

LSU Health
NEW ORLEANS

School of Dentistry

ALUMNI & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Newsletter



SPRING 2026

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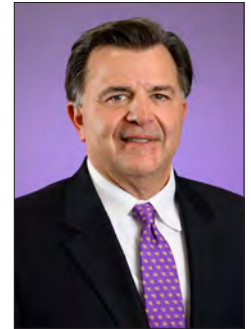
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This newsletter is published by the LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry's Office of Alumni & Community Affairs. If you have an event or article you'd like to publish, please email ds-alumni@lsuhsc.edu for more information.

A Message from the Dean

As we welcome the spring season, I am pleased to share several exciting updates from the School of Dentistry, each reflecting our continued commitment to excellence in education, patient care, and community engagement.



Dr. John Gallo

We are proud to announce several important leadership transitions that support our students and academic programs. Effective June 1, Dr. Adriana Wilson will assume the role of Assistant Dean of Student Affairs and Admissions. Since joining our faculty in 2015, Dr. Wilson has distinguished herself as an exceptional educator, mentor, and leader. Her deep commitment to student development, academic excellence, and inclusive leadership will be instrumental in shaping the student experience for years to come. At the same time, Dr. Shirin Khoynezhad will step into the role of Interim Chair of the Department of Prosthodontics. With more than 15 years of experience in clinical care and academic leadership, she brings both expertise and continuity to this important position.

This spring also marks meaningful investment in our campus environment. Beginning in mid-May, we will launch a series of long-anticipated renovation projects designed to modernize and enhance our teaching and clinical facilities. These include a complete renovation of Auditorium C, audiovisual upgrades to Auditoriums A and B, and improvements to key clinical spaces such as the first-floor screening clinic, Central Laboratory, and second-floor dispensary. We are also excited to introduce a new exercise room that will support wellness for our students, faculty, and staff.

Beyond campus improvements, this issue celebrates the people and programs that make our school so special. We are honored to recognize our 25th and 50th DDS reunion classes, whose careers and contributions continue to inspire our current students. You will also read about our continued participation in Give Kids A Smile, a program that underscores our commitment to community service and access to care for children in need. In addition, we highlight the outstanding accomplishments of our residents, whose accolades reflect both their talent and the strength of our training programs. Finally, we share updates across several academic and clinical programs that demonstrate ongoing innovation and growth.

As always, we are grateful for your continued support and engagement. Our alumni community plays a vital role in advancing our mission, and we are proud to keep you connected to the progress and achievements happening every day at LSUSD.

John R. Gallo, III, DDS, MS

John R. Gallo, III, DDS, MS

Dean, LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry

Wilson, Khoynezhad Appointed to Assistant Dean, Department Chair Roles

Effective June 1, Dr. Adriana Wilson will be appointed Assistant Dean of Student Affairs and Admissions. Dr. Wilson currently serves as Chair of the LSUSD Department of Prosthodontics and has been a



Dr. Adriana Wilson

valued member of our faculty since 2015. A graduate of the Universidad Latina de Costa Rica, she completed her prosthodontics training and Master of Science in Dentistry at LSUSD, along with earning a graduate certificate in Teaching in Health Care Professions from LSU A&M.

Dr. Wilson has distinguished herself as an educator and leader, earning multiple Golden

Apple Excellence in Teaching Awards, the **ADEA / AAL** Faculty of Color Tuition Scholarship, and the LSUSD Research Excellence Award. She is a Fellow of both the ADEA Leadership Institute and the LSU Leadership Academy. Dr. Wilson's deep commitment to student success and academic excellence will serve our School well in this new role.

Additionally, effective June 1, Dr. Shirin Khoynezhad will be appointed Interim Chair of the Department of Prosthodontics. Dr. Khoynezhad, Associate Professor of Prosthodontics, has more than 15 years

of experience in clinical care, teaching, and academic leadership. She holds both a DDS and a DMSc in prosthodontics from the Harvard School of Dental Medicine and co-directs the Internationally Educated Dentists Program at LSUSD.

