LSU Health NEW ORLEANS
School of Dentistry

ALUMNI & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

# Newsletter

SUMMER 2026

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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

*Dr. John Gallo*

As I reflect on the past several months, I am struck by the energy, dedication, and sense of community that continue to define our school. Every day, I have the privilege of watching students grow, faculty innovate, staff go above and beyond, and alumni make meaningful contributions in their communities. These moments serve as a constant reminder of how fortunate we are to be part of such an extraordinary profession.

This issue highlights many reasons to celebrate. We recognize faculty members whose leadership, accomplishments, and promotions reflect their unwavering commitment to excellence and to the future of our school. We also look back on a memorable commencement ceremony and celebrate the achievements of our newest graduates as they begin the next chapter of their professional journeys.

As we honor these milestones, we are also looking ahead. You will find updates on our renovation projects, which continue to transform the spaces where learning, research, and patient care take place. These enhancements represent important investments in our future and in the success of everyone who walks through our doors.

We are excited for this year's Alumni Day and hope you will make plans to join us. The event will feature a welcome reception on Thursday evening, two exceptional speakers, and updates on the exciting progress of our school. It is a valuable opportunity to connect with fellow graduates, faculty, and friends while celebrating the achievements and impact of our alumni community, and we encourage you to register and be part of this special event.

Looking toward the future, we are excited to welcome our newest students. As you browse the class photos, I hope you share our enthusiasm for this talented group of future dental professionals. They bring fresh perspectives, ambitious goals, and tremendous potential, and we are proud to welcome them into our School family.

Thank you for your continued support, partnership, and pride in our institution. Together, we celebrate the people, programs, and achievements that make our community so special.

John R. Gallo, III, DDS, MS

**John R. Gallo, III, DDS, MS**

*Dean, LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry*

# LSUSD Class of 2026 Celebrated in Commencement Ceremonies

The LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry held its Spring 2026 Pre-Commencement Ceremony at the UNO Lakefront Arena on May 13, honoring 124 graduates: 80 in dentistry, 37 in dental hygiene, and seven in dental laboratory technology.

"We are here to recognize all of our graduates who have worked so hard and accomplished so much. Our programs are demanding and challenging, and to successfully complete these programs takes determination, dedication, and sacrifice. As such, we could not be prouder of the graduates sitting here today," said Dr. John Gallo, Dean (shown above), who presided over the ceremony.

*Dr. Gary DeWitt*

Dr. Gary DeWitt, Clinical Assistant Professor, LSUSD Class of 1979 alumnus, and LSUSD Alumni Association President, gave an inspiring keynote address. DeWitt emphasized that dentistry is a collaborative profession, blending science, artistry, and human connection, and urged graduates to commit to lifelong learning as the field continues to evolve. He underscored the importance of compassionate, patient-centered care alongside ethics, trust, and professional engagement, encouraging graduates to give back through service, to mentor others, and to stay connected to LSUSD.

"The most successful professionals are not those who know everything today, but those who remain curious tomorrow," DeWitt explained. "This moment, and tomorrow, are not the finish line. It's the starting point of a career that will challenge you, inspire you, and ultimately define the impact that you create."

School leaders and faculty gathered on stage to present graduates with medallions and hoods, to share where they will practice, and to recognize several graduates with honors and awards of excellence in academics, leadership, service, and more—view the list.

Many members of the Class of 2026 are choosing to keep their skills and expertise close to home. Graduates of the Dental Laboratory Technology (DLT) program have secured positions in Louisiana and Mississippi, where they will contribute to the oral healthcare and dental laboratory workforce. Similarly, all 37 graduates of the Dental Hygiene (DH) program are entering practice in Louisiana and neighboring Texas, helping expand access to preventive and patient-centered oral healthcare throughout the region.

Among Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) graduates, approximately 76% are beginning their careers in states including Louisiana, Texas, South Carolina, Georgia, Massachusetts, Florida, Oklahoma, Tennessee, North Carolina,

***"Commencement" continued on page 4***

***"Commencement" continued from page 3***

Alabama, and Arkansas, with many choosing to remain in Louisiana and across the Gulf South. About 24% of DDS graduates have been accepted into advanced education and specialty training programs in Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Jersey, Washington, Mississippi, and the U.S. Navy, where they will continue their professional development before returning to serve patients and communities. The graduates will be attending residencies in General Practice, Advanced Education in General Dentistry, Pediatric Dentistry, Prosthodontics, Orthodontics, Endodontics, Periodontics, and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

Graduates selected faculty members as recipients of the Golden Apple Excellence in Teaching Award, a special honor presented annually to one faculty member in each program—DLT, DH, and DDS—recognizing teaching effectiveness, a deep commitment to student success, meaningful mentorship, and exemplary role modeling.

Julio Zavala, DLT Program Director and Associate Professor of Clinical Prosthodontics, was selected as the Golden Apple Award recipient for the Program in DLT. Students described Zavala as a dedicated mentor who invests significant time and energy into their growth and development and challenges them to reach their full potential.

For the Program in Dental Hygiene, Tricia Barker, Interim Program Director and Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry, was selected as the Golden Apple Award recipient. Graduates praised her kindness, positivity, support, and dedication, distinguishing her as an exceptional educator and a trusted role model.

Representing the DDS program, Dr. Maurice "Moe" Lonergan, Assistant Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry, was named the Golden Apple Award recipient. Students recognized Dr. Lonergan for encouraging growth, challenging them, and genuinely investing in their personal and professional success.

The Allen A. Copping Excellence in Teaching Award was presented to Dr. A.C. Liles, III, Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry. The award honors one outstanding faculty member in each of LSU Health New Orleans' six schools. Students and colleagues who nominated Dr. Liles described him as a compassionate educator who supports students as both clinicians and individuals, fosters confidence, encourages growth, and sets an example of what every dentist should strive to be—kind, approachable, and optimistic.

