

# UOFS DENTISTRY

## MOVING ON

DR. GERRY USWAK ON 10 YEARS AS DEAN,  
AND WHAT LIES AHEAD



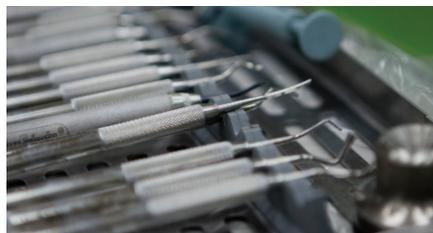
Dental Day YXE



Cello-Playing Dentist



Tenure Track



THE COLLEGE OF  
**DENTISTRY**

University of Saskatchewan  
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Dental Clinic Building  
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**On the cover: Dr. Gerry Uswak.**  
**The story is on page 4.**  
**Photos of Dr. Gerry Uswak by David Stobbe**

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## Message from the Dean

“ You never think it’s gonna end.  
Then it always ends.

Pat Riley, former player and coach in the  
National Basketball Association

“ Something new begins again.

Dr. Gerry Uswak, outgoing dean of the  
College of Dentistry

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Janice Cruise, co-ordinator of the curriculum review project, and Dr. Dean Kolbinson, chair of the Curriculum Review Steering Committee.

## CURRICULUM REVIEW UPDATE

It has taken many meetings and a lot of hard work by everyone involved but there is now a draft model for a renewed curriculum in the College of Dentistry that will ensure its graduates are as well prepared as they can be to enter the profession.

The model, yet to go to the college's Faculty Council for approval, provides the framework around which a new curriculum will be fashioned, explained Janice Cruise, co-ordinator of the review project, but there is still work to be done.

The Curriculum Review Steering Committee (CRSC), which was struck last fall, established seven working groups to prepare deliverables for specific areas of the curriculum, said Cruise. The groups range in size from three to five people and are comprised of full- and part-time faculty, including general dentists and, in some cases, students. She went on to talk about the activities of each group.

The Career Foundations group understands the mandate of the college is to graduate competent general dentists, Cruise

said, but it is exploring what additional experiences students need in order to choose a career other than general dentistry. For the Discipline-Based Learning working group, the question of what is best taught within specialty classes versus taught in a

**“On the whole, people were very interested, open and willing to share what they knew, and their views. Students in particular seemed appreciative of being able to have a voice.”**

Janice Cruise

more broad fashion is being considered.

Along a similar theme, the Integration group will determine those elements of the curriculum that cross disciplines. This becomes important as students move out of the college and into general practice, said Cruise. “When a patient walks into the office, they don't say, I have an endodontic issue; they say my tooth hurts. The dentist

has to do a systematic analysis that crosses disciplines.”

The Research group is looking at how the curriculum can equip students to do critical analysis of research and then apply it to their clinical decision-making. Finding experiences that equip students to carry their skills beyond a typical clinic setting and into the community is the work of the Outreach group.

The Foundational Sciences group is looking at the science requirements for students entering the college as well as which sciences are best taught in which year of the program. Finally, the Patient-Centred Care group is considering the entire clinical and pre-clinical experience of students.

Each working group will present five deliverables to the CRSC, she said. Feedback and questions from that group will help refine the deliverables, which will also go to the Undergraduate Education Committee and Faculty Council for final approval.

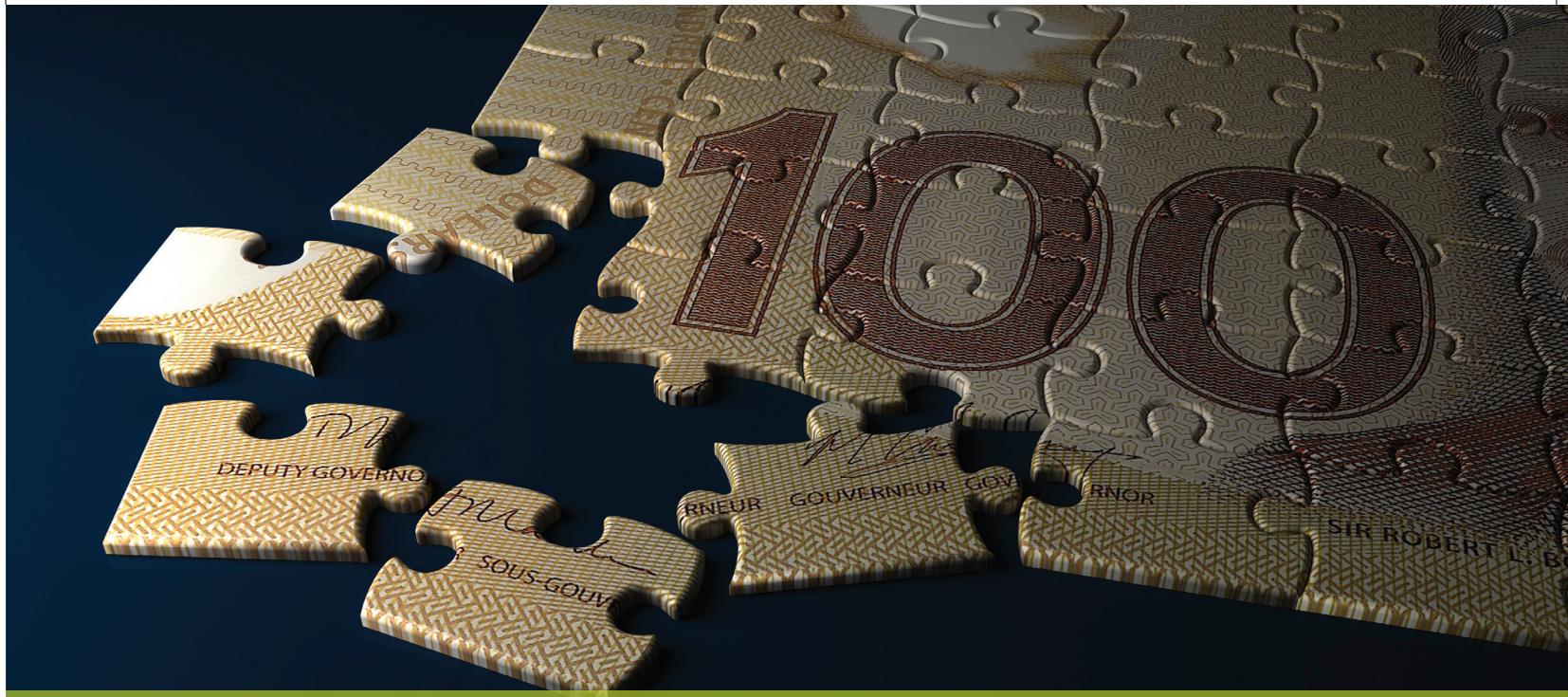
In addition to co-ordinating the work of the various groups, Cruise has made a point of speaking to as many people as possible within the college as the curriculum review has unfolded. Every full-time faculty member met with her, as did many who teach part time. She spoke to each year of students as a group, and with most of the college staff who have roles to play within the clinical courses.

“I asked what they liked about the current curriculum, what would be good to include in a new curriculum and if they saw any problems. On the whole, people were very interested, open and willing to share what they knew, and their views.” Students in particular seemed appreciative “of being able to have a voice.”

Cruise has shared her findings, with no names attached, with the CRSC and the working groups, “and I think it was immensely beneficial for the committee members to hear some other perspectives.” The model of a renewed curriculum has also been shared on a couple of occasions, including at a college town hall meeting in February and an activity day in March, “and there didn't seem to be any big concerns.”

In the fall, the working groups will start fine-tuning the broad educational objectives and goals of the curriculum, she said. From those will flow the actual courses and content.

“The question then will be, how do we do this? We can talk all we want about integrating these different educational components into a curriculum, but what will it actually look like?” ■



## TOUGH DECISIONS AHEAD IN COLLEGE BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

The impact of the provincial government's recent funding cut to the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) is being felt across campus, including in the College of Dentistry where the loss of almost \$400,000 for 2017-18 means some tough decisions lie ahead.