Dr. Khoynezhad's contributions to dental education have been recognized nationally, including selection for the ADEA Emerging Academic Leaders Program and election as an officer in ADEA's Special Interest Group for Internationally Educated Oral Health Professionals. She has also served on the **INBDE** Standard Setting Committee and was recently inducted as a Fellow of the **International College of Dentists** and accepted into the ADEA Leadership Institute Program. Dr. Khoynezhad's leadership, experience, and dedication to advancing prosthodontic education make her exceptionally qualified for this appointment.



Dr. Shirin Khoynezhad

Congratulations to Dr. Wilson and Dr. Khoynezhad as they step into these important leadership roles. Their expertise and commitment strengthen our School and support our mission to educate the next generation of oral health professionals. ■

Wolaver Named Resident of the Year

Congratulations to Dr. Kristen Wolaver, DDS, MD, LSU Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, on being named Touro Infirmary's 2026 Resident of the Year by LCMC Health! Dr. Wolaver is admired for her exceptional clinical skill, compassionate bedside manner, and positive leadership. A trusted teammate and dedicated mentor, she consistently lifts those around her while delivering outstanding patient care. We are incredibly proud of Dr. Wolaver and the excellence she represents! ■



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

Dental Laboratory Technology

Advancements through Digital Innovation

LSUSD's Program in Dental Laboratory Technology (DLT) continues to lead in preparing dental laboratory professionals by embracing the rapid evolution of digital dentistry. Cutting-edge technology is integrated into our curriculum and clinical training, creating a learning environment mirroring the modern dental lab.



Students gain hands-on experience with tools such as CAD/CAM systems, digital impressions, and 3D printing, which enhance accuracy and efficiency while equipping graduates with in-demand, workforce-ready skills. By incorporating digital workflows, the program connects traditional craftsmanship with emerging technologies. Alongside essential lab techniques, students develop competencies



in scanning, virtual design, and additive manufacturing, ensuring they are adaptable, innovative, and prepared for a digital-first profession.

As dentistry becomes increasingly technology-driven, DLT is a growing field. Graduates benefit from strong career opportunities across laboratories, dental practices, and industry partners, with increasing potential for competitive salaries and advancement. Faculty play a critical role by continually updating coursework and partnering with industry leaders to stay aligned with advancements in materials and technology. This ensures graduates are not only technically skilled but also equipped to contribute to innovation in the field.



Application Information

Visit our [website](#) for instructions on how to apply to the LSUSD DLT Program, or contact DLT Program Director Julio Zavala at jzaval@lsuhsc.edu. ■

Aladawi Awarded for Innovation in Post-Oncologic Facial Prosthetics



Dr. Ahmed Aladawi displays his award at the 97th Annual Meeting of the American Prosthodontic Society.

LSUSD third-year prosthodontics resident Dr. Ahmed Aladawi placed second in the Clinical Case Presentation category at February's **97th Annual Meeting of the American Prosthodontic Society** in Chicago.

Dr. Aladawi's presentation, "Rebuilding Confidence Digitally: A Customized Facial Prosthesis for a Post-Oncologic Midface Defect," showcased innovative digital solutions and a strong

commitment to restoring quality of life for patients with complex maxillofacial needs.

This accomplishment also reflects the guidance of Dr. Jorge Palavicini, Associate Professor of Prosthodontics, whose leadership helped shape the project. Their collaboration reflects the academic excellence and clinical innovation that define LSUSD's Advanced Education Program in Prosthodontics. ■

Gave the Date!

OCTOBER 22-23

LSU Health
NEW ORLEANS
School of Dentistry

ALUMNI Day

2026

Thursday, October 22
Evening Alumni Welcome Reception

Friday, October 23
Full-Day Continuing Education Program

1100 Florida Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70119

More Information - ds-alumni@lsuhsc.edu - 504-941-8120



LSU Health New Orleans Continuing Dental Education is an ADA CERP Recognized Provider. ADA CERP is a service of the American Dental Association to assist dental professionals in identifying quality providers of continuing dental education. ADA CERP does not approve or endorse individual courses or instructors, nor does it imply acceptance of credit hours by boards of dentistry. Concerns or complaints about a CE provider may be directed to the provider or to the Commission for Continuing Education Provider Recognition at www.ada.org/CERP.