Amanda Bryant, DDS Class of 2026 President, delivered reflections on the challenges, growth, and teamwork that defined students' experiences at LSUSD. She thanked family, faculty, staff, and fellow graduates for their support and emphasized the importance of collaboration among dentists, dental hygienists, and dental laboratory technicians in providing exceptional patient care.

"Although we each serve a different role, we share the same goal, caring for patients and helping improve their lives through their smiles," Bryant said. "The best dentistry doesn't happen alone. It happens when we trust and respect each other and work together. This journey has forever changed us. It has made us stronger and more aware of the responsibility we now hold."

The ceremony concluded with remarks from Dr. Sandra Andrieu, Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, who commented on the transformative power of education, gratitude, and lifelong learning. She applauded the faculty, staff, families, and friends who supported the graduates' journeys and reminded graduates that their degrees are both an earned achievement and a gift that will create opportunities throughout their lives.

"No one can ever take this education from you. This gift will empower you, expand your horizons, and enrich your lives in ways you cannot yet fully imagine," Dr. Andrieu emphasized. "Education prepares you to become thoughtful and ethical leaders. Education drives progress and innovation, allowing each of you to make meaningful contributions to society. Education helps you discover and fulfill your potential."

On May 14, graduates from all six LSU Health New Orleans schools reconvened at the UNO Lakefront Arena for the 153rd Spring Commencement, with City of New Orleans Mayor Helena Moreno delivering the keynote address. View the complete list of LSU Health New Orleans 2026 graduates.

Special thanks to the members of LSUSD's Office of Student Affairs for their thoughtful planning and hard work in coordinating the ceremonies. ■

## 2026 EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD RECIPIENTS

### Golden Apple Awards

Julio Zavala

Tricia Barker

Dr. Maurice "Moe" Lonergan

### Allen A. Copping Award

Dr. A.C. Liles, III

# Advanced Education Graduates Honored at Certificate Ceremony

Graduating residents of LSUSD's Advanced Education Programs in Endodontics, General Practice Residency, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Orthodontics, Pediatric Dentistry, Periodontics, and Prosthodontics were recognized in a Certificate Ceremony on June 19 at the LSU Health New Orleans Human Development Center.

Dr. Paul Armbruster, Director of Advanced Education, presided over the ceremony, which included remarks from Dr. John Gallo, Dean and Dr. Sandra Andrieu, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Each year, three graduating residents are recognized for excellence in research as judged at the Advanced Education Annual Research Day. The first place award is the Dr. Robert B. Brannon Research Award, given to a resident whose work emulates the legacy of Dr. Brannon, an internationally distinguished oral and maxillofacial pathologist, former head of LSUSD Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, and decorated U.S. Air Force colonel who dedicated his career to advancing research, education, patient care, and forensic dentistry.

Dr. Zezhang Wen, Professor of Oral and Craniofacial Biology (left in each photo), presented the 2026 research awards.

**1ST PLACE**
**Dr. Robert B. Brannon Research Award**

**Dr. Hallie Moehring**
***Orthodontics***

Pre- and Post-Treatment Comparison: Mesiodistal Tooth-Width and Bolton Ratios across Three Orthodontic Software Platforms

*Dr. Hallie Moehring (right)*

**2ND PLACE**

**Dr. Daeoo Lee**
***Periodontics***

Development and Validation of Orientation Device for Accurate Implant Placement: In Vitro Study

*Dr. Daeoo Lee (right)*

**3RD PLACE**

**Dr. Mohamed Aref**
***Prosthodontics***

Effect of Intraoral Scanner and Scan Pattern of the Trueness of Extraoral Complete Arch Implant-Supported Prosthesis Scan

*Dr. Mohamed Aref (right)*

View the complete list of LSU Health New Orleans 2026 graduates. ■

# ADVANCED EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS: Orthodontics

## Graduates Honored at Banquet

The Advanced Education Program in Orthodontics Class of 2026 was honored and welcomed into the LSUSD Alumni Association at a banquet on June 20 at the Four Seasons Hotel New Orleans.

*Pictured from left are Dr. Richard Ballard, Professor of Orthodontics; Drs. Matthew Stumpff, Kaylin Ware, Shohreh Ghassemi, and Hallie Moehring, Orthodontics Class of 2026; and Dr. Paul Armbruster, Department Head of Orthodontics and Director of Advanced Education.*

## Full-Time Faculty Position Available

LSUSD is hiring a full-time, tenure track assistant or associate professor in the Department of Orthodontics. We are seeking an outstanding educator who will engage in didactic pre-clinical and clinical instruction for undergraduate dental, dental hygiene, and postgraduate students, as well as research activity. An opportunity to participate in the School's faculty practice is also available. Read the full job description.

## Department Adds Technology

The Department of Orthodontics has acquired a second Voxel Falshforge 3D printer, allowing greater efficiency in workflow for research, instruction, and quality patient care.

## Graduates Produce Research

Two 2026 graduates presented their research at the 2026 IADR/AADOCR General Session in March:

- **Dr. Matthew Stumpff** — Shear Bond Strength of Different Size of Aligner Attachments onto Enamel, 3Y Zirconia, and Lithium Disilicate Surfaces
- **Dr. Kaylin Ware** — Investigation of the Preventive Effects of In-Office Varnishes Compared to Curodont Repair on Enamel Demineralization

Alumni who recently published include the following:

- **Dr. Skylar Steel** (2022) — Evaluation and Comparison of Demineralization Changes Utilizing the Canary Caries Detection System and Various Toothpastes on Incipient Enamel Lesions: In Vitro Study — *Journal of European Oral Research*, 2026 January.
- **Dr. Jill Huffman** (2025) — The Effect of pH on the Mechanical Properties of Beta Titanium Orthodontic Archwires — *Journal of European Oral Research*, 2026 January.
- **Dr. Hope Grandy** (2025) — The Effects of Rinsing and Curing Conditions on the Biocompatibility of 3D-Printed Resin Orthodontic Brackets — *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics,* March 2026.

