Lasting Impression, Summer 2016

College of Dental Medicine

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INSIDE: GIVE KIDS A SMILE • SMOKING CESSION • CHRISTOPHER MARIANI • ROBERT UCHIN

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ON THE COVER: First-year dental student Cinthia Funes

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After more than two years serving as dean, I continue to be amazed by the advances that the NSU College of Dental Medicine (CDM) has made in its short 19-year history. This issue of Lasting Impressions illustrates how the CDM is shaping dentistry’s future through the efforts of our faculty members, students, and alumni.

In just six weeks, our renovated Simulation Laboratory reopened with a modern footprint developed by the Italian firm, Pininfarina, which designs the Ferrari and Maserati automobiles. The lab’s sleek lines, combined with its electric handpieces, provide a state-of-the-art environment for our students’ clinical dental education.

Community service remains a high priority for the college. This year’s Give Kids A Smile day served as the national launch for the American Dental Association’s annual event. We focus on this event, of which we are extremely proud, as well as student leader Kelly Cundy, class of 2016, who coordinated the 2016 NSU Give Kids A Smile day.

As science advances, we change our views about dental disease diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. In this issue, you’ll learn how the Department of Restorative Sciences and Cariology is implementing new concepts of dental caries into clinical education and practice. Similarly, the College of Dental Medicine shows how it is committed to helping patients quit using tobacco, which kills many Americans each year.

The profession will continue to advance as our students—our future leaders—take their place. Meet Danny Young, class of 2018, a modern inventor whose goal is to make dentistry easier and more efficient for his colleagues.

Robert Uchin, the College of Dental Medicine dean from 2001–2013, retired in February 2016. But his lasting legacy continues with the creation and funding of the Robert and Marlene Uchin Faculty Development Fund.

Also in this issue, you will see how the NSU College of Dental Medicine is not following a script for the future, but writing it. I invite you to visit the College of Dental Medicine when you are in South Florida. Meet our students and faculty members to capture the energy and enthusiasm that is shaping the future of dentistry!
The day is surely coming ... when we will be engaged in practicing preventive, rather than reparative, dentistry. When we will so understand the etiology and pathology of dental caries that we will be able to combat its destructive effects.” —G.V. Black, D.D.S., 1926

Audrey Levitt Galka, D.D.S., chair, Department of Cariology and Restorative Dentistry at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine (CDM), will be the first to tell you that days of “drill and fill” dentistry are numbered, and that G.V. Black, the father of modern dentistry, would be pleased to know that the day he spoke of in his famous
quote has arrived. When students of the cariology and restorative dentistry department head out into the world as professionals, Galka hopes they keep five important letters in mind during their day-to-day practice: ICCMS™.

“This is the new model that we are using to train future dentists,” said Galka about the International Caries Classification and Management System™ (ICCMS™) that has become the overarching philosophy and mission of the department.

In June 2013, Galka headed to King’s College London Dental Institute as part of the ICCMS™ Implementation Workshop. When she returned, she set out to put a process in place at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine. “We have had cariology here for 14½ years, and the philosophy of minimally invasive dentistry, including caries risk assessment, is reinforced by our faculty members. But now, we will have a formal ICCMS™ pathway,” she said.

The ICCMS™ concept uses a standardized system in a prevention-oriented approach. “ICCMS™ classifies the stages of severity of the caries process—which is the decay—and the activity status of lesions. This relates directly to whether and how to treat,” Galka explained.

“Today, the evidence supports that if we get to the lesion early, using preventive strategies and motivational training for patient compliance, we can reverse the caries process.”

The protocol calls for a comprehensive management plan that first assesses the patient’s risk for caries. “Students are taught to evaluate the patient’s history, X-rays, and clinical examinations to determine whether the patient is low, moderate, or high risk and to stage caries severity and lesion activity. The diagnosis governs the clinical treatments, which include an individualized preventive treatment plan (based on risk level) and nonsurgical or surgical care for individual lesions,” Galka said. The emphasis is on prevention and minimally invasive dentistry. A coded system ranks caries severity beginning at zero, with six being the most severe.

For patients with early stage caries, students are taught that they should work with the patient for a remineralizing plan and monitor these lesions over time before resorting to an irreversible surgical procedure. For moderate and severe caries, minimally invasive restorations are recommended. “The department supports the philosophy that controlling the caries process and preservation of tooth tissue are paramount,” Galka said.

GOODBYE, EXPLORER

Galka supports the view that traditional use of the dental explorer for caries detection be replaced with the less-invasive visual assessment model. She explained that if “you take that explorer and you have the initial stage caries—that white spot lesion—or the start of chalkiness, you can actually cavitate the tooth with the explorer.” Galka added that it is challenging to get buy-in from dentists and faculty members who have been using the explorer instrument as their right-hand man for 40 years. “We’re in the process of ensuring that all our faculty members are trained to use the ICCMS™ survey,” she said.

“The CDM has a rigorous cariology pre-clinic and clinical component, and we are excited about this initiative,” said Evren Kilinc, D.D.S., Ph.D., a cariology content expert. The treatment plans created by the students trained in the classification will result in a more comprehensive caries diagnosis. “They will become more attuned to looking at these initial active lesions and taking all steps necessary to try to remineralize these early lesions, before intervening with surgical care,” Galka said.

Amir N. Farhangpour, D.D.S., predoctoral director and restorative director of the CDM Clinic, said the ICCMS™ creates a common language between students, faculty members, and patients. “It provides a guideline of what stages we should be looking for,” he explained. “It makes sure that we are looking at the entire picture and not just one tooth. Let me simplify it. In years past, if we saw a small spot, we treated it in the same way we would treat a large, active lesion. Now, we say, ‘Let’s see if we can give this a second chance with our preventive approach.’ ”

MINIMALLY INVASIVE STRATEGY

Students working in the clinic are taught to look at the caries risk of the patient to develop an individual preventive treatment plan and to make decisions about borderline lesions. “That’s where that minimally invasive strategy comes in. We say, let’s prescribe fluoride to stop the progression of the lesion. It may need a restoration many years down the road, or maybe never,” said
Farhangpour. When surgical intervention is indicated, students are taught to follow principles of minimally invasive dentistry and make every attempt to be conservative in tooth preparation.

Both Galka and Farhangpour agree that the key for their students to make a determination on restoration is if the tooth is cavitated and there is a break in the integrity of the enamel. “What we're teaching our students is the rationale linking the diagnosis to treatment,” said Farhangpour. “Hopefully, with future dentists learning this protocol, the restoration of cavities—previously the mainstay of general dentistry—will one day become part of a complete, patient-centered preventive model.”

However, Farhangpour does point out that the CDM has no shortage of patients in need of restorative care. “Our students get a great deal of experience in a wide variety of restorative procedures, placing quality restorations with state-of-the-art restorative materials,” he added.

INTEGRATED STUDY

Students in their first year of dental school also are introduced to a course that has them hitting the ground running.

Continued on next page
“We broke the silos when we created the Integrated Restorative Dental Sciences course. This was an interdisciplinary initiative where we combined dental anatomy, occlusion, cariology, operative, biomaterials, fixed prosthodontics, and case-based treatment planning as a super course,” said Galka. “The students are not just treating a tooth. On day one, we show that we are treating the overall well-being of a patient. It’s all tied together, which lends itself to the clinic, which is built on a comprehensive care clinic model.”

Zohaib Munaf, president of the CDM’s class of 2018, said the course almost immediately had him immersed. “It was fast-paced because of all the dental topics rolled into one. It really showed me what I would do in my practice,” he explained. Enrolled in the course for three semesters, he said it showed him to look at a patient as more than “just a restoration. I’m not just going to do a composite treatment. It’s a different way of looking at the whole oral cavity and seeing what other issues may be present or how you can resolve any other concerns.”
SPECIAL POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM

With the many complex restorative cases at the CDM, and a desire to be at the forefront of operative dentistry, the Department of Cariology and Restorative Dentistry developed and implemented a postgraduate program in operative dentistry in 2011. Currently, the CDM is one of only six operative dentistry postgraduate programs in the country.

Luana Oliveira Haas, D.D.S., Ph.D., M.S., director of the postgraduate program in operative dentistry, found it intriguing when she came to the United States from Brazil and discovered that operative dentistry was not considered a specialty as it is in other countries. “While operative is learned in dental school, the difference is that you learn only the basic concepts. If you attend a postgraduate program that focuses on operative, you will learn different techniques, improve skills, and have a different approach to your patients because you are more highly trained,” she said.

Currently, the program, with its first-entering class in July 2011, is competitive, with 50 to 70 applicants vying for only 4 available positions. The training program awards a Master of Science degree and a certificate in operative dentistry upon completion.

“We teach many of the general dentistry concepts at an advanced level where they may have cases that are more complicated,” Haas stated. Students practice both cosmetic dentistry, such as working with porcelain veneers, composite restorations, and prosthetic procedures, as well as fixed partial dentures. “The clinic aspect is the strongest portion of the program, and we have a large pool of patients, so our students are exposed to many different cases,” she said.

Additionally, a major focus of the postgraduate operative specialty program aligns with the predoctoral program, with an emphasis on a patient-centered prevention model. Recently, the Academy of Operative Dentistry requested that the American Dental Association’s Council on Dental Education and Licensure recognize operative dentistry as a special interest area in general dentistry. “If this proposal gets final approval, operative dentistry will be even more important in terms of recognition,” Haas said.

Amr A. Azhari, a second-year resident in the two-year program, said an additional year may be used to complete the research thesis. He had his pick of other operative dentistry programs, including the University of Michigan and Indiana University, but “chose NSU because the CDM’s program has three components that are treated equally: research, clinical, and teaching.” Azhari is one of the students who is sponsored in the operative dentistry program as part of the Department of Medical and Health programs of the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission. In his role as a faculty member at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Azhari said the government would have him return to his country with his skills to teach others, in addition to having his own clinical practice.