"This puts a full stop on a lot of things, and other things will have to be put on the back burner," said Dean Gerry Uswak. "We have to look at everything, from programs to people."

In its budget tabled March 22, the Sask Party government slashed the university's annual operating grant by 5.6 per cent, a reduction Uswak described as massive. "Historically, the university has never had a cut like this." In turn, the university reduced funding to a number of colleges, with dentistry facing a 6.2 per cent decrease, to \$5.5 million from \$5.9 million in 2016-17. (All university numbers are considered preliminary until its Board of Governors approves them in June.)

Uswak pointed out only two colleges faced larger reductions than his—11 per cent for the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, and 9.6 per cent for engineering.

In addition to the university based funding, the college relies

on tuition revenue to support its operations, and tuition is going up by two per cent in 2017-18, to \$33,619 per year.

As senior leaders in the college consider options for the coming year's budget, the dean stressed the need to protect the core business of dental student education, and work will be done to find all possible improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in basic operations. "This is a process we should do on a regular basis but when you're facing budget cuts, it puts a sharper focus on that," he said.

Among the plans that will be put on hold due to the budget cut is filling two research faculty positions that were intended to begin building the new dental public health graduate program, said Uswak. "Now, that's not going to happen soon."

In addition to preparing the operating budget for 2017-18, college leaders are also working on a five-year rolling budget plan so the funding reduction must be factored in to that as well. In all of the budget determinations, "we will also consider what university level options exist," he said. "We need to know what the university is committed to and whether that has any bearing on each college. The entire institution is finding its way at the moment in terms of what this truly means."

Also to be considered is the college's revenue generating potential, said the dean. A new \$7,000 per student annual program fee that will be implemented in the fall "will help us immensely now but we'd also like to take some of that and spend it to do things that benefit students."

Uswak offered one example that would result from a reorganization of the clinic in order to ensure it mirrors as closely as possible a private practice. "We need to do all the things I would do for a patient in my practice, and one of the things we've discussed is taking the booking of

patients out of student's hands." Using the program fee revenue to hire schedulers to book patients better reflects a real-world situation "because the dentist isn't calling patients and asking, when are you coming in?"

He added that the combination of tuition and the program fee puts the U of S college near the top when it comes to cost compared to other Canadian schools, but it will not likely affect student recruitment.

College officials will also look at increasing patient numbers in the clinic and improving students' patient throughput to increase fee-for-service revenue. "It's not going to generate millions of more dollars but it will help the overall college operations."

No decisions have been made about what next year's budget will look like, he said, adding the process will involve discussions with the university's provost as well as with faculty members and the college's Faculty Council. Students and staff will also "be kept apprised of some of the decisions that we're making," Uswak said. "It's only fair." ■

# DR. GERRY USWAK

## A candid conversation with the departing dean

**D**r. Gerry Uswak is a man with many passions.

He prefers the north of Canada to the south. He'd take the country over the city any day, and has two acreages, one outside Saskatoon and one near Oliver, B.C., where he can breathe the clean air. He loves his John Deere 4230 tractor. Uswak and his wife MaryAnn rescue dogs, old racehorses, donkeys and ponies because "there are lots of animals, who need good homes, and there are not enough good homes to go around."

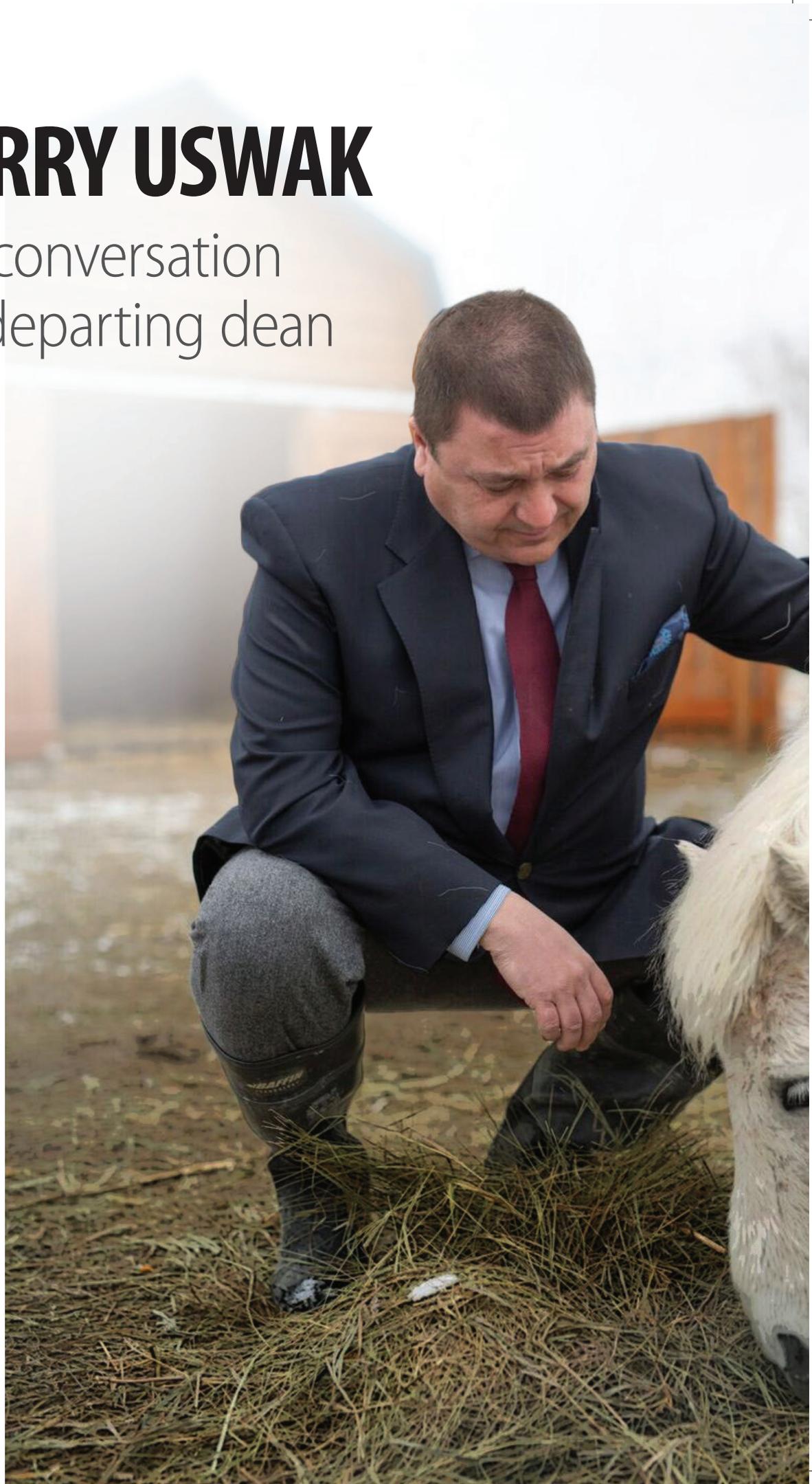
But that's his private side. On the public side, as dean of the College of Dentistry, he is no less committed to what he believes. Since he was first named to the position, Uswak has been an outspoken advocate for his college, for where he believes it needs to go to ensure the people of Saskatchewan are well served by the dental professionals it graduates.

At the same time, he has tried to improve the fit of dentistry in the institutional structure of the University of Saskatchewan (U of S).

It has been an uphill road but Uswak has never wavered in his commitment to doing what he believes is best for the college, its faculty and students, and the university. Nor has he pulled any punches along the way.

"If I say something, it's because I think it needs to be said. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it endears you to people, sometimes it pisses people off but it's who I am, and you have to be true to yourself."

At the end of June, Uswak will leave the dean's office after announcing last year his de-





cision to step down part way through his second five-year term. In a wide-ranging interview for *Recall*, he talked about what brought him to the College of Dentistry, the challenges that came with the job and his optimistic vision for its future.

