of Regents Faculty Award for Excellence in Public Service.

Each year, the USM board recognizes distinguished faculty members in five categories. The public service award honors exceptional commitment to community engagement and public impact. "This award is the highest honor that the board bestows to recognize exemplary faculty achievement," chair Linda R. Gooden, MBA, wrote in a letter announcing the recipients.

Dhar is renowned for his contributions to pediatric oral health, particularly in expanding access to care for underserved populations. Through his leadership, research, and advocacy, he has played a vital role in shaping evidence-based policies and advancing public health dentistry in Maryland and beyond.

"This award reflects not just my individual efforts, but also the collaborative work of dedicated colleagues, students, and community partners who share my commitment to expanding access to quality oral health care for all children," he said.

At UMSOD, Dhar heads the Oral Health for Underserved Uninsured Children Program, which delivers essential dental care in the Baltimore area. Under his leadership, the program has created a dental home for nearly 1,500 families and earned multiple grants and legislative support for its innovative work in advancing health equity.

A graduate of Leadership Maryland's Executive Program, a statewide initiative that connects professionals from public and private sectors with a goal of advancing the state, Dhar serves as director of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD). In 2024, he received the Foundation of the College of Diplomates Dr. Ronald A. Bell Mentor of the Year

"This award reflects not just my individual efforts, but also the collaborative work of dedicated colleagues, students, and community partners who share my commitment to expanding access to quality oral health care for all children."

— VINEET DHAR, BDS, MDS, PHD



Courtesy of USM

UMSOD's Vineet Dhar stands with Jay A. Perman, MD, chancellor of the University System of Maryland, after receiving his Board of Regents Faculty Award.

Award, honoring his dedication to guiding the next generation of pediatric dentists.

A nationally recognized leader in evidence-based dentistry, he also has received AAPD's Suzi Seale Coll Evidence-Based Dentistry Service Award twice (2022 and 2024) for his contributions to evidence-based research.

Over the past decade, he has earned numerous other accolades for his scholarly work, including the 2018 Evidence-Based Dentistry Mid-Career Faculty Award from the American Dental Association and the American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research.

"This honor will further motivate our team to continue developing innovative

approaches to pediatric oral health challenges," Dhar said. "By bridging research, education, and community service, we can create sustainable solutions that make a meaningful difference in children's lives and advance health equity in Maryland and beyond." **MD**

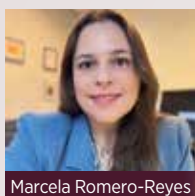
Lasting Impressions

Laurels *In celebration of faculty accomplishments*



Simon Akerman

Simon Akerman, PhD, associate professor and vice chair, and **Marcela Romero-Reyes, DDS, PhD**, clinical professor and director, Brotman Facial Pain Clinic, both in the Department of Neural Pain Sciences, received the Steven Graff-Radford and Robert E. Merrill Award to recognize their research in the field of orofacial pain and headache at the 18th Annual Headache Cooperative of the Pacific Winter Conference in January 2025.



Marcela Romero-Reyes

Guilherme Arossi, DDS, MSc, PhD, clinical assistant professor, Department of Comprehensive Dentistry, was the main speaker at the prestigious 2025 Chicago Midwinter Meeting, one of the country's largest and most influential dental conferences.

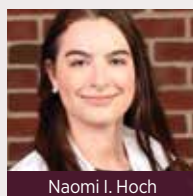


Douglas M. Barnes, DDS '83, MS, professor and chief dental officer, Faculty Practice, was elected president of the Baltimore City Dental Society in January 2025.

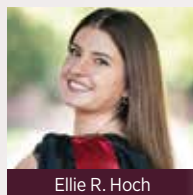


John K. Brooks

John K. Brooks, DDS '79, clinical professor, Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences (ODS); **Ahmed S. Sultan, BDS, PhD**, assistant professor and director, Advanced Program in Oral Maxillofacial Pathology, Division of Artificial Intelligence Research, ODS; **Naomi I. Hoch, DDS '25**; and **Ellie R. Hoch**, Doctor of Dental Surgery student, were among the co-authors of "Alpha-Gal Syndrome: Potential for a Hypersensitivity Reaction After the Use of Dental Products," which was published in the *Journal of American Dental Association* in May.



Naomi I. Hoch



Ellie R. Hoch

Joyce T. Da Silva, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Neural and Pain Sciences, was the co-recipient of a one-year, \$50,000 Innovative Collaboration Pilot Grant from the UMB Institute for Clinical and Translational Research for "Peak Alpha Frequency as a Biomarker of Persistent Post Traumatic Headache."

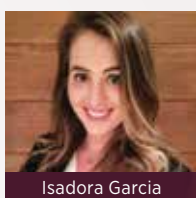




Vineet Dhar, BDS, MDS, PhD, clinical professor and chair, Department of Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry, and assistant dean, Postgraduate and Professional Studies in Dentistry, graduated from Leadership Maryland's Executive Program in December 2024. He was one of 51 individuals chosen by a committee to complete the eight-month hands-on learning program. He also was the keynote speaker at the 44th Annual Scientific Day at the University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry in March.



Carl Driscoll, DMD, FACP, clinical professor, Division of Prosthodontics, Department of Advanced Oral Sciences and Therapeutics, received the 2024 American College of Prosthodontists Dan Gordon Lifetime Achievement Award, which honors individuals who have contributed at the highest level to the welfare and advancement of prosthodontics, dentistry, science, and the health professions.



Isadora Garcia

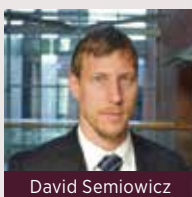
Isadora Garcia, DDS, MSc, PhD, clinical assistant professor, Division of Operative Dentistry and Cariology, and **Mary Anne Melo, DDS, PhD, MSc, FADM, FACD**, clinical professor and chair, both in the Department of Comprehensive Dentistry, were among the co-authors of "Unlocking Tiny Titans: 360 View of the Quantum Dots Nanotechnology for Dental Applications," which was published in *Frontiers in Dental Medicine* in March 2025. Garcia also received a \$7,500 UMB Leaders in Education: Academy of Presidential Scholars grant that will fund the acquisition of a multi-material 3D printer used to fabricate plastic teeth with different textures.



Mary Anne Melo, DDS, PhD, MSc, FADM, FACD, clinical professor and chair, Department of Comprehensive Dentistry, was the keynote speaker at the University of Mississippi Medical Center's Research Day in March 2025, offering valuable insights into the evolving landscape of biomaterials research and its clinical applications.



Mary Ann Jabra Rizk, PhD, professor, Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences, was among the co-authors of "Functional Redundancy in *Candida Auris* Cell Surface Adhesins Crucial for Cell-Cell Interaction and Aggregation," which was published in *Nature Communications* in October 2024, and "SARS-CoV-2 Infection of Salivary Glands Compromises the Production of a Secreted Antifungal Peptide with Potential Implications for Development of Oral Candidiasis," which was published in *PLoS Pathogens* in December 2024.

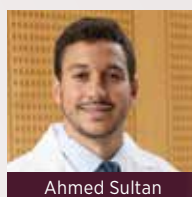


David Seminowicz

David Seminowicz, PhD, adjunct professor, Dean's Faculty, and **Joyce T. Da Silva, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Neural and Pain Sciences, were among the co-authors of "Predicting Individual Pain Sensitivity Using a Novel Cortical Biomarker Signature," which was published in *JAMA Neurology* in January 2025.

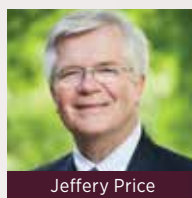


Steven M. Siegel, DMD, part-time clinical assistant professor, was elected president of the American Association of Orthodontists in April.



Ahmed Sultan

Ahmed Sultan, BDS, PhD, assistant professor and co-director, and **Jeffery Price, DDS, MS**, clinical professor and co-director, both in the Division of Artificial Intelligence Research, Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences, were among the co-authors of "Efficacy and Empathy of AI Chatbots in Answering Frequently Asked Questions on Oral Oncology," which was published in *ScienceDirect* in January 2025. Price also presented the keynote address "The Use of AI in Dentistry & Dental Research: Diagnostics, Oral Health Care and Ethical & Medical Considerations" at Marquette University's Research Day on March 27, 2025.



Jeffery Price



Darien Weatherspoon, DDS, MPH, assistant professor, Department of Dental Public Health, was the lead author of "Oral Health Care Use Characteristics in a Limited Sample of Medicare Advantage Beneficiaries, Medicare Advantage Encounter Data 2021," which was published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*.



UMSOD Researchers Featured in ‘Quintessence International’

University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) researchers’ work on abnormal calcification of older adults’ bones was highlighted on the cover of the dental journal *Quintessence International* in March.

Co-authors of the article — “Diffuse Idiopathic Skeletal Hyperostosis (DISH): Incidental Radiologic Finding in an Older Adult” — included **John K. Brooks, DDS**, clinical professor; **Azin Parsa, DDS, MSc, MS, PhD**, clinical associate professor, both in the Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Science (ODS); **Rewa O. Hazim**, Doctor of Dental Surgery Class of 2026; **Sylvan Feldman, DDS, MLA**, clinical associate professor of periodontics and member, UMSOD Dean’s Faculty and Board of Visitors; **Sharon L. Varlotta, RDH, MS**, clinical associate professor, ODS; and **Jeffery B. Price, DDS, MS**, clinical professor, director of radiology, and co-director, Division of Artificial Intelligence Research, ODS.

