

**UCLA Dentistry**

**Summer 2021**

A stylized, abstract illustration of a human face, focusing on the nose and mouth. The nose is a large, rounded shape in shades of pink and magenta. The mouth is open, showing a row of white, rounded teeth. The lips are a dark magenta color. The background is composed of various organic shapes in shades of orange, yellow, and pink, creating a vibrant, abstract composition.

**The Changing Face  
of Dentistry**



Dental students, Benit Meyer (left) and Naseem Musharbash (right), pose for a photo with Dean Paul Krebsbach to record the UCLA ASDA chapter winning a wellness competition last fall. (Photo: Brian Lozano.)

*In it Together*

**I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE THE RESILIENT CLASS OF 2021**

who graduated on Saturday, May 15, at a small ceremony on campus. Fortunately, we were able to safely acknowledge our graduates' accomplishments in an outside venue that somewhat resembled our traditional ceremony. When these graduates reflect on this chapter of their lives, I hope that they will take with them the skills they've gained during the COVID - 19 pandemic to improve their clinical practice. I know it's been a long road, but I couldn't be prouder of these newly minted dentists.

As you saw on the cover, the theme of this magazine issue is **The Changing Face of Dentistry**. This was partly prompted by the conversations and actions that transpired from last year's tragic death of George Floyd. It started with a virtual talking circle, which turned into a committee, and now we have clear initiatives that we hope will improve the diversity of our student body, will create a more equitable future, and will build an inclusive environment for our entire community. We are UCLA – the #1 public university in the world – and we have an example to set for the entire nation.

We also introduce you to **two new oral surgeons, Dr. Wayne Ozaki and Dr. Jason Yu**, who joined our faculty at the beginning of 2021. We welcome their fresh perspective, and the wealth of knowledge and skills that they bring to our school.

You will also get to know **two of our alumni, Dr. Hedi Kermani '95, and Dr. Stevan Dumas '80**. Both dentists have

gone on to build successful practices and careers, and they reflect on the importance of giving back to the school and the profession.

We take a look back at the **celebrated career of Dr. Philip Trask**, a pediatric dentist, who has worked for UCLA for just over 50 years. He retires at the end of June but will stay on as a volunteer faculty member. We can't thank him enough for his service and dedication.

We highlight a past event that took place at the end of 2020; dozens of UCLA student dentists and faculty gave up their Saturday and volunteered at a **drive-through oral health screening event**. Adults and children from the community were given oral hygiene items and oral health instruction.

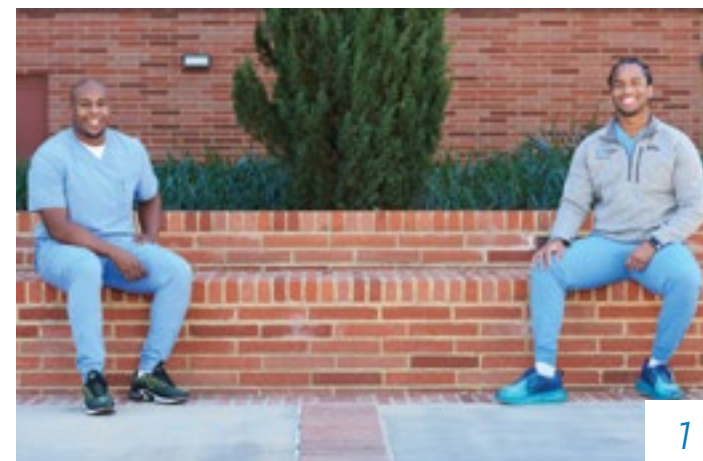
Our Special Patient Care clinic welcomed a new resource, Ms. Michael O'Hara, a social worker and a Luskin School of Public Affairs employee. This small change has brought about a big impact.

With that, I wish everyone a safe, healthy, and enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

Paul H. Krebsbach, DDS, PhD  
Dean and Professor

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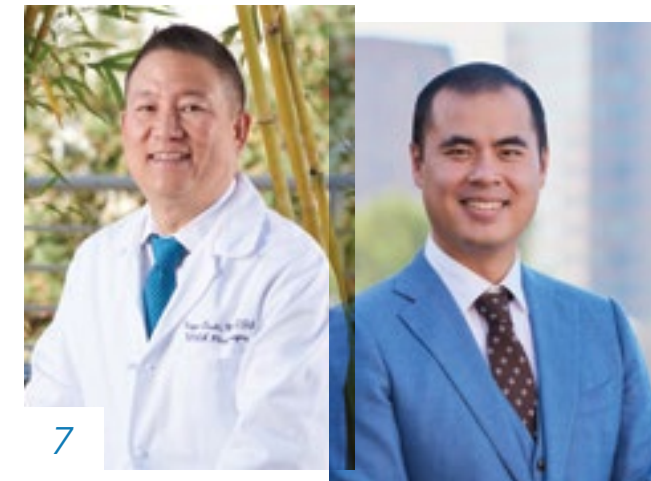
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**Top left image:** Student dentists, Ryan Davis, left, and Izzy Sampson, right, are helping the dental school recruit more students of color.

**Top right image:** Drs. Wayne Ozaki, left, and Jason Yu, right, two new faculty members, joined the dental school at the beginning of 2021.

**Above image:** Dental students volunteer at an outreach event to help promote oral health and hygiene.

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Ryan David (left) and Dr. Edmond Hewlett (right).

# *Embracing Diversity – One Dental Student at a Time*

**FOR UCLA DENTAL STUDENTS ISAIAH “IZZY” SAMPSON AND RYAN DAVIS, ENTERING THE DENTAL FIELD WAS, IN A word, perplexing.**

Growing up in several different states, Sampson never saw a Black person in his family’s dentist offices. Not the dentists, the hygienists, nor even the office staff. As he started thinking about applying to dental schools and attending pre-dental society meetings, he again found himself among only a few people of color, let alone Black people.