### THE BACK-STORY

Uswak grew up in Winnipeg, in a family that stressed the value of education. “There was a school in the inner city we’d drive by and on this big stone wall it said knowledge is power. My father would always stop and point it out. He said, ‘don’t be like me’—he was in the heating trade—‘get an education and do something good.’”

After high school, Uswak entered the University of Winnipeg where he studied for two years before realizing “everybody who was getting into professional programs went to the University of Manitoba, so I switched. I applied for medicine, I applied for dentistry, I got into dentistry, I didn’t get into medicine so here I am.”

After graduation, Uswak did a general practice residency at the U of M and, when not on call, worked in a general practice. In considering his next move, a two-week externship he’d done in fourth-year dentistry proved pivotal.

That experience took him to northern Canada, on what he thought would be his only trip there “but we probably did more dentistry in those two weeks than we did in all of fourth year. It was meat and potatoes dentistry, and it was for people in need.”

Uswak moved to the north with the U of M’s outreach community dentistry department. “I flew around what’s now Nunavut, the Keewatin zone, all the communities on the west coast of Hudson Bay ... with everything I needed—tools, consumables. I had seven big aluminum boxes that followed me everywhere I went.”

It was during that year he made the decision to pursue a

dental public health specialty at the University of North Carolina.

Back in Canada, in 1994, Uswak headed north again, this time to Iqaluit on Baffin Island, as regional dental health officer, then director of regional programs. In addition to running dental programs, he also had responsibility for audiology, mental health and variety of other services in addition to doing pe-

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Dr. Gerry Uswak

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diatric dental surgery. That was followed, in 2002, by a move to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, to the position of CEO of the Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Authority, which has Canada’s most northern hospital.

### THE CALL OF THE SOUTH

In 2005, it became clear Uswak and his wife needed to move south to be near aging parents, and that meant finding a job. It turned out to be “one of those magical things.

“I hadn’t cracked the want ads of a dental journal in forever but when the decision was made to move to Saskatchewan, I went to the Canadian Dental Association journal and opened it to the back pages and dammed if there wasn’t a dental public health job there. It was meant to be I guess.”

Uswak said he always wanted to be in a university setting, to teach and do research, “all the good things a faculty member does.” The last thing he imagined was a move into administration but barely a year later, in 2006, that’s exactly what happened.

“That was a time in the college’s history when there had been a series of acting deans,” he explained. When that position came open again, “I didn’t even apply—someone put my name in. Over time, people deselected themselves and I think it was just me left on the list. I did a formal presentation to faculty and the interview thing, and there I was, boom, the acting dean.”

That lasted two years before Uswak had a conversation with the university provost of the day. “What I said was, you can only have people acting for so long if you want to see change. This place has been status quo forever and we don’t need any more of that. We need to go out and search for a dean, and again, I was successful.”

The move from acting dean to the permanent position was seamless, Uswak said, because “I didn’t act as a caretaker. I didn’t care that I was in an acting role. I think the only difference between me acting and me as dean were those couple of years that allowed me to understand what my environment was.”

### TWO SOLITUDES

The environment Uswak referred to is one characterized by an underlying tension, a low-level conflict between the original mandate of the college and the expectations placed on it as part of the University of Saskatchewan. Managing those often-competing interests has been a hallmark of his time in office.

“This college has always been under some threat to its existence and I was aware of that prior to even coming here,” he said, adding he also knew of its stellar reputation for turning out dentists who are well trained, with far more clinical experience than most of their counterparts across the country.

The university’s Board of Governors approved the establishment of the dentistry college in 1966, and the first students were enrolled two years later.



Uswak said it is important to remember the government mandate was to increase access to dentists for residents of Saskatchewan, but there was also an expectation it would “do all those things that a college within a university does, including research.” And there’s the rub.

“Most of the faculty is dedicated to teaching and the clinical education side, they’re not researchers. You can’t have someone who is a superstar researcher, who is a teacher where every student claps at the end of every lecture and is a superstar clinician. That doesn’t exist; something has to give.”

Uswak believes the numbers prove the college has fulfilled its provincial mandate, with almost 500 dentists currently serving the people of Saskatchewan. “The problem is, I think, that from the university perspective, there is that optic of, what about the other mandates of a fully-functioning unit on this campus, which means research?”

These are the two solitudes Uswak has been trying to unite. The creation of an associate dean research position last year was a big step; the next is finding the resources to hire PhD-prepared research faculty and establish graduate programs, but Uswak is well aware of the risks.

Having always focused on the quality of graduates, for the college to divert resources to research and clinical master’s programs could come at a cost to undergraduates. “If you start adding specialty programs, the more interesting patients are going to go to those programs leaving the students with less clinical experience.”

The solution, he believes, is the non-clinical dental public health specialty. It is more research oriented than other specialties but does not require access to the patient pool or costly lab equipment. “You do basic examinations of the oral health in a popula-

tion, you collect epidemiologic data, you work on health policy, you do a variety of things that don’t require a lot of research infrastructure but you build that research core in the college (and) you are actually making things better for the province, the country and the world.”

So, how close is the college to finding the sweet spot where it can turn out high-quality graduates while also addressing the research mandate issue? Very, according to Uswak.

“It’s been a 10-year struggle to get to the point where we are but we’re undergoing curriculum renewal, which is fabulous because you cannot continue to do the things you did in 1974 in 2017. We received funding to bring in an external expert to look at the feasibility of doing the specialty program and graduate program in dental public health. A report was generated that said absolutely, it would be vital and vibrant.

The college is also working with the Levin Group out of Maryland, dental practice management consultants, to ensure the dental clinic is operated and managed like a high-functioning dental practice.

“There are all these balls in the air. The good thing is we’re close. The bad thing is I’m not going to be dean to see it all get accomplished.”

## MOVING ON

Last fall, Uswak decided it was time to move on. He said he could have completed his term as dean, “but then reality set in.”

That reality was the significant resistance he encountered on two fronts, one being curriculum renewal, the other a change to the college’s Faculty Council structure.

Faculty Council in the college consists of 22.5 full-time faculty members and about 70 part-time members, he explained, and each

has a vote. Uswak stressed those community based faculty are essential to the education mandate of the college “but no other college has so much control in the hands of external people. I wanted to change that to make Faculty Council more representative of the people who work here full time all the time.”

The dean’s suggestion was to have only four voting part-time faculty representatives on council. It was a proposal that offended many people, he said.

“To be honest, the acrimony that was propagated by certain people was unprofessional. And the curriculum renewal has been a sore spot too. I was angry. I was incredibly frustrated and thought I don’t need to do this job any more. I can accomplish a lot of the things I want to do without being dean.

He said he has no regrets about the decision—“I rarely regret anything I do.” He will continue to serve as dean until his replacement arrives in addition to taking on other projects “that are moving this college forward.” One is preparing for college accreditation next year, and for reaccreditation of the General Practice Residency and hospital dental service programs. “It would be unfair not to participate in that and hang it solely on the new dean.”

## BRIGHT FUTURE

Even as he prepares to take a step back, Uswak remains confident the college will get where it needs to be, that the groundwork he has laid will see it emerge, eventually, with faculty members “firing on all cylinders,” with graduate programming in place, with a renewed curriculum that is based on effective pedagogy and integration, with a strong contingent of part-time faculty and with a dental public health research program that will be the envy of other schools.

But the to-do list is not yet complete: there needs to be, he said, a different kind of employment track for faculty who would love to teach full time in a clinical setting but have no interest in tenure and research. Term contracts could be an option. “The university is a great place to work for dental faculty but as dentists, we have solid alternatives.”

Progress is being made on all fronts, he said. “Is it at the speed I would like it? No, but at universities, everything moves at a glacial pace.”

As the future unfolds, Uswak sees himself settled into a new position, a hybrid between his original faculty job and that of dean. He will teach and do research but he will also keep a hand in the work of ensuring a bright future for the College of Dentistry.

