

ON THE CUSP[®]

The Official Magazine of Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine • Summer 2025 • Volume 2; Issue 2

ADVOCATING FOR ORAL HEALTH

Students champion important causes in Albany and DC

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Stony Brook
School of Dental Medicine

SDM students and residents visited the Cradle of Aviation to participate in Nassau County Dental Society Give Kids a Smile Day, providing preventive care for more than 1,000 children.





The Class of 2025 officially retired the School of Dental Medicine's royal blue scrubs at their Senior Dinner, gifting a signed top to this year's graduation grand marshal, Dr. Jeffrey Seiver.

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A LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear Colleagues,

This issue of *On the Cusp®* showcases how our students are participating in and learning about the legislative process, both at the state and federal levels. Advocating for the public and profession, alongside leaders in organized dentistry and legislators, offers them the knowledge and experience that will benefit them and those they will care for once they enter practice. It was clear that the occasion left everyone more learned about the bills under consideration and their potential impact on patients and providers.

Taking second in our lead stories is a recap of the convocation celebration for the Class of 2025, which captures the joy and pride beaming from the faces of so many – students, family members, friends, staff and faculty. Special mention is made of the recognition many received for their achievements, and the list of residencies that the class has matched into provides further evidence of their ability and talents.

A section of the magazine is dedicated to the school's ever-growing efforts in research, something that is so critical to our vitality on the Stony Brook campus. This includes a new NIH award, collaborating with biomedical engineering faculty, that will explore the use of AI to identify significant clinical findings from CBCTs taken for dental treatment planning. Also highlighted is our annual Research Symposium, where the entire school is engaged to contribute to or participate in a sharing of discoveries that move the profession forward so that others can learn from our work.

Spotted throughout the issue are photos and articles about the new senior staff and faculty the school has recruited, as well as select physical enhancements being made to facilities that will be appreciated by our learners and faculty alike. Combined, these are what help us recruit the best students and residents, and hire additional leaders in the school.

To inform readers of the individual efforts of alumni, staff and faculty are making in their communities and in the school, a clustering of acknowledgements pays tribute to the various ways each stands out. In particular, a detailed review of the history of a distinguished alum who has been a student, faculty member and dean, and how she is transitioning, provides an insight that few stories could achieve.

For those looking to be part of the school's upcoming celebrations, an event calendar shows when and where receptions are planned. The SmileCon meeting and our

annual alumni reunion day in particular should catch your eye. This will be the final national ADA meeting, and thus it could be one of those moments that will be remembered by attendees for years to come. And for those celebrating a milestone graduation year, be sure to see where you can join your classmates this fall.

The closing story is about two graduates, who met on campus, earned their degrees at Stony Brook and found their dental careers to be so professionally satisfying and personally rewarding.

How pleased we are to share this edition of *On the Cusp®* with you so that you can continue following along as our school does its part to shape the profession for the next generation of oral healthcare providers and the public.

All the very best,

Patrick M. Lloyd, DDS, MS
Professor and Dean, School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook University





Stony Brook students Christina Chalmers and Anthony Monaco, as well as Dean Patrick Lloyd, met with New York State Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner to advocate for improvements in oral health that will benefit patients, providers and communities throughout the state. NYS photos by Vanessa Wheeler.

PRIORITIZING ORAL HEALTH ADVOCACY

Students Seize Opportunity to Push for Change in Albany and DC

Behind the oral healthcare provided in operatories, emergency rooms and mobile clinics around the country are the conversations taking place in conference rooms and chambers at the local, regional and national levels.

Like the mouth is the gateway to the body, its health closely intertwined with a person's overall well-being, making these visits, connections and cases are crucial to the health of dentistry and the communities they serve.

Stony Brook students have been on the front line of such efforts in recent months, traveling to the New York State Capitol, as well as the United States Capitol, to advocate for oral healthcare initiatives benefiting not just patients but entire communities, as well as the more than 40,000 dental professionals practicing in New York State. The experiences have been an introduction to the people, places and methods

"Advocacy at the state and national level is critical for advancing oral healthcare," said Patrick Lloyd, dean of Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. "In partnering with organized dentistry to champion policies that expand access and promote preventive care, we can help transform communities and ensure every patient receives the care they deserve."

The New York State Dental Association (NYSDA) hosted in-person advocacy events over the winter and spring that focused on three topics: workforce, dental insurance reform and access to care.

ADVOCACY, continued on page 8

ADVOCACY, continued from page 7

Advocacy is a two-way street. To better understand bills that are proposed, Lloyd said that legislators appointed to key roles on health and education committees are eager to gather information from those in the profession, including dental school personnel. Visits from institutions like Stony Brook help familiarize lawmakers with, among other subjects, how schools can contribute to a more favorable distribution of dental providers in New York State. In turn, such interactions can train students on the nuances of advocacy and inspire them to become lifelong oral healthcare ambassadors.

New York State Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner has long made community health a priority, especially for underserved populations, proposing legislation ranging from improving broadband internet coverage to facilitating access to affordable, nutritious foods in rural and urban supermarkets. She, too, is concerned with the dearth of dentists in Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSA); over 40 percent of counties in

New York are full or partial DHPSAs. Woerner has thus backed bills aimed at, among other topics, expanding loan relief to dentists and making purchases of oral hygiene products tax-exempt.

“The best predictor of good health throughout your life, and into old age, is how well you care for your teeth, and how much care you get from the dentists in our communities,” Assemblywoman Woerner said in a media address in March. “What I’ve also learned is we have a critical shortage of dentists, particularly in our poorer and rural communities. We need to fix that problem.”

Stony Brook is supporting these bills at home through such financial aid opportunities as the Dean’s Scholarship Fund for Underrepresented Students and the Drs. Richard and Mary Truhlar Endowed Scholarship. Stony Brook has made a point to recruit students from upstate New York, helping to address shortages seen in underserved areas.

Anthony Monaco, DDS ’25, who joined Lloyd and second-year dental student Christina Chalmers on



Dean Lloyd with D4 student Selin Ozturk prior to their meeting with Congresswoman Elise Stefanik



Rising D3 students Shayna Winston (left) and Kawalpreet Kaur in the nation's capital



Anthony Monaco, DDS '25 (right), then a fourth-year dental student, shares his perspective with Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner (left) in Albany.

the Albany visit, was one of the inaugural recipients of the Dean’s Scholarship. For him, advocacy efforts are personal. He grew up in Laurens, New York, a town of about 2,400 people in Otsego County, where dental services is limited, and specialty dental care often requires driving upward of two hours for care. It’s an inconvenience for some, and a non-starter for others, who may not have the money or time to make the trip. To help address the healthcare disparity, Monaco expects to return to central New York to provide care in or near his hometown after he completes his general practice residency at NewYork-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital.

“Having grown up in a rural community, I have witnessed firsthand the impact that limited access to care can have on individuals and families,” Monaco said. “Given that many New Yorkers lack a dental home, it is imperative that state leadership and its institutions take active steps to address unmet oral

health needs. Drawing from our training and patient care experiences, our group offered well-informed perspectives to help guide policymakers in a direction that promotes equitable access to dental care.”

In addition to state politicians, the Stony Brook contingent met with NYSDA members, and partnered with them in conversations with legislators. These partnerships, said Lloyd, are vital in advancing initiatives that may eventually benefit the public and the profession.

“Learning from and partnering with organizations like NYSDA and the American Dental Association only help to amplify our voice in advocating for oral healthcare for positive change,” he said.

Advocacy, though, doesn’t stop at the state’s boundaries. To learn further about oral healthcare issues and policies at a national level, 10 Stony Brook dental students accompanied Lloyd to Washington, DC,

ADVOCACY, continued on page 10

ADVOCACY, continued from page 9

for the ADA's annual Dentist and Student Advocacy Day. Topics ranged from community water fluoridation and student loan reform to proposed bills such as the Dental and Optometric Care (DOC) Access Act, which is aimed at regulating anti-competitive practices by dental and vision insurance companies, restoring control to patients and providers. The Stony Brook collective met with New York legislators who convey their interests to a broader audience.

Chalmers connected with Congressman Nick LaLota inside the US Capitol building concerning topics including water fluoridation and the Resident Education Deferred Interest (REDI) Act, which has garnered bipartisan support from healthcare organizations, including the ADA. The bill would allow postgraduate students to earn interest-free deferment on their student loans during residency.

“It was an incredibly rewarding experience that showed how students can play a role in shaping the future of our profession and the quality of patient care,” Chalmers said. “Having the opportunity to speak with Representative LaLota offered a new perspective in support of the REDI Act — that of the dental student. Many of us have taken significant student loan debt to finance our education, and the REDI Act would offer us the opportunity to pause interest accrual, so we do not continue to accumulate debt while completing a specialty program. This would relieve a major financial burden and encourage more dentists to pursue careers in community health and research.”

The experience proved meaningful for her and her classmates — and by keeping these conversations going, the ripple effects could lead to lasting improvements in both patient care and the profession at large.

ADVOCATING FOR BRIGHTER SMILES

By Christina Chalmers, D3 student

Advocacy in dentistry is a powerful force for driving change — within our communities, the healthcare system, and in improving access to oral healthcare. By extending beyond the clinical aspects of dentistry, dental professionals can shape the future of the profession and improve access to essential oral health care needs.

Advocacy isn't just limited to professionals; dental students, too, play an important role. From advocating for changes in student loan repayment to contributing new perspectives to longstanding challenges, students are helping to lead conversations that will impact future dental care. As students attending a state university, there is increased responsibility for us to advocate for expanded care for underserved populations across the state.

