



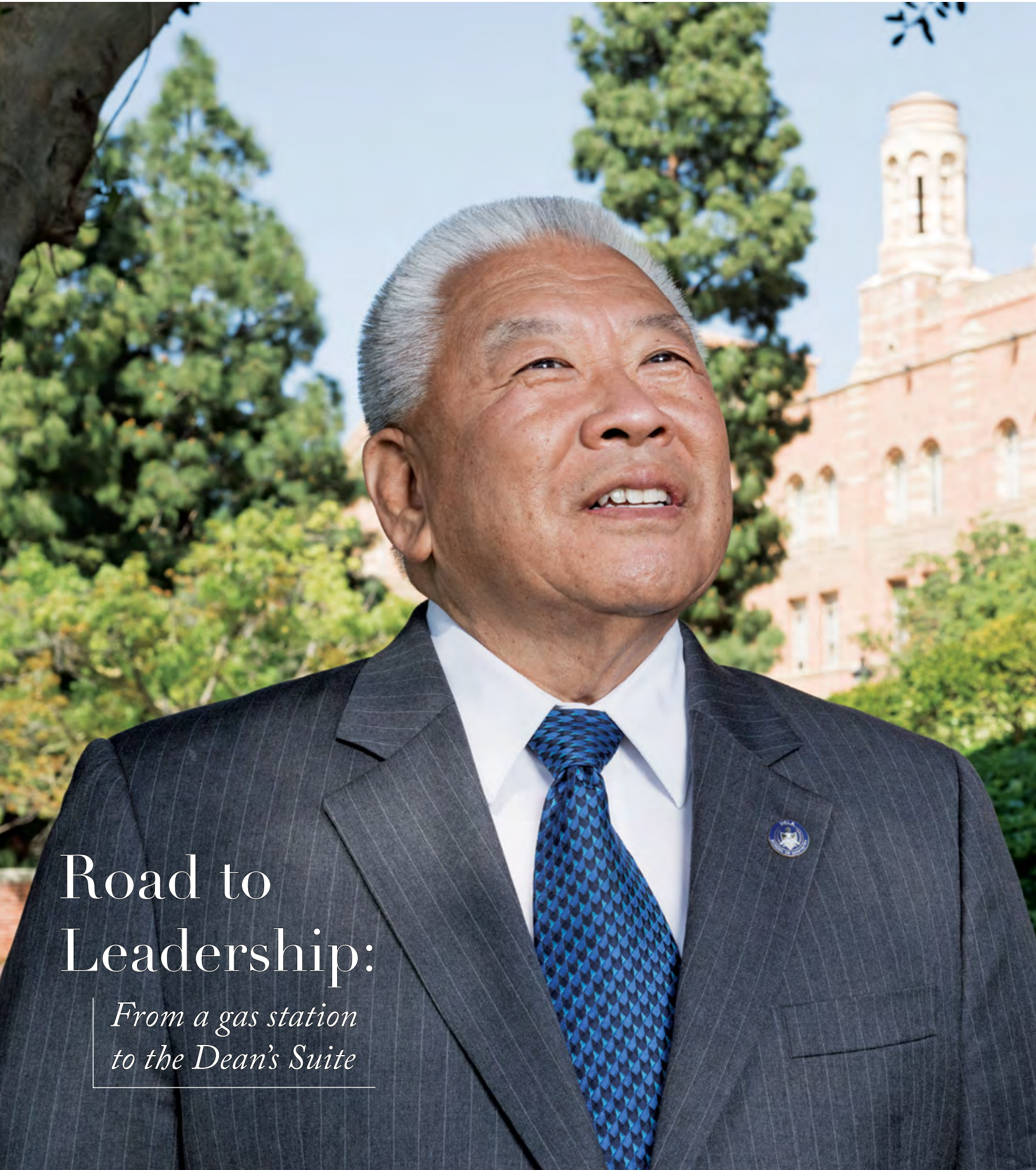
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با افتخار تقدیم می کند

- Searching for a Cure
- Diverse Pathways to Dentistry

- Resource for the Community
- Discovering Another Art Form



Road to  
Leadership:

*From a gas station  
to the Dean's Suite*

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## Finding a Way

In the first year of my deanship, I found myself surrounded by faculty, students, staff, and fellow academic leaders wanting to introduce me to the beauty of this campus, this city, and this outstanding dental school – **UCLA Dentistry**. I have been warmly welcomed by the entire community to what has now become my home.

This magazine is a new communications piece for us, with a goal of giving the dental school community and beyond a glimpse into what sets our professional health sciences school apart from the rest. I already know what makes this a wonderful place, but it is important that we share our stories with our current stakeholders as well as those who may not be familiar with this amazing place of dental training and education, innovative research, quality patient care, and dedication to public service.

In this inaugural issue, you will have the opportunity to meet three of our premiere researchers, who are **searching for a cure** to conquer cancer. Their research roads to discovery are among many that you will read about in future issues. Next, you will be introduced to four of our bright, talented dental students, whose **diverse pathways to dentistry** were a little different from

their colleagues'. This June also marked the retirement of one of our most beloved and valued academic leaders, Dr. Ronald Mito, whose **road to leadership** is inspirational. We will also give you a glimpse of our premiere community-based dental center, the Wilson-Jennings-Bloomfield UCLA Venice Dental Center, which has been a **resource for the community** for nearly 50 years. Lastly, we will highlight our very first female alum, Dr. Margaret Pan Quon, a retired endodontist who has **discovered another art form** in retirement.

It's an honor to be leading this dental school and I look forward to finding ways to further our growth and development.

If you have an idea for a story or just want to send me your thoughts about what we featured in this piece, please do not hesitate to email us at [info@dentistry.ucla.edu](mailto:info@dentistry.ucla.edu). Your opinion and thoughts matter and are important to us.

Sincerely,

Paul H. Krebsbach, DDS, PhD  
Dean and Professor



**Top photo, from left to right:** Three researchers, Drs. Cun-Yu Wang, David Wong, and Anahid Jewett, who are working towards fighting different types of cancer. **Top right photo:** UCLA Venice Dental Center during a busy treatment day. **Right photo:** Dr. Margaret Pan Quon, alum and artist, holds up two of her paintings from her travels in China and Cambodia.

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# Searching for a CURE

## Natural Killer Cells Link to Eliminating Cancer

Dr. Anahid Jewett, professor of Oral Biology, thinks her fascination with fighting cancer began at a very early age. “Everyone, including my mother, was afraid of cancer and as a child that left a very strong impression on me, to the extent that I made it my mission to make this disease disappear,” she said. “I chose to pursue cancer research as my main career path and to figure out how and why the failure of our immune system is the start and progression of cancer. Now, my approach is to find out how to restore immune function to either prevent or treat aggressive tumors.”