Even faced with that lack of diversity, Sampson still decided to apply to dental schools. He felt it was his calling to become a

dentist and to do his part to make sure that the next generation of Black children would see a dentist who looked more like them.

At UCLA, Sampson and Davis are in the minority in their class of 88 students — six students are Black in the class of 2023. Most recently, a recruitment push to attract more students of color has started to pay off. The demographic makeup of the incoming class of 2025 is 11% Black, a goal the school had set for the class of 2026 but met one year ahead of schedule. In comparison, Black people make up 8% of the population of Los Angeles County.



*“...I’ve been able to connect with other students of color, and with support from Dr. Hewlett and our student services office, we’ve been able to deal with the good, bad, and ugly. And I’m happy to say that coming here was the right decision.”*

- Isaiah "Izzy" Sampson, Class of 2023

The school has also made strides in attracting more Hispanic students. There are 18 Hispanic students, or 20% of Sampson and Davis’ class. That figure dipped to 14% for the incoming class of 2025, but the school’s overall goal is to have each incoming class represent the diversity of the greater Los Angeles community.

**“As we proclaim a strong commitment to diversity in our student body and the dental workforce, we must welcome the accountability that it demands,” said Dr. Edmond Hewlett, a professor of restorative dentistry and the school’s associate dean for equity, diversity and inclusion.**

The UCLA School of Dentistry is not alone in the challenge of attracting more underrepresented minorities to enroll. According to a recent study by the American Dental Education Association, the percentage of Black people in dental school has increased slightly from 5.3% in 2010 to 5.8% in 2019, while the enrollment of Hispanics and Latinos has increased from 7.7% to 10% over the same period.

### **How representation can make a difference**

Following the murder of George Floyd — yet another unarmed Black man killed by a police officer in the United States — the school’s lack of diversity forced a much-needed and tough conversation about systemic racism and social injustices. The dental school held a virtual talking circle, bringing together more than 200 people from the dental school community, which lasted seven hours. The emotional conversation included Black students sharing experiences of racism and what it means to be Black in today’s society.

Talking was helpful, but the school still had to confront the biggest hurdle; how to turn these conversations into action, and how to direct more resources and energy toward improving its ability to recruit a more diverse student body.

Among the initial steps, the school formed its committee for the advancement of racial equity, or CARE, made up of students, faculty and staff, to improve diversity and ensure that equity and inclusivity is happening in every facet of the school’s operations, from faculty recruitment to curriculum.

“We cannot in good conscience recruit students of color to our school without doing everything we can to provide for them an environment in which they can thrive,”

Hewlett said. “Only by striving to make it so can our school become the best version of itself.”

As a student in the dental school, Davis agreed.

“As a school, I believe we’ve done a good job at handling the snowball effect of the current social climate,” Davis said. **“We are on the right track and I am optimistic that we will accomplish the goals that have been set to increase awareness, accountability and respect.”**

CARE’s student liaison, Selena Gray, who is on track to graduate in 2023, has harnessed the power of change led by a group of individuals with a common goal. One of several initiatives that has moved forward is a pipeline program with Morehouse College, a historically Black institution. The program encourages students who demonstrate academic achievement, dedication to the field of dentistry and a commitment to leadership and community service to consider careers in the dental field.

**“We are working on creating a pipeline program for students attending historically Black colleges and universities because the students from these institutions are brilliant and qualified, yet underestimated,”** Gray said. “We want to create a bridge for students to feel supported at the UCLA School of Dentistry educationally, financially and mentally.”

### **Students are helping lead the reform**

Another step student leaders took toward bringing the dental school’s community together was establishing UCLA SIDE (students for inclusion, diversity and equity), which is working to address topics of racial, ethnic and cultural disparities in health care. For the past year in the pandemic-forced virtual environment, the student-run organization has set up a series of online lectures and film screenings touching on cultural diversity and underrepresented minorities.

Other initiatives include curriculum changes to be more relevant and relatable to all students in the dental school. The school is also offering seminars on cross-cultural sensitivity, racism and implicit bias. Another big push is to recruit more faculty from underrepresented minorities.

“My goal is to make the UCLA School of Dentistry one of the most inclusive and diverse dental schools in the country,” said Dr. Paul Krebsbach, dean and professor at the UCLA School of Dentistry. “We have some great momentum and I want to keep that going. This conversation and the actions that come from those discussions have just begun.”

A big part of the puzzle of piecing together a more diverse

student body, and in turn a more diverse profession, is making sure people interested in becoming dentists can become competitive dental school applicants. Undergraduate students need to view dental school as a viable and realistic option, said Davis. The desire may be clear, but the path may be foggy.

Growing up, dentistry had always intrigued Sampson for a few reasons. He saw his mother’s quality of life deteriorate due to oral health problems and he made it his goal to help those in similar situations. His other motivator is that the field is the perfect overlap of his love for science and art.

For Davis, a former UCLA football player who graduated in 2016, he realized that his athletic career had an expiration date, and that he needed to find a new direction. A series of chance meetings with practicing dentists pushed him to seriously look at dentistry as a future path. He was attracted to the autonomy of the work and, even more, how he would be able to help people. He also saw that the field needed more diversity.

“The allure of the profession took me by storm,” Davis said. “I came in contact with a network of Black dentists who embraced me. Dentistry found me.”

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*“As we proclaim a strong commitment to diversity in our student body and the dental workforce, we must welcome the accountability that it demands.”*

- Dr. Edmond Hewlett, Professor of Restorative Dentistry & Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

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Both Sampson and Davis said that even starting the dental school application process was daunting.