The opportunity to have a large patient pool in which students are encouraged to be more productive seeing patients three times a week, and as many as eight patients per day, is another difference between the CDM’s program and others similar programs, Azhari added. “Some cases are simple and some are complex. We are lucky to have experienced faculty members working with us. This program is really one of the toughest programs I’ve ever worked in. It’s good, because it gives you the opportunity to learn under pressure.”
**STUDENTS’ VIEWS PUBLISHED**

Adam Saltz, class of 2017, had his article, “The Millennial Dentist,” published in *Mouth*, the journal of the American Student Dental Association. In the article, Saltz discussed how the next generation of dentists is changing the landscape of the field. Saltz’s article also touched on how technology and social media can expand and enhance modern dental practices.

Danny (Tony) Nguyen, class of 2018, has his article, “Building a Dental Business with the Help of ‘E-Myth Revisited,’” in a recent issue of *ASDA News*. In his article, Nguyen discussed the importance of dental students taking business classes in order to manage their future practices.

Dmitriy Kravchenko, M.P.H., class of 2017, discussed how a dual degree can broaden the scope of a dentist’s practice in a recent issue of *ASDA News*. Kravchenko’s article examined the benefits and importance of a dual degree—dental medicine combined with a degree in public health or law.

**SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED**

Two CDM students received scholarships during the annual meeting of the Hispanic Dental Association Foundation. Christine Puig, who is currently concluding her first year as a pediatric dental resident at Miami Children’s Hospital, was awarded the 2015 Colgate-Palmolive Company Scholarship for a Dental Residency or Specialty Program. Erick Crespo, class of 2016, was awarded the 2015 Hispanic Dental Association Foundation Scholarship. He will be attending a general practice residency at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, New York.

**ALUMNI TO MEET AT ADA**

In honor of its 20th anniversary, NSU’s College of Dental Medicine will be planning several events, including an alumni reception to be held at the American Dental Association Annual Meeting in Atlanta in 2017. CDM class reunions are being planned for the fall of 2016 to honor the first graduating class (2001), the fifth graduating class (2006), and the 10th graduating class (2011). For information on helping to plan the reunions or attending, contact Chris Phelps, president, CDM Alumni Society and Friends, at drchrisdmd@gmail.com or Rosalie Marin at rm1147@nova.edu.

**STUDENT CLINICIAN NAMED**

Ashleigh Weyh, a fourth-year dental student who will graduate in 2016, was named as one of the 2015 Student Clinicians during the 56th Annual American Dental Association/DENTSPLY Student Clinician Research Awards. Weyh’s research was titled, “Insurance Status: An Important Predictor of Oral Cancer Surgery Outcomes.”
Dear Fellow Alumni and Friends,

The CDM Alumni Society members find success in the simple motto “for alumni, by alumni.”

A tremendous number of alumni turned out at our inaugural 2015 Alumni and Friends Weekend. These social events demonstrate that the CDM Alumni Society is a serious entity within the dental community as we bring together friends and colleagues and meet more recent alumni. We thank our sponsors—Care Credit, Solution Reach, Implant Direct, Social Dental, and Patterson Dental—for supporting these events.

I hope you consider attending an alumni event in 2016. If you have not received information about the alumni events, contact Rosalie Marin (rm1147@nova.edu) or the CDM Alumni Relations Office. See the column to the left for upcoming events. You can also email me at drchrisdmd@gmail.com. For those Facebook friends, please search for the CDM Alumni Society and Friends page and hit the like button.

NSU CDM alumni are growing in numbers and in national reputation. When I travel throughout the United States for speaking engagements, many of the participants recognize NSU CDM as a top-rated dental school. Our alumni society members are national speakers and elected officers in national organizations. For example, Irene Marron-Terrazzi, D.M.D. (’03), is the newly elected second vice president of the American Dental Association. (See a feature about her on page 31.) These types of recognitions are a testament to our education and character. It is because of you that our reputation continues to grow, and I thank you.

I hope 2016 is bringing success in your personal life and that your practice is experiencing new levels of growth.

Fins Up!

Chris Phelps
President, CDM Alumni Society and Friends

UPCOMING ALUMNI EVENTS

May 20, 2016, 3:00–5:00 p.m.  
NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, NSU CDM Alumni Society Reception for 2016 graduates—Meet the graduates and welcome them to the NSU CDM Alumni Society.

May 28, 2016, 5:00–7:00 p.m.  
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas—Meet and connect with your pediatric dentistry colleagues.

June 17, 2016, 5:00–7:00 p.m.  
Florida Dental Conference in Orlando, Florida—Join us at the conference. Prizes will be awarded to the classes with the most attendees!
THE CDM’s nationally recognized 
Give Kids A Smile 
event combines oral health 
with a party atmosphere.

BY SALLIE JAMES
When NSU’s College of Dental Medicine launched its first version of the American Dental Association’s Give Kids A Smile program 13 years ago, about 100 children in desperate need of basic dental care showed up. Year after year, attendance continues to increase at the CDM’s popular community outreach event. The 2016 event surpassed attendance records, attracting more than 750 children and special-needs patients.

The university’s event has become so highly respected that the American Dental Association’s Foundation (ADAF) selected NSU’s CDM as the national kickoff site for this annual program, which is held at 1,500 locations across the United States.

The CDM event was organized by dental students who, supervised by CDM professors, performed free dental cleanings, applied sealants, and filled cavities throughout the day for children ages 2 to 18. The children also learned the value of proper brushing, hand-washing, and good nutrition. In addition to its national attention, the CDM’s Give Kids A Smile event has evolved to become interdisciplinary, with participation from students in NSU’s colleges of Pharmacy, Optometry, and Osteopathic Medicine, as well as the physician assistant programs.

Carol Gomez Summerhays, D.D.S., ADA president, said the program teaches potentially life-changing habits. “The skills they will learn about taking care of their mouth health through daily brushing and flossing will benefit them for a lifetime,” said Summerhays, who is based in San Diego, California. “It will also make a
positive, lasting impression on them about what dentists do and how much they care about children and their health.

Give Kids A Smile day has a party atmosphere for the children, as CDM volunteers turned the dread often associated with dental care into delight with a little help from some popular Disney figures, such as Elsa and Anna from Frozen, Star Wars characters, a deejay, and clowns. “Our day is like a carnival,” said Kelly Cundy, a fourth-year CDM student who coordinates NSU’s Give Kids A Smile program and is president of the pediatric dental club. (A profile on Cundy can be found on page 42.)

This year’s event featured face painting, balloon artists, music, and appearances by Miami Dolphins and Florida Panthers players, including former Miami Dolphins player O.J. McDuffie. NSU’s mascot Razor the Shark, the Florida Panthers’ mascot Stanley C. Panther, and Timmy the Tooth also showed up.

“The focus on fun and education makes kids feel comfortable,” added Summerhays. “Events like this teach kids how important it is to be comfortable with the dentist, who is there to help you smile.”

“It’s like they are going to Disney for the day. The fun factor takes away the fear factor,” said Laurie Gordon-Brown, D.M.D., a CDM clinical professor of restorative dentistry. “It’s a fun experience for them with all sorts of things happening.”

NSU’s Give Kids A Smile program has been a standout for the South Florida community since it was launched. In 2015, the ADA Foundation named the CDM program one of only seven national winners of the E. (Bud) Tarrson Dental School Student Community Leadership
Award. The CDM program was the only such event to win a $5,000 award. Additionally, CDM graduate Jason Watts (’15) was selected to serve on the ADA Foundation’s national Give Kids A Smile Advisory Committee.

“The faculty members and students at Nova Southeastern University’s College of Dental Medicine are dedicated to making a tremendous impact not only in their own community, but on a national level,” said Ralph C. Attanasi, Jr., D.D.S., M.S., a prosthodontist who practices in Delray Beach, Florida, and serves as president of the Florida Dental Association. “The Give Kids A Smile program is influential in addressing children’s oral health issues.”

According to Gordon-Brown, the event is a “great learning experience” for the dental students. “Faculty members all participate in supervising the students while they are working on patients,” she said. “First-year dental students helped with the mechanics of the event, second-year dental students did cleanings, and third- and fourth-year dental students performed fillings and extractions. The dental students learn about treating patients, and the patients learn about essential oral care.”

“This program engages faculty and staff members, as well as community members who serve as volunteers,” said Linda Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., dean of the College of Dental Medicine. “It enables our students to realize their leadership potential. Give Kids A Smile day also teaches our students the power of giving back to the community, which is a core value of Nova Southeastern University.”

This year’s Give Kids A Smile program continued its partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County and other community organizations that reach out to families. Additionally, the CDM went a step further this year by teaming up with Broward County Public Schools, which sent students and teachers from eight elementary schools, including Pompano Beach Elementary School and Park Ridge Elementary School in Pompano Beach. Both schools were chosen because a high percentage of children from low-income families attend them. The schools were able to transport the children to the event.

What made the day magical was just the right touch of fantasy. Several student volunteers dressed up like
Disney characters, and there was even a tooth fairy who comforted nervous patients. “It makes it fun for them,” said Adam Saltz, a third-year CDM student who also serves on the ADA Council on Access, Prevention, and Interprofessional Relations. “It is rewarding to be a part of these experiences, because we are on the frontline delivering these services to patients.”

The college’s student-organized and student-led Give Kids A Smile program also includes monthly maintenance visits at local schools. CDM faculty members supervise the student volunteers. “Every year, we try to expand the event and do it better than before. Last year was the first year we provided care for special-needs patients,” Saltz said. “This year, we wanted to expand care. We have an incredible team of more than 500 student volunteers.”

Additions this year included educational stations with information on poison control, hand-washing, personal hygiene, and proper nutrition. “These events teach kids that dentists are there to help and that prevention skills—brushing for two minutes, twice a day, with a fluoride toothpaste and cleaning in between the teeth each day—go a long way in fighting dental disease,” Summerhays said.

To commemorate the honor of being the kickoff for the 1,500 Give Kids A Smile events scheduled to take place throughout the year, the CDM held a reception the night before the event that included representatives from the event’s sponsors, such as Henry Schein Cares; Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals, Inc.; the KaVo Kerr Group; and the ADA.

For more information about the Give Kids A Smile program, call (407) 291-KIDS. Give Kids A Smile is one of the world’s largest oral health charitable programs. Annually, it provides dental care to more than 350,000 children.