For the past 25 years, Dr. Jewett has dedicated her life to figuring out why cancer stem cells (CSCs) are able to survive in patients. She believes the key is to focus on natural killer cells or NK cells, which are known to kill many different types of CSCs, including oral, pancreatic, lung, breast, glioblastoma, and melanoma tumors. Much of her recent work has focused on pancreatic cancer – one of the most challenging and difficult forms of cancer.

“We are making significant progress in the field of immunity to pancreatic cancer, and my greatest hope is that most of these discoveries are going to be used in human pancreatic cancer trials,” said Dr. Jewett. “We are even in the process of starting clinical trials in China using super-charged NK cells.”

To test whether NK cells could help minimize pancreatic cancer tumors, Dr. Jewett and her team developed a humanized mouse model with an intact human immune system. They injected these mice with pancreatic CSCs along with NK cells and they found that the CSCs did not grow or metastasize to other parts of the body.

The team’s next strategy was to ‘super-charge’ the NK cells using osteoclasts, a cell that breaks down bone, but also expands highly functional NK cells to levels that are superior to other methodologies in the oncology field. With this strategy, they were able to shrink pancreatic tumors in their mouse models by greater than 90 percent, and the small number of tumors left within the pancreas of the mice injected with super-charged NK cells grew very slow, and they were no longer cancer stem cells.

“Natural killer cells are the body’s natural defense against cancer cells, we just had to figure out a way to increase their numbers and make them stronger,” said Dr. Jewett, who is also a member of the Weintraub Center for Reconstructive Biotechnology and the Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center. “Our findings provide a hopeful glimpse into the development of new therapies for pancreatic cancer.”

In addition to injecting NK cells into a tumor mouse model, Dr. Jewett and her team fed a combination of bacteria, named AJ2, to a second mouse model. The bacteria, in conjunction with the super-charged NK cells, further increased the model’s survival rate and cancer fighting capabilities. With these strategies the team was able to completely eradicate the aggressive tumors in mice.

Dr. Jewett’s technology with super-charged NK cells are currently being used in human clinical trials, and her bacterial supplement AJ2 is being manufactured by a company, headquartered in Iowa, as an adjunct therapeutic strategy for pancreatic cancer patients.

*“I have collaborations with cancer researchers from around the world. I am hopeful that with the pace of my lab’s advancements, we will be able to have effective treatments for pancreatic cancers in the very near future.”*



Photo by Chris Flynn



## Making Saliva a Serious Business

With lung cancer being a leading cause of cancer deaths among men and women, the need for better detection methods is urgent. Current clinical practice for diagnosing lung cancer involves invasive bronchoscopies, which aren't entirely accurate, could have sampling errors, and may not be feasible depending on the health and age of the patient.

An emerging new medical technology, which researchers and clinicians are utilizing, is liquid biopsy for non-invasive detection of human cancer mutations. Liquid biopsy involves the sampling of a patient's blood or urine using next generation sequencing or digital droplet PCR genotyping to detect whether there are actionable cancer mutations in the patient's tumor. So far, this has been the best option oncologists have, outside of invasive biopsies, to detect cancer tumors earlier on in a patient's disease. The problem with this method is that it's about 80 percent accurate and is still in its infancy in cancer detection.

An unsuspected form of liquid biopsy that has gained momentum over the past three years is salivary diagnostics. For Dr. David Wong, associate dean for research, and a pioneer in the burgeoning saliva testing field, discussing spit is always at the tip of his tongue. Dr. Wong has dedicated nearly a decade of his career to saliva and the hidden gems of biological information that lie within its DNA.

In 2014, Dr. Wong's research hit a major milestone and again in 2017, with landmark funding from the National Cancer Institute. In November of 2014, Dr. Wong and his team were able to use their novel new technology, called electric field-induced release and measurement (EFIRM), to detect and measure epidermal growth factor receptor gene mutations, a significant

indicator of lung cancer. In their study using the EFIRM technology, they were able to achieve nearly identical results to the bronchoscopy-based detection of the same cancer mutations.

"We were able to show that salivary diagnostics is just as reliable in lung cancer detection as traditional methods are," said Dr. Wong. "However, our method is non-invasive, nets quicker results (minutes versus days), and with the EFIRM-assay, the concordance is near perfect when compared with other biopsy-based genotyping."

In March of 2017, Dr. Wong's research and achievements gained the attention of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), who awarded him a \$2.5 million grant and the opportunity to take his EFIRM technology to the next level. The funding supports a two-phased study that spans five years, with the goal to clinically refine and validate his technology.

"The National Cancer Institute sees great potential in our technology," said Dr. Wong. "Their grant allows us to partner with the UCLA Department of Pathology and Lab Medicine and, if successful, UCLA will be the only location in the country to offer this type of certified diagnostic testing of a patient's saliva."

Dr. Wong never thought he'd be analyzing spit when he pursued a dental degree, but now he can't picture doing anything else.

*"Most people are surprised when I tell them that saliva can reveal as much, if not more, than blood or urine can. We have made it our mission to make saliva testing a clinical reality to detect for serious diseases. And we're getting very, very close."*

Photo by Chris Flynn

## Discovering a Cause to Find a Solution

Head and neck squamous cell carcinoma is a highly invasive form of cancer and the low survival rates have challenged researchers to develop a more effective approach to combatting the disease.

One of the most popular treatments currently being used is the therapeutic drug cisplatin, yet, more than 50 percent of people who take cisplatin demonstrate resistance to the drug, and they experience recurrence of the cancer. Dr. Cun-Yu Wang, a leading oral cancer researcher and a professor of Oral Biology, has made it his mission to understand why people with this type of cancer are resistant to this therapy.

“I believe that the most effective way to overcome cancer resistance and prevent the spread of squamous cell carcinoma is to target the cancer stem cells,” said Dr. Wang, who is also the associate dean for graduate studies. “We’re dealing with the most common head and neck cancer and the second-most common skin cancer. There is an urgent need to develop new approaches for treating it.”

Earlier this year, Dr. Wang and his research team released study findings on what they found to be a more effective method of treating head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC). Cancer stem cells are known to be responsible for tumor formation and development; they also self-renew and tend to be unresponsive to cancer therapy. These cells have also been found in HNSCC. The research team’s first approach was to develop a mouse model of HNSCC that allowed them to identify the rare cancer stem cells present using *in vivo* lineage tracing, a method of identifying descendants of a single cell in tissues.