## Classes of 2027, 2028 Welcomed

New and second-year orthodontic residents were welcomed to LSUSD for the start of the new academic year in July. ■

*First-year orthodontic residents shown in the front row from left are Drs. John "JT" Varytimidis, Brooke Haydel, Ansley Clark, and Tyler Divis. Second-year orthodontic residents shown in the back row from left are Drs. William Dalton Ford, Sophia Cain, Olivia Wilks, and Sarah Dawson.*

# ALUMNI Day 2026

LSU Health NEW ORLEANS School of Dentistry

## OCTOBER 22-23

**1100 Florida Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70119**

**Thursday, October 22**
**Evening Alumni Welcome Reception & Awards**

Reconnect and celebrate with fellow alumni, faculty, and friends as we honor our shared history where it all started. 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

**Friday, October 23**
**Full-Day Continuing Education Program**

Sign-in & Breakfast 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. ▪ Dr. Carstensen 8:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Lunch 11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. ▪ Dr. Cho 1:15 p.m. - 4 p.m.

## REGISTER NOW!

**tinyurl.com/yr93srp8**

*Includes five (5) C.E. clinical credits (lecture), continental breakfast, box lunch, and alumni reception.*

| | Early Bird *Until 9/15* | Regular *9/16-10/15* | Late *After 10/15* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dentist | $325 | $340 | $365 |
| Hygenist, Lab Tech | $200 | $215 | $240 |
| Assistant, Other | $115 | $130 | $155 |

## Dr. Steve Carstensen

is a nationally and internationally recognized leader in dental sleep medicine, holding multiple fellowships and diplomate status with the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine. Based in Bellevue, WA, he has treated sleep apnea and snoring since 1998 and serves as an ADA consultant while leading its Children's Airway Initiative. An educator, author, and co-founder of *Dental Sleep Practice Magazine,* he lectures globally, teaches at the Pankey Institute, and contributed to *A Clinician's Handbook for Dental Sleep Medicine.* He received the 2023 AADSM Distinguished Service Award.

### The Primary Care Dentist's Role in Sleep and Breathing

*This lecture examines the role of dental professionals in identifying, evaluating, and managing sleep-related breathing disorders. Participants will explore the relationship between dental conditions and sleep-disordered breathing, including the impact on treatment planning and patient outcomes. The course will review diagnostic pathways, patient communication strategies, and therapeutic options such as oral appliance therapy, with consideration of associated risks and complications.*

**Learning Objectives**
After completing this activity, the learner will be able to:

- **Recognize** the impact of sleep-related breathing disorders on oral health and dental treatment planning
- **Discuss** appropriate evaluation, diagnosis, and referral pathways for patients with suspected sleep apnea
- **Implement** basic principles of oral appliance therapy and identify potential complications

### Early Proactive Intervention Sets Up Optimal Breathing for Life

*This lecture focuses on the role of early intervention in establishing healthy breathing patterns and supporting craniofacial development. Participants will examine how structural and behavioral factors influence airway function across the lifespan. The course will address identification of patients with compromised nasal breathing, appropriate referral and treatment strategies, and practical approaches to improving airway health in both pediatric and adult populations.*

**Learning Objectives**
After completing this activity, the learner will be able to:

- **Evaluate** nasal function and identify patients who may benefit from intervention
- **Explain** the impact of breathing patterns on craniofacial growth and development in children
- **Demonstrate** patient education strategies to support improved breathing patterns across age groups

## MORE INFORMATION

**504-941-8193 ▪ CDE@lsuhsc.edu**

## Dr. Aaron (Seok Hwan) Cho

is a board-certified prosthodontist and Chair and Associate Professor at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry, with prior leadership roles at Texas A&M College of Dentistry. He trained at Seoul National University and Texas A&M and has received honors including the Stanley D. Tylman Research Award and the Claude R. Baker Faculty Award. He lectures internationally on digital dentistry, implant prosthodontics, and All-on-X full-arch rehabilitation, and developed the D.E.A.R. (Digital Engineering–Analog Reflection) concept to enhance treatment predictability.

### 4 Strategies for CAD/CAM Fundamentals for Digital Chairside Workflow: Clinical Strategy for Digital Dentistry

*This lecture provides a structured, clinically focused introduction to CAD/CAM dentistry and its application in chairside workflows. Participants will be guided through the key components of digital dentistry, including data acquisition, design, material selection, and fabrication processes. Emphasis will be placed on clinical decision-making, workflow integration, and practical application rather than software-specific techniques. Current and emerging technologies, including advanced CAD/CAM systems will also be reviewed to support evidence-based adoption in clinical practice.*

**Learning Objectives**
After completing this activity, the learner will be able to:

- **Describe** fundamental CAD/CAM concepts and terminology relevant to clinical dentistry
- **Outline** the steps involved in a complete chairside digital workflow
- **Assess** the clinical applications, advantages, and limitations of current and emerging digital technologies

### D.E.A.R. Full-Arch Digital Impression: Digital Engineering–Analog Reflection for Predictable Implant Prosthodontics

*This lecture provides a comprehensive, clinically oriented review of full-arch implant digital impression techniques. Participants will examine various digital systems, including scan body workflows, marker-based systems, photogrammetry, and hybrid approaches. The presentation will highlight key clinical considerations such as accuracy, efficiency, and workflow integration. The D.E.A.R. (Digital Engineering–Analog Reflection) concept will be introduced as a framework for combining digital technologies with established prosthodontic principles to improve treatment predictability.*

**Learning Objectives**
After completing this activity, the learner will be able to:

- **Classify** current full-arch implant digital impression systems and workflows
- **Compare** the clinical performance, advantages, and limitations of different digital impression techniques
- **Apply** principles of digital impression workflows to enhance predictability in implant prosthodontic treatment

ADA CERP® Continuing Education Recognition Program

*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.*

# A New Chapter for Our School: An Update from Dean John Gallo

*The Administration Building is undergoing window replacement and façade updates.*

I'm excited to share an update on something many of us have been looking forward to for a long time: the major renovations and upgrades to our School have officially begun.