This March, I joined thousands of dentists and dental students in Washington, DC, to advocate on behalf of patients and fellow students. My classmates and I met with lawmakers, and discussed issues impacting dentistry. At the Capitol Building, I spoke with US Representative Nick LaLota about several pressing topics, including the importance of promoting community water fluoridation and increasing NIH funding for fluoride research to address misconceptions about its safety. I was able to express



ADVOCACY

my support for the Resident Education Deferred Interest Act (REDI), which would allow dental residents to qualify for an interest free deferment of student loan payments while completing their residency program. I explained how this legislation could encourage dental students to participate in research or serve in underserved communities by helping to alleviate the financial burden of student loan debt.

Motivated by the impact we could make, I later traveled to Albany to participate in the NYSDA Access to Care Advocacy event. There, I met with state senators, including Senator Rivera and Senator Gallivan, to discuss initiatives aimed at expanding access to care in New York State. One proposal involved expanding the scope of practice for dental hygienists by allowing them to administer block anesthesia. This would allow dentists to focus on complex care and improve workflow. Another initiative advocated for permitting dentists to administer the HPV vaccine and in emergency situations, the COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations.

To be involved in efforts to improve the future of dentistry has been an extremely rewarding experience and has emphasized the importance of organized action and using our voices to shape the profession and patient care. I encourage all dental students to get involved with advocacy efforts to help create a longstanding impact on the healthcare system within our communities.

A WEEKEND IN WASHINGTON

Dean Patrick Lloyd and 10 Stony Brook dental students promoted dental healthcare initiatives over a full weekend in the nation's capital. Here's what their schedule looked like:



- MARCH 31**
- 8:45am Opening Remarks and Issue Review
 - 10:15am Members of Congress presentation
 - 11:15am How to Meet with Your Member of Congress
 - 12:15pm Networking/Strategy Lunch
 - 4:30pm Meeting with Senator Chuck Schumer's Office
 - 5:00pm Fundraising reception for Rep. Brian Babin, DDS (TX-36)

- APRIL 1**
- 10:30am Meeting with Rep. Elise Stefanik's Office
 - 1:00pm Meeting with Rep. Andrew Garbarino's Office
 - 1:45am Meeting with Rep. Nick LaLota's Office
 - 2:15pm Meeting with Rep. Tom Suozzi's Office
 - 3:00pm Meeting with Rep. John Mannion's Office



SDM students and administration met with legislators in Washington, DC, to promote numerous oral healthcare initiatives at the annual American Dental Association (ADA) Advocacy Day.



Chalmers meets Congressman Nick LaLota inside the US Capitol.



Clockwise from top: The DDS Class of 2025; new dentists Sana Sabir, Jana Makki and Maryam Hafeez celebrate; Alonzo Tabada, DDS '25, and his extended family; Chloe Beninati, DDS '22, Endo '25, with daughter and a potential future grad; Jonathan D'Costa, DDS '25, on stage; Evan Weingarten, DDS '25, with family at the post-ceremony festivities. Opposite page: Class President Dana Lee, DDS '25, delivers the graduate keynote address.

CLASS OF 2025 SMILES EAR TO EAR AT CONVOCATION CEREMONY

Pride and joy brimmed and — fittingly — smiles stretched from ear to ear as Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine's Class of 2025 proudly crossed the stage to receive their dental school degrees and advanced degree certificates at the annual convocation ceremony held at Stony Brook University's Staller Center for the Arts.

The school's newest dentists, 47 Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) graduates will now continue their residency training in areas including general dentistry, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics, pediatric dentistry, periodontics and prosthodontics. Additionally, 37 residents, one doctoral student and one master's degree student were feted by the event's more than 500 attendees.

Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine, acknowledged the lasting impact the class has had at Stony Brook, having brought distinct personalities, life experiences and varied educational backgrounds to the school.

"Thank you for helping shape our school," he said. "You've left a mark on it that will benefit those who follow for years and years to come. And for that we are truly grateful."

His address was followed by that of Class President Dana Lee, DDS '25, who encouraged her peers to take a moment to reflect on their incredible achievement, and the path they took to arrive at their goal.

"We didn't just survive dental school. We thrived. We persevered," Lee said. "We grew into clinicians, advocates and caregivers in the truest sense of the word. And through every challenge — every practical, every patient, every setback — we showed up, with grit and grace.

"It's easy to forget what we've actually accomplished after the whirlwind has died down, to forget how extraordinary it is to get here," she continued. "So before we rush off into residencies, practices, or well-deserved vacations — take a second to breathe this in. Let the weight of this moment settle in your chest. You took the road less traveled, and getting here, to this moment, was no small task. You deserve it. You've earned it."

Lee, like more than 30 of her classmates, began residency this summer in New York State. The SDM's newest alumni joined programs in 10 other states, including California, Florida, Maine, Maryland,

Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia. At graduation, Vito Liut, DDS '25, soaked in the moment before heading off to his prosthodontics residency with the United States Dental Corps at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

"Everything will probably kick in for me in a couple days," Liut said. "There were a lot of challenges, tears and happiness in dental school, but I'm glad I went through it, especially with my classmates. I would definitely do it again. It was worth it."

CONVOCATION, continued on page 14



“I would definitely do it again. It was worth it.”

– Vito Liut, DDS '25

CONVOCATION, continued from page 13

From graduation, Aditya Mehra, DDS '25, continued his career as a general practice resident at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts. He called convocation “a beautiful experience” but also acknowledged that the moment was bittersweet.

“It’s been really nice to celebrate with my classmates, who I’m going to miss,” Mehra said. “Dental school was definitely daunting at first, but the four years went by really quickly. It all came together in the end. I’m thankful for everybody who was there to help me throughout the way. I couldn’t have done it without the faculty, my friends and my family.”

They included Arielle Adams, DDS '25, who came to Stony Brook after started her career in oral healthcare as a dental hygienist. With two of her dental school classmates, Adams recently started her general practice residency at the VA Medical Center in Buffalo, New York,

not far from where she grew up.

“It feels fantastic,” Adams said. “Many years of hard work were put into this, and I give thanks to my family and friends. We made it. I’m so grateful.”

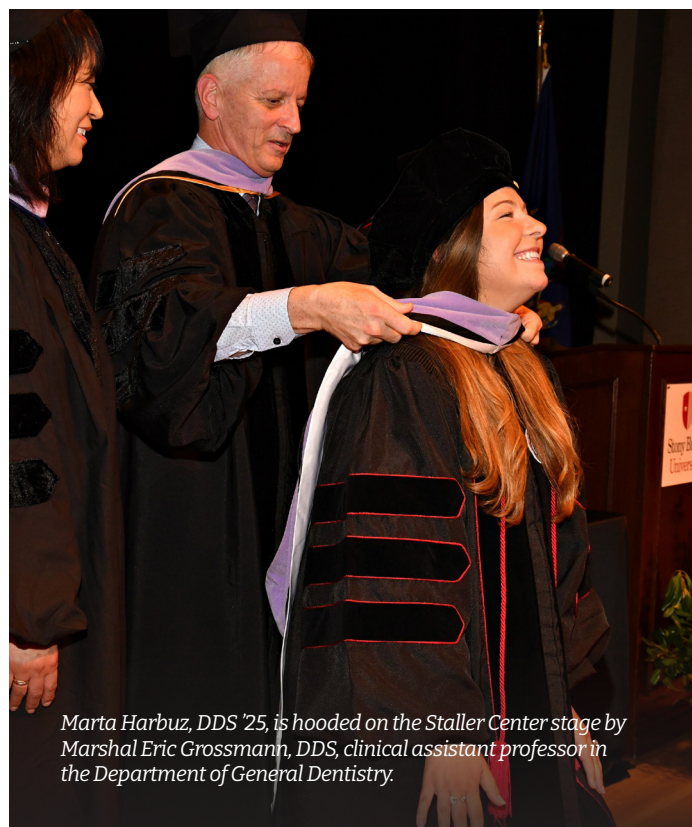
Like with the DDS class, residents and graduate students crossed the stage to great applause. Among them was Kyle Reeves, DDS, OMFR '25, who owned and operated a private practice in Texas for more than 20 years before coming to Stony Brook to complete an oral and maxillofacial radiology residency. His son, daughter-in-law and 2-year-old granddaughter flew in to celebrate at convocation, after which Reeves returned to Texas to split his duties between an oral and maxillofacial radiology private practice as well as teaching part-time in Dallas and Houston.

“I’m thankful for the opportunity to be able to pursue a Plan B in my career,” Reeves said. “Being in private practice and coming back into an academic institution, it was humbling to have to learn and relearn some things. I had an excellent experience at Stony Brook, and the time I got to spend with my co-residents, and with Dr. [Mina] Mahdian and Dr. [Dan] Colosi, has been very rewarding.”

The afternoon’s keynote address was delivered by Canise Bean, DMD, MPH, professor emeritus at The Ohio State University College of Dentistry and a leader in helping to deliver oral healthcare services to underserved areas in Ohio. Bean served as the director of community education at OSU for more than 20 years, overseeing the Oral Health Improvement through Outreach (OHIO) Project, a mobile dental coach that cared for children in Columbus City Schools as well as 27 other community-based sites.

Bean implored the Class of 2025 to allow their passions and values to serve as beacons throughout their careers, and to continue to learn, mentor, innovate and give back.

“The road is yours to shape,” she said. “You’re stepping into a world of tremendous opportunity, and you’re entering a profession that has the power to change lives. Not only are you dental professionals, but keep in mind that you are healers, you are educators, you are innovators and you are advocates.”



Marta Harbuz, DDS '25, is hooded on the Staller Center stage by Marshal Eric Grossmanh, DDS, clinical assistant professor in the Department of General Dentistry.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE NEWEST DENTISTS

On The Cusp® asked the most recent inductees to the School of Dental Medicine’s Omicron Kappa Upsilon Dental Honor Society to share their thoughts on the journey they had just taken through dental school, what lies ahead, and advice that they have for first-year dental students coming to Stony Brook this month.



Lauren Mistretta

Hometown: Bethpage, NY
Undergrad: Stony Brook University
Residency: Orthodontics, Stony Brook University

What’s one piece of advice you have for first-year dental students?