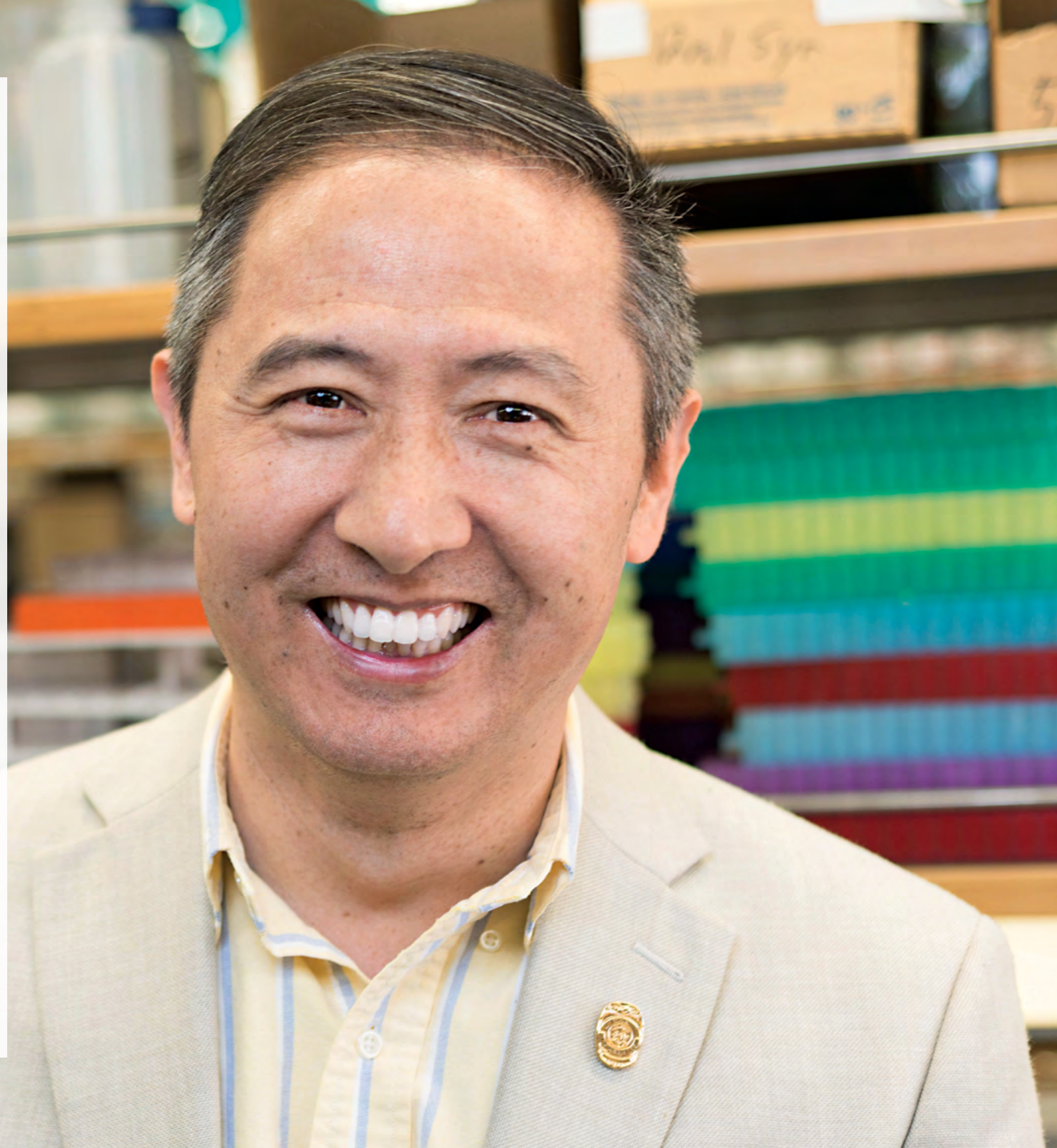
The researchers found that the cancer stem cells expressed the stem cell protein Bmi1 and had increased activator proteins, which are known to control the expression of multiple cancer-associated genes. Based on this discovery, the team developed and compared different therapeutic strategies for treating HNSCC. They found that a combination of targeting cancer stem cells and killing the tumor mass, which consists of rapidly multiplying cells, with chemotherapy drugs resulted in better outcomes.

The team further discovered that cancer stem cells are not only responsible for squamous cell carcinoma development, but that they also cause cervical lymph node metastasis – the spread of cancer to other parts of the body.

“Our findings are an important step forward to understanding the cellular and genetic mechanisms behind squamous cell carcinoma. Our study shows for the first time that by targeting the proliferating tumor mass and dormant cancer stem cells, with combination therapy, effectively inhibited tumor growth and prevented metastasis compared to monotherapy in mice,” said Dr. Wang, who is a member of the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center and of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at UCLA.

*“Our discovery could be applied to other solid tumors such as breast and colon cancer, which also frequently metastasize to lymph nodes or distant organs. The translational value and potential of this study’s findings are enormous.”*

Photo by Chris Flynn



# DIVERSE PATHWAYS TO DENTISTRY

“I believe there’s a little bit of pathologist in all of us,” said Diana Wang, Class of 2017. “Patients always want to know why something happened to them, and pathology helps answer those difficult questions.”

After she graduates in June, Diana will head to Harvard School of Dental Medicine where she’ll begin a four year training program as an Oral Pathology resident, followed by a D.M.Sc. program in Biological Sciences in Dental Medicine. You can see the excitement glowing from Diana’s face as she talks about oral pathology and what lies ahead. “I fell in love with pathology when it was introduced during my didactic courses. Histology was like a different language to me and I couldn’t get enough.”

Diana’s interest in dentistry began through a painful experience. After completing her undergraduate degree, she began a career as an applications engineer in the biotechnology field. She started having pain in her jaw and her dentist told her she had two impacted wisdom teeth that needed to be removed. The aftermath of the removal didn’t go as planned. After countless follow-up appointments and numerous complaints of a shooting pain in her jaw, her dentist finally decided that there were fragments of teeth still left in her mouth, causing a major infection.

“In a weird way, that experience of bad dental work ignited an interest in dentistry for me,” said Diana. “I felt like I could be a really good care provider by giving patients the respect that I felt I never received. I believe an important part of being in healthcare is listening to patients and educating them about what’s going on with their body.”

Despite her burgeoning career in biochemistry, Diana couldn’t ignore her draw to dentistry. She began volunteering at a dental office, and eight months later, she found herself applying to dental schools. In the fall of 2013, she entered UCLA Dentistry as one of the eldest female students in her class.

“Dental school was a very big lifestyle change for me. I was going from making a good salary with a lot of independence and traveling to being back in school taking difficult dental courses. But looking back at these years of dental school, I believe I made the best decision to change career paths.”

In the past four years, Diana has made connections that she hopes will remain intact after graduation, specifically, the valuable mentors she’s been introduced to. In her second year of dental school, she began researching in Dr. Anahid Jewett’s lab on the comorbidities associated with teeth bleaching, which she believes will ultimately lead to oral cancer.

“Research has always been an important aspect of my career, even when I was an applications engineer helping my clients. Research allows us to get to the root of the problem and figure out why something is the way it is and how we can better treat people.”