Thanks to a historic investment of approximately $100 million from the Louisiana Legislature and LSU Health New Orleans, we are embarking on the most significant transformation of our facilities in more than 50 years. To say we are excited would be an understatement.

Over the next three years, you'll see exciting changes across our campus designed to improve the experience for our students, faculty, staff, residents, and patients. While construction will occasionally bring some inconveniences, the end result will be a modernized, more efficient, and more welcoming environment for everyone.

## Projects Currently Underway

Several key projects are already in progress or will begin very soon, including:

- Renovation of the 2nd floor clinic dispensary and waiting room, with similar upgrades to the 3rd and 4th floor areas to follow.
- Construction of a new Central Lab on the 2nd floor.
- Return of the Screening Clinic on the 1st floor of the Clinic Building.
- Creation of a new Wellness Center/Gym.
- Replacement of windows on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Administration Building to improve energy efficiency and prevent leaks.
- Complete renovation of Auditorium C, creating a modern learning environment for future generations.
- Upgraded A/V technology in Auditoriums A and B, which is already complete. New seating will be installed at the end of the academic year.

## What's Coming Next

Additional projects scheduled to begin over the next several months and years include:

- Replacement of flooring in the 3rd floor clinic.
- Renovation of the 2nd floor clinic.
- Full renovation of the DLT Lab on the 3rd floor.
- Renovations to the 5th floor of the Clinic Building.
- Comprehensive update to the library, creating a modern learning space.
- Renovation of the 2nd floor of the Administration Building.
- Development of a new digital dental lab.

## Looking Ahead

Additional future projects include the complete renovation of the 4th floor clinics, updates for the 6th and 8th floors, and improvements to the Postgraduate Prosthodontics Lab, among other initiatives currently in planning and design.

*Construction of the Screening Clinic in progress.*

Our goal is to complete these renovations within the next three years, and there are other projects in development that may not yet appear on the current list. As plans are finalized, we will continue to share updates along the way.

This is an exciting time for our School. These investments reflect confidence in our mission and our future, and they will help ensure that we continue providing an outstanding educational experience and exceptional patient care for decades to come. Thank you for your patience and flexibility as we work through the construction process—we can't wait to see the finished result. ■

*No more orange chairs! Auditorium C overhaul is underway.*

# LSUSD Welcomes New Students: First-Year DDS, DH, and DLT Classes

During July and August, LSUSD opened its doors to first-year dental, dental hygiene, and dental laboratory technology students.

We're excited to have them join us and wish them success on their journey through our programs! ■

## DOCTOR OF DENTAL SURGERY ▪ CLASS OF 2030

## DENTAL HYGIENE ALEXANDRIA ▪ CLASS OF 2028

## DENTAL HYGIENE ▪ NEW ORLEANS ▪ CLASS OF 2028

## DENTAL LABORATORY TECHNOLOGY CLASS OF 2028

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: Dental Hygiene

## Millon Receives Scholarship

**Ashley D. Millon**, RDH, MSHCM, Assistant Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry, has been selected as a recipient of the ADS-DANB-DALE Foundation Andrew Whitehead Education and Certification Scholarship. As part of this recognition, she will receive access to the Dental Infection Prevention and Control Certificate, providing foundational education in infection prevention and control.

## Faculty Contribute Journal Articles

In *Dimensions of Dental Hygiene*, **Angie Marshall-Reech**, RDH, BSDH, MEd, CH-ONC, Assistant Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry, and **Catrina Lanza**, RDH, BSDH, MHA, Assistant Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry, published "When Cancer Treatment Affects the Mouth" in the May/June 2026 issue.

In addition, **Ashley D. Millon** authored the article "Why Research Skills Are the Clinical Superpower in Dental Hygiene," published in the July/August 2026 issue of *Dimensions of Dental Hygiene*. ■

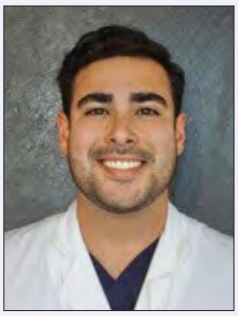
*Pictured from left are Catrina Lanza, Ashley Millon, and Angie Marshall-Reech.*

# Five Faculty Members Earn Promotions

Congratulations to faculty who were promoted and/or awarded tenure as of July 1:

- **Catrina Lanza** has been promoted to Assistant Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry – Dental Hygiene.
- **Dr. Sherrod "Shade" Quin** has been promoted to Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry.
- **Dr. Earl Peter Park** has been promoted to Associate Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery with tenure.
- **Dr. Vinayak Joshi** has received tenure as an Associate Professor of Periodontics.
- **Dr. Amir Nejat** has received tenure as an Associate Professor of Prosthodontics. ■

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:
# Dental Laboratory Technology



*Dr. Jorge Rodriguez*

## How a DLT Degree Became the Foundation for One LSUSD Graduate's Career in Dentistry

***by Dr. Jorge Rodriguez, DLT '20, DDS '24***

When I first enrolled in the Dental Laboratory Technology (DLT) program at LSUSD, my goal was to become a dentist. I viewed the DLT program as a safety net while I worked toward getting accepted into dental school. Looking back now as a general dentist, I can honestly say that enrolling in the DLT program was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

What I thought would simply be a backup plan became the foundation that shaped the way I practice dentistry today. The DLT program gave me an understanding of dentistry that extends beyond what is typically taught in dental school, especially in fixed and removable prosthodontics. I learned dental terminology, laboratory procedures, material science, the strengths and limitations of restorative materials, and, most importantly, how to think critically through restorative cases.

During dental school, I realized I was learning very similar material again, but from an entirely different perspective. In the DLT program, I learned to think like the technician fabricating the restoration. In dental school, I learned to think like the clinician diagnosing and treating patients. Bringing those two perspectives together gave me a much more complete understanding of dentistry than I could have gained from either path alone.

