Welcoming the Class of 2025
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Cover photo:
Photo of the Class of 2025 taken by Steve Gilbert.

As second-year DMD students transitioned from HMS to HSDM a few weeks ago, they had a chance to fit in some fun in between orientation sessions with a scavenger hunt around Boston.
Dear Alumni and Friends,

It was just a year ago at this time that I was packing up my house in Ann Arbor, Michigan and on my way to Boston to begin serving as HSDM’s new dean. The excitement and anticipation I felt then, continues to motivate me today. The past year has been filled with challenges due to the pandemic, yet also rewards. This summer, I was thrilled to welcome our new students to campus in person, and celebrate our incoming DMD students, as well as the Class of 2024, who started their program entirely virtually last year. It was rewarding to see the smiles on their faces as they stepped onto the stage on the Quad in their new white coats to introduce themselves. It reminds me that traditions like the White Coat Ceremony are so meaningful, and we cherish them even more after such a challenging year.

In this issue, you’ll get to meet several of the DMD students in the Class of 2025, and learn why they chose HSDM. You’ll meet Hoda Mahmoud, DMD25, a daughter of immigrants, and the School’s first recipient of the Freeman, Grant, Franklin Scholarship. She notes that growing up, she rarely came across dentists that looked like her, and realized that it was not the lack of interest in the field; rather, it was the lack of opportunities and representation in dentistry. Thanks to the generosity of our alumni and friends, the scholarship now opens doors for students like Hoda to make an impact in dentistry and broaden diversity in our field.

As alumni, we all remember how exciting those early days of dental school were. That’s when we formed the bonds with classmates that we still hold dear to this day. Earlier this year, we hosted a virtual Reunion and Alumni Day gathering. I was fortunate to meet several of you and I was impressed with your passion for the profession and your dedication to HSDM. We’ve launched a new Harvard Dental Alumni Council, under the leadership of HDAA President Dino Bertini, that will reinvigorate networking and connections amongst our alumni. You’ll meet our new Council members in this issue, as well as our new Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Relations, Jody Johnson. I’m eager to meet more of our alumni as opportunities to travel arise.

This fall, our campus has come back to life with students, faculty, and staff returning. It’s heartening to see our community come together once again. We’ve returned with new energy and are looking forward to beginning a strategic planning process for the School that will give shape to priorities identified in a recent research review and community climate survey. Thanks to the dedication of many, we’ve kept our community extremely safe through vaccinations, continued testing, and indoor masking. HSDM remains strong and resilient. I hope that you continue to stay well, and I thank you for your support of HSDM.

William V. Giannobile, DDS, DMSc96, PD96
Dean, Harvard School of Dental Medicine
Jody M. Johnson joined Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM) as associate dean for Development and Alumni Relations on August 23, 2021. Most recently, Jody served as Senior Director of Development for The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare, an affiliate of Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston-based national healthcare organization, where she worked with the Board of Directors and Leadership Council. She brings 20 years of experience in educational fundraising to this role. Jody began her career at the Harvard College Fund and is thrilled to return to the University in this leadership role.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.
I grew up in Connecticut and attended Bucknell University, where I played cello in the University orchestra and studied abroad in Tours, France. For as long as I can remember, I have found it inspiring to be part of an academic community. I’ve maintained strong ties to my alma mater and have volunteered as an alumna to support the University. I feel it’s important to give back to institutions that have significantly shaped my life and career.

My interest in fundraising began early in life. For most of my formative years, I was fundraising in some form or another — whether it was selling Girl Scout cookies or tickets to the annual school pancake breakfast, or celebrating a milestone anniversary for my sorority.

Interestingly, as a teenager one of my first summer jobs was assisting a local oral surgeon, who was kind enough to hire me — a great opportunity to gain some office experience and walk to work. On my first day, they asked me to hold a suction tool for a patient but I felt a little lightheaded — clearly I was not cut out for clinical responsibilities! The next day, I was moved to the front of the office — much better suited to my skillset, answering phones and greeting patients. This marked the beginning of my administrative work. It’s...
great to return to the healthcare environment, fortunately for all of us, in the office.

Today I live on the North Shore with my family. The pandemic made us ever more grateful for town access to the beach, local hiking trails and outdoor recreation.

You’ve served in development roles in education and healthcare fields. What drew you to philanthropic work in these areas?