FLORIDA’S CHILDREN FIRST HONORS FRED LIPPMAN

Fred Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D., chancellor of NSU’s Health Professions Division, was honored by Florida’s Children First for his lifetime of work on behalf of children in Broward County.

“Dr. Lippman’s career has set the example for all child advocates—from his tenure in the Florida Legislature until most recently when he chaired the group that fought to create and ensure the perpetual existence of the Children’s Services Council of Broward County,” said Fort Lauderdale attorney Howard M. Talenfeld, president of Florida’s Children First’s Board of Directors.

As HPD chancellor, Lippman is responsible for overseeing all the HPD colleges, including dental medicine, health care sciences, medical sciences, nursing, optometry, and pharmacy, as well as the recently established College of Allopathic Medicine, the M.D. counterpart to NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine, which offers a D.O. degree, in addition to several master’s degrees.

Lippman joined Southeastern University College of Pharmacy in 1987 as vice president for pharmaceutical affairs. In 1989, he was promoted to vice president for external affairs for Southeastern University of the Health Sciences, which merged with Nova University in 1994 to create NSU. He was appointed chancellor of NSU’s Health Professions Division in 2004.
Message from the Chancellor

NSU has been undergoing a transformation related to the realignment of various academic programs. This realignment has created an ancillary benefit, allowing the Health Professions Division (HPD) colleges to look into establishing new baccalaureate and certificate programs that can help channel new students into the graduate and first-professional degree programs.

Currently, about 80 percent of NSU’s undergraduate matriculants are biology majors, with many seeking opportunities to gain preliminary exposure within the HPD to our pedagogy, labs, and research methods. As a result, the soon-to-be eight HPD colleges are working diligently to establish these types of opportunities.

In an effort to provide additional educational opportunities to first-time college students, there are a number of bachelor’s degree programs that are being proposed and developed within the HPD colleges in a variety of areas, such as nutrition, medical education, and public health. The establishment of new certificate programs that will enhance the educational mix, such as one for pharmacy technicians, is also being considered.

After reviewing some recent admissions data regarding students who matriculate into the HPD programs, it has become evident that they know our university is going through a positive academic realignment. Many of these students have also expressed to our admissions teams that they believe NSU is a holistic and interprofessional academic entity.

NSU is at an exciting point in its history. As we continue to enhance our educational offerings and enrich our reputation, the significance of these advancements will be of tremendous value to us in the future. As a result, we will attract exceptional students to our programs and recruit additional, first-rate faculty members and researchers to teach and prosper in our colleges.

Frederick Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D.
Chancellor, Health Professions Division
After running a dental practice in Fort Lauderdale for 30 years, Robert Uchin, D.D.S., planned to retire, but not from the profession. “I was getting further along in my age, and then they were opening a dental school right in my backyard,” he said. “I could go full time, teach at a university, and I didn’t have to relocate.”

That was 1997, and the opportunity would be the first new dental school in the United States in 25 years and the first private dental college established in Florida. “I had been in Fort Lauderdale since 1960, and I knew the community and political atmosphere, especially when it came to the dental community,” he explained. “That was my value to Dr. (Seymour) Oliet, who was the founding dean of Nova Southeastern University’s College of Dental Medicine.”

The same year the dental school was founded, Uchin joined the university full time. Five years later, Oliet stepped down and Uchin
became the second dean at the CDM in 2001. He held that position until 2013. Although he stepped down as dean, he continued to teach. “I'm 82 now,” said the endodontist. “But age has never been a factor for me; age is a matter of mind.”

He said his reason for retiring was less about him and more about the school. “I felt it was time for someone with a higher degree of energy and a next decade of foresight to become a leader of the CDM,” he admitted.

After a national search, Linda Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., was appointed as the third dean, joining the CDM in October 2013 from the Department of Restorative Dentistry at Texas A&M University’s Baylor College of Dentistry. “He's made such an impact,” Niessen said about Uchin. “His presence will be forever felt.”

A walking historical timeline of events in the CDM, Uchin beams with pride at how far the college has come since its founding, with most of its growth happening during his tenure. “We've continued to prosper as an educational center, in the quality of our students, staff members, and educators,” he said. “Our strength has been that we are anxious to grasp introductions of new techniques and equipment, to modernize dentistry, to learn these ideologies, and pass them on to our students.”

Leaving a Legacy
Although Uchin continued to teach after stepping down as dean, he announced his ultimate retirement in 2015. There are things he’ll miss about being on the CDM campus daily, including teaching students to be “intellectually curious as to what is next for dentistry.” But there’s also the commitment to his faculty members as a leader to ensure they were committed to learning.

“I have always supported the faculty members I was responsible for,” Uchin stated. “Most of them, probably 75 percent, I hired.” To that end, he and his wife, Marlene, have created the Robert and Marlene Uchin Faculty Development Fund. “While the university supports continuing education for every faculty member, we decided to set up a support fund
can’t get lost in the past,” he said. “You have to teach with enthusiasm and with a view into the future.”

**Future Focused**

When Uchin began his career in dentistry, he said it was a time of “real transition in dentistry.” He was drafted into the Air Force and stationed at Eglin Air Force Base near Pensacola, Florida. “Most dentists weren’t saving teeth, and those that wanted to save teeth had no one to refer to,” he said. Uchin was sent by the Air Force to Lackland in San Antonio, Texas, where he was taught endodontics. “When I came back to Eglin, I was the base endodontist.”

Uchin found motivation in being one of only three endodontists in Florida in the early 1960s. “Because it was new, we felt empowered. We were proselytizing all over the world and teaching dentists how to save teeth, because it was the biggest change taking place in dentistry,” said Uchin, who became the founding president of the Florida Association of Endodontists. “I felt my obligation was to teach people how to do endodontics.”

Thanks to his knowledge and commitment to the field, the NSU College of Dental Medicine’s postgraduate endodontic program is recognized as one of the finest in the United States. Students are exposed to the latest advances in technology in the endodontics field and are given valuable opportunities in education. Those opportunities include the chance for each student to participate in a surgical rotation at one of NSU’s partner universities in Tlaxcala, Mexico;
Universidad Santa Tomas, Bucaramanga, Colombia; Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia in Lima, Peru; or Universitat Internacional de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain.

**Teaching What Matters**

While Uchin is proud of his dental specialty, he said that, out of approximately 190,000 dentists in the United States, only 20 percent are specialists.

“We teach dentistry, but we also teach our students that practicing dentistry isn’t done in an isolated environment, and that the health professions are interrelated to one another. We’re also the first dental college established in partnership with a college of osteopathic medicine to offer a combined program leading to a dual D.O. and D.M.D. degree.”

Teaching dentists how to treat the whole person was also a focus throughout the growing years of the CDM. “From the beginning, we put emphasis on treating special-needs populations. We challenged students and immediately placed them in an environment where they had to treat populations with physical and mental disabilities.”

**Career in Dentistry**

For Uchin, dentistry came naturally, because his father was a dentist. He didn’t even consider another career choice. “I have to assume that’s how I became interested in it,” he said. “My father never pushed it. In fact, he tried harder for me to become a physician.” What interested Uchin most was the “artistic side of dentistry.” He loved carpentry work and building models with his hands. “I liked the independence of dentistry, which is more self-reliant than medicine,” he said.

His children, however, didn’t follow in his footsteps, although his daughter, Carol, did become a dental hygienist and is a CDM staff member. “I encouraged them to go into the field,” he admitted. “I hounded Carol and said, ‘Why are you going to hygiene school? Go two more years and be a dentist.’ ”

His oldest son, Andrew, is a photographic artist who manages the museum store at the Norton Simon Museum in Los Angeles, California. Middle son, Richard, passed away at the age of 33 from complications from Crohn’s disease. “That was when no one knew what to do about managing Crohn’s,” Uchin said.

Not one to slow down, Uchin is looking forward to enjoying more leisure time with this wife. “Marlene was my childhood sweetheart,” he said. “We started going steady when we were 15, when she lived around the corner from me in Philadelphia.” He and Marlene plan to spend more time at the Vermont summer home they share with their daughter and her husband, Steve Alterman. “I’ll fish a little, and maybe I’ll take up something else,” he said.

There’s a clue that he won’t retire entirely, since he will be providing occasional lectures to dental students on money management as part of their practice management course. “I will teach on occasion,” he revealed. “I spend most of the time now with graduate students in the Department of Endodontics, and it’s very rewarding.”
Breaking the

While progress has been made in reducing smoking, the tobacco industry is cultivating the next generations of consumers with the advent of electronic and candy-flavored cigarettes. But a dedicated band of dental students, as well as dentists and dental hygienists on the College of Dental Medicine faculty, are hard at work constructing a tobacco-free future for their dental patients.

The program—Dental Tobacco Cessation Initiative in collaboration with the NSU College of Osteopathic Medicine’s Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Tobacco Cessation and Training Program—
The students also will have provided a three-to-five minute motivational intervention to help patients explore options to quit tobacco use. In this interaction, the students ask each patient about tobacco use, discuss the health effects of tobacco and the benefits of quitting, and refer them to the AHEC Tobacco Cessation Program. “We want prevention and referral to become natural for all these students,” said Lina Mejia, D.D.S., M.S., M.P.H., a CDM assistant professor of oral medicine and diagnostic sciences.

The potential impact of the CDM graduates in reducing tobacco use in the future is enormous.

- Each year, the College of Dental Medicine graduates approximately 125 dentists.
- In each year of practice, these dental graduates will cumulatively have approximately 250,000 patient visits.
- Based on an average 30-year practice life, each graduating class will have about 7.5 million dental patient visits.
- Based on recent reports that 17.7 percent of adult Floridians smoke, the projected number of patient visits by smokers treated by each graduating class in its lifetime of practice will equal well more than 1 million. That represents a million chances to save lives.

And that’s just the graduating dental students. In addition, NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine and College of Nursing also are weaving tobacco cessation into their educational curriculum to address tobacco use with their patients and make referrals to cessation groups.

“Tobacco use is the chief avoidable cause of death in this country. You can make a huge difference,” added Zucker, who serves as associate dean at NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine, director of the AHEC Cessation and Tobacco Training Program, and professor of community dentistry at the CDM.

