

ON THE CUSP®

The Official Magazine of Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine • Winter 2025 • Volume 2; Issue 1



AIDING IN AI

Radiology residency program bringing dentistry to new heights

Alum Leads NYS FQHCs

A Peek into Dental School

New and Improved

6

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Stony Brook
School of Dental Medicine



The Class of 2024 gathers for the traditional Senior Dinner at the Old Field Club on the north shore of Long Island.



Second-year dental student Nick Picarella (center) was selected to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at the School of Dental Medicine's inaugural Night at the Long Island Ducks Game. Nick's pitch — which caught the outside corner — kicked off a fantastic evening, with dozens of students and faculty in attendance, and even more fans learning about oral healthcare services available at the SDM.

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 On the cover: Dr. Mina Mahdian (seated) with OMFR residents (clockwise from top) Jinha Kim, DDS '24; Brandon Fitzgerald, DMD; and Sonya Movassaghi, DMD.

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A LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear Colleagues,

As with previous issues of *On the Cusp®*, this one updates readers on the progress our school is making on meeting the expectations of those who depend on us and those who look to us for guidance and inspiration. This includes all that our students, residents, staff, faculty and alumni are doing to advance the profession here at Stony Brook and beyond.

Leading this issue of our magazine is an article on how one of our graduates is helping those who depend on a network of federally funded healthcare centers on Long Island and all along the Hudson Valley. As chief dental officer at 24 Federally Qualified Health Centers, the impact of his efforts is far-reaching and influential.

Showcased on the cover is one of our faculty and her residents who are on the cutting edge of radiologic diagnostic accuracy utilizing artificial intelligence. Their work has potential application across the full scope of our discipline, in patient care, student and resident education and clinical research. The promise such technological breakthroughs hold for the profession is both revolutionary and game-changing.

The backbone of any health science school is its staff, and how fortunate we are to have such a talented and dedicated group supporting our programs and departments. In this issue of *OTC®*, we spotlight one of those who has been with us for over three decades, helping just about everyone in our clinics, making the day go better for all of those who come to our school.

How pleased we are to share news about the substantial renovations our school is undergoing, thanks to the support provided by the governor's office to enhance research at the two state flagship universities – us and Buffalo. This is resulting in the creation of open-concept labs for new basic science faculty, who will be able to help raise our ranking among NIH-funded dental schools and provide opportunities to mentor students and residents. It is also providing capital to redo student and resident labs so that they can have access to the latest technology. These upgrades will not only boost our research programs, they will help in recruiting the best students, residents and faculty.

With the ever-growing dependency we have on external sources of revenue to fund important initiatives – student scholarships, endowed professorships, specialized equipment acquisitions – we have dedicated space in the magazine to acknowledge those whose generosity has made it possible for us to reward the most

deserving students and make possible opportunities that have benefited so many.

Elsewhere, you will read about our annual class reunion celebration, our leadership role in promoting Dental Educators Day, staff and faculty recognitions and all the special achievements of our alumni.

We close out this issue of *OTC®* with an article on one of our graduates who uses his creative talents to transform his orthodontic office into a Halloween haven, to the delight of his patients and staff, and gaining the attention of national media.

As we move into a new year, here's to an exciting time for all of us. I predict that it will be a most productive and rewarding year, one that someday we'll all look back and say, "I was there when they _____."

All the very best,

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



SERVING THE UNDERSERVED

Maddalena “a natural leader” working in New York State’s largest FQHC network

By Liza N. Burby

When Greg Maddalena, DDS '05, was a child, the sounds of his father’s dental office in Coram, New York, were the backdrop to his TV cartoons and daily life.

His first job was cleaning the home office, vacuuming floors for about \$3 a week, enough for Bazooka bubble gum at the local store. As a teenager, he worked the reception desk. He said these tasks developed his familiarity with and interest in dentistry.

“It was a really good experience because I got to see all the elements of working, practicing and running a dental office,” said Maddalena, now a practicing dentist living in Highland, New York. “I used to handle insurance claims and scheduling. Because of growing up with the sounds and smells of the home office, it was just a part of my life.”

So attending Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine after he earned a biology degree at SUNY Binghamton was a natural progression for Maddalena “because it had such a good clinic reputation and I liked the class size and it was close to home.”

Those earlier lessons of being involved in his father’s practice would come into focus as he pursued his career. Maddalena, who is now chief dental officer of Sun River Health in New Paltz, New York, the largest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in the state, said it was working with patients in private dental practices after graduation that made him passionate about treating those who are underserved.

Greg Maddalena, DDS '05, visits with a patient in his New Paltz, New York, FQHC clinic.

Photos by Joey Place Photography

A DRAGON SLAYER

Currently, he oversees the health organization's dental department, which has about 24 dental offices operational in New York, including Long Island, New York City and upstate. Maddalena said the management skills he needed to do so came from acting as class president for all four years at Stony Brook.

"I didn't realize it at the time but the experience as the president of the class helped me as an administrator doing what I'm doing now," he said. "Working with people and problem solving, learning all the different perspectives and the way that people look at the world was just so valuable."

In that role, Maddalena made an impression on a student three years ahead of him — his now longtime friend Jimmy Kilimitzoglou, DDS '02.

"As class president, Greg would basically slay dragons. For any issues that would come up, he was an advocate for his class, but also between the faculty and his classmates and administration," said Kilimitzoglou, who is an associate clinical professor in the school and owner of ESI Healthy Dentistry in Smithtown, New York. "And he did it with grace, eloquently and very effectively."

Classmate Tom Patrie, DDS '05, who works with Kilimitzoglou and is also an assistant clinical professor at Stony Brook, called Maddalena a natural leader. "He was always thinking of how to make things better for the dental students, and not only for our class but for those who followed. He was such a good communicator with the faculty, expressing our needs, and was good at facilitating."



Greg Maddalena, DDS '05, and his staff are responsible for the care of patients in the state's largest Federally Qualified Health Center network.



MEETING IN MICROBIOLOGY

The roots Maddalena established at the SDM led not only to lifelong friends, but also to his wife, Amy Angiolillo, MD '05, who he met in a microbiology class. "I always joke about how romantic microbiology is," he quipped.

After residency, Maddalena said he began a six-year journey following Amy around the Northeast during her medical training. That gave him a unique opportunity to work in and see different kinds of practices, from high-end, fee-for-service to public to insurance-driven offices.

"While I didn't picture myself working in public health full time, I never felt comfortable with the idea of turning people away who were in pain, had an infection, or couldn't apply for jobs because they didn't have a smile, just because they didn't have the money for treatment," he said.

When he and his wife came back to Long Island in 2011, he worked with Kilimitzoglou in an East End practice that accepted vouchers for predominantly Mexican farm workers who worked at the vineyards. Maddalena said at the practice in Mattituck and Shelter Island, New York, they would see 30 patients in the span of six hours. It was also his first experience with the FQHC, Hudson River Healthcare, which would later become Sun River Health. The workers paid a nominal fee if they could afford to. He said it was challenging at first because "there are so few providers who are in settings where they can provide care to patients who maybe don't have insurance or have Medicaid or managed care." But the work resonated with Maddalena who said it was rewarding because so many of the patients were in pain when they arrived.



Greg Maddalena, DDS '05

TREATING DENTAL DISEASE

In 2013, the Maddalenas moved to the Hudson Valley for Amy's work, and there he was introduced to the chief dental officer of his current company. For 10 years, he worked at their New Paltz site seeing predominantly workers from the apple farms in the area, during which time he developed a strong passion for the work. In 2020, he stepped into his current position as the chief dental officer. Because the patients mostly speak Spanish, Maddalena committed to learning the language and is now fluent. He said his organization receives most of its funding from the state to provide care for migrant farm workers, Medicaid patients, health insurance marketplace patients and the uninsured. Maddalena said that working with these underserved populations—with many individuals who have not had routine dental care for much of their lives—has energized his appreciation and passion for the profession.

But he recognizes that this path isn't for every dentist. "A lot of the time, I think people are chasing the highest income, but to me, that's not everything."

When you choose this as a career path, you're making that difference every day," he said. "It's the difference between somebody going out for a job interview versus avoiding it because they have no front teeth. But we can fix their dental issues and then we empower them to go back out into the world and get a job. The reward you get is feeling like you're making a difference in somebody's life. To me that's what working in community health is all about."

At the same time, Maddalena said it can be hard to staff non-urban areas including Monticello, where there's been an opening for five years, and Southampton—areas he said new dental candidates tend to find too remote but urgently need dentists.

He said he's encouraged that Dean Patrick Lloyd has been talking about exposing students to working in FQHCs. "I think it's a great step in the right direction. I didn't know what it was until I started working in one. I'm really excited to expose new students to it because I do feel if more dentists are exposed, maybe more will choose to offer this care."