“Questions such as: How many schools do I apply to? What will the interviews be like? And how much shadowing experience do I need? came up,” Sampson said. “Add to this with the fact that I didn’t have much of an opportunity to volunteer at a dentist’s office, because I needed a paying job in college.”

Davis said he had a similar experience, but he was fortunate enough to cross paths with Hewlett, who in addition to being the school’s associate dean for equity, diversity and inclusion is also a UCLA Dentistry alumnus. Hewlett encouraged Davis to apply to UCLA Dentistry’s post-baccalaureate program.

The program provides extensive resources to help increase

an individual's competitiveness as a dental school applicant. In 2017, Davis was one of only four students to be included in that year's cohort. Since 2003, when the program began, 92% of those who completed the program and applied to dental school were accepted, and 65% of these students enrolled at UCLA.

As they finish up the first half of their four years of dental training, both Davis and Sampson agree that UCLA has welcomed them and that there is a strong support system in place.

"It was intimidating at first to be one of a handful of Black students," Sampson said. **"But I've been able to connect with other students of color, and with support from Dr. Hewlett and our student services office, we've been able to deal with the good, bad and ugly. And I'm happy to say that coming here was the right decision."**

Both students have also started to help with recruitment of students of color and have visited high schools, part of the UCLA High AIMS program, and undergraduate pre-dental societies at UCLA, to answer questions and encourage anyone who has an interest in dentistry to apply to dental school.

"When undergraduate students of color see professional students who look like them, that visual representation shows these individuals that a health care profession is absolutely realistic," Davis said. "We don't want to be seen as this exception to the rule. This is what this school is about and it's not just talk."

### **A little encouragement can go a long way**

"I knew I wanted to become a dentist while I was in high school and needed to see an orthodontist," said Guiselle Murillo, Class of 2022. "During my first and subsequent visits, I became intrigued by the field. My orthodontist eventually became a mentor to me and that experience set things in motion to pursue dentistry."

Guiselle, a Hispanic dental student, successfully completed her undergraduate degree at UCLA with a bachelor's degree in biology and continued to immerse herself in dentistry during that time. She actively took part in pre-dental society activities and gained exposure to the field through shadowing opportunities.

Despite a slight setback in taking the Dental Admissions Test (DAT), she was accepted into the UCLA School of Dentistry during the 2017 admissions cycle, and she started her dental school journey in the fall of 2018. The year prior to starting dental school, she volunteered at an afterschool science program for an elementary school.

Volunteer work is something that is near and dear to Guiselle. In the three years that she's been at UCLA Dentistry, she has taken advantage of the various outreach and volunteer opportunities offered.

"Working in underserved communities, such as at the Meet Each Need with Dignity (MEND) Clinic, at CDA Cares, and at Care Harbor - these experiences instilled a deeper passion for helping people through improving their oral health," she said. "There were times when I was the only person who could speak Spanish. I was able to interact and connect with Spanish-speaking patients who reminded me of family members."

Now, entering her fourth year of training in the summer, Guiselle has made it a goal to assist Hispanic undergraduates navigate the application process. As a former co-President of the Hispanic Student Dental Association, she helped establish a pre-dental outreach committee within the association. Hispanic dental students help with personal statements and give advice on the dental school application. They also make presentations outlining steps on how to become a competitive candidate.

**"Sometimes all it takes is a little encouragement and guidance by an older peer who motivates an individual to pursue an advanced degree program,"** said Guiselle. **"I plan to mentor in the future when I start practicing, and I will encourage anyone who shows an interest in dentistry to go for it."**

To further improve the diversity of the dental school's student body, school leadership collaborated with student leadership, including Guiselle, to ascertain what could be done to become a top choice for students of color. "I think we need to look at the entire applicant's background and accomplishments, not just their DAT score and GPA," she said.

**"UCLA is well positioned to be a leading example of what a dental school of the future should look like – one of diversity and inclusivity, and one of cultivating a caring environment for people of all backgrounds,"** said Guiselle. **"A student body made up of people from all ethnicities and different belief systems brings life and energy to our school and the campus."**



*“Sometimes all it takes is a little encouragement and guidance by an older peer who motivates an individual to pursue an advanced degree program. I plan to mentor in the future when I start practicing, and I will encourage anyone who shows an interest in dentistry to go for it.”*

- Guiselle Murillo, Class of 2022

# Welcome to the Team

Two new faculty members join the Section of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, further elevating our surgical offerings

**CRANIOFACIAL SURGEON, DR. WAYNE OZAKI, MAY BE NEW TO THE UCLA SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY,** but he's been a UCLA Health surgeon and professor for almost a decade. In January, he joined the dental school as the new chair for oral and maxillofacial surgery and also became the chief of dental services for the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge about the crossover between medical surgical services and dental services, and the dental school welcomes his outside perspective.

When asked why he chose such a complex medical specialty, Dr. Ozaki replied that, "beyond being able to profoundly impact a patient's quality of life, craniofacial cases allow me to establish a bond with my young patients and their families. **I may perform an operation on an infant, see them throughout adolescence, and then see them through their final procedures while in high school. I couldn't imagine doing anything else.**"

Dr. Ozaki decided to become a dentist after watching his uncle, who was also his dentist, perform dental procedures. He noticed that he lived a relatively stress-free life and made a comfortable living, and from then on becoming a dentist became a personal goal. "You could say I was a very mature 8-year-old," he laughed.

Following his undergraduate years at USC and while in dental school at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, Dr. Ozaki explored a few different specialties, and it was oral surgery that sparked his interest. After dental school, he sought out programs that combined an oral surgery certificate with a medical degree, and landed at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. It was following a rotation in craniofacial surgery where he saw his future come together.