Tobacco use contributes to a wide range of health issues, including oral cancer. For decades, dentists and hygienists have been at the forefront of screening oral cancer, which has a high survival rate if caught early. It was a natural progression for these professionals to move from oral health to overall health. Learning to apply motivational interviewing was the key.

Developed by psychologists, motivational interviewing takes a respectful and supportive approach. No scolding or lecturing—just an effective way in which patients and health care providers can discuss a difficult behavior and work collaboratively toward change—in this case, quitting smoking.

Third-year dental student Israel Gross has found that the motivational interviewing approach works well for all sorts of persuasion, from quitting smoking to flossing regularly. “It’s comprehensive and realistic in its goals,” Gross said. “They’re not training us to be social workers. Our job is to point patients in the right direction and get them enrolled in a free quit-smoking program.”

NSU COLLEGE OF DENTAL MEDICINE • 21
By the time they become practitioners, all CDM dental students will have been well trained on tobacco cessation.”

—Abby J. Brodie, D.M.D., M.S.

program. There’s really no risk, and there is everything to gain. And it makes my job easier.”

The key to success is for the dentist to build brief motivational interventions for tobacco-dependent patients and referrals to tobacco-cessation services into his or her practice. “You are the role model for your office,” said Nevin Zablotsky, D.M.D., a Vermont periodontist and tobacco educator who frequently makes presentations at the CDM.

“If you say it’s important, then your hygienist, your assistants, and your front-desk people will feel it’s important,” added Zablotsky, who wrote the chapter on tobacco, its relationship to oral and overall health, and cessation in the new textbook, Non-Surgical Control of Periodontal Diseases: A Comprehensive Handbook 2016.

Hyang Min Park, who graduated from the CDM in May 2016, has been pleased with the results of her conversations with patients. Two of her patients at the CDM’s dental clinic have joined the NSU AHEC’s free tobacco-cessation groups. “I share any information they need and let them make a choice,” she said. “They tell us they are cutting down on smoking, and we encourage them to continue with the free smoking-cessation groups.”

Too often, smokers expect to be attacked and shamed, rather than invited to share their own concerns about tobacco. As a simple communication technique, motivational interviewing is used to assist health professionals briefly discuss tobacco addiction with their patients. “We want them to be comfortable,” said Sheri Schour, AHEC senior project specialist.

“It’s a touchy subject,” said Amir N. Farhangpour, D.D.S., clinical director at the CDM. “Our students have to be sensitive and empathetic with their patients in assessing their motivation and advising them to quit smoking.”

Kimberly Wang, R.D.H., a member of the Department of Periodontology who works with students in the NSU dental clinic, was pleased when a student convinced a patient to join one of the AHEC tobacco-cessation support groups. “My student talked to one patient a couple of times and did the groundwork. I referred him to a smoking-cessation group right then and there,” she said.
The free tobacco-cessation program was developed by the Area Health Education Centers and is now available to all Floridians through funding received from the 1998 settlement between Florida and the tobacco industry. Groups typically include 6 to 12 smokers, assisted by a well-trained tobacco-cessation specialist. Smokers can opt for the six-week or the single, two-hour program. Both formats offer, if needed, free nicotine patches, lozenges, or gums to help in the quit process. The cessation specialists also give smokers practical tips to prepare them to quit and cope with the emotional, physical, and psychological triggers.

“Having a conversation with a dentist or other health provider, followed by participating in a tobacco-cessation program, can nearly triple the success rate for those who wish to stop smoking—to around 30 percent, as compared to about 11 percent success for those who quit without help,” said Zucker. “Although there are groups to help people lose weight, stop drinking, and correct any number of bad habits, there were few avenues for tobacco-cessation group support.”

In Broward County, for example, no one should have to travel more than eight miles to join a free AHEC smoking-cessation group. Also, sessions are scheduled at convenient times. Overall, the NSU team runs programs throughout 19 South and Central Florida counties.

Noreen LaBonte quit smoking through one of the NSU AHEC cessation programs and now works as an AHEC tobacco treatment specialist, running three groups a week in Palm Beach County. “My life has changed dramatically since I quit smoking,” said LaBonte.

Zablotsky tells students that empathy is the key to winning over skeptical patients. “One patient said, ‘Why do you keep bothering me about this?’ And I said, ‘Because I care about you,’ ” she explained.

Once a patient agrees to discuss tobacco use, the dental professional might offer some overall health reasons for quitting, said third-year dental student Adam Saltz. “Some people will quit just because they want whiter teeth,” he said. “We highlight the outcomes. I will tell them that an implant could fail because of poor periodontal behavior.”

Now that smoking cessation is built into the college’s curriculum, the CDM and AHEC tobacco teams are working on efforts to train CDM faculty members, as well as hygienists and dentists already in practice, through local and statewide professional associations.

The organizers hope these CDM efforts to involve dentists and dental hygienists in tobacco cessation will move well beyond Florida. Mejia and Brodie recently presented an overview of the NSU CDM tobacco-cessation program to a national dental education group.

Although still in its first decade of operation, the statewide AHEC tobacco-cessation program has trained more than 120,000 health professionals to help their tobacco-dependent patients. “One day, every health professional will be trained in this war against tobacco. At that point, the smoking rates will drop like a rock,” Zucker said. ♦

Individuals who are referred by a health care provider to the AHEC cessation services are three times more likely to quit.

For more information on these free I-Quit with AHEC cessation services, call 877-848-6696 or visit ahectobacco.com.
INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

SIMULATION LAB ADVANCES THE COLLEGE OF DENTAL MEDICINE.

BY OLINE H. COGDILL
The recently renovated Simulation Lab at Nova Southeastern University’s College of Dental Medicine ushers in a new era of advanced technology and equipment. Located on the CDM’s second floor, the Simulation Lab features 130 ergonomically correct work stations. Swiss-made electric handpieces that provide a more precise cut, a constant speed, and a higher torque have been added to the present air-driven handpieces. The new manikins give a greater range of head movements to simulate a real patient. Each station has a computer, as well as an LED monitor and an LED dental light. In addition, the new units form 36 circles of three or four units, which incorporate a smaller
footprint to allow for wide aisles and for all students to sit in the center of the room. This is the only such simulation lab in the United States.

The NSU administration pushed this project as an investment for the future. We must be competitive, with the latest technology and innovations in oral health education,” said Linda Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., dean of the College of Dental Medicine.

The renovated lab is also an excellent recruiting tool, attracting top-quality students and faculty members to the CDM. “Our students are proud of the lab, and they are showing it off to those who are considering coming here. Those potential students recognize the CDM’s innovative approach to education,” said Niessen.

Peter Keller, D.D.S., CDM executive associate dean, oversaw the Simulation Lab’s renovation. After testing by students and faculty members, simulation units were purchased from Midmark Corporation in Versailles, Ohio. Midmark assembled the units with equipment from Saratoga Dental of Italy and Bien-Air of Switzerland. The final product was designed by Pininfarina, which is the main designer for Ferrari and Lamborghini automobiles. ACAI Associates Inc. also was integral in the lab’s architectural design. Adolfo Cotilla, president of ACAI and a long-time supporter of NSU, “personally assured us that everything would be done in time for the architectural drawings to be completed and approved by the city to meet our narrow window of construction. He was able to keep the design of the lab aesthetically intact while dealing with myriad support columns and the lab’s utility needs,” added Keller.

“The Simulation Lab, which also offers a naming opportunity for a donor, is the first step in the college’s renovation,” said Niessen. “The CDM will continue to move forward.”

Top: Assisted by dental students, Linda Niessen, CDM dean, demonstrates a handpiece to Adolfo Cotilla of ACAI Associates; Marc Croquet, vice president for business services; and Joel Slingbaum, D.M.D., assistant CDM professor, in the Simulation Lab.

Below: Fourth-year dental student Alex Verga shows the Simulation Lab to George L. Hanbury II, NSU president and chief executive officer.
The Mariani Family Distinguished Speakers Series was launched this year to bring an array of prominent leaders in their fields to the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus.

Speakers in the initial series included Lois K. Cohen, Ph.D., who spoke about achieving global health through oral health. Cohen, who is a sociologist, has served as a consultant and as a Paul G. Rogers Ambassador for Global Health Research since her retirement from the National Institutes of Health.

Another presentation was given by Stephen E. Thorne IV, M.H.A., founder, president, and CEO of Pacific Dental Services, a dental support organization established in 1994 and headquartered in Irvine, California.

The organization provides business services to approximately 500 dental practices in more than 17 states. Thorne spoke about becoming an entrepreneur in dentistry. His presentation was jointly sponsored by the NSU College of Dental Medicine and the NSU H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship.

The Mariani Family Distinguished Speakers Series is a program established by the College of Dental Medicine that will bring national and international leaders to the college to discuss current topics, technologies, and trends in the dental profession. The series was underwritten by the Mariani family. (See story on page 28.)

REALIZING POTENTIAL

NEW NONENDOWED PROGRAM AND FACULTY FUNDS

- **Dr. Robert and Marlene Uchin Faculty Development Fund**
  
  **DONORS:** Robert and Marlene Uchin
  
  **COLLEGE/CENTER:** College of Dental Medicine
  
  **PURPOSE:** Enhance educational leadership experience for faculty members

NONENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Whitehead Family Changing Lives Scholarship**
  
  **DONOR:** Albert W. Whitehead
  
  **COLLEGE/CENTER:** Farquhar Honors College
  
  **PURPOSE:** Encourage Farquhar Honors College students enrolled in the dual-admission dental program

- **Research Initiatives Discretionary Fund**
  
  **DONOR:** The Harry T. Mangurian, Jr., Foundation, Inc., and Centene Corporation
  
  **COLLEGE/CENTER:** College of Dental Medicine
  
  **PURPOSE:** Provide preventive oral health care services to underserved children

The Mangurian Foundation is supporting the Smiles Across Broward program, and Centene Corporation made a generous gift for NSU’s participation in the Give Kids A Smile event.
Richard Christopher Mariani, Jr., D.D.S., M.S., is one of those rare people who has known what he wanted to do since he was a kid. Rarer still, he got the first real-world experience that would lead to his career as a successful, much-admired orthodontist when he was just in the seventh grade.