“I just won’t come to work every day and do it from this office.” ■



Dr. Petros Papagerakis, right, receives the Innovation in Oral Care Award from Dr. Jukka Meurman, president of IARD.

## RESEARCH AWARD FOR DR. PETROS PAPAGERAKIS

The development of a saliva-collection device to facilitate melatonin measurements for sleep disorders and psychiatric patients has earned Dr. Petros Papagerakis and his research colleagues

a coveted Innovation in Oral Care Award from the International Association for Dental Research (IADR).

Papagerakis, associate dean research in the College of Dentistry, along with co-in-

vestigators Dr. Silvana Papagerakis from the U of S College of Medicine and engineering professor Nikos Chronis from the University of Michigan, received the prestigious award for a study titled “Intra-oral Device to Measure Time-dependent Saliva Biomarker Levels.” Their goal is to produce a cost-effective personalized device to collect saliva in real time for analysis of melatonin and other biomarker levels that can be used in diagnosis and treatment monitoring of patients.

The \$50,000 competitive award, funded by GlaxoSmithKline, is one of three handed out annually by the IADR. It recognizes pioneering research designed to produce innovative compounds, biomaterials or devices that can be routinely used by the public to maintain and improve oral health and quality of life. The aim is to encourage investigators to explore innovative research beyond the confines of traditional dental research.

The award was presented in March at the IADR annual meeting in San Francisco. ■

## ORAL HEALTH RESEARCH PROJECT IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES RECEIVES SHRF FUNDING



A research project looking at oral health in Indigenous communities as well as potential pathways for early intervention has been awarded a Collaborative Innovation Development Grant by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF).

The research team for the project includes: Dr. Gerry Uswak, dean of dentistry; Marcella Ogenchuk, College of Nursing; Vivian Ramsden, College of Medicine; Holly Graham, College of Nursing; and Dr. Rob Weiler, College of Medicine. They will receive almost \$50,000 for their project. The SHRF funding is designed to support creative and innovative research that has the potential to benefit the health of Saskatchewan residents. ■

From left to right, Holly Graham, Dr. Gerry Uswak, Marcella Ogenchuk, Vivian Ramsden and Dr. Rob Weiler.



Dr. Alyssa Hayes, left, and Dr. Danielle Briere were key organizers of Dental Day YXE.

## DENTAL PROFESSIONALS GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

**“Oh no, this is actually happening!”**

That was Dr. Danielle Briere’s initial nervous thought when 150 volunteers started arriving at the College of Dentistry April 8 for Dental Day YXE, an event organized to provide members of Saskatoon’s most at-risk and underserved populations received free dental care. It was a bit chaotic at first, said Briere, but by mid-morning, her thought had changed to, “Wow! This is actually happening.”

“As I walked around the clinic floor, all I could hear was the steady hum of hand pieces and everyone had their heads down and

were just working away on patients. It was just a great moment to know that all of our hard work had been for a good cause and people were getting the care they needed.”

Briere, who graduated from the college in 2016, and Dr. Alyssa Hayes, assistant professor of dental public health, spent the better part of a year organizing Dental Day YXE, which is a scaled-up version of a similar community outreach event that has been held in Regina since 2012. Key to its success was peoples’ generosity.

It was the volunteers who made it happen, they both agreed. On the day, there were general dentists, dental assistants, dental hygienists, dental therapists, dental specialists and denturists on hand to provide everything from fillings and extractions to

root canals and denture fittings. And, added Briere, all of the community professionals donated their time, and many brought along not only volunteer staff from their practices but also their own equipment and tools.

“One of the positive aspects of an event like this is that it’s an opportunity to bring together all the dental professions and build relationships,” said Hayes.

Students and staff from the College of Dentistry also pitched in to keep things organized and running on schedule by providing help with paperwork, reception, screening, food, media, logistics, sterilization and many other tasks. “You can see how it gets complex,” Hayes commented.

By the end of the day, almost 200 patients had been seen by a dental professional. Dental Day targeted people who face challenges accessing dental care, largely due to a lack of insurance, said Hayes. Patient recruitment took the form of reaching out to local organizations like the Salvation Army, the Open Door Society and the local food bank. Hayes’ phone rang for weeks after the 200 appointment spots were filled, an indication of the level of need in Saskatoon.

Local businesses, national dental supply companies and professional organizations also pitched in with supplies, support and sponsorship gifts.

Briere said she learned a lot through the organizing process and the event itself, but she was not alone.

“We had people who play administrative roles at the college down in sterilization, sponsors with no dental knowledge helping lead the provider groups, and first-year students who have rarely been on the clinic floor in charge of keeping the hygiene unit running smoothly,” she said. “For the dental providers, it was a learning experience working within such a short time frame, in a different environment than they are used to, with new materials and sometimes an assistant they had never met. It was a great chance to bring together all of the dental professionals under one roof.”

Hayes said the feedback being collected from volunteers has been universally positive. There have been some good suggestions about how to “fine-tune the process” next time but everyone believes the inaugural Dental Day YXE accomplished its goal.

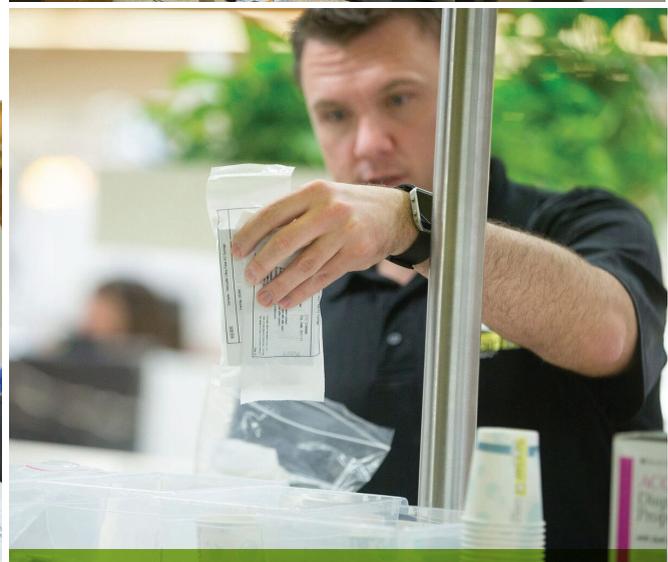
“The day wasn’t designed to provide comprehensive care for every patient,” said Hayes. “Many will need further treatment, and we offered them the opportunity to stay with the college as patients, but our goal on that day was to address their most urgent needs and I think we accomplished that.” ■



Dr. Jocelyne Hodgson of Wall Street Dental in Saskatoon was one of many dentists who volunteered their services for Dental Day XYE. "It's an amazing opportunity to be involved," she said, adding she brought along dental assistant Lisa Pascual, above right, and a dental hygienist from her practice. Hodgson, who graduated from the college in 2008, said the event was a chance for her staff "to see what goes on here in the clinic, to see how we learn and how we train. It's great to come back to where it all started."