MUSIC WITH FRIENDS

Maddalena takes his commitment beyond the office as co-chair of the Community Health Care Association New York State's Oral HEAL Subcommittee, an advocacy organization that works with community health centers in the state on best practices and policy. He's received recognitions and awards from *Hudson Valley Parent Magazine*, *Dan's Papers*, the Academy of General Dentistry, the Foundation of the Pierre Fauchard Academy, and the Academy of Dentistry for Persons with Disabilities, and has been published by dentaleconomics.com.

But through it all he remains connected to his alma mater. Maddalena, who sings and plays the guitar, keyboard and bass, was in a bluegrass quartet with Patrie that played at the SDM Talent Show and a local restaurant when they were students. He's also played in a rock band with alums Kilimitzoglou, Jerry Romeo,

DDS '05, and Alex Papas, DDS '06, Perio '08, and is currently in a roots band with his in-laws, Mark Angiolillo, DDS '06, and Lina Angiolillo, BS '01, DDS '06.

Maddalena, who with Amy has two teenage daughters, said he also enjoys baking sourdough bread. "I'm planning on eventually opening a bakery in the Hudson Valley with Josh Segal [DDS '05], who also bakes."

If that plan rises to the top of his career, likely it will be one more area that showcases his ability to work with others. As Kilimitzoglou said, "Whatever Greg does, he's a phenomenal leader and is so inclusive that he empowers everybody around him. And he's a man of integrity who will do the right thing even when nobody's watching. He's honorable and confident and he wants to make sure things are done the right way. He's just a great guy to know."

THE AI (R)EVOLUTION

Radiology residency program bringing artificial intelligence to new heights

By Brett Mauser

Mina Mahdian, DDS, MDSc, is helping to lay the foundation for artificial intelligence in dentistry – step by step, study by study.

As the world of AI expands and accelerates at a blistering pace, the director of the Advanced Education Program in Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine understands that the precision, diligence and patience that she and her colleagues demonstrate now, are crucial to supporting all the developments that follow.

Together with the residents she oversees, fellow researchers across the Stony Brook University campus, and scientists around the world, Mahdian has brought about significant progress in the various applications of AI in diagnostic imaging.

“It is gradually making its way into healthcare systems worldwide,” said Mahdian, an associate professor in Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine’s Department of Prosthodontics and Digital Technology. “It is definitely growing and is going to become a major part of dentistry, specifically precision dentistry. I can’t tell you how soon that will happen, but it is going in that direction.”

ENHANCING EFFICIENCY

Mahdian is a member of the Global Initiative on 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.

She views AI as a complementary tool, inspired by human



Dr. Mina Mahdian and oral and maxillofacial radiology resident Jinha Kim, DDS '24, review a case in the School of Dental Medicine's radiology reading room.

intelligence, created by humans for humans to use. It has shown early signs of revolutionizing industries like manufacturing, finance and healthcare, particularly with her field – imaging and diagnostics. Like with many AI tools used to perform mundane tasks, dentists can free up valuable time with finely tuned AI automation – when the time is right.

“Clinicians sometimes need to perform quantitative assessment of structures to evaluate anatomical changes or progression of disease. If someone wanted to manually delineate the anatomical structure or the pathology for quantitative analysis in a volumetric study, it might take them up to 30 minutes,” she said. “With one click on an appropriately trained AI tool, the same result can be achieved in less than a minute.”

Multiply that by the thousands of scans being done annually and productivity and efficiency grow exponentially. AI development could prove especially

beneficial for dentists practicing in Healthcare Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) with limited resources and access to specialists in their area. By leveraging reliable AI tools to assist with certain diagnostic and treatment planning tasks at an acceptable level of accuracy, Mahdian said, they can see more patients and perform more procedures.

She began her own journey in AI in 2017 as a junior faculty, collaborating with a colleague on optical coherence tomography (OCT), using light to stage incipient versus advanced carious lesions based on optical properties of the tissues. The advantage of this technology over conventional radiography is that it uses non-ionizing radiation. However, due to the nature of these images, they discovered that it may be difficult for dentists to interpret these images and distinguish carious and non-carious lesions.

“We then worked to develop a deep learning

algorithm to decode these images based on the signal intensity values of the OCT images so dentists can differentiate carious and non-carious lesions,” said Mahdian, whose work was funded by an American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology (AAOMR) XDR grant.

Mahdian has directed Stony Brook’s OMFR residency program since its launch in 2017, and in a short time, it has made an impact in the field of radiology. The program’s first-ever resident, Jalal Bukhari, DDS, received the AAOMR’s Howard R. Raper Award for excellence in radiology and his commitment to a career in academia. That same year, Maryam Ajami, DDS, earned the organization’s Albert G. Richards Graduate Student Research Grant for developing an AI model using cone beam computed tomography (CBCT) data to detect vascular calcifications, incidents that are often missed by non-radiologists.

“A lot of times, these calcified plaques in arteries can become clinically significant, especially if the patient is not aware of their existence, and may lead to reduced blood flow to the brain, and potentially cerebrovascular incidents (stroke),” Mahdian said.

Then, in a collaborative effort with Renaissance School of Medicine Department of Radiology faculty, Chuan Huang, PhD, Lina Albitar, DDS, MS ’22, OMFR ’22, trained a CNN-based AI model to identify missed second mesiobuccal canals in endodontically treated maxillary molars. These canals are often difficult to detect by human eye and may be a cause of failure of endodontic treatment. Dr. Albitar’s research earned the Best Resident Poster in the Research Category at the 2021 annual AAOMR meeting.

An even more recent endeavor extends into the field of radiomics where automated feature extraction is utilized to predict disease. Together with Prateek Prasanna, MS, PhD, in Stony Brook University’s Department of Bioinformatics and Haibin Ling, MS, PhD, in its Department of Computer Science, Mahdian applied radiomics to characterize vascular calcifications in CBCT images to determine a patient’s risk for cardiovascular disease. CBCT scans of the maxillofacial complex often include incidental findings beyond the teeth and the jaws, that may require medical follow-up, one such example being vascular calcifications. The patient may be unaware of the presence of these calcifications and the dental provider may be the first to identify these potentially significant findings and refer for medical evaluation. The trio received seed grant funding from the university’s Office

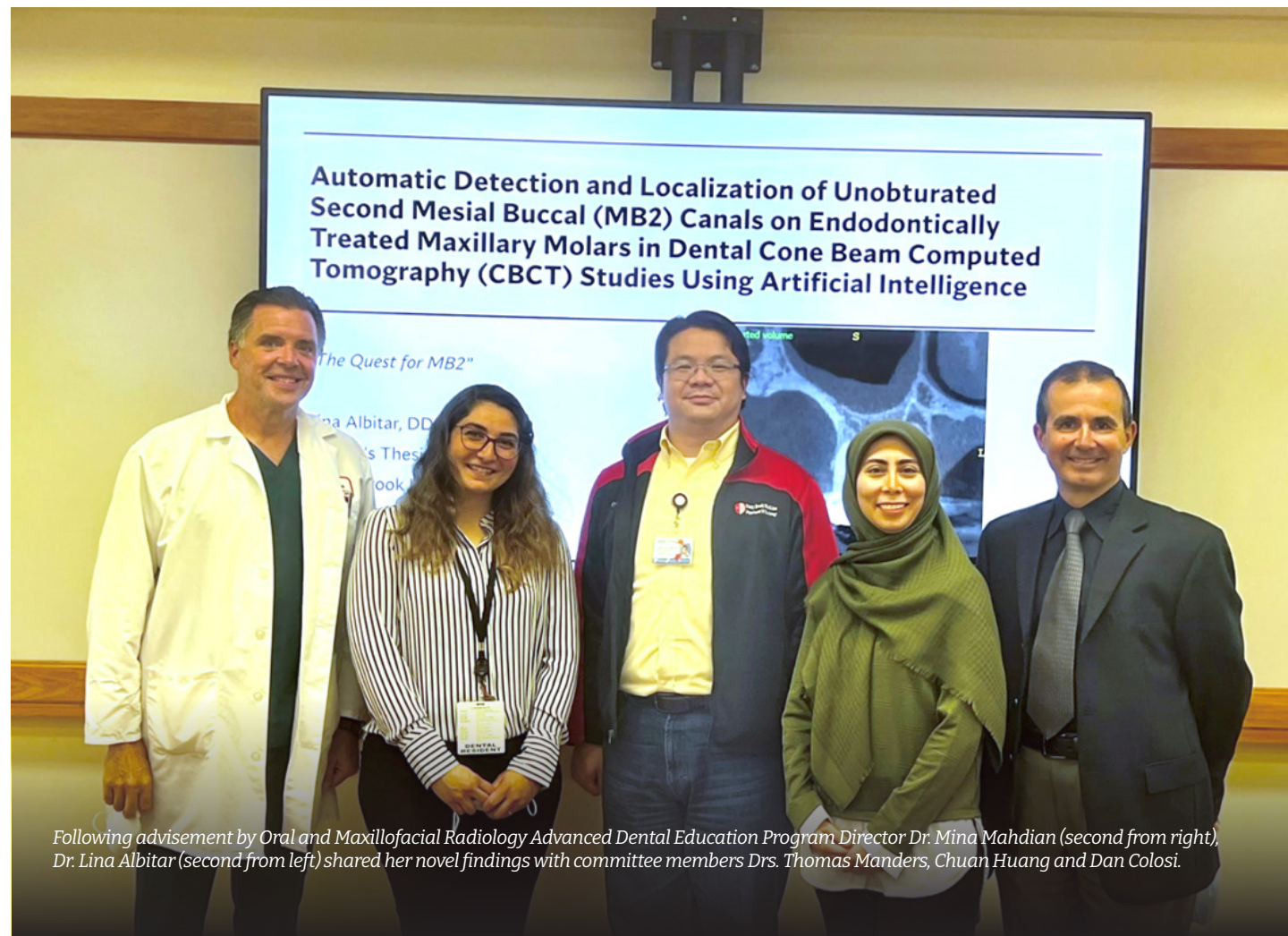
of the Vice President of Research earlier this year.