The report provided an overview of DISH and focused on an 87-year-old man whose cone beam computed tomography findings included ossifications involving two cervical vertebrae, as well as carotid artery calcifications. The researchers suggest that dental health care clinicians examine scans for evidence of DISH and refer affected patients for closer medical evaluation.

— HOLLY SELBY



Study Reignites Debate About Water Fluoridation

A new meta-analysis linking fluoride exposure to lower IQ scores in children has reignited the debate about water fluoridation, even as dental experts emphasize the safety and importance of fluoride at U.S.-recommended levels.

The *JAMA Pediatrics* study, which was published Jan. 6, 2025, analyzed 74 studies and found associations between higher fluoride exposure and lower IQ scores. However, the research primarily examined fluoride levels that are significantly higher than those used in U.S. water systems.

Erica Caffrey, DDS, clinical assistant professor, Division of Pediatric Dentistry, University of Maryland School of Dentistry, and a board-certified pediatric dentist, urged parents not to panic about U.S. water fluoridation programs.

“I encourage all parents and anyone who has concerns regarding fluoride to discuss it with their dentist, with their physician, and with any other health care providers that are involved in their daily lifestyle,” Caffrey told NBC News.

Caffrey, who is chair of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry’s (AAPD) Council for Clinical Affairs, notes that the study focused on countries with much higher fluoride levels than permitted in U.S. water systems. While the study examined fluoride levels of 1.5 parts per million and higher, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends just 0.7 parts per million for community water systems.

While Caffrey supports continued research on fluoride safety, particularly in U.S. populations, she emphasizes that more than 70 years of studies have demonstrated fluoride’s benefits in preventing tooth decay. Multiple major health organizations, including AAPD, the American Medical Association, and the American Dental Association, continue to support fluoride use in multiple formats, including water systems.

“No studies have come out regarding the safety of fluoride in the United States that have shown any detrimental effects on IQ or other cognition,” Caffrey said.

— LAURA LEE

In Appreciation

of the 2024-25 Dean's Faculty

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE PROFESSIONALS WHO GENEROUSLY VOLUNTEER AS MEMBERS OF THE DEAN'S FACULTY. EACH YEAR, THESE PROFESSIONALS DONATE THEIR TIME, ENERGY, AND EXPERTISE TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF ORAL HEALTH LEADERS.

Sunia Abdula-Lessing, DDS
 Ronald Ackerman, DDS
 Oluwayemisi Titilayo
 Akinrefon, DDS
 Sara Aldahmash, BDS, MS
 Guy Alexander, DDS
 Bana Al Haydar, DDS
 Roghieh Atapour, DDS
 Thomas Barron, DDS
 Steven Becker, DDS
 Reza Beheshti, DDS
 Ali Behnia, DMD
 Henry Benavent, DDS
 Louis Berman, DDS
 Ignacio Blasi, DDS
 Gonzalo Blasi Beriain, DDS
 Sheldon Bloom, DDS
 Laurie Brenchley, RDH
 Warren Brill, DMD
 Sol Brotman, DDS
 Ashley Brown, DDS
 Saul Burk, DDS
 Paul Bylis, DDS
 Kevin Byrd, DDS
 Deborah Cartee, RDH
 Jerome Casper, DMD
 Natalia Chalmers, DDS

Richard Chang, DMD
 Charles Chen, DDS
 Aleah Cho, DDS, MBA
 Harvey Cohen, DDS
 Gary Colangelo, DDS
 James Coll, DMD
 Paul Corcoran, DDS
 Grant Cylus, DDS
 Nathaniel Dancykier, DDS
 Wendy Daulat, DDS
 Nneka Davis, DMD
 Ronald Davis, DDS
 Seyed Omid Dianat, DDS
 Richard Diaz, DDS
 Vincent DiFabio, DDS
 Charles Doring, DDS
 Douglas Drewyer, DDS
 Shannon Dunphy, RDH
 Allan Dworkin, DDS
 Bruce Dye, DDS
 Ali Eghtesadi, DDS, MBA
 Karim Elrafei, DDS
 Ali Elyassi, DDS
 Ekpa Eyoma, DDS, MPH
 Fazel Fakhari, DDS
 Karen Faraone, DDS

Sylvan Feldman, DDS
 Stephen Gandel, DDS
 James Garner, DDS
 Farnaz Ghane, DDS
 Ioana Ghita, DDS
 Edward Gillis, DDS
 David Gordon, DDS
 Elizabeth Greig-Moore, DDS
 David Harmon, DDS
 Michael Hartman, MD, DMD
 Curtis Hayden, DDS
 Joseph Heher, DDS
 Gal Hershko, DDS
 Daniel Hoch, DDS
 Robert "Mark" Horner, DDS
 Andrew Horng, DDS
 Michael Hsu, DDS
 Peterson Huang, DMD
 Julius Hyatt, DDS
 Fred Hyman, DDS
 Jae Jang, DMD
 Jeffrey Jarvis, DDS
 Chao Ji, BDS
 Beverly Jimenez, DDS

Eric Katkow, DDS
 Susan Katz, RDH
 Wahn Khang, DMD
 Dushanka Kleinman, DDS
 Michael Kleinman, DDS
 Morgan Kneib-Baker, DMD, RDH
 Hakan Koymen, DDS
 Joseph Kravitz, DDS
 Neal Kravitz, DMD
 Melvin Kushner, DDS
 Bryan Lara, DDS
 Alan Wonhee Lee, DDS, MS
 Cameron Lee, DMD
 Henry Lee, DDS
 Lili Leon, DDS
 Martin Levin, DMD
 Xiang Li, DDS
 Christopher Liang, DDS
 Ryan Linn, DMD
 Morris Lustman, DDS
 William Maas, DDS
 Erin Mahoney, DDS
 Saurabh Mannan, DMD
 Marion Manski, RDH, MS
 Philip Markin, DDS, MS
 Christiana Markova, DMD



Thomas Ritter, clinical instructor, Department of Clinical Dentistry, Dean's Faculty, works with a student in the Simulation Lab.



Henry Lee, clinical instructor, Department of General Dentistry, Dean's Faculty, examines a patient as Earl Hurley, Class of 2026, observes.

Darianna Masih, DDS
David Mazza, DDS
Patricia McGuire, RDH
Eugene McNinch, DDS
John Meredith, DDS
Elaine Miginsky, DDS
Julian Moiseiwitsch, BDS, PhD
Charles Morris, DDS
Niki Moutsopoulos, DDS, PhD
Kevin Murphy, DDS
Sathyanathan Nadarajah, DMD
Angela Noguera, DDS
Robert Noppinger, DDS
Ali Nosrat, DDS
Youssef Obeid, DDS
Kristopher Paik, DMD
Gilbert Palmieri, DDS
Si-Woon Park, DDS
Mary Passaniti, DDS
Kathryn Pawlak, DDS
Harold Pincus, DDS
Jeffrey Posnick, DMD
John Powers, DMD
Frederick Preis, DDS

Nicole Quezada, DMD
Michael Raderman, DDS
Roham Rafat, DDS
Steven Rattner, DDS
Michael Rethman, DDS
Thomas Ritter, DDS
Elias Rivera, DDS
Shuyan Rofe, DDS
Paul Rosen, DMD
Barry Rosenthal, DDS
Arash Rostami, DDS
Tarun Saini, DDS
Viney Saini, DDS
John Sawchuk, DDS, FAGD
Richard Schlossberg, DDS
S. Craig Schneider, DDS
MaryAnn Schneiderman, RDH
David Seminowicz, PhD
Francis Serio, DMD
Juheon Seung, DDS
Mohammad Shahegh, DDS
Nahid Shahry, DDS
Shohreh Sharif, DDS
Stuart Sheer, DDS
Preston Shelton, DDS

Paul Shires, DDS
Indra Sidhu, DDS
Victor Siegel, DDS
Carl Simon, PhD
Tanvir Singh, DDS, MS
T.P. Sivakumar, BDS
Terry Slevin, DDS
Harry Snyderman, DDS
Ahad Soleymanzadeh, DDS
Leonard Spector, DDS
Colin Stanhope, DDS, MD
Marina Stasak, RDH, MPH
Dennis Stiles, DDS
Howard Strassler, DMD
Di Sun, DDS
Jirun Sun, PhD
Jon Suzuki, DDS
Sheldon Sydney, DDS
Garima Talwar, DDS
Haley Tate, DDS
Renju Thackenkary, DDS
Robert Tigani, DDS
Stephen Tigani, DDS
Norman Tinanoff, DDS
James Tong, DDS
Mahmoud Torabinejad,

DMD
Bradley Trattner, DDS
Amanda Turner, RDH
Margaret Valega, DDS
Kim-Thi Van-Dinh, DDS
Devender Verma, DDS
Prashant Verma, DDS
Maya Vernon, DDS
Jordan Virden, DDS
Mark Wagner, DDS
William Wahle, DDS
Ian Walker, DDS
Sheng Wang, DDS, PhD
Maria Rosa Watson, DDS, MS, DrPH
Brandon West, DDS
George Whitaker, DDS
Robin Williman, DDS
Julian Woods, DDS
Chihwen "Alec" Yen, DMD
Raha Yousefi, DDS
Lobna Zada, DDS
Mehdi Zamani, DDS

Making Their Spring Break Count

UMSOD Students Offer Oral Health Care to Youths in the Dominican Republic

BY HOLLY SELBY



Photo by Benjamin Hung

It was clear to Daphnie Sumah that the little girl was nervous as she entered the school cafeteria and climbed into the makeshift dental chair. Sumah, a member of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry's (UMSOD) Class of 2026, took a few moments to chat with the child and explain what to expect.