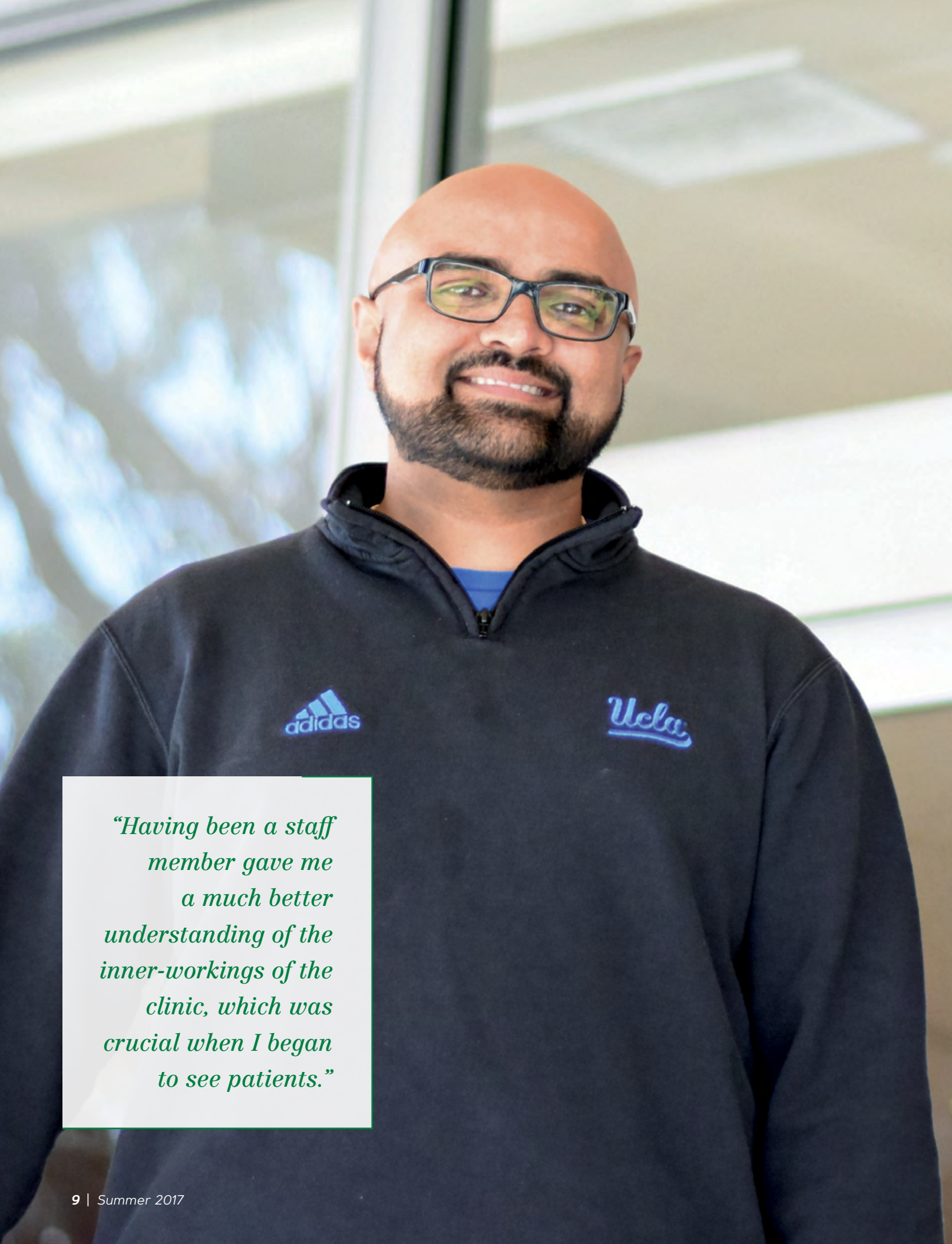
When she makes her new life on the east coast, Diana is going to miss the sunshine and her loved ones the most, but she has dreams to one day come back to UCLA and teach at the dental school. “I would love to head the first oral pathology postdoctoral program at UCLA,” said the Pasadena native. “It’s not the most popular specialty to go into, but an understanding of pathology transcends every stage of a patient’s treatment plan. For me, that was the biggest draw to the field, seeing something from beginning to end.”

Photo by Chris Flynn

*“Research allows us to get to the root of the problem and figure out why something is the way it is and how we can better treat people.”*

DECODING ORAL HEALTH

*Diana Wang, Class of 2017*



## FROM DESK TO DENTAL CHAIR

*Ritesh Salvi, Class of 2018*

*“Having been a staff member gave me a much better understanding of the inner-workings of the clinic, which was crucial when I began to see patients.”*

“I miss my old job,” chuckles Ritesh Salvi. “Juggling patients and dental courses isn’t easy.” The third-year dental student is referring to his time as a Group Practice Administrator (GPA) – a staff position he held for over a year in our general clinic before entering dental school in 2014 as a full-time student.

Ritesh is well into the patient care component of the curriculum and is feeling the challenges of maintaining a full clinical schedule, while also keeping up with courses. There are times when he feels a little overwhelmed, but having some insight into how the general clinic operates has helped him.

“Having been a staff member gave me a much better understanding of the inner-workings of the clinic, which was crucial when I began to see patients,” said Ritesh. “It can be intimidating as a student entering a busy clinic space and you’re trying to manage patient expectations, develop treatment plans, and also fulfill the expectations of your supervising faculty member.”

Ritesh’s path to dentistry took longer than he originally planned. “I graduated from UCLA in 2007, but had to move back home to help my family when the economy crashed,” said Ritesh. “I dabbled in real estate for a little bit, but found myself eventually working for a dental clinic near my family’s home in Orange County. I never gave up on my dream of becoming a dentist.”

It wasn’t until 2012 when Ritesh was able to get back on track with his dental training. While he was working as a GPA, he was also studying for his Dental Admission Test and applying to dental schools.

“That was a difficult time in my life, I was working full-time and commuting from Diamond Bar every day,” Ritesh reflected. “However, I loved my job, I got to interact with

students, faculty, and patients, as well as learn about how the School was run.”

Ritesh’s busy schedule paid off, he was accepted into the UCLA School of Dentistry Class of 2018 and began classes in the fall of 2014.

“I was absolutely ecstatic when I got the call that I had been accepted to UCLA Dentistry,” said Ritesh. “I have a lot of Bruin pride, which stems from my undergraduate experience, and to be able to be a two-time Bruin was surreal.”

With graduation now a year away, Ritesh already has plans to pursue a General Practice Residency (GPR) program and eventually work in private practice. “Compared with other medical professions, dentistry allows you to see multiple patients per day, but also establish a relationship with each of those patients. That aspect has always attracted me to the field.”