Because I already had a strong laboratory foundation, I was able to spend less time mastering laboratory concepts and more time focusing on my clinical procedures, patient care, and didactic education. Instead of only understanding how to prepare a tooth or take an impression, I understood what happened after the case left my hands and how my clinical decisions directly affected the final restoration. I was fortunate to complete many of my cases as both the treating dental student and the dental laboratory technician. Looking back, that experience is something I am especially proud of because it gave me a deeper understanding of both the clinical and laboratory aspects of patient care.

Now, two years into practicing as a general dentist, I appreciate the value of that education more than ever. Every day I find myself drawing from both my laboratory and clinical training. Understanding how restorations are designed, fabricated, and adjusted has strengthened my treatment planning, improved my communication with dental laboratories, and given me greater confidence when restoring my patients. I truly believe that combining those two perspectives has allowed my clinical skills to flourish.

I also gained an immense respect for the profession of dental laboratory technology itself. DLT was far more than a stepping stone to dental school for me. It is an outstanding career that requires precision, artistry, critical thinking, and technical expertise. The work dental laboratory technicians perform is essential to the successful treatment of countless patients, and I have an even greater appreciation for that now that I practice as a dentist.

I truly believe every dentist with an interest in prosthodontics or restorative dentistry would benefit from spending time in a dental laboratory. There is simply no substitute for understanding how restorations are created and how clinical decisions influence the final result. More broadly, I encourage anyone interested in the dental field to consider the DLT program. Whether your goal is to become a dental laboratory technician, a dentist, or another member of the dental team, the knowledge, discipline, and perspective you gain are invaluable.

It is a privilege to say that I am both a DLT and DDS graduate of the LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry. Those experiences have shaped not only the dentist I have become but also the professional I strive to be every day. I will always be proud to represent both programs and forever grateful for the education, mentorship, and lifelong friendships I gained at LSUSD. Looking back, what I once considered a safety net became the catalyst for my career and one of the greatest blessings of my professional life. If I had the opportunity to do it all over again, I would choose the DLT program without hesitation.

## DLT Application Period Open for Fall 2027

LSUSD is accepting DLT applications for the Fall 2027 semester **now through January 31, 2027**. This is an opportunity for those passionate about blending healthcare, science, artistry, and technology to prepare for a rewarding career in creating the dental prosthetics and appliances that improve patients' lives.

The class size is 12 students, offering a personalized learning environment for individual growth, hands-on skill development, and professional mentorship. Classes begin in mid-August 2027, starting a two-year program that leads to an Associate of Science (AS) degree.

To learn more about the application process, email ds-admissions@lsuhsc.edu or call **504-941-8124**. ■

# College Students Explore Dentistry through Annual Summer Enrichment Program

Each year, the Student National Dental Association (SNDA) chapter at LSUSD welcomes college students interested in pursuing careers in dentistry to its annual Summer Enrichment Program. Held July 11-12, this year's program combined hands-on learning experiences with valuable resources designed to help participants become more competitive dental school applicants.

Throughout the two-day program, students received guidance on the dental school admissions process, student life, and access to a full DAT Bootcamp subscription. Participants also engaged in open and honest discussions about overcoming academic and professional challenges on the path to a career in dentistry.

This year's cohort represented a diverse group of institutions, including Howard University, the University of Alabama, Louisiana State University (New Orleans and Baton Rouge), Florida State College at Jacksonville, Spelman College, East Carolina University, the University of Houston, and Nicholls State University.

The program's success was made possible through the generosity of LSUSD faculty, community dentists and specialists, and a dedicated group of guest speakers who shared their expertise and experiences.

Taylor Rosen, a third-year dental student and president of LSUSD's SNDA chapter, and Emma Cornejo, a third-year dental student and past chapter president, led the program with support from faculty and staff.

LSUSD extends a special thank you to Dr. Joey Lacoste, founder and CEO of Louisiana Dental Center, whose generosity and continued support help make opportunities like the Summer Enrichment Program possible for aspiring dental professionals. ■

# DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS: Prosthodontics

## Prosthodontics Colleagues Celebrated

The department recently came together to honor **Katherine Mims**, Administrative Coordinator, on her retirement, recognizing her many years of dedicated service to LSUSD and the countless students and colleagues she supported along the way. **La Tonya Dixon** was welcomed as the new Administrative Coordinator. Congratulations and thanks to them for their contributions!

*A recent department gathering celebrated colleagues' accomplishments.*

## Annual Summer Program Helps Students Build Various Skills

The 2026 Department of Prosthodontics **Summer Research Exposure Program** provided an intensive research experience for dental students and prosthodontic residents and was organized by dental student members of the Dental Research Interest Group.

Participants conducted research design, literature review, data collection, laboratory activities, statistical analysis, scientific writing, and scholarly presentation preparation under the mentorship of Dr. Amir H. Nejat, Associate Professor of Prosthodontics; Dr. Xiaoming Xu, Interim Department Head of Oral and Craniofacial Biology; Dr. Yapin Wang, Research Associate; Dr. Richard Ballard, Professor of Orthodontics; and Dr. Paul Armbruster, Department Head of Orthodontics and Director of Advanced Education.

Those involved were rising second-year prosthodontic residents Drs. Zahra Azad, Ahmed Tareq Elghamrawy, and Mohamed Elshengab; rising third-year prosthodontic residents Drs. Alexia Cholakis and Luciana Kawashima; rising second-year dental students Joseph Acierno, Caroline Badeaux, Morgan Buras, Michael Furka, Lily Grigely, Olivia Hupperich, Brooke Nguyen, Britney Rice, Awais Tariq, and Usman Tariq; rising third-year dental students Christopher Acosta, Nathan Bolton, Jillian DeSalle, Alexis Hamilton, and Rivers Singley; and rising fourth-year dental student Andrew Gottsegen.

