INSIDE: SCHOOL-BASED DENTAL HEALTH • DEPARTMENT OF PERIODONTICS • GIVE KIDS A SMILE

SETTING POLICY FOR PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY
PAGE 22
TRIBUTE GIVING

Name a scholarship to help a student and honor people important to you, or explore naming opportunities and bench dedications across NSU’s campuses.

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Name a Changing Lives Scholarship
$5,000 ($1,000/5 years or $84/month)
Distributed for Five Years
(954) 262-2127 | annualfund@nova.edu

Name an Endowed Scholarship
$25,000 ($5,000/5 years)
Designed to Last for Generations
(954) 262-2109 | nameascholarship@nova.edu

Dedicate a Bench
$2,500 (single seat)–$20,000 (crescent of five benches)
(954) 262-2162 | tributegiving@nova.edu

Explore Additional Naming Opportunities
(954) 262-2064

Explore Legacy Giving Options
(954) 262-2135

SHOW YOUR PRIDE

TAG YOUR RIDE

WITH THE NSU SHARK PLATE

Upgrade to an NSU Shark Specialty Plate, and we'll give you a $25 gift card.

Visit nova.edu/alumni/licenseplate for more details and restrictions.
Table of Contents

2 MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN
3 HEALTHY STARTS
6 DISCOVERING A SPECIALTY
13 MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR
18 FROM A RUSSIAN CONFERENCE TO A HOME IN OKLAHOMA
25 FOR ALUMNI BY ALUMNI
26 SCENES FROM GRADUATION 2016
40 MILES OF SMILES
44 PROBLEM SOLVERS
52 REALIZING POTENTIAL

FACULTY IMPRESSIONS
Maria Hernandez 10
Sharon Crane Siegel 14

RESEARCH
Program Director Sets Pediatric Dentistry Standards 22

ALUMNI IMPRESSIONS
Amir Akhavan 28
Ashley Millstein 32
Gabriela Aurora Rolland-Asensi 36

ALUMNI NOTES 35

STUDENT IMPRESSIONS
Francesca Pietri 48

STAFF IMPRESSIONS
Tanya Gress 50

CDM IMPRESSIONS
CDM Featured in FDA Publication 31
Dean Discusses Research, Scholarship 31
Alumni Meeting at ADA Planned 31
Fraternity Graduates Among Largest in Nation 31
Contribution Enhances Student Training 39
Student Receives Local Hero Award 39
Dental Program Receives Statewide Award 47

ON THE COVER: Judith Chin connects with a young patient during a visit to the CDM Wilton Manor clinic.
“Obsolescence is a fate devoutly to be wished, lest science stagnate and die.”
—Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life*

At Nova Southeastern University’s College of Dental Medicine (CDM), dental science is alive, well, and certainly not obsolete. As the CDM approaches its 20th anniversary in 2017, it continues to grow and progress through the efforts of our faculty members, students, and team members.

This issue of *Lasting Impressions* showcases how our students continue to make a difference. Not only do they expect to become great dentists, but our students want to make a difference in the world by helping others. Our award-winning Give Kids A Smile program is a testament to their creative and generous energy.

The Department of Periodontology, under the leadership of Maria Hernandez, D.D.S., demonstrates how periodontal education can improve a patient’s health, and how residents and faculty members are generating new knowledge and contributing to the oral health sciences.

The College of Dental Medicine continues to benefit from recruiting outstanding faculty members. Judith Chin, D.D.S., joined the Department of Pediatric Dentistry as director of the Advanced Education Program in Pediatric Dentistry. Learn how she is making a significant impact on dental education and oral health policy in the specialty of pediatric dentistry.

Our CDM Alumni Society and Friends continues to grow and connect with our graduates. Alumni receptions will be held throughout the year at several of the specialty meetings, including the American Academy of Periodontology, the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, the American Association of Pediatric Dentistry, the American Academy of Orthodontics, the American Association of Endodontics, and the Florida Dental Convention in Orlando on June 23, 2017.

If you can’t attend the receptions, check in with your classmates via email and let us know what you are doing. We want to include you in our alumni notes column. We look forward to hearing from you, so email Rosalie Marin at rm1147@nova.edu with your updates.

Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P.
Dean and Professor
College of Dental Medicine
Nova Southeastern University
Healthy Starts

BY JOHN DOLEN

If there’s such a thing as dental angels, then surely there was one over the shoulder of NSU’s Ana Karina Mascarenhas, B.D.S., M.P.H., Dr.P.H., that day in 2011 when she and Joyce Lawrence, M.D., hatched an idea to serve schoolchildren in Miami-Dade County. At the time, children from three elementary schools in North Miami were being provided preventive dental care, including sealants, in a program funded by a grant from the Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation.

At the time of their meeting, Lawrence was involved in a similar mission with the Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation to help provide health care to nine North Miami schools. Her program covered nurses and physicians serving the schools. As the two professionals conferred on a new grant proposal, a key twist came up that married the two efforts. What if Mascarenhas and her cadre from NSU’s College of Dental Medicine trained the school nurses and physicians under Lawrence’s purview? Could they not then conduct
oral health evaluations and apply the fluoride varnish?

In that stroke of inspiration, NSU’s mission of dental mercy multiplied from 9 North Miami schools to all 145 Miami-Dade schools—elementary, middle, and high. Mascarenhas collaborated with Lawrence to write the initial grant proposal, which resulted in a $129,000 grant from the Health Foundation of South Florida. Since then, additional funding was provided by The Children’s Trust. This year, 191 professionals have been trained to evaluate, counsel, and apply fluoride varnish, and the dental care has expanded from serving hundreds to serving thousands.

Mascarenhas cites three key evidence-based elements for improved dental care: water fluoridation, tobacco cessation, and proper care of pits and fissures in teeth by using sealants. The pits and fissures in a tooth’s biting surface can be effectively protected by the sealants, applied in a thin resin.

The sooner a child is seen by the nurse, the sooner there can be a referral to a dentist if the child has a dental problem. But, if there are no cavities, the nurses themselves can apply the varnishes, which are made from a thin fluoride resin. “The earlier you can start, the more dental problems you can prevent,” said Mazon. “They provide all our students with preventive dental care they would not be able to get otherwise.”

Mazon calls Mascarenhas “very caring and charitable” and praises the NSU dentists who visit. “They do a wonderful job of relating to kids, who are only seven or eight years old,” he said. “They make the students feel comfortable and leave with a smile.”

In addition to being one of the program’s grant writers, Mascarenhas, who came to NSU in 2010 from Boston University’s Goldman School of Dental Medicine, is the CDM’s associate dean of research. She relocated to the United States from India after earning her B.D.S. degree from Goa Medical College and Hospital and earning M.P.H. and Dr.P.H. degrees at the University of Michigan. She subsequently held posts at Ohio State University and the Forsyth Institute in Boston, Massachusetts.

There is another important objective in this effort, and similar ones across the country, relating to how proper dental health can affect academic achievement. Mascarenhas cites studies showing that time lost in school because of oral problems can add up. And school days lost means time not spent in learning. One study estimated that “more than 51 million school hours are lost each year to dental-related illness,” she said. “This is not new data, because we have known this from the early 1990s.”

Another study shows that in children ages 5 to 17, cavities are five times more prevalent than the next most common childhood ailment—asthma. If that’s not enough, ponder this stunning figure about a child’s dental health: Poor children suffer nearly 12 times more restricted activity days than children from higher-income families.
Fighting such inequities is at the core of Mascarenhas’ public health study and career. “She is wonderful, completely dedicated, and her commitment to serving the kids is outstanding,” said Kim Greene, executive director of the Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation. “NSU’s College of Dental Medicine is a wonderful partner. I never have to worry about the quality of the dental component. If there are glitches, we communicate immediately and get problems solved. She has also managed to bring in a lot of other funding and partners for her projects, which has spread beyond the nine school clinics we serve in Miami-Dade County.”

Peter Gorski, M.D., of The Children’s Trust, which provides health care services to all Miami-Dade public schools, including the adoption of the sealant and preventive dental training, agrees. “I know her to be a very compassionate and diligent professional,” said Gorski, who serves as the organization’s chief community health and child development and innovation officer. “She and her staff members have trained 191 nurses in 145 schools in evaluating for dental disease and the application of fluoride varnishes.”

According to Gorski, the kudos for Mascarenhas don’t end there. “She has not just trained the nurses and left them on their own,” he added. “She and the NSU staff members have been available for coaching or for any kind of assistance that has been needed. What they have done has been very impressive.”

Mascarenhas pursues public health advocacy through several organizations. She is board certified in dental public health, serves as secretary/treasurer of the American Board of Dental Public Health, as a board examiner, on the editorial board of the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry*, and as a statistical consultant for *Oral Surgery, Oral Medicine, Oral Pathology, and Endodontics.*

She is past president of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, a current commissioner on the Commission on Dental Accreditation, and the recipient of numerous research grants. She also previously chaired the Health and Human Resource Administration Independent Review Panel and has served on study sections for the National Institutes of Health and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

“I have no free time,” Mascarenhas said with a laugh. She also is a guest lecturer, maintains various leadership responsibilities in her role as associate dean, and completed stints as division chief of primary care and developmental sciences at NSU. In addition, she recently completed a project that develops national competencies and curriculum in dental public health, which is one of the nine specialties in dentistry.

Work never seems to stop. Even during a discussion about the children’s project, a call comes in—a minor emergency regarding an equipment delivery by her staff members to a Miami school. She has to deal with it, rescue the effort, and then return to the interview.

Currently, Florida is ranked 49th in the country in terms of dental health, making this work even more vital. “Preventive dental health for children yields dividends for a child’s entire life and reaches far beyond oral health,” said Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., dean of NSU’s College of Dental Medicine. “Preventive dental health improves children’s ability to learn, and they miss fewer days from school,” she added. “Good oral health also improves their overall health and self-esteem. This project for schoolchildren is a critically important program for South Florida and the College of Dental Medicine. Who knows? We might even be recruiting the next generation of dental students.”
Discovering a

WITH SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF PERIODONTOLOGY, STUDENTS
REALIZE A PASSION FOR PERIODONTICS

BY MICHELLE F. SOLOMON

Fourth-year student Adam Saltz, M.P.H., completed his bachelor’s degree at Nova Southeastern University as a dual admission dental medicine student. “I transitioned into the dental school at the age of 21. I knew that NSU’s College of Dental Medicine had a strong reputation in academia, research, and clinical practice, so I didn’t feel the need to consider other programs,” said Saltz, who originally hails from Maine.

During his second year of dental school, Saltz also pursued a Master of Public Health degree, which he received from NSU in the summer of 2016. (Saltz is one of the organizers of the 2017 Give Kids A Smile program. See story on page 40.) But there was more at the CDM that would expand Saltz’s knowledge and help him define his professional goals. In his first year of dental school, he discovered a specialty that piqued his interest.

“I was always drawn to medicine and surgery, and periodontics nicely combines the two. I admire the interdisciplinary approach needed to restore form and function through surgery. The link between periodontal and systemic diseases has only strengthened over the years,” said Saltz, who will begin a three-year postdoctoral program in periodontics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio in June 2017.

The American Dental Association defines periodontics as a specialty of dentistry that encompasses the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases of the supporting and surrounding tissues of the teeth or their substitutes, as well as the maintenance of the health, function, and esthetics of these structures and tissues.

All predoctoral College of Dental Medicine students go through a comprehensive curriculum in periodontics.

“All predoctoral College of Dental Medicine students go through a comprehensive curriculum in periodontics.

“Everything in dentistry has something to do with the preservation and maintenance of periodontal health,” said Maria A. Hernandez, D.D.S., associate professor, chair of the Department of Periodontology, and director of advanced specialty education in periodontology. “We teach all our dental students the relationship between certain systemic diseases and periodontal diseases.”

First-, second-, and third-year predoctoral students are steeped in periodontal didactics and clinical courses. First-year students take a course with the periodontal department’s group of hygienists, where they learn the basics of periodontal instrumentation.

FIRST TIME WITH PATIENTS

In their second year, the students get hands-on training in the dental care clinic. “This is really their first time facing and working on patients,” Hernandez explained. “This is where they learn when they need to refer patients to a specialist when they become general practitioners.” As second-year CDM students, they are already performing examinations, reading X-rays, devising treatment plans, doing diagnostics, and planning referrals. “It is really fascinating to see them for the first time with patients,” she added.

Fourth-year student Gabriella Ambrose, M.B.S., became interested in exploring periodontics during her second year of predoctoral study. “As I began seeing patients, I came across many who were about to be rendered fully or partially edentulous because the periodontics portion of their dental care was placed on the back burner or not maintained,” said Ambrose, who earned her Master of Science in Biomedical Science degree with an oral biology

Continued on page 8
Kyle B. DeLuca, right, chief resident within the Department of Periodontology, demonstrates a procedure to a third-year dental student.
concentration from Rutgers School of Dental Medicine in Newark, New Jersey.