The registration fee is partially refundable (minus an administrative fee) if you cancel your registration thirty (30) days before the start of the course. Any cancellation after this deadline will result in forfeiture of the entire tuition. Written cancellation requests can be submitted by email to CDE@lsuhsc.edu. LSU Health New Orleans Continuing Dental Education (LSU CDE) reserves the right to cancel the course should circumstances warrant such action. Full refunds of registration fees would be made in that event. However, LSU CDE is not responsible for any related costs or expenses, including cancellation/change charges assessed by airlines.

LSU Health Foundation: Meet the Executive Director of Gift Planning

The LSU Health Foundation is pleased to introduce Lauren Michel, MS, JD, CAP®, CFRE, Executive Director of Gift Planning, who works with supporters of the School of Dentistry to create meaningful and lasting philanthropic legacies.

Q: What is your role?

A: I partner with donors to explore giving opportunities that support dental education, patient care, and research while aligning with their personal and financial goals.

Q: How do you assist donors?

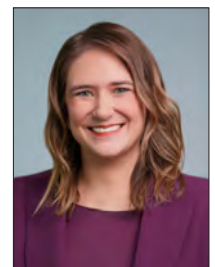
A: I provide guidance on a range of charitable options, including bequests, life income plans, and other tax-efficient giving strategies. I also work with dental professionals planning for retirement who are interested in incorporating philanthropy into the sale of their practice. My goal is to make each conversation clear, personalized, and impactful.

Q: Who should reach out?

A: Those interested in supporting the School of Dentistry, whether they are just beginning to explore giving or ready to create a plan, are encouraged to connect. Contact me at **504-568-1608** or giftplanning@lsuhealthfoundation.org.

Q: How can donors stay informed?

A: In the coming months, you will begin receiving more communications from the Office of Gift Planning, including newsletters, mailings, and email updates with helpful information and donor stories.



Lauren Michel

Lauren welcomes the opportunity to connect and serve as a resource for those interested in making a lasting impact on the LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry. ■

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: Dental Hygiene

Dental Hygiene Students Participate in Health Fair

First-year LSUSD Program in Dental Hygiene students (Alexandria campus) joined in a campus health fair on March 25. Students distributed information and samples to faculty and students, promoting oral hygiene and awareness about the dental hygiene program and clinic on the Alexandria campus.



Students Visit Head Start Centers



On March 27, LSUSD dental hygiene students visited St. Charles Parish Public Schools Head Start locations to teach Pre-K students about oral health, including healthy food choices and proper brushing and flossing, through fun activities and a puppet show.

Faculty Share Expertise at NODC

On April 11, 2026, at the New Orleans Dental Conference, Angie Reech, RDH, BSDH, MEd, CH-ONC, Assistant Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry, and Tricia Barker, RDH, MEd, Interim Dental Hygiene Program Director and Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry, presented their session, "Hygiene Gumbo: Periodontal Staging and Grading, Local Anesthesia Review, Dental Hygiene Care for the Cancer Patient." LSUSD Dental Hygiene Class of 2025 graduates Claire Sule, RDH, and Sara Upton, RDH, were among the attendees.



Shown from left are Angie Reech, Claire Sule, Sara Upton, and Tricia Barker.

Faiyazuddin Named Recipient of Tracy Helm Scholarship

Mohammed Faiyazuddin, a second-year dental hygiene student, was named the recipient of the Tracy Helm RDH Scholarship during a presentation held April 15 at LSUSD. Established in 1997 by William and Barbara Helm in memory of their daughter Tracy, a 1993 graduate of the LSUSD Program in Dental Hygiene who passed away in 1994, the scholarship honors students who reflect her outgoing, kind, and compassionate spirit. Faculty described Faiyazuddin as reliable, adaptable, and consistently supportive of both patients and classmates, qualities that align with the scholarship's mission. The award, now in its 29th year, recognizes dedication to the profession of dental hygiene and sensitivity to the needs of others, and Faiyazuddin marks a milestone as the first male recipient of the scholarship.



From left are Carla Dunn, RDH, BSDH, Patient Care Coordinator and past Helm Scholarship recipient; Heather Allen, RDH, BSDH, MSHCM, Director of Student Affairs and Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry; Mohammed "Mo" Faiyazuddin; Richard Helm, brother of Tracy Helm; Tricia Barker, RDH, MEd, Interim Dental Hygiene Program Director and Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry; and Jennifer Hew, RDH, MSHCM, Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry.