KAYLE NEIS

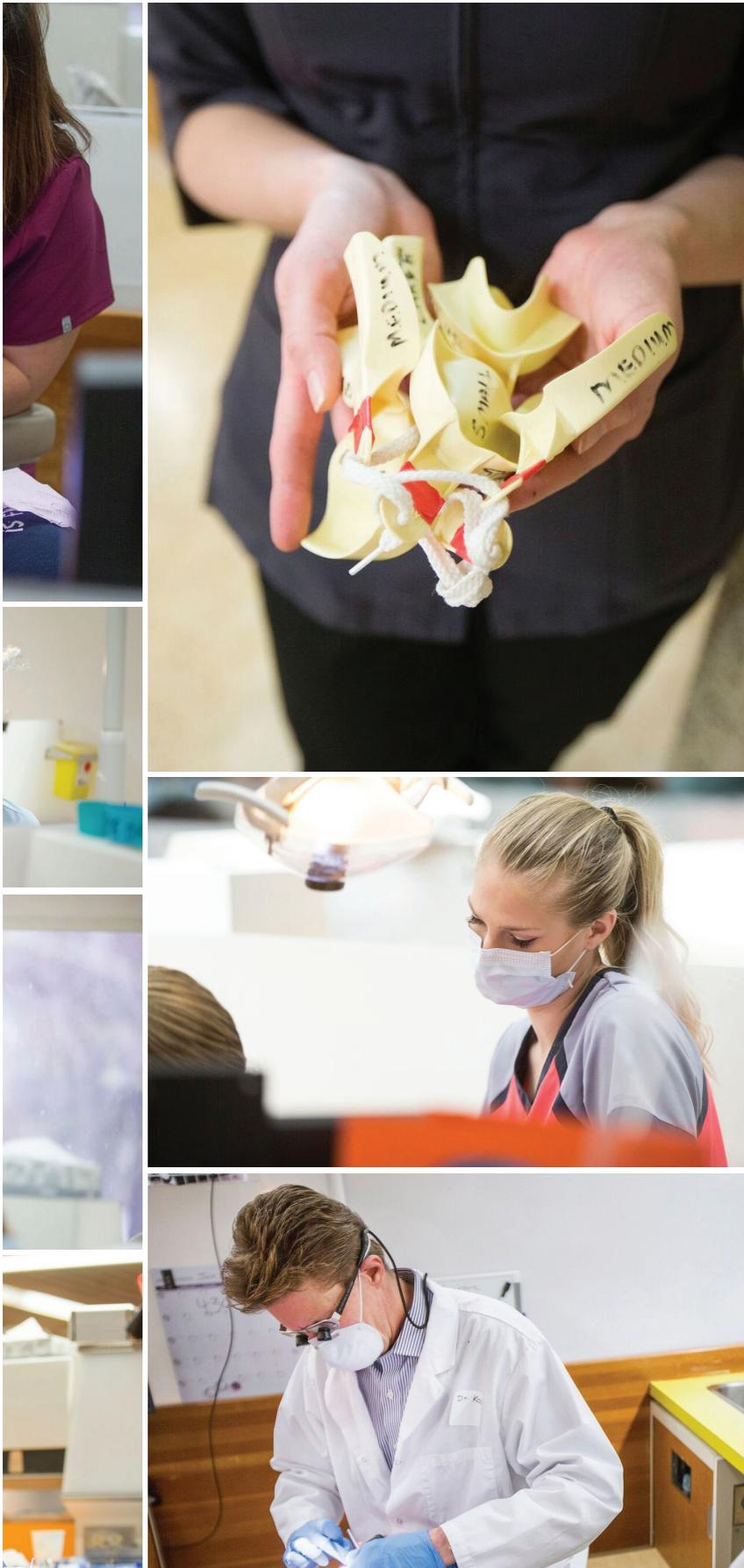


Shane Wiedman, shown above, a sales consultant with Sinclair Dental, said his company was happy to supply consumables for Dental Day XYE as "a way of giving back to the community." The Henry Schein Cares Foundation also supplied consumables along with sterilization equipment. Kelly Fradette from Henry Schein said events like Dental Day XYE fulfill the foundation's mission to expand access to dental care to at-risk and underserved populations. "We see events like this as a social responsibility."



College of Dentistry students were on hand throughout the day to help where needed. This group of second-year students was put in charge of sterilization.





Tessa Creary was kept busy during her shift at the Saskatchewan Dental Hygienists Association booth during Dental Day XYE. In addition to handing out toothbrushes and demonstrating proper brushing technique, the organization had a good supply of healthy snacks and water on hand for patients.

# THE TWO-CAREER LIFE OF DR. CARMAN RABUKA

**Dr. Carman Rabuka  
has his life in his  
hands. Literally.**

**W**hether he's performing a root canal or Bach's Cello Suites, Rabuka's hands are key to joy and fulfillment in his two-career life, as is his ability to find balance, to use music as an escape from the work day world and visa versa. It's a skill he has been honing for a very long time.

Rabuka's music training began at the age of four and started with just a cardboard cutout of a cello, to get used to its shape. Growing up in a house constantly filled with music, learning an instrument was a natural step.

"When you're four, it's a bit of a game. I was excited to try something new."

In addition to schoolwork, there were private lessons, group lessons, small ensemble work, youth orchestra, performances and concerts—"it was non-stop." He admitted practicing takes discipline, even today, and recalled sitting indoors with his cello watching his friends playing on the street in front of his house. It was hard, but the young man was committed to his instrument.

When football tryouts rolled around one fall, Rabuka was keen to take a shot until he got a stark reminder about the importance of his hands.

"My parents said, go ahead but you could dislocate a finger. I'd probably be in the NFL if I hadn't stuck with cello," he said with a smile, "but without my parents' encouragement, I wouldn't be where I am today."

His parents and grandmother also get credit for buying Rabuka the instrument he still plays today, a cello made by David Palm who lives near Shellbrook. The cello, made in 1992 and bought for him when he was 12. It was a big investment for his family and it continues to improve with age, he said.

Rabuka was a good student at E.D. Feehan Catholic High School in Saskatoon. He got good grades, played low-impact sports (badminton) to protect his fingers, and joined the student representative council,



the chess club and the school band. In his musical life, he recognized he was achieving significant milestones and in Grade 11, auditioned for and was accepted into the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra (SSO).

“I realized I could play at a level that people would come to listen to, and I couldn’t believe I was getting paid to do it.”

After high school, Rabuka took a leave from the SSO to spend a year at bible school in Three Hills, Alberta, travelling into Calgary regularly for cello lessons. He returned to Saskatoon, rejoined the orchestra and enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan “to pursue the sciences I’d left back in high school.” And in addition to anatomy and cell biology classes, Rabuka also took a first-year music class which he described with a laugh as “a mark booster for sure.”

As he studied and played, Rabuka thought about his future. Influenced by the stories he heard from a number of physicians in his extended family, he was zeroing in on medical school “when I ran into an old friend, Thomas Yu. He and I grew up in music together and he’d just started dental school. He said in dentistry, you’ve got the sciences, you’ve got the interaction with patients, you’ve got the ability to use your hands as an art form. It seemed like a little bit more of a straightforward path than medicine, and music could be part of it.”

In 2003, Rabuka entered the College of Dentistry and quickly recognized the value of the time-management skills he learned along with the cello. In addition to juggling classes, competencies and clinics, he had to contend with the SSO’s rigorous schedule that included five, 2.5-hour rehearsals leading up to every concert.

Graduation in 2007 meant another leave from the SSO for a year in the general practice residency at Vancouver General Hospital, an opportunity to decide on a specialty.

There, Rabuka followed his interest in oral surgery, taking advantage of the chance to work with specialists on trips to Whitehorse, the Queen Charlotte Islands and Vietnam. In the end, “I realized that I appreciated the diversity of general dentistry although I do have an affinity for performing oral surgical procedures. It was a year to really refine the skills I’d acquired as an undergrad.”

So it was back to his hometown, back to the SSO and into private practice; Rabuka has been part of the Broadway Dental Group since 2011. His life now also includes three young daughters—a six-year-old who plays piano, a four-year-old who plays cello and a two-year-old “who just makes a mess all over the house.

“I’m really blessed,” but it’s a busy life



**Dr. Carman Rabuka performs with the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra in its presentation of *The Music of Star Wars* April 22.**

and the cello does not get played every day. That said, he described music as a valuable outlet, particularly on those days “when you hit the wall and think there’s no way I can get through this.

“When I was a student, I could totally disengage the academic side of my brain and get lost in making music. Even today, I can go to a rehearsal at the end of a busy day and two-and-a-half hours go by like that. It’s refreshing.”

For Rabuka, it is and always has been about balance, finding outlets that offset the stresses of life. “It’s so easy in dental school to forget about your relationships, to forget about your extra curricular-activities. Even as a medical or dental professional, you have to keep everything in perspective because the second you get focused in on your career too much, that’s when things can spiral out.”