**"I'll never forget my first cleft lip repair case; it was in that moment when I made the decision to become a craniofacial surgeon. The decision required an additional six years of training beyond oral surgery, but I've never looked back," said Dr. Ozaki. "I love my job and it's not work, it's my passion."**

After some time in the Pacific Northwest where he held faculty and leadership positions at the Oregon Health and Sciences University, the California sunshine and professional opportunities brought him back to Los Angeles. He was recruited to join the UCLA Health System in 2014 in the Section of Plastic Surgery.

Having tried private practice during his career, Dr. Ozaki enjoys academic environments and the act of sharing a craft with a student or resident is what he finds most fulfilling. "I feel obligated to help others achieve their dreams. I had some great mentors and it's only right for me to do the same for my trainees," he said.

Dr. Ozaki is looking forward to improving areas of an already reputable specialty at the UCLA Dental Clinics. The Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery clinic is one of the dental school's most popular clinics, as patients can access costly procedures at reduced fees compared to private practice. "My goal is for our patients to have a top-notch patient experience, which comes down to communication, efficiency, and quality care," he said. **"We'll do this by attracting the best and brightest trainees out of dental school and by implementing operational changes that you may see in private practice. Changes don't happen overnight, but I see this as a team approach towards overall progress."**

When asked how he manages to maintain such a busy schedule, which include his UCLA appointments and additional outside affiliations with several oral surgery centers across the county, he replies "they say that if you do something you love, you'll never work a day in your life. I couldn't agree more."

*“They say that if you do something you love, you’ll never work a day in your life. I couldn’t agree more.”*

- Dr. Wayne Ozaki



**Wayne Ozaki, MD, DDS, FACS**

*Clinical Professor and Chair of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery & Chief of Dental Services, Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center*



**Jason Yu, DMD, MD**

*Assistant Clinical Professor  
Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery*

## *Connecting the Dots in the Past for the Future*

**“YOU CAN’T CONNECT THE DOTS LOOKING FORWARD; YOU CAN ONLY CONNECT THEM LOOKING BACKWARDS. SO, YOU HAVE TO TRUST THAT THE DOTS WILL SOMEHOW** connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.”

This Steve Jobs quote is a mindset that Dr. Jason Yu has adopted during his career, and he tries to approach each opportunity with the same zeal as Mr. Jobs. Dr. Yu is new to UCLA, he officially joined the section of oral and maxillofacial surgery as an assistant clinical professor in January 2020. The dental school welcomes his extensive background and training in oral and plastic surgery.

**“For me, facial reconstructive surgery is an area that crosses both form and function,” Dr. Yu said. “I’ve always been fascinated by oral surgery and being able to help those who have had oral cancer, trauma, or a congenital disfigurement is the most rewarding.”**

Originally from Canada, Dr. Yu was first introduced to oral surgery while spending time at his father’s endodontics practice. A patient had a tooth abscess and the process of removing it was fascinating. It was then that he decided to become an oral surgeon. Upon completing two years of undergraduate work, he went to the Boston University School of Dental Medicine to complete his DMD degree.

From there, Dr. Yu spent the next 11 years at the University of Pennsylvania pursuing a medical degree and several postgraduate certificates in general surgery, oral and maxillofacial surgery, and plastic and reconstructive surgery. He then headed to New York and Boston where he completed fellowships in microsurgery and plastic and oral surgery, respectively.

“There would be times where there was a rotation that I wasn’t as interested in, but it was the knowledge that I gained in those moments that have become valuable to me now,” Dr. Yu said. “Where I’ve been in the past has helped me get to where I’m at now... in the words of Jobs, ‘So, you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.’”

***“I’ve always been fascinated by oral surgery and being able to help those who have had oral cancer, trauma, or a congenital disfigurement is the most rewarding.”***

- Dr. Jason Yu

Moving to a new city and starting a new job during a pandemic has had its challenges, but he tried to take advantage of his time at home. As a new father, Dr. Yu was able to spend time with his newborn during the initial months of the pandemic. It’s also been a humbling experience. He’s a lot more empathetic towards his patients who are also dealing with the stressors of life.

When asked where he sees oral surgery as a field going, Dr. Yu said, “the advancements with imaging and tissue engineering are changing how we do surgery. I don’t know if this will happen in my lifetime, but we could probably reconstruct a jaw with 3D-printed tissue and bone. We’re getting closer and closer to that being a reality and it’s incredible.”

For now, he’s looking forward to the immediate changes in oral surgery that come with new leadership. **“There has already been a lot of comradery and opportunities for collaboration,” Dr. Yu said. “The hiring of Dr. Ozaki showed progressive ideas from the leadership and I’m excited to see where we can take oral surgery at UCLA.”**

# What goes well with tacos?

## **Toothbrushes!**

*Despite the ongoing pandemic, UCLA Dentistry students and faculty found a way to continue their mission of promoting oral health in the community*



*“I am full of joy knowing that my small role volunteering at this event possibly prevented oral discomfort or possibly Even future tooth loss.”*

- Brent Humeston, Class of 2024

### **FROM CLEANINGS TO ROOT CANALS TO EXTRACTIONS IN DECIDEDLY NON-DENTAL OFFICE ENVIRONMENTS, A CORE PART OF UCLA DENTAL STUDENTS’**

education includes critical oral health care delivery to people in underserved communities.

Since its inception in 1964, the UCLA School of Dentistry’s students, residents and faculty help thousands of people annually in community clinics across southern California to fulfill its historical mission of improving the oral health of Los Angeles, California and beyond. Their efforts continue to be essential as an estimated 5.2 million people in California do not have dental insurance according to the National Association of Dental Plans.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the barriers to care that many Angelenos face. Clinicians and health care providers across the country have had to innovate how they provide and promote routine, preventative health care.