One reason why Ritesh wants to pursue a GPR certificate is to be able to treat children as well as adults. “Knowing how to treat the entire family at different stages is important, it makes you a better practitioner.” He knows that good oral health starts at a young age.

Having come this far, Ritesh seems at peace with everything that has happened along the way. He will be the first of his family to enter the healthcare field and he is looking forward to being able to finally say that he’s a dentist.

“In dentistry, there’s an instant gratification to helping someone,” said Ritesh. “The field also encourages constant training. My belief is that as healthcare providers, you always have a responsibility to your patients to continue to learn. I’m glad I never gave up.”

Photo by Brian Lozano



*“People have different reasons for getting into this field and I feel as though my life experiences provide a unique perspective. I have something to bring to the table that’s different from anyone else.”*

Hilary Tate’s love for dentistry began at an early age. She would wear her head gear to school and used paper clips to mimic braces. While most kids her age loathed going to the dentist, she enjoyed the regular visits.

Compared to many of her dental school colleagues, the road to dentistry took a little longer for Hilary. She is one of the eldest female dental students in the Class of 2019, and there are times when she feels out of place. Dentistry is a second career for the native Angeleno. Her first career was as an architect at a large, successful firm in New York. After surviving three rounds of layoffs during the Great Recession, and taking a look at what she really wanted out of her professional life, she enrolled in a post-baccalaureate program at Columbia University to fulfill prerequisite requirements for dental school.

Architecture had not been her first choice when she entered college at the University of Miami. She began course work in Sports Medicine and was set on entering the healthcare field after graduation. She even worked with the athletic department’s team dentist as a student athletic trainer, where she was in charge of making mouth guards.

Back-to-back tragedies derailed Hilary’s studies. She lost her father to a heart attack during her sophomore year and her mother to cancer during her senior year. The pre-med workload became too much for her at the time and she changed majors to architecture.

“I was forced into adulthood at a very young age. I graduated from college with no parents and no home. Given the circumstances, I did the best I could,” she recalls. “I bounced around a little and ended up in New York where I started to piece my life together.”

After several years of living and working in New York and gaining some independence, Hilary started to do some soul-searching and found that she didn’t want to spend her life designing homes for the exceedingly wealthy, which is what she felt she was doing as an architect.

“A big reason why I’m choosing to become a dentist is that I wanted to be able to positively affect people in a more useful way,” said Hilary. “I also wanted to use my design education in a more transferable way and incorporate the healthcare component I’d fostered in my four years of sports medicine.”

Hilary finds that she has been able to apply quite a few of her skills from architecture to dental school. “The 3-D imaging, spatial relations, and how form follows function are all things that I find myself doing in my lab courses.”

UCLA has always held a special place for Hilary. She grew up hearing about the Bruins. Her mother graduated from the UCLA School of Engineering and her father from the UCLA School of Law. There’s even a scholarship named in her mother’s honor at the School of Engineering. “My mother’s legacy was the inspiration for my first career,” said Hilary. “Now, I’m able to branch out and pursue my dream to become a dentist.”

Hilary hasn’t regretted for a second her decision to become a dentist. “People have different reasons for getting into this field and I feel as though my life experiences provide a unique perspective. I have something to bring to the table that’s different from anyone else.”

Photo by Brian Lozano

## RESEARCH PAVES A ROAD

### *Cesar Olmos, Class of 2020*

“My work ethic comes from watching my parents work relentlessly,” said Cesar. “I have always admired what they did to provide a good life for my brother and me, and it’s always been important to me to push through and achieve more.”

Cesar Olmos is the first generation of his family to go to college and a first-generation U.S. citizen. He received a Bachelor’s degree in biochemistry from UCLA in 2013, which he followed up with four years of clinical research in the UCLA Rheumatology Department, researching autoimmune diseases.

During the time that Cesar started to focus on applying to dental school, he met Dr. Vivek Shetty, a professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the UCLA School of Dentistry. Dr. Shetty was in the process of initiating a clinical trial, studying salivary biomarkers of trauma victims to evaluate whether saliva could indicate post-traumatic stress disorder. The trial was taking place at LA County + USC Medical Center, and being fluent in both English and Spanish, Cesar was a perfect fit to help recruit patients.

“The population we were working with was very diverse, and I had to be sensitive to their situations, which involved gunshot wounds and stabbings among other types of trauma,” said Cesar. “My heritage and ethnicity helped make the patients feel more comfortable and be more open to participating.”

It was also during this clinical trial and being at the medical center that Cesar had the opportunity to shadow oral surgeons, which further cemented his desire to go to dental school and maybe even consider pursuing a postdoctoral surgical residency program. He was also aware that all of these experiences were preparing him to be a competitive candidate for dental school. “I was also fortunate to come in

contact with Dr. Edmond Hewlett who helped me see what a dental school application should look like,” said Cesar. All of his hard work as a clinical research associate paid off. He was admitted to the UCLA School of Dentistry with the Class of 2020. “UCLA was my top choice and I couldn’t be happier.”

Despite his busy schedule of didactic courses and the introduction of clinical rotations starting this summer, Cesar has continued his research. “Research leads to new advancements and these advancements can change the paradigm of how clinicians treat patients. It’s inspiring to know that what I’m working on may one day help people and improve patient care.”

Cesar plans to continue working with the underserved Hispanic population, which he has been doing through volunteering at health-related outreach events. He is also part of the Hispanic Student Dental Association, the American Student Dental Association Research committee, and he serves as the social chair for his class. Cesar credits his ability to successfully juggle these multiple tasks to the time management skills he developed as a researcher.

“It is without doubt that being a researcher has helped me in many aspects, and it is my intent to continue conducting research even after I graduate dental school.”

Despite his humble upbringing in a community that has lower high school graduation rates, Cesar’s future is bright. “My biggest advice for people who are interested in the field of health sciences is to find outstanding mentors and persevere. With enough hard work, you’ll get through it.”

*“It is without doubt that being a researcher has helped me in many aspects, and it is my intent to continue conducting research even after I graduate dental school.”*

# Road *to* Leadership

For many individuals, an experience or person influenced them to pursue a certain path. In Dr. Ronald Mito's case, it was a dentist from his hometown who turned a traumatic restorative experience into a focus to pursue dentistry. There were multiple events and conversations along the way that led Ron to an academic leadership position, most currently as the executive associate dean for academic programs and personnel. After 40 years of service to the dental school, Ron is retiring from this position and reflects on the life-changing 'sentinel' events that steered him along the way.

At 8 years old, Ronald Mito found out the hard way about how teeth were drilled and filled. After enduring a trip to a dentist, who used a drill powered by cords and pulleys with no anesthesia, his mother then took him to a younger dentist with more modern techniques. This younger dentist went on to act as Ron's mentor throughout his adolescence and college years, and greatly influenced his decision to become a dentist.