“I am quite excited about this particular project, as this is the first study to apply 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.”

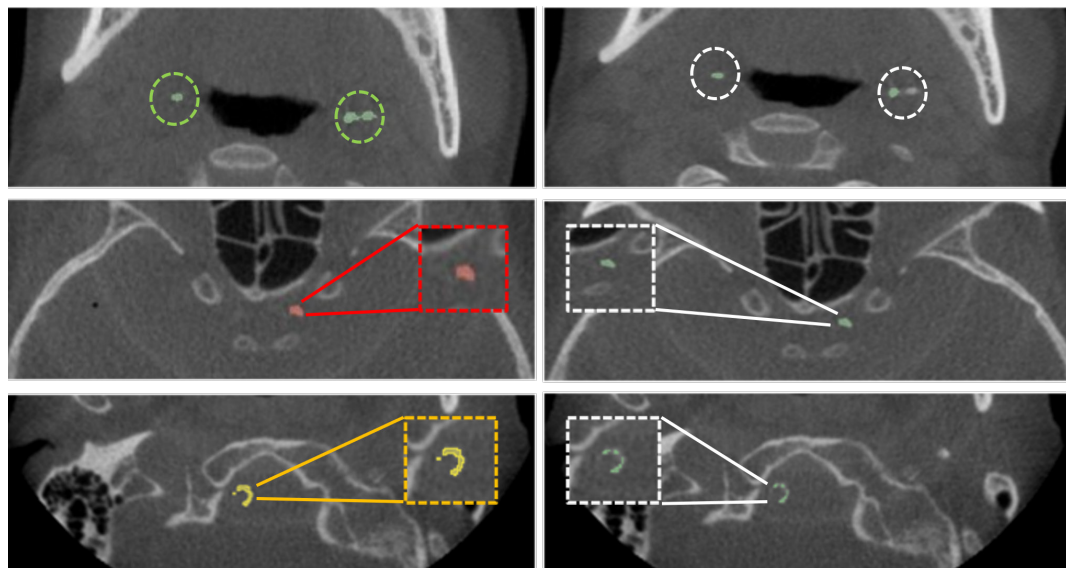


“[AI] is definitely growing and is going to become a major part of dentistry, specifically precision dentistry. I can’t tell you how soon that will happen, but it is going in that direction.”

– Mina Mahdian, DDS, MDSc



Following advisement by Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology Advanced Dental Education Program Director Dr. Mina Mahdian (second from right), Dr. Lina Albitar (second from left) shared her novel findings with committee members Drs. Thomas Manders, Chuan Huang and Dan Colosi.



Manual (left) and nnU-Net (right) segmentations of the three types of vascular calcifications

THE ROAD AHEAD

Challenges remain in the development of reliable AI tools. One of them is data, of which scientists need scores of in order to train models to perform efficiently and, even more importantly, produce accurate results. Lack of large, standardized datasets, that are of high-quality and representative of diverse populations poses a challenge to the development of reliable AI tools in dentistry. Furthermore, powerful AI servers are needed, to process these large quantities of data.

And, Mahdian emphasized, dental AI models must be validated by expert clinicians, and for advanced applications, oral and maxillofacial radiologists, of which there are only about 400 in the United States. Stony Brook is one of just 10 dental schools in North America that has a CODA-accredited oral and maxillofacial radiology residency program, and the only such program in New York State.

“There is a bottleneck right now for the development and validation of these tools,” she said.

Stony Brook as a whole is on the front lines of AI innovation. In September, it launched the AI Innovation Institute (AI3), which was created to coordinate, organize and advance AI innovation and education across campus. According to University Provost Carl Lejuez, PhD, the AI3 will “[catalyze] core AI research, curriculum innovation, and societal change in the ever-evolving landscape of knowledge work.”

Mahdian has mentored numerous students and residents in AI-related projects. Among them is Sonya Movassaghi, DMD, who enrolled in Stony Brook’s

OMFR residency program in 2023 after spending eight years as a general dentist. Under Mahdian, and in collaboration with the Stony Brook Applied Mathematics Department, she has worked to develop an automated model to detect mucosal thickening within the maxillary sinus in CBCT images, measuring the volume of disease as well as the surrounding air and anatomical structures.

“By feeding images of both diseased and healthy sinuses to the AI algorithm, we can teach it what to look for and test its effectiveness in distinguishing mucosal thickening from healthy air, bone structure and the nasal cavity,” said Movassaghi. “Working on this project has opened my eyes to the power of AI and how rapidly this field is advancing and changing.”

However, its growth, between detection, efficiency and, in the end, patient care, is only as good as the foundation underneath it. That’s why Mahdian and her team are taking the necessary measures now so that those in the future, wherever they are practicing, can stand on their shoulders.

“A lot of people are concerned that AI is going to replace practitioners; I don’t think that will ever happen,” she said. “AI lacks consciousness, creativity, intuition and clinical judgment. It makes decisions mathematically. You ultimately need to have a person in charge and making decisions. AI has the potential to be a great complementary tool. I think we should all be open to testing it, seeing how it works, and trying to improve it, because it’s only going to help.”

STONY BROOK CELEBRATES SECOND ANNUAL DENTAL EDUCATORS DAY

Driven by the shortage of dental school faculty in New York and across the United States, Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine hosted its second Dental Educators Day on October 5, on Stony Brook University’s south campus. The event was held in conjunction with World Teachers’ Day, and will be celebrated at Stony Brook on the first Thursday in October each year.

Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine, met with students who are interested in an academic career to share the many pathways into dental education, how faculty are promoted and tenured, as well as tips on how and where to secure an academic position.

The need for faculty has never been greater, with an increase in not only the number of dental schools in the United States — more than a dozen in the last 15 years — but increased class sizes, from a first-year enrollment of 4,232 in 2000 to more than 6,300 in 2020. The dental education workforce is aging, with more than 40 percent of full-time dental faculty in the United States over the age of 60. Recruitment of faculty is challenged as well by private practice opportunities that often provide greater levels of compensation.

As one of few institutions at which dental students can concurrently earn a Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration degree at no extra cost in tuition, Stony Brook is uniquely positioned to help dental students interested in an academic career get

a head start. Those in Stony Brook’s general practice residency program can also develop their skills as didactic and clinical instructors by completing a second year of training in the program.

Leading up to the celebratory day, School of Dental Medicine faculty members shared their sentiments on what makes a career in academia so rewarding.

“The most rewarding part of being a dental educator is seeing students achieve their educational goals, transforming from these beginners into skilled clinicians, and also seeing the patients happy with their care,” said Euane Newen, DDS ‘97, AEGD ‘98, clinical assistant professor in the Department of General Dentistry and director of the General Practice Program D4 Clinic. “Teaching is a fulfilling career that not only allows educators to share their knowledge but also helps them stay up to date on the latest dental practices.”

“Teaching is deeply rewarding,” added Hechang Huang, DDS, MS, MSD, PhD, director of Stony Brook’s Advanced Education Program in Orthodontics and Dental Orthopedics. “It inspires light-bulb moments and life-long personal growth. It stimulates intellectual curiosity and creativity. It builds up mind and hand skills, offering the chance to make a meaningful impact on students’ lives. Teaching provides job satisfaction, professional development and lasting relationships while contributing to the future.”



Students from across the school learned more about the pathway to, and the many benefits of, a career in academia at the School of Dental Medicine’s second annual Dental Educators Day in October.

LLOYD NAMED CODA COMMISSIONER

Patrick Lloyd, DDS, MS, dean of Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, was elected by the American Dental Education Association's House of Delegates to serve on the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), at its annual session in March. His appointment was approved by the American Dental Association's House of Delegates during the SmileCon 2024 annual meeting, in New Orleans, Louisiana, in October.

As one of a 32-person commission, Lloyd will work to help develop and approve accreditation procedures and standards by which dental and dental-related education programs are accredited. He began serving in this role upon the approval of his appointment, and will hold the position for four years.

"I am humbled and honored to have been selected by my colleagues to serve on CODA," Dean Lloyd said. "Accreditation is the means by which we maintain the integrity of our profession and the trust of the public. It helps keep our programs contemporary, monitors their continuous quality improvement and provides our patients with the assurance that we have national standards as to how our dental professionals are educated and trained."