The Burbank-based non-profit, Kids’ Community Dental Clinic, or KCDC, got creative and at the end of 2020 hosted a drive-thru dental outreach event. UCLA dental students (and a few faculty) volunteered their time at the event, coined Tacos and Toothbrushes. Volunteers served 105 adults and 39 children, who stayed in their cars while they received treatment. Another collaborator, the San Fernando Oddfellows, donated the nutritious food and the event space.

Over a three-hour timeframe, 21 dental students, under the supervision of UCLA Dentistry professors Dr. Lisa Nguyen and Dr. Kristen Moriguchi, helped to organize a line of cars and applied fluoride varnish to prevent dental disease in addition to handing out oral health kits, dental referral information and freshly made tacos.

“Tacos and Toothbrushes was the first in-person volunteering event I was able to participate in since starting dental school at UCLA,” said Brent Humeston, a first-year dental student, who added that participating in outreach like this was about more than just community service — it was personal.

**“For a large portion of my life I did not have dental insurance and my access to dental care was very limited,” Humeston said. “I loved being able to provide fluoride varnish to those in need because I know the importance of preventative care.”**





**Above photo:** A young child is given an oral health screening by a student dentist volunteer at the outreach event. Oral hygiene products and informational pamphlets were given to all of the attendees.

KCDC’s longstanding mission is to improve the oral health of children from low-income families in Burbank and other areas of need. The pediatric dentistry clinic is one of 15 affiliated sites that the UCLA School of Dentistry’s Community-Based Clinical Education Program collaborates with.

Established in 2018, the community-based clinical education program places fourth-year dental students in community dental clinics, such as federally qualified health centers and private practices that focus on people living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which for a family of four is \$52,400 a year. In exchange for providing treatment, trainees receive valuable clinical experience. All dental students, regardless of their year in school, are invited to attend outreach events. Events like Tacos and Toothbrushes allow first-year students to assist their colleagues and gain valuable experiences interacting with different patient populations despite not entering the clinic until later on in their training.

**“We are thankful for KCDC’s team for demonstrating what it is to be a true oral health care professional and community servant,” said Dr. Bill Piskorowski, associate dean of UCLA Dentistry’s Community-Based Clinical Education program. “Through this service learning affiliation, we have strengthened our students’ ethic of caring and confidence in providing much needed care for an underserved, pediatric population.”**

The clinical education program has been a resounding success, since the start of the program in March 2018, student dentists have provided more than 35,000 procedures at their affiliated sites with the majority of the locations in Southern California. Students perform a wide array of services, including patient education, cleanings, fillings, crowns and extractions.

### Tacos and Toothbrushes Event



100  
Cars



20+  
Volunteers



100+  
Adults



35+  
Children

“I am so grateful we are able to continue building collaborations to find more ways to safely serve the community,” said Dr. Lisa Nguyen, associate director of the Community-Based Clinical Education program and a faculty member who helped coordinate UCLA’s participation in the outreach event. “This event also allowed our new first-year dental students to connect in-person with each other and students in other years to ask for advice as school progresses.”

For many first-year dental students, the event was the first time that they saw their dental school colleagues. Since the start of the 2020-2021 school year, all first-year courses have taken place remotely.

**“The start of this school year hasn’t been ideal for our first-year dental students. Friendships start during orientation and in those first few months,” said Dr. Paul Krebsbach, dean of the UCLA School of Dentistry. “Connecting and collaborating with other students is a vital part of dental school. We’re doing everything we can to supplement what our first-year students are missing out on, but it’s hard to truly replicate in-person instruction. Events like Tacos and Toothbrushes can help fill the void.”**

Dale Gorman, director of the KCDC said, “the Kids’ Community Dental Clinic wants to impact as many people as possible with preventive care and access to our free and low-cost dental clinic. Teams of dentists, hygienists, dental students, hygiene students, dental assistants and pre-dental student volunteers, including UCLA volunteers, help us provide treatment and tools to the families who need it the most.”

*This story was originally published on the UCLA Newsroom.*

*Author: Brianna Aldrich, Copy Editor: Mike Fricano.*

*Photos: Dr. Lisa Nguyen*

**Below photo:** A young Dodger’s fan is given a child’s toothbrush with her parents at a free oral health screening and outreach event.





## Dr. Hedi Kermani '91, DDS '95, AEGD '95

*Proud Bruin, Founder & Practicing Orthodontist at Newport Orthodontics & Children's Dentistry, Liaison with the UCLA Chancellor's Cabinet Council & UCLA Chancellor's Society in Orange County*

# Practicing Gratitude

*Bruin Optimist with an appreciation for giving back*

### **DR. HEDI KERMANI'S DRIVE, PAIRED WITH HER ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT, ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS**

that have helped her build a successful orthodontics and pediatric dentistry practice in Orange County. From acquiring the latest technology and equipment down to choosing the colors for the interior, hiring top associates and even designing the website, she has dedicated her career for the past two decades to perfecting a practice that her patients can rely on for quality care.

"There weren't enough hours in the day when I was running my practice while raising my children," she reflects. "They practically grew up in that office! It is no surprise that my daughter has chosen to follow in this same path and become a dentist herself. We were ecstatic that she was accepted to the UCLA School of Dentistry last fall and for her Bruin journey ahead."

Dentistry fascinated Dr. Kermani ever since she was a child. She enjoyed going to her dentist and seeing all the equipment, the devices, and "cool buttons." As she started thinking about a career, she considered that dentistry could offer the flexibility she would want as a future mother. In 1991, she completed her undergraduate degree in biochemistry at UCLA, and that, along with an impressive DAT score and volunteering at dental offices, primed her to be an attractive candidate for dental school.