"Dental Hygiene" continued on page 9

"Dental Hygiene" continued from page 8

■ Sigma Phi Alpha Honor Society Welcomes New Inductees

Sigma Phi Alpha National Dental Hygiene Honor Society inductees were celebrated during a joint banquet with the Omicron Kappa Upsilon National Dental Honor Society and the C. Edmond Kells Honor Society, held April 16 at Chateau Country Club in Kenner.



Pictured from left are inductees Macey Wendt, Kelsey Sigur, and Aubre Thibodeaux, all second-year dental hygiene students, along with Tricia Barker, RDH, MEd, Interim Dental Hygiene Program Director (second from left).

■ Future Hygienists Represent LSUSD at LDHA 2026 Session

LSUSD Program in Dental Hygiene students (Alexandria campus) attended the Louisiana Dental Hygienists Association (LDHA) 2026 Annual Session on April 24 at the City Club at River Ranch in Lafayette. The event provided opportunities for professional development and networking with leaders in the dental hygiene community.



■ Dental Hygiene Grads Honored

LSUSD Program in Dental Hygiene graduates (Alexandria campus) graduates were celebrated at a dinner on April 29 at Tunk's Cypress Inn in Boyce. ■



Dental hygiene graduates (Alexandria campus) shown from left are Jodi Bradford, Chloe Leger, Ali Landry, Gillian Cole, Ashley Solis, and Emma Billeaud.

LSUSD Joins in STEM Fest 2026

At STEM Fest 2026, hosted by the New Orleans Saints and Pelicans in partnership with Entergy on March 28 at the Ochsner Sports Performance Center, LSUSD dental and dental hygiene students participated to promote oral health and hygiene hands-on STEM-based activities. ■



LSUSD Welcomes Esperanza Academy for Give Kids a Smile Day

LSUSD reinforced its long-standing commitment to community oral health by welcoming approximately 120 first, second, and third graders from Esperanza Academy for this year's Give Kids a Smile Day—a national initiative dedicated to expanding access to dental care and oral health education for children.



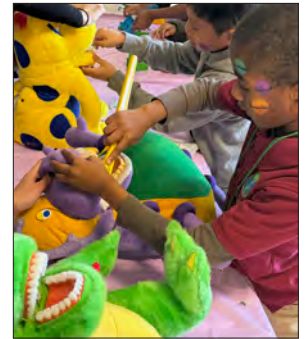
From the moment the school buses arrived, enthusiasm filled the campus. Dental students, dental hygiene students, and Pediatric Dentistry residents dressed in this year's theme, "Your Smile Is Out of This World," lined the walkways

to greet the children against a space-inspired backdrop. The celebratory atmosphere set the stage for a morning focused on learning, wellness, and community engagement.

Throughout the event, children rotated through a series of interactive educational stations. In the clinic, LSUSD students and residents provided dental screenings, cleanings, and sealants as needed. Hands-on demonstrations taught proper brushing and flossing techniques using oversized dental models and stuffed animals with large sets of teeth. Nutrition activities helped children distinguish tooth-friendly foods from those that encourage "sugar bugs." Outdoors, volunteers led additional activities, including games, chalk art, and face painting.



Guenther shared that her favorite part of the day was "seeing everything come together" after extensive planning. "There was so much coordinating involved, and it was great to see the kids come in excited," she said. "For some of them, it was potentially their first trip to the dentist, and we hope that this experience helps create healthy habits for the future."



The event was supported by generous partners, including the Louisiana Department of Health's Well Ahead program and Haute Soiree, as well as national supporters of the Give Kids a Smile program including the American Dental Association, Colgate, and Henry Schein, whose ongoing contributions help ensure children across the country receive essential preventive dental care and education.

“

It was great to see the kids come in excited. For some of them, it was potentially their first trip to the dentist, and we hope that this experience helps create healthy habits for the future.

Annika Guenther (D3)



Strong student leadership remains vital to the success of Give Kids a Smile Day at LSUSD. This year's event was coordinated by Pediatric Club President Annika Guenther (D3), Vice President Taylor Thibodaux (D2), and Give Kids a Smile Day Liaison Gracie Poe (D3), who collaborated closely with faculty, staff, residents, and fellow students.