Rabuka believes his busy life would indeed spin out of control were it not for his wife Esther, a veterinarian who plays upright bass and piano, and, he noted with some envy, sings with perfect pitch.

“Nothing would work without her, and in the end, family is everything so put your book down, put your cello down and go out tobogganing!” ■



**Dr. Carman Rabuka’s busy life revolves around practicing dentistry and the cello.**

# TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING

## Austin Andrews' research shows beneficial role of advanced simulation system in dental education

If Austin Andrews' research project has any indication, technology could have a significant and beneficial role to play in the training of future dentists.

The delivery of new advanced simulation technology equipment to the College of Dentistry set Andrews up with a table clinic research project that looked at how it might be used to develop clinical competency. Winning the table clinic competition last fall meant the third-year student from Victoria went head-to-head with students from across the country in the Canadian Dental Association (CDA)/DENTSP-LY Student Clinician Research Program May 3-6 in Toronto.

Andrews said the genesis of his research was the delivery of the Inliant Technology to the college's simulation clinic. Made by Inliant Dental Technologies of Vancouver, the technology is an educational application of the company's dynamic surgical guidance technology, and Andrews, along with his supervisor Dr. Ken Sutherland, saw an opportunity to put it to the test. And the results, he said, were surprising.

The technology involves adding sensors to the overhead lights that recognize hand pieces and mannequins in the simulation clinic. These sensors track the movements of the hand piece in the mouth and display them on a screen in real time.

One use for the technology is after-hours work in the clinic when no faculty members are present, explained Andrews. Any work a student does can be logged into the technology for later review.

A second use is self-evaluation, he said. "Most people know that they've done something wrong but they won't know when they did it, or why." Using the technology allows students to observe their work as it happens, helping to create muscle memory of correct technique. "It's instant feedback that you don't always get in class."

For his table clinic project, Andrews decided to test the technology's efficacy in developing technique, and first-year students were selected as the subjects. "We wanted to see if the technology could help students overcome their inexperience in a more timely way than using conventional teaching methods."

The volunteer students attended operative class lectures as usual, along with two drilling sessions. They were then divided into two groups, one that used the Inliant Technology and a control group. All the students then had 30 minutes to prepare an ideal Class 1 amalgam on tooth number 36. The teeth were collected, with no student identifications, and evaluated by an operative dentistry professor.

The results, said Andrews, "would have



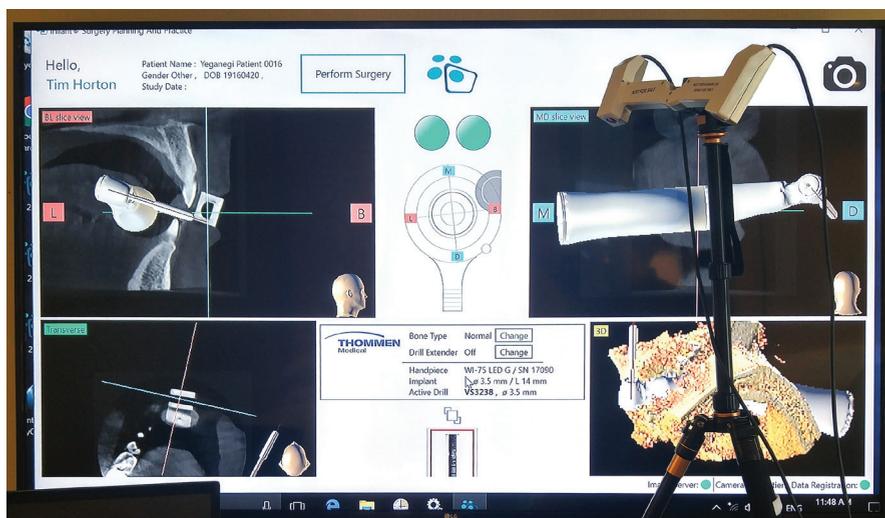
Year-three student Austin Andrews.

been obvious to even the untrained eye." The students using the technology did a much better job and were far more consistent than those in the control group. In fact, 71 per cent of the students who used the Inliant Technology produced a clinically acceptable preparation compared to just 25 per cent of the control group.

"I was really surprised," he said. "The uniformity of the preparations between the students that used it was shocking. It really opened our eyes to the utility this type of technology can have in operative dentistry. It's worth considering the potential of generating similar results in prosthodontics and pediatric dentistry."

Andrews said while the sample was small—just 15 students—the results have been shown to be statistically significant, and indicate the possibilities for future educational applications.

"Some of the things we learn take a while to click. During those initial months of pre-clinical dentistry, this technology could make it easier to apply what you're learning in class and reproduce it with your hands." ■



A model of the Inliant Technology that was used in Austin Andrews' research project.



## PAULINE PONTAROLLO, THE WOMAN KNOWN AS 'THE DENTAL LADY'

Pauline Pontarollo, administrator of the pediatric clinic in the College of Dentistry.

**P**auline Pontarollo has had a number of positions in the College of Dentistry but none has been as fulfilling as the one she has now, the job where some of her patients refer to her as “the dental lady.”

Pontarollo is administrator of the pediatric clinic and on just about any Thursday during the school year, you'll find her riding a bus between inner-city schools and the college, shepherding groups of youngsters in need of dental care. Hearing the emotion in her voice as she describes her work is an indication of Pontarollo's dedication to the almost 1,200 children she serves every year.

“It's a really powerful experience to go to the school to pick them up,” she said, “and then, at the end of the morning, see them smiling and happy because their teeth don't hurt anymore. I care about this program a lot.”

Born and raised in Canora, Pontarollo did her training as a dental assistant at Kelsey Institute, now called Saskatchewan Polytechnic, in Saskatoon. She worked in private practice before joining the college in October 1978 as a dental assistant on the clinic floor. She took on the position of administrator of the pediatric clinic about eight years ago.

Pontarollo works with principals and co-ordinators in nine public schools to identify children whose families are facing barriers to dental care, cost being the most common. It's not easy, she said. “It still amazes me to see children with four quadrants of teeth so visibly decayed.”

Part of her job is to help parents understand their responsibility when it comes to giving consent for treatment, and paying for it afterward but for some, “even \$17 for sealant is just too much. I do waive fees,”

she said, “because if you're actually going to help a child, sometimes you have to go the extra mile.” The college does do some pro bono work and pays for transporting the children.

**“ I see them leave with a smile on their face and I hear from the (school) co-ordinators that the children aren't crying in class because their teeth hurt.”**

Pauline Pontarollo

Once the patients are recruited—and every clinic is full—Pontarollo assigns cases to students and when the bus arrives on clinic day, it's organized chaos for everyone involved. “I make my 10,000 steps on Thursdays without even trying.”

In the midst of it all, Pontarollo said she tends not to assist chair side on the clinic floor, but in some ways, that helps maintain her relationship with the children. “I'm probably the person they would like to see but it's better if a dental assistant gets them through their procedure and I can be the one to give them a hug afterward.”

While it is immensely rewarding to be providing much-needed dental care to children, Pontarollo never loses sight of the importance of the pediatric clinic to the training of future dentists.

“One of the most satisfying things about my job is knowing that our dentistry students will be leaving here having had lots of opportunities to work with children. Many students have passed through since I began working at the college and I hope I've had at least a small positive influence on their dental education.”

Something she hopes the students learn

in the clinic is that treating children takes time, “extra time. They're not like an adult. Their parents sign them up, I bring them here and they don't necessarily want to get their teeth fixed.”

The work is not without its frustrations, however. One is kids with “attitude,” those old enough to understand what's happening who decide they simply will not have treatment done. “Another is parents who don't recognize the need for good oral health and the negative impacts bad teeth can have on their children's overall health and self esteem.”

Pontarollo knows the work she and others do makes a difference. “I see them leave with a smile on their face and I hear from the (school) co-ordinators that the children aren't crying in class because their teeth hurt.”