SDM TAKES BIG STEP IN ITS ADMINISTRATION

Kevin Tuttle, MHA, was appointed associate dean for finance and administration at the School of Dental Medicine (SDM) this fall.

In this position, which is new for the SDM, Tuttle oversees the finance and administration, staff human resources, information and technology and facilities of the school, working with the school's leadership to maintain a responsive financial and administrative organization. This includes preparing an annual budget and year-end financial report; leading construction, renovation and capital planning initiatives; developing, revising and implementing policies and procedures; and ensuring that the clinic and school comply with state and national regulations.

Tuttle joined Stony Brook after a five-year stint as vice president of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service Line at Northwell Health. Previously, he spent eight years with Stony Brook Medicine, including as executive administrator in its Department of Medicine, leading the operational, financial, human resource management, program development and strategic planning for more than 120 providers in the Stony Brook network.



RECENT SDM JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

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ZAJAC HELPING STEER NYS FINANCIAL AID



Daniella Zajac, BA '14, MBA '16, director of student services at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, was recently elected the 1st Vice President of the New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association (NYSFAAA) Executive Council for 2024-25.

Founded in 1968, the NYSFAAA advocates for equal access to post-secondary education for all students, while also offering educational programs and networking opportunities for members across its eight designated regions. In Zajac's role with the NYSFAAA, she will support committees in charge of membership, mentoring and awards.

Zajac has been a member in the SDM's Office of Education since 2022, advising dental school and residency students to ensure their compliance with financial aid programs. Her responsibilities also include overseeing student clubs, organizations and elections, serving as the school's Title IX officer, and advocating for student mental health and counseling services. She previously worked as a graduate assistant and financial aid advisor in the Health Sciences Office of Student Services, helping staff, faculty, students and their families navigate the financial aid process.

A JOB WELL DONE



On his last day with the School of Dental Medicine, **Jeff Nieri** (center) was celebrated at its summertime staff and faculty retreat. Nieri spent 20 years as a Stony Brook University employee, including the last 14 as assistant director of purchasing at the SDM.



Therese Lauth (center) was joined by her colleagues at a retirement reception at Oaks Learning Center in October. Lauth spent more than 15 years as a key component within the Dental Care Center, most recently as its special needs coordinator.



Cheryl Belcher (second from right) retired after spending more than 33 years at the School of Dental Medicine, most recently as General Practice Residency program coordinator for a four-year period. She began at the SDM as a dental assistant.



Pattie Hayden (left) retired after spending 44 years in the Dental Care Center at the School of Dental Medicine. Hayden, who began as a dental assistant before transitioning to student program coordinator, was feted by colleagues at a lunch held in her honor at the DCC.

MARSH RECOGNIZED AT STONY AWARDS



For the second consecutive year, Christine Marsh, coordinator of community outreach at the SDM, was a finalist for the Community Award at the Stony Awards, an annual event that recognizes outstanding faculty and staff across the Stony Brook University landscape. In her role, Marsh has helped to improve oral health, particularly among underserved children, in communities throughout Long Island.

SHINING FOR OUR STUDENTS

By Kathleen Fitzpatrick

It could be argued that the School of Dental Medicine's main dispensary is at the heart of the school, both in a literal and figurative sense. Positioned near the juncture of Sullivan and Westchester Halls, it services many students, residents, staff and faculty daily. Since her start in 1992, Linda Ilovic has been offering her assistance, friendly smile and unwavering optimism in this valuable area. *On the Cusp*® caught up with Linda to learn more about her role which greatly supports one of the school's most valuable assets — its students and residents.

You have been in this area for 33 years. What has made you stay?

Carol Sloane, who ran the clinic for many years, hired me and wanted me to work in the main dispensary. Eventually, when Alison Verna retired, it was my responsibility to track instruments and supplies, and make sure that all processes were kept current. Because of my role, management has always wanted me there. I enjoy helping out and seeing the students who see me every day, and love being with my team. We have great communication and get along well.

What is something you look forward to daily in your position, and what are its challenges?

I definitely look forward to interacting with the students, and fortunately I get to do that every day. On the other side, the challenge can be the pressure of making sure they have everything they need to succeed, like filling last-minute orders and providing the correct instruments, as well as making sure their professors and patients are happy with their work. There can be a lot of expectations to manage.

What is one change you would make that would benefit students, staff and faculty?

A new dispensary! I would make it larger. Since they enclosed the space after moving sterilization to the hospital, it can feel very small when it becomes busy. Even though there are only three people working in here at a time, it can feel like a game of bumper cars.

What is your favorite thing about working in the SDM?

I enjoy learning the different techniques of dentistry. My favorite area would have to be prosthodontics. I love seeing the transformation of the patient from beginning to end. I look forward to student and resident updates — seeing their crowns and implants — and encourage them throughout their progress. It is very rewarding.



For more than 30 years, Linda Ilovic has been a key component to making sure the day goes right for SDM students, residents and their patients.

RENOWNED RESEARCHER BEGINS TOLL ROLE

In the fall, Soosan Ghazizadeh, PhD, began her John S. Toll Professorship after a nearly 30-year career as a professor and researcher in the SDM's Department of Oral Biology and Pathology. She celebrated with students and other SDM community members at a reception at the school, and later at a special dinner with colleagues in Port Jefferson, New York.

Since arriving at Stony Brook in 1995, Ghazizadeh contributed immensely to the growth and reputation of the SDM, the success of its students and the advancement of dentistry through her research, which centered around epithelial stem cells, cell plasticity, tissue engineering and gene- and cell-based therapy. Most recently, she was the principal investigator on a project aimed at identifying the mechanism of cell plasticity toward acinar cells in adult salivary glands.

Ghazizadeh received more than \$4.75 million in funding for her work as principal investigator, the results of which appeared in numerous well-respected, peer-reviewed journals.

"On behalf of our institution, I extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Ghazizadeh for her groundbreaking research contributions," said Patrick Lloyd, dean. "Her dedication and pioneering work have profoundly advanced knowledge and inspired countless students. We celebrate her achievements, thank her for shaping the future of research and innovation in the SDM, and look forward to her continued engagement."



Dr. Soosan Ghazizadeh in her lab.

Ghazizadeh began her academic career in 1995 as a postdoc research associate at the SDM's Department of Oral Biology and Pathology before joining the faculty in 2000 and rising through the ranks to a full professor by 2014. She served as the director of the Stony Brook Stem Cell Gene Transfer Core Facility from 2010 to 2020. In her time at Stony Brook, Dr. Ghazizadeh mentored dozens of dental, master's, doctoral and postdoctoral as well as undergraduate students in their research endeavors.



Dr. Soosan Ghazizadeh (fifth from left) with colleagues at her retirement reception held at the school.

MINDS MEET AT FACULTY AND STAFF RETREATS

School of Dental Medicine full- and part-time faculty, as well as staff, convened for the semiannual retreats at the Student Activities Center on Stony Brook University's main campus.

More than 75 faculty participants seized the opportunity to synch with their school and departmental colleagues. Dean Lloyd began the session by outlining the proposed new Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) standards for dental education programs, covering institutional effectiveness, education and educational support, faculty calibration, patient care services and research. The afternoon included an update on what's new in the Department of Prosthodontics and Digital Technology, an interactive review of medical

emergency scenarios as well as collaborative breakout sessions for all departments. Dean Patrick Lloyd concluded the retreat by presenting information on the opportunities ahead with the prospect of a new facility.

The staff morning retreat included team building exercises, an employee benefits review and an activity led by the university's Origami Club, and concluded with an all-school luncheon.

"Events such as these are valuable opportunities for our entire community to all be in one room together, and to learn about the latest updates at our school and in our field," Lloyd said. "We look forward to getting together this June for what promises to be yet another fruitful get-together."



Dr. Jeffrey Seiver leads an exercise for faculty in the Department of General Dentistry.



Periodontal faculty engage in calibration.

FACULTY COUNCIL SETS COURSE FOR FUTURE

Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine's triannual Full- and Part-Time Faculty Council Meeting in December brought together faculty members and administrators to propose and vote on changes to school bylaws, as well as discuss key issues and initiatives.

"The Faculty Council meeting was a resounding success not only due to the sheer number of faculty in attendance, but their engagement in the discourse of the meeting," said Patricia Swanson, DDS, Pros '18, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Prosthodontics and Digital Technology, who serves as the Faculty Council president. "It has had a domino effect seen in the revitalization of standing committees, which have already begun their work to further improve the SDM"

The December meeting included an update from Patrick Lloyd, dean, on the record-setting application pool for the Class of 2029 admissions cycle, news updates from the school, as well as information on the prospect of a new facility on campus. The days on which Council

meetings are held rotate to allow all faculty to attend, learn and have their voices heard throughout the year.

"With these meetings, we are looking to more fully engage with all of our faculty in the governance of the school and to align with new CODA standards on faculty participation," Lloyd said. "So that we can standardize and calibrate, and move forward as a collective body, it is important that our faculty members, full and part time, are full-time dental educators."