LSUSD students emphasized the importance of Give Kids a Smile Day in reducing barriers to pediatric dental care. Since its launch in 2003, the national Give Kids a Smile program has enabled thousands of underserved children to receive no-cost dental care and oral health education. At Louisiana's only dental school, the tradition continues to grow each year, driven by the dedication of LSUSD students and a shared commitment to improving oral health throughout the community. ■

The Art of Occlusion: Students Transform Dental Skills into Creative Expression

First-year dental students in Dr. Jorge Palavicini's Principles of Occlusion course combined science and art in LSUSD's annual Prosthodontics Art Cast Contest. Each year, the course culminates in a unique showcase where students transform dental casts, originally created for class assignments, into imaginative works of art, highlighting both their technical skill and artistic vision.

This year's contest gained additional recognition in a **WDSU news segment**, featuring interviews with Dr. Palavicini along with Rebecca Simar, first-year class president, and Ethan Redlich, second-year class service chair, who played key roles in organizing and executing the event.

Voting was open to LSUSD faculty, staff, residents, and students, with winners announced in early May.

Taking first place was "Cheshire's Purr-fect Occlusion" by Emily Nguyen, Christina Vu, Brooke Nguyen, Lily Grigely, Radeeya Islam, and Lauren

Nguyen. Their piece featured the iconic grinning Cheshire Cat from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Second place was awarded to "Mount Brushmore" by Delaney Thompson, Courtney Homes, Sarah Fibich, and Shannon Klein. Their project reimaged the famous mountainside carving, incorporating brief dental histories of Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln.

Earning third place was "Love at First Bite" by Cameron Guzaetta, Trey Gregory, and Cameron Basinger, who presented a velveteen jewelry box complete with an engagement ring, offering a clever and elegant design.

The class extends special thanks to the vendors who generously donated gift cards as prizes: Louisiana Dental Center (first place), ZimVie (second place), and Nobel Biocare (third place). ■

1st PLACE

Cheshire's Purr-fect Occlusion



From left: Emily Nguyen, Christina Vu, Brooke Nguyen, Lily Grigely, Radeeya Islam, and Lauren Nguyen.

2nd PLACE

Mount Brushmore



From left: Delaney Thompson, Courtney Homes, Sarah Fibich, and Shannon Klein.

3rd PLACE

Love at First Bite



From left: Cameron Guzaetta and Trey Gregory.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS: Pediatric Dentistry

Care That Travels: Pediatric Dentistry Hits the Road

On March 26, LSUSD faculty, pediatric dentistry residents, and dental students climbed aboard what's affectionately known as the "tooth bus" to deliver care directly to children in a St. Bernard Parish community. The mobile clinic is part of a growing partnership between LSUSD and Baptist Community Health Services to expand access to pediatric dental care across Southeast Louisiana.



The "tooth bus."

Owned and operated by Baptist Community Health Services, the dental bus is staffed by LSUSD students and residents under the direct supervision of Pediatric Dentistry faculty, including Drs. Stuart Bonnin and Laura Guidry. Dr. Victoria Sullivan, Department Head of Pediatric Dentistry, emphasized that the initiative supports both education and service, while Dr. Sterling Roberts, Director, Advanced Education Program in Pediatric Dentistry, helped lead the effort to bring LSUSD providers onto the bus.



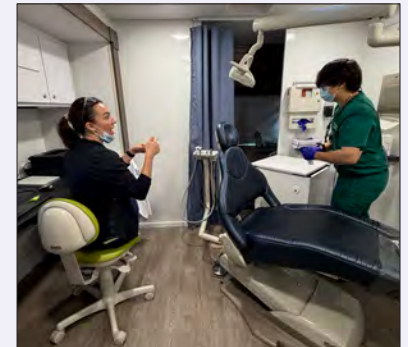
Madison Mascagni (left) and Victoria Boraski ensure their patient's comfort with an overhead TV streaming children's programming.