"I gradually watched her begin to relax in the chair," Sumah said. "It was a meaningful interaction that reminded me how taking just a few extra moments to build trust can make a big difference in a patient's experience — especially for children."

Sumah was among eight dental students who spent their spring break on the Samaná Peninsula, in the northeastern part of the Dominican Republic, providing free oral health care to underserved residents.

As part of a collaboration between UMSOD and the Rotary Club of Baltimore, the students and their faculty supervisors spent March 9-13 offering dental treatments to 406 children. The Rotary Club is a nonprofit dedicated to improving lives locally and globally; additional partners in the effort included local Rotarians and other local health care professionals.

UMSOD Dean's Faculty members Ryan Linn, DMD, and Nicole Quezada, DMD, served as supervisors as the students visited the communities of Sanchez and Santa Barbara, where they performed extractions, cleanings, and fillings, and demonstrated proper oral health techniques to the children and their families.

LEFT TO RIGHT: The team of UMSOD student volunteers — Benjamin Hung, Aza Shiao, Natalie Gochar, Colton Wilson, Marilyn Okine, Daphnie Sumah, Emily Nguyen, and Bolu Baiyewu, all members of the DDS Class of 2026, except for Okine (DDS '25) on their first day in the Dominican Republic.



Photo by Emily Nguyen

Benjamin Hung, Class of 2026, uses a "tell-show-do" teaching method to explain a prophylactic dental cleaning to his young patient.



Photo by Benjamin Hung

Daphnie Sumah, Class of 2026, explains the importance of oral health to her patient.

This was the third year that UMSOD students have traveled to the Dominican Republic. The trips are sponsored by Barry W. Rosenthal, DDS '78, who in 2019 established the Barry W. Rosenthal '78 DDS Humanitarian Experiences Fund to provide international volunteer opportunities to dental students.

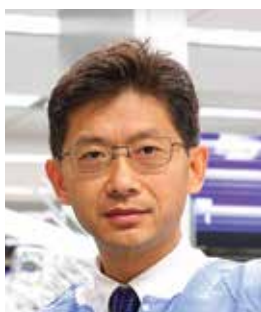
"For one week, we converted a school cafeteria and classroom into a dental clinic. It was an eye-opening experience," Sumah said. "The logistics and planning that went into making this clinic a reality were impressive, and it was inspiring to see how everyone came together to make it a success."

For Benjamin Hung, Class of 2026, who had participated in an overseas trip as an undergraduate, the opportunity to provide hands-on oral health treatment was gratifying.

"It was a rewarding experience to finally be on the other side and treating the patients directly," he said. "I also learned the impact these Rotary trips can have on the community — since the students rotate in every year, we found a good majority of the patients only needed small fillings or cleaning, showing the impact of the Rotarians over time." **MD**

Innovation +Discovery

NIH Awards Nearly \$3.5 Million Grant to UMSOD Researchers to Develop Novel 'C. diff' Treatment



Hanping Feng



Yongrong Zhang

Hanping Feng, PhD, professor and vice chair, and Yongrong Zhang, PhD, research assistant professor, both in the Department of Microbial Pathogenesis, University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), received a five-year, nearly \$3.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to support the development of a novel probiotic yeast- and single-domain antibody (VHH)-based immunotherapy to prevent the transmission of *Clostridioides difficile* (*C. diff*).

C. diff is a gram-positive bacterial pathogen responsible for severe gastrointestinal infections, frequently leading to life-threatening complications,

particularly in health care settings. Often occurring after antibiotic use, *C. diff* symptoms include diarrhea, cramping, fever, dehydration, and potentially severe colon damage.

"This grant accelerates our ability to translate lab discoveries into real-world solutions," Feng said. "Our goal is to create a safe, patient-friendly, and accessible therapy that not only treats *C. diff* but disrupts its transmission cycle, protecting patients and health care systems alike."

The development of a probiotic, yeast-based immunotherapy represents a potentially transformative strategy that could significantly reduce the incidence of *C. diff* infections, improve patient outcomes, and decrease associated health care costs.

The research centers on engineering probiotic yeast to deliver VHHs targeting *C. diff*'s virulence mechanisms.

These VHHs, derived from camelid antibodies, bind to key proteins involved in *C. diff* colonization and spore formation, effectively blocking the bacteria's ability to adhere to intestinal cells and produce resilient spores that spread infections.

Collaborating with biotechnology firm Fzata, which was co-founded by Feng, the team has optimized the yeast to survive gastrointestinal transit, releasing therapeutic VHHs directly into the gut. Early preclinical trials in animal models show promising reductions in *C. diff* burden and spore transmission.

While *C. diff* primarily infects the gut, recent research suggests indirect ties to oral health. Poor oral hygiene can lead to microbial imbalance in the mouth, which may exacerbate systemic inflammation or alter gut microbiota — potentially increasing susceptibility to *C. diff*. Additionally, oral ingestion of *C. diff* spores, such as via contaminated surfaces or hands, is a common transmission route.

"The global antibiotic resistance crisis has prompted us to explore innovative strategies for treating infectious disease," said Zhang. "Our lab has been dedicated to developing therapeutic antibodies and novel antibody delivery platforms. Receiving this grant is both encouraging and inspiring for our team."

Over the next five years, the UMSOD team will focus on refining the probiotic yeast formulation, scaling up production with Fzata, and conducting safety and efficacy testing in preclinical models. Pending successful results, Fzata and the research team would then aim to file for FDA Investigational New Drug (IND) approval to begin Phase I clinical trials in humans in the future. They also will explore partnerships with health care institutions to assess the therapy's impact on reducing hospital-acquired *C. diff* rates. Long-term goals include developing an oral capsule for at-risk populations, such as patients taking antibiotics or undergoing chemotherapy. **MJ**

— HOLLY SELBY

UMSOD's Chu Receives National Award Honoring Early Career Researchers



Emily Chu

Emily Chu, DDS, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Biomaterials and Regenerative Dental Medicine, University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), received the 2025 American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research (AADOCR) William Butler Fellowship.

The annual award, recognizing researchers at the early stages of their scientific careers, was presented in March during AADOCR's annual meeting, which was held in New York in conjunction with the Canadian Association for Dental Research's Annual Meeting.

Since arriving at UMSOD in June 2021, Chu has focused on identifying the influence of phosphate and pyrophosphate modulators in cementum development, maintenance, and regeneration. Her work also seeks to identify tooth phenotypes associated with disorders of mineralization. Because cementum integrity is critical for a healthy periodontium, defective cementum can lead to periodontal disease.

"The Butler Fellowship offers opportunities to expand our research objectives beyond cementum," Chu said. "It will let us use techniques aimed at deep phenotyping of mineralized tissues."

Although few therapies currently target cementum regeneration, Chu and others have found in previous studies that acellular cementum formation is exceptionally sensitive to pyrophosphate. (Pyrophosphate inhibits calcium crystallization and deposition, and pyrophosphate compounds are used in toothpastes and mouthwash to prevent tartar and plaque formation.)

A key regulator of pyrophosphate is ectonucleotide pyrophosphatase phosphodiesterase 1 (ENPP1), which causes skeletal and dental disturbances when lost. ENPP1 mutations are implicated in generalized arterial calcification of infancy (GACI, a rare disease). Individuals with GACI and associated animal models exhibit hypercementosis.

Chu's lab is investigating the contributions of different ENPP1 functions to cementum and other mineralized tissues of the oral cavity. The researchers' goal is to determine whether ENPP1 and other pyrophosphate regulators are potential targets for promoting cementum formation when the periodontium is compromised.

The oral cavity presents a unique opportunity to study four distinct mineralized tissues: cementum, dentin, enamel, and alveolar bone. Because of her interest in mineralized tissues, when conducting cementum analyses, Chu's lab also investigates the effects of pyrophosphate (and other regulators of mineralization) on dentin, enamel, and bone.