This hands-on experience was one of the first involvements Ambrose had with dental neglect. She is hoping to be accepted into the College of Dental Medicine’s postgraduate periodontics program.

LEARN BY DOING

“It is really fascinating to see them learning,” said Hernandez about the students’ hands-on experience. “Many of them do decide to apply to our specialty.” Hernandez also said that when the students do rotations in the postgraduate clinic, which is part of the third-year course curriculum, that’s when things really come together. “What an eye-opener for them,” she added.

“They are fascinated, because everything they have been learning in the didactic courses—such as how to do a surgery, how to raise a flap, how to take out a tooth, how to place an implant—they finally get to see it. This is real life.”

In May 2016, Kyle B. DeLuca became chief resident within the Department of Periodontology—a role that he “takes great pride in.” The role of chief resident contributes to the strength of the advanced education in the periodontics specialty program. DeLuca, who received his Doctor of Dental Medicine from NSU’s College of Dental Medicine, is now in his third year as a postgraduate resident in the periodontics special education program.

While always interested in the general practice of dentistry, the significance of the periodontics specialty really took hold during DeLuca’s predoctoral education. His interest in dental surgery occurred while he was with his mother, Helena A. DeLuca, D.M.D., who has a practice in Sunrise, Florida.

“Prior to starting dental school, I was shadowing my mother, along with a local periodontist,” he said. “Then, as my education progressed and I learned more about the specialty, I really began to appreciate the scientific and technical nature of periodontology.”

While in the dental program, DeLuca assisted in the postgraduate periodontics clinic and attended residents’ seminars. “I even spent my spring break interning with the program in my third year,” he said of the experience that allowed him to see the depth and variety of the procedures being performed and become acquainted with the faculty members. “I knew I wanted to be part of the department.”

Now his mother’s practice will gain a periodontist. DeLuca plans to join the Sunrise office part time after he receives his specialty degree, while also working with other dentists’ practices for their periodontal and implant needs.

In the United States, periodontics was officially recognized as a dental specialty in 1947, according to the American Association of Dental Schools. The first university-based programs for the training of specialists in periodontics were established at Columbia University, the University of Michigan, and Tufts University in the late 1940s. Within the next decade, one-year programs expanded into two-year programs. Not surprisingly, periodontics has changed in the almost 70 years since its founding.

Currently, more than 50 university- and hospital-based graduate periodontics programs are located within the United States. All of these programs are three years in length, and graduates receive a certificate in the specialty of periodontics. The CDM’s Department of Periodontology also has a predoctoral honors program for fourth-year students interested in continuing their studies in the specialty. Saltz and Ambrose are currently honors students in this course.

“We usually take only five to six students,” said Hernandez. “They must be in the top 50 percent of the class and be in good standing. They also must have a special interest and motivation in the surgical aspect of periodontal therapy.
The purpose of the Periodontics Honors program is to provide select students with more advanced knowledge and clinical experience in periodontal surgical therapy.

During the honors program experience, the students perform various resective and regenerative surgeries. “These surgeries are procedures residents usually perform,” said Saltz with pride. “It’s a very special honor I have strived for since my first year.”

POSTGRADUATE PROCEDURES

Ambrose agreed that it is a one-of-a-kind learning experience to be part of the honors program. “Periodontists are surgeons, but they are still very much involved with everyday dentistry,” she explained. “By offering students the chance to take part in the honors course, students have the opportunity to perform procedures that would otherwise be done in a postgraduate setting.”

Students in the Department of Periodontology are also given the opportunity to participate in research projects.

In some cases, they work with faculty members spearheading clinical trials. Currently, Theofilos Koutouzis, D.D.S., is working on two clinical trials, one of which is evaluating the effect of abutment macro-design on soft- and hard-tissue responses, while William Parker, D.D.S., serves as principal investigator for a multicenter study that involves evaluating abutments on implants from four manufacturers.

“Three projects are usually the average number we are working on,” said Hernandez. “We are always looking for an opportunity for research.”

While not all faculty members in the department do research, Hernandez said about 50 percent are actively involved in research-related endeavors. “Every single resident we have enrolled in our program is paired with a mentor,” she said. “Between the resident and the mentor, they usually design a research project that the resident implements. We’ve been presenting these projects in national and international meetings with much success.”

Hernandez believes that residents who enter the field after being part of the CDM’s Department of Periodontology have a well-rounded education, which makes them better prepared to become periodontics specialists. “While the school is strong on academics, the student-centered approach to the department, in tandem with how the faculty members interact as team players, sets an example for students,” she said. “They see how we help and respect each other, and they follow that lead.”

The students agree. “Faculty members and residents are highly approachable and actually engage students in various discussions about cases of interest,” Ambrose said. The triple-threat approach is what DeLuca found the most valuable. “Some periodontal programs focus on academics, research, or clinical practice. We have highly knowledgeable and accomplished faculty members for our literature and academics, as well as internationally respected and talented clinical faculty members. The culture of the program fosters a sense of mutual learning among residents and creates an encouraging educational environment. NSU was my number one pick for dental school, and I am glad it was.”
Even when Maria Hernandez, D.D.S., was a young girl growing up in Venezuela, she loved working with her hands. Whether it was her mother’s dainty necklace or a tangled string of Christmas lights that needed fixing, the refrain in her family was the same: “Give it to Maria. She can fix it.” So when it came time to choose a career, the idea of working with her hands and using small instruments, combined with her desire to be in a health profession, drew Hernandez to dentistry and, ultimately, to her specialty in periodontology.

Today, Hernandez brings her hands-on, fix-it style and her love for connecting with students, faculty and staff members, and patients to all the positions she has at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine (CDM). Hernandez, an associate professor who has been at NSU since 2006, serves as chair of the Department of Periodontology, director of advanced specialty education in periodontology, and director of the Department of Periodontology.
of the implant fellowship. She said she enjoys having her hands in a little bit of everything at the CDM.

“I get to interact with so many specialists, colleagues, and students. I’m learning from them, and they’re learning from me. That is the kind of environment that is fulfilling for me,” she said.

Hernandez fell into the world of academia by accident. After graduating from dental school in Venezuela, she practiced there as a general dentist for a year and a half. She was interested in learning the periodontics specialty, and after visiting her sister in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, she decided to apply to the University of Pennsylvania’s periodontics program. She was accepted, and with the support of her parents, Hernandez moved to Philadelphia to attend the program.

“I went to Pennsylvania with the vision that I was going back to Venezuela to work as a periodontist,” she said. When she finished her studies, however, Hernandez said her father told her the political situation had worsened in Venezuela and that it would be best for her future if she stayed in the United States. She went to her mentors at the University of Pennsylvania for advice, and they offered her a one-year implant fellowship and a part-time teaching position. Hernandez then was offered a faculty position and taught at the University of Pennsylvania for two years.

“I remember one of my mentors said to me that ‘once you start in academia, you’re never going back.’ He was right,” she said. “When I started, I didn’t know if I would like it. But then you see how you can teach somebody something. Sometimes they do it even better than you, and you realize this is amazing.”

After finding her passion in academia, Hernandez started to crave a change. She was looking for a university setting where she could grow and lead in a larger way. Again, a mentor gave her an idea.

“He said I would be a perfect fit for Nova Southeastern University,” Hernandez said. “Now I get so mad when people say this, but I actually asked, ‘Where is it?’ He told me South Florida, which, of course, was closer to Venezuela. And, he said the department chair was looking for periodontists to teach there. I went right to my office and applied.”

Hernandez said she fell in love with the CDM during her interview. “I loved the school and the area,” she admitted. “I was excited when they offered me a job.”

She started as an assistant professor in July 2006, and soon found opportunities to grow and learn at a fast pace. A few months after she started, both the director and the chair of the Department of Periodontology left. Robert A. Uchin, D.D.S., the CDM’s dean at the time, told her they were advertising for the positions, but in the meantime, the department was in her hands. “I told him I didn’t think I had the expertise for that,” Hernandez said. “He just said not to worry, I would do fine. And, thankfully, with the help of the adjunct staff and full-time faculty members, we were able to keep the department stable.”

After that, she was promoted to associate director of the department, which she did for two years before becoming director in 2009. She was appointed to the chair position in May 2015. Hernandez credits William Parker, D.D.S., CDM associate dean for postgraduate education, for helping her along the way while he was chair of the periodontology department. “He has been the person who has been mentoring me, guiding me, teaching me everything and anything about education and leadership,” she said.

Parker said Hernandez was the perfect candidate to replace him as chair. “She developed so quickly for a relatively young faculty member. She took on higher positions and higher authority and always did a wonderful job,” he said. “She is a talented clinician, excellent educator, and a wonderful colleague. She is intelligent and knowledgeable and has a tremendous work ethic.”

What makes Hernandez unique, Parker added, is her ability to work well with everyone. “She is well liked and respected by the students, the faculty and staff members,
and the administrators. She is also strongly motivated to help the students and residents become solid dentists.”

Hernandez enjoys passing on the support and guidance she has received to the residents and other faculty members. “As director, the residents are my family. I call them my kids,” she said. “Since I became chair, I say my family has been expanded to include the faculty and staff members. We are one big family here.”

One of her favorite aspects of her position is watching her postgraduate “kids” grow and flourish. “When they come into the program, they are dentists already, but they have basic knowledge,” she said. “It’s so neat to see them do their first presentation, and then, how much they change by their last one. When they graduate, they are flying.”

Fatemeh Gholami, D.D.S., M.S.D., a CDM postgraduate periodontology resident from Iran, is an example of one of the students who has received help. Hernandez recognized Gholami was having a difficult time transitioning from what she had learned in Iran to the NSU program and worked with Gholami to help her. Hernandez also encouraged Gholami to consider the academia route. As a result, Gholami is now succeeding in the program with a promising future in periodontics, possibly in a university setting. “Professor Hernandez has inspired me with a methodology in research and clinical approach to the extent that I could not imagine or hope for a better mentor,” Gholami said. “Her remarkable personal conduct and professional ethics serve as a great example.”

Hernandez says her goals for the Department of Periodontology include improving relations and connections with CDM alumni, expanding research, and continuing to elevate the reputation of NSU’s periodontics program. “We have a very good reputation for the product we are getting out of the doors of the CDM,” she said. “The dentists and specialists I know in the community tell me that NSU graduates exceptional dentists and specialists. I get a lot of emails and calls around graduation inquiring about our graduates working for them, because they have had such good experiences with us.”

Hernandez, who is continually honing her leadership skills, recently completed the American Dental Education Association Leadership Institute—a yearlong program for leaders in academic dental institutions. “I will be bringing to NSU all the skills and knowledge I have developed during my training, so I can guide and help my colleagues at the CDM,” she said. “Also, I think I will be able to successfully support the mission of NSU and the 2020 vision and goals.”

Outside of the CDM, Hernandez enjoys biking, traveling, and playing with her beloved beagle, Camila. “She’s the best,” Hernandez said. “No matter what kind of day I’ve had, I come home and see those eyes and that wagging tail, and that’s all I need.”
Message from the Chancellor

Recently, while I was listening to the university’s president, George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., discuss NSU’s Vision 2020 goals, he mentioned that although the university is almost 53 years old, it has only been a merged institution since 1994, which occurred when Nova University merged with Southeastern University of the Health Sciences.

Because I have been affiliated with the university for more than three decades, Dr. Hanbury’s comments made me reflect on the creative pioneers who helped establish Nova University in 1964, particularly Abraham S. Fischler, Ed.D., president emeritus. Thanks to these visionary leaders, a new educational paradigm—related to the presentation of curricula and professions—was unveiled.

As I’ve discussed previously, it was this forward-thinking approach to education that brought Morton Terry, D.O., the founder of Southeastern University of the Health Sciences, together with Nova University—because he saw in it the same visionary attitudes and verve for the future he had envisioned while creating Southeastern University of the Health Sciences.

Since the merger transpired, NSU has continued to reach new heights of excellence, which is reflected by the fact that the university is classified as a research university with “high research activity” by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Additionally, NSU is 1 of only 50 universities nationwide to also be awarded Carnegie’s Community Engagement Classification.

In terms of the NSU Health Professions Division, I recently spent some time in the Speech-Language Pathology Program, which was integrated into the College of Health Care Sciences in July 2015 as part of the university’s programmatic realignment process. This realignment, which involved repositioning five academic degree programs housed in other NSU colleges into the College of Health Care Sciences, has added new synergy to the Health Professions Division.