"I knew I wanted to be a dentist at 8 years old," said Ron. "I never wavered from that goal once. But, I also never thought I'd end up where I'm at now. It was a series of sentinel events that led me here."

Ron grew up in a small town in Northern California, and at 12 years old began working for his father at his gas station. "I learned a lot of valuable life lessons pumping gas and cleaning windows," said Ron. "Professionalism, customer service, and the importance and pursuit of education were principles that were ingrained in my character at a young age."

Ron's father was an instrumental figure in his life, and he followed his advice by choosing to go to U.C. Davis. It turned out to be a good choice. Among other things, he credits the university with providing a strong basic science education.

"In college, I learned that education isn't about remembering every fact, it's more about remembering the value of the information and the ability to relearn it," said Ron. "It's more about the concepts than the details."

While classic rock, the Vietnam War, and the draft lottery were at their peak, Ron graduated with a Bachelor's degree with honors in Biological Sciences and began applying to dental school. In 1972, he entered the UCLA School of Dentistry.

UCLA's dental school wasn't even 10 years old at that point, but the School had already built a good reputation for integrating basic science into clinical practice. "I loved dental school from the very beginning, but it wasn't until I began treating patients that my love for providing a service to people came full circle," reflected Ron. "The customer service skills I learned 15 years prior at my family's gas station came back to help me."

Photo by Chris Flynn

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*"I knew I wanted to be a dentist at 8 years old. I never wavered from that goal once. But, I also never thought I'd end up where I'm at now. It was a series of sentinel events that led me here."*





*“If UCLA School of Dentistry had a Hall of Fame, Ron Mito would be selected on the first ballot. His forty years of dedicated service impacted thousands of students and colleagues. His humility and selfless desire to help others be successful served the School very well. Ron believes it is not what you say, it is what you do and how you do it. One could not ask for a better role model.” - Dr. Tom Rauth '73*

Ron graduated from the UCLA School of Dentistry in 1976 and went on to pursue a General Practice Residency certificate from the UCLA Hospital, which he completed in 1977. All through undergraduate school, dental school, and residency, Ron had plans to go back to Watsonville to take over the practice of his professional mentor. But after a long, introspective conversation with this mentor and friend, he came to the conclusion that his skills and training would be better suited for the larger population in Los Angeles.

After his postgraduate training and some prompting from a well-known medical anesthesiologist, Dr. Gerald Allen, Ron partnered with colleague, Dr. Joseph Chang, who had recently opened a private practice. They built one of the first practices in the country where the dentists, in conjunction with dental anesthesiologists, would provide treatment to patients under general anesthesia in their office. This was a novel concept at the time.

At first, the anesthesia was used for more complex cases, such as multiple restorations and surgical procedures. But, Ron and his partner began applying it for patients suffering from severe dental anxiety and phobia.

“We built a practice based on the management of fear,” said Ron. “We had people coming from all over the country to have dental treatment performed while under anesthesia. But, I realized that we were creating a population of people dependent on us who wouldn’t see anyone else.”

Ron felt he needed to approach dental anxiety with an alternative method and engaged Dr. Ken Mazey, a clinical psychologist, to help assess the patients and teach them coping skills and strategies through cognitive behavioral

therapy. Through this process, they developed a rating system of fear and coping strategies, which are still used today.

While he was in private practice, Ron held a part-time faculty appointment at UCLA, and then in 1984 he was recruited for a full-time teaching position as an adjunct assistant professor by Dr. John Beumer. He taught hospital dentistry, directed the General Practice Residency, and became the Director of the Dental Fear and Anxiety Center. In 1986, he received a call from the dean of the UCLA School of Dentistry, who asked him if he would serve as the chair of Hospital Dentistry.

“That was another one of those sentinel events that changed my career path,” said Ron. “It was one of the first academic leadership positions I held and would kick-off my years of administrative service at UCLA.”

Over the years, Ron was asked to take on more and more responsibility. He served the School in several capacities, including associate dean for administration, associate dean for student affairs, and associate dean for clinical dental sciences. In 2011, he was appointed to his current position, in charge of all academic programs and faculty positions, and in 2015 was promoted to executive associate dean – a position second only to the dean of the school. Over the years Ron has served with five Deans, however the last 18 years were under Dr. No-Hee Park.

After he retires, Ron will continue working part-time for the dental school as a special assistant to Dean Paul Krebsbach, helping in any way he can. Through the many roles Ron has held, the valuable life and professional lessons he’s learned have helped pave his road to leadership and professional fulfillment.

*Here he answers some questions and gives advice to those seeking a similar path or looking to grow their career:*

**Question:** You are an alumnus of the UCLA School of Dentistry. What does that mean to you, and what is your advice for recent D.D.S. graduates trying to build their career?

**Answer:** I have a tremendous sense of pride and respect for the education I received at UCLA and for the people who trained me. Dental school can be overwhelming, and there’s a tendency to be worn down by the process, so you may not fully appreciate the value of your education until you are practicing and treating patients. Rigor can be mistaken for obstacles, but it exists to ensure the quality of education, safety, and compliance. Also, you should plan to continually learn and retrain yourself throughout your career.

**Q:** You have been a faculty member at the dental school for 40+ years. What do you feel has been your most impactful work?

**A:** Being able to mentor students has by far been the most fun and fulfilling part of my tenure. Students have a hunger for knowledge and experiences, and they sincerely want to help patients. Students, in general, have a bigger vision than just doing dental treatment. They want to impact the people they touch and most of them want to give back in some way.

**Q:** How do you deal with difficult decisions?

**A:** My advice is to take the emotion out of a situation. When you are faced with a difficult situation, you need to slow down, be contemplative, and ‘think grey.’ Be deliberative and make a decision based on facts and hearing all sides of a story. It’s rare that any decision needs to be made today.

**Q:** What are some of your life mottos that have helped you succeed?

**A:** Don’t rush to judgement about people. Learn to understand the other person’s perspective. It’s okay to agree to disagree. It’s not about winning, it’s about making a good decision.

**Q:** How long has the road been to the Dean’s Suite?

**A:** I never had that on my road map or a desire to be in the Dean’s Suite. As mentors, you must reach out to quality people and encourage them to take on new responsibilities. It’s a professional responsibility for leaders to cultivate future leaders, whether or not they are seeking it. I’ve always been lucky to have people ask me to be in leadership positions. It goes back to those sentinel events where you have to pick a road. As Ron’s father would always say, “when given a choice, pick”.

**Q:** There is currently a scholarship campaign being established to honor your dedication to the betterment of UCLA Dentistry, which will award student dentists who display excellence in professionalism, leadership, and service. What does this mean to you?

**A:** When I learned that Dr. Joan Otomo-Corgel, my UCLA classmate and friend, agreed to champion a scholarship in my honor, I was in total shock. What a surprise to learn of this effort, which includes support from Dean Paul Krebsbach, as well as committee members Drs. Carol Bibb, Tom Rauth, Steve Okamoto and Mitra Simanian. I have tried to be a role model for students in professionalism, leadership, and service and having a scholarship named after me that recognizes these qualities is absolutely my greatest professional recognition.