When the college term comes to an end, Pontarollo makes time to attend appreciation events in the schools she serves, often taking along donations she has collected over the year to hand out as extra rewards, particularly to children who have been through a lot.

Her work has touched many lives, and a story Pontarollo related about one immigrant family illustrates that fact to a tee. There were a number of children and the family faced many challenges that she helped them navigate when they were clinic patients some years ago. She met the family again recently at a concession they own in a local rink, and when he saw her, the oldest boy smiled and said, “You're the dental lady!” It's a story that makes Pontarollo smile.

And what does the dental lady do when school is finally out? “I play catch-up, and then take a good six weeks off.” ■

# WHITE COAT CEREMONY MARKS TRANSITION FOR THE CLASS OF 2019



There was no better place to be on a wintry Saskatchewan day than in historic Convocation Hall for the College of Dentistry’s annual White Coat Ceremony. On January 6, 2017, the Class of 2019 was formally welcomed into the dental profession in a ceremony that reaffirms the ethics of the dental profession.

Before an audience of family, friends, faculty, staff, students and members of the dental community, the Year 4 students cloaked 27 Year 2 students in a ceremony that marks an important dental school milestone: the transition from the pre-clinical simulation environment to patient care and treatment in the clinical setting.

Keynote speaker Dr. Michael Lypka, Class of 2000, reflected on his dental school experience and how it shaped his career, and Dr. Michael Prestie, Class of 1983 and President of the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CDSS), likened the students’ transition to the clinic to learning the rules of the road. He suggested that the

chance to begin working on patients is an honour and the clinic is where “the rubber meets the road.” As the students get into the driver’s seat, “they will venture out onto the streets and highways, their driver instructor beside them to get the feel of traffic, rules of the road and the variety of road hazards.”

He explained that the CDSS “makes the rules of the road, the speed limits, the stop signs and the school zones” which are necessary to protect the people that travel the roads. Dr. Prestie reminded the students that “we travel these roads as dentists ... so that we are always here to see our patients.”

Mary Tait, Year 2 Class Representative, spoke on behalf of the Class of 2019. Mary admitted she was feeling both excitement and nervousness when thinking about transitioning from working on dentofoms with mounted teeth to real teeth and real patients. She explained that it is easy for students to “zone in and focus solely on the task at hand” during pre-clinical labs, but that as students transition to the clinic, “we

must never lose focus of the person behind the procedure.” She acknowledged that “today and everyday in the future when we put on our white coats we will be reminded of what’s most important – our patients.”

Dr. Carman Rabuka, Class of 2007 and member of the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra as well as the piano trio The Hemostatics, shared his passion for the cello and entertained guests by playing several pieces during the musical interlude. To conclude the performance, Carman’s wife, Dr. Esther Rabuka, joined him on piano for his final piece.

Before leading the students in a recitation of the Code of Conduct to reaffirm their commitment to uphold the highest standards of ethical behavior, Associate Dean Dr. Ken Sutherland reminded the students that ethics is “not just about how you behave when you’re in the spotlight but how you behave when there is no one watching.” Following the ceremony, guests gathered at the University Club for a reception. ■

# CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DENTAL EDUCATION

## Several changes aim to strengthen the program for Saskatchewan dentists

**C**onsistency, cost effectiveness and quality are the three hallmarks of an effective continuing education (CE) program in any profession, and that is exactly what Saskatchewan's Continuing Professional Dental Education program works to deliver.

Offered through a partnership between the U of S College of Dentistry and the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CDSS), Continuing Professional Dental Education now has a full-time co-ordinator to strengthen the program and ensure dentists have access to learning opportunities that build their skills and knowledge base. Jason Korte, who started in the position Feb. 1, 2016, has made a number of changes he expects will appeal to the profession he serves.

"Job one when I started was getting the lay of the land, figuring out what was being offered, who was doing what and what we needed to do for dental education," said Korte, who was national retail marketing manager for Samsung Mobile in Toronto before joining the college. "What I needed to do was stabilize the continuing education program that had been handled in sort of an ad hoc manner for some time."

A refresh of the CE website brought new attention to events, as did Korte promoting them through email. And even though 2017 is only about half over, he is already at work putting together the course schedule for 2018 to ensure participants get lots of notice of dates, times and locations. "You can't fault dentists for not coming if they're not given enough notice."

When it comes to setting that course calendar, "I always ask people who attend events what they would like to see on the schedule in the future, to recommend topics and speakers. I then try to identify trends in those responses," he said. "I also look at what's happening in the industry and at what is being offered in other markets."

Many of the speakers at CE courses are from outside Saskatchewan, but Korte is working to "tap into home-grown presenters." And with other health-science colleges in close proximity on the U of S campus, Korte meets regularly with his CE counter-



Jason Korte, co-ordinator of the Continuing Professional Dental Education program.

parts in other disciplines to identify topics of common interest.

Because CE is mandated by the CDSS and co-ordinated through the College of Dentistry, both have an opportunity to vet the annual 9-course calendar.

Looking back on his first year in the job, Korte said he was somewhat surprised by how competitive CE can be, even in Saskatchewan. "It's like the Wild West out there when it comes to continuing education," he said, "with dental supply companies all offering education events and vying for people's dollars and time."

To remain competitive, Korte said he focuses on quality and variety. "We need to give dentists a broad picture when it comes to education." He added his ability to organize events in various locations throughout the province is an advantage in making courses convenient for dentists to attend.

But there is also a lot of appeal to traveling abroad for a CE course, particularly in the dead of winter, so Korte said he is looking into offering courses in warmer climates in the future.

Change does not happen overnight, he added, but people have noticed the improvements he has made and are providing helpful feedback. "This is all about giving Saskatchewan dentists access to quality CE opportunities." ■

For detailed information about Continuing Professional Dental Education seminars and events, and to register, visit [usask.ca/dentistry/cpde](http://usask.ca/dentistry/cpde)

### **DIGITAL GUIDED SURGERY AND IMPRESSION SCANNING TECHNOLOGY**

Lecture and hands-on course presented by Sinclair Dental  
June 3, 2017  
College of Dentistry, U of S Campus  
8 am-4 pm

### **2017 SASKATCHEWAN ORAL HEALTH CONFERENCE**

Presented by the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan  
Sept. 28 - 30, 2017  
Double Tree by Hilton Hotel & Conference Centre Regina

### **EVIDENCE BASED MANAGEMENT OF TMD**

Oct. 28, 2017  
Health Sciences Building,  
Room GB03, U of S Campus  
8 am-4 pm

### **2-DAY MINIMAL CONSCIOUS SEDATION**

Hands-on course; Dentists Only  
Nov. 25 and 26, 2017  
College of Dentistry, U of S Campus  
8 am-4 pm both days

### **BOUTIQUE WEALTH STRATEGIES**

Dec. 2, 2017  
Health Sciences Building,  
Room E2334, U of S Campus  
8 am-noon

### **CPR CERTIFICATION/DENTAL EMERGENCIES**

Hands on course  
Jan. 13, 2018  
Health Sciences Building,  
Room E2350, U of S Campus  
8 am-4 pm

# COLLEGE FUNDS OFFER OPTIONS FOR SUPPORTING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Enhancing the experiences that students have throughout their education takes many forms, and the College of Dentistry has a number of options for people interested in seeing it happen. The college maintains a number of funds that are earmarked for specific purposes. Donations to the funds provide the college with financial flexibility to address needs and to tackle long-term projects that are not provided for in its yearly operating budget. The various funds also offer the opportunity for donors to match their interests with the projects and priorities identified in the college.

## INFRASTRUCTURE REVITALIZATION FUND

Established in 2012, the Infrastructure Revitalization Fund was set up to support equipment purchases and capital improvements to the college. It is important students are trained on state-of-the-art equipment in a modern setting. With the college building nearly 40 years old, donations to this fund allow for upgrades that would not otherwise be possible.