It is exciting to witness the Vision 2020 goals—which were adopted by the NSU Board of Trustees and supported by the deans and faculty and staff members—coming to fruition. NSU has clearly positioned itself as an educational exemplar of excellence. As a result, the university is leading the way for other academic institutions to follow.

Frederick Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D.
Chancellor, Health Professions Division
Sharon Crane Siegel, M.S., M.B.A., D.D.S., has built a distinguished academic career marked by leadership, research, invention, and her dedicated mentorship of other women. Last year, Siegel—the first female department chair at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine—was honored with the Lucy Hobbs Taylor Award from the American Association of Women Dentists (AAWD).

The honor is, in essence, a lifetime achievement award, though Siegel is hardly finished adding to her already-lengthy list of accomplishments. They include being the coinventor and co-patent holder for CaStix—a device that holds dental casts together when they’re placed on a jaw-simulating articulator—and the publication of some three dozen papers in international, peer-reviewed journals.

Although she primarily teaches others as chair of the CDM’s Department of Prosthodontics, Siegel recently received her M.B.A. from NSU’s H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship, which occurred after she had started and
run the web-based Articulation Innovations, which manufactured CaStix, for a decade.

Why add to an academic portfolio that already includes a B.A. cum laude in biology from Maryland’s McDaniel College, a D.D.S. degree and a certificate in prosthodontics from the University of Maryland Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, and an M.S. in oral biology from the University of Maryland’s graduate school in Baltimore? “I love being a student,” Siegel said. “Before it was the in-vogue thing to do, I was always a lifelong learner. My brain becomes activated and engaged when I’m learning something. I learn, and then I pass that on to my students.”

Thomas Griffin, D.B.A., one of Siegel’s professors during her M.B.A. program, recalls her curiosity, mentorship, and leadership abilities. “She is a natural leader, and automatically, after she asked a question, a flood of questions came from other students,” he said. “She is caring and intelligent, with a willingness to learn. She’s open to new ideas while maintaining very high personal standards for professionalism in everything she does.”

Siegel’s focus on helping women who want to become dentists may have been born of the support she received from her high school guidance counselor. Growing up in Baltimore, Maryland, Siegel was an excellent student drawn to study biology and dentistry. She decided in the eighth grade, when she was having orthodontic work done, that becoming a dentist would be her dream. “The orthodontist looked like he was having so much fun doing what he did,” she recalled. “I watched the patients coming and going, and he was just so engaged with all of them.”

Siegel ranked number one in her high school class; however, she had a rude awakening when she talked college with her father, an engineer at Bethlehem Steel. “When I told him I wanted to go to college and become a dentist, he said, ‘The money is for your brother, not for you,’ ” she said. “I told this to my guidance counselor, Mary White, who said, ‘You need to have your parents come in and talk to me.’ She told them, ‘Sharon can do this. She can become a dentist. We’ll apply for scholarships. You just have to let her have that opportunity.’”

Thankfully, her parents bought into the idea. Siegel received the scholarships and worked as a switchboard operator and as a resident adviser. She also worked at Bethlehem Steel, where she fed the coke ovens and worked on a pipe mill. Her father did help financially, but mainly she worked hard during the summers to pay for her education. She lived at home to save money while she attended dental school. “My father was very traditional,” she said. “It wasn’t until I was 38 that he said, ‘I’m really proud of you.’ By then, I had already been in dentistry for 10 years.”

At the University of Maryland’s Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, she met her husband. Michael Siegel, M.S., D.D.S., FDS, is chair of the NSU College of Dental Medicine’s Department of Oral Medicine and Diagnostic Services. The two celebrated their 37th anniversary in July 2016. “Sharon’s integrity and honesty attract me to this day,” said her husband, Michael. “She is honest both in her professional and personal lives. There is no one I have ever met that I trust and respect more. I am in awe of what she has accomplished, and her opinion is the one I seek out most often when I need feedback on my own work.”

After graduating, the couple joined the U.S. Army and served for two years in Germany. They traveled throughout Europe, then returned to the University of Maryland to start their academic careers.

Their daughter, Sarah, works in Boston, Massachusetts, for Pathfinder International—a public health organization that works to improve the sexual and reproductive rights of women, men, and young people in developing countries. “My daughter actually had the opportunity to utilize her Georgetown University degree in foreign service in a number of different areas,” Siegel said. “I never realized that my message was getting through when I would tell her my stories of helping women.”

While working at the University of Maryland from 1985 to 2003, Siegel served as a faculty adviser to the AAWD student chapter. She does the same for the Women’s Dental Society, which is the AAWD student organization at NSU.
She believes mentoring women in the profession is vital to encouragement and transformation.

“In the past, dentistry has been a male-oriented, male-dominated profession. It’s just within the last 20 years that more and more women have been accepted into dental schools; now, it’s 50 percent male and 50 percent female,” she said. “When I was in dental school, there were 13 women out of a class of 130. Today, women are starting to look at higher leadership positions, because they know they can manage a family, be a dentist, and be a leader in dentistry as well.”

Siegel acknowledges, however, that women in the profession do encounter roadblocks. Her advice? Be persistent. “I’ve encouraged women not to take no for an answer. The second answer may not be no,” she said.

Although Siegel was a tenured associate professor during her last three years at the University of Maryland, she decided to come to NSU when her husband was offered his department chair position. Siegel was hired as a faculty member by former dean Robert Uchin, D.D.S., with the understanding that she would help establish a separate Department of Prosthodontics—and that she wanted to become a department chair. Although she was willing to wait for five years to realize her goal, it happened much quicker. “I came in January 2003, the department started in July, and I became chair in October,” she said. “I like building things.”

Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., the college’s current dean, lauds the work Siegel has done as an architect of the Department of Prosthodontics. “I have found Dr. Siegel to be an outstanding academic scholar and administrator who exhibits NSU’s Core Values of academic excellence and student centeredness in all her activities,” Niessen said. “She works diligently to recruit, hire, and retain outstanding faculty members, and ensures that the prosthodontic curriculum remains current with the state of the science. She is increasing the research and scholarly activities accomplished by her faculty members and department. In addition, she has incorporated CAD/CAM into the prosthodontic curriculum and is working to expand the digital work flow in clinical dentistry to remain on the cutting edge of dental sciences.”
CAD/CAM—computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacturing—is just one of the tools being used now to alter prosthodontics, which Siegel describes as “the field of replacing missing parts.” Dentures and partial dentures, now called removable partial dental prostheses and fixed partial dental prostheses, plus veneers, crowns, implants, and biomaterial, are all part of Siegel’s specialty.

“We can now digitize information, and from that produce a crown or a denture. The patient doesn’t need to have an impression made for a crown. You just scan with a machine that takes pictures of the teeth and surrounding tissues, and that information goes to a machine where you mill the crown,” she explained. “We can make them right on-site. Dentistry is going digital; it’s definitely more precise. To have it done in one appointment, without having a provisional or temporary put on your tooth, really is such a convenience. And this is a convenience-oriented society.”

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The female dentists and students Siegel has befriended or mentored all warmly cite her support and her gift for leading by example. Wendy Hupp, D.M.D., met Siegel when both were national directors for the AAWD. Hupp, a former NSU faculty member who helped recruit both Siegels to South Florida, now teaches at the University of Louisville School of Dentistry. She believes that Siegel has, through her work and leadership, tackled such common issues as the lack of equal pay and opportunities for women in academia, and the need for role models and mentors for younger women.

“Her position as adviser to the AAWD student chapter allows the dental students to see that many opportunities are available to them, such as specialty training, research projects and funding, faculty positions, and having children,” Hupp said.

Elaine D. Lara, D.D.S., who is now part of the department’s faculty, met Siegel when she was a third-year NSU prosthodontics resident. Born in Venezuela, Lara was moved, but not surprised, when Siegel came to her naturalization ceremony—a moment she cherishes. “She once told me that getting to know me made her understand the effort, and sometimes the struggle, of coming from a foreign country seeking an advanced education and a better future,” Lara said.

Hope Marshall, a 2017 D.M.D. candidate at NSU and the past president of the Women’s Dental Society, said Siegel “has high expectations for her students and the quality of work that is submitted in the Simulation Lab and in the clinic with patients. She is passionate about continuing education,” Marshall said. “Dr. Siegel encouraged me to pursue my dual master’s degree in public health while in dental school.”

Htet Bo, D.M.D., also worked with Siegel when she served as president of NSU’s Women’s Dental Society. “She helps others succeed. She helped me apply to my pediatric dental residency and pushed me to believe in myself.”

Siegel pointed out that she isn’t all work. She grows orchids, race walks, and loves to read. She and her husband share their home with two rabbits, Chadwick (a black-and-white English Spot) and Roxy (a peach-colored dwarf rabbit), who are litter box trained and have their own room.

Life at NSU, she says, is just as satisfying. “Dr. Niessen is taking our school to the next level, with research and making connections with other aspects of dentistry. I see this as a young, forward-thinking institution,” Siegel said. “At NSU, the sky’s the limit.”

As for getting a lifetime achievement award when she’s still deeply engaged in her career, Siegel feels honored to receive a national accolade named for Lucy Hobbs Taylor—the first American woman to graduate from dental school. “When I accepted the award, I said, ‘This is the greatest honor I could receive, since one of the visions for my life is to lift women higher than myself, to have them step on my shoulders so they can rise higher,’ ” she said. “Lucy Hobbs Taylor encountered so many obstacles in reaching her goal. All women have the potential to impact other women in ways we don’t even know.”
Eugenia Johnson, D.D.S., a 2008 CDM alumna, had been a dentist in Moscow, Russia, for 10 years when she attended a dental conference in Sochi, Russia. It ended up being the turning point in her life.

“It’s like a Cinderella story. We don’t have the specialty of endodontics,” she said of dentistry in her native Russia. “I studied online and in books, and we had lot of good speakers in Russia at conferences. These courses cost a lot, so not many could afford it. I saved some money and participated.”

For Johnson, the conference was like buying a winning lottery ticket. Not only was the conference engaging and informative, but she met the world-renowned endodontic specialist and instrument designer William Ben Johnson, D.D.S., who was one of the speakers—and who eventually became her husband.

“We exchanged telephone numbers and started communicating. He invited me to visit him in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I said, ‘Well, this is something serious,’ ” Eugenia Johnson recalled.

“A year after, I moved to the United States. We were married in 2005.”

Ben Johnson, who prefers to use his middle name, said their chance meeting was a significant turning point in his life. “In Russia and Eastern Europe, 80 to 85 percent of dentists are female. So I might see 300 or 400 women at a conference,” he explained.

But his future wife clearly stood out. “At lunch that first day, I was sitting at the head table. I saw Eugenia stand up. I told my interpreter, ‘I want to meet that woman.’ But the
interpreter smiled and said, ‘I think she is married.’"

Later, the two talked in the buffet line. "We took a photo with her and her friend," he said. But he figured that was the end of their story. "Later, the interpreter told me, ‘I have good news and bad news.’"

“What’s the good news?” Ben Johnson asked. "I was mistaken. She’s not married,” the interpreter replied.

“What’s the bad news?" Ben Johnson asked. "It’s the last day of the conference,” the interpreter responded.

Not to be deterred, Ben Johnson arranged to be seated next to his future wife at the conference’s closing night dinner dance. Their initial conversation was mainly "nouns and verbs" because of language difficulties, but the two shared life stories and interests—his, hunting and fishing, and hers, ballroom dancing.

When they first married, graduate school was not on the agenda, Ben Johnson said. The couple traveled, and Eugenia Johnson became acclimated to life in Tulsa. But happy as she was, she missed her profession, mainly because she had been well established in her birth country and had worked hard to attain success.

“Many in my family were teachers and engineers. It was very prestigious to be a doctor,” Eugenia Johnson said, explaining that in Soviet Russia, the better the profession, the more prestige afforded you and your family. "I wanted to be either a teacher or a doctor. I applied to medical school and dental school," she said.

After earning 100 percent on one portion of the exam, she qualified to immediately go into the Russian dental program. "I was over the moon," she said. "I know I am a lucky person, but I worked hard. Russian school is free, but you pay for tutors. After you graduate, you have to work for the government for a couple of years. I was selected to work in a nice Russian Academy of Science clinic. Then you had to choose different clinics or open your own clinic.”

She and a colleague opened a clinic that they ran for about eight years before she moved to the United States. "I was a successful dentist in Moscow. I was quite ambitious and wanted to continue in the United States. I applied to several schools, and one of the schools was Nova Southeastern University’s College of Dental Medicine," said Johnson, adding that meeting several CDM professors helped her make her selection.

Despite her many years of professional experience, starting over again was daunting. “It wasn’t a smooth road,” she said. “I wasn’t a young student. Being a foreigner and in a different school, it was a cultural and emotional shock. It was quite challenging using a foreign language to express myself, because I had to give presentations in English.”