After months of planning, licensing, and coordination, LSUSD learners began seeing patients on the bus in summer 2025. The unit has since traveled throughout Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard Parishes, with plans to expand further through school and community-based partnerships. While the bus operates as a fully equipped dental operator, its greatest impact may be what it offers beyond clinical care.

"Getting the students out of the clinic and onto a bus that is in the community has, I think, opened their eyes to the needs in our area," Dr. Roberts said. "You never know who's going to be in your chair."

For residents, the experience has strengthened both clinical confidence and communication skills. Resident Emily Rutherford noted, "Every time we come to the bus, we end up learning new things and learning about behavior management. It's a small space, so we definitely have to control our environment a lot more."

Resident Victoria Boraski echoed that sentiment, noting that because the bus has only one nitrous oxide unit—allowing just one provider to use it at a time—clinicians must often rely on other techniques to help patients feel at ease. "You can practice your other advanced behavior management techniques to help keep the kids relaxed and not scared or anxious," she explained.



Emily Rutherford (left) and Ahn-Tuan Nguyen prepare the exam area for the next patient.

Fourth-year dental students rotating on the bus see the experience as equally valuable. Ahn-Tuan Nguyen shared, "This setting is a lot more intimate, so we get to learn more from the residents and get to know the patients better." Madison Mascagni, on her first day aboard, added, "It's fun to get outside of the pediatric clinic and do something different, and it's been great so far."

By meeting families where they are, the Department of Pediatric Dentistry is reinforcing that early dental care matters, and meaningful training happens both inside and outside the classroom. As the tooth bus continues its route, it carries not only dental equipment—but the next generation of providers learning to serve with skill, adaptability, and purpose. ■

25th, 50th Year DDS Class Reunions Celebrated

Members of two LSUSD classes returned to New Orleans to commemorate milestone reunions. The Doctor of Dental Surgery Class of 2001 (left) celebrated its 25-year reunion on April 11 at Flamingo A-Go-Go, followed by the Class of 1976 (right), which marked its 50-year reunion on April 18 at the Southern Yacht Club. ■



LSUSD Endodontics Makes Strong Showing at AAE 2026

The LSUSD Department of Endodontics made a memorable impact at the American Association of Endodontists (AAE) Annual Meeting, held April 15–18, 2026, in Salt Lake City. All three full-time faculty members, eight endodontic residents, and four dental students attended the conference together.

Five residents—Drs. Max Baran, Kyle Gaudet, Rachel Healy, Joon Koh, and Maggie Wang—and dental student Madeline Raymond presented poster clinics highlighting their research.

A microsurgical lecture by internationally renowned endodontist Dr. Mahmoud Torabinejad featured an LSU connection. Dr. Torabinejad discussed a microsurgical case treated by Dr. Chip Simon, former AAE President and LSUSD Clinical Assistant Professor, and referenced a publication co-authored by Dr. Meric Kazandag, LSU's Preclinical Endodontics Director. Dr. Torabinejad also presented research comparing diagnostic decisions made by Diplomates of the American Board of Endodontics with AI platforms. Dr. Fred McMullen, LSUSD Endodontics Department Head, was among the participating Diplomates in the study.

The meeting also included an LSU Endodontic Alumni Association gathering, welcoming more than 40 alumni spanning graduating classes from 1983 to 2025. Alumni, students, and residents shared stories, mentorship, laughter, and even a few joyful tears—proving once again that while the education gained at LSU is invaluable, the relationships formed are truly priceless. ■



LSUSD faculty, residents, and students attending the 2026 AAE Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City.

ADVANCED EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS:

Periodontics

■ Gupta Wins First Place at Rapid Research Competition

Fourth-year dental student Chris Sansar Gupta earned first place in the **AADOCR NSRG 411 Rapid Research Competition** for his presentation, "Impact of Peri-implantitis on Adjacent Implants: A Cross-sectional Analysis." Held March 25-28, 2026 in San Diego during the **IADR/AADOCR/CADR General Session & Exhibition**, the competition highlights predoctoral dental students' ability to communicate research to a non-specialist audience. Gupta's first-place finish represents a notable national achievement for LSUSD and our Department of Periodontics. Dr. Eswar Kandaswamy, LSUSD Associate Professor of Periodontics, served as mentor to the project. Contributing authors are Jeanne



Chris Sansar Gupta

St. Germain, RDH, LSUSD Periodontics Instructor; Dr. Vinayak Joshi, LSUSD Associate Professor of Periodontics; Dr. Qingzhao Yu, Associate Dean for Research and Amjila Bam, Biostatistics PhD student, LSU Health New Orleans School of Public Health; and Dr. Vivek Thumbigere-Math, Assistant Professor of Periodontics, University of Maryland School of Dentistry.