Since its inception, donations to the Infrastructure Revitalization Fund have made possible the purchase of, among other things, new dental chairs and lights on the clinic floor; clinic and oral surgery equipment; and has supported the construction of Clinic 120 Health Scienc-

es Dental Centre. Located on the college's main floor, Clinic 120 is home to the General Practice Residency program.

In 2016, donations to the fund totaled \$210,741.50, which includes a \$100,000 gift from the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CDSS). The CDSS is one of the college's long-standing regular donors; its contributions of more than a half-million dollars have supported the purchase of equipment, infrastructure upgrades, community outreach and student awards.

## OUTREACH FUND

The college's Outreach Fund is relatively new and is designed to support community outreach programs. The intention

is to address the dental needs of the most vulnerable populations in rural, urban and northern areas of Saskatchewan. It was first used in 2016 when \$10,000 was allocated to help provide much-needed dental care for Syrian refugees new to Saskatoon.

Over \$43,000 has been donated to the Outreach Fund, with \$29,000 of that total earmarked for a mobile dental unit.

## ANNUAL FUND

Donors interested in helping students directly can do so through the College of Dentistry Annual Fund. The fund is part of a U of S-wide initiative called the Campaign for Students, and donations made to the college provide Opportu-

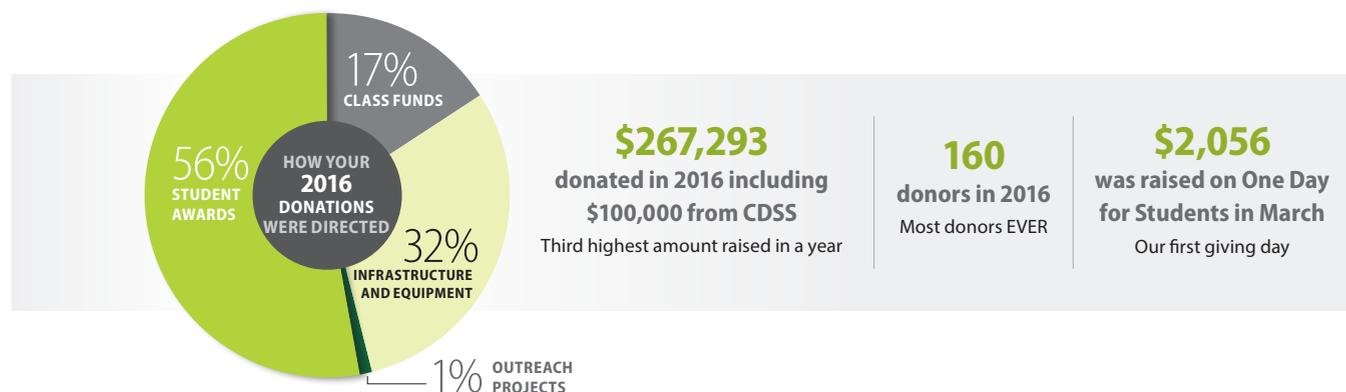
nity Awards for first- and second-year students.

In 2016-17, \$12,000 in Opportunity Awards went to density students.

## CLASS FUNDS

In addition to the college-based funds, a number of graduates from a single year have set up class funds, usually to celebrate a milestone reunion. The first to do so was the Class of 1972.

Most of the class funds target specific projects. For example, the Class of 1980 purchased classroom tables and chairs as well as an x-ray unit, the Class of 1996 created a scholarship for second-year students, and the Class of 2003 specified their fund be spent on an oral surgery chair and clinic equipment. ■



For more information about these funds or other opportunities to support the college, contact Stacey Schewaga, leadership giving and donor relations officer, at 306-966-4001 or at [stacey.schewaga@usask.ca](mailto:stacey.schewaga@usask.ca)



## DR. VINCENT TORRESYAP SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATES THE ARDUOUS ROAD TO TENURE



Dr. Vincent Torresyap.

**Dr. Vincent Torresyap recently reached an important milestone in his career at the College of Dentistry, that of being awarded tenure by the University of Saskatchewan.**

**T**he road to tenure is long and arduous, and it is one Torresyap has been on since he joined the college in July 2011 after completing an implant fellowship at Ohio State University and a prosthodontics residency at The Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry, University of Southern California. Tenure requirements include teaching, publishing research and private practice, he said, as well as passing a Royal College of Dentists of Canada specialty examination.

Torresyap said start-up funds provided to new faculty by the college and university allowed him and colleague Dr. Jay Hoover to mount a research project that resulted in two papers, both published in the International Journal of Prosthodontics and Restorative Dentistry with Torresyap as first author.

In 2015, Torresyap was first author of an additional paper. This one, published in The Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry, described the characteristics of biofilm found under cemented restorations. That research will continue, he said, and will involve exploring new cementing protocols as well as formulating new cements with ingredients that eliminate the bacteria.

The college review committee evaluates tenure submissions, including the appli-

cant's teaching performance, research and practice of professional skills.

Once the college review committee completes its evaluation, its recommendation then goes to the university review committee for consideration. Torresyap recently received a letter from U of S President Peter Stoicheff confirming his tenure; he will be honoured, along with tenure recipients from across campus, at a celebration May 24.

"It's been a long five years," he said. Torresyap gives credit to his colleagues, support staff in the college and his wife for helping him meet the tenure requirements all while maintaining his teaching and private practice responsibilities and "being available to students in your spare time, if you have any." ■

## ALUMNI COME TOGETHER



**T**he College of Dentistry hosted its largest ever gathering of alumni when about 200 alumni and guests came together in Vancouver on March 9 to reminisce and reconnect. The college-sponsored reception was held in conjunction with the Pacific Dental Conference, Canada's premier dental conference and one of the largest in North America. ■



# CELEBRATIONS

## ENGAGEMENTS



*Kassidy Stevenson and Kyle Diakow*



*Kristen Major and Brendon Gryba*



*Blake Mitchell and Renee Lemieux*

## WEDDINGS



*Megan Lamontagne and Michael Koskie*



*Jennifer Park and JJ Kim*

## ARRIVALS



*Timothy Garrett Burns*



*Brynn Filan*



*Alexander Joseph Phee*



*Elle Hamilton*

# CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2017



Dr. Steven Arcand



Dr. Kayla Cardiff



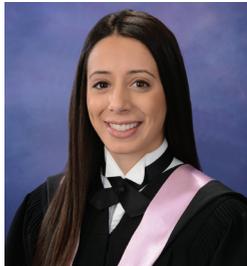
Dr. Christina Chiesa



Dr. Khalil Delawarally



Dr. Andrew Doig



Dr. Savannah Dreger



Dr. Jordan Enns



Dr. Davis Guenther



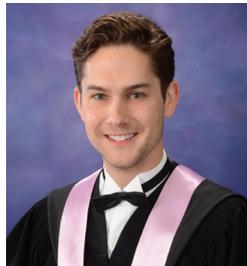
Dr. Trislyn Herrick



Dr. Marina Jones



Dr. Grace Kang



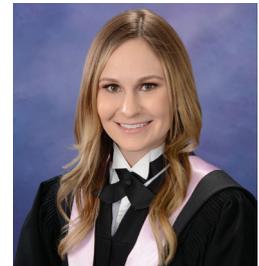
Dr. Jason Kopchynski



Dr. Brittany MacDougall



Dr. Troy Muench



Dr. Sara Rayner



Dr. Brendon Reynaud



Dr. Daniel Salloum



Dr. Brett Spenrath



Dr. Radu Ioan Stefureac



Dr. Jeremy Svenkeson



Dr. Lauren Tarasoff



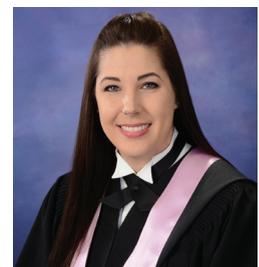
Dr. Ashley Toporowski



Dr. Eric Tuttosi



Dr. Brock Wilde



Dr. Jessie Zoorkan



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**College of Dentistry**  
USASK.CA/DENTISTRY

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