She said her Russian school and NSU educational experiences resembled one another in most ways but one. "It was very similar, but with a significant difference: I didn’t use a microscope in Russia. It was truly the most noticeable influence working with a microscope. It was like the American dream.”

During the two-year CDM program, Johnson performed research under Adam Lloyd, B.D.S., M.S., who is now chair of the Department of Endodontics at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of
Eugenia Johnson's research with Lloyd was published in the *Journal of Endodontics* and led to the development of a rotary instrument with a different heat- and tension-treated alloy. She uses these same instruments for root-canal treatment.

She also credits other CDM professors who played a significant role in her educational years, including Sergio Kuttler, D.D.S., former associate dean of advanced education. "I chose NSU’s College of Dental Medicine because of him and former CDM dean Robert A. Uchin, D.D.S.,” she said.

The biggest supporter of her American education was her husband, who sold his Oklahoma home despite his deep ties to the Tulsa community. The couple then relocated to South Florida to be near NSU’s Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus.

Ben Johnson’s accomplishments are equally as impressive as his wife’s. His list of achievements include owning a well-established endodontics practice, serving as founder of Tulsa Dental Products and creator of the Thermafil Endodontics Obturator and ProFile hand/rotary instruments, being named Oklahoma Inventor of the Year, and receiving the University of Tulsa Distinguished Alumni Award.

In addition to presenting lectures worldwide, he served as a contributing author to the 1993 revised edition of *Clark’s Clinical Dentistry* and the sixth edition of *Ingle’s Endodontics*. He also is a recipient of the American Association of Endodontists Philanthropist of the Year and President’s awards.

No stranger to academics himself, Ben Johnson is a clinical professor of endodontics at the Texas A&M University College of Dentistry and at the Louisiana State University School of Dentistry. In addition, he taught dental graduate students in the CDM’s clinics.

Ben Johnson said he came up with the idea for his dental instrument designs largely out of frustration. "I was a very busy clinician. I kept thinking it would be easier if the procedures were done a different way, but the tools weren’t available, so I came up with the concept, hand-making them myself,” he explained. "I hoped I could get a company to make them, but everyone turned me down. So I found investors and started my own company.”

He eventually sold Tulsa Dental Products in 1996 to one of the companies that originally turned down his idea. This afforded him the financial opportunity to greatly broaden his philanthropic outreach and fund scholarships, professorship chairs, research education, and equipment at universities across the country.

**THE MISSION OF GIVING BACK**

Eugenia Johnson said her husband's philanthropic views are an inspiration. "He was my role model for philanthropy. It’s a point of view,” she said. "I have a Soviet childhood, and philanthropy wasn’t a part of my life. My family was middle class, and we did not have an opportunity to earn money,” she added. "We had a monthly salary. It was slightly more if you were an engineer or a doctor, but it’s a fixed paycheck. We didn’t have the opportunity to share extra money; we just had the money to survive. I learned how you are supposed to share and how you are supposed to care from my husband, and from living in the United States.”

Johnson also is appreciative of the education she received in Russia and at the CDM. “After I started working in Tulsa, I started sending money to my mom,” she said. “My parents worked hard to give me this education. I told her, ‘Mom, you gave me this education, you gave me my happiness.’ This is the same thing I feel for my school—NSU—my endodontics program at the College of Dental Medicine. I can’t even express how proud and fortunate I am. I learned a lot at the CDM. I have to help my school.”

For his part, Ben Johnson, who received his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree and endodontics certificate from Baylor College of Dentistry (now Texas A&M University College of Dentistry), said it’s easy to give back to a profession that has given him so much, especially when he grew up with so little in Alabama.

“They didn’t have indoor plumbing until I was 10 years old,” he said. "I worked three nights a week to help put myself through college. It was tough getting an education.”

Her husband’s philanthropy led Eugenia Johnson to support the Kenneth N. Namerow Endowed Professorship in Endodontics at NSU, named in honor of Kenneth Namerow, D.D.S., who joined the CDM in 2000. "Dr. Namerow was like a father to me and helped me immensely,” she said.

Namerow was in private practice in endodontics for 32 years in Ridgewood, New Jersey, before coming to the CDM to instruct predoctoral students and
postgraduate residents. He said one of his proudest contributions is a fund-raising effort to create an endowed professorship in endodontics. Namerow created the campaign and guided it to the goal of $500,000 in only four years. "The professorship helps us entice people to academia," he said.

Namerow remembers Eugenia Johnson as a standout student despite her difficult path. "We have literature review every week, and she had to translate into Russian first so she could understand it," said Namerow, who worked closely with her when he was department chair. "She is probably the hardest worker I’ve ever encountered in terms of residents who have gone through the program, and she improved her skills the most. She was incredible in her motivation to be the best she could be."

The Johnsons also make a point of returning to the CDM on a regular basis. Ben Johnson delivers all-day lectures to the CDM’s endodontics residents twice a year, while Eugenia Johnson returns once a year for Nova Southeastern University’s alumni weekend. "She has always been a very loyal alumna," Namerow added. "She knows how to give back. She’s a very supportive person both financially and physically."

Eugenia Johnson also has immersed herself in dental professional groups. She’s the incoming president of the Tulsa Dental Society and is active in the American Association of Endodontists, the American Dental Association, and the Oklahoma Dental Association. In addition, she maintains her membership in the European Society of Endodontology and the Endodontology Society of the Russian Dental Association.

The couple now lives in Oklahoma. Ben Johnson has since retired, but remains a "living legend in the area," she said. Eugenia Johnson is making her own name, creating a thriving practice named Green Country Endodontics in Tulsa and becoming an important part of the community. A few years ago, her photograph ran on the cover of Oklahoma Magazine for a feature on the state’s most fashionable residents.

"She's very well-liked by patients and referring dentists," her husband said. "I have to say—I don’t tell her this—but she’s a very good clinician."

Johnson also feels welcomed by her practice. "The people of Tulsa are so unique, so real. I love talking to my patients," she said.

At home, the Johnsons definitely talk shop after work. "He asks, ‘How was your day, did you have interesting cases?’" she said. So almost nightly, they get out the X-rays and start talking about their shared profession. 

Eugenia Johnson says pride in her CDM education led her to help support the Kenneth N. Namerow Endowed Professorship in Endodontics.
Judith Chin, D.D.S., M.S., professor and CDM pediatric dental resident program director, has authored or reviewed nearly 200 policies and guidelines for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

But some of the most challenging and rewarding policy research work she has done is for the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD). “I’m literally writing a policy for the AAPD as we speak,” Chin said.

As a policy researcher, she contributes as a consultant for the Council on Clinical Affairs for the AAPD Reference Manual—the gold standard for oral health policies and clinical guidelines for pediatric dentistry.

She’s currently working on a “brand new policy,” where she is credited as first author for the AAPD’s 2017–2018 manual on oral health policies and clinical guidelines. The details are embargoed until May 2017, but she did divulge that it concerns a new procedure in pediatric dentistry.

In the past few months, the subject matter has been receiving positive national attention in the news media. Consequently, when the policy is released, the AAPD will be right on point. “I feel that we were really forward-thinking on this topic, since we discussed it in early February, and I was assigned to write the policy this past May,” Chin said.

The majority of the academy’s 9,900 members will have the chance to ratify the new policy when they meet for the AAPD’s 70th Annual Session in Washington, D.C., in May 2017. “I’m so honored that I was chosen to write this policy, and I’m honored to represent the CDM,” she said.
Chin has been involved in more than 100 clinical trials and is nationally recognized for her work in the pediatric dental specialties of infection control and caries detection and prevention. She has also published extensively on those topics, which makes her a “go to,” especially for the AAPD.

“Anytime there is an infection control guideline or something to do with caries prevention, it will come to me or one other individual in the United States to review for the AAPD,” Chin explained. “We have the most knowledge in these areas because we conduct clinical trials. As an educator, we have to keep up on our game, so we provide the most current information going forward to residents in our programs.”

The AAPD, founded in 1947, is the authority on pediatric oral health care. Chin was invited to join the group as a member. While at Indiana University, she represented the Midwest District. “You are only allowed to be a representative for a district for five years,” she said. “Then, if the academy believes that your contributions are valuable, you are asked to continue as a consultant.”

For the past eight years, Chin has been steeped in the Council on Clinical Affairs, which is charged with writing and reviewing policies and guidelines for the AAPD. There are fewer than 20 selected consultants who are part of the council. “These individuals are known as being national leaders in their respective fields,” she said.

As a policy researcher, Chin helps draft recommendations or modifies policies based on new information. “Then we meet as a council in November and, line by line, we go over every single policy,” she said.

In any given year, there may be 20 AAPD policies or guidelines to be reviewed. Currently, the AAPD Reference Manual has 42 policies and 26 guidelines. The group also works with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. “Not only are we tasked with our own policies and guidelines, but we’re also asked on a national level to evaluate what other government bodies are recommending,” she explained.

In 2002, the American Dental Association initiated a review of “The Selection of Patients for X-Ray Examinations: Dental Radiographic Examinations.” The AAPD, along with other dental specialty organizations, participated in the review and revision of the guidelines on prescribing dental radiographs for infants, children, adolescents, and individuals with special health care needs. The Food and Drug Administration accepted the guidelines in 2004. Subsequently, the AAPD has been looked to for its review each time guidelines pertaining to the topic are updated.

**MAJOR POLICY ADOPTED**

One of the most notable policies Chin authored was in 2006 when the AAPD adopted a policy on xylitol to “assist oral health care professionals making informed decisions about the use of xylitol-based products with the aim of preventing caries in children,” according to the AAPD Reference Manual. Chin became first author for a 2015 updated policy from a previous revision in 2010. The latest update was based upon a review of current dental and medical literature related to the use of xylitol.

She worked with an assigned group from the council. “After we each did our independent literature reviews, we realized that the new clinical trials coming out didn’t support the guideline anymore,” explained Chin, who was credited as second author on the AAPD’s “Guideline on Xylitol Use in Caries Prevention.”

Continued on next page

“I’m so honored that I was chosen to write this policy, and I’m honored to represent the CDM.”

—Judith Chin
The policy was completely revised and the guideline taken away. “It’s not often that we take away guidelines,” Chin said. “But when the evidence-based literature comes out and it doesn’t support what we are recommending, as representatives of the pediatric dentistry community, we may say that this is something we’re not going to continue to recommend going forth.”

In 2013, she was first author on the AAPD’s “Policy on Infection Control.” Another policy in which she was first author included a “Definition of Dental Neglect.”

“We came out on a national level and said that the tooth is the gateway to the body, so if something happens in the mouth, it needs to be treated,” Chin explained. “This is where we can have some influence. We’re regarded on a national level, so these types of policies help give state agencies the ability to move forward to make a case for what they would like to see insurers cover.”

Chin, who joined the CDM faculty in June 2016, previously served as an associate professor in the Department of Pediatric Dentistry at Indiana University School of Dentistry for 16 years. While the position of pediatric dental resident program director was part of the allure to bring her to South Florida, so were family ties.

“My parents have been snowbirds in Florida for almost 25 years,” she said. “They have a magnificently large RV. They spend one month in Orlando, one month in West Palm Beach, one month in Naples, and one month cruising. They head to Florida at Thanksgiving, and they don’t go back home to Oklahoma until right after Easter.”

When Chin saw there was an opening at the CDM, she asked colleagues at Indiana University what they knew about NSU. “The feedback I got was there was a new dean who was progressive. They said, ‘She will be supportive of your work.’ I also had a resident at Indiana University who graduated from the program two years ago, and he had nothing but praise for the school,” she said.

While she’s devoted to her current policy research and working with the CDM’s pediatric residents and its program, Chin plans to continue her clinical research. An estimate for her clinical work at Indiana University is that she has brought in more than $6 million for clinical research over the last 16 years. “And that is probably a conservative estimate,” she said.

In her spare time, of which “there isn’t a lot,” she creates simulation programs to educate dentists; however, she has plans moving forward for her virtual reality simulation software to help the military. She also said she is looking forward to exploring opportunities at NSU’s new Center for Collaborative Research (CCR). “I’ve heard that the CCR may have space available for people who can do simulations.”

Chin said she plans to become a vital part of the CDM. “I was in my last position for 16 years. I’m not going anywhere, anytime soon,” adding that she and her husband, Robin, bought a house in Cooper City. “We didn’t consider renting. We come, we stay, and we make the best of every situation,” she said. ♦
There are only a few instances that change the course of one’s life. October 18, 2014, was one of those moments. I was in my third year at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine when I attended the continuing education program, Practice Management Essentials, which was sponsored by the CDM Alumni Society and Friends.