Dental school is challenging, but consistent practice truly makes a difference. Your effort will show in your work. If you stay committed, always do your best and prioritize your patients’ well-being, success will follow.



Stanley Faynblut

Hometown: Lawrence, NY
Undergrad: University of Connecticut
Residency: GPR, South Brooklyn Health

How will you look back on your time at Stony Brook?

Stony Brook has prepared us exceptionally well. Beyond the clinical and academic foundation, what I’ll cherish most are the relationships I built along the way. In such a tight-knit community, classmates and faculty quickly became family. We supported one another through every challenge and celebrated each success.



George Kokkinos

Hometown: Voula, Greece/Bayside, NY
Undergrad: Queens College
Residency: GPR, VAMC New York

What do you look forward to the most about being a dentist?

I truly look forward to the journey ahead, helping more people, transforming smiles, and positively impacting lives every single day. Dental school provided an incredible foundation, but I know it’s only the beginning of a lifelong path of learning and growth in this profession.

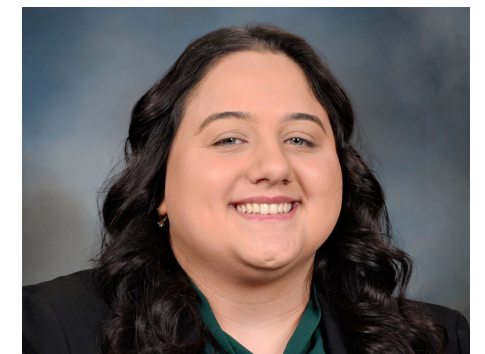


Allyson Newman

Hometown: Syosset, NY
Undergrad: Cornell University
Residency: Prosthodontics, Columbia University

What’s one piece of advice you have for first-year dental students?

Don’t take anything for granted. Dental school moves quickly, and each experience—whether clinical, academic, or personal—has something valuable to teach you. Support your peers, learn from each other, and always prioritize your patients. Integrity and collaboration are just as important as clinical skill. There are no shortcuts.



Rachel Swed

Hometown: Brooklyn, NY
Undergrad: Brooklyn College
Residency: GPR, One Brooklyn Health

How will you look back on your time at Stony Brook?

I’ll look back on my time at Stony Brook with immense gratitude. It was a place where I grew not only as a clinician, but as a person. The support from faculty, the friendships built with classmates, and the countless clinical and community experiences shaped me into the dentist I’ve always wanted to be.

CLASS OF 2025 POSTGRADUATE PLACEMENT

Another outstanding match season has the 47 members of the Class of 2025 going off to residency programs throughout the country, including 33 who will continue their training in New York State.

Arielle Adams
AEGD
VA Medical Center
Buffalo, NY

Sarh Aly
GPR
Hackensack Meridian Health
Hackensack, NJ

Aabir Aslam
GPR
University of Texas
School of Dentistry
Houston, TX

Brandon Axelrod
OMFS
NY-Presbyterian – Weill Cornell
New York, NY

Daniel Belfiore
GPR
St. Charles Hospital
Port Jefferson, NY

Bin Chen
GPR
NYU Langone
Brooklyn, NY

Sally Chen
GPR
NYC Health + Hospitals
Brooklyn, NY

Cailin Cleary
Pediatric Dentistry
Bon Secours St. Mary’s Hospital
Richmond, VA

Anthony Curmi
GPR
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH

Jonathan D’Costa
GPR
St. Charles Hospital
Port Jefferson, NY

Joseph De Leon
OMFS
Rutgers School of Dental Medicine
Newark, NJ

Beshoy Farah
GPR
Stony Brook School of
Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

Ariella Farahmandpour
GPR
Stony Brook School of
Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

Stanley Faynblut
GPR
NYC Health + Hospitals
Brooklyn, NY

Eric Fung
GPR
VA Medical Center
Northport, NY

Yuriy Garaev
GPR
Kings County Hospital Center
Brooklyn, NY

Shiley Grinbaum
GPR
NY-Presbyterian – Weill Cornell
New York, NY

Maryam Hafeez
Periodontics
Rutgers School of Dental Medicine
Newark, NJ

Marta Harbuz
AEGD
NYU Langone Health
Bradenton, FL

Nicholas Kagelmacher
AEGD
VA Medical Center
Buffalo, NY

Elise Kaufman
GPR
VA Medical Center
Northport, NY

George Kokkinos
GPR
VA Medical Center
New York, NY

Jackie Kostenko
AEGD
VA Medical Center
Miami, FL

Dana Lee
AEGD
Columbia University
New York, NY

Kasey Lin
Pediatric Dentistry
Wyckoff Heights Medical Center
Brooklyn, NY

Kevin Lin
Pediatric Dentistry
Cohen Children’s Medical Center
New Hyde Park, NY

Vito Liut
Prosthodontics
Walter Reed National Medical Center
Bethesda, MD

Raymond Lopez
GPR
Stony Brook School of
Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

Jana Makki
GPR
VA Medical Center
New York, NY

Aditya Mehra
GPR
VA Medical Center
Boston, MA

Veenna Minnal
GPR
NYU Langone Health
Mineola, NY

Lauren Mistretta
Orthodontics
Stony Brook School of
Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

Anthony Monaco
GPR
NYP Hospital – Brooklyn Methodist
Brooklyn, NY

Britney Nam
GPR
St. Charles Hospital
Port Jefferson, NY

Allyson Newman
Prosthodontics
Columbia University
New York, NY

Elina Nourmand
GPR
NYP Hospital – Brooklyn Methodist
Brooklyn, NY

Christine Om
GPR
NYU Langone Health
Mineola, NY

Ajay Panesar
AEGD
VA Medical Center
Chelsea, ME

Eric Pun
GPR
NYC Health + Hospitals
Jamaica, NY

Sana Sabir
GPR
Stony Brook School of
Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

Mohammad Amin Sadeghi
GPR
NYU Langone
Mineola, NY

Deepak Sharma
GPR
NYC Health + Hospitals
Jamaica, NY

Scott Steimle
GPR
VA Medical Center
Mare Island, CA

Rachel Swed
GPR
One Brooklyn Health
Brooklyn, NY

Alonzo Tabada
Pediatric Dentistry
St. Christopher’s Hospital
Philadelphia, PA

Evan Weingarten
GPR
SBH Health System
Bronx, NY

Kevin Zhang
GPR
NYU Langone
Brooklyn, NY





WHITE COATS FIT JUST RIGHT

The Class of 2028 pledged their commitment to dentistry at their White Coat Ceremony in May.

In front of family and friends, 46 first-year students at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine's Class of 2028 pledged their commitment to excellence and ethics in patient care at the annual White Coat Ceremony, held at the Sidney Gelber Auditorium on Stony Brook University's main campus.

Eighty-seven percent of the class hails from New York State, a promising figure given the school's commitment to build up the dentistry workforce, particularly in Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSAs). They came to the SDM from 23 undergraduate institutions, including 11 who earned their bachelor's degree at Stony Brook University.

The white coats symbolizing their dedication to the well-being of their patients, the Class of 2028

will begin seeing patients in the Dental Care Center (DCC) in the spring of their first year before seeing a full complement of patients at the beginning of their second year, a clinical setup unique on the dental school landscape.

"We, your faculty, look forward to deepening your knowledge, refining your values, and teaching you skills over the next three years so that you will be prepared to bear the title of doctor," said Dolores Cannella, MA, PhD, associate dean for education and associate professor in the Department of General Dentistry. "But we are not your only teachers. Your patients will indeed teach you as well. Remember to be astute observers and listeners to your patients, who will teach you how to reach a proper diagnosis, how to deliver patient-centered care

and how to improve patient lives."

Brian Howe, DMD, MS, associate dean for clinical operations and patient care in the DCC and associate professor in the Department of General Dentistry, shared helpful "pearls" that he has accumulated in his years of practice, hallmarked by compassion, compromise and commitment to continuous improvement. Also, he recommended that they take advantage of emerging technology in the field but

not lose sight of what's most important in caring for patients.

"Remember the impact that you have on each patient you see. Remember, it is about the person you are treating," Howe said. "Technology is a great tool that allows us to provide amazing dentistry, but keep in mind that dentistry isn't about the gadgets and the wow factor. It is about taking care of people and the impact that you will have on their lives."

MADDALENA NAMED 2025 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

Gregory Maddalena, DDS '05, GPR '06, chief dental officer for Sun River Health in New Paltz, New York, the largest network of oral health Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) in the state, is the 2025 recipient of the School of Dental Medicine's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Since graduating with his DDS degree, Maddalena went on to private practice in New York and New Hampshire, and much of his service has centered around providing care for underserved populations, beginning with his care of farm workers on the east end of Long Island. It continued when he and his wife, Amy Angiolillo, MD '05, relocated to the Hudson Valley, where at Sun River Health he began to care for a wide range of patients, including workers at the local apple farms.

In 2020, he took over as the organization's chief dental officer, overseeing 24 dental offices throughout southeastern New York, including in his primary office in New Paltz. The majority of the patients he and his staff care for earn below the federal poverty line, yet he shared with the audience how fulfilling — and important — the service he provides.

"I am honored and humbled to receive the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, which gave me a strong foundation to provide high-quality care to high-needs patients," Maddalena said. "This is so essential in New York State, where nearly half of the 62 counties face full or partial dental care shortages, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations."



Award recipient Gregory Maddalena (center) with school administration

A RANGE OF ACCOLADES

PhD student **Abdel Hameed Mahmoud, DDS**, earned first place for his research poster at the American Association of Endodontists (AAE) annual meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. Mahmoud's research, titled "An Innovative Injectable Retrievable and Sustainable Drug Delivery System for Endodontic Therapy", showcased a new thermo-reversible hydrogel that, combined with calcium hydroxide and salicylic acid, effectively eradicates *E. faecalis* biofilm, and improves intracanal delivery and retrievability in endodontic cases. His work was selected from a pool of more than 160 presenters at the specialty's largest conference. After completing his PhD at Stony Brook, Mahmoud joined the Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) program at Eastman Institute for Oral Health in Rochester, New York this summer, with designs on advancing into a career in endodontics, as a practitioner and educator.