Faculty members cast their vote.



CLASS OF 2024 ENCOURAGED TO "MAKE A DIFFERENCE"

Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine's Class of 2024 entered the Staller Center of the Arts one last time as students for their convocation ceremony, and they left as the newest wave of dentists to join the profession, smiling ear to ear alongside their family, friends and classmates.

All together, 43 members of the graduating class will begin residency or private practice this summer, approximately two-thirds of whom will do so in New York State. They will continue their training in disciplines such as general dentistry, oral and maxillofacial radiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics, pediatric dentistry and periodontics, across nine states.

"You have left a mark on the school that will benefit those who follow for years and years to come," said Patrick Lloyd, dean. "Your distinct personalities, different life experiences, and varied educational backgrounds were instrumental in helping us accomplish so much during your years here. And for that we are truly grateful."

"As you move forward in your careers, get involved, lead the way, take responsibility — in our profession and in your communities. You've been given much and therefore much is expected," he continued. "People will look to you for advice, for all sorts of issues — be there, help when you can, and as you've done here, make a difference."

Among those who made an impression at the SDM was Jesse Mulham, DDS '24, who began his oral and maxillofacial surgery residency program at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan.

"It's a pretty surreal moment. This is what I've been dreaming about for a long time," Mulham said. "It's really special to see everything come to fruition. I'm extremely happy to take this next step in my life, to make my parents and mentors proud, and to celebrate this moment with my classmates."

As president of his class, Mulham delivered the traditional graduate address in front of his classmates, who were among more than 500 people in attendance.

"It's a pretty surreal moment. This is what I've been dreaming about for a long time."

– Jesse Mulham, DDS '24

The Class of 2024 gathered once more for a joyous post-ceremony reception at the Charles B. Wang Center, at which Preeya Thomas, DDS '24, expressed her excitement about her future as a general practice resident at Cambridge Health Alliance in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She also praised the companionship and drive of her colleagues who began their dental school journey during the uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This moment is really bittersweet," she said. "I'm just so proud of all of us classmates. We leaned on each other, and I could not have done this without them."

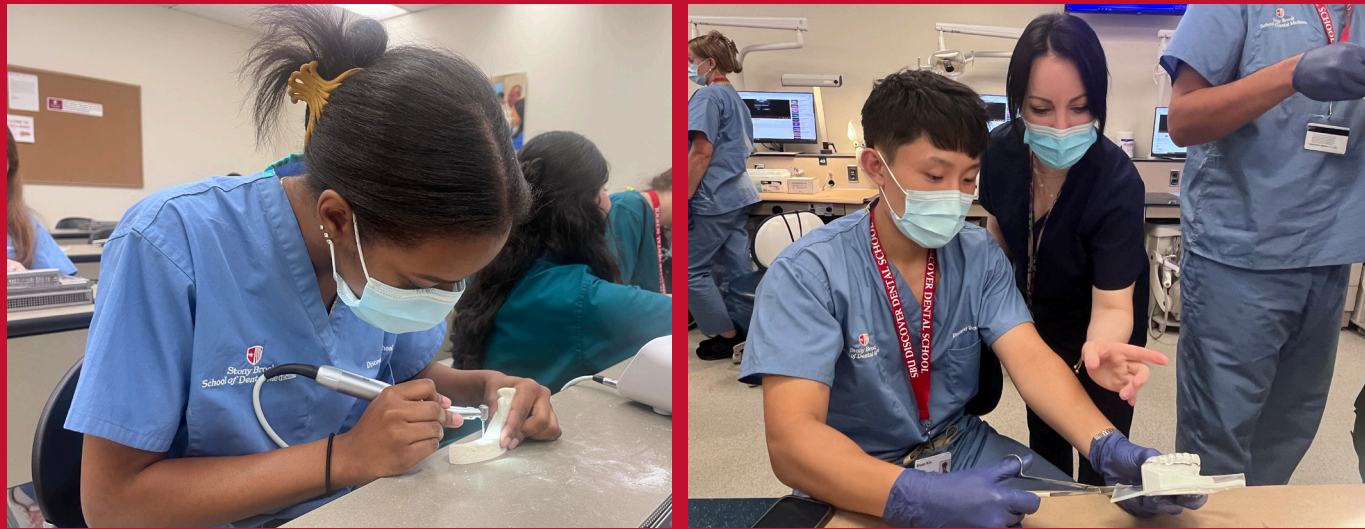
Christopher Fox, DMD, DMSc, chief executive officer of the International and American Associations of Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Research, delivered the afternoon's keynote address, reminding the newest class of graduates of the inexorable link between oral and overall health, and the need for them to acknowledge the ever-evolving science in their chosen field.

"There's no question you are entering the profession at a time of rapid scientific and technological change," Fox said. "You have a responsibility to keep current with these advancements from, whatever manner you like to consume, trusted sources of scientific news. It is the profession's responsibility — and that now includes you — that these advancements benefit everybody and not just those with a financial capacity to afford them. We need to use technology to close the gap of health disparities and not widen the gap."

"I am confident in today's graduating class that you will each do your part in delivering oral health for all," he continued. "The future of oral health in America is indeed bright and is in your hands."

Left: Kaylee Duggan, DDS '24, smiles brightly as she officially earns her DDS degree at the convocation ceremony held at the Staller Center. Right: Michelle Wu, DDS '24, crosses the graduation stage, having earned summa cum laude accolades.





SNEAK PREVIEW At the SDM's annual Discover Dental School summer program, undergraduate students captured a glimpse of life as a dental student, gaining valuable hands-on experience and mentorship during the five-day session.

SDM DIVES INTO DENTAL SCIENCES

Seizing an opportunity to explore the world of dentistry — and get a glimpse of life as a dental student — 20 high school students from across the United States took part in Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine's new Dive Into Dental Sciences summer program. It was part of a university-wide program that provides high school students an opportunity to experience a week of one of several careers offered by schools across campus. For those who were interested in dentistry, they participated in a variety of hands-on activities in the SDM's preclinical laboratory, under the tutelage of Stony Brook dental students, staff and faculty.

The week's activities included using high-speed dental handpieces and other instruments, making cavity preparations, creating typodont impressions and stone models, and fabricating athletic mouth guards, among other tasks.

"The Dive Into Dental Sciences summer program is a wonderful opportunity for students who are considering a career in dentistry to truly experience it first hand," said Patrick Lloyd, dean. "We are so pleased with the program's success in its inaugural year, and look forward to providing this window into our world for many years to come."

During the six-day program, students also watched demonstrations in the school's state-of-the-art Center for Implant Technology (CIDT), and were introduced to

Stony Brook University's Scholars for Dental Medicine Program, which allows qualified candidates to complete a combined bachelor/Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) course of study. Outside of school, they enjoyed a wide variety of excursions throughout Long Island.

"As a dentist who also knew what I wanted to do at a young age, to see that same focus and enthusiasm in high school students was such a joy for me," said Jeffrey Seiver, DDS, the program's director and a clinical assistant professor in the Department of General Dentistry. "The students were a pleasure to work with, and each demonstrated great skill in performing all of the activities throughout the week."



A Dive Into Dental Sciences student tries her hand in the sim lab.

CLASS OF 2028 AT A GLANCE



Class Size
46

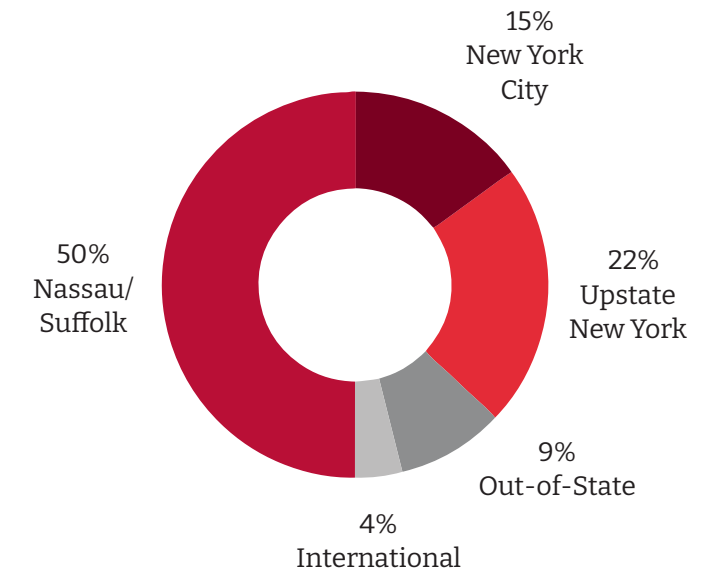
CLASS BREAKDOWN

23 Average Age

65% Female

35% Male

BY LOCATION



BY THE NUMBERS

GPA **3.79**

Science GPA **3.74**



Undergraduate Institutions Represented

23



The Class of 2028 assembles for their first day as dental students.