There were many inspiring and enlightening speakers, but none more than Christopher Phelps, D.M.D., CMCT. He spoke about the area of dentistry that often isn’t covered in dental schools: business. His presentation, and our subsequent conversation, sparked an interest I had to explore.

The following February, I attended a two-day alumni symposium where I heard Dr. Phelps speak again, in addition to his "Principles of Persuasion" workshop. I was drawn to his experience and no-nonsense way of explaining dental marketing and the Cialdini method of influence.

Dr. Phelps was gracious enough to answer many questions and mentor me as I began to implement his strategies in my parents’ practices. Of the many things I took from his workshop, none was better than a job offer. An entire year before I graduated, I accepted a position in his dental practice near Charlotte, North Carolina.

My experience with the alumni association provided me:
- exposure to new thoughts and ideas
- insight into my own professional passion
- networking opportunities with the best in the field
- opportunities to implement new strategies on the job
- a lifetime mentor

This proves the importance of the CDM’s alumni society and how even new dentists benefit from being members. I am truly grateful to Dr. Phelps and to the alumni society for providing me with the opportunity to find my passion.

Fins Up!

(Christopher Phelps, 2003, is the president of the CDM Alumni Society and Friends.)
Scenes from Graduation 2016
Growing up in Iran, Amir Akhavan’s childhood dream was to become a carpenter. “There was something magical about the creativity and craftsmanship of carpentry,” he recalled. But with a father and older brother in the medical field, his destiny did not lie in wood and hand tools.

“I grew up admiring my dad and brother as health care professionals, and I knew that I wanted to be in the health care field,” said Akhavan, who earned his D.M.D. degree from NSU’s College of Dental Medicine in 2014. “I realized that, in dentistry, I can be creative and use craftsmanship to serve my patients and create a beautiful and healthy smile that would bring them joy and confidence.”

Akhavan’s mother had been a nurse before leaving the profession to raise a family, which also includes an older sister who is a fashion consultant and entrepreneur in Switzerland. Though he gave up on carpentry, he didn’t skip hands-on creativity completely. As an undergraduate, he took several courses in visual arts and sculpting.
Amir Akhavan credits his academics and leadership at the CDM in aiding him as he pursues his master’s degree at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry.

“At the University of California—Irvine, I majored in psychology and minored in biology. I thought it would be a fantastic opportunity to learn about the human mind and a field that is full of mysteries that essentially affects every aspect of life regardless of who you are or what you do,” he said. “The social sciences gave me a unique perspective on how I practice dentistry today.”

Having pursued his undergraduate degree in sunny Southern California, a move to South Florida seemed like an easy transition. “I also had friends who were already attending NSU at the time, and I thought it would be nice to have their mentorship throughout dental school,” said Akhavan, who took on several mentoring roles while at the CDM.

“One of the best decisions I made in dental school was to become involved in leadership opportunities,” he said of his time as executive board president of the CDM’s Student Government Association (SGA). “It is such a privilege to be able to serve and be a voice for fellow classmates and future colleagues. It also gave me the opportunity to work closely with talented individuals. Together, we were able to bring about positive changes to NSU’s CDM.”

He especially was intrigued by the changes student government could create. “The Student Government Association is the unified voice of the students,” he said. “We listened to the students’ needs and worked toward resolving some important challenges our students faced.”

One important step was to simplify and organize the processes that precede the national board exam. Making the patient-screening process more efficient, organizing mass screenings, transitioning to the review of the X-rays digitally by the examiners, and providing support and comfort to students and their patients on the day of the examination were among the changes made.

“We also began a process to allow the students to provide feedback regarding their clinical experience to the administration. Additionally, we started the Students’ Choice Awards to show our appreciation for the faculty and staff members who go above and beyond,” said Akhavan, who received the Student Advocate of the Year Award in 2014 and was a member of Omicron Kappa Upsilon, the national dental honor society. “I think our students definitely benefited as a result of these SGA initiatives.”

He also credits the CDM professors for their help with the SGA and for the education they provided. “Amir Farhangpour [D.D.S.] is one of my favorite professors among the faculty,” Akhavan said. “He is witty, humble, and a sincere student advocate. Every year, he and Michael Georgescu [D.M.D.] tirelessly help fourth-year dental students through one of the most stressful periods of their dental school education: the national boards.”

Akhavan’s efforts on behalf of the College of Dental Medicine didn’t end with graduation; he now serves on the Alumni Advisory Board. He said a strong alumni base is vital to, and speaks volumes about, the college.

“Our goal should be to focus on creating an exceptional educational experience for the current students that starts from day one of dental school,” he said.

His rationale? “If our students feel that they have had an exceptional educational experience, they are far more likely to contribute,” he said. “Fortunately, our administration, under the leadership of Dr. Linda Niessen, understands this
important point, which is why we are taking the right steps to grow our alumni base.”

A high-quality alumni network is especially helpful in the dental field today. “The competition is fierce in many parts of the country, and we have alumni all across the country, many of whom are leaders in their field and very successful,” he said. “We want our new graduates to take advantage of this incredible opportunity to be connected to this vast network. Having a strong alumni network also allows our institution to continue to attract the strongest and most qualified applicants.”

Akhavan credits CDM Dean Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., as an inspiration to the students and alumni. “Her clear vision, extraordinary level of experience and energy, and commitment create an exceptional educational experience for the students,” he said. “I had the opportunity to learn many valuable leadership lessons from Dr. Niessen, and these lessons have impacted the way I practice dentistry today.”

As a recent graduate, Akhavan offers current and incoming dental students the following advice: “Set short- and long-term goals, develop good habits, and find mechanisms to reduce stress.” For him, that involves early to bed, early to rise.

“I can significantly reduce my stress and increase my productivity by going to bed early and waking up early. Developing a morning routine is important. Mine includes 5 to 10 minutes of meditation, light exercise, eating a healthy breakfast, and planning my day,” he said. “I also read encouraging self-improvement and financial books for at least 30 minutes a day. Finally, every night before going to bed, write down three things you are grateful for regardless of how bad your day was.”

Although Akhavan has earned his D.M.D. degree, his education is not finished. He is pursuing his master’s degree in biological sciences and his certificate in orthodontics at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry. “I will graduate from my residency program in April 2017,” said Akhavan, who considers himself lucky to be a part of the Maryland orthodontic program. “I have the opportunity to work with fantastic people every day and am blessed with amazing coworkers. I am very excited about the future,” he said.

Career plans for this dentist include working as an associate for a few years and then buying a practice. Akhavan would like to work with a pediatric dentist to provide comprehensive orthodontic and pediatric dental care, perhaps in North Carolina or Texas. “I love practicing orthodontics and would like to strengthen my knowledge of entrepreneurship,” he said.

Akhavan even has plans for after he retires. “Hopefully, I can spend most of my time teaching and helping others in the field of orthodontics,” he said. “Throughout my education, I have had teachers who have inspired me, and I hope that, one day, I can be an inspiring teacher to others.”

“Akhavan credits CDM Dean Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., as an inspiration to the students and alumni. “Her clear vision, extraordinary level of experience and energy, and commitment create an exceptional educational experience for the students,” he said. “I had the opportunity to learn many valuable leadership lessons from Dr. Niessen, and these lessons have impacted the way I practice dentistry today.”

As a recent graduate, Akhavan offers current and incoming dental students the following advice: “Set short- and long-term goals, develop good habits, and find mechanisms to reduce stress.” For him, that involves early to bed, early to rise.

“I can significantly reduce my stress and increase my productivity by going to bed early and waking up early. Developing a morning routine is important. Mine includes 5 to 10 minutes of meditation, light exercise, eating a healthy breakfast, and planning my day,” he said. “I also read encouraging self-improvement and financial books for at least 30 minutes a day. Finally, every night before going to bed, write down three things you are grateful for regardless of how bad your day was.”

Although Akhavan has earned his D.M.D. degree, his education is not finished. He is pursuing his master’s degree in biological sciences and his certificate in orthodontics at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry. “I will graduate from my residency program in April 2017,” said Akhavan, who considers himself lucky to be a part of the Maryland orthodontic program. “I have the opportunity to work with fantastic people every day and am blessed with amazing coworkers. I am very excited about the future,” he said.

Career plans for this dentist include working as an associate for a few years and then buying a practice. Akhavan would like to work with a pediatric dentist to provide comprehensive orthodontic and pediatric dental care, perhaps in North Carolina or Texas. “I love practicing orthodontics and would like to strengthen my knowledge of entrepreneurship,” he said.

Akhavan even has plans for after he retires. “Hopefully, I can spend most of my time teaching and helping others in the field of orthodontics,” he said. “Throughout my education, I have had teachers who have inspired me, and I hope that, one day, I can be an inspiring teacher to others.”
CDM FEATURED IN FDA PUBLICATION

The CDM played a prominent role in a recent edition of Today’s FDA, which is a publication of the Florida Dental Association. From left, fourth-year students Joel Rosenfeld; Preston Hansen; Lizette Garcia; and Alexis Otero; and 2016 alumnus John Aylmer, D.M.D., are featured on the cover.

The issue also includes an article written by the college’s dean, Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P. “Innovation Continues” discusses the history and recent achievements of the CDM. These include the total renovation of the CDM’s 19-year-old Dental Simulation Laboratory and the research that continues to develop at the college. In her article, Niessen also points out the honor the American Dental Association Foundation gave the CDM’s Give Kids A Smile event (story on page 40) and the students’ participation in the Florida Mission of Mercy in Jacksonville.

Fourth-year student Preston Hansen offers an editorial in his role as president of the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) chapter at the CDM. In it, Hansen states that the “ASDA is the voice for all dental students at all dental schools. We speak and take action on behalf of the health and wellness of our students.”

DEAN DISCUSSES RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP

Linda Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., discussed the university’s goals to foster research in diverse areas in a recent article written by Richard Valachovic, D.M.D., president and CEO of the American Dental Education Association. In Valachovic’s article, “Are We Patient Enough to Build a Culture of Research and Scholarship?” Niessen mentioned several strategies the CDM utilizes.

These include focusing on training the next generation—encouraging not only predoctoral students to do research, but also faculty members to mentor them and each other. Niessen also mentioned that the CDM is hosting faculty development seminars with leading researchers who share their expertise.

ALUMNI MEETING AT ADA PLANNED

In honor of its 20th anniversary, the College of Dental Medicine is planning several events, including an alumni reception that will be held at the American Dental Association annual meeting in Atlanta in 2017. For more information, contact Rosalie Marin at rm1147@nova.edu.

FRATERNITY GRADUATES AMONG LARGEST IN NATION

The Alpha Omega Dental Fraternity, NSU Chapter, had 30 members who graduated in the spring 2016 commencement, making it one of the organization’s largest graduating classes in the United States.
Alumna’s Practice of Giving Back Has CDM Roots

Ashley Millstein, D.M.D., a 2014 graduate from the endodontics residency program at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine, chose a familiar path. She joined a busy corporate practice, where she is building her speed and stamina and developing her consultation skills daily by tending to a steady stream of patients.

Millstein is an independent contractor at Greenberg Dental & Orthodontics, shuttling between her home in Tampa and 6 of Greenberg’s more than 18 offices on Florida’s west coast. As a CDM graduate, Millstein said a sense of “giving back” was ingrained in her, and she is proud to be part of an organization that does just that. She chose her current endodontics position not solely for the working experience, but also because of the clientele.

Approximately 80 percent of Millstein’s endodontics patients are children, many of whom are covered by dental insurance through Florida Medicaid. She is one of few root canal specialists in the area who treat this underserved population. Another endodontist who cares for these patients is her husband, Mikhail Gankin, D.M.D. Gankin and Millstein, who met during their CDM residency training, were married on October 29, 2016.

On any given day, Millstein’s patients may need upward of three root canals at the age of eight. “It’s a second chance to save their teeth,” she said. “A lot of them
do not have access to care. Oftentimes, the need for a root canal is the first exposure the child has to a dentist, and it is the last hope for that child’s tooth.” Millstein takes her time to educate the parents of underserved children to allow them to comprehend the urgency by which they must make a change to their child’s oral health.

When performing high-anxiety procedures, especially on children, Millstein finds it extremely important to explain, step by step, how the root canal will take place. Most children will even watch a YouTube video before the appointment to familiarize themselves. At times, even with all of the right dialogue, “putting all the necessary tools in their mouth is sometimes a struggle,” she said.

It is with ease that Millstein recalls being in a similar position when she was 12 and wore braces. Although her teeth were what she described as “crazy crooked” and the braces were cumbersome, the orthodontist always reminded her of the light at the end of the tunnel. A similar analogy presented itself when her single mother, Pam Millstein, had to finance the orthodontic treatment. This situation gave Millstein the drive to help those in need.