**Ron’s career at UCLA set him apart, and he manifested and dedicated his professional life to the betterment of UCLA Dentistry. The School has launched a campaign to name an educational scholarship in his honor.**

**If you are interested in giving to the *Dr. Ronald Mito Award for Professionalism, Leadership and Service*, please call (310) 206-6063 or visit [giving.ucla.edu/ronmitoaward](http://giving.ucla.edu/ronmitoaward)**

## Resource for the Community

Carmen Fabian starts most days by kissing her grandkids goodbye as they head off to school. The 68-year-old grandmother of four is grateful that she can help take care of two of them while living with one of her daughters in Culver City. She also tries to maintain her health by walking in her neighborhood every day.

However, one area where Carmen had experienced challenges is around her oral health. After a recommendation from her primary care physician that she needed to see a dentist as soon as possible due to severe pain in one of her back teeth, her daughter found the Wilson-Jennings-Bloomfield UCLA Venice Dental Center (VDC) as a location that would accept Carmen's Denti-Cal coverage. "I was in a lot of pain from one particular tooth, and because I hadn't been seeing a dentist regularly, I didn't have any care provider to turn to," said Carmen.

The VDC serves as a major safety-net and primary oral care provider for many seniors, adults, and children in West Los Angeles and surrounding communities, providing nearly 13,000 patient visits in the 2016 fiscal year. Over the years, the VDC's patient base has grown to distant areas in Southern California and has also increased its services to include patients with complex needs who have limited access to advanced dental care.

After her initial consultation at the VDC, Carmen found out she needed fairly extensive dental treatments, which included a root canal on a back upper tooth, followed by a crown – treatments with fees that would add up fast, even though the VDC keeps its fees at the lowest possible threshold to financially accommodate its patients.


Furthermore, adult Denti-Cal only covers regular cleanings, fillings, full dentures, and root canals on front teeth. Deep cleanings, gum (periodontal) treatment, root canals on back teeth, permanent crowns and bridges, or partial removable dentures for replacing one or a few missing teeth, are not covered benefits. Any patient with adult Denti-Cal coverage who needs such services has to pay the full fee out of pocket. For many seniors like Carmen, the non-covered dental treatments, which they need the most are out of reach financially.

*Carmen Fabian  
A Grateful Patient*

*Wilson-Jennings-  
Bloomfield  
UCLA  
Venice Dental  
Center*

*"I was in a lot  
of pain from one  
particular tooth.  
I didn't have any  
care provider to  
turn to."*

Photo by Chris Flynn



**200**  
Residents,  
student dentists,  
and faculty

**27**  
Operatories  
with Pediatric  
Wing

Provides  
**13,000**  
patient visits  
annually

“I didn’t have the money to pay for all the complex dental services that I needed,” said Carmen. “I was in a position where I was going to have to go without and just live with the chronic pain.” Fortunately for her, the VDC focuses on providing quality care and major dental services for the community, and it has been able to partner with various community foundations and other philanthropists to help supplement the coverage provided by adult Denti-Cal to qualifying patients.

“The UCLA Venice Dental Center remains committed to enhancing the health and quality of life for low-income and indigent children, adults, and seniors who have limited access to oral healthcare,” said Dr. Lillian Cheng, director of the UCLA Venice Dental Center and an associate clinical professor of Restorative Dentistry. “Since we’re a teaching institution, the quality of our care and our access to resources makes us an appealing choice for all patients, too.”

For Carmen, her case qualified her to receive patient subsidy funds from The Nicholas Endowment, a non-profit that was created with the vision of enabling individuals to reach their full potential in today’s society. The funding covered a significant part of the fees for her root canal treatment and crown on a back tooth, which are not within the scope of Denti-Cal coverage.

To begin the complex treatment process, Carmen was assigned to third-year student dentist, Ibrahim Saeed, who delivered her treatment and managed her case. The supervision of her root canal treatment was assigned to volunteer faculty member and UCLA D.D.S. alum, Dr. Brandon Seto, an endodontist. Dr. Lillian Cheng oversees the entire care process to ensure quality control.

“By exposing UCLA dental students to a population with critical and extensive needs, we are providing valuable professional and clinical experience that is deeply grounded

in social impact, and this experience lays the groundwork for their professional careers in similar settings once they complete their training,” said Dr. Paulo Camargo, a professor of Periodontics and the associate dean for clinical dental sciences.

To say that Carmen is a grateful patient is an understatement. She received specialized dental care that would have been unaffordable without the VDC. With the majority of the work behind her, she can now transition into the maintenance stage of dental care. Her experience as a patient was so positive that she plans to continue coming to the VDC as her dental home and refer her friends.

For nearly 50 years, the VDC has been a valuable resource for the Westside community. Without philanthropic support to supplement the limited coverage provided by adult Denti-Cal, patients like Carmen, who do not have the funds to augment their Denti-Cal coverage, often disappear

mid-treatment or, more often, decide to opt-out of treatment altogether. This leads to the deterioration of oral health and the need for multiple and sequential tooth extractions. Ultimately, one’s inability to receive proper dental care prevents one from having a productive life and contributing to society.

“The link of oral health to overall health is undeniable, and I appreciated having this service-learning opportunity at the UCLA Venice Dental Center,” said Ibrahim. “Carmen was a dream patient and gave me confidence about selecting dentistry as a career. I learned a lot from treating her and found it incredibly rewarding. She can now smile without pain and in return wants to teach me Spanish!”

*Photo by Chris Flynn. Dr. Brandon Seto (pictured at left), with Dr. Lillian Cheng, as they discuss a case in the main clinic area of the Venice Dental Center.*

## Discovering Another

# ART FORM

When you first meet Dr. Margaret Pan Quon, you are struck by her warm presence and genuine smile. The retired endodontist and UCLA alum has taken up oil painting and based on her work, she has approached painting the same way she approached her dental career – with passion and precision.

Margaret was part of the very first class graduating class from UCLA School of Dentistry in 1968, and even more astounding, is that she was the only female student in the class. She was a pioneer in the dental field and held her own in a classroom full of men. “I’ve seen the dental school change a lot over the years. The first class had 28 students versus today’s 108 and more than half of the student body is now women,” said Margaret. “Advanced degrees are offered, the clinics have gone high-tech, and the growth of research is evident.”

The budding artist emigrated from China in 1939 and enrolled at UCLA in 1955, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics Education in 1959. She decided to continue her education and went on to earn a Master of Science degree in Nutrition and then stayed on as a lecturer for two years in the same subject. Her passion for learning pushed her to apply to the new dental school that had just been built on campus.