Byung Min Nahm, DMD, Pros '25, captured first place in the Research Digital Poster category at the American Prosthodontic Society annual meeting in Chicago. His research examined the impact of a bone leveler on prosthetic abutment fit in subcrestal implant placement in guided implant surgery. Upon completing his tenure as chief resident in the program at Stony Brook, Nahm began his maxillofacial prosthetic fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City in July.



Third-year dental student **Astrid Bucaro** received the New York Academy of Dentistry Excellence in Research Award at the organization's event in New York City

in February. Bucaro's research focused on the efficacy of 5-fluorouracil in pediatric and young adult patients with odontogenic keratocysts.

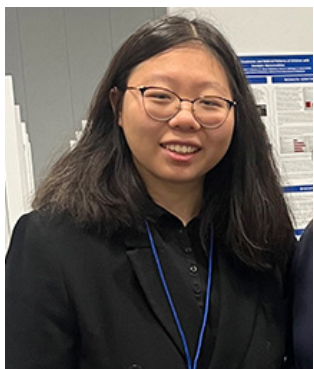
At its annual awards banquet in New York City, the New York Section of the American College of Dentists (ACD) recognized **George Kokkinos, DDS '25**, then a fourth-year dental student, for demonstrating outstanding student leadership at Stony Brook. Kokkinos, who graduated magna cum laude in May, left with a decorated resume, serving as president of the Dental Student Organization and Dentistry Declassified, social chair of the American Student Dental Association, teaching assistant for multiple courses, as well as presenting at multiple national conferences.



For his research on optimizing health and wellness screening recommendations for older adults, **Eric Pun, DDS '25**, earned third place among student posters at the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) annual meeting in National Harbor, Maryland. It marked the second time in the last three years that a Stony Brook student received accolades at the ADEA conference, joining Dana Chan, DDS '23.



Predental student **Isabella Ho** captured first place in the inaugural National Student Research Group (NSRG) Rising Researcher Competition at the 2025 American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research (AADOCR) meeting in New York City. Ho has twice been recognized with the Undergraduate Research Award at the SDM's annual research symposium.



Program director Tanya Somohano Marquez, DMD (center), is joined by university and school administration and staff to usher in a new era in prosthodontics at Stony Brook.

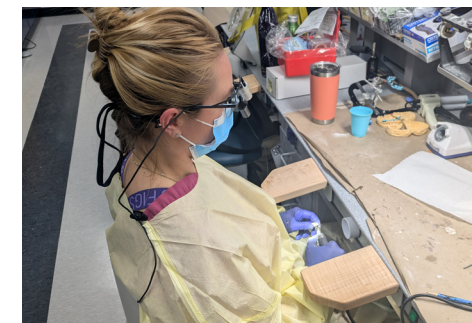
Together with staff from across the Stony Brook University campus, as well as corporate partners, the School of Dental Medicine officially opened its new prosthodontics residency laboratory with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 26. Equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and instruments, the lab will enable residents to learn, experiment and master how to best use the newest innovations in prosthodontics.

Doing the honors with cutting the ribbon was Tanya Somohano Marquez, DMD, director of the Advanced Dental Education Program in Prosthodontics. For the ceremony, she and Patrick Lloyd, DDS, MS, dean of the School of Dental Medicine, were accompanied by Laura Pellizzi (fourth from left), capital projects manager, Stony Brook University Campus Planning, Design

and Construction; Glen Itzkowitz (far right), associate dean, research facilities and operations, Stony Brook Medicine; representatives from equipment supplier Benco Dental; and several contractors responsible for the laboratory's renovations.

"With our new lab, our residents have the resources they need to provide optimal care for their patients, as well as equipment to streamline workflows and maximize their residency experience," Somohano Marquez added. "It is a beautiful new space that we look forward to using for many years to come."

The prosthodontics residency program was established in 2013, welcoming two residents annually for clinical, laboratory and didactic training in fixed, removable and implant prosthodontics.



The new prosthodontics laboratory provides residents with not only a larger space but the latest technologies to care for patients and advance their research.

RESEARCHERS AWARDED NIH GRANT TO EXPLORE HEART DISEASE CUES HIDDEN IN DENTAL SCANS

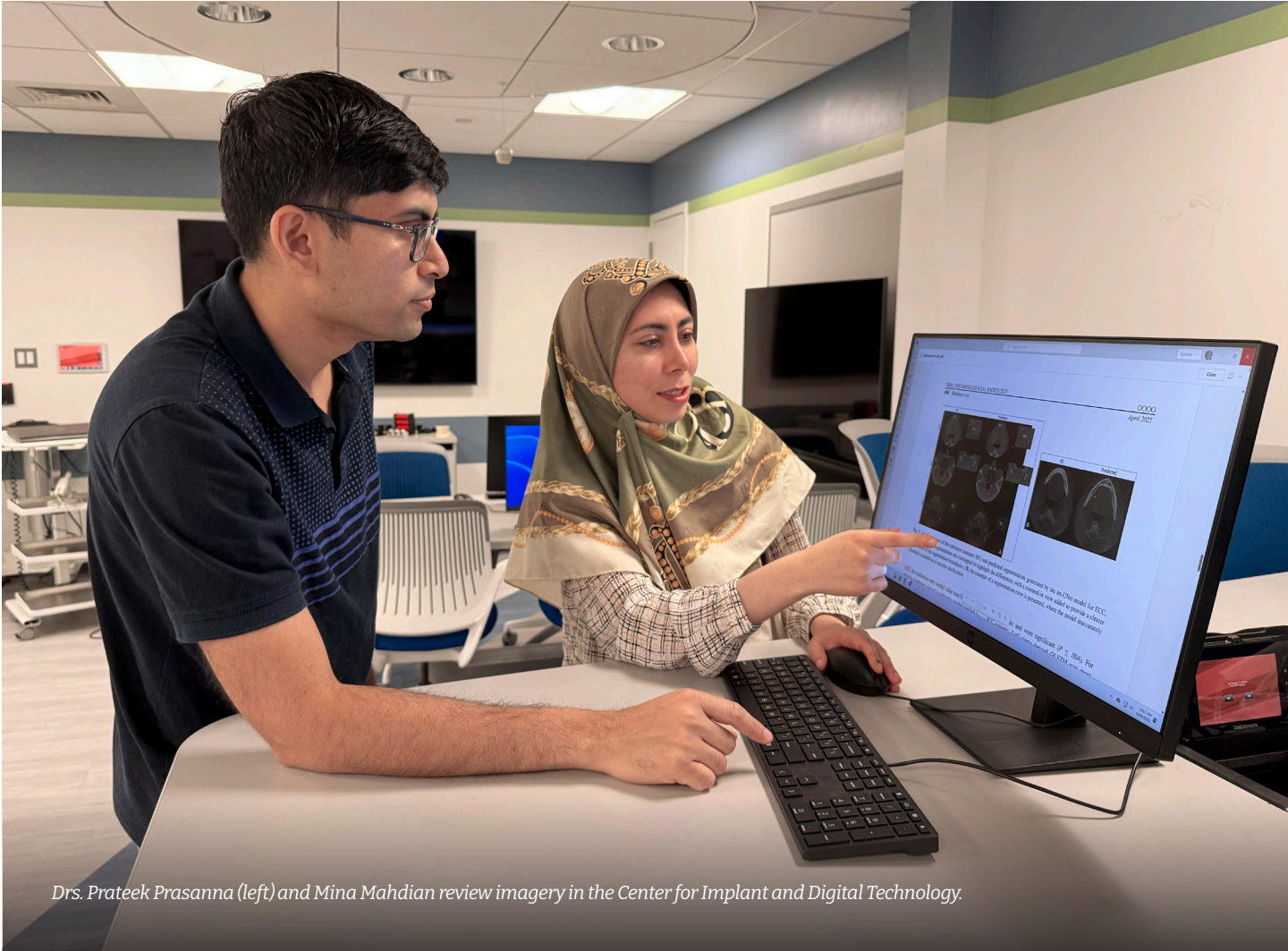
Mina Mahdian, DDS, MDSc, associate professor in the Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine Department of Prosthodontics and Digital Technology, and Prateek Prasanna, assistant professor in the Department of Biomedical Informatics, have received a \$300,000 grant from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to explore whether routine dental imaging can be used to detect early signs of heart disease.

The two-year research project is titled, “Automated Characterization of Arterial Calcification in Dental Cone Beam Computed Tomography as Predictors of Cardiovascular Disease.” It aims to develop an AI-driven

tool that can automatically identify and characterize arterial calcifications, mineral deposits that can signal cardiovascular risk, visible in cone beam CT (CBCT) scans commonly used in dental practices.

“I am excited about this project, as this is the first study to apply quantitative imaging biomarkers, such as radiomics, to characterize vascular calcifications in CBCT to predict cardiovascular disease,” Mahdian said. “The majority of current AI research is focused on common dental pathologies, whereas this project signifies the role of AI in assisting dental providers with predicting the risk of cardiovascular incidents based on dental CBCTs and making proper and timely referral.”

Mahdian is a member of the Global Initiative on



Drs. Prateek Prasanna (left) and Mina Mahdian review imagery in the Center for Implant and Digital Technology.



Dr. Mina Mahdian

Artificial Intelligence for Health, Dental Diagnostics and Digital Dentistry, a mission launched by the World Health Organization (WHO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Its aim is to improve healthcare worldwide using AI and promote the exchange of knowledge and the development of technical standards for the use of AI in the healthcare sector.