While at the UCLA School of Dentistry, Dr. Kermani was involved in orthodontics research and student leadership. In 1995, she received her Advanced Education in General Dentistry certificate while also achieving her DDS degree.

In 2020, Dr. Kermani, who is a proud Apollonian Society member, marked her 25-year anniversary of graduating from the UCLA School of Dentistry and now she reflects on the significance of this milestone, "without a doubt, the training I received at UCLA was the best in the world.

**The combined opportunities for research, service, leadership, and the unparalleled didactic and clinical foundation are what sets the UCLA dental school program apart. I will be forever grateful."**

UCLA Dentistry impresses on its dental students a charge to strive for excellence, and Dr. Kermani took that mantra very seriously. The other mantra that took hold with her was the importance of being a life-long student. After completing her UCLA DDS degree, she went on to obtain her orthodontics specialty certificate at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine, where her master's degree thesis led to publication in the prestigious American Journal of Orthodontics & Dentofacial Orthopedics. Thereafter, she achieved the status of a fully board-certified orthodontist. She has also maintained affiliations with numerous dental and orthodontic societies. She continues to evolve as a healthcare provider and has become a mentor to undergraduates who show an interest in oral health and the dental profession.

**"I want to lift up the next generation of dental healthcare providers. Not only do I feel it is my obligation, but I genuinely enjoy doing so, to impact and inspire the generation ahead!"**

Over time, Dr. Kermani's practice has flourished. Having a multi-specialty practice, combining pediatric dentistry with her orthodontic services, along with volunteer work, sponsoring school activities, and maintaining a strong reputation in the community, has positioned Newport Orthodontics and Children's Dentistry as a permanent fixture for the oral health needs of families in Orange County.

Now, with both of her children on their own paths to become future Bruin alumni, she plans to focus and devote even more of her time to UCLA Dentistry. "I am so thankful for the training I received at UCLA," Dr. Kermani said.

"From when I was first starting my practice and to this day, patients travel out of their way to come see me because I am a UCLA dental professional and attended the UCLA School of Dentistry. **I want to pay that pride forward and help the dental school to always attract the best and brightest candidates with a continued remarkably successful future!"**

# From Geology to Dentistry

Pivoting to dentistry after undergraduate degree brought joy and fulfillment

**DR. STEVAN DUMAS, CLASS OF 1980, DIDN'T START OUT WANTING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN DENTISTRY WHEN HE GRADUATED WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN GEOLOGY FROM UCLA IN 1976.**

An additional four-plus years of training felt like a lifetime, and he enjoyed working outdoors. But the timing was terrible, as the oil embargo hit shortly before he graduated and his job prospects were poor. Around that time, he had a toothache and went to visit his family dentist who after listening to his complaint of limited job prospects asked, "why not consider dentistry?"

Shortly after that, Dr. Dumas attended an open house at the UCLA School of Dentistry, and from there joined the Class of 1980. He met several lifelong friends, and was able to squeeze in some fun while he studied and trained. Over the years, dentistry has brought purpose into his life, and being able to improve the dental health of his patients continues to provide fulfillment. **"I find the most joy in being considered a part of their families and watching the kids I've treated grow up."**

Dr. Dumas celebrated his 40th reunion year in 2020, and while some aspects of dental practice have remained the same, there have been numerous advancements. "The materials that we have now were only dreamt about while in school. The composites we use to restore a tooth and today's dental implants didn't exist when I was starting out. We're able to deliver a higher quality of care today than we did in the past."

Following graduation from the UCLA School of Dentistry, Dr. Dumas completed a general practice residency program at Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital, and then worked for a few years in Inglewood and Harbor City. But he was intent on owning his own practice and saw a "For Lease" sign in a window in Culver City and landed there.

Over the years, Dr. Dumas has branched out beyond the confines of his practice. He has been involved in many levels of organized dentistry. He was an examiner for the California Dental Board's Examining Committee and recently completed his service as a member of the California Dental Association's Council of Peer Review. All these opportunities brought with them a network of like-minded dentists who dedicate their time to improving the profession. He has also found happiness in mentoring aspiring dental students.

**"UCLA Dentistry has had a huge impact on my career. I did not always appreciate the amount of information that the instructors imparted on us as students," said Dr. Dumas. "I believe the caliber of a UCLA education sets the standard."**

Dr. Dumas has made a point of giving back to his alma mater and has made several gifts over the years, including a bench in the restorative lab in honor of his parents and supporting the School's scholarship programs. "An advanced degree in the health sciences is a costly endeavor, and this is why I support programs that provide a path for young students who want to enter dentistry."

Most years, he attends extra continuing education courses — more than is required by the dental board to maintain his license — because he enjoys expanding and refining his knowledge of the field. He sees these courses as a chance to improve the quality of care he provides his patients and to reconnect with friends. To reflect his commitment to professional development, he added the title of Fellow in the Academy of General Dentistry to his credentials.

**When asked what his motto is in life, he said with a smile, "I know what I know, but more importantly, I know what I don't know. And that's how to keep out of trouble."**

**“UCLA Dentistry has had a huge impact on my career. I believe the caliber of a UCLA education sets the standard.”**

- Dr. Stevan Dumas



**Dr. Stevan Dumas, DDS '80**

*Private Practice Owner & Former Examiner for the California Dental Board's Examining Committee*



## Finding Wealth in Giving Back

Pediatric dentist and popular mentor hits 50-plus-year teaching milestone

**PHILIP TRASK HAS BEEN A BUTCHER'S APPRENTICE, AN ARTILLERYMAN, A TELEPHONE LINEMAN AND, AT ONE Point, A Juvenile Gang Member.** But it's as an instructor and mentor at the UCLA School of Dentistry that the longtime pediatric dentist found a true calling, one that has complemented his years of service to the wider Los Angeles community.