Research findings from the program will be submitted for presentation at national and international meetings, including the Annual Sessions of the American College of Prosthodontists (ACP) and the AADOCR. Notably, Rivers Singley, a participant in the 2025 Summer Research Exposure Program, received a 2026 AADOCR Bloc Travel Grant for the scientific merit of his abstract developed under the mentorship of Dr. Nejat and presented his research findings at the 2026 AADOCR General Session.

## Faculty Participate in Leadership Training

Congratulations to the following faculty on their leadership development achievements:

- **Dr. Luis Infante**, Associate Professor of Prosthodontics, has been selected for ADEA's **Emerging Academic Leaders** program.
- **Dr. Faye Mascarenhas**, Associate Professor and Director of Advanced Education in Prosthodontics, will begin the **LSU Health New Orleans Leadership Academy** this September.
- **Dr. Alejandro Trevino**, Associate Professor and Assistant Director of Advanced Education in Prosthodontics, and Dr. Shirin Khoynezhad, Interim Department Head of Prosthodontics, will graduate from the **LSU Health New Orleans Leadership Academy** this August.
- **Dr. Shirin Khoynezhad** has joined the **ADEA Leadership Institute**, a year-long program focused on developing future leaders in academic dentistry.

## Khoynezhad Represents LSUSD at National Summit

**Dr. Shirin Khoynezhad** represented LSUSD the historic **Reimagining Dental Education Summit**, held June 11–13, 2026 at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM). The Summit convened leaders from 36 dental schools across the U.S., UK, and Canada alongside representatives from the ADA, ADEA, NIDCR, and AADOCR with the goal was of reimagining dental education for the next 100

*"Prosthodontics" continued on page 14*

***"Prosthodontics" continued from page 13***

years, confronting workforce shortages, gaps in access to care, rising student debt, and disruptive new technologies. Dr. Khoynezhad served on Working Group 3—Academic Career Pathways for Clinical Educators/Scientists—one of six groups tasked with taking action on dentistry's most pressing areas. Dr. Khoynezhad's contributions included co-authorship of a forthcoming manuscript for the *Journal of Dental Education* capturing the group's recommendations. Her participation reflects LSUSD's voice at the table for this once-in-a-generation moment shaping the future of dentistry.

## Journal Club Helps Residents Advance Evidence-Based Education

The Journal Club is a cornerstone of the Advanced Education Program in Prosthodontics, providing residents with the opportunity to stay current with the latest scientific advances while strengthening their critical thinking and presentation skills. Held monthly throughout the academic year, the club consists of nine sessions, each led by a different prosthodontics resident, during which the resident presents a critical assessment of a recently published article from a leading journal. These discussions encourage thoughtful analysis, evidence-based decision-making, meaningful dialogue among residents and faculty, and improved patient care.

*Members of the Journal Club enjoy dinner.*

## Faculty Members Lead Clinical Trials

The Department of Prosthodontics continues to lead and advance innovation in research and patient care through these impactful clinical trials and strategic collaborations with industry partners representing more than $200,000 in external funding:

- **Randomized Prospective Split Mouth Clinical Evaluation of No Needle Dental Anesthesia Compared to Syringe Anesthesia Delivery** — Principal Investigator: Dr. Amir H. Nejat; Co-Investigators: Dr. Eswar Kandaswamy, Dr. Joshi Vinayak, Dr. Adriana Wilson, and Dr. Alika Yu; Sponsor: Henley Transdermal.
- **Effects of Early Loading Protocol on the Survival of the Nobel N1 Implant System: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial"** — Principal Investigator: Dr. Amir H. Nejat; Co-Investigators: Dr. Eswar Kandaswamy, Dr. Panagiotis Dragonas, Dr. Katherine Carmona, Edwin Kee, and Jeanne St. Germain; Sponsor: Nobel Biocare.

## LSUSD Prepares Digital-Ready Prosthodontists

The Advanced Education in Prosthodontics program pairs foundational restorative dentistry training with cutting-edge digital workflows. Residents gain hands-on experience with intraoral scanning, CAD design, guided implant surgery, and 3D printing, preparing them to deliver precise, efficient, and patient-centered care.

**Dr. Mohamed Aref**, a 2026 program graduate, recently demonstrated these technologies (pictured at right):

*Intraoral Scanning*

*Guided Implant Surgery Software*

*3D Printing*

- **Intraoral Scanning:** Advanced digital scanning captures highly accurate images of patients' teeth and oral tissues, improving patient comfort. The resulting digital files serve as the foundation for designing crowns, dentures, implant restorations, and other prosthetic devices.
- **Dental CAD Software:** Clinicians upload patients' intraoral scans into dental CAD software to design crowns, dentures, implants, and other appliances, which allows them to visualize restorations before fabrication and adjust virtually, increasing treatment accuracy and efficiency.
- **Guided Implant Surgery Software:** Combines digital scans and CBCT imaging to plan optimal implant placement before surgery. Custom surgical guides translate the digital plan to the clinical setting, improving precision, predictability, and patient outcomes.
- **3D Printing:** Produces models, surgical guides, dentures, night guards, and provisional restorations, streamlining treatment workflows. ■

# Growing Our Own: Preparing Dentists Who Will Call Rural Louisiana Home

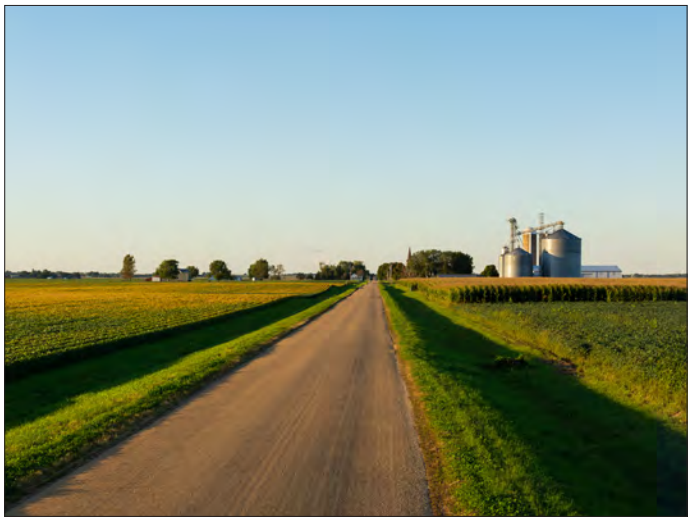
Every parish in Louisiana deserves access to a dentist who understands the community, knows its people, and is committed to building a practice there. That conviction anchors the LSUSD's strategic direction for strengthening the Dental Rural Track Scholars (RTS) Program.