In her fast-paced morning schedule at Greenberg Dental, Millstein’s time is choreographed carefully as she utilizes two treatment rooms and two consultation rooms, with two assistants by her side. Without missing a beat, Millstein moves from macromanaging (patiently reassuring a nervous woman about the procedure) to micromanaging (performing a root canal while peering through a microscope), to doing the work “upside down and backward, through a mirror,” as she pointed out.

With the radiographs on a screen a few inches away, Millstein can refer to them as needed and perform all of her clinical work through a dental microscope. She peers into the scope while her hands work one of several tiny files to prepare the root-canal system—a strangely disjointed action she performs with skill and precision. The work is meticulous, measured in millimeters.

After three root canals back-to-back—interspersed with three patient consultations—Millstein shows no sign of fatigue or stress. During a free moment, she catches her breath and gets back to work. The patients emerge from their root canals smiling with relief.

Her patients don’t know it, but colleagues say Millstein is one of the CDM’s best endodontists. “She became one of our finest residents,” said Michael Flax, D.D.S., assistant professor and head of the CDM’s endodontics program. “How good? Her first year out, she was asked to give a talk to the American Association of Endodontics. We’ve had her come back and give a couple of lectures at the CDM, and we don’t ask too many of our residents. She’s got very good hands, and she’s got the gray matter.”

Melissa Marchesan, D.D.S., M.S., Ph.D., who was, at different times, Millstein’s CDM colleague and professor, called her diagnostic skills “phenomenal.” Marchesan added, “It takes listening to what the patient has to say. Ashley is very good at that. Sometimes the pain doesn’t come from the tooth. Sometimes it’s not that obvious on the radiograph.”

Millstein grew up in Parkland in western Broward County, graduating from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. She participated in the honors program and graduated cum laude in 2007 from Florida Atlantic University with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a double minor in biotechnology and political science. She graduated from NSU’s College of Dental Medicine in 2011 and completed her endodontics fellowship in 2012. Millstein, who served as chief resident, was one of six students to be accepted into the CDM’s endodontics residency, which she completed in 2014.

Continued on next page
"If we offered her the fellowship, she had to be head and shoulders above the rest in confidence and background," Flax said. "I found her to be one of the most resourceful people I’ve ever met. She did everything on time; she was the first in her group. She will be famous in our department for years to come.”

Her professional life is not all about clinical endodontics. She lectured last year to the Central Florida Academy of General Dentistry and has taught predoctoral endodontics at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine School of Dental Medicine across town from her office in Bradenton. And, yes, her students tease her that she is barely older than they are.

Millstein takes it in stride, and Flax is not surprised. To make it through her training, she had to be able to know her subject—and to defend everything to her peers. He calls her "the consummate professional" who is well-prepared at all times.

“She had to read thousands of articles, with all the pros and cons,” Flax said. “She had to know how the nine disciplines of dentistry interconnect. It takes a special kind of person who is willing to take criticism and discuss what they did without taking it personally. She has confidence. It’s difficult to stand up to your class in front of dentists and specialists who all think they know everything. You have to have all the information at your fingertips. You have to be responsible for every millimeter. You better know everything about it.”

Millstein also contributes, with three of her physical fitness peers, to a blog that combines fitness and inspiration. But her friends see much more writing in her future. "I never saw someone who could write like Ashley," Marchesan said.

To unwind, Millstein works out several times a week at a local gym. She earned a black belt in American Kenpo Karate, practicing for 12 years and winning three state karate titles by the time she was 12.

As for her future, Millstein wants to work with schools and dental students to promote dental education. Most importantly, she wants to inspire as many people along the way as possible. "For me, it’s all about giving back,” she said. "If people didn’t give me a chance, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”
Alumni Notes

2000s

**Michael Foster**, D.M.D., B.S. (PA-C), M.P.H. ('00), is an oral and maxillofacial surgeon for the Associated Oral and Implant Surgeons in Kingsport, Tennessee.

**Dean Kois**, D.M.D., M.S.D. ('05), was a guest speaker during the American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry annual meeting in Dana Point, California, with his father, John Kois, D.M.D., M.S.D. Kois and his wife, Tara, who is also a 2005 CDM graduate, practice together along with John Kois at Kois Dentistry in Seattle, Washington. The couple has three children.

2010s

**Blerta Abdi**, D.M.D. ('14), will complete her three-year residency in orthodontics at Texas A&M College of Dentistry in May 2017.

**Brittanie Dillon**, D.O., D.M.D. ('14), is pursuing a family medicine residency at Cambridge Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

**Anna Gayday**, D.M.D. ('14), had to miss the inaugural CDM Alumni Weekend because she was getting married on November 12, 2016. Gayday is a member of the dental team at Dental Arts Davis Square in Somerville, Massachusetts.

**Erinne Kennedy**, D.M.D., M.P.H. ('15), is completing her dental public health specialty education by doing a residency in dental public health at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Suzanne Barnes**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing an oral and maxillofacial surgery residency at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Kelly Cundy**, D.M.D. ('16), began her first year of pediatric dentistry residency training at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine.

**Trevor Hart**, D.M.D. ('16), has joined Aspen Dental in Fort Myers, Florida.

**Shadiya Hasan**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing an orthodontics residency at the University of the Pacific in San Francisco, California.

**Johanna Hernandez**, D.M.D. ('16), has joined Heartland Dental in Naples, Florida.

**Samantha Kirzner**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing a general practice residency at Jersey City Medical Center in New Jersey.

**Kristen Krotec**, D.M.D. ('16), has joined Aspen Dental in Greenville, South Carolina.

**Nimish Maniar**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing a general practice residency at St. Barnabas Hospital in Bronx, New York.

**Adele Mirbey**, D.M.D. ('16), has joined Heartland Dental in Orlando, Florida.

**Morvarid Moini**, D.M.D. ('16), began a two-year pediatric residency at Tufts Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts. Following the completion of her residency training, Moini plans to move back to Melbourne, Florida, to practice with her sister, who is a general dentist.

**Sandra Ogando**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing an endodontics residency at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine.

**Derek Owens**, D.M.D. ('16), has joined MB2 Dental Solutions in Farmington, New Mexico.

**Elizabeth Pages**, D.M.D. ('16), has joined Aspen Dental in Ocala, Florida.

**Ryan Priemer**, D.M.D. ('16), has joined Heartland Dental-Canoe Creek Family Dental in Orlando, Florida.

**Alexander Raiken**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing an endodontics residency at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine.

**Juliana Sardenberg**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing a general practice residency at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Florida.

**John Tawadrous**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing a general practice residency at New York Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn, New York.

**Carolyn Thompson**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing an advanced education in general dentistry residency with the U.S. Navy.

**Alex Verga**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing a three-year orthodontic residency at the Georgia School of Orthodontics in Atlanta.

**Ashleigh Weyh**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing a residency in oral and maxillofacial surgery at University of Florida Health in Jacksonville.

**Michael Wiernicki**, D.M.D. ('16), is doing an orthodontic residency at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine.

The following 2016 D.M.D. graduates have joined a private practice: **Armand Asinmaz**, South Florida; **Lauren Friedman**, Toronto, Ontario; **Nikki Moshiri**, Melbourne, Florida; **Suzanne Najjar**, Dallas, Texas; **Alice Reich**, South Florida; and **Drew Williams**, New Mexico.

Share Your News with Us

The NSU College of Dental Medicine wants to know what you’ve been up to. Share any achievements and milestones in your career and your family. Share your personal and community pursuits. Send your news to Rosalie Marin at rm1147@nova.edu.
Becoming chief of the dentistry department at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, which is part of the Miami Children’s Health System, is an honor for so many reasons, according to Gabriela Aurora Rolland-Asensi, D.M.D., who was appointed to the position in December 2015.

Rolland-Asensi, who is a 2003 NSU College of Dental Medicine graduate, said her sense of satisfaction comes from seeing the outcomes of medically compromised children who are in need of the services and the facilities the department provides at the hospital. But one of her biggest
sources of pride is how she received her esteemed position as elected chief of the Department of Dentistry. “My peers here trusted me enough to elect me,” she said, adding that she received 75 percent of the vote. “They decided I would be a good leader, and it was an honor for me.”

Rolland-Asensi, who is the president and owner of Miami Children’s Smiles in Coral Gables, had privileges through her private practice at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, which meant she had the hospital’s facilities and equipment at her disposal. “Some of our patients may have special needs, which may require more than a traditional office setting can offer, so this is when we are in need of the hospital’s pediatric dentistry facilities,” she said.

She had been familiar with the hospital after being its chief resident, while she was doing her general practice residency there. She completed her pediatric dentistry advanced education residency training at the University of Florida (UF). The hospital, then called Miami Children’s Hospital, was renamed Nicklaus Children’s Hospital after the golf legend, Jack Nicklaus, in 2015.

As the elected hospital chief for a four-year term, Rolland-Asensi oversees the operating room for dentists and is instrumental in the credentialing process for incoming dentists who want to be part of the medical staff, as well as for those who want to be given privileges to the pediatric dentistry unit.

U.S. SUCCESS

According to Rolland-Asensi, the success she has had in South Florida is due in part to the time she spent at NSU’s College of Dental Medicine. Already a dentist when she arrived in the United States in 1993 after graduating from the Universidad Central de Venezuela, she came here with her husband, Jacobo Asensi. The two lived in Boston, Massachusetts, so he could complete his M.B.A.

When her husband was offered a job in Miami, the couple relocated to South Florida. Still wanting to be involved in dentistry, Rolland-Asensi volunteered at Miami Children’s Hospital in the dental clinic for several months, and then became a resident in the general practice residency from 1997 to 1998.

While she always had a desire to work with children, it was only when she arrived in the United States that the reality of becoming a pediatric dentist really took hold. “Pediatric dentistry is a true specialty in the United States,”
she explained. “In other countries, it is not as recognized. Most people just take their children to a general dentist.” But Rolland-Asensi felt that children with more intensive needs, such as those with autism, cerebral palsy, Down’s syndrome, or other medical conditions, should be treated by a dentist who had a specific knowledge of children’s dental medicine.

After she learned about the hospital’s affiliation with the University of Florida and its pediatric residency, she was accepted into the program. She graduated from the UF pediatric dentistry residency in 2000. “However, to practice dentistry in the state of Florida and obtain a dental license, you must have a United States degree,” Rolland-Asensi explained.

BACK TO SCHOOL

If she was going to have to go to dental school all over again, she knew Nova Southeastern University was the perfect choice. “It was super new, and the equipment was modern,” Rolland-Asensi recalled. She was accepted into the CDM’s International Program for Dental Graduates in 2000 and received her D.M.D. degree in 2003.

“It was difficult to go back to dental school, because I had already gone through school and was already a dentist,” she said. “I had also graduated in pediatric dentistry and knew that was what I wanted to do, so having to see adults again and do dentures and all those things was hard for me.”

Rolland-Asensi credits sympathetic mentors, such as CDM faculty member Rashondia W. Gaines, D.D.S., for helping her to succeed. “Dr. Gaines made me see the light at the end of the tunnel. Some of my other instructors, who knew I was just there to get my dental degree so I could practice what I loved, were so involved that they made it easy for me,” she said.

She gratefully acknowledges the CDM for giving her an opportunity to be “part of the school, let me study there, and let me get an American degree so I could work in this country. I’ll never forget that.” Rolland-Asensi said her husband, who is now the operations manager of her private practice, was also instrumental in her success. “I couldn’t do what I do without him,” she admitted.

In her elected position, she feels that her passion for pediatric dentistry may hopefully inspire others. “This specialty gives you the chance to be funny all day. Kids are very genuine, and they don’t have filters,” she said. “I feel comfortable working around them. I’d have to be more serious if I was treating adults.”

According to Rolland-Asensi, there is another aspect to working with children that adds more to the specialty. “There is psychology involved, too. You have to take the time to help children who are afraid and let them know that everything is going to be okay,” she explained. “The most gratifying part of my job is at the end of a procedure, when the child gets down from the dental chair and gives you a big hug. Adults—well, most anyway—don’t do that.”
Karlyn G. Emile, M.P.H., CHES, received the Local Hero Award from the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry. She was honored for her tireless efforts in raising awareness, developing programs, and advocating for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD).

The Local Hero Award is given to an individual who has made a significant contribution in the field of IDD in his or her community. Emile oversees the Special Olympics Florida Healthy Community in South Florida. The Healthy Community is a premier health care delivery approach that focuses solely on individuals with IDD.

Emile also serves as a preceptor for public health, dietetics and nutrition, nursing, and health service administration to university students, including those in NSU’s College of Dental Medicine, to expose and train future health practitioners to work with IDD patients. She has mentored more than 200 students in the past three years. In addition, she has developed a course that can serve as an elective in many of the health disciplines, authored articles, and presented on IDD-related topics.