“At the IMAGINE Lab, we’re committed to pushing the boundaries of what AI can do for healthcare,

beyond traditional domains like cancer. This project is a prime example of how advanced machine learning and imaging analysis can reveal hidden signals in routine scans, like dental CBCTs, to inform risk for systemic diseases such as cardiovascular conditions,” said Prasanna, director of the Imaging Informatics for Precision Medicine (IMAGINE) Lab. “By bringing sophisticated computational tools to bear on everyday clinical data, we hope to enable earlier, more informed interventions, and showcase the broader impact AI can have across medicine.”

If successful, the technology could serve as an early warning system embedded in routine dental visits, alerting providers to possible risk factors and encouraging timely follow-up with medical professionals.

“Dr. Mahdian’s NIH award demonstrates the collaborative potential that exists when a dental school resides on a university campus and is an integral member of an academic health center. In such settings disciplines can capitalize on each other’s unique skills, technologies and clinical interpretations,” said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine. “It is from collegial environments like ours that discoveries are made, new knowledge is created and ultimately patients are better cared for. The future of the dental profession depends on schools with what we are and have done.”

The research is supported by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number R03DE033489.

RECENT SDM JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

Mahdian M, Ahmed AA, Bhattacharya M, Prasanna P. Deep learning and radiomics-based vascular calcification characterization in dental cone beam computed tomography as a predictive tool for cardiovascular disease: A proof-of-concept study. *Oral Surg Oral Med Oral Pathol Oral Radiol.*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oooo.2024.12.010>

Dai Q, Lee H-M, Giordano A, Chiang F-P, Walker SG, Delgado-Ruiz RA, Johnson F, Golub LM, Gu Y. (2025) Effect of a chemically-modified-curcumin on dental resin biodegradation. *Front. Oral. Health* 5:1506616. doi: 10.3389/froh.2024.1506616

Gu Y, Golub LM, Lee H-M, Walker SG (2025) Diabetes, periodontal disease, and novel therapeutic approaches- host modulation therapy. *Front. Clin. Diabetes Healthc.* 6:1529086. doi: 10.3389/fcdhc.2025.1529086

Nasehi A, Kurtz KS, Delgado-Ruiz R, Swanson PH. Retrieving a “frozen” over-torqued altered dental implant healing abutment: A dental technique. *J Prosthodont.* 2025; 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopr.14045>

Swanson, PH (2025), Open-internet OSCE in Implant Component Selection. *J Dent Educ.* <https://doi.org/10.1002/jdd.13838>



A DAY OF DISCOVERY

Zoe Katevatis, MS '25 (right) now a member of the DDS Class of 2029, presents her master's degree research findings to SDM faculty.

Continuing its mission to foster discovery and advance the field of dentistry, Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine (SDM) hosted its annual Research Symposium at Stony Brook University's Student Activities Center (SAC), with 46 students — at the undergraduate, dental school, master's and PhD levels — as well as residents presenting their findings.

Eight presenters received awards, including second-year dental student Astrid Bucaro, who was honored with the American Association of Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Research (AADOCR)/Dentsply Sirona Student Research Award for her study, Topical 5-Fluorouracil Is Effective In Young Patients With Odontogenic Keratocysts. The recognition includes funding from Dentsply Sirona, allowing her to present at the organization's 55th annual meeting in San Diego next year.

"This symposium is an event that all students and their mentors can take immense pride in," said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine. "Each year, it provides a platform for them to showcase the knowledge they've gained through countless hours of work—all while managing rigorous didactic, clinical and lab coursework. These efforts translate into discoveries that enrich our profession's knowledge base."

The event also featured the Leo and Mickey Sreebny Distinguished Lectureship, delivered by Kenneth Dill, PhD, SUNY Distinguished Professor of Physics and Chemistry at Stony Brook University, Affiliated Distinguished Professor in Applied Math, the Louis and Beatrice Laufer Endowed Chair of Physical and Quantitative Biology, and founding and current director of the university's Laufer Center for Physical and Quantitative Biology. Dr. Dill delivered his lecture, titled "The Story of Deep Innovation in America," to an audience of more than 175 students, residents, faculty and staff at the SAC's Sidney Gelber Auditorium.

"We were incredibly fortunate to have Dr. Dill with us," said Stephen Walker, interim associate dean for research at SDM. "His lecture was informative, timely and highly relevant, adding to an already outstanding day that advanced our profession and the careers of those presenting."

The lectureship honors Dr. Leo M. Sreebny, a past dean and longtime faculty member at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. Passionate about fostering discovery among SDM students and residents, Dr. Sreebny and his wife, Mickey, pledged their support for the school's annual Research Symposium before his passing in 2020.

RESEARCH AWARDS

AADOCR/Dentsply Sirona Student Research Award

Astrid Bucaro, D2; Mitchell Steinberg, DDS, MD; Michael Proothi, DMD, MD; Rekha Reddy, DMD
Topical 5-Fluorouracil is Effective in Young Patients with Odontogenic Keratocysts

Hinman Symposium Award

Lauren Brown, D3; Olivia Schmitt, D3; Dolores Cannella, MA, PhD; Patrick Lloyd, DDS, MS
Growing Your Own: Cultivating the Next Generation of Dental Educators

AADOCR National Student Research Day Award

Erin Gal, D2; Joseph De Leon, D4; Georgios E. Romanos, DDS, PhD, Prof Dr med dent
Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo as a Complication of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Procedures

AADOCR Long Island Section Student Research Award

Naomi Newen, D3; Euane Newen, DDS; Nina K. Anderson, PhD; Dolores Cannella, MA, PhD; Mary Truhlar, DDS, MS
Overlooked Health Issues in Dental School Screenings of Older Adults

Resident/Fellow Research Award

Qi Dai, DDS, General Practice Resident; Hsi-Ming Lee, PhD; Stephen Walker, MSc, PhD; Francis Johnson, PhD; Lorne Golub, DMD, MSc; Ying Gu, PhD, DDS
Novel Chemically-Modified-Curcumin: Prevents Composite Surface Hardness Changes Mediated by Bacteria

Graduate Student Research Award

Abdel Mahmoud, DDS; Aaron Sloutski, MSc, PhD; Zoe Katevitis, MSc; Shi Fu; Huiting Luo; Robert Wang; Marcia Simon, PhD; Jerome J. Cymerman, DMD; Stephen G. Walker, MSc, PhD; Thomas Manders, DDS; Miriam Rafailovich, PhD
An Innovative Injectable and Retrievable Drug Delivery System for Endodontic Therapy

Undergraduate Student Research Award

Isabella Ho; Nidha Bhandari, MS; Cindy Leung; Hsi-Ming Lee, PhD; Lorne Golub, DMD, MSc; Francis Johnson, PhD; Ying Gu, PhD, DDS
A Novel Chemically-Modified-Curcumin Reduces MMP-9 Levels through p38 MAPK Pathway

Omicron Kappa Upsilon Sigma Tau Chapter Research Award

Allyson Newman, D4; Patricia Swanson, DDS
Considerations for Porcelain Veneer Restorations in Patients with Bruxism



Allyson Newman, DDS '25 (left), shares her research at the School of Dental Medicine's annual research symposium.

COLOSI PROMOTED TO PROFESSOR

Dan Colosi, DDS, PhD, has been promoted to professor in the Department of Prosthodontics and Digital Technology.

Colosi, the department's interim chair as well as division director of oral and maxillofacial radiology, has been on faculty at Stony Brook since his appointment as an assistant professor in 2006. His research interests include the characterization of novel applications of maxillofacial imaging modalities and radiomic and radiogenomic methods in head and neck imaging. He has been an active member in organized dentistry, including having served as president of the American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology.

Colosi earned his Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) from the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Cluj-Napoca in his native Romania as well as additional training in oral and maxillofacial surgery at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Targu Mures. Colosi then completed a two-year oral and maxillofacial radiology residency and his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) from the University of Connecticut.



Dr. Dan Colosi

GRASKEMPER ASCENDS TO CLINICAL PROFESSOR



Dr. Joseph Graskemper

Joseph Graskemper, DDS, JD, has been promoted to clinical professor in the Department of General Dentistry.

Graskemper has been a member of the Stony Brook faculty for more than 25 years. He earned his DDS from The Ohio State School of Dentistry, and from there served for two years as a United States Navy dental officer at Camp Pendleton in California. Graskemper went on to attain six fellowships in dentistry, as well as his law degree from Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, California.

When not instructing students and residents at Stony Brook, Graskemper works in private practice in Bellport, New York. His academic interests include dental ethics, professionalism and practice management. Graskemper has also authored two textbooks: "Professional Responsibility in Dentistry: A Practical Guide to Law and Ethics" and "Leadership and Communication in Dentistry".

In addition to his service at Stony Brook, Graskemper practiced for 25 years at Brookhaven Memorial Hospital in Patchogue, New York, and for more than a decade at Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla, California.

JONKE RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS NYSDA AWARD



Dr. Guenter Jonke (left) receives the Feldman Service Award from 2024-25 NYSDA President Prabha Krishnan.

Guenter Jonke, DMD, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at Stony Brook, was honored with the prestigious New York State Dental Association (NYSDA) Mark J. Feldman Distinguished Service Award. He received the award at the NYSDA House of Delegates annual meeting on Long Island in May.

In addition to caring for patients in private practice for more than 35 years, Jonke has been a longtime proponent of organized dentistry, including currently as president of the New York State Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons. Jonke is also a past president of the Suffolk County Dental Society, and held the roles of NYSDA Trustee, Greater Long Island Dental Meeting chair and chair of the American College of Dentists New York chapter.