The need is substantial. Louisiana continues to experience a persistent maldistribution of dentists, leaving many rural and underserved communities without adequate access to oral health care. Nationally, rural counties have roughly half as many dentists per capita as urban communities, approximately 33 versus 65 dentists per 100,000 residents. Louisiana has also experienced a net loss of early career dentists to other states in recent years, reinforcing the importance of developing and retaining a workforce that serves Louisiana.

Research points to two particularly important workforce development strategies. The first is recruiting students who have meaningful connections to rural communities, because rural upbringing and personal relationships are strong predictors of rural practice. The second is providing students with substantive community-based clinical experiences that build their confidence, awareness of community needs and resources, and readiness to care for underserved populations.

The Dental RTS Program brings these strategies together. Students with a rural Louisiana upbringing or a demonstrated commitment to underserved communities are encouraged to apply for tuition support made possible through endowed gifts to the LSU Health Foundation. In return, scholars commit to practicing in an approved, high-need community for at least 15 months for each year of tuition support. This service-linked investment helps reduce educational debt while creating a direct pathway from dental school to the communities where dentists are needed.

Through LSUSD's community-based education course, fourth-year dental students will provide supervised care at affiliated safety-net clinics in



New Orleans and Baton Rouge. LSUSD is exploring additional partnerships in other regions of the state, including the Alexandria area. These experiences combine patient care with structured reflection and a deeper understanding of the social and economic factors that shape a community.

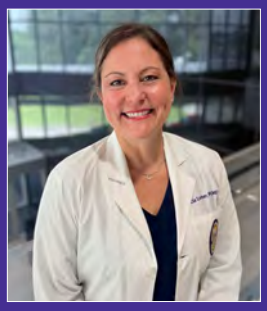
The School recently launched the Rural Dental Scholars Mentorship Program, which pairs each scholar with a practicing rural Louisiana dentist for three to six conversations annually. Mentors share their lived experience with rural practice and provide practical guidance about practice financing, Medicaid participation, professional relationships and the challenges and rewards of small-town dentistry. Mentor relationships are intended to support scholars as they move from predoctoral education into sustainable rural practice.

LSUSD cannot accomplish this work alone. We invite alumni and rural dentists throughout Louisiana to serve as mentors, clinical partners, and champions for the next generation of caregivers. Growing our own dental workforce is more than a scholarship strategy. It's a long-term commitment to Louisiana that we intend to support, one student and one community at a time.

For more information or to get involved, contact Dr. Nicholas Mosca at nmosca@lsuhsc.edu. ■

# Barker, Liles Officially Assume Lead Roles

## TRICIA S. BARKER, RDH, MEd



*Tricia S. Barker, RDH, MEd*

LSUSD is pleased to announce the appointment of Tricia S. Barker, RDH, MEd, as Director of the Program in Dental Hygiene, effective July 15.

A respected educator, scholar, and leader, Barker has made outstanding contributions to academic excellence, professional service, and student development throughout her nearly 19-year career at LSUSD. Since joining the faculty in 2007, she has been pivotal in shaping the educational experience of dental hygiene students through curriculum leadership, clinical instruction, mentoring, accreditation activities, and program administration. She has directed numerous courses, supervised clinical education, coordinated student rotations and academic portfolios, and advised generations of dental hygiene students.

Beyond teaching, Barker has demonstrated a deep commitment to institutional and professional service as a member of numerous LSUSD and LSU Health committees, including the Community Engagement Committee, which she currently co-chairs. Her leadership extends to active involvement in the American Dental Hygienists' Association and the Louisiana and New Orleans Dental Hygienists' Associations, including service as President of the New Orleans Dental Hygienists' Association.

Barker has also advanced dental hygiene education through scholarship, interprofessional education initiatives, professional presentations, and published research focused on collaborative practice and student learning. Her dedication to excellence has been recognized with prestigious honors, including the LSU Health New Orleans Chancellor's Excellence Award (2024) and the Golden Apple Excellence in Teaching Award (2026).

A graduate of LSUSD's Program in Dental Hygiene, Barker earned her Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene in 2000 and completed a Master of Education in Human Performance and Health Promotion from the University of New Orleans. She was appointed Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry in 2021 and served as Interim Dental Hygiene Program Director before officially assuming the role.

Please join us in congratulating Tricia Barker on this well-deserved appointment. We look forward to her continuing to advance the Program in Dental Hygiene and support the success of our students, faculty, patients, and community.

## A.C. LILES, III, DDS

*Dr. A.C. Liles, III*

LSUSD is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. A.C. Liles, III as Assistant Dean of Clinical Affairs, effective August 1.

A respected educator, clinician, and academic leader, Dr. Liles has contributed more than 20 years of service to LSUSD in various capacities interspersed with time in private practice. His most recent roles at LSUSD were Associate Professor of Clinical Comprehensive Dentistry and Director of Operative Dentistry before becoming Assistant Dean. His appointment reflects more than three decades of service to the dental profession and a longstanding commitment to advancing clinical education and student success.

In his new role, Dr. Liles will provide leadership for the School's clinical enterprise, overseeing clinical operations, patient care, and initiatives that support excellence in clinical education.

Dr. Liles earned his Bachelor of Science in Pre-Dental Studies from Northeast Louisiana University before receiving his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from LSUSD. He completed an Advanced Education in General Dentistry residency at LSUSD and has been a licensed dentist in Louisiana since 1992.