Contribution Enhances Student Training

Nobel Biocare, a pioneer in the field of implant-based dental restorations, recently renewed its support to the CDM to enhance the student training experience offered at the college. The contribution brings Nobel Biocare’s lifetime giving to NSU to nearly $1.5 million.

“The NSU College of Dental Medicine appreciates the longstanding partnership with Nobel Biocare,” said Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., who serves as CDM dean. “This partnership has enhanced the predoctoral educational program, enabling dental students to increase their experience in providing dental implants for patients.”

Student Receives Local Hero Award
The student coordinators of the NSU College of Dental Medicine’s Give Kids A Smile program work as a team, and like any award-winning team, they need a mascot. Adam Saltz, M.P.H., knows this all too well. The fourth-year CDM student and Give Kids A Smile codirector joined the program during his NSU undergraduate years, bringing tireless pluck to his humble roles as Timmy the Tooth and Healthy Matthew, the initiative’s costumed rovers.

The son of a dentist and nephew of a periodontist, Saltz knew he was destined for more than morale raising and photo ops. During the past six years, he’s risen up the ranks, serving as Give Kids A Smile’s class representative during his first year of dental school. Ultimately, he shared many
of the directorial responsibilities in his third year with fellow fourth-year student Kelly Cundy. Now, he is officially running the show alongside codirector Divya Puri, another fourth-year student.

And it is a show. Equal parts dental clinic and state fair, the event typically features inspirational cameos from local athletes, face painting, balloon artists, clowns, a DJ, and costumed revelers from movies like Frozen and Star Wars—all to reduce fear for the hundreds of children ages 2 to 18 who receive free dental care from CDM students every February. The 2017 event is scheduled for Saturday, February 4.

“There are three ways in which people are disconnected from dental care,” Saltz said. “They physically can’t access it, they can’t afford it, or they don’t understand the value of it. If we can break down at least one of these barriers for that day, we are providing a lifetime of good health for our patients. Parents greatly influence the habits of their children, and many of our attendees have never even visited a dentist before. By allowing them to visit us in a space that’s fun and exciting, with a carnival-like atmosphere, we put some stereotypes to rest—that the dentist is scary or not affordable. It’s a truly engaging environment for a child’s first dental experience.”

In the weeks leading up to Give Kids A Smile, a staff of 20 to 30 CDM students toils in various leadership capacities to ensure its success. For the 2017 event, Saltz and Puri interviewed 30 dental students for 15 positions. These include recruitment chair, fund-raising chair, and to fill roles for media outreach and interprofessional care. In 2016, Give Kids A Smile added collaborations with NSU’s College of Osteopathic Medicine and College of Pharmacy to provide comprehensive care.

“That’s largely what our Give Kids A Smile is about—comprehensive care through education and treatment,” Saltz said. “And not just through oral hygiene. We’re trying to treat them at a systemic level and improve their overall wellness.” It’s no wonder that Give Kids A Smile was a major factor in the 2016 NSU STUEY (Student Life Achievement Award) that was presented to the Pediatric Dental Club, over which Puri presides.

During the day of the event, all CDM students are likely to participate, from first-year students providing oral-hygiene instructions to children and their parents to fourth-year students performing restorative procedures and extractions. Recent graduate Cundy, now in her first year of residency in pediatric dentistry at the CDM, said she will be involved with the 2017 event as a “postgraduate liaison, overseeing and helping.”

The CDM’s program has become so well respected that the American Dental Association (ADA) Foundation selected the 2016 event to serve as the national kickoff for Give Kids A Smile across the country. ADA president Carol Gomez Summerhays, D.D.S., traveled from San Diego, California, to observe the CDM event. “NSU’s Give Kids A Smile event had such a great energy,” she said. “The CDM dental students and faculty members were so thoughtful in creating a day that was fun and educational for local
families. It was clear the kids felt at ease during the screenings and were inspired to keep visiting the dentist and take care of their teeth at home.”

INTRICATE PLANNING

The planning that goes into the CDM’s Give Kids A Smile event is immense.

“Dental students will join us for the first time, and they don’t believe how much work actually goes into this event,” Saltz said. “Predominantly, the help is in recruiting patients from the Boys & Girls Clubs and local public schools. We’ll actively recruit families at each site, handing out flyers and event materials. We also provide health history and informed consent packets, so that when they come in, if they have everything signed and completed, we can see them immediately.”

Speed is vital to the event’s success. With last year’s Give Kids A Smile attracting a record 697 patients—double the attendance of any previous Give Kids A Smile Day—the codirectors need all hands on deck, working collectively and efficiently. This team effort includes help from faculty members and administrators, who are available for encouragement and to perform procedures outside students’ skill sets.

“It’s a Saturday, they don’t have to be there, but they’re there,” Puri said. “People come to this event to help out in any way they can. The students were able to learn different techniques and talk to children and parents. It was an invaluable experience.”

Some of these techniques involve developing a chairside manner suitable to pediatric dentistry. “One of the biggest things about treating children is understanding their mindset,” Puri said. “There’s this big component of anxiety, so it is different than treating adults. You’ve got to have behavioral management techniques to engage children. You talk to them at whatever level they’re at, try to build a really good relationship with them, and try to build that trust.”

Student participants in Give Kids A Smile learn comforting behavioral methods such as “tell, show, do” in which the student explains a dental instrument and shows its function outside the mouth before using it on the child. Students accomplish this through relabeling, such as calling an anesthetic “sleepy juice,” and positive reinforcement for every time the patient behaves well.

“I had a younger patient in the CDM’s special needs clinic, and she loved Frozen,” Saltz said. “So I had the song Let It Go on repeat for her entire appointment. Hearing that on loop for an hour may not have been my favorite, but it doesn’t matter. It’s for her. It’s being able to personally identify with your patients and tailor every aspect of their dental experience to meet their needs and interests.”
These behavioral necessities can have a major effect on children’s future lives as patients. Saltz doesn’t normally get to see children during Give Kids A Smile, but his lone patient last year stands out in this respect.

“He was very nervous at the beginning of his visit,” Saltz recalled. “He was crying when he first arrived with his brother. When I saw that his brother was pretty calm and relaxed, I had the brother go through the procedure first. We used the ‘tell, show, do’ technique, and he saw that his brother went through it fine. I encouraged him to ‘Be the hero for your brother that I know you can be.’

By the end of the procedure, his little brother jumped in the chair and was all ready to go,” Saltz said.

“His mom asked him at the end of the appointment, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ And he said, ‘I want to be a dentist,’” Saltz added. “To get a child to go from completely anxious in the chair, clinging to his mom, to now trying on my loupes at the end of the appointment because he thought it was so cool is impressive. You’re not only engaging with kids on a treatment basis; you have the power to shape their whole livelihood.”

Give Kids A Smile also influences the dental students’ futures. Saltz hopes to launch a practice in periodontics, a field he said “bridges the gap between oral health and medicine.” As for Puri, a native of Denmark who moved to the United States to attend college, her experience with Give Kids A Smile has had a significant impact on her career plans.

“I enjoy the behavioral portion of it but also the educational aspect,” she said. “These children are scared, and I want to be able to have an impact on them. In one of our clinics, I was working with a patient who was autistic. He was hesitant to do anything at all. We were able to pass over that barrier for him, and it was an amazing opportunity. The biggest part for me was when his mother started crying because he had never been so good at the dentist before. It got me really emotional. I knew then that this is what I wanted to do.”

For more information about Give Kids A Smile, or to make an appointment, call (407) 391-KIDS. Give Kids A Smile, launched nationally by the American Dental Association in 2003, is one of the world’s largest oral health charitable programs. Annually, it provides dental care to more than 350,000 children from low-income families across the country.
Problem Solvers

BY SALLIE JAMES

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION HONORED WITH A STUEY

Members of the college’s Student Government Association (SGA) believe that solving problems is a duty. The students’ innovative solutions earned the SGA a prestigious Student Life Achievement Award. Now in its 17th year, the awards—affectionately known as the STUEYS—are considered to be NSU’s version of the Academy Awards.
“It’s pretty significant,” said Brad A. Williams, Ed.D., vice president for Student Affairs and dean of NSU’s College of Undergraduate Studies, who coordinated the final selections in each award category. “They won for Student Government of the Year, and there are more than 200 student organizations at NSU.”

The CDM SGA consists of 20 members. There are four class presidents, four class vice presidents, four class secretaries, and four class treasurers, plus an additional four members who are executive officers. The executive officers are third- and fourth-year students who represent the entire CDM, while the class officers represent the needs of their specific class.

Several projects earned recognition for the SGA. The organization funded the purchase of four high-tech DSLR cameras, and the university matched those funds to buy an additional four more, said Alex Verga, D.M.D., who was the SGA president when the organization won the STUEY. The initiative provided the foundation for the creation of a digital photography course so students could learn how to better document their work. The SGA also supported the renovation of the college’s outdated dental Simulation Lab and made administrative changes that helped the CDM’s dental clinic run more efficiently.

“They really made a difference,” said Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., dean of the CDM. “These students are wonderful. When the university recognizes them with a STUEY Award, it’s a huge deal. And we won two. We won the award for the SGA, and the Pediatric Dental Club won the Graduate Student Organization of the Year for the Give Kids A Smile program.” (See story on page 40.)

The STUEY Award was tangible acknowledgment that the group’s hard work has made a lasting impact, said Verga, who also received a STUEY as the CDM’s 2016 Student of the Year. “It’s an award that says this student government went above and beyond. It represents the impact we made for the college and for the community.”

Because of the SGA’s efforts, clinical photography with DSLR cameras optimized for dentistry with macro lenses and ring flashes is now the order of the day. The camera kits cost about $2,000 each, with half of the funding coming from the SGA and half from a university-procured donor, said Stanley Hack, B.D.S., assistant professor for the CDM’s Department of Cariology and Restorative Dentistry. The SGA used money from its budget to cover half the cost, and the College of Dental Medicine provided the matching funds.

“The initiative was started by the SGA,” Hack said. “The students requested the CDM match their purchase of four cameras, making a total of eight. This would provide one camera for each of the eight teams in the CDM predoctoral clinic.”

Continued on next page
The eight cameras primarily are used by third- and fourth-year dental students in the CDM’s clinic. Second-year students also use the DSLR cameras while learning in a clinical photography class. Photographs obtained from the cameras allow the students to document clinical data with great detail and to be able to show their patients what is going on inside their mouths while discussing the various treatment plans.

“We can educate the patient and document the transition of the case—how it starts and how it finishes,” Verga said. “The images also allow us to determine the best treatment plan with our faculty members once the patient leaves the chair.”

According to Hack, the students take seven standardized photos of every new patient. “Aside from recording data at a very visible level, which can then be viewed and discussed with faculty while formulating treatment plans, the students learn how to operate DSLR cameras,” he said. “The cameras are also available to record the progress of lesions and restorations and to enable students to produce a portfolio of their cases.”

Another initiative the SGA influenced was the renovation of the CDM’s new Simulation Lab, which opened in early 2016 and has become a great source of pride among incoming and outgoing students. The renovation project was spearheaded by Peter Keller, D.D.S., executive associate dean for finances and administration at the CDM, who had worked on the project for well over a year before the new facility was actually constructed. The lab’s renovation was completed during a six-week period under Keller’s supervision.

The SGA and faculty members practiced in and evaluated three different simulation stations, also under Keller’s direction and guidance, and offered their input before the university made a final selection. “They took our input, then selected one,” said fourth-year dental student Jared Gibby.

“It is where we practice our first and second years. Before you work on patients, you work on a mannequin. It’s where you learn the fine motor skills and steps needed for each treatment,” Verga said. “Our students were very happy to have it renovated.”

Niessen said the students have proved to be innovative problem solvers, which serves as a key reason to why they were able to win a STUEY. “They came up with a lot of solutions,” Niessen said. One problem SGA members tackled was how to keep track of what dental chair a student was assigned to on a particular day in the first-floor dental clinic. The SGA solution? Installing two television monitors similar to those at airports that are used to track arriving and departing flights. The dental clinic monitors show where each student is assigned to work. The nominal cost was covered by the university.

Gibby, the current SGA president, is thrilled to be taking charge of a student organization that is so focused on getting things done. “We have 18 clubs within our SGA, and we really encourage our clubs to be active and do things,” he said. “When you are part of the SGA, you are doing things for the CDM to make our college better. We are trying to keep a legacy going.”

Popular clubs include the Dental Missions Club, whose members make four to five trips a year to third-world countries to provide free dental care to the underserved. Another, the American Student Dental Association, introduces members to national leadership conferences and guides them through the basics of civic involvement.