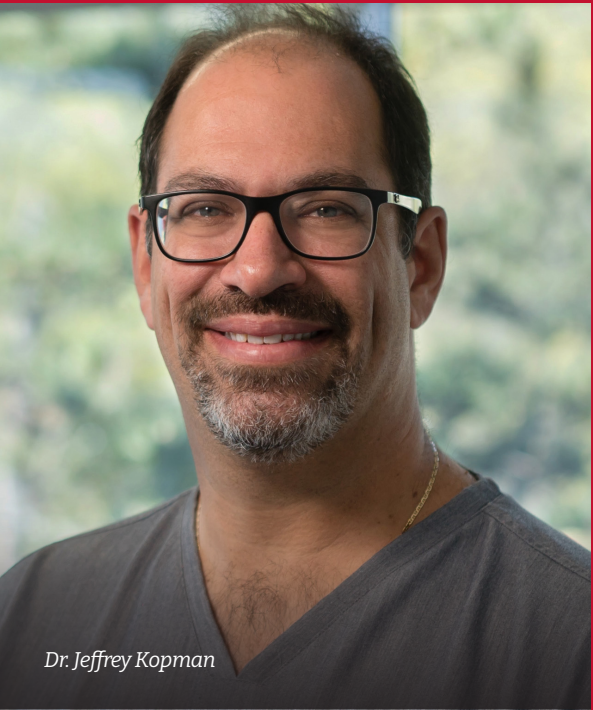
"I am humbled beyond belief to be recognized with the Mark J. Feldman Distinguished Service Award," Jonke said. "Dr. Feldman's legacy of leadership, dedication and advocacy in dentistry has set a standard for all of us in the profession. I share this honor with my many colleagues in dentistry and academia who have inspired and mentored me throughout my career."

PERIODONTIST GAINS NATIONAL DISTINCTION

Jeffrey Kopman, DDS, MMSc, clinical assistant professor in Stony Brook's Department of Periodontics and Endodontics, was selected as a recipient of the American Academy of Periodontology's Excellence in Teaching and Mentoring Award. The honor acknowledges periodontal educators who demonstrate excellence in teaching, inspiring and supporting students.

In addition to his academic responsibilities at Stony Brook, Kopman practices periodontics at Leading Edge Specialized Dentistry in Melville, New York. He earned his Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) from University of Buffalo School of Dental Medicine, and his certificate in periodontology and Master of Medical Sciences in oral biology from Harvard School of Dental Medicine.

Kopman is the son of Harold Kopman, an early volunteer faculty member in the then-Department of Periodontology at the SDM, teaching one day a week until the early 1990s while also practicing privately.



Dr. Jeffrey Kopman

FRANZA ASSUMES ADMISSIONS DIRECTOR ROLE



Joseph Franza

Joseph Franza, MEd, joined Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine as its director of admissions and student events, leading its dental student recruitment and admissions procedures and policies, as well helping to organize and operate special events and activities.

Previous to his appointment, Franza served in a number of capacities within the admissions office at University Support Services, the North American correspondent for St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada, West Indies. Most recently he held the position of director of admissions, for which he developed and carried out admissions recruitment strategies, and maintaining strong relationships with prospective students, pre-health advisors and pre-health clubs. He also met with students and their families at admissions events throughout the United States and Canada, and attended numerous graduate school and health professional fairs.

Franza earned bachelor's degrees in sport management and marketing at Sacred Heart University. He also holds a master's degree in higher education leadership and policy studies from Hofstra University.

LONG ISLAND DENTIST JOINS FULL-TIME FACULTY

Jennifer Englebright, BA '05, DMD, a respected general dentist on the north shore of Long Island, has been appointed a full-time clinical assistant professor in the Department of General Dentistry at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. Englebright spent the past 15 years in private practice, most recently in Port Jefferson.

"Dr. Englebright's experience in private practice, involvement in organized dentistry and a family history of academics predict substantial contributions she will make to the education of our students and the future of our school," said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine.

An English literature graduate of Stony Brook University, Englebright went on to earn her dental degree from the University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine in Philadelphia, and then completed her general practice residency at St. Charles Hospital in Port Jefferson, New York. Her journey came full circle when, while in private practice, she volunteered as an attending in the St. Charles dental residency program from 2015 to 2019. A proponent of organized dentistry, Englebright serves on the Suffolk County Dental Society board of directors.



Dr. Jennifer Englebright



Erika Ortiz has been a key ingredient to the school's and Dental Care Center's success for more than 20 years.

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

By Kathleen Fitzpatrick

The number one driver in the SDM's mission is its people. Finding those who have a passion for what they do, in addition to being gifted in their skill, accelerates this pursuit even further. Erika Ortiz, dental assistant in the Dental Care Center, is front and center in that effort, offering her passion and knowledge in the many facets of the clinic's day-to-day care. *On the Cusp*® was able to catch Erika during her ever-growing schedule to get her perspective on things and see what propels her to get the job done.

What has been your path in dentistry?

I've been a dental assistant for 21 years. My first job was in a private office where I worked with a dentist who was, honestly, a genius. He taught me so much about dentistry. After he retired six years ago, I found an opening at the School of Dental Medicine. I'm so happy I found Stony Brook because I have learned so much, from general dentistry to working with patients who have special needs.

In what areas have you provided care at Stony Brook?

I started in pediatric dentistry, which was new for me as I never provided care for children before. After three

years, I then began rotating in periodontics. I've really enjoyed assisting with their surgeries and being in that setting. Another rewarding area for me has been working in GPR because of my daily interaction with the residents and directors; I feel that my contributions are recognized and that I'm making a difference in the program which means a lot to me.

What does your typical work week look like?

That's a great question! When I'm not in clinic rotations, I assist in the clinic van that visits schools and shelters to provide oral care and assist with translation for Spanish-speaking patients. They say, do what you love, and you won't feel like you're working. That is how this job is for me. I love it because I get to help people whether it's the patients, students or residents.

What does societal outreach in dentistry mean to you?

This is such a passion of mine and it's why I have been in this role for so long. Being at Stony Brook has given me a chance to help treat all walks of life. When someone is anxious or doesn't understand how the procedure will go, I try my best to calm them down and provide them with the best experience they can have. Once I achieve that, they will no longer fear going to the dentist. Building trust means easier treatment, and their health will continue to improve – whether it's eating better or confidently showing their smile. It is probably the best part of my career.

Top: A special celebration with the D2s
Bottom: Dr. Truhlar with longtime colleagues



"FOUNDATIONAL" ALUMNUS BIDS ADIEU TO SDM

Few know the halls of Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine more than Mary Truhlar, DDS '84, MS.

She navigated them first as a student, then as a member of the faculty and administration, and in many roles since and in between — leader, mentor, colleague and friend among them.

Her colleagues celebrated Truhlar's career at a special reception at the Three Village Inn in Stony Brook Village, toasting her many achievements as one of its fixtures.

Addressing those in attendance, Truhlar expressed gratitude for "the friendships and relationships we've built, the projects we've shared, the classroom and clinical experiences, the many accomplishments and, of course, the adventures along the way that added humor and levity to the situations."

Dean Lloyd opened the evening by sharing Truhlar's numerous accomplishments, before giving way to longtime faculty such as Dolores Cannella, MA, PhD, associate dean for education, who contended that Truhlar's impact on the school will last long beyond her retirement.

"Mary's legacy is woven into the very fabric of the SDM," she said. "It isn't just present—it's foundational. She helped shape the School of Dental Medicine into what it is today, and what it will become tomorrow."

Truhlar was the first female — and the only alumnus — to serve in the role of dean at Stony Brook, doing so from 2014 to 2020. In that position, she championed the funding and support for the state-of-the-art Center for Implant and Digital Technology and launched the school's oral and maxillofacial radiology residency

program. All the while, Truhlar instructed and inspired students as a professor in the Department of General Dentistry, provided care in Stony Brook's faculty practice, and advanced the profession through funded research.

"In her entire 35-year career at Stony Brook, Mary has always put the needs of faculty, students, residents, staff, and patients of the SDM above all else," said Allan Kucine, DDS, vice chair of the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, who joined the Stony Brook faculty with Truhlar in 1990. "Her contributions to education, patient care and administration have left an indelible signature on the history of the School of Dental Medicine."

Among those who shared their admiration was Ying Gu, MS, DDS '02, PhD '02, AEGD '03, who first encountered Truhlar as a PhD student in the 1990s. Since then, Gu has learned from Truhlar as a dental student, general dentistry resident, faculty member in the Department of General Dentistry, and now as its chair.

"As clinicians, we can directly improve the oral health of a limited number of patients, but as educators, we have the power to improve the health of many more," Gu said. "Dr. Truhlar has devoted her entire career to educating dental students and advancing the dental profession. She has shaped the paths of so many of us here—her influence is profound, and her legacy will continue to inspire generations of future dentists and enrich our profession for years to come."



Dr. Mary Truhlar (center) with Department of General Dentistry faculty Mark Salerno, DDS '83, and Euane Newen, DDS '97.

"There is a Chinese saying: A teacher for a day is a teacher for a lifetime," she continued. "Thank you, Dr. Truhlar, for being my teacher and a great mentor."

Most recently, Truhlar created an endowed scholarship for students from Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSA), strengthening the school's commitment to educating those from underserved areas so that they may return to these communities to provide much-needed care.

Her students, and the oral healthcare they will provide to their future patients, were always a priority during her time at Stony Brook. A preview of her farewell reception, the Class of 2027 surprised Truhlar with a celebration at the school, an occasion that included a one-of-a-kind cake created by student Eva Aminova. Truhlar promised to be back on campus for their graduation, when they, like her, can call themselves proud Stony Brook alumni.



A one-of-a-kind confectionary creation by student Eva Aminova



ENDODONTICS SCHOLARSHIP FUND ESTABLISHED

Sachem Dental Group, together with the Stony Brook Foundation, has agreed to establish the Sachem Dental Group Endodontics Scholarship Fund at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. The fund will provide financial assistance for select high-achieving residents enrolled in the school's Advanced Dental Education Program in Endodontics.