Upon graduation from college, I gravitated to a skillset I developed as an undergraduate—strengthening ties with alumni. One of my campus jobs was with the student calling program. The summer before my senior year, I worked as an intern at the Yale School of Medicine and Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital Development Office to learn more about the profession. I was hooked! It is a joy to work in the non-profit sector and I have had the benefit of learning from extraordinary mentors. I admire the faculty and it is gratifying to celebrate the programmatic work with students and families who value lifelong relationships during this pivotal time in their educational experience. Philanthropy can motivate us on a small or large scale, by delivering new programs and services that have long-lasting impact.

What are you most excited about as you return to Harvard?

It is energizing to return to Harvard in this new role and intimate environment at HSDM, especially as the new school year begins on campus. I look forward to partnering with Dean Giannobile, his leadership team, faculty, staff, and colleagues to advance HSDM’s programs and initiatives. I feel humbled by the University enterprise and the extraordinary work and dedication of Harvard employees. It is a privilege to develop relationships with donors who want to make gifts that transform the experience for students, support faculty and teaching, or advance important research. I will focus our Development and Alumni Relations efforts on supporting HSDM’s growth and new vision under the leadership of Dean Giannobile.

What do you hope to learn about our alumni?

I am eager to get to know HSDM alumni and learn about their experiences, and how their education and research shaped their careers. From what I’ve learned already, our alumni are outstanding leaders in the field, and even beyond dentistry, many are entrepreneurs, public health advocates, researchers, policy makers, and educators as well. I’m curious what drew them to HSDM’s predoctoral and postdoctoral programs, and how the personalized experienced and education they received impacts their work today. Which instructors made the biggest impact? How do they want to give back to HSDM and support the next generation of graduates and scholars?

What role does philanthropy play in the HSDM’s teaching and research mission?

Philanthropic support will help us achieve the goals of diversifying the student and faculty population and expanding funds for research. My role is to partner with donors and match their interests with our institutional priorities. We will encourage and foster more funding from friends, corporations, and foundations so we can expand HSDM programs. We know that HSDM students bring their skills and dedication as clinicians to treat and teach in communities around the world. The historic legacy of Harvard School of Dental Medicine is significant; I look forward to continuing to build on the School’s global enterprise and support its important role shaping oral health practices and policies for practitioners and patients alike.

“I’m looking forward to having Jody’s expertise in leading our fundraising efforts and engaging our alumni base. Increasing HSDM’s funding opportunities and scholarship aid is vitally important to the growth of our School and to attracting the very best students regardless of financial need.”

—Dean William Giannobile
After an unprecedented year, the arrival of 35 new Doctor of Dental Medicine students on campus in early August came with joy and excitement, as well as added health precautions to assure a safe and welcoming environment.

“Introduction to the Profession” orientation week kicked off on Monday, August 2, beneath a tent on the Harvard Medical School (HMS) Quad. Dental and medical students, sitting in chairs spaced six feet apart, were welcomed by the deans of the Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM) and Harvard Medical School. “This is an exciting time for you, as it is for us. After over a year of the pandemic, we are thrilled to welcome you to campus in person,” said Dean Giannobile. “You join a highly supportive environment where we are all dedicated to your success.”

Throughout the week, the students participated in activities to get to know their classmates and what to expect in their first year. They experienced their first patient clinic and had the chance to try on their white coats. They were also introduced to their academic societies where they will collaborate in smaller student groups with faculty advisors.

“After talking to a number of my classmates and learning about their path to medicine or dentistry, I feel inspired, motivated, and supported, so I know I made the right choice to come here,” said Albert Yang, DMD25, who came to HSDM from southern California. Yang added that another factor in choosing HSDM for his dental education was the opportunity to be surrounded by classmates from different geographical regions and cultural backgrounds in a small, close-knit community. The DMD Class of 2025 hails from 18 different states, and 11 countries. The Class is comprised of 69 percent women and 31 percent men, with a third of the new students coming from populations underrepresented in dental medicine.

The dental students will spend the first year of their education immersed in the medical school curriculum learning alongside their medical school classmates.
Because the first year of dental school is shared with the medical school, I am so excited to learn more of the interaction between oral health and an individual’s overall health, specifically in the flipped-classroom, case-based learning that characterizes Harvard,” said Camila (Cami) Tussie, who was born in Argentina and grew up in Miami.

The week culminated in not one, but two, White Coat Ceremonies. On Thursday, August 5, the Class of 2024, who did not have an in-person ceremony last year due to COVID restrictions, celebrated with a “White Coat 2.0” ceremony held on the Quad. The Class of 2025 then had their chance to take the stage on Friday, August 6. Wearing their white coats, they each introduced themselves in front of their classmates and a virtual audience of friends and family watching via livestream. The deans of both schools shared advice and accolades with the new students.