Gibby is confident that the 2016–2017 school year will herald great things. In
fact, the brainstorming of new projects began last summer. "We are looking into implementing patient check-in kiosks for the clinic to help streamline the check-in process," he said. "Additionally, we are planning to collaborate with other NSU colleges, like pharmacy, in doing a health fair to encourage interprofessionalism."

Verga and other students credit Niessen’s personal involvement in the SGA as a key reason why the group was able to accomplish so much. "The dean joined us during my second year, and she was at every single meeting," he said. "She would go out of her way to make sure things happened outside of school hours. She gave a lot of her free time to help us out. We definitely give her a lot of the credit for winning this award."

Fourth-year student Kyle Aten said the STUEY Award is a reflection of the group’s collaboration as students. "We work as a team and collaborate all year with the different clubs," said Aten, who serves as SGA treasurer. "I think that was a big reason we were selected as the winner."

Niessen said the leadership skills the students learn now will serve them well during their future careers. "We are training them not only to be excellent clinicians, but also to be leaders within the dental profession, and to be comfortable doing so," she said.

Verga agrees. "The leadership experience you gain with the SGA will translate into your ability to lead in your community and practice," he said. "For me personally, it was extremely rewarding to help make a difference during my four years here."

Zohaib Munaf, SGA executive vice president and a third-year student, said that receiving the STUEY was a "phenomenal" experience. "It was a great accomplishment for the whole dental college," he said proudly. "Our goal is to win it again in 2017."

The CDM’s Smiles Across Miami program received a Sapphire Award and a $20,000 grant from the Florida Blue Foundation for the college’s efforts to bring quality oral health services to underserved and primarily uninsured school children in Miami-Dade County. Ana Karina Mascarenhas, B.D.S., Dr.P.H., M.P.H., associate dean of research at the CDM, accepted the award on the college’s behalf.

The Florida Blue Foundation awards outstanding work by individuals, programs, and nonprofit organizations in community health care or health care-related fields that are distinguished by leadership, innovation, and achievements in community health. The honorees in each category were announced during the two-day Sapphire Symposium, which featured community health experts from around the state and country.

"The goal of Smiles Across Miami is to identify oral diseases early and improve access to vitally needed oral health care for Miami-Dade schoolchildren most at risk in order to reduce health disparities and improve health and social equity in our community," said Mascarenhas, who oversees the program.

"By starting preventive care, treatment, and education at an early stage, we can provide the basis for children to maintain good oral health and overall healthy habits for their entire lifetime," said Linda C. Niessen, D.M.D., M.P.H., M.P.P., who serves as CDM dean.

Since 2005, the Florida Blue Foundation has presented 73 Sapphire Awards, totaling more than $3.75 million, to 15 individuals and 58 programs and organizations from across Florida. This year’s honorees were selected from among 112 nominees. An independent panel of experts with state and national expertise in community health best practices selected the honorees in each category.
Second-year dental student Francesca Pietri’s childhood dream was to be a dentist. Like other students in the NSU College of Dental Medicine, her college courses focused on the sciences. But how many dental students can say they worked as an international model or studied at the Sorbonne University in Paris?

Pietri began her CDM studies in 2015 after working on a Master of Biomedical Sciences (M.B.S.) degree at NSU’s College of Medical Sciences. She was awarded a Stella August Endowed Scholarship for academic achievement in the master’s program. Students in the program take basic science courses alongside dental and osteopathic medicine students in preparation for admission to one of the two professional programs.

In a letter to Pietri, Harold Laubach, Ph.D., dean of the College of Medical Sciences, wrote: “You now have the opportunity to add another dimension to your career, because you have been selected to receive the Stella August Endowed Scholarship.” The scholarship funds were applied to Pietri’s 2015–2016 College of Dental Medicine tuition. “I worked really hard during my M.B.S. year, because I wanted to be a dental student,” she said. “Being awarded the Stella August Scholarship was the icing on top.”

Born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, Pietri spent her latter teenage years in New Jersey and received a Gates Millennium Scholarship, which is funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Pietri said the Gates Millennium Scholarship funded all her education, including her University of Florida, Florida Atlantic University, and Nova Southeastern University undergraduate and graduate educations.
She also received a Walmart community scholarship, among others.

The CDM gave Pietri the chance to live her dream. “As soon as I became a dental student, I assumed an intensely determined attitude to do well and enjoy the experience,” she said. “I wanted to be a dental student for a very long time, and although my journey into dental school was not a typical one, I always knew in my heart that if given the chance, I would succeed.”

Pietri’s journey included modeling in the United States, Central America, and Europe when she was 19 years old. In 2012, after her graduation from NSU with a bachelor’s degree in biology, she moved to Paris to study the French language and architecture at the Sorbonne University. She also took painting and drawing classes at the Académie de Port Royal.

Not surprisingly, Pietri’s work ethic, determination, and dedication were noticed by her professors in the NSU Master of Biomedical Sciences program. “Francesca is a dedicated and hardworking student,” said Yuri Zagvazdin, Ph.D., professor of physiology. “She showed a focused interest in the subject.” He called Pietri “a stellar performer.”

“Shes top in all classes. It tells you how much she was determined to do this,” said Lori Dribin, Ph.D., professor of anatomy and College of Medical Sciences assistant dean for student affairs. “She’s someone who wants to be a dentist. She’s living for this. You can’t find anyone who wants to be a dentist more than Francesca.”

For four years, Pietri shadowed Rashondia Gaines, D.D.S., M.S., director of faculty practice at the CDM.

“I don’t think I’ve had someone as passionate about dentistry as Francesca,” Gaines said. “I thought she was an amazing student. She always asked great questions. She wanted to know everything.”

Stanley Hack, B.D.S., CDM assistant professor of cariology and restorative dentistry, who instructed Pietri in a dental anatomy class and in the Dental Simulation Lab, said Pietri is “very diligent. She applies herself far beyond expectations.”

Pietri applies the same work ethic and dedication to extracurricular activities and organizations. She is part of the executive board of the NSU American Student Dental Association chapter and was the chapter’s first-year class representative. She also represents the CDM on the NSU Student Advisory Board and serves as the NSU Orthodontist Student Association treasurer and the NSU American Dental Education Association second-year class representative. She was selected to be a College of Dental Medicine student ambassador, as well.

In addition, Pietri accompanied dentists on dental missions to underprivileged communities in Costa Rica and Panama. She was awarded a scholarship to attend the 2016 American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD) Scientific Session in Toronto, Canada, where she participated in several dental workshops.

Envisioning her own dental practice, Pietri said she wants to give back to people in need and focus professionally on cosmetics. “I love aesthetics, so perhaps pursuing a specialty in orthodontics and becoming accredited by the AACD is something I might consider doing in the future. But for now, I’m enjoying being a second-year dental student.”

The Stella August Endowed Scholarship, established in 1991, was funded by the estate of Stella August—a Wilton Manors, Florida, resident who died in 1989. Scholarships for tuition and fees are awarded to a limited number of NSU College of Medical Sciences students with the highest grade point average when they enter the NSU College of Dental Medicine or NSU College of Osteopathic Medicine.

In addition to Pietri, first-year CDM student Robert Size (right) was awarded a Stella August Endowed Scholarship. Size received the scholarship because he had the highest grade point average in the M.B.S. program. Size, who hails from Minneapolis, Minnesota, is committed “to being the best possible dentist I can be,” he said.

Size’s award marks two years in a row that a dental student has been awarded this scholarship.
The adage states there are no problems, only solutions, and that certainly applies to Tanya Gress. In her role as manager of clinical support, Gress is a key figure in maintaining and regulating clinical needs for NSU’s CDM—from ordering supplies to organizing Occupational Safety and Health Administration training. It’s a job Gress has been doing in one capacity or another for the past 15 years. “I try to find a solution for anything that may arise, and if I cannot, I will direct those who need assistance appropriately,” she said.

Robert Uchin, D.D.S., the CDM’s former dean, enticed Gress to come to the CDM in 2001. At the time, Gress was working as an office manager/dental assistant in a private office where Uchin’s daughter worked. “When he became dean, he said to me, ‘I have the perfect place for you if you are interested,’ ” she said.

With her husband, Tom, teaching at NSU’s University School, and her two children both attending middle school there, taking a job at NSU was the natural choice for Gress. Her first position was as the coordinator for the CDM’s newly created community dentistry department, which included 28 residents in the Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) program.

A few months after starting her job, she also became the resident coordinator for the oral surgery program. Not long after that, she added the pediatric program to her list of responsibilities.

Then, in 2008, when the oral surgery clinic opened a second location at Broward Health Medical Center, Gress moved there and worked solely with...
Tanya Gress is known for her efficiency at problem solving. At right, Gress discusses clinical needs with Bridger Jensen, D.D.S., chief resident of oral and maxillofacial surgery at the CDM.

the hospital’s oral surgery clinic. Eventually, Gress managed both oral surgery clinic locations, until she became manager of clinical support in 2015.

Diane Ede-Nichols, D.M.D., M.H.L., M.P.H., the CDM’s chair of community and public health sciences, was Gress’ first chair and has known her for 15 years. “We need to clone her,” Ede-Nichols said. “She is one of those rare people you can give anything to, and she will get it done. I am so impressed at how she assesses a situation and rapidly anticipates how to fix it. And she has this gift of knowing what you need, even before you know you need it.”

Once, Ede-Nichols said, Gress showed up at Ede-Nichols’ office with the perfect gift bags needed for a graduation ceremony. She hadn’t asked Gress to get them, but Gress had thought ahead and saved Ede-Nichols time and money.

“She is terrific that way, always thinking about what other people need,” Ede-Nichols said. “If someone mentions something in passing about what they like, she will make a mental note and get it for them when she sees it. She is a nurturer, always meeting the needs of people around her, both at work and in her family.”

Steven Kaltman, D.M.D., M.D., who serves as chair of the college’s Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and dean of hospital and extramural affairs, has also worked with Gress for the past 15 years. “Tanya was instrumental in helping me put together the oral surgery residency program,” Kaltman said. “She is a renaissance woman, and I am so fortunate to have her help me navigate the waters every day. She also cares about the university and is always trying to build the brand in a positive way.”

Gress’ motivation and her ability to juggle numerous responsibilities and situations make her unique, he added. “She has an old-school work ethic. She is a multitasker and a forward thinker, always being proactive,” Kaltman said.

In 2006, Gress received NSU’s Staff Person of the Year STUEY Award as recognition for her hard work. Gress said she was honored to receive the award, but prefers to remain behind the scenes. She typically can be spotted walking down the hallways of the CDM with two phones in her hands, stopping to answer questions, and popping in and out of offices, or the clinics, as needed.

Gress loves the fast pace of her job, and that every day brings something new. “It’s never boring, that’s for sure,” she said. “Whatever I plan for the day never happens. I feel like I accomplish what is put in front of me at the moment, and I try to get the resolution, whatever it may be. There’s always so much going on. I try to help anybody who comes to me or send them to where they can get help.”

When she’s not at the CDM, she enjoys being with her husband, Tom; her son, Kyle; her daughter, Megan; and son-in-law, Eric. “Family is everything to me,” she said. “I’m also very close to my sister and mom, and we spend a lot of time together.”

Continually taking on even more responsibilities as the manager of clinical support, Gress does her best to help things run smoothly at the CDM. “I don’t think anything of it. People come to me and I help,” she said. “I enjoy what I do.”

NSU COLLEGE OF DENTAL MEDICINE • 51
SEND US YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY

NSU’s College of Dental Medicine will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2017. We want to hear about your favorite CDM memory. Maybe it’s a professor whose mentorship helped you make a career decision. Or, maybe you were active in an organization. Was it late-night studying at the library? Did you meet lifelong friends, or your spouse, while at the university? And, if you have a photo of your days at the CDM, please include it. Send your favorite memories of your time at the CDM to Rosalie Marin at rm1147@nova.edu.

REALIZING POTENTIAL

ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

DR. HAL LIPPMAN ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND

DONORS: The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, upon the recommendation of Dr. Robert Pickron—The Pickron Family Fund of the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta; Kiran Malavia; Dr. Ashok K. Patel; and Nita and Rupesh R. Shah

COLLEGE/CENTER: NSU College of Dental Medicine

PURPOSE: Scholarships for predoctoral students enrolled in the dental college

A donor can name a Changing Lives Scholarship with a gift of $1,000 each year for five years. For $5,000 paid each year for five years into NSU’s endowment, a donor can create a named scholarship, research, faculty support, or program fund designed to last for generations. For more information, please call (954) 262-1209. Students interested in scholarship opportunities can go to nova.edu/financialaid/scholarships.
Become a part of an extraordinary story.

Be active in YOUR alumni society and leave a lasting impression.

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.
Your Destination for Dental Education

Preparation of leaders for a diverse global community

For more information, visit dental.nova.edu.