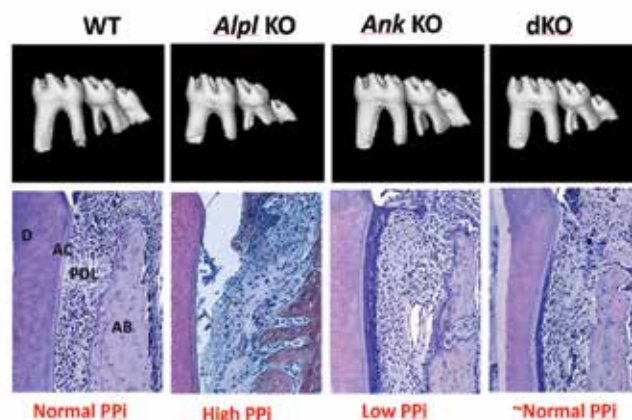
Chu earned her Doctor of Dental Surgery and PhD degrees at the University of Washington School of Dentistry, where she received funding from several sources, including a T32 Institutional Research Training Grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that supports research being conducted by predoctoral and postdoctoral students, and an F30 Individual Predoctoral Dual Degree Fellows Award from the NIH. During her fellowship at the NIH, she earned an NIH Pathway to Independence Award (K99/R00), allowing her to establish her independent research program at UMSOD.

At UMSOD, Chu received a 2023 IN-SPIRE Award in collaboration with Frederico C. Martinho, DDS, MSc, PhD, clinical professor and director of predoctoral endodontics, Division of Endodontics. The award recognizes promising projects developed as a collaboration among faculty members of two different departments.

Chu's next steps include establishing collaborations to expand her research in mineralized tissues, as well as continuing to teach.

"I am very grateful for the opportunities and mentorship I have received throughout my education and career," Chu said. "I hope to provide the same commitment, dedication to high standards, and mentorship to future students." **MJ**

— HOLLY SELBY



Acellular cementum growth is inversely proportional to PPI levels (from Chu et al. *Bone* 2020). Cementum, along the root surfaces, is critical for periodontal integrity. When disrupted, for example in an alkaline phosphatase knockout (*Alpl* KO) mouse model, which has high PPI levels, cementum formation is inadequate, which results in periodontal detachment. In contrast, in cases of low PPI — e.g., when progressive ankylosis protein (*Ank*) or ectonucleotide pyrophosphatase/phosphodiesterase (ENPP1) is ablated — hypercementosis results. In *Ank*, *Alpl* double knockout mice, where PPI is normalized, cementum thickness also becomes more normalized, demonstrating the importance of PPI in cementogenesis.



Congratulations to Our 2025 “Top Dentists”

We're proud to announce that 12 University of Maryland School of Dentistry faculty members have been recognized as Top Dentists by *Baltimore* magazine for their expertise in seven clinical specialties.

Dental Anesthesiology



Marvin Leventer, DDS

Clinical Assistant Professor,
Oral-Maxillofacial Surgery,
Pediatric Dentistry

Endodontics



Patricia Tordik, DMD

Clinical Professor and Division Chief,
Endodontics

General Dentistry



Douglas Barnes, DDS, MS

Professor, Advanced Education
in General Dentistry



Lisa D'Affronte, DDS

Clinical Assistant Professor,
General Practice

Oral-Maxillofacial Surgery



John Caccamese, MD, DMD

Professor, Oral-Maxillofacial Surgery,
University of Maryland Schools
of Medicine and Dentistry



Karen Garber, DMD

Clinical Associate Professor,
Oral-Maxillofacial Surgery



Joshua Lubek, MD, DDS

Professor, Oral-Maxillofacial Surgery,
University of Maryland Schools
of Medicine and Dentistry

Oral Pathology



John Basile, DDS, DMSC

Associate Professor,
Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences

Periodontics



Mary Beth Aichelmann-Reidy, DDS

Clinical Associate Professor and
Division Chief, Periodontics



Mark Reynolds, DDS, PhD, MA

Dean and Professor, University of
Maryland School of Dentistry



Harlan Shiau, DDS, DMedSC

Clinical Associate Professor,
Periodontics

Prosthodontics



Radi Masri, DDS, PhD, MS

Professor and Division Chief,
Prosthodontics

Faculty Practice & Student Clinic Locations:



Baltimore City

University of Maryland School of Dentistry
650 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201
410-706-7101




Montgomery County

The Universities at Shady Grove
Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Building
9631 Gudelsky Drive, Suite 2135
Rockville, MD 20850
240-665-6700



Accepting new patients for general, pediatric and specialty dental care.



Jade Harris, CDHL
Class of 2026,
prepares to capture
images of a patient's
mouth to check for
cavities and bone
health.

Honing Hands-On Techniques, Polishing People Skills

Dental and dental hygiene students gain experiential training while working with diverse populations at the Universities at Shady Grove clinic.

BY HOLLY SELBY

While on rotation at the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) Dental Clinic and Patient Care Facility, Nila Lahijan, DDS '25, gained hands-on experience through her work on cases ranging from new patient evaluations and extractions to removable prosthodontics and a bridge. But she recalls one in particular: treating a patient who suffered from significant dental anxiety.

"The clinic had a weighted blanket available, which completely changed his experience. He told us it was his best dental visit ever and requested the blanket for future appointments," she said. "It was an example of how small touches can make a big impact."

Details that may enhance patient comfort frequently come up in conversations at the Shady Grove dental clinic, which is located in a light-filled, state-of-the-art building on the USG campus in Rockville, Md. The 5-year-old facility offers comprehensive dental and emergency care in an educational environment to residents of Montgomery County and the greater Washington, D.C., area, with particular emphasis on expanding access to oral health care to underserved populations.

Operated by the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), the clinic serves as a rotation site for fourth-year predoctoral dental students, endodontic residents, and Advanced Education in General Dentistry residents. It also is home to UMSOD's Clinical Dental Hygiene Leader (CDHL) dual-degree program, which allows students with a science background to complete Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in two years.





“We really aim to create a space where our students can treat patients from a variety of backgrounds in a community-based setting. We also focus on the accessibility, affordability, and quality of the patient-centered care we offer.”

— HALIMA KARIM, DIRECTOR AND CLINICAL INSTRUCTOR, DIVISION OF GENERAL PRACTICE-SHADY GROVE

‘An Immersive Environment’

“We really aim to create a space where our students can treat patients from a variety of backgrounds in a community-based setting,” said Halima Karim, DDS, FAGD, FACD, director and clinical instructor, Division of General Practice-Shady Grove. “We also focus on the accessibility, affordability, and quality of the patient-centered care we offer.”

Between 30-40 percent of dental patients at Shady Grove prefer to communicate in Spanish; others prefer French or Mandarin. “Languages spoken by our team include Spanish, Tagalog, French, Arabic, and Hindi,” Karim said. “This multilingual capacity is a great asset in serving our diverse patient base by building community trust.”

Through a partnership with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the clinic aims to provide dental care to uninsured patients, establish dental homes, and offer specialized dental services to those in need. “We also serve as a referral site for health centers such as CCI Health Services as well as organizations like Mercy Health Clinic; Holy Cross Clinics; Primary Care Coalition; WUMCO, Help, Inc; and various private practices,” she said.

Fourth-year dental students rotate through Shady Grove for two weeks in the summer and fall and one week in the spring; about 10 students are in each cohort. In addition to working with diverse populations, the dental and dental hygiene students gain “exposure to a wide range of complex dental cases and direct faculty mentorship. It’s an immersive environment that blends classroom learning with real-world clinical experience,” Karim said.



Benjamin Hung, DDS Class of 2026, provides dental care to a young patient at the Sealant Saturday event held in February at Shady Grove.

In its fifth year, the CDHL program comprises six new students who entered the program in June, four who are entering their senior year, and three who will graduate at summer’s end. Each completes a traditional dental hygiene curriculum while taking graduate-level courses that include research development and writing and advanced-level education and communication requirements.

“This program challenges the traditional dental hygiene education paradigm by synchronizing Commission on Dental Accreditation-approved educational strategies with community-engaged research and scholarship activities,” said Lisa Bress, RDH, MS, clinical associate professor and chief, Division of Dental Hygiene. “Our graduates are prepared to develop, lead, and critically evaluate public health programs that integrate oral health, primary health and/or behavioral health care services.”



The USG Dental Clinic and Patient Care Facility is housed on the second level of the airy, state-of-the-art Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Education Facility located on the USG campus in Montgomery County.



Simran Uddin, CDHL Class of 2026, provides care to a patient.



Cyrano Yee, DDS '25, and Marina Fileva, DDS Class of 2026, examine and treat a patient at the Mission of Mercy event held in April at Shady Grove.



Negar Homayounfar, DDS, MS, assistant professor, Departments of Advanced Oral Sciences and Therapeutics and Comprehensive Dentistry, discusses a case with Ashwant Kaur, DDS, resident, Advanced Education in General Dentistry.

Photo grouping above by Holly Selby

Working Fast, Solving Problems

A typical day at the clinic begins early with a faculty and staff huddle before students arrive to review their charts and prepare for their patients. Morning and afternoon sessions involve comprehensive care under close faculty supervision. The most common treatment needs include preventive care, restorations, periodontal therapy, and extractions.

When working in the Baltimore clinic, dental students are assigned patients with the goal of providing care for the duration of a treatment plan. But during a typical two-week rotation, there might not be enough time for a dental student to complete a patient's entire treatment plan, said Keon Manesh, DDS '25.

Working at Shady Grove offers opportunities to complete a wide range of dental treatments in a relatively short amount of time, he said. "The pace is faster and is a lot more like working in a private practice. You need to be a good problem solver and manage your patient's expectations and succeed no matter the treatment."