RENOVATED CAFÉ SATISFYING SDM TASTEBUDS



As students returned for the 2024-25 academic year at the School of Dental Medicine, they discovered that the services available in the on-campus café had dramatically increased and improved, thanks to the culmination of a six-month renovation project.

The café is part of a series of upgrades taking place around the school to further enhance the experience at the SDM for students, residents, staff and faculty.

“We are so pleased to have created a venue where those here at the SDM can order an array of food and drink options throughout the day,” said Patrick Lloyd, dean. “The feedback we have received has been highly positive, with the taste of what is served, the friendliness of the staff, and on the wide spectrum of menu selections.”

The menu at the SDM, for many years, was limited to grab-and-go, pre-packaged entrees, snacks and drinks. However, with the new setup, students, residents, staff and faculty can enjoy an array of hot food options, ranging from breakfast sandwiches in the morning to meals such as chicken parmesan, teriyaki meatballs, freshly made paninis and numerous vegan options in the afternoon.

Additionally, Starbucks® coffee is available for those in need of a tasty pick-me-up throughout the day. The upgrade has also resulted in additional seating in the café.

Above: Friendly faces in the new SDM café. Left: Fourth-year dental student Joseph DeLeon is all smiles after ordering his breakfast sandwich; A fresh panini is cooked up on the grill.

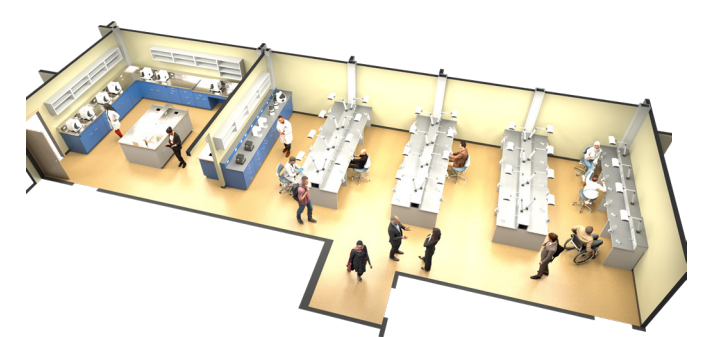
ON THE CALENDAR FOR 2025



Graduate prosthodontics lab

Nowhere are the benefits of technology more apparent in dentistry than with the specialty of prosthodontics. Whether it be in patient assessments, treatment planning or the rendering of complex therapies, digital-based equipment and instruments have resulted in greater precision, predictability and patient satisfaction. The SDM’s new, enlarged and fully-equipped lab will enable residents to learn, experiment and master how best to use the newest innovations.

Projected completion: March 2025



Laboratory images courtesy of NevinLabs, a division of DentalEZ

Dental student wet lab

Looking much like it did when the school opened, both in size and scope, the student wet lab was due for a makeover. So that they can have more space to complete their introductory projects and early patient-based experiences, the lab will be 70 percent bigger and will be equipped with the latest equipment, including overhead lighting, polishing lathes and light-curing units. And, to make it easier to keep clean, each bench will have its own, knee-controlled dust collector.

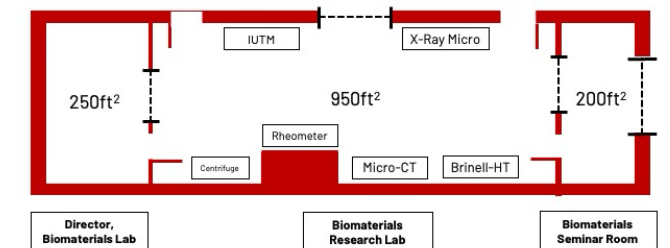
Projected completion: May 2025



Open-concept biomedical research laboratory

Evidence continues to mount that the traditional style of discipline-specific, segregated basic science research labs stymie creativity, innovation and discovery. To combat this, the SDM has removed the walls separating five existing labs in Westchester Hall to create a larger, open-concept lab that will support several investigators who will work side by side, collaborating on new initiatives, sharing the results of their efforts and making breakthroughs that otherwise might never have occurred.

Projected completion: October 2025



Biomaterials research center

With the ever-greater dependency the dental profession has on the performance of ceramic, metallic and a host of other materials in the care of patients, the SDM is creating and equipping a center for biomaterials research. Housed in Westchester Hall, this 1,400- square-foot facility will have the latest in materials testing technology, as well as office and meeting space for the director of the facility and a seminar room for students, residents and faculty involved in materials research.

Projected completion: December 2025



GRADUATES REMINISCE AT INAUGURAL SDM ALUMNI CLASS REUNION

The beginning of an annual tradition, Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine welcomed graduates celebrating milestone anniversaries back to campus for an Alumni Class Reunion on October 26. Festivities included an afternoon barbecue, question-and-answer session with current students, as well as a tour through the school led by Patrick Lloyd, dean. The event concluded with a cocktail hour and sitdown dinner at the Waterview at Port Jefferson Country Club.

The visit was not only a trip down memory lane for alumni returning to their alma mater; it was also an opportunity to see how the school has changed since they graduated. Additionally, reunion visitors could see the multi-million-dollar renovations that are underway, which will result in new open-concept biomaterials and basic science research laboratories and upgraded and enlarged student and prosthodontic resident labs.

Robert Minoofar, DDS '94, who practices general dentistry outside Los Angeles, traveled with his wife, Isabelle, to attend what he described as “a great gathering.” In particular, he enjoyed learning about the future of the SDM as well as the soon-to-be dentists that it is educating. At the evening dinner, he and his fellow graduates reveled in reuniting with past faculty, including Philius Garant, DMD, dean of the SDM from 1979 to 1992, and Vincent Iacono, DMD, who has instructed dental students at Stony Brook since 1974.

Teresa Skalyo, DDS '94, a general dentist based in Geneva, New York, was delighted to reconnect with her classmates. With several having relocated to faraway states, she noted it had been some time since they had

all been in the same room together.

“What I enjoyed most was the opportunity to have a place and time to meet with my classmates,” she said. “I was proud to see all of the positive changes and expansion that has happened at Stony Brook since I graduated. The visit made me want to go back through dental school all over again.”

Dean Lloyd expressed his excitement about continuing to welcoming alumni back each year.

“Our graduates are our very best ambassadors,” Dean Lloyd said. “They help us recruit the best students and residents into our programs and can advocate for us with legislators to secure the resources we need to take our school to the next level, so we can better serve the citizens of New York, offer the most advanced educational experiences, make discoveries that have meaningful impact on our patients and lead the profession forward.”

“In that vein, it is important that they see that their school — and the students and residents who have followed in their footsteps — are on an upward trajectory,” he continued. “I was so pleased to meet alumni who had not been back to campus in many years, and look forward to doing so in the years to come.”

The School of Dental Medicine will hold an alumni reunion for members of the classes of **1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020** in November. Graduates interested in serving as an ambassador for their class can contact Janet Masini, director of alumni programs, Office of Alumni Relations, at janet.masini@stonybrook.edu or (631) 632-6212.

A LETTER FROM THE DENTAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

As president of the Alumni Association for the Stony Brook School of Medicine, I am delighted to share exciting updates about our alma mater and our thriving alumni community. This past October, we gathered on campus for a truly memorable Alumni Class Reunion—a celebration that highlighted the strength of our shared connections and the ongoing evolution of our school.

Building on this momentum, I am thrilled to announce that planning is already underway for our next reunion, set for November 8, 2025. This promises to be an even bigger celebration, and we're eager for alumni input to ensure it reflects the incredible diversity and achievements of our community.

One of the most exciting developments at the school has been the recent renovations that are transforming our facilities into a more dynamic and welcoming environment. A brand-new café has been added, providing students and faculty with a modern, inviting space to recharge and connect. Upgraded office spaces and refreshed hallways, have further enhanced the daily experience for everyone in the building, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. These updates have breathed new life into our beloved institution, reflecting its commitment to excellence and innovation.