“You’ve come to Harvard to learn what it takes to become future doctors, and you’ve done it against a backdrop of a pandemic that has underscored the importance of dental health and service to others. You’ve gained valuable insights this year that will serve you well in your academic journey and your future career,” said Dean Giannobile. “I am looking forward to following your progress over these four years and supporting your dreams. Congratulations and best wishes to all!”

First Impressions
Why did you choose HSDM?

“I believe HSDM will well prepare me to become a leader among the next generation of dental professionals. I am interested in expanding access to dental care in rural and underserved communities which I can explore through courses, research projects, and community outreach programs offered at HSDM. These curricular and extracurricular experiences will give me a global perspective of patient care which is advantageous in a progressively diverse and interconnected world.”

– Jake Cantrell, DMD25

“I chose to attend HSDM because of the faculty. During my interview I could feel the sincerity and warmth from everyone I had the pleasure of meeting that day. The students and faculty felt like a family, and so although I was apprehensive about leaving my family and moving to Boston, I knew that I would be gaining a new one.”

– Sufiya Hassan, DMD25

“HSDM offers opportunities unlike anywhere in the world – the professors are researchers and clinicians who are at the cutting-edge of the field, my classmates come from a range of backgrounds and share such diverse passions, and I am given access to resources that push me to be the very best dentist and person that I can be. With a class size of only 35 students, I feel like I am more than just “another student” – I feel heard, represented, and like I am in a place where I can find resources and mentors that cater to my passions and interests.”

– Camila (Cami) Tussie, DMD25
Several members of the Class of 1981 gathered for a cookout in Hull, MA, to celebrate their 40th Reunion.

HSDM alumni reunited during this year’s Reunion and Alumni Day through informal gatherings, virtual happy hours, and engaging online programs. While most activities were virtual this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, alumni found creative ways to channel their class spirit and relive fond memories of HSDM.

Events kicked off on Thursday, June 3 with a toast by Dean William Giannobile, DMSc96, PD96, at a virtual happy hour. Alumni had the chance to reconnect with friends and also meet current students in each of the break-out sessions. Alumni reminisced fondly about former mentors, their educational experience, and camaraderie shared with their classmates.

On Alumni Day, Friday, June 4, Dino Bertini, DMD97, MMSc99, Harvard Dental Alumni Association President, hosted the day’s Zoom events from his dental practice in New York City.

“I want to thank each of you for joining us from your home or office,” said Bertini. “Though we’re meeting virtually to support our community’s continued health, safety, and well-being, hopefully by spending some time with us today you’ll feel more connected to your HSDM family.”

New Alumni Council

Bertini congratulated the newest recipients of the Harvard Dental Alumni Association (HDAA) awards. Class of 2021 graduates Emily Wei-Ling Chen and Jiachen Lin received the HDAA Silver and Gold Medal Awards respectively for exceptional all-around scholastic achievement. He also announced the newly appointed members of the reinvigorated HDAA Alumni Council. Miguel Roque, DMD16, MMSc19 (endodontics), who will serve as Vice President, Jenny Chang, DMD97, DMSc01 (prosthodontics), Sonia Molina, DMD89, MPH89, Matthew Plummer, DMD73, MPH74, and Mindy Streem, DMD05. The HDAA Council members will work to bring the alumni community together and forge connections between current students and alumni.

“We received an enthusiastic response to our request for nominations and thank everyone for their submissions. I’m excited to work with all of you and grateful for your willingness to serve,” said Bertini.

State of the School

Bertini then turned the program over to Dean William Giannobile for his State of the School presentation. Dean Giannobile touched on changes in clinical care, research, and education at HSDM during a year transformed by the pandemic.

“Our community displayed such resilience and adaptation during this challenging time. I’ve been amazed at the wonderful teamwork at the School. There has been a tremendous amount of pivoting required to continue the mission of the School,” Giannobile said.

The dean highlighted exciting developments over the past year, including the opening of a new dental practice in Cambridge, new faculty and leadership appointments, the activation of increased scholarship funding, diversity initiatives, and an external research review that will give shape to emerging research priorities.

“In 2021-22 we anticipate increases in clinical revenue, research, and continuing education activities. I’m
optimistic that we’re moving in a favorable direction,” Giannobile said.