Mariani—Chris to his friends, family, and colleagues—has been around dentistry all his life. His father, Richard Christopher Mariani, Sr., D.M.D., is a general restorative dentist who still sees patients nearly two days a week in an office near South Miami Hospital. And when his only child told him, “Dad, I might want to be a dentist,” the elder Mariani found his son a mentor: orthodontist Joseph Lunsford, D.D.S., M.S.

So, at the age of 12, Mariani began working with the man who would teach him the basics of his profession throughout the aspiring dentist’s years at Epiphany School, Christopher Columbus High School, and the University of Miami. “I went into orthodontics because of my experience with Joe,” said Mariani, whose friend and mentor now practices in Palm Beach County. “I watched him work. He taught me how to bend wire, as well as the basics of tooth movement. He was a real professional.”

Mariani received his dental education at the Emory University School of Dentistry in Atlanta, Georgia, graduating with his D.D.S. degree in 1981, then earning his M.S. from the Georgetown University School of Dentistry’s Department of Orthodontics in 1983. Both dental schools have since closed—Emory’s in 1988 and Georgetown’s in 1990.
With a thriving practice based in a striking, freestanding building in South Miami—a space that he and his wife, Kimber, had a major hand in designing—Mariani has become a dental school donor. Because, as he says, “I don’t really have an alma mater” to support, Mariani and his wife, Kimber, who retired from her careers as a nurse and a medical insurance investigator, have made a generous gift to NSU’s College of Dental Medicine.

The orthodontist and his wife have no professional ties of their own to NSU, though their 19-year-old son, Christopher James (C.J.), is now a freshman. Mariani has made a presentation to the college’s orthodontic residents about the value of membership in the American Association of Orthodontists, has visited the dental college, and admires the educational philosophies of both George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., NSU president and chief executive officer, and Linda Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., dean of the College of Dental Medicine.

“Nova Southeastern University is a wonderful part of the community, with so much to offer, and the College of Dental Medicine is growing exponentially,” said Kimber Mariani. “We’re thrilled to be able to give back to university, just as the university gives back to the community. We feel our gift is being passed on, which is wonderful.”

For Mariani to give to an institution he didn’t attend isn’t unheard of, Niessen said. “Like other donors, dentists contribute to dental schools for any number of reasons: They believe in the mission of the school, they are faculty members, or they contribute to honor a current or past faculty member,” she said. “I am honored that Kimber and Chris chose to support our college of dental medicine, even though Chris did not attend NSU.”

According to Niessen, the donation will be used for two specific purposes. “It has enabled the College of Dental Medicine to update our strategic planning process and launch a new faculty development program,” she explained. “This new distinguished lecture series will invite outstanding leaders in dentistry to the College of Dental Medicine to share new techniques or clinical skills, advance research, or present new educational ideas.” Niessen added that the lecture series will be named in honor of the Mariani family.

That the Marianis would be drawn to NSU’s College of Dental Medicine, with its state-of-the-art facilities and emphasis on student centeredness along with academic excellence, isn’t surprising. Preparing students for careers that will stretch into 2050 will involve teaching “digital-radiography, 3-D imaging, digital impressioning, digital design, and fabrication of dental restorations (CAD/CAM dentistry)—techniques that will continue to advance in the lifetime of our graduates,” Niessen said.

Fostering a student-centered environment in an intense, highly technical field also helps the college train future leaders. “Giving students a voice in their education, listening to the problems they have identified, and working together to create solutions allows the students to demonstrate their leadership skills, making it a natural transition for them to become leaders when they graduate,” Niessen explained.

Mariani is that kind of leader. He was the founder and first president of the University of Miami’s chapter of the American Society for Pre-Dental Students and is a past president of the Florida Association of Orthodontists. He is also a team sports dentist for Coral Gables High School and the University of Miami—the latter continuing a tradition begun by his father, who was a team dentist for the Hurricanes.

“I take the materials and teach the student trainers to make mouth guards,” Mariani said. “I took impressions on site of all the football players. It’s fun and nice to be involved; it’s energizing.”

Mariani’s office, which was inspired by a resort in the Turks and Caicos Islands, blended with what the orthodontist calls “a Cape Cod coastal feeling,” exudes a relaxed, welcoming warmth. Ceiling fans with drooping palm-frond blades hang from a wooden ceiling that rises to a peak in

Inspire Generous Gift
the center of the space. According to Kimber Mariani, getting that ceiling in place “was like assembling a giant puzzle.”

The front desk countertop is made of nautical fossils with abalone shells, while the counters in Mariani’s office are made of petrified wood. The building’s exterior and interior feature plenty of blue—Mariani’s favorite color.

For the Marianis, who chose every design and decorative detail of the office, that attention to aesthetics was another way of giving back. “We wanted a more tranquil environment,” Kimber Mariani said. “We thought it would be something nice to give to the patients, because they’ve been so generous to us.”

Within the space, a state-of-the-art practice flourishes with nine semi-private operatories featuring left-handed delivery systems for the left-handed Mariani. He works an average of 13 hours a day, Monday through Thursday, treating patients of all ages. Digital technology is everywhere, including in the special area reserved for Invisalign patients.

Even with 33 years of experience, Mariani said, “I can still lose sleep over some of the more difficult cases. In orthodontics, you have to understand growth and development, genetics, physiology, and appliances. You have to be a kind of fortune teller.”

One of Mariani’s adult patients, Elizabeth Bridon, has been in treatment for 10 years, since she was 18. She’s almost finished, and she’s thrilled with what Mariani and an oral surgeon have been able to do for her. “I had a severe underbite, and no orthodontist would see me. Dr. Mariani recommended two different surgeons to me. It’s been a long journey, but if not for Dr. Mariani, I wouldn’t have done it,” she said. “He was very comforting and patient. He assured me I’d be happy, and I am. He helped me build my confidence back.”

Coral Gables dentist Gordon Sokoloff, D.D.S., frequently refers patients to Mariani and echoes the praise for the orthodontist’s work. “He stands by his work with old-fashioned values, yet he employs the newest technology that exists. We took our boards together in 1981, and I’ve been sending referrals to him ever since,” Sokoloff said. “His work is the very best I’ve seen. He’s excellent and empathetic.”

The Marianis, whose son is considering a career in dentistry (daughter Vera, 17, a senior at Ransom-Everglades, is an avid sailor), are concerned about the competition, pressures, and costs dental students face. “Students can graduate owing half a million dollars, which makes them vulnerable to signing up with corporate offices” rather than establishing private practices, he said.

Students from the University of Miami and Florida International University shadow the pros in Mariani’s South Miami office, getting paid for their work, which is scheduled around their classes. The CDM students at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus are much farther away, but would be equally welcome, he said.

The program at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine “appears to be a happy environment,” Mariani added. “Linda Niessen is the most approachable dean I’ve ever met. She seems to be so open, yet so humble. And she’s as sharp as a tack.”

Richard Christopher Mariani, Jr., has become a generous supporter of the CDM, impressed by the college’s approach to academics and research. Mariani had known since age 12 that he wanted to be a dentist. Now, he has a thriving practice based in a striking, free-standing building in South Miami—a space that he and his wife, Kimber, had a major hand in designing.
NSU periodontist lends her voice to national dental issues of the 21st century

BY JODI NODING

While growing up in Venezuela, busy Miami periodontist Irene Marron-Tarrazzi, D.M.D., M.S., briefly flirted with the idea of a very different profession.

“As a child, I was drawn to work with my hands,” Marron-Tarrazzi said. “For this reason, I also considered being an architect.” But she chose dentistry. “It allowed me to interact with people, and I wanted to have a career that I felt was positively contributing to society,” the married mom of two said.

Marron-Tarrazzi is now making her contributions on a more national scale. The 2003 CDM alumna was elected second vice president of the American Dental Association (ADA) at the end of 2015. “The vice president has the potential to bring new ideas to the table,” she said. “I decided to run when I became aware that this position was on the verge of being removed. I thought this would be a perfect opportunity to forge a new path for all new dentists. In my case, bringing the viewpoint of a young dentist who’s familiar with the challenges faced by fellow 21st-century graduates will provide a needed voice to our ADA Board of Trustees.”

She sees her position with the ADA as playing an integral role for her profession. “The ADA is the beacon for the American dentist. It represents
Alumni Impressions

us before the legislators and provides standards, research, and services we cannot provide by ourselves. Its main role is to protect the future of our profession as a whole. There is power in numbers,” Marron-Tarrazzi said. “For example, it is imperative to cross generational bounds if we are going to connect with 21st-century dentists. This year, the ADA started to build a new platform and actively reached out to the dental students.”

As a child, Marron-Tarrazzi saw firsthand how dentists make a difference in the community. “My inspiration has been my mother,” she said. “My mother is a general dentist in Venezuela and was a solo practitioner for more than 25 years. I grew up watching her work, and she definitively inspired and influenced my decision.”

Marron-Tarrazzi was drawn to her specialty because of its links to patients’ overall well-being. “Periodontists have become increasingly essential partners in helping patients achieve good oral and general health,” she said. “The treatment by a periodontal specialist in concert with the general dentist is increasingly critical as patients live longer, experience more chronic diseases, and take more medications than ever before. This partnership is particularly important in light of the growing body of evidence linking periodontal disease and other systemic disease.”

And the field is rapidly changing. “Treatment options offered by periodontists have evolved dramatically. Even though achieving overall health is the primary objective, in 2016, esthetics play a significant role,” Marron-Tarrazzi said. “I practice in an area in Miami where the patient population demands highly esthetic cases and minimally invasive procedures. For this reason, my practice focused on dental implants, periodontal plastic surgery, and laser procedures.”

“TREAT VENEZUELA TO THE UNITED STATES

Marron-Tarrazzi completed her dental degree at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. She came to the United States as a foreign-trained dentist to obtain a specialty degree in periodontics from the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, where she graduated with a certificate in periodontics and a Master of Science degree.