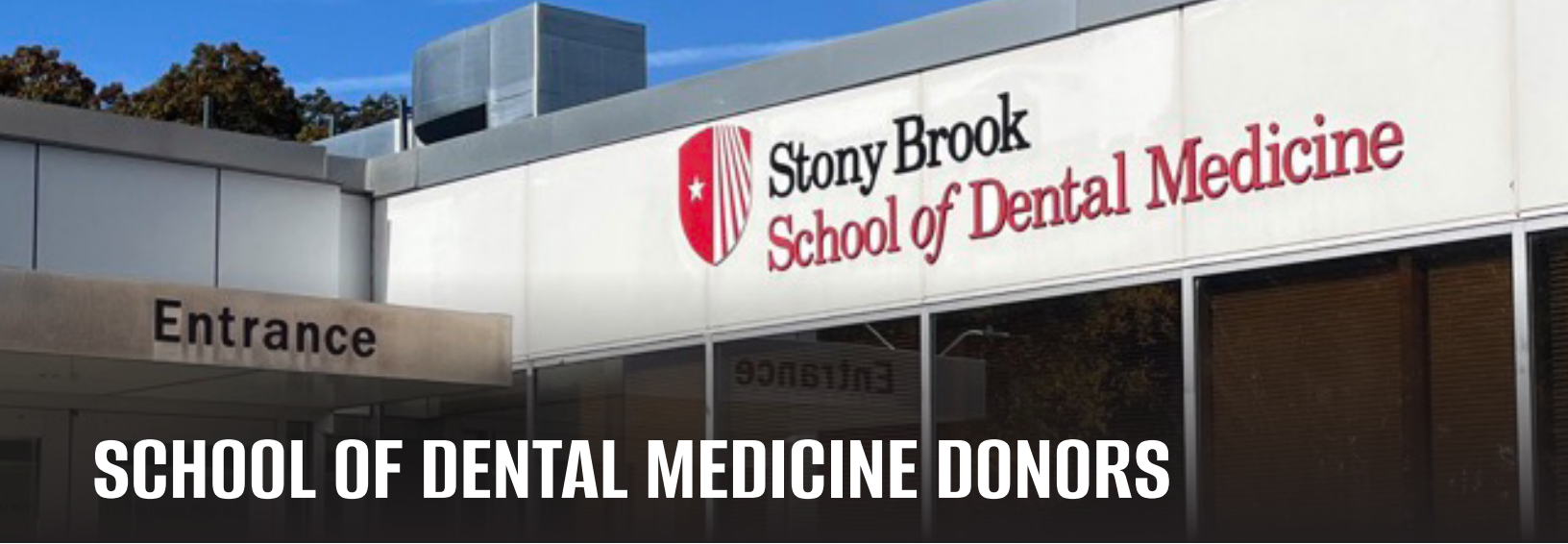
The positive energy throughout the school is palpable, and much of this spirit can be attributed to the steady leadership of Dean Lloyd. Under his guidance, the institution has flourished, fostering stability and an optimistic outlook for the future. His vision for the school continues to inspire not only current students and faculty but also alumni who remain deeply invested in the school's success.

Looking ahead, there is even more reason to be excited. Plans are in the early stages for a new building that will expand the school's capacity to educate future generations of dentistry leaders and advance groundbreaking research. This project symbolizes the school's forward-thinking approach and its dedication to meeting the evolving needs of dental education and healthcare.

The Alumni Class Reunion reminded us all of the incredible community we share and the bright future that lies ahead for the Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. As we prepare for our next reunion in 2025, I encourage all alumni to stay connected, share their ideas and celebrate the ongoing progress of our beloved institution. Together, we are building something extraordinary.

Warmest regards,
Stacy Reisfeld, DDS '88
 President, Stony Brook Dental Alumni Association





SCHOOL OF DENTAL MEDICINE DONORS

Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and organizations who supported the school's mission with gifts of \$100 or more during the 2024 fiscal year. It is through contributions like these that we can continue to provide a comprehensive education, cutting-edge research opportunities and state-of-the-art oral healthcare for our patients. Gifts reflected as of June 30, 2024.

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Director of Development
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(631) 806-6280

EXPRESSING OUR SINCEREST GRATITUDE

Thank you for the incredible generosity demonstrated by so many people from across our community in the 2024 calendar year. Your contributions enable us to educate and provide scholarships to deserving students, implement state-of-the-art care for patients who visit our Dental Care Center, and advance the art of dentistry through groundbreaking research. On behalf of all of those who benefit, and have benefited, from your

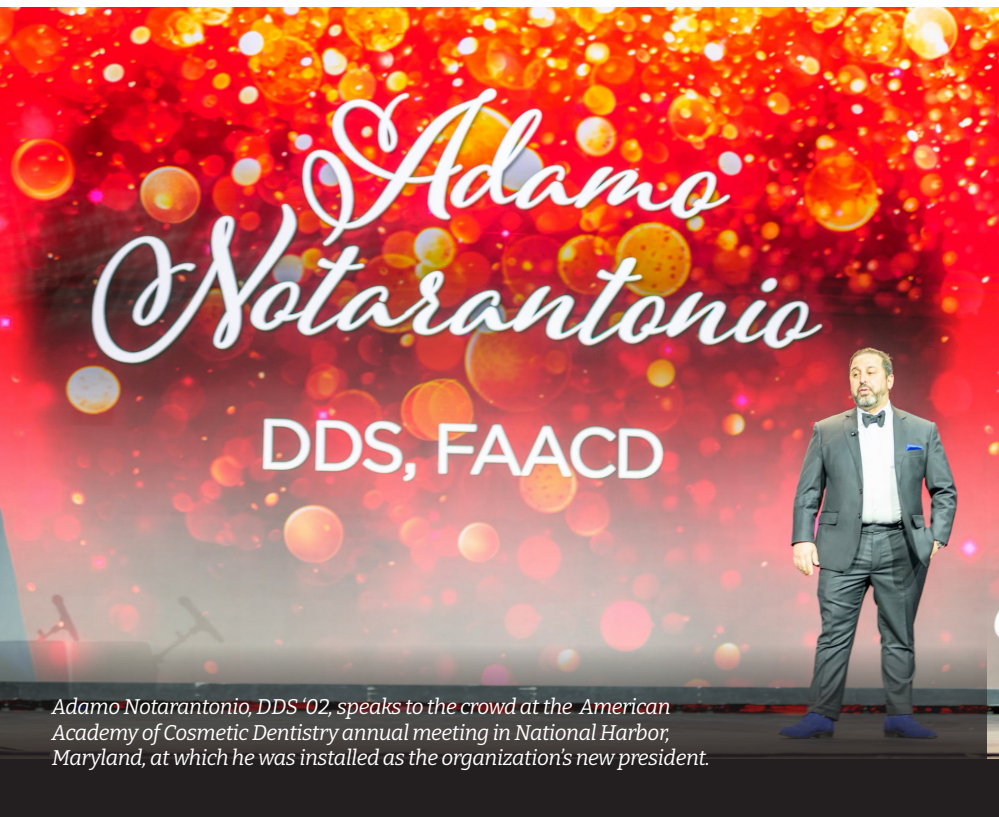
support — thank you. We have so much to look forward to in 2025 and beyond, and I invite you to join us on our tripartite mission. Your support—whether a one-time gift or ongoing pledge — directly fuels our ability to educate the next generation of dentists. Thank you for considering this opportunity to make a difference. Together, we can achieve extraordinary results.



Howard Wang, DDS '13, MPH '15, MBA '15, MS '16, Perio '16 (left) is acknowledged at Stony Brook University's annual 40 Under Forty ceremony.



Devin Klein, DDS '19, MS '22, Ortho '22 (second from right), with his Suffolk County Dental Society colleagues.



Adamo Notarantonio, DDS '02, speaks to the crowd at the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry annual meeting in National Harbor, Maryland, at which he was installed as the organization's new president.



Ying Gu, DDS '02, PhD '02, AEGD '03, is welcomed as a fellow of the American College of Dentists annual meeting in Washington, DC.

CLASS NOTES

1988

In addition to providing periodontal and implant care for patients on Long Island, **Stacy Reisfeld, DDS '88**, has worked as a professional cutwoman at boxing events throughout the United States, as well as served as a penguin keeper at the Long Island Aquarium in Riverhead, New York.

2002

Adamo Notarantonio, DDS '02, AEGD '03, was named president and fellowship chairman of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. A member of the AACD since 2011, Notarantonio received the organization's Rising Star Award in 2016 and his fellowship in 2018.

Ying Gu, DDS '02, PhD '02, AEGD '03, chair and professor of the Department of General Dentistry at Stony Brook, was selected as a fellow of the American College of Dentists in April, and was officially welcomed to the distinguished group at the ACD's annual meeting in October.

2013

In October, **Howard Wang, DDS '13, MPH '15, MBA '15, MS '16, Perio '16**, was acknowledged at Stony Brook University's annual 40 Under Forty ceremony, during which it recognizes 40 alumni under the age of 40 who have made significant strides early in their careers, joining fellow graduates across healthcare, technology, public service, academia, environmental sciences and other fields. Wang practices at Bensonhurst Endodontics and Dental Implants in Brooklyn, New York, and co-founded the Fujianese Medical Association of America, which educates and mentors individuals from underrepresented population groups.

2019

Devin Klein, DDS '19, MS '22, Ortho '22, was elevated to the role of vice president at the Suffolk County Dental Society President's Gala and Officers' Installation in January.

2021

Haley Golden, DDS, Peds '21, was recognized as a diplomate of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry. Golden completed the two-step process to become board certified. The ABPD pinning ceremony will take place at American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, in May.

A trio of graduates from the SDM's Advanced Dental Education Program in Pediatric Dentistry — **Shradha Duggal, BS '17, DDS '21, Peds '23, Hannah Kwak, DMD, Peds '23**, and **Cyril Manchery, DDS '21, Peds '23** — were acknowledged as diplomates of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry and will be recognized at the AAPD meeting in May.