■ Perio Review Course Poised to Reach Milestone Year

The 49th Annual LSU Periodontics Review Course was held in January, continuing a nearly five-decade tradition of preparing generations of periodontists for board certification and professional success. Attracting participants from across the country, the course provides an in-depth review of periodontal concepts, clinical decision-making, and exam

readiness within a rigorous, supportive learning environment. As the course looks ahead to its **milestone 50th anniversary in January 2027**, what sets the LSU Perio Review apart is the strong and ongoing involvement of LSUSD alumni, many of whom return to share their expertise, clinical experience, and insights with current residents and participants. This culture of mentorship and professional collaboration underscores LSUSD's commitment to community, continuity, and national leadership in periodontal education. For more information about the 2027 course, call **504-941-8193** or email **CDE@lsuhsc.edu**.

■ Unique Microsurgery Course Held Annually

The LSU Advanced Education Program in Periodontics is one of only two in the U.S. to host a **Periodontal Microsurgery Course**, distinguishing LSUSD as a national leader in advanced periodontal education. Held annually each January, the course trains residents using surgical microscopes to develop the fine motor control and visual acuity essential for microsurgical procedures—resulting in smaller, more precise incisions, reduced tissue trauma, and faster healing for patients. Residents begin with tabletop microsurgical exercises to build foundational skills before progressing to clinical application under the guidance of experienced periodontics faculty. The course also emphasizes proper ergonomics, demonstrating how microscope-assisted surgery promotes healthier posture and reduces long-term musculoskeletal strain, an important consideration for career longevity in dentistry. ■



Periodontal residents in microsurgery training.



Dash into Dentistry Provides Hands-On Career Exploration for High School Students

On March 3, LSUSD welcomed 37 high school students from Central Louisiana for the Dash into Dentistry event, an immersive, hands-on experience introducing potential healthcare professionals to the world of dentistry.

The high schoolers explored our simulation labs, tried their hand at dental activities, toured the campus, and connected with current students and faculty.

Dash into Dentistry is organized by a committee of faculty and staff led by Dr. Nicholas Mosca, Associate Professor of Clinical Diagnostic Sciences, through a partnership with the Central Louisiana Area Health Education Center (CLAHEC), a community-based nonprofit that works to improve access to quality healthcare across a 17-parish region by

connecting students, healthcare professionals, and local communities.

CLAHEC offers health-career exploration programs, supports training and continuing education for medical professionals, and partners with organizations to provide community health education and services.

Dr. John Gallo, LSUSD Dean, opened the day with welcoming and encouraging remarks before participants rotated through campus tours, demonstrations in the digital dentistry lab, and hands-on activities—including chalk carving and sealant application led by student volunteers.

In the afternoon, dental, dental hygiene, and dental laboratory technology students joined in a panel discussion, offering

practical advice, candid reflections, and insights into their educational experiences.

The day concluded with administrators and program directors presenting overviews of each academic program, including admissions requirements and application processes.

“We received very positive feedback in our post-event survey. While the success of the event was a collective effort, our student volunteers especially stood out, patiently guiding participants through the hands-on activities and offering candid, thoughtful insights about pursuing a career in dentistry,” Dr. Mosca said. “Their information and influence clearly resonated with the high school students.” ■

Alumni: Stay Connected with LSUSD by Sharing Updates, Achievements, Reunions

Planning a Class Reunion? Send Us Details and Request a Party Box!

If you're planning a reunion for your graduating class, let us know! LSUSD's Office of Alumni & Community Affairs can help spread the word through our social media and emails.

We'll also send you a party box—a curated collection of branded swag, including cups, beads, koozies, pom poms, and napkins, to help you elevate your celebration and bring the Tiger pride!



Class Reunion Party Box

Send details including the program, class year, date(s), location, and contact person's information to ds-alumni@lsuhsc.edu and we can help your class reconnect and add flair to your event!