Manesh's experience at Shady Grove gave him insights into the barriers to dental care faced by some patients. One patient traveled two hours by bus for a two-hour consultation. "You realize how fortunate we are [to have easy access to care] and how motivated some patients are to get treatment," he said.

"The pace is faster and is a lot more like working in a private practice. You need to be a good problem solver and manage your patient's expectations and succeed no matter the treatment."

— KEON MANESH, DDS '25

The clinic has hosted several events designed to broaden access to oral health care to area residents who might not have a regular dentist — and to encourage those who come for a visit to return for oral health care on a regular basis.

Last February, the Shady Grove clinic organized its first Sealant Saturday event, which allowed the CDHL students to perform oral screenings and place sealants on children in second and third grades. And in April, the clinic partnered with Catholic Charities to hold a Mission of Mercy event, which offers a day of free dental care to underserved populations.

"These initiatives are vital not only for the school and its students but also for the wider community, as they provide essential services to those without insurance," Karim said. "Through our collaborative efforts, we've effectively connected the community with essential resources, including blood pressure screenings through the University of Maryland School of Nursing. We've also provided guidance on enrolling in medical and dental insurance, ensuring that residents have access to comprehensive health care services with the help of Maryland Health Connection."

Many of the patients seen by Elvia Jimenez Ciriaco, DDS '25, mentioned how convenience and proximity of care play a role in their decision to seek dental care. "The rotation definitely impacted my approach to dentistry," she said. "It reinforced the importance of community-based care and made me reflect on how access and location all play a role in how patients receive and respond to treatment." **MD**

The Dean's Scholarship for Leadership & Excellence is supported primarily by UMSOD's "Socks for Scholarships" fundraising effort. Donors making a minimum gift or pledge of \$100 receive a pair of UMSOD socks as a thank you. For more information, visit www.dental.umaryland.edu/give/sock24.



FANTAS

*Introducing the 2025 DEA
for Leadership & Excellence Recipients*



JIMENEZ
CIRIACO



GAO



HUNG

TIC

N'S SCHOLARSHIP

— BY HOLLY SELBY

4



The University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) is pleased to announce the 2025 recipients of the Dean's Scholarship for Leadership & Excellence. In its fifth year, the honor celebrates and supports outstanding student leaders who aspire to have a positive impact on their communities.

"Each year, this scholarship makes a tangible difference to our superlative students, supporting them so that they can maintain their focus on academic excellence, professional development, and service," said Mark A. Reynolds, DDS, PhD, UMSOD dean and professor.

"The range of achievements, contributions, and aspirations of the four students selected this year is quite impressive," he added. "I am very pleased to have the opportunity to congratulate and commend our 2025 Dean's Scholarship for Leadership & Excellence recipients."

Read about the 2025 recipients on the following two pages.



**ELVIA JIMENEZ
CIRIACO**
DDS '25

Growing up in South Florida, **Elvia Jimenez Ciriaco** was aware of how diligently her parents worked to ensure that their three children would thrive. As Hispanic immigrants, her mother and father worked in a variety of positions that frequently offered few or no benefits.

"But my mom always made it a point to take us to the doctor and dentist," Jimenez Ciriaco said. "I have many memories of waiting rooms at community centers because the wait was always long."

Those experiences fueled Jimenez Ciriaco's desire to become a dentist. "One of the things I like about practicing dentistry is being able to make a difference," she said. "The ability to help people in need — especially when there is a language barrier — means a lot."

Jimenez Ciriaco worked for seven years as a dental assistant while a part-time student at Miami Dade College in Homestead, Fla. After receiving a scholarship, she transferred to Florida International University in Miami as a full-time student, graduating cum laude in 2021 with a Bachelor of Science degree.

"This scholarship has allowed me to focus on my education and community service without the constant worry of financial strain. It serves as a reminder that perseverance and passion for service do not go unnoticed," she said.

As a fourth-year student, she completed an orthodontic clerkship, which allowed her to hone basic didactic and clinical skills. Additionally, she was a 2022 participant in UMSOD's Dental Student Summer Research Training Program, where over a nine-week period she gained firsthand experience in analysis, scientific writing, ethics, and lab safety. Under the guidance of Nasir Bashirelahi, PhD, professor; and Jeffery Price, DDS, MS, clinical professor and director of oral radiology and co-director, Division of Artificial Intelligence Research, both in the Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences, Jimenez Ciriaco was a co-author of "What Every Dentist Needs to Know About the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Dentistry," which was published in the *Journal of General Dentistry* in 2023.

Additionally, Jimenez Ciriaco has focused on addressing health care disparities and language barriers, particularly among Spanish-speaking patients. She was the community service chair of UMSOD's Hispanic Dental Association, a club focused on promoting service and dental awareness through screenings, health fair tables, and distribution of dental hygiene kits. She served in a similar role for UMSOD's Community Outreach and Engagement Club from August 2019 to April 2021.

Jimenez Ciriaco's other volunteer activities included participating in the 2024 Eastern Shore Mission of Mercy, giving oral health presentations at nonprofits such as The Baltimore Station, and leading tours of UMSOD during orientation. A member of the Gamma Pi Delta Prosthodontic Honors Society and UMSOD's Orthodontics Interest Group, Jimenez Ciriaco plans to complete an Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) program in Immokalee, Fla.



LONGHUI GAO
DDS '25

Longhui Gao was 21 years old before he first visited a dentist. He and his parents were living in a small village in Fuzhou, in southeast China, where knowledge of and access to oral health care is limited.

But all things considered, he was lucky. "My older sister was 27 when we went to the dentist, and she needed extractions and root canals. For me, there was mild periodontitis and some cavities," he says.

Seeing his family postpone needed medical or dental treatments because of cost and lack of information piqued Gao's interest in dentistry and instilled a desire to aid the underserved. "Growing up with a lack of general care and knowledge about oral health care made me really interested in dentistry," he said. "It made me want to provide affordable care for people who otherwise couldn't receive it."

As an undergrad at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa., Gao connected students from low-income families with paid research opportunities so they could afford to participate in summer research. As a pre-dental committee member in UMSOD's American Student Dental Association, he led a drive to donate used Dental Admissions Test study materials to low-income students applying to dental school.

"I knew dental school was expensive, but I had no idea how expensive it was to apply to dental school," he said. "I felt like donating our materials to other students was a win-win."

During UMSOD's 2022 Dental Student Summer Research Training Program, Gao investigated the effects of the anti-diabetes drug metformin on the release of pro-angiogenic factors from dental pulp cells, under the mentorship of Abraham Schneider, DDS, PhD, associate professor and chair, Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences. Gao won first place in UMSOD's science poster competition and attended the 27th Hinman Student Research Symposium at the University of Tennessee that October.

He also participated in the University of Maryland, Baltimore's President's Student Leadership Institute, a nine-month interprofessional program aimed at enhancing public speaking and leadership. Since 2023, Gao has volunteered as a student admissions interviewer to help foster a welcoming environment for applicants. He also served as an implant prosthodontics clerk in UMSOD's clinics, honing his proficiency in fixed and removable implant prosthodontic procedures.

Gao is entering a general practice residency at Lehigh Valley Health Network in Pennsylvania with the goal of one day working in private practice in Maryland. But he doesn't rule out also teaching — perhaps one day at UMSOD.

"In college, I had four jobs: working as a student mentor, a campus tutor, a private tutor in chemistry, and an office assistant," he said. "I really liked teaching."



BENJAMIN HUNG
CLASS OF 2026

Benjamin Hung noticed early on that his dentist could put patients at ease by asking a question as simple as “How are you feeling today?”

“I could see the tension and anxiety fade from the patients’ faces as they chatted about their families, recent movies, and holidays,” he says. “I realized that paying attention to small details can foster connection.”

The observation stuck with him.

Hung, who grew up in Laurel, Md., and graduated in 2021 from the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) with a bachelor’s degree in neurobiology and physiology, has taken an interest ever since in building connections and creating welcoming environments.

Fluent in Japanese and Chinese, he’s working on learning Spanish so he can communicate with a wider range of patients. “I plan to use these languages to connect with my patients on a deeper level than a translator could achieve,” he says.

As vice president of the American Student Dental Association (ASDA)-Maryland, and fundraising chair of the Korean American Student Dental Association, Hung has organized presentations on topics such as managing a dental practice and financial literacy.

For ASDA this year, he worked with students from five dental schools to coordinate events for its annual District 3 conference in Hershey, Pa. Hung also provided oral health screenings and fluoride treatments to athletes at the 2024 Special Olympics Maryland and mentored middle and high school students at UMSOD’s 2024 Planet Smilez Summer Camp.

He also has tutored Baltimore middle and high school students in physics, math, and chemistry and taught and supported fellow UMSOD students at “Wax and Relax” and “Drill and Fill” sessions and by serving as a mentor for pre-dental students through ASDA.

Meanwhile, Hung is conducting research focused on resin infiltration materials to help guide clinical decision-making, under the guidance of Mary Anne Melo, DDS, MSc, PhD, FAGD, professor, director of operative dentistry, and chair, Department of Comprehensive Dentistry.

A member of the Gorgas Odontological Honorary Society and Gamma Pi Delta Prosthodontic Honor Society, he participated in the 2024 University of Maryland, Baltimore President’s Student Leadership Institute, an interdisciplinary program that creates opportunities for students in different fields to learn from one another.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to receive this scholarship, and I will continue to strive for the model of leadership and excellence that my fellow recipients and previous scholarship recipients have exemplified,” Hung says.