Dr. Liles has earned a reputation as an exceptional teacher and mentor. In 2026, he was selected as the recipient of the Allen A. Copping Excellence in Teaching Award, one of LSU Health's highest faculty honors.

Throughout his career, Dr. Liles has received numerous teaching and professional honors, including recognition from Kell's Honor Society, the Institute for Teaching and Learning, and Omicron Kappa Upsilon.

Dr. Liles is a Fellow of the International College of Dentists, the Pierre Fauchard Academy, and the Academy of Operative Dentistry.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Liles on this well-deserved appointment and in celebrating his many contributions to LSUSD.

LSUSD also extends sincere gratitude Dr. Tom Giacona for his outstanding service as Interim Assistant Dean of Clinical Affairs for the past two years and his many years of unwavering devotion to the School. ■

# Periodontics Show 'N Tell Event Features Innovation in Implant Dentistry

On May 29, LSUSD's Department of Periodontics hosted its annual Show 'N Tell event, with 51 participants attending in person and virtually. Attendees earned six hours of continuing education during the day-long event, which continues to serve as a cornerstone of advanced clinical learning and collaboration within the specialty.

*Dr. John M. Tsourounakis, LSUSD-trained periodontist and implant fellow, delivers his presentation at Show 'N Tell.*

Supported by the R. Jack and Mary Louise Cassingham Endowed Chair in Periodontics, Show 'N Tell brings together residents, faculty, alumni, and invited experts for a focused exchange of clinical knowledge and innovation. The event reflects the legacy of Dr. Jack Cassingham, who helped establish the LSUSD postdoctoral periodontics program in 1974 and dedicated decades to advancing periodontal education and patient care.

This year's featured speaker, Dr. John M. Tsourounakis, presented "Blueprint to Smile: A Facially Driven Digital Workflow for Implant Rehabilitation." A 2012 graduate of LSUSD's Advanced Education Program in Periodontics and fellowship-trained in implant dentistry, Dr. Tsourounakis is a board-certified periodontist who maintains a private practice in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and serves as a clinical instructor at the University of Manitoba.

Dr. Tsourounakis' presentation emphasized outcome-driven treatment planning—beginning with the desired final restoration and working backward to plan each step to get there by using facially driven diagnostics, digital workflows, and guided surgical execution for both multi-implant restorations and full-arch rehabilitation.

Attendees gained insight into reverse-engineering implant placement and selecting materials and components to create restorative solutions that are easier to maintain, longer-lasting, more comfortable for patients, and supportive of long-term oral health. A key focus throughout the lecture was the importance of streamlined communication between clinicians and laboratory teams to ensure digital plans translate into consistent, repeatable clinical success.

The event also showcased LSUSD's commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly with the Department of Prosthodontics, which has participated in the event for the past four years on complex restorative cases.

In the afternoon session, third-year periodontics residents Drs. Daeoo Lee, Cyrus Mansouri, and Veronica Xia along with implant fellow Dr. Emily Dalluge presented case studies, demonstrating their clinical training and innovation.

*From left are third-year periodontics residents Drs. Veronica Xia, Daeoo Lee, and Cyrus Mansouri, and implant fellow Dr. Emily Dalluge.*

The continued growth and success of Show 'N Tell reflects LSUSD Periodontics' dedication to excellence in education, collaboration, and patient care, preparing the next generation of specialists to deliver predictable, high-quality outcomes through evidence-based and digitally driven approaches. ■

# 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**. ■

LOUISIANA DENTAL ASSOCIATION

# Federal Legislation Introduced to Apply State Dental Insurance Laws to Self-Funded Plans

*Annette Droddy*

***By Annette Droddy***
***Executive Director, LDA***
*with assistance from the American Dental Association*

The LDA and ADA are supporting a new piece of federal legislation aimed at ensuring that state dental insurance reform laws apply to self-funded dental plans. Louisiana has been very successful over the years in passing these insurance reform laws, therefore this federal legislation could be a game changer.

The Improving Dental Administration Act, or IDA, was introduced by Reps. Jeff Van Drew, DMD, R-NJ, and Herb Conaway, MD, D-NJ The measure would ensure that the more than 360 state dental insurance reform and patient protection laws enacted in the past decade apply to patients enrolled in self-insured plans.

Rep. Cleo Fields, D-LA, has already agreed to cosponsoring IDA. The LDA will be working with our grassroots action team leader dentists to ask ALL of our congressional delegation to also consider cosponsoring.

Dentists and patients in Louisiana appreciate support from Rep. Fields for this important legislation, which closes the loophole in ERISA that has created a two-tiered system of consumer protections for patients in our state. Louisianians deserve the same protections when it comes to their dental coverage, regardless of how their dental benefits are designed. The IDA Act would help restore fairness and consistency by ensuring that state laws governing dental benefit administration apply equally to all patients and providers while protecting federal benefit design rules.

Self-funded dental plans are regulated under the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, or ERISA. Some dental carriers have argued that the law allows them to avoid complying with state insurance regulations designed to protect patients and providers, and the ADA said it wants to close the loophole and return the power to regulate health care to the states.

"The growing number of 'self-funded' plans regulated by ERISA has emboldened carriers to assert they are not subject to state oversight, claiming that the ERISA preemption gives them a free pass to ignore insurance laws," said ADA President Richard Rosato, DMD. "We need to fix this ERISA loophole that keeps state regulators from enforcing pro-consumer insurance laws enacted in their states. Patients and providers should not be left unprotected based simply on how their dental benefits are purchased."

According to the ADA, the continued growth of self-funded plans, compared with fully insured plans, has contributed to confusion about which laws carriers must follow. ERISA was originally intended to protect retirement plan assets, including 401(k), 403(b) and pension plans.

Take action now and ask your Representative to support H.R. 7931 and this much needed reform. Raising your voice will help ensure fairness, consistency, and accountability in dental coverage for patients and providers alike. ■

ALUMNI & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

# Newsletter

ds-alumni@lsuhsc.edu

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