"We are grateful for this generous gift from Sachem Dental Group, whose support will allow program residents to complete their endodontic training not only with a lesser financial burden but give them more freedom to pursue professional opportunities after they graduate," said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine.

Offering a wide range of oral healthcare services, Sachem Dental Group has been a fixture in Central Suffolk County for more than 30 years, with six offices in locations that include Holbrook, Lake Ronkonkoma, Nesconset, Selden and Patchogue.

"As Sachem Dental Group developed into one of

the largest private group dental practices on Long Island, we could not have done so without our many doctors that graduated from Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine," said Anthony Gentile, DDS, of Sachem Dental Group. "The partners — those who started Sachem Dental and the current partners and staff — felt it necessary to give back to the school. We have selected the students of the Advanced Dental Education Program in Endodontics as beneficiaries of our Endowment. By paying it forward, we hope every graduate will do the same."

Thomas Manders, DDS '91, who directs the endodontic residency program at Stony Brook, looks forward to welcoming even more outstanding endodontic trainees in the years to come.

"I, along with the entire endodontic faculty, express our deepest gratitude to Sachem Dental Group, a longtime ally of the school," Manders said. "Their support will allow scholarship recipients, as well as our program, to thrive well into the future."

VOICE OF THE GRADUATES: WHY I GIVE



ROBERT DIETZ | DDS Class of 1983

I give a donation to the school every year as a thank you for the past. My gifts are in appreciation for the caring, dedicated teachers and staff that trained and inspired me. They helped me have a 36-year career that enabled me to help my patients and provide for my family and travel the world. I truly was able to say "if you love your job, you will never work a day in your life." I'm thankful that I was treated as a colleague from day one, unlike how friends of mine were treated at other dental schools. I truly would not have had the rich, enjoyable, exciting life I have had without my Stony Brook dental education. I encourage you to say thank you as well by sending a donation today.



EUANE NEWEN | DDS Class of 1997

Having experienced dental school both as student and now as an educator, I understand the challenges, sacrifices and determination it takes to succeed in this profession. Supporting the next generation of students is one of the most meaningful ways we can give back. By giving, I hope to help students who will one day become the compassionate dental care providers our community needs. Whatever we give will give someone hope to strive for a better future. I deeply believe in the saying: "The good you put out into the world has a way of finding its way back."



Sachem Dental Group's scholarship fund will provide financial assistance to select high-achieving endodontics residents at Stony Brook.



THANK YOU FROM THE OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT

As the Major Gift Development Officer for the School of Dental Medicine, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to each of you who has chosen to support our mission. Your generosity directly fuels our ability to educate future dental leaders, advance groundbreaking research and expand access to care for underserved communities.

Every gift—whether directed toward scholarships, clinical innovations, or state-of-the-art facilities—helps us shape a healthier future, one smile at a time. Thank you for investing in excellence, compassion and the next generation of dental professionals.

LAURA SHELLEY, Director of Development

Phone: (631) 806-6280 | Email: laura.shelley@stonybrookmedicine.edu

SAVE THE DATE ALUMNI RECEPTION

THIS YEAR'S CLASS HONOREES

1980	1995	2010
1985	2000	2015
1990	2005	2020

November 8, 2025

**Port Jefferson Country Club
44 Fairway Drive, Port Jefferson, NY**

Connect with your classmates and see the latest facility upgrades, technologies and learning spaces at the school, and then enjoy an evening of great food and company at Port Jefferson Country Club. Scan the QR code for additional details and to RSVP!



A LETTER FROM THE DENTAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Alumni,

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I share this update on behalf of the Alumni Board of the Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. As we continue to strengthen our community and advance the mission of our alma mater, I am constantly inspired by the remarkable spirit of our students, faculty and alumni.

This past academic year has been filled with celebration and transformation. Convocation was a truly special occasion, marking a significant milestone for our graduating students and recognizing their hard work and perseverance. Equally meaningful was the White Coat Ceremony, which welcomed our newest students into the profession. The event was made even more memorable by an inspiring keynote address from Dr. Maddalena, this year's recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to welcome the incoming Class of 2029 this August. This is a remarkably high-achieving group, and we are excited to see the contributions they will make to the school and the profession. Their arrival coincides with a period of exciting change at the School of Dental Medicine.

Renovations across the school continue to advance our mission of excellence. A brand-new prosthodontic laboratory is now complete, significantly expanding our clinical capabilities. Additionally, a new student lab and a cutting-edge biomaterials lab are on track to be finished this fall, further enriching the learning and research environment.

We also look forward to our upcoming Alumni Class Reunions – an excellent opportunity for graduates to reconnect, share memories and witness firsthand the exciting changes taking place. Visiting the updated facilities will surely bring pride and a renewed sense of connection to the place that shaped our careers.

As alumni, we are a vital part of the School's continued success. I encourage you to stay engaged, support future generations and join us in celebrating all that we have accomplished—together.

Warmest regards,

Stacy Reisfeld, DDS '88

President, Stony Brook Dental Alumni Chapter

**Join us at our SmileCon
reception on October 24.
See page 38 for more details!**



CLASS NOTES

1982

Shortly after graduating from Stony Brook, **Alan Viani, DDS '82, GPR '83**, took ownership of his childhood dental practice in Poughkeepsie in 1986, where he has practiced general dentistry ever since. Viani is also a past president of the Dutchess County Dental Society. He has been very active in his community in other ways, coaching the Our Lady of Lourdes High School varsity girls basketball team for the past 15 years, including leading it to the state championship in 2024.

1983

Robert Dietz, DDS '83, retired in 2019 after 36 years in practice, a career that included more than three decades of providing volunteer dental care for special needs patients under general anesthesia at St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse, New York one day a week. He has continued his volunteer care in retirement, working at free dental clinics in both Syracuse and Hilton Head, South Carolina.

2004

Armin Lalehzari, DDS '04, opened up the second location for his practice, Dazzling Smile Dental Group, in October 2024, establishing an office in downtown Port Washington, New York. Dazzling Smile also provides care for patients in Bayside, Queens.

2006

Jason Starace, DDS '06, Perio '09, was appointed director of the Advanced Education Program in Periodontics at New York University College of Dentistry in May. Starace joined NYU in 2012 as an adjunct professor, and became a full-time assistant clinical professor in 2022. Additionally, he practices part-time in New York City at Manhattan Periodontics and Implant Dentistry alongside classmate **Navid Rahmani, DDS '06, Perio '09**.

2008

Emily Gabeler, DDS '08, and her practice, Greenwich Pediatric Dental Group, in Greenwich, Connecticut, were honored with the Women Who Inspire Corporate Award at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Greenwich at its seventh annual awards ceremony in March, having demonstrated outstanding leadership in developing women's empowerment in the community. Gabeler has practiced at GPDG for more than eight years.

2009

Natalie Bitton, DDS '09, is proud to be the only orthodontist in Rockville Centre, New York, where she owns and operates Bitton Orthodontics. At the SDM, she finished at the top of her class and enjoyed participating in multiple outreach endeavors. She then completed her orthodontic residency training at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx.

2020

Yujie Huang, PhD, DDS '20, practices endodontics in Modesto, California. Huang graduated cum laude from the School of Dental Medicine, and moved west for endodontic residency training at the University of California, San Francisco, where he served as a clinical instructor from 2022-2024.

2021

Dana Bergenfeld, DDS '21, and **Alex McGuiness, BS '17, DDS '21**, currently work together at Life Long Dental Care in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Since meeting at and graduating from Stony Brook, they couples-matched to a GPR program in Utica, New York. After her GPR, Dana worked at a non-profit serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and in a mobile setting providing care for geriatric populations. She then completed a fellowship in dental oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, a foundation for her mission to work with local organizations and hospitals to incorporate dental oncology services into the community. Together they are newly elected as co-presidents of the Greater Danbury Dental Society.

Nicole Francisco, BS '17, DDS '21, GPR '23, has been with Smile Shack, a four-dentist private practice based in Port Jefferson, New York, since graduating from Stony Brook's general practice residency program. Concurrently, her affinity for research has her working toward a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in oral biology and pathology through Stony Brook University.

Joseph Manzella, BS '17, DDS '21, MPH '21, was elected vice president of the Connecticut State Dental Association for the 2025-26 year at the state's House of Delegates meeting in May. Manzella is a general dentist at North Branford Dental Group in North Branford, Connecticut, and also practices per diem at Samuels Sinclair Dental Center at Rhode Island Hospital, part of Brown University Health, primarily treating special needs and pediatric patients.



Alex McGuiness (left) and Dana Bergenfeld, both members of the DDS Class of 2021, were elected co-presidents of the Greater Danbury Dental Society.



Emily Gabeler, DDS '08 (second from left) was the co-recipient of the YWCA Women Who Inspire Corporate Award



Joseph Manzella, BS '17, DDS '21, MPH '21 (seated, third from left) was elected vice president of the Connecticut State Dental Association for the 2025-26 year.



JOIN US AT SMILECON!

Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine reception

Walter E. Washington Convention Center

801 Allen Y. Lew Place NW, Washington, DC 20001

Friday, October 24, 7 — 9pm

RSVP by emailing Janet Masini at janet.masini@stonybrook.edu.

IN MEMORIAM

Martin Stern, DDS, professor and founding chair of the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, passed away at the age of 91.

Stern played an integral role in the growth and development of the school, having served from its opening in 1973 through his retirement from academia and dentistry in 1993. During his time, he was responsible for the construction of the curriculum, the appointment of several longtime faculty members, and the education of hundreds of School of Dental Medicine graduates.

While at Stony Brook, Stern concurrently worked as an oral and maxillofacial surgeon at three hospitals, including as chief of oral and maxillofacial surgery at Queens General Hospital and Long Island Jewish (LIJ) Medical Center, at which he also directed of the training program in oral and maxillofacial surgery. His efforts paved the way for LIJ residents to rotate through the SDM and Stony Brook University Hospital.