Keep Your Contact Information Current

Did you move, change jobs, or update your personal or business contact details? We want to stay in touch! Keeping your contact information current ensures you receive LSUSD updates, invitations, and opportunities tailored for our alumni community. **Update today!**

Celebrate Your Success: Be Featured on LSUSD Social Media

Our alumni are doing amazing things, and we'd love to celebrate you! Whether you've earned a recent award, reached a professional milestone, completed a degree, launched a business, given back to your community, or experienced another exciting, newsworthy moment—we want to know.

Alumni are invited to email a brief update and photo showcasing a recent accomplishment, accolade, or meaningful life event to ds-alumni@lsuhsc.edu. Selected submissions may be featured on LSUSD's social media platforms to inspire current students, fellow alumni, and the community.

Help us highlight the lasting impact of an LSUSD education and show the incredible paths our graduates take! ■

LSUSD License Plates Available at Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles

Did you know you can show your school spirit with an LSUSD license plate? Available through the Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles, these specialty plates support LSUSD's Rural Track Scholars Program, which aims to expand access to dental care across Louisiana.

Order yours today! For more information, call 504-941-8120 or email ds-alumni@lsuhsc.edu. ■





Our Leaders Choose to Be Involved and Are in the Room When Decisions Are Made



Annette Droddy

By Annette Droddy Executive Director, LDA

During COVID times in 2020, our then president Dr. Trey Carlton decided that we would do our best to help ALL dentists during the pandemic in the hopes that some of those nonmember dentists would realize the value of the LDA and join. His plan was good!

One of those dentists who came back shared with me that the first time he was able to attend his component meeting, he was nervous. He had never been and he thought that it would be competitive and cut throat since all the dental offices had been closed and because he had been a nonmember for so long.

He said he quickly realized that value. Dentists weren't there to compete, but instead to compare notes and share successes (like where they bought PPE) and their failures (such as where NOT to purchase PPE) during such a tumultuous time.

It wasn't what he'd imagined a professional group to be. It wasn't about proving expertise—it was about pooling it. And somewhere between shared failures and small wins, it stopped feeling like a room full of competitors and started feeling like a team. That's what the LDA should be to all of you—YOUR team. Your place to go when you don't know where else to go.

The leaders of the LDA step into rooms where decisions are made. They engage in conversations that shape the future of dentistry. And most importantly, they choose to be involved. That choice matters, because organized dentistry does not move forward on its own. It moves forward because of leaders—people willing to raise their hand, step up, and lead with purpose.

When I testify before the legislature, it makes a difference when I say that I represent nearly 75% of the dentists in the state of Louisiana. This has been very important in past years in fighting for the profession.

2026 is a long legislative session that began March 9. We've secured funding already in the LA Department of Health budget for both the regular dental Medicaid Quality Improvement program and the Special Needs Quality Improvement program. Fingers crossed for no cuts to the LDH budget that would impact us before June 1. Dr. Don Donaldson is a major force in our Medicaid efforts.

Senator Mike Fesi once again filed a statewide fluoride ban bill. Once again we are fighting the ban or trying to at least amend it in order to keep the 38% fluoridation we have today.

There are approximately 50 bills that the LDA is closely monitoring this session. We've also filed a virtual credit card bill that is an amended version of a bill we passed in 2019. It would automatically have dentists opted out of virtual credit cards and if a dentist chooses to accept the 2.5 to 5% charge, they can opt in.

Currently, you can opt out but some of the insurance companies are making dental offices opt out EVERY year or they start sending the virtual cards again.

We are also working with the Cancer Advocacy Group of Louisiana (CAGLA) on their bill related to providing some medical insurance coverage for medically necessary dental extractions for an insured patient diagnosed with cancer. Because the affordable care act doesn't allow for additional mandates for insurance companies (in other words the state would have to cover the costs) we are assisting CAGLA in finding the best option possible to achieve this coverage. ■



From left, testifying on behalf of SB155, the CAGLA dental bill, were Senator Kirk Talbot (chair of Senate Insurance), Dr. Elizabeth Heirtzler (dentist), and Dr. Patrick Stagg (oncologist from CAGLA).

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