2022

Chloe Beninati, DDS/MPH '22, a second-year resident in Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine's Advanced Dental Education Program in Endodontics, was awarded the prestigious Foundation for Endodontics and Dentsply Sirona Freedom Scholarship. Beginning in 2024, the \$50,000 scholarship will be given annually to three second- or third-year endodontics residents at programs accredited by CODA, helping to offset the cost of their tuition. Awardees were chosen based on their academic performance in dental school and their residency, a personal statement about their career aspirations, letters of recommendation and expenses associated with their endodontic residency training program.

Do you have some news you would like to share?

Submit brief notices about milestone events and activities to brett.mauser@stonybrookmedicine.edu, or by mail to Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, 123 Rockland Hall, South Drive, Stony Brook, NY 11794.

OUT AND ABOUT WITH THE SDM

Members of the School of Dental Medicine community actively participate in annual meetings across the country throughout the year. These gatherings provide an excellent opportunity for students, residents, staff, faculty, and alumni to reconnect at school-hosted receptions. Attendees can catch up with classmates, share stories, and exchange updates about their careers or the latest developments at the school.

This year promises an exciting lineup of events, including the second annual reunion dinner during Homecoming Weekend at the Port Jefferson Country Club (see page 34).

Take a look at where we've been and what's on the horizon. We look forward to seeing you there!



American College of Prosthodontists Annual Session, Marco Island, Florida



In December, the SDM held a reception for alumni and friends attending the Greater New York Dental Meeting, New York, New York.



SDM reception at SmileCon 2024, New Orleans, Louisiana



SDM reception at 2024 American Academy of Periodontology Annual Meeting, San Diego, California

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY 2025

January 24 - 26

American Association of Orthodontists Winter Conference
JW Marriott Marco Island Beach Resort • Marco Island, FL

January 31

Class of 2025 Match Day Celebration
Oaks Learning Center
Stony Brook, NY

FEBRUARY 2025

February 7 • 7:30am

Nassau County Give Kids a Smile Day
Cradle of Aviation Museum
Garden City, NY

February 26 • 9am

SDM Annual Research Symposium and Sreebny Lectureship
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, NY

MARCH 2025

March 8 - 11

American Dental Education Association Annual Meeting
Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center
National Harbor, MD

March 12 - 15

AADOCR/CADR Annual Meeting
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center
New York, NY

March 27 - 29

Academy of Osseointegration Annual Meeting
Seattle, WA

March 30 - April 1

American Dental Association Lobby Day
Washington, DC

APRIL 2025

April 2 - 5

American Association of Endodontists Annual Session
Hynes Convention Center
Boston, MA

April 25 - 27

American Association of Orthodontists Annual Session
Pennsylvania Convention Center
Philadelphia, PA

MAY 2025

May 21

SDM Convocation
Staller Center Main Stage
Stony Brook University

May 22 - 25

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Annual Session
Colorado Convention Center
Denver, CO

May 23

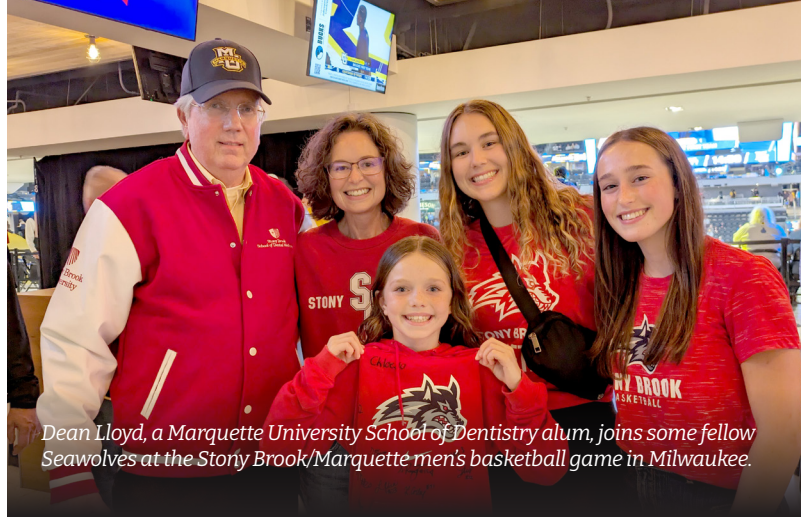
University Commencement
Kenneth P. LaValle Stadium
Stony Brook University

May 30 • 2pm

Class of 2028 White Coat Ceremony
Student Activities Center
Stony Brook University



Drs. Sri Myneni (front left) and Mina Mahdian (front right) celebrate their promotions with colleagues at a ceremony on East Campus.



Dean Lloyd, a Marquette University School of Dentistry alum, joins some fellow Seawolves at the Stony Brook/Marquette men's basketball game in Milwaukee.



D4 student Rachel Swed poses for her senior portrait.



Dean Lloyd honors Dr. Vincent Iacono for his more than 50 years of service at the School of Dental Medicine.



The SDM's annual Welcome Back Barbecue brought everybody together to kick off the 2024-25 academic year.



Amid a rainy CommUniversity Day, students screened dozens of visitors to their tent ...



... and the Tooth Fairy shared stories from her worldwide travels.



GPR resident Victoria Hansbury (left) and Alexandria Sullivan (right) use Play-Doh to teach dental skills at Stony Brook Medicine's Take Your Child to Work Day.



Dean Lloyd and Stony Brook University Interim President Richard McCormick connect after the State of the University address.



D4 student Vito Liut displays where he will head after graduation this spring.



Students, residents, staff and faculty came together for a festive holiday celebration in December.

AN UN-ORTHO-DOX HALLOWEEN

Opinions on Halloween often vary, but it has always been a date that Scott Mateer, DDS '07, has circled on the calendar.

"I've always been big into Halloween," said Mateer. "As a kid, I always wanted to take the costume to the next level."

This remains to be true at his practice, Mateer Orthodontics in Commack, New York, which for two days each October transforms into a scene that his patients might expect to see in a movie theater or silver screen, whether it be *The Upside Down* or *Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft*. These metamorphoses have gained the praise of his patients, young and old, as well as drawn the attention of outlets like News 12, NBC New York, and even *The Today Show*.

Mateer sat down with *On the Cusp*® to share how it all came about, and how it's become the phenomenon that it is today.

When did the Halloween transformations begin?

When I opened my office in 2013, we wanted to do Halloween costumes that everyone on the team could be a part of. And then six years ago, we did *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, and we had the idea of not having it just be costumes but rather an experience. We had custom candy bars made up, and two people even won \$1000 and \$500 by pulling a "golden ticket." Things really ramped up in 2022 when we did *Stranger Things*,

which was huge at the time. We were going to do one room, but that became two, and next thing you know the whole office has been turned into the set of *Stranger Things*.

What are some other themes that you have had?

We've done *Minions*, *Tiger King*, *Toy Story*, *Stranger Things*, *Harry Potter*, and this year, we did *Beetlejuice*. One year we even did *The Grinch* around the holidays and turned the whole office into Whoville. I dressed as the Grinch, and the whole staff wore silicone noses.

How have patients reacted to these experiences?

The reaction of the patient base is the best. People come in just for the Halloween experience, and they're just so shocked. Some people who aren't even patients stop in to see us. Our youngest patients are probably about 7 years old, and they love it. The younger kids can't believe it's me underneath the costume, and older kids think it's really cool. And especially with *Beetlejuice*, the nostalgia I feel for that movie I see in the parents.

How has your staff taken to it?

I have a couple people who are all in and feed off my enthusiasm for it. Others say they're only doing it for me; they didn't even dress up for Halloween as a kid. I'm so appreciative of all of them. There's no way anything would get done without them.



How are you able to do these transformations while operating a practice?

People have asked me who we hired to do all of it, and truthfully, it's just our staff. Our office will close on a Friday, and we have people taking shifts over the weekend, all day and all night, to get prepared for the big opening on Monday. It's like setting up a movie set.

How soon do you start planning?

For *Beetlejuice* this year, we began brainstorming at the end of August. One of the most creative people on my team was on maternity leave so I was a little more involved this year, and I'm someone who is apt to take an idea too far. I was involved in everything and we just went all out. We even ordered black and white peel-

and-stick tiles for our waiting room, and the small village that's in the movie, it probably took me three months to recreate that, all out of shoeboxes and other materials.

What's in the works for next year?

There is no theme as of yet. People have kicked around some ideas, including superheroes and Disney characters, but I want to do something that's more trending, something that's in the news. Whatever we end up doing, I look forward to it. Halloween is something that I feel like all of our patients love. For those couple days, everyone's happy and in a good mood. It does get stressful because we've done so much and you wonder "how can we top that?" But I'm up for it.

Left: Halloween themes in the Mateer Orthodontics office have included *Stranger Things* and *Beetlejuice*. Above: Scott Mateer, DDS '07, at his office in Commack.

**Stony Brook School
of Dental Medicine**

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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

Join your classmates for a full slate of events at the School of Dental Medicine in the afternoon, and then an evening of great food and company at Port Jefferson Country Club. Details to follow! We look forward to celebrating your milestone graduation anniversaries each year.



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