As she neared the end of her residency, she was considering a dental education career when a conversation with a CDM instructor changed her path. “I interviewed with Sigmund Stahl, who was the chair of the Department of Periodontics at NSU at that time,” she said. “He recommended that, rather than taking this route, I should seek an American dental degree. I went on to obtain my D.M.D. degree from NSU’s College of Dental Medicine, and I am forever grateful for Dr. Stahl’s wisdom and advice. Because I had already obtained my specialty degree, I was offered a position at the CDM as a teaching assistant in the Department of Periodontology. This allowed me to stay connected to my specialty area while pursuing my D.M.D.”

Other CDM instructors would also be instrumental in her development. “I have very good memories of Ines Velez, our instructor in oral pathology. Dr. Velez is a great example of a professor who goes above and beyond for her students,” Marron-Tarrazzi said. “I was always impressed by her dedication and devotion. Not only was she highly knowledgeable in the field, she was a humble person and had a nurturing style of teaching. I’m still in touch with her and seek her guidance and expert opinion when I come across a rare or unique case.”

Despite time demands, Marron-Tarrazzi has kept her hand in teaching, and guest lectures at the CDM five to six times a year for the second- and third-year dental
LENDING HER LEADERSHIP

In addition to her thriving practice and teaching stints, Marron-Tarrazzi lends her voice and expertise to multiple dental organizations that develop policy for the profession. She believes that being active at all levels of the organization in the early stages of her career has provided her with a broad-based and grassroots perspective.

“I have been a big advocate about the role of the students in the future of the professional associations and the fact that we need to mentor them and work directly with their dental schools and faculty members,” Marron-Tarrazzi said.

Her list of contributions is substantial. She has served as president of the Greater Miami Dental Society, been involved with the South Florida District Dental Association, served as treasurer of the Florida Dental Association PAC, and has volunteered her time as a representative in many other councils and committees, including her new role with the ADA.

“American dentistry is the gold standard for the world. But it doesn’t happen by accident,” Marron-Tarrazzi said. “The reason why standards are high is because the ADA maintains those high standards—for the dental community, manufacturers, education, and research. Globally, these standards reach over a million dentists and billions of consumers. Our job at the ADA is to support our members, but also to build up all of dentistry.”

And she has a message for those just getting started in the profession. “I encourage all recent graduates to not only become part of their profession, but to get involved in our boards, councils, and committees and to lead our profession toward the future. It’s our choice to make the most of our profession, and to a large extent, this choice is within our control,” Marron-Tarrazzi said.

Being involved helps everyone, she said. “Our association is critically analyzing and responding to the challenges facing dentistry today through the work of its councils and committees. Our role is to anticipate and identify issues before they become problems. We lead advocacy efforts for professional dentistry, protecting the profession and ensuring its future.”

Marron-Tarrazzi’s advocacy work extends to her alma mater as a part of the NSU CDM Alumni Advisory Board. “This is a new project. The CDM is a relatively new dental school, and most of the alumni have been out less than 15 years,” she said. “I’m new to the alumni advisory board, but I believe it is important to create a sense of community among the CDM alumni. I believe we can help the CDM achieve its goals in becoming one of the best dental schools.”

CDM alumna Irene Marron-Tarrazzi is now making her contributions on a national scale as second vice president of the American Dental Association.
The student chapter of the CDM’s Hispanic Dental Association was enlightened by a bright idea—literally. Brush Bright, a product that consists of a smile-shaped mirror that lights up for 30 seconds on each quadrant in the mouth, made NSU’s student chapter the winners of the 2015 Nuestros Niños Video Contest, which was sponsored by Colgate.

The product, which is really a prototype at this point, is designed so a parent merely has to hold the mirror in front of the child to ensure the youngster will brush in the correct direction for at least two minutes. In addition to the lights, there are vocal instructions in English and Spanish—the whole idea was born out of a brainstorming session by the student chapter.

“The whole point of the contest was to create a product that will help children do a better job of brushing,” said Lizette Garcia, a third-year dental student and president of NSU’s student chapter of the Hispanic Dental Association. “It was oral health innovation.”

Seven NSU students, who represented the club, were flown to Piscataway, New Jersey, where they toured Colgate’s Technology Center. The CDM student association also received a $1,000 prize, which was used to purchase supplies, such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, and floss that are used in community-service events and health fairs.

But that’s not all the 35-member student association does. In the past year, the student chapter has been involved in a number of community projects, including those below.

- The Orgullo Program—that’s Spanish for pride—teaches children from first through fifth grade the proper ways of brushing and flossing. The program features two components—an educational video on oral health education and outreach with CDM dental students visiting schools on career days.
- Lessons in a Lunchbox is a program initiated at Indian Trace Elementary in Weston, Florida. Instead of food, students received lunchboxes full of oral-hygiene products and tips on proper nutrition.
- The student chapter assisted in the set up and organization of the CDM’s continuing education courses held off campus.
- Garcia created a bilingual script of English-to-Spanish dental terms to help dentists communicate better with their patients. As a fund-raiser, the chapter also sold Spanish-English dictionaries. Student dentists who bought the dictionaries also received free Spanish lessons from Garcia and her colleagues.
- Student chapter members receive experience—and connect with the community—by joining professional dentists on the Colgate Bus, which makes prearranged stops in Hispanic communities in Hialeah and Homestead, Florida. “It’s basically dental care on wheels,” said Alexis Otero, a third-year dental student and the student chapter’s vice president. “We teach the residents about how to maintain a healthy mouth. We’ve seen a ripple effect. We teach the kids, and they teach their
parents,” said Otero, adding that this program has been going on for years but is being reemphasized by the current student chapter.

During the winter holiday season, the student chapter worked with the agency Kids In Distress, which is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. The CDM students donated toys and games and talked with children about proper oral hygiene.

“Being involved with the public can help students learn more about themselves and even put them on a path to their future career,” said Lina Maria Mejia, D.D.S., M.P.H., a CDM assistant professor of oral medicine and diagnostic sciences and the president of the professional chapter of the Hispanic Dental Association.

Mejia said there is a major need for both the professional and student chapters, because only 6 percent of the active dentists in the United States are Hispanic. And yet, NSU is located in one of the most diverse metropolitan areas in the nation. In fact, 25 percent of the CDM students are of Hispanic heritage. “We cater to a predominantly Hispanic patient pool,” Mejia said, “and that presents unique challenges.”

The student chapter organized a mixer in Coral Gables, Florida, attended by about 50 students and professional dentists, to help meet those challenges. That kind of networking allows “students to connect with those already working in the field to learn firsthand about the profession,” Garcia said.
In the lobby of NSU’s Terry Building, steel tooth forms from 1912, a metal tongue guard patented in 1926, and a circa 1940 set of molds for making acrylic teeth are among the antique dental devices and instruments on display. One day, several 21st-century dental devices and instruments invented by second-year CDM student Daniel Young may be part of the display.

Young, 26, said he gets his ideas for inventions while working in the CDM simulation lab. His first invention, for which Young and the CDM are seeking a U.S. patent, resulted from Young’s frustration in working with one instrument. “I thought, ‘I can do something better,’” he said. Young envisioned an improved version of the instrument and drew it by hand. Next, he created several versions on a computer and made plastic models using a 3-D printer in the HPD Library’s 3rd Dimension Innovation Lab. Then, he made a video demonstrating the use of the instrument in the simulation lab. All of this while being a busy dental student.

“He’s a very busy man,” said Domenic Digioia, a CDM second-year student. “From the day I met Danny when we started here, he was throwing out ideas.” Young is determined and loves what he is doing, Digioia said. “I think he’s on the right track. I think his inventions will be improved over time.”
Young came to the CDM after graduating from the University of California—San Diego with a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Physiology. The CDM has proven to be “a good fit,” Young said. “It’s a beautiful school, and the faculty members are welcoming and warm.”

He is not sure how he decided to study dentistry. Among Young’s influences were his mother, who was an artist, and his father, who was a business executive in Taiwan. Young was born in the United States, but his family moved to Taiwan when he was a child. The family returned to the United States about 15 years ago and settled in southern California. About five years ago, Young’s father received a doctoral degree in acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

Young’s older sister is a dental student at UCLA. His younger sister is an undergraduate student at UCLA and plans to study either dentistry or medicine. “I had influences,” Young said. “You still have to find your own path.”

After graduating from the CDM in 2018, Young wants to practice dentistry. “I still want to have clinical experience,” he said. “Every day will be different.” And he wants to continue inventing instruments and devices, then patent and license them to manufacturers to bring to the marketplace. “Most people don’t really consider being an inventor a career path,” Young joked. “This is something special I can pursue.”

Young’s first invention is “just the tip of the iceberg,” said Gary Margules, Sc.D., vice president of the NSU Office of Research and Technology Transfer. “He has about 10 ideas.” All are in the same vein, Margules added.

Young has “the persistence and dedication” to see his first invention through the patent process, Margules said. Revealing it to alumni would make it public and give Young and the university only one year to file for a U.S. patent. It also would immediately bar the invention from receiving foreign patents, Margules explained.

“Innovative new ideas facilitate the practice of dental medicine,” Margules said. “Danny is dedicated to the practice of dentistry and to improving the practice of dentistry.”

Jeffrey Thompson, Ph.D., professor of prosthodontics and director of the CDM’s Biosciences Research Center, said Young went to him in the fall of 2015 to discuss ideas for devices to use in clinical dentistry. Young is “bright and clever” and has “a realistic sense of what can work as an actual product,” Thompson said.

Thompson and a company in Durham, North Carolina, received a U.S. patent in 2014 for a new bonding technology. Thompson, a trained engineer, said Young thinks like an engineer and has a lot of the innate traits of a good engineer. “He has a lot of common sense and a practical approach to a problem,” Thompson added. Young approached the university about creating a product, Thompson said. “Many inventors lack fire in the belly. He’s got a lot of drive.”

Young said he can’t wait for his invention, which is “market ready” to receive a U.S. patent. “I’m super excited,” he said.◆
There are several reasons why Theofilos Koutouzis, D.D.S., M.S., chose NSU’s College of Dental Medicine to continue his research. After nine years at the University of Florida from 2006 to 2015, the periodontal researcher and professor was drawn to what he says was an invigorated spirit at a “fairly young university.” His theory? “Young research institutions like NSU allow more opportunity to grow versus those that are established; because in those type of environments, you really have to fight for your niche.”