"UCLA is my happy place," says Trask, 79, who last year celebrated a full half-century of helping to prepare the university's budding dentists for the profession. **"The essence of pediatric dentistry is to teach. Giving the gift of knowledge is one of the only gifts you can give that doesn't diminish what you have."**

One would be hard-pressed to find a dental student or resident who hasn't benefited from the gift of Trask's

expertise and wisdom over the past 50 years, and his influence as a private practitioner, an advocate for children's oral health and a volunteer dentist for schools, nursing homes and countless other organizations has been felt and recognized across the region.

It wasn't an easy journey to find that purpose. Born in Los Angeles, Trask spent much of his adolescence in an orphanage, and by the time he was in high school, he was working in a butcher's shop to support himself. With no real sense of community, he found the camaraderie he craved in a gang. One thing led to another and before long, he found himself standing before a judge who offered him two options: jail time or the military. Trask ended up serving as an Army artillery operator in Vietnam, where he suffered permanent hearing loss from canon blasts.

But the experience helped him turn his life around. Following his honorable discharge, he put himself through community college by working full-time as a lineman for the telephone and gas companies in Los Angeles, eventually transferring to UCLA, then UC San Francisco, where he was admitted to the School of Dentistry. Dentistry, he felt, was more conducive than medicine — his other preference — to having a family.

It was in 1968, his final year of dental school, that he chanced upon job that would determine the course of his future. While covering for a colleague at a lab that made prosthetic eyes and cheeks for post-oral cancer patients, he was asked to fill in at a clinic that treated infants with cleft palates. "It was something I stumbled upon, but it would forever change my professional track," Trask recalls. "I'd been planning to become a prosthodontist and work with geriatric patients, but working with young children was uplifting."

Within two years, he'd opened a pediatric dentistry practice in Santa Monica, which over the next three-and-a-half decades would grow into one of the largest in West Los Angeles, and had accepted a 20% faculty appointment at the UCLA School of Dentistry, later to increase to 50%.

Trask poured himself into both endeavors with fervor. With his UCLA students, teaching was always about more than skills and technique; it was about life lessons, many gleaned from his own experience. Early in his career, for example, as a long-haired, bearded, tie-dye-wearing young practitioner, he found his patients weren't heeding his advice. He cleaned up his appearance and focused on ensuring that his patients had a positive experience.

"I quickly realized that I needed to look the part of a medical provider and to concentrate on my doctor-patient communication," he recalls. "I never had a problem after that, and this is something I try to teach my residents."

Ronald Bills, one of his former students and the first graduate of the UCLA pediatric dentistry residency program, still fondly recalls a nugget of wisdom Trask handed him. **"He said to me, 'Bills, take off your watch. It's a stressor.' At the time, I was going through a personal crisis. It meant a lot to me that he took the time to talk to me as a colleague and friend, versus a student talking to his instructor. It goes to show you the type of person he is and how he treats those around him."**

The signature care and attention Trask has always paid to his patients has been mirrored by his unflinching devotion to his students. Over the years, he has worked tirelessly on their behalf, networking, seeking out opportunities and even bringing graduates into his private practice. Trask's daughter Laura remembers that, "without hesitation, my father would always be happy, no matter what — even staying up long hours — to write personalized job and college-entry letters of recommendations or student evaluations."



**Above photos:** Dr. Trask has been dedicated to improving the lives of children in Los Angeles and providing quality dental care for more than four decades. (Top photo by UCLA School of Dentistry student; bottom photo courtesy of Dr. Philip Trask and opposite page photo provide by SCAAPD UCLA)

And Trask has never missed on opportunity to bring UCLA's expertise to the broader community, whether testifying before the Los Angeles and Santa Monica city councils on behalf of the university about the benefits of fluoridated water or working as a supervising faculty member for the past 17 years at UCLA's Give Kids a Smile events, which provide oral care for children in underserved communities.

**"Phil has been a pillar of UCLA Pediatric Dentistry for decades, dedicated to helping residents, students and the children and families who seek care from UCLA,"** says Dr. James Crall, professor and chair of public health and community dentistry at the school. **"He understands and has modeled what it truly means to be a professional, someone with special knowledge and skills whose mission is to help others. That's the Phil Trask that I and countless others have known over these many years — a gifted and tirelessly giving friend, teacher and supporter of all things UCLA."**

At the same time, his commitment to serving others has taken him far beyond UCLA. Trask has taken volunteer teaching assignments in Tokyo and Mexico City and has spent time providing dental care on American Indian reservations — the handmade leather jacket with Buffalo nickel buttons given to him by one tribe has become a family heirloom.

Closer to home, he has served as the chief volunteer dentist for the Santa Monica–Malibu Unified School District, dental consultant for the Jewish Home for the Aging and chief pediatric dentist for Vista Del Mar, a Jewish nonprofit and orphanage. He still regularly provides dental care to children with special needs at health fairs hosted by the Friendship Circle Los Angeles and invites his student to join him at these and other events, believing that a sense of altruism is one of the most important qualities future oral health leaders can possess.

And although back surgery in 2005 forced him to sell his Santa Monica practice, he soon launched a new one in Pacific Palisades because he missed treating patients.

It's a testament to the number of lives Trask has touched that his children still hear his praises sung as they go about their daily lives. "I still randomly come across stories of my father's work, in the grocery checkout line, at doctor's appointments, the carwash, the library, wherever," Laura says. People who have benefited from Trask's help talk about what a great dentist he was for their kids, how he helped their child get into a residency program. One of the most frequent compliments? Your father has changed my life.