“At the time, I was a minority in my field and there were times when I felt people’s doubt because of my gender,” said the alum, who also served as a UCLA Dentistry Board of Counselors member for over 10 years. “I’ve always tried to maintain a good attitude and believe that success comes from being honest and fair, and showing compassion and kindness.”

Following dental school, Margaret completed an Endodontics Specialty program at the Long Beach Veterans Hospital. She then went on to work in private practice in Endodontics for the next 30 years. When asked about what she would do upon retirement, it dawned on her that she had no idea. The next thing she knew, she found herself in an oil painting class at a local art school where she lives in Orange County.

*“I’ve always tried to maintain a good attitude and believe that success comes from being honest and fair, and showing compassion and kindness.”*

“I’ve always enjoyed working with my hands and looking at beautiful objects,” she said. “An understanding of spatial relationship, subtle change in shades of color, and attention to details are reflected in my style of painting. The hand-eye coordination I refined in my dental practice definitely helps.”

In addition to her artwork, the 2015 Alumna of the Year is still very involved with her alma mater, and giving back to the dental school remains a priority. In 2008, Margaret and her family funded the establishment of an endowed scholarship for students. In addition, Margaret has lent the School two of her oil paintings, as shown in the Table of Contents, to be displayed in the School’s academic building.

“My advice for dental students just starting out, would be to perform each procedure as if you were being graded; and be good to your staff for they are reflections of you and are your best asset,” said Margaret. “Don’t make the financial reward a top priority, if you enjoy your work, this will come automatically.”

If you are an artist that would like to donate or lend the UCLA School of Dentistry pieces of your work for display throughout the dental school, please contact the Administrative Offices at (310) 206-6063 or email at [info@dentistry.ucla.edu](mailto:info@dentistry.ucla.edu).

Photo by Chris Flynn

The CENTENNIAL Campaign for **UCLA**

UCLA School of Dentistry is already among the finest dental schools in the world, with an international reputation for excellence in education, research, patient care, and public service. Philanthropic support is absolutely crucial if we are to retain our role in shaping the brightest dental minds of this and coming generations.

**STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS**  
\$10 MILLION

Endowed scholarships and academic prizes attract and reward the most qualified, dedicated, and promising students. Financial support empowers those students to develop their talents through rigorous academics and enriching experiences.

**RESEARCH & SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES**  
\$10 MILLION

Developing relevant academic programs and maintaining top-flight research centers that focus on clinical innovations to improve oral and systemic health are core goals. Our research centers enhance scholarship and give students the training to become leaders in the field.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**  
\$5 MILLION

We strive to provide affordable and accessible patient care to the community through health fairs and other outreach events. Establishing a pipeline for students from underrepresented communities to enter professions in the health sciences expands pathways to higher education.

**DISCRETIONARY FUND & DEAN'S PRIORITY CAMPAIGNS**  
\$10 MILLION

The Apollonian Society enhances the student experience and the School of Dentistry's reputation for excellence. With these unrestricted funds, we can uphold exceptionally high standards in all areas of our school.

**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**

3,852  
GIFTS

5,242  
ALUMNI

1976  
CLASS THAT GAVE THE GREATEST NUMBER OF GIFTS

1983  
CLASS WITH THE HIGHEST GIVING TOTAL

\$25M  
RAISED TO DATE

**\$35 MILLION GOAL**





## Faculty Retirements

25

YEARS OF SERVICE

### Edward McLaren, D.D.S., M.D.C.



After earning a D.D.S. degree from the University of the Pacific School of Dentistry and a certificate in Prosthodontics from UCLA, Dr. Edward McLaren was hired in 1990 as a lecturer for the UCLA Graduate Prosthodontics program.

In 2001, Dr. McLaren became an adjunct assistant professor of Biomaterials and Advanced Prosthodontics and then in 2004 was promoted to an adjunct associate professor. In 2010, he was promoted (and changed series) to health sciences clinical professor in Restorative Dentistry. For the past 18 years, he has also served as the director of the UCLA Center for Esthetic Dentistry.

During his time at UCLA, Dr. McLaren developed a national and international

reputation for excellence in esthetic dentistry with an emphasis on personalized training in the art of ceramic restorations. His trainees have populated dental laboratories and dental offices around the globe.

37

YEARS OF SERVICE

### Andrew G. Pullinger, D.D.S.



Dr. Andrew Pullinger was first hired in 1980 as a research fellow in Orofacial Pain and TMJ disorders. Then in 1982, he became an assistant professor of Gnathology and Occlusion; was promoted to an associate professor of Orofacial Pain and Occlusion in 1987; and then promoted to a professor of Orofacial Pain in 1993. He also served as the chair of the Section of Orofacial Pain from 2001 to 2003.

Dr. Pullinger earned a D.D.S. degree and a Master's of Science degree in Prosthodontics, both from McGill University. He is also a member of the Royal College of Dentists of Canada.

20

YEARS OF SERVICE

### Nancy Reifel, D.D.S., M.P.H.



Originally hired by the dental school in 1996 as a dental public health specialist under the Division of Public Health and Community Dentistry and the UCLA American Indian Studies Center, Dr. Nancy Reifel spearheaded a program to improve dental care access for American Indians in Southern California. From 2005 to 2009, she became an assistant researcher for the same program.

In 2009, Dr. Reifel became an assistant professor of Public Health and Community Dentistry and for the past seven years has taught a selective credit course where pre-doctoral students go into the community to provide

dental care to underserved populations. She received her D.D.S. degree from the University of Minnesota and a Master's in Public Health from UCLA.



## Your Legacy Can Change and Save Lives

The UCLA School of Dentistry delivers high-level dental healthcare education and performs some of the most advanced research in the world (such as a liquid biopsy process that can detect pancreatic or lung cancer, or the development of advanced tissue engineering products to repair dental, oral, and craniofacial defects).

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### For more information, please contact:

Robin Sauldsberry, Director of Gift Planning, at [robinw@support.ucla.edu](mailto:robinw@support.ucla.edu), 310.267.4070.

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## We Want to Hear from You

Please give us your comments and feedback by emailing us at [info@dentistry.ucla.edu](mailto:info@dentistry.ucla.edu). Include your name, email address, city, and state of residence and whether you are an alumnus of the UCLA School of Dentistry (include your graduation year).

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**08.26.17**

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**07.22.17**

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**09.02.17**

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**09.15.17 - 09.16.17**

Full Mouth Rehabilitation with Tilted Posterior Implants

**Starts 08.04.17**

Sleep Medicine Mini-Residency

**09.22.17 - 09.23.17**

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**Starts 08.11.17**

TMD/OFP Mini-Residency

**Starts 10.06.17**

Endodontic Continuum

For more information or to register for a course, please visit [dentistry.ucla.edu/CDE](http://dentistry.ucla.edu/CDE) or call 310.206.8388.