After graduation, he plans to complete a residency program before practicing general dentistry — and, yes, to teach.



CAMERON WATSON
CLASS OF 2026

One day when **Cameron Watson** was shadowing a dentist, a patient asked the clinician to offer him implants, so that he could eat steak. Several appointments later, the patient was able to do so.

Something about this case clicked with Watson from its origin to its outcome — the patient’s request, the clinician’s interactions and skill, and the difference the treatment made in the patient’s life.

“Dentistry means more than just fixing teeth,” he says. “It means making a lasting impression by the care you provide, how you speak to and treat a patient, and the impact you can have on his life.”

Watson hopes to have such positive patient-dentist interactions in the future as well as a role in oral surgery and prosthetic research. “I really saw the importance of prosthetic research in an ever-changing field like dentistry.”

With that in mind, Watson participated in the University of Maryland School of Dentistry’s (UMSOD) Dental Student Summer Research Training Program before his first and second years at UMSOD. Designed to allow predoctoral students to gain hands-on biomedical research experience under faculty mentorship, the program concludes with a science poster competition.

Watson, who has a bachelor’s degree in biology from Washington College in Chestertown, Md., has continued working as a student researcher or laboratory technician assistant in the labs of UMSOD assistant professors Emily Chu, DDS, PhD, and Hanae Saito, DDS, MS.

Watson is president of the Class of 2026, which allows him to represent his peers as a member of the University of Maryland, Baltimore’s University Student Government Association, act as a confidant to his classmates, and build rapport with faculty and alumni.

“One of the things that I am proudest of is how our class comes together when it’s crunch time. For example, during practicals, we’re sharing information, composites — looking out for one another,” he said.

Raised by a single mother in Washington, D.C., Watson grew up with a keen awareness of how hard she worked to support her children and how personal circumstances affect access to health care. “I saw how much effort it took my mother and grandmother to support me,” he said. “I would like to bridge the gap between dentistry and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

Recent experience volunteering at the Eastern Shore Mission of Mercy in Salisbury, Md., strengthened his resolve.

“When you volunteer at a free clinic, you have a different experience,” Watson said. “Our own biases get diminished, and you see how happy people are to get their teeth cleaned or a tooth extracted.” **MD**

Alumni

From the Alumni Association



Dear Fellow Alumni,

As my second year as president of the Alumni Association Board of Directors closes, I can't help but think about how my life has changed in the past year. I lost my father, Stanley Block, DDS '58, became

a grandmother for the second time, and celebrated my mother's 90th birthday with gratitude that she's still in good health.

With all the wonderful things I have in my life, it grew apparent that it was time to sell my dental practice and spend more time with my family. But, of course, I plan to remain president of our Board of Directors.

Thanks to the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), I've had a successful career in dentistry, first practicing with my father for 18 years, then operating on my own for 21 years. I think fondly about my dental school days and have enjoyed speaking with first-year students as part of UMSOD's orientation the past two summers.

At a UMSOD-sponsored cocktail reception at the Chesapeake Dental Conference, I and 100 alumni connected with each other and learned about what's new at the dental school. The 2025 conference is Sept. 18-20 in Ocean City, Md., and I hope to see you there. In addition, SmileCon

2025, the American Dental Association's annual meeting, will be held Oct. 13-15 in Washington, D.C. If you have not been to SmileCon, you are really missing out. I love the energy that it brings to our profession!

In May, I was honored to speak at UMSOD's 2025 Honors Convocation. I encouraged the graduates to continue to grow and learn and urged them to give back to our profession by getting involved in organized dentistry, joining our alumni association, or teaching at our great institution.

On June 13, the All-Alumni Reunion, honoring classes ending in 5s and 10s, kicked off with the Dr. Harry W.F. Dressel Jr. Memorial Lecture, featuring Fontini V. Anagnostopoulos-King, DMD, clinical assistant professor at UMSOD. Titled "Transcending Impulse and Instinct: Cultivating Frameworks, Moral Courage, and Reflection in Ethical Choices," her timely presentation held great resonance.

Another reunion highlight was our Alumni Awards ceremony. My congratulations to Harold "Hal" L. Crossley, DDS '80, PhD, MS; James Taneyhill, DDS '80, MEd; Dana Godbout Laake, BSDH '87, RDH, MS; and Stephanie L. Dennison, DDS '15, FAGD, recipients of the Distinguished Achievement Award, Distinguished Public Service Award, Linda DeVore Dental Hygiene Award, and the Rising Dental Health Leader Award, respectively. *(Read more about each recipient on pages 32-33.)*

Lastly, please remember that the Alumni Association is here for you if you need any resources or questions answered.

Joanne Block Rief, DDS '86

President | Alumni Association Board of Directors

In Memoriam

We are saddened by the loss of the following alumni, faculty, and friends.

Norman S. Alpher, DDS '57
Steven G. Ashman, DDS '70
Geoffrey M. Berman, DDS '66
John S. Blackard, DDS '68
Henry S. Blank, DDS '71

Charles D. Broe Jr., DDS '57
Carl M. Caplan, DDS '63
F. Jeffery Chyatte, DDS '89
C. Edmund Connelly Jr., DDS '70
William M. Davidson, DMD
Eric W. Donoho, DDS '74
Rhonda E. Eskinazi, DDS '86
Jay H. Feinstein, DDS '66
Burton M. Greifer, DDS '55

Donald P. Lewis, DDS '58
John K. McDonald, DDS '59
Barbara L. Merritt, RDH '81
Paul R. Miller, DDS '74
Antone T. Oliveira Jr., DDS '61
Sanford Paskow, DDS '54
R. Mark Schulz, DDS '74
Joseph J. Smith, DDS '60
Frederick J. Suls

John B. Tullner, DDS '74
Trumer J. Wagner, DDS '66
Michael A. Ward, DDS '77
Gary L. Womer, DDS '63

The school learned of the passing of these alumni, faculty, and friends between Sept. 23, 2024, and May 5, 2025.

In Memoriam

BERNARD LEVY, DDS, MSD



Bernard Levy, a renowned specialist in oral and maxillofacial pathology, longtime educator, and prolific author, died July 28, 2024, at his home in Alexandria, Va. He was 83.

Levy, who began practicing surgical pathology in 1969, developed and directed the resident training in surgical oral pathology program at the University of Maryland Medical System. He held academic appointments in the University of Maryland School of Dentistry's (UMSOD) Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences and the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Department of Pathology, and he was the chief forensic dentist for the Office of the Chief Maryland State Medical Examiner, according to *The Baltimore Sun*.

Levy also was the director of international affairs for UMSOD and served as a consultant to Johns Hopkins Hospital and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He also led curriculum development for governments in Brazil, China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates that sought to expand their professional dental programs. He was published extensively in dental literature from 1966 until his retirement in 2015.

Levy studied zoology at Ohio University, earned a doctorate in dental surgery at Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve), and received a master's degree in oral pathology from Indiana University.

Born on Dec. 20, 1940, to Samuel and Flora Levy in Cleveland, Bernard Levy is survived by his wife, Gail Foster Levy; daughter, Alice Levy Burns of Arlington, Va.; son, David F. Levy of Santa Fe, N.M.; and many other family members.

BARRY L. COHAN, DDS '74, PEDS '76



Barry L. Cohan, a distinguished private practitioner and esteemed member of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry's (UMSOD) Dean's Faculty and Board of Visitors, died April 17, 2025, at the age of 76.

After completing his Doctor of Dental Surgery and certificate in pediatric dentistry at UMSOD, he specialized in temporomandibular joint therapy and facial pain at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. For more than 40 years, he operated a successful private dental practice.

Cohan served as a member of the Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners, was a past president of UMSOD's Alumni Association Board of Directors, and sat on the UMSOD Board of Visitors and the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) President's Roundtable. Beginning in 2011, he volunteered as a part-time assistant professor on the UMSOD Dean's Faculty, spending two days a week teaching residents and undergraduate students in pediatric dentistry and facial pain.

His unwavering commitment to the dental school and profession earned him numerous accolades, including the 2017 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year Award. In 2020, UMSOD named the children's dental facility the Dr. Barry and Mrs. Adele Cohan Pediatric Dental Clinic.

In 2024, Cohan received a UMB Catalyst for Excellence Award, which recognizes individuals who exemplify powerful advocacy for success, achievement, and philanthropy while serving as visionaries for future progress. "Dr. Cohan's journey is one of unwavering commitment to dentistry and community betterment," UMSOD Dean Mark A. Reynolds, DDS, PhD, said at the awards ceremony.

Cohan was a fellow in the American College of Dentists and International College of Dentists and a member of the Pierre Fauchard Academy, Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology, Gorgas Dental Scholarship Honor Society, and Gamma Pi Delta Honor Society in Prosthodontic Dentistry.

He is survived by his wife, Adele; two sons, Jeffrey and Brian; three grandchildren; and sister, Deb.

RICHARD R. RANNEY, DDS, MS



Richard R. Ranney, who was a professor of periodontics and dean of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) from 1991 to 2003, died Nov. 13, 2024. He was 85.