**Symposium on Dental Research**

The Dean’s presentation was immediately followed by an engaging symposium on new directions in dental research. Moderator Christopher H. Fox, DMD87, SM87, DMSc91, PD91, chief executive officer for the International Association for Dental Research, joined speaker Dr. Rena N. D’Souza, director of the NIH’s National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) for a lively discussion on where the NIH/NIDCR is focusing research funding.

D’Souza oversees NIDCR’s annual budget of more than $475 million, which supports basic, translational, and clinical research in areas of oral cancer, orofacial pain, tooth decay, periodontal disease, salivary gland dysfunction, craniofacial development, and disorders and the oral complications of systemic diseases.

“The pandemic has challenged us in numerous ways, but throughout each crisis there is something to learn,” said D’Souza, who highlighted ways the agency responded to COVID and learned new lessons.

D’Souza described the agency’s mission to transform human lives through scientific discovery and how their goal of advancing oral health is inextricably linked to overall health.

“This is an unprecedented time in our history with the opportunity to now really bring cures and therapies to the forefront,” she said. “Rapid acceleration of diagnostics can be applied to dentistry long after COVID,” she said.

She illustrated the ways NIH/NIDCR continues to innovate through investments in oral health, telehealth, funding for dental schools, and intramural research areas. She also advocated for greater diversity in the scientific community.

Dean Giannobile wrapped up the event by thanking the presenters and the HSDM alumni and community members in attendance. “We hope to see you all in person next time,” he added.

**Meet the HDAA Alumni Council**

Miguel Roque, DMD16, MMSc19
**HDAA Vice President**

Dr. Rogue is an HSDM-trained endodontist in private practice, and has maintained his connection to the School through his service on the HSDM Admissions Committee. He looks forward to serving on the HDAA. “My time at HSDM was an inflection point in my life. The relationships made and lessons learned have paved the way to my present day. I relish the opportunity to keep the alumni community engaged and interested so we may all continue to benefit from one another’s experience and talent far beyond our time on campus.”

Jenny Chang DMD97, DMSc01

Dr. Chang is an HSDM-trained prosthodontist and founder and CEO of Chang Dental Group. “This is an exciting time under the leadership of Dean William Giannobile and President of the HDAA Dr. Dino Bertini, to join the alumni association and contribute to the growth and development of our alumni network. It’s a great honor to reinvigorate our alumni association to engage all members from all over the world.”

Sonia Molina, DMD89, MPH89

Dr. Molina is a California-based endodontist in private practice who holds degrees from both HSDM and the T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She serves on the Harvard Alumni Association board and is currently a member of the Harvard Club of Southern California. “As part of these organizations, I have learned to work in collaboration with other alumni and to get alumni to stay engaged.”

Matthew Plummer, Jr., DMD73, MPH74

Dr. Plummer is a graduate of both HSDM and the T.H. Chan School of Public Health and is in private practice in Texas. He also serves as president of the Harris County Hospital District Foundation. He actively supports HSDM’s recruitment of URM students working with the HSDM Admissions Committee. He joins the Council “to continue my support of 40 years to HSDM. It gives me the opportunity to continue to give back.”

Mindy (Greenblatt) Streem, DMD05

Dr. Streem is an orthodontist who received her DMD degree from HSDM and owns a private practice in Ohio. “I would like to play a role in keeping the HSDM alumni community connected. My time at HSDM was so special and so unique. I really feel like we have strong alumni, but we need to keep them more active, not only in the School, but with each other!”
Scholarship Recipient Inspired to Make a Difference Through Dentistry

Among Harvard School of Dental Medicine’s newest students in the incoming Class of 2025 is Hoda Mahmoud, DMD25, the School’s first recipient of the Freeman, Grant, Franklin Scholarship. Mahmoud is excited to start her studies at HSDM and chose Harvard’s DMD program for its focus on the integration of oral and systemic health.

"Of the many factors that impacted my decision to attend HSDM, the aspect that most persuaded me, was its emphasis on overall health through its integration with the medical school, especially during the first year," Mahmoud said. "Dentistry cannot be studied just by looking at the oral cavity; it must be viewed systemically in order to address underlying health issues that affect the body as a whole," she added.

Mahmoud, a native of Chicago, was also struck by the welcoming environment that she experienced when applying to HSDM. "I loved the friendly environment that is created by faculty and students. The caring and exciting environment of Harvard is what sealed the deal for me when picking a DMD program."

Mahmoud was selected to receive the