Koutouzis, whose specialty is implant research, is currently working on two studies sponsored by a major implant manufacturer to test new products and procedures. “These are clinical trials with real patients, real treatments, and real follow ups,” he explained. The other plus for his NSU research is the large pool of patients available from the

BY MICHELLE F. SOLOMON
CDM’s dental clinic, where he said he was able to find patients for the company-initiated study, which includes materials and treatments that are all FDA approved.

For the first study, Koutouzis needed to identify patients from the clinic who had been fitted over the past three years for complete upper dentures, but who still had their lower teeth. He was able to identify patients who had been fitted with complete dentures, but it took investigating to find those that were only missing their top teeth. “There were more than 700 patients from the dental clinic with that criteria,” he said. He was able to narrow it down to 60 who fit the criteria. He then sent letters inviting the patients to participate in the study. “If they were willing to come in and see us, then we took X-rays to see if they were a good fit,” he said.

The right “fit,” Koutouzis said, was a patient who would benefit from a shorter implant, someone who didn’t have enough bone dimension for a longer implant and, in that case, would need the bone to be augmented through a graft. Longer implants, as opposed to the shorter implants that Koutouzis is testing, usually require bone graphs. “We need to place implants in a bizarre way to avoid anatomic structures and so forth. These are short implants that don’t require major surgery,” he said.

The study was to enlist 20 patients who would commit to the five-year follow up after receiving the implant treatment. Koutouzis found them. The procedure using the short implants distributes six implants equally and replaces an entire upper jaw of false teeth. “With this, we don’t do one implant per tooth,” he said.

Patients participating in the clinical trial are receiving what Koutouzis said would ordinarily be a cost-restrictive procedure. “The benefit of any clinical trial, and in our case, to cover the implant expenses, is that there is a grant for the study that allows us to do these kinds of treatments at a fraction of the cost.”

The company provides for most of the treatment, including the components, and patients only pay a portion of the lab fee. The other portion of the study involves the use of CT scanning software to see how the shorter implants will be placed correctly into the bone prior to beginning the surgery.

“Young research institutions like NSU allow more opportunity to grow versus those that are established; because in those type of environments, you really have to fight for your niche.”

—Theofilos Koutouzis

THE IMPLANT OVER TIME

The multiyear study, which is being done at two other research centers besides NSU, will allow Koutouzis to evaluate the procedure’s outcomes. “We’ll watch how the implants are integrating, if bone is being lost over time, and we’ll look at how successful the fixed prosthesis on top of the implants is and how it is holding up.”

While shorter implants have been tested before, there have been limited studies on full upper teeth replacement. “This requires different demands when replacing the upper denture,” he said.

If the shorter implantation is a success, patients will enjoy not only the aesthetic value of no longer having to wear upper dentures, but also they’ll have their taste buds back. “They can taste food and feel temperatures now that there is no longer a plastic barrier covering their palate.”

According to Koutouzis, the biggest benefit of the shorter implant procedure is that it does not require major surgery. “We’re trying to develop a protocol that’s less invasive for patients. With the shorter implants, we can avoid augmenting and grafting procedures,” he explained. “It isn’t necessary to drill massive holes or make big cuts with these implants.”

Continued on next page
LESS TIME IN THE CHAIR

The second study, which is also supported with a research grant by the same company, was initiated by Koutouzis and his research team. Expediting implant treatments using available technology is the focus of the study. Using single teeth implant replacement as the model, a digital scan of a mold of the tooth is used to plan the implant, abutment, and crown placement. The periodontist can create the perfect fit without having the patient return to the office again and again.

Koutouzis said what he is looking at with creating the case “completely digitally” is minimizing the time the patient needs to invest in the pre-implant stages. “I believe it is a big benefit, but our research is looking at how to ensure that it will not compromise the quality of the work,” he said.

The study will look at all possible sides of the equation. Does the digital flow work? Is the placement accurate? “You can plan something on the computer, but even a small variance can make a big difference,” Koutouzis said. And then there’s the question that every professional will have to ask themselves. “Do you want to spend more time with a computer in your office perfecting the treatment or with your patient in the chair?”

Koutouzis arrived at NSU with the two grants in tow. He plans to expand his research at the university to study biomaterials for bone and soft tissue for use in periodontics. “In the (periodontal) field, one thing leads to another,” he said. “My goal is to eventually make NSU a preferred research center for the industry.”

STUDENT, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HONORED

CDM postgraduate dental student Fatemeh Gholami and associate professor Theofilos Koutouzis, D.D.S., M.S., were awarded third place at the Academy of Osseointegration annual meeting for their poster, “The Effect of Abutment Reconnection and Disconnection on Peri-Implant Marginal Bone: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.” Their entry was selected from more than 250 posters presented at the meeting.
Nova Southeastern University is now at the forefront of conducting pioneering cell-based biomedical research with the launch of the new NSU Cell Therapy Institute, an international collaboration with prominent medical research scientists from Sweden’s world-renowned Karolinska Institutet (KI). KI is globally recognized for its Nobel Assembly, which awards the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine annually. The NSU Cell Therapy Institute will be located in the university’s 215,000-square-foot Center for Collaborative Research (CCR), shown above, one of the largest and most advanced research facilities in Florida with state-of-the-art laboratories.

The NSU Cell Therapy Institute is dedicated to the discovery and development of innovative translational biomedical research, focused on the potential of cell-based therapies to prevent, treat, and cure life-threatening and debilitating diseases. The institute is accelerating the advancement of next-generation approaches to precision medicine, such as targeted immunotherapy and regenerative medicine, with an initial focus on targeting cancers, heart disease, and disorders causing blindness.

Karolinska Institutet is one of the largest and most prestigious medical universities in the world, consistently ranked among the top universities globally.

NSU recently hired a world-class team of researchers, including Richard Jove, Ph.D., who will lead the NSU Cell Therapy Institute. Jove is best known in Florida for his decade-long work as professor and director of the Molecular Oncology Program at the Moffitt Cancer Center Research Institute in Tampa and as associate director for basic research of Moffitt’s National Cancer Institute Comprehensive Cancer Center. He also served as chair of molecular medicine and director of the Beckman Research Institute at City of Hope in Los Angeles, California.

The CCR will provide wet and dry labs for many of NSU’s innovative researchers. These include a General Clinical Research Center, an outpatient facility that will provide a centralized clinical research infrastructure to benefit investigators in multiple disciplines; a technology incubator offering partnerships with innovative companies; and the NSU Cell Therapy Institute. The CCR will also house NSU’s Institute for Neuro-Immune Medicine; NSU’s Rumbaugh-Goodwin Institute for Cancer Research; the Emil Buehler Research Center for Engineering, Science, and Mathematics; and the U.S. Geological Survey, which partners with NSU on collaborative interdisciplinary research involving greater Everglades restoration efforts, hydrology, water resources, and more.
Student Impressions

Future Pediatric Dentist
Gives Kids Smiles

Kelly Cundy is now in her fourth year at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine, but as a child, she wasn’t always the perfect dental patient. Once, when the Fort Lauderdale native was having a tooth filled, she bit the hand of her pediatric dentist, Dan S. Arnold, D.M.D., who is now a professor of pediatric dentistry at the CDM. “We always laugh about that,” Cundy said. “I’ve come a long way since then.”

Indeed she has. The niece of an orthodontist, this cheerful 26-year-old has known since high school that she wanted to pursue a career in dentistry, and after four years as an undergraduate at Florida State University, she was thrilled to return to South Florida and join NSU’s College of Dental Medicine, which she considers one of the top emerging dental schools in the country.

Through her classes and her experiences performing cleanings as a second-year student and through more involved procedures as a third-year student at the CDM’s clinics in Davie, North Miami Beach, and Oakland Park, Cundy has already navigated a great deal of dental dilemmas.
“You see everything from people needing full mouth extractions and dentures placed immediately to people who never flossed a day in their lives, and yet their teeth are perfect; they just need a cleaning,” she said.

Her professors have been invaluable in helping her through it, and Cundy cites Rashondia Gaines, D.D.S., M.S., as her most influential teacher. “Dr. Gaines really has helped me to become the best I can be in clinic,” Cundy said. “I’m a feeler, and she’s teaching me to get over that. You’re there to provide the best service possible, and you can’t always let your emotions dictate your treatment. You have to give them what is necessary for them. You can’t put treatment on hold.”

Gaines, who serves as director of faculty practice and as an assistant professor with the Department of Cariology and Restorative Dentistry, sees a bright future for Cundy. “Kelly is passionate and is a hard worker. She has such an animated personality, and she is extremely dedicated to whatever she puts her mind to,” said Gaines.

For Cundy, who admits that “I don’t sit well,” this dedication has manifested itself in her extracurricular work with children. She is the Broward County program director for Acing Autism, which provides tennis instruction for children affected by autism. As president of the college’s Pediatric Dental Club, she helps oversee the CDM’s Give Kids A Smile program—an annual, daylong, free clinic sponsored nationally by the American Dental Association. (See story on page 10.)

During 2015’s Gives Kids A Smile event, for the first time, Cundy helped bring special-needs children to the clinic. “It hit us that it’s such a need,” she said. “We have the resources, so we should help everybody.”

As usual, the atmosphere during the Give Kids A Smile event felt more like a carnival than a dentist’s office. Costumed characters from Frozen joined Miami Dolphins and Florida Panthers players, NSU’s mascot Razor the Shark, the Florida Panthers’ mascot Stanley C. Panther, and Timmy the Tooth. Face painters, balloon artists, and music were also featured.

“For some of these children, this is their first time coming to the dentist,” Cundy said. “You want it to be such a memorable experience. You want to get them excited about brushing their teeth and having good oral hygiene.”