An exemplary researcher, administrator, and leader, Ranney, oversaw important initiatives as dean, including international partnerships, the recruitment of stellar faculty, and impactful research.

When Ranney retired, David J. Ramsay, DM, DPhil, then-president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, noted his work to secure \$94 million from the state for a new UMSOD building. "He can be proud of this lasting achievement ... a new facility to push the limits of dental science and technology," Ramsay said. "His insightful leadership was key to the school's consistently high rankings among dental institutions."

Ranney earned his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and held positions, including chief dental officer, at a U.S. Public Health Service outpatient clinic in Cincinnati before receiving a master's degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and a certificate in periodontics from the Eastman Dental Center.

Ranney began his career as an educator in 1969 as an assistant professor at the University of Oregon. He was appointed dean and professor of periodontics at the University of Alabama in 1986.

Ranney was a member of professional organizations such as the American Dental Association, Pierre Fauchard Academy, American Academy of Periodontology, and International Association for Dental Research, serving as president from 1995-96. He also was president of the American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research from 1990-91.

A UMSOD professor emeritus, he earned the Pierre Fauchard Academy Maryland State Award of Recognition in 2003 and was the American Dental Education Association/William J. Gies Foundation Education Fellow in 2004-05. In 2003, UMSOD named the Richard R. Ranney Dean's Conference Room in his honor.

He is survived by his wife, Patricia, and many family members.

— OBITUARIES BY HOLLY SELBY

Pleased to Meet You

Donors and Recipients Get Acquainted at UMSOD's Annual Scholarship Luncheon

BY HOLLY SELBY



LEFT TO RIGHT: Alan Gorny, DDS Class of 2027; Jean Maddox Jones, sister of the late Elton Maddox Jr., DDS '72; Anita Maddox Jackson, guest speaker and sister of Maddox Jr.; Marilyn Okine, DDS '25; and James M. Jones, brother-in-law of Maddox Jr.



Michael Wright, DDS '99, Prosthodontics '02, MS '02, stands with Brianna Garcia, DDS Class of 2027.



Noting that scholarships play a critical role in dental education, Mark A. Reynolds, DDS, PhD, dean of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), added, "Scholarships signal to students that their hard work and dedication are recognized and that others believe in their potential. By alleviating financial burdens, scholarships allow students to fully dedicate themselves to their studies and clinical training."

His remarks were made at UMSOD's Scholarship Luncheon, an annual event held April 3 at Westminster Hall in Baltimore that featured guest speakers, a luncheon, and plenty of time for conversation.

"Today, we come together to express our gratitude to the generous donors whose support directly impacts the education and future of our students at the School of Dentistry. We also celebrate the achievements of our outstanding students, who benefit from these scholarships and embody the promise of our profession's future," Reynolds said.

Guest speakers included Alan Gorny, a second-year dental student and 2025 scholarship recipient. Additionally, the featured donor speaker, Anita Maddox Jackson, spoke movingly on behalf of her late brother, UMSOD alumnus Elton P. Maddox Jr., DDS '72.

"The Elton P. Maddox Jr. Endowed Scholarship holds a special place in my family's heart as it was established in 2015 shortly after my brother's passing," she said. "Through this scholarship, Dr. Maddox's dream was to continue his legacy of academic excellence, convey his passion for dentistry, and promote the importance of philanthropy."

For Melvin F. Kushner, DDS '66, past chair of UMSOD's Board of Visitors, the annual gathering represents a chance to reconnect with fellow alumni who understand the need to support the next generation of dental professionals. "I love this event. I love the chance to recognize, support and meet the students," he said.

Against the backdrop of the hall's stained-glass windows, alumni, students, faculty and staff met and mingled. Above the attendees' heads, monitors displayed rotating photos of this year's scholarship recipients and thank-you messages.

"I want to sincerely thank the scholarship donors for their generosity in establishing these awards, which provide invaluable support to students like me pursuing our dreams in dentistry," Keon Manesh, DDS '25, said in one digitized message. "Your investment in my journey not only lightens my burden but also inspires me to give back to my community as a dedicated dental professional." **MD**



LEFT TO RIGHT: Benjamin Hung, DDS Class of 2026; Mark A. Reynolds, UMSOD dean; Elvia Jimenez Ciriaco, DDS '25; and Cameron Watson, DDS Class of 2026. The students are three of the 2025 recipients of the Dean's Scholarship for Leadership & Excellence; not pictured here is recipient Longhui Gao, DDS '25.



Melvin F. Kushner, DDS '66, past chair of UMSOD's Board of Visitors, and Vivian Nguyen, DDS Class of 2028



Photo courtesy of Kathryn M. Pawlak

Kathryn Pawlak, recipient of a 2025 ADA 10 Under 10 Award, with Brett Kessler, DDS, ADA president.

UMSOD Alumna Pawlak Honored with ADA's 10 Under 10 Award

Kathryn M. Pawlak, DDS, a 2019 graduate of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) and member of the school's Dean's Faculty, was among the 2025 recipients of the American Dental Association's (ADA) 10 Under 10 Award. The honor recognizes ADA members who have graduated from dental school within the past 10 years, demonstrated excellence, and made a significant impact in the profession.

The award was announced March 29 at Elevate, a leadership conference hosted by ADA in collaboration with the editor-in-chief of *Entrepreneur* magazine.

Known for her commitment to community outreach, Pawlak is a board-certified pediatric dentist practicing in Buffalo, N.Y., and the founder and president of Planet Smilez, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting oral health education for at-risk populations.

As a first-year dental student, Pawlak launched the Planet Smilez Discovering Dentistry Camp in partnership with the University of Maryland, Baltimore CURE Scholars Program, offering mentoring and immersive learning experiences to prepare middle and high school students for potential careers in oral health. Since graduating, she has returned to UMSOD annually to engage students through hands-on activities such as suturing, resin restorations, and the management of traumatic dental injuries.

In response to the national shortage of oral health professionals, Pawlak expanded her efforts by creating the Planet Smilez Discovering Dentistry Symposium, a full-day outreach event focused on students from dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). In 2024, she collaborated with the Maryland Department of Health's Office of Oral Health and UMSOD dental students to deliver immersive learning experiences across three HPSA regions in Maryland.

This year, Pawlak and Planet Smilez senior leadership members Ryan Shargel, DDS '19; Lauren Gritzer, DDS '22, MPH; Kristine Oladipo, DDS '19, MS; and Anthony Petito, DDS '93, MD, FACS, plan to expand the Discovering Dentistry Symposium to 10 locations across the country with support from Delta Dental. During the summer, Pawlak is bringing the event to UMSOD as part of her efforts to address workforce shortages and improve access to care in underserved communities.

"This recognition from ADA is incredibly meaningful to me, and I am truly grateful for the education, mentorship, and support I received during my time at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry," she said. "The UMSOD faculty and leadership played a pivotal role in my development, not only as educators but also as mentors who inspired and guided me throughout my journey. It is a privilege to serve alongside them as a member of the Dean's Faculty, contributing to the same legacy of excellence and mentorship that shaped my own path." **Md**

— HOLLY SELBY

Congratulations to the 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award Honorees

Each year, the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) presents four categories of awards to honor outstanding alumni. The four recipients were celebrated at an awards ceremony June 13 as part of UMSOD's All-Alumni Reunion Weekend.

DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT ALUMNI AWARD

Harold "Hal" L. Crossley, DDS '80, PhD, MS



In recognition of his international reputation and public service as an expert on street drugs, chemical dependency, and clinical pharmacology, as well as his commitment to teaching and mentoring the next generation of oral health and law enforcement leaders, Hal Crossley is the 2025 Distinguished Achievement

Alumni Award honoree.

This award honors a University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) graduate for significant professional accomplishments in science, dentistry, or education.

Crossley graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 1964 and then earned a master's degree and a PhD in pharmacology. After joining UMSOD, he completed a doctoral degree in dentistry. In his career, Crossley has excelled as a pharmacist, pharmacologist, educator, author, dental practitioner, and accomplished speaker who has instructed dental students and other dental clinicians and law enforcement officers throughout the world.

He attributes his wide-ranging professional path to keeping his mind open to changes. "Don't get so mired down in what you're doing that you don't seize an opportunity, because it could change the whole direction of your life," he said in 2004.

Frequently referred to as "Your pal, Hal," Crossley often was requested by dental students to serve at their graduation ceremonies, was voted Teacher of the Year several times, and is a popular draw at UMSOD's Continuing Education classes. "I don't teach just because it's a job. I try to instill in students a sense of excitement and enthusiasm," he said.

Crossley, a Professor Emeritus, helped to write the first edition of the "Drug Information Handbook for Dentistry" with Richard L. Wynn, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Department of Neural and Pain Sciences, and Timothy F. Meiller, DDS, PhD, professor, Department of Oncology and Diagnostic Sciences, both of UMSOD. Now in its 30th edition, it is the most recognized chairside dental drug reference book.

After a chance encounter with members of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Crossley was asked to speak to law enforcement officers. Soon after, he was speaking at countless law enforcement agencies throughout the country, leading courses on the pharmacology of street drugs including heroin and cocaine.