**"He loves being a professor, being in service, providing opportunities to help change lives, giving inspiration and building relationships,"** she says. **"He is an inherent lifelong learner, and being a professor has allowed my dad to selflessly exercise and share this part of himself with his students — it's his life's calling."**

Trask will officially retire at the end of 2020-2021 academic year and will transition to a volunteer faculty role where he will continue to do what he loves — impart his knowledge and wisdom to pediatric dentistry residents and dental students.

For Trask, the best piece of advice he can give to his students and younger colleagues as he prepares to enter his sixth decade of teaching is to always keep their focus on what is most important.

**"The most common reward in our society is money and salary,"** he says. **"Another reward is that which one receives from the hug of a parent or a smile from a child. Giving to those less fortunate is truly better than receiving, and the rewards I've received in my career are worth far more than money."**

*This story was originally published on the UCLA Newsroom.  
Author: Brianna Aldrich, Copy Editor: Todd Schindler.*

**“Phil has been a real role model to our dental students and residents, because he represents what a pediatric dentist should be... a passionate professional and a real advocate of children's oral health and well-being.”**

- Dr. Daniela Silva, Associate Clinical Professor & Chair of Pediatric Dentistry



**Above photo:** Full- and part-time pediatric dentistry faculty at the 2019 Ribbon-Cutting event for the refurbished pediatric dentistry clinic.



**UCLA** School of Dentistry

## **YOUR LEGACY. OUR FUTURE.**

**A gift through your will or living trust is an easy way to support UCLA Dentistry and its mission in education, research, patient care and community service.**

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# Small Change Creates a Big Impact



Michael O'Hara, MSW '14, LCSW

UCLA Field Instructor, Luskin School of Public Affairs - Social Welfare, UCLA Special Patient Care & Center for Cerebral Palsy at UCLA

**IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR PATIENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, COMPLEX MEDICAL CONDITIONS, AND PHYSICAL OR COGNITIVE differences, to encounter challenges when seeking dental care.** The Special Patient Care (SPC) clinic at the UCLA School of Dentistry – and its specialists trained in treating this vulnerable population – serve as a major safety net for special needs patients and their caretakers. For many of these patients, UCLA is the only option they have and those who live far away are willing to drive hundreds of miles to be seen.

Thanks to long-time UCLA School of Dentistry supporters Peter Shapiro and the Shapiro Family, a part-time social work supervisor was added to the clinical team to further enhance the patient experience. The new staff member, Ms. Michael O'Hara, was hired to help patients through the course of their treatment, all the way from conducting intake interviews to providing post-surgery resources.

A graduate of the Masters in Social Work (MSW) degree program from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Michael is a welcome addition for SPC clinic director, Dr. Eric Sung, professor and chair of special patient care, and the existing clinic team who collectively provide comprehensive care for more than 3,000 patients a year. The Shapiros also gave a major gift to establish the UCPLA Endowed Chair in Special Patient Care in 2015, which is held by Dr. Sung.

Michael was hired as part of a new, three-year special patient care fellowship at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, that is designed to create cross-campus collaboration for student fellows seeking to obtain field experience while assisting some of Southern California's most underserved patients. She is responsible for a range of clinical and care management duties, including triaging patient needs, assisting with resource referrals, and coordinating with the operating room at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center.

**"Our hope in creating a social work field placement in Special Patient Care is to bring multidisciplinary and integrated care to this unique clinic, and work in small and large ways to address equity and the social determinants of health," said Michael.**

Beginning Fall 2021, Michael will also supervise two second-year MSW students in completing field education study at the Special Patient Care Clinic and the Center for Cerebral Palsy at UCLA. This new support allows Dr. Sung and his team to focus more on the hands-on work that is required to fully treat these patients, instead of working on the more administrative tasks that can monopolize their workdays.

**"I am grateful to the Shapiros for their continued efforts to expand access to care for the special patient care population," Dr. Sung said. "Over the years, their gifts have made a tremendous impact on the quality of care we can provide to a patient population who desperately needs the resources."**

# CELEBRATING OUR REUNION YEARS

1964 - UCLA School of Dentistry is established

1968 - First DDS graduating class

1970s - The Apollonian Society is established



Class of 1971 - Settling in for their 8 AM lecture

1989 - Venice Dental Center named the Wilson-Jennings-Bloomfield UCLA Venice Dental Center

1991 - UCLA's undergraduate student body becomes the most diverse of any research university in the nation

2000s - Acceleration in the establishment of endowed chairs & research funding at the dental school

2014 - Dental School celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

2019 - Wilson-Jennings-Bloomfield UCLA Venice Dental Center Celebrates 50th Anniversary Year

2021 - Celebrating the Class of 1971's 50th reunion year

**Celebrating the Reunion Classes of 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016**

To commemorate the legacy of the Class of 1971 and in honor of their 50th reunion year, the class has embarked on a campaign to establish the **Class of 1971 Dr. Jean Savage Memorial Scholarship** to support future dental students for years to come.

Please contact the UCLA School of Dentistry Development Office at **(310) 206-0215** with questions or ways to give.

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*“May you look back years from now, as I often do, and reflect on the good fortune you had in attending UCLA.”*

- John Engle, DDS '72

*“You made a wonderful career choice, and you have a great life ahead of you. Bravo to you, Class of 2021.”*

- Evelyn King, DDS '76

## Congratulations to the CLASS OF 2021

*“As you graduate, take pride in the fact that you have a plethora of alumni and faculty that are rooting for to you to be the best in your field and the future of dentistry.”*

- Linda Brogmus Segal, DDS '86



Consider making a gift in honor of the class