Dr. Stern made a lifelong impression on students, residents, staff and faculty, including Anthony Casino, DDS '78, clinical associate professor in the OMFS department, who called Dr. Stern "the ultimate administrator" as well as a "mentor to many and a friend to all."



Mark Swerdloff, DDS, professor emeritus of oral and maxillofacial surgery and a faculty member for more than 35 years, passed away on April 18, 2025, at the age of 80.

Swerdloff overcame great adversity to become a highly regarded surgeon, educator and mentor to students, residents, staff and faculty alike. As a second-year dental student at Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery, he was struck by a vehicle, resulting in the loss of both of his legs. Swerdloff nevertheless persevered, earning his DDS from Columbia and completing his oral and maxillofacial surgery residency at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City.

In 1975, Swerdloff was appointed as the first full-time faculty member in the SDM's Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. He served in this position until 2007, during which time he was awarded the Stony Brook President's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Swerdloff taught for an additional five years on a part-time basis. In addition to his academic appointment, he cared for patients at the Dental Care Center, Stony Brook University Hospital as well as at the Northport Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

REMEMBERING OUR OWN

Neal Lehrman, DDS '96, was an expert in the field of laser periodontal therapy, working in specialty practice for nearly 30 years. (January 25, 2025)



Morhlon Harris, DDS '23, was a beloved member of his dental school class. He recently served as a general practice resident at St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx. (June 14, 2025)



OUT AND ABOUT WITH THE SDM

Throughout the year, members of the School of Dental Medicine community gather at major annual meetings across the country. At these events, the school hosts receptions that bring together students, residents, faculty, staff, and alumni—offering a great chance to reconnect, share stories, and catch up on career milestones and school news.

Yet another exciting lineup of events is planned for this fall, including our alumni class reunions as we welcome back those who paved the way for today's dental students. See page 34 for more details!

Take a look at where we've been—and what's ahead. We hope to see you at a future gathering!



SDM dinner at the American Association of Orthodontists Annual Session, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



SDM reception at the American Association of Endodontists Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts



2025 American Associations for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research/Canadian Association for Dental Research Annual Meeting, New York, New York



SDM reception at the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Annual Session, Denver, Colorado



SDM dinner at American Dental Education Association Annual Meeting, National Harbor, Maryland

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 2025

August 14 • 5pm

All-School Barbecue
School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

August 28 • 2pm

Give Kids a Smile Day
School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

SEPTEMBER 2025

September 15 – 20

American Association
of Oral and Maxillofacial
Surgeons Annual Meeting
Garden City, NY

September 27

CommUniversity Day
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, NY

OCTOBER 2025

October 2

Dental Educators Day
School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

October 13 – 16

American Academy of Oral
and Maxillofacial Radiologists
Annual Meeting
Charlotte, NC

October 15 – 18

American Academy of
Periodontology (AAP)
Annual Session
Toronto, ON

October 16 • 7pm

AAP SDM Alumni
Reception
Fairmont Royal York
Toronto, ON

October 22 – 25

American College of
Prosthodontists Annual
Session
New Orleans, LA

October 23 – 25

American Dental
Association
SmileCon 2025
Washington, DC

October 24 • 7pm

ADA SDM Alumni
Reception
Washington
Convention Center
Washington, DC

October 23 – 26

Stony Brook University
Homecoming
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, NY

NOVEMBER 2025

November 6 • 6pm

New York Academy of
Dentistry "Stony
Brook Night"
Union League Club
New York, NY

November 8

School of Dental Medicine
Alumni Class Receptions
School of Dental Medicine and
Port Jefferson Country Club
Port Jefferson, NY

November 14 • 8am

Northeastern Society
of Periodontists
The Times Center
New York, NY

November 28 – December 3

Greater New York
Dental Meeting
Javits Center
New York, NY
*GNYDM SDM
Reception November
30, 5:30pm; site TBD



Vito Liut, DDS '25, is sworn in to his prosthodontics residency position in the United States Navy by another SDM grad, Michelle Wu, DDS '24.



Class of 2026 student Ahmed Abdullah celebrates his own commitment to the Navy, having secured an oral and maxillofacial surgery residency position.



Sri Myneni, BDS, MS, PhD, director of Stony Brook's Advanced Dental Education Program in Periodontics, explains the curriculum and the journey to students Amaris Han (left) and Danielle Ohana at the school's residency fair.



SDM students, faculty and alumni provided preventive care and valuable oral health tips for more than 200 children at the 2025 Suffolk County Dental Society Gives Kids a Smile Day at the Long Island Aquarium.

TOOTH PICS



The SDM's Office of Education celebrates all the students who play such a crucial role in the admissions interview process.



Dean Patrick Lloyd updates the school community on the latest news at the school at the semi-annual Full- and Part-Time Staff and Faculty Development Retreat.



Class of 2025 graduate Shiley Grinbaum poses for her senior portrait.



The Class of 2028 pointed the way for the 2029s, who visited campus for their orientation in June.



SDM student Naomi Newen shows a young fan the proper way to brush at the Stony Brook Medicine Kids Health and Safety Expo, held at Fairfield Properties Ballpark, home field of the Long Island Ducks.



Story time at the hospital was a hit.



School of Dental Medicine staff gathered for a special luncheon on National Administrative Professionals Day, observed annually in late April.

SIDE BY SIDE FROM THE START

Little did Tamara Kroboth, BS '04, DDS '08, Ortho '11, and Alex Bogler, BS '04, DDS '08, GPR '09, know that years after their journey through the School of Dental Medicine, even more years since meeting as undergraduates at Stony Brook University, they would be practicing — and going through life — side by side. Together, they care for patients at Valley Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics, a practice with locations in Jefferson Valley and Hopewell Junction, New York, joining up with another Stony Brook graduate, founder and chief executive officer Ben Dancygier, DDS '96. *On the Cusp*® caught up with the couple to learn about what happens when career paths — and personal lives — converge.

We should start at the beginning. How did you meet?

Kroboth: We first met during our freshman year at Stony Brook University in the Honors College. Alex had transferred from Fordham after his first semester and joined the Honors College in the spring. During his first week, he was looking to introduce himself to our classmates and was going door to door in the Honors College dorm, Cardozo. When he knocked on my friend's door, I happened to answer. Clearly flustered, Alex asked for information about applying to live in the dorms. Wanting to help, I took him to the main office and gave him several brochures. We went on our first date about a week later.

How would you describe your Stony Brook experience?

Bogler: I believe the education and training I received at Stony Brook — both in dental school and during my residency — provided a strong foundation that thoroughly prepared me for the transition into private practice. During my GPR at Stony Brook, I was able to focus on implant dentistry and prosthodontics, which has enabled me to confidently manage more complex cases, while also giving me the clinical judgment to recognize my limitations and refer patients to specialists when appropriate.

You had surgery/orthodontics done while you were a student at Stony Brook. What was that like?

Kroboth: I did not have the opportunity to undergo orthodontic treatment as a child. However, once I began dental school at Stony Brook, straightening my teeth became a top priority. Entering the dental

profession, I recognized the importance of presenting my best self and feeling confident in my smile. My treatment included braces and a surgically assisted palatal expansion. The surgery itself was relatively straightforward; the greater challenge was adjusting to the palate expander as an adult. Throughout my treatment, I spent a significant amount of time with the orthodontic residents, and that experience played a pivotal role in inspiring my decision to specialize in orthodontics.

How did you come to practice together?

Bogler: I owned and operated my own dental practice from 2014 to 2022. After sustaining a back injury that limited my ability to work full-time, I made the difficult decision to sell the practice. However, my passion for patient care remained strong, and I wanted to stay clinically active on a part-time basis. I approached Dr. Ben about the possibility of seeing adults and older teens at Valley Pediatric Dentistry, and it has been a smooth and rewarding transition. It's been a pleasure to join such a well-established and highly respected practice where I can continue contributing to patient care in a meaningful way.

Dr. Kroboth, you spent two years as president of the Dutchess County Dental Society. Why have you made organized dentistry a priority?

Kroboth: I have participated on the board of the Dutchess County Dental society for about a decade in various roles including steward, president and program chair. Our society is a branch of the Ninth District. I am very proud of the effort all of our board members have put into keeping our society relevant and useful to our members, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Bogler, you practiced for a time at Green Chimneys. How did that come about and how was the experience?

Bogler: Green Chimneys is a specialized school in Putnam County, primarily serving children on the autism spectrum. Having treated many of the school's staff members in my private practice, I was invited to join the team in a staff position to provide dental care for the student residents. Green Chimneys is known for its individualized approach to education and care — including the integration of animal-assisted therapy. It has been a privilege to contribute to such a thoughtful



SDM graduates Alex Bogler and Tamara Kroboth

and compassionate environment that prioritizes each child's unique needs.

How is special needs care integrated into the practice?

Kroboth: As the orthodontist in a combined pediatric/orthodontic/general practice, I have the opportunity to provide care for patients with a wide range of abilities and behavioral needs—many of whom may not be candidates for traditional orthodontic settings. The joint specialty model allows us to streamline patient care, often coordinating cleanings with orthodontic adjustments to minimize appointments and improve continuity. I greatly value the collaboration with my colleagues and the comprehensive, patient-centered approach we're able to provide.

Dr. Ben's practice was already a thriving and well-established part of the community before the

introduction of orthodontics. The addition of both orthodontic and general dental services has allowed us to expand the scope of care we offer, providing a more comprehensive range of treatment options to meet the diverse needs of our patients and their families.

What has it been like working together? What are the keys to your success?

Bogler: Working together has been a rewarding and seamless experience. One of the keys to our success is maintaining a clear boundary between work and home life. While it might be easy to imagine us discussing teeth over dinner, we actually make a conscious effort to focus on other shared interests—like our cats, travel plans, and our ever-growing plant collection. (This is 40!)

**Stony Brook School
of Dental Medicine**

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Stony Brook
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