For almost 40 years, Crossley served on the Maryland State Dental Association's Well-Being Committee. He is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, Omicron Kappa Upsilon National Dental Honor Society, the American College of Dentists, and the International College of Dentists. He served as a consultant for the DEA and other law enforcement agencies and, in 2008, received the Gordon J. Christensen Lecturer Recognition Award from the Chicago Dental Society. Crossley is one of 12 dentists (in 113 years) to be honored as a member of the Thomas P. Hinman Dental Society.

Upon his retirement from UMSOD in 2004, he said, "I've just had a wonderful experience. I've been blessed with good health, a wonderful family, and friends. I feel very fortunate."

— UMSOD STAFF

DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE ALUMNI AWARD

James Taneyhill, DDS '80, MED



To honor his decades-long commitment to service, clinical excellence, and leadership in military and civilian dentistry, James Taneyhill is the 2025 Distinguished Public Service Alumni Award winner.

This award recognizes a graduate for outstanding professional leadership and contributions to the University of Maryland

School of Dentistry (UMSOD) and the community.

"I believe that all dentists, and me, have been blessed," Taneyhill said. "I can't think of a higher honor that I could have received in our profession."

After earning Bachelor of Science in English and Master of Education degrees from Loyola University Maryland, Taneyhill pursued his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree at UMSOD, graduating in 1980 through the school's Accelerated Professional Training Program. He then completed a general practice residency at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Baltimore.

His professional journey has combined private practice, public health, teaching, and military service. From 1981 to 2013, Taneyhill maintained a private general dentistry practice in Bel Air, Md., with a clinical focus on advanced restorative, implant, cosmetic dentistry, and non-surgical temporomandibular joint therapy. He also served as a lecturer and clinical consultant at the Baltimore VA Medical Center from 2001 to 2013, mentoring the next generation of dental professionals.

From 2012 to 2024, Taneyhill served as a contract dentist with the Maryland Army National Guard, bringing compassionate dental care to service members. His military involvement reflects a broader dedication to service — he retired as a colonel in Army Aviation and remains an active member of the National Guard Association of the United States.

In 2003, Taneyhill founded a dental clinic at the Bon Samaritan School in St. Marc, Haiti, providing much-needed oral health care to underserved communities. In 2011, he expanded his outreach by founding a second clinic at the Our Daily Bread Employment Center in Baltimore.

Committed to lifelong education, Taneyhill has completed more than 500 hours of continuing education at esteemed institutions. His professional affiliations include fellowships and leadership roles in the Academy of General Dentistry, the International College of Dentists (Deputy Regent, Maryland), and the Baltimore Association of Dental Surgeons, where he served as chair. He also is a past president of the Harford-Cecil County Dental Association and a retired member of the American Dental Association and Maryland State Dental Association.

Beyond dentistry, Taneyhill is a Knight of the Order of Malta and serves as treasurer for the group's Baltimore region. He also is a member of the Sailing Club of the Chesapeake and has a history of community engagement efforts that reflects a life lived in service to others.

Taneyhill's legacy is one of quiet leadership, steadfast service, and tireless commitment to improving lives — whether in the clinic, the classroom, or communities near and far.

— BETHANY PROBST

RISING DENTAL HEALTH LEADER ALUMNI AWARD

Stephanie Dennison, DDS '15, FAGD



For her dedication to advancing oral health equity and leadership in dental education and interprofessional collaboration, Stephanie Dennison is the 2025 Rising Dental Health Leader Alumni Award honoree.

This award recognizes a University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD)

graduate from the past decade whose achievements have positively impacted the perception of the dental profession and who has shown outstanding service to the community.

"It is truly incredible to watch the transformation that takes place in a student as they progress through their clinical training," said Dennison, a clinical assistant professor and general practice director in the Department of Comprehensive Dentistry at UMSOD. In that role, she teaches and mentors predoctoral dental students. She also provides comprehensive, state-of-the-art general dentistry to patients at U.M. FDSP Associates, a nonprofit affiliate of UMSOD.

After graduating from Penn State University's Schreyer Honors College in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology, Dennison earned a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree in 2015 from UMSOD, where she was awarded the Quintessence Award for Academic Excellence and the Dean's Outstanding Community Service Award. She completed an Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) residency at NYU Lutheran Medical Center in 2016.

"My father was my initial inspiration to pursue a career in health care," she said. As a physician, "he worked tirelessly for his patients. Growing up, I was able to see how his efforts translated to patient health and well-being."

As a recipient of the National Health Service Corps four-year scholarship, Dennison committed herself to serving underserved communities. From 2016 to 2018, she worked as a lead general dentist at Choptank Community Health System in Cambridge, Md., where she played a pivotal role in establishing a prenatal dental referral program, extended treatment hours, and provided dental care for migrant patient populations.

She also served as clinical faculty for the NYU Lutheran AEGD program and supervised dental student externs from UMSOD and the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health. She continued her mission-driven work at Chase Brexton Health Care from 2018 to 2022.

Dennison joined UMSOD as a full-time faculty member in April 2022, mentoring third- and fourth-year dental students, directing the course Diagnostic Competency for Class II and Class III Caries, and engaging in research. She received a 2022-23 University of Maryland, Baltimore Center for Interprofessional Education seed grant for a project integrating dental providers into sleep medicine teams to address obstructive sleep apnea.

Dennison is a fellow of the Academy of General Dentistry and a certified dentist with the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM). She also is a member of organizations including the American Dental Education Association, AADSM, and American Association of Women Dentists.

— BETHANY PROBST

LINDA DEVORE DENTAL HYGIENE ALUMNI AWARD

Dana Godbout Laake, RDH, MS



For her transformative work on behalf of her profession and innovative solutions for those living with complex health conditions, Dana Godbout Laake is the 2025 Linda DeVore Dental Hygiene Alumni Award.

The annual award recognizes a dental hygiene graduate of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) who

represents the integrity, intellectual curiosity, community-mindedness, and leadership epitomized by the late DeVore. Active in dental hygiene education, scholarship, and public service, Devore served as chair of UMSOD's Department of Dental Hygiene from 1993 to 2003 and president of the American Dental Education Association in 1994.

Laake earned a Bachelor of Science degree from UMSOD; Master of Science in nutrition from the University of Maryland, College Park; and a Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH) certificate from Temple University. Although she worked as a clinical hygienist for 23 years, her accomplishments span the medical and dental professions. A licensed dietitian nutritionist, she also focused on patient care at Dana Laake Nutrition, a medical nutrition practice located in Maryland.

Co-author of "The Kid-Friendly ADHD and Autism Cookbook" and "The ADHD and Autism Nutritional Supplement Handbook," Laake is a popular contributor to journals, newsletters, and blogs. For decades, she hosted the "Health, Lifestyle & Nutrition for the 21st Century" radio show on WTOP-1500 AM in Washington, D.C. She has been a sought-after guest speaker on National Public Radio and cable TV shows and has presented more than 500 courses and workshops.

The first registered licensed hygienist in the country to receive a gubernatorial appointment to a state board of dental examiners, Laake served two terms on the Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners. She also served for decades on the Northeast Regional Board of Dental Examiners and was the first dental hygienist to serve on its Dental Examination Committee. A longtime advocate, she worked as a Maryland House of Delegates legislative assistant on health issues and received two gubernatorial appointments to the Maryland Department of Health's State Board of Dietetic Practice.

"When I was first appointed to the Maryland Board of Dental Examiners, I was advised by the American Dental Hygienists' Association that my goal was to stay on the board," she said. "Although the change that occurred in Maryland was extremely controversial — it was the 1970s — and a serious concern among the dental boards, the Maryland board recommended enthusiastically that the inclusion of dental hygienists on the boards would be beneficial. This support ultimately resonated throughout the country, resulting in positive changes. I have always been appreciative of the Maryland board for its support and integrity."

For her efforts, Laake has been recognized with many honors, including a 50th Anniversary Outstanding Alumnus Award from Temple University in 1977.

— HOLLY SELBY



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UMSOD Continuing Education Courses

The University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) is committed to lifelong dental education and offers myriad courses throughout the year that are open to all oral health professionals. Below is a partial listing of the classes scheduled for fall 2025.

FOR INFORMATION AND CLASS LISTINGS
Call 410-706-2282 or visit www.dental.umaryland.edu/ce



- **Porcelain Laminate Veneers**
Friday, Sept. 12 - Saturday, Sept. 13, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET | In Person UMSOD
- **Biomimetic Approach to Direct Composite Posterior Restoration**
Saturday, Sept. 27, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET | In Person UMSOD
- **Introduction to Dental Cone Beam CT**
Friday, Oct. 3, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET | In Person UMSOD
- **Detection of Oral Cavity Cancers in the Dental Office**
Saturday, Oct. 11, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. ET | In Person UMSOD
- **RPD's - Alternatives to Implant Therapy - Advantages and Myths**
Friday, Oct. 31, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET | In Person UMSOD
- **Laser Dentistry Participation Course with ABLS Certification**
Friday, Dec. 5 - Saturday, Dec. 6, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET | In Person UMSOD

DON'T MISS: UMSOD IMPLANTOLOGY CONTINUUM COURSE

Two-year, hands-on continuing education program aimed at preparing practicing dentists to perform implants. Beginning August 2025; registration is limited.