With this kind of résumé, it’s no surprise that when she graduates in spring 2016 with a D.M.D. degree, Cundy plans to pursue pediatric dentistry. She’ll be more than prepared, even if—as she knows better than most—kids can bite. ♦
JACKSONS PLEDGE $1 MILLION TO HELP FIGHT CANCER

For Mike and Alice Jackson, cancer is personal; so much so that they are joining with Nova Southeastern University researchers in the fight against one of the nation’s deadliest diseases. The Jacksons have announced a $1-million personal pledge to support NSU’s cancer research.

Mike Jackson, chairman, CEO, and president of AutoNation, Inc., the country’s largest auto retailer, and his wife, Alice—a cancer survivor, accomplished businesswoman, and philanthropist—have made it their personal mission and that of his company’s philanthropic arm to help find better treatments and cures for breast and other types of cancer.

Alice Jackson has supported NSU’s Rumbaugh-Goodwin Institute for Cancer Research (RGI) for years through her involvement with the Royal Dames of Cancer Research, Inc., a not-for-profit organization with the sole purpose to raise funds for the study and research of cancer at RGI.

The Jacksons have been honored numerous times for their philanthropic gifts to Nova Southeastern University and the greater South Florida community. Mike Jackson was inducted in 2010 to NSU’s H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship’s Entrepreneur Hall of Fame. In 2011, he received NSU’s highest honor, then called the Chancellor’s Community Award, bestowed annually on individuals whose leadership and support provide the foundation for continued growth of the university and the community.

DEAN NAMED FOR NSU COLLEGE OF ALLOPATHIC MEDICINE

Johannes W. Vieweg, M.D., FACS, has been named founding dean of NSU’s College of Allopathic Medicine, which is projected to welcome its first class of M.D. candidates in 2018, subject to achieving accreditation.

Vieweg joins NSU from the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, where he served as the Wayne and Marti Huizenga Endowed Research Scholar’s Chair, director of the UF Prostate Disease Center, and chairman of the Florida Prostate Cancer Advisory Council.

NSU’s College of Allopathic Medicine will be the eighth college in NSU’s Health Professions Division, joining the colleges of osteopathic medicine, dental medicine, nursing, health care sciences, medical sciences, pharmacy, and optometry.

Much of Vieweg’s career-long scientific activity has centered on the investigation and clinical testing of genetically engineered tumor vaccines, the discovery of universal tumor antigens, and the modulation of immunosuppressive T cells and myeloid cells. He was awarded a Jefferson Science Fellowship by the National Academy of Science in 2015 and, currently, serves as a senior science and technology adviser to the U.S. Department of State in the development of foreign policy.
About 200 people from NSU and the South Florida community participated in the Fourth Annual AO Oral Cancer Awareness 5K Run and Walk-a-thon, sponsored by the Alpha Omega Dental Fraternity, NSU Chapter. The chapter raised more than $8,000 during the run to benefit South Florida resident Cassandra Charles and the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine. The funds raised include a significant donation made by second-year dental student Anum Anomaly Ali’s parents, Feroz and Samina Ali.

Charles was diagnosed with an ameloblastoma—a large, expansile lesion—in her lower right jaw. The procedure included removal of most of her lower jaw and teeth. While the tumor has been removed and work has begun to reconstruct the lower jaw, she still needs bone grafting, multiple implant placements, and restoration for functional artificial teeth.

The CDM’s Oral Surgery Department sees many patients who experienced trauma, facial fractures, or disease requiring models of their cranium, jaws, or facial bones to be created in order to bend custom plates used in repairing their particular injury. Many cannot afford the cost of the high-end models for plate fabrication.

The CDM’s Alpha Omega chapter has a history of raising money for the college and for members of the community. Last year, the Alpha Omega members purchased a 3-D printer for the CDM’s Oral Surgery Department, using funds raised from the oral cancer run and walk-a-thon. The 3-D printer is used as an alternative to print models and bend plates for patients who cannot afford the higher-cost models.

“Alpha Omega is community oriented. Our members know that being involved with the community is a major factor of being a dentist,” said third-year student Alan Seidenfeld, who is president of the CDM’s Alpha Omega chapter.

An Alpha Omega member, who was diagnosed with cancer while attending the CDM, organized the first 5K run and walk-a-thon. The event raises funds for oral cancer patients who cannot afford to pay for treatment, or whose insurance does not cover the treatment, and to purchase equipment needed by the dental students to benefit their patients. The chapter donates 100 percent of the funds raised during the events to its projects. In addition, CDM students and faculty members provided oral cancer screenings during the event.
Dental assistant Teresa Marquez proudly shows off the sterilization department, her home at the CDM for almost 10 years. Her passion for making sure things are right and the best they can be for the students is evident in the meticulous system she has helped put in place, from the cleaning process to the barcoding, log books, and organized methods for dispensing.

“Everything that needs to be sterilized comes through us. I always try to do my best to have everything the way it is supposed to be. I like to do it the right way, never skipping any step,” Marquez said. “For me, sterilization is one of the most important parts of the dental school. If something comes out wrong, that can affect the life of another person. That’s why I’m passionate about doing my work to the best of my abilities, and sometimes, going further than I’m supposed to. That’s just how I am.”

Marquez will tell you that, first and foremost, it’s all about the students. When she first started the job in sterilization, she thought it was something she might do for a year or two. Then she discovered the joy of interacting with the students.

“I found out I love helping the students. I always put them first and do what I can to help them. It gives me so much joy when I see them graduate. I have watched them from start to finish, and they change so much and have confidence when they graduate,” she said. “Then they come back
and say, ‘Thank you, Teresa.’ That makes me feel so good. That’s my pay, my reward.”

Peter Mai, vice president of the class of 2018 and a second-year CDM student, said that has been his experience with Marquez since the first day he met her to receive his dental instruments. “She has always greeted me with a warm smile in passing or when I had any questions about instruments or sterilization,” he said. “What I admire most about Teresa is her work ethic and her desire to really help the students.”

For example, Mai said, Marquez recently made sure he and his fellow students got their instruments in time to set up for a lab, even though that meant getting them their cassettes before sterilization officially opened in the morning. “Her willingness to put others before herself is a testament to the kind of human being she is, no matter how big or small the act is,” Mai said.

Those kind of actions have earned Marquez a nickname, said her coworker Amparo Velasco. “Sometimes, the students call her Mother Teresa. She has a powerful talent for having patience and helping them,” she explained. “They come to us stressed sometimes, and she will go not just one mile, but so much farther for them. And they leave here smiling and thankful.”

It has not always been an easy journey for Marquez. She was born in Ecuador and studied accounting there. With the unstable economic and political environment, however, she could not find work. At the age of 28, Marquez moved to the United States by herself. “It was very hard in the beginning when I came here. Now my daughter says, ‘You are a hero to me,’ “ Marquez said.

A couple years after coming to the United States, Marquez met her husband, Mario. They have two children, Andrea, 22, and Brian, 15, and this year will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. Brian is in high school and loves playing soccer. Andrea will be graduating from the University of Michigan this year and is currently ranked second in her class.

It was her daughter’s need for dental services, when she was young, that first brought Marquez to NSU’s CDM. “There was something about it, and I said to my daughter, ‘It would be nice to work in a place like this,’” she said. Marquez even inquired about how to apply for a job, but it was not until six years later, when her son was going to kindergarten, that she actually went online and filled out the application. She got the job in the sterilization department and has devoted her time and effort to it ever since. “I’m always looking for ways to improve things and make it better for the students. I love coming up with ideas, and I like to save money, too,” she said.

Abby Brodie, D.M.D., M.S., associate dean for academic affairs, has known and worked with Marquez from the beginning. “We’ve both been here quite a while,” Brodie said. “What makes Teresa so special is that she really cares about having everything in place, and she really cares about the students. The students see that throughout the four years they are here. She doesn’t lose sight of the value of helping students.” In addition, Brodie said, Marquez is a pleasure to work with. “It’s not just her work, but how nice she is. She always has a smile on her face and a positive thing to say. What a wonderful commentary on the kind of person that has that kind of outlook on life. We’re very lucky to have her.”
The metal benches just outside NSU’s College of Dental Medicine offer students more than just a place to take a break between classes or meet with friends. Those benches now are a way to fund NSU student scholarships. More than 50 benches at NSU’s Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus, 15 at the Palm Beach Campus, and 2 on the Orlando Campus, are available for sponsorship, with the money going to the President’s Scholarship Fund. The donor may designate a specific NSU college to award the student scholarships.

Linda Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., dean of the CDM, was the first person at the university to donate to the NSU Scholarship Fund by sponsoring a named bench. “Sponsoring a bench is just one of the many ways that individuals can show their support for the CDM,” she explained. “It’s more than just putting a small dedication sign on the bench—it signifies the meaningful education and research being done here.”

The bench dedication project is part of NSU’s Realizing Potential campaign, which plans to raise $250 million by December 2020. Gift opportunities include $2,500 to dedicate a one-person bench outside the Health Professions Division’s Terry Building; $5,000 to dedicate an existing bench on the Fort Lauderdale/Davie, Orlando, or Palm Beach campuses; $10,000 to dedicate and place a new bench at any NSU college, facility, or campus; and $20,000 to dedicate a crescent of five benches outside the Health Professions Division’s Terry Building.

“Naming a bench provides our donors with a place to reflect and remember a person or occasion significant to them while providing a beautiful spot to rest and enjoy their surroundings. We hope this will become a great tradition, and that soon, all 50 benches will be named and connected to someone special,” said Jennifer O’Flannery Anderson, Ph.D., NSU’s vice president of advancement and community relations.

For more information on dedicating a bench, contact Jason Lyons at (954) 262-2127 or tributegiving@nova.edu, or visit nova.edu/giving/tributes.
The chain of events started as you applied to NSU. It continued as you became a student at the College of Dental Medicine, and then graduated to become a member of the dental profession. You are a vital part of the NSU family.

Make your voice heard by becoming active in the new CDM Alumni Society. We also are accepting nominations for the newly formed CDM Alumni Society Advisory Board.

The chain begins and continues with you.

For the latest information, visit our website at dental.nova.edu. You can update your personal information at dental.nova.edu/alumnirelations.

For more information on becoming involved, email Rosalie Marin at rm1147@nova.edu, or call (954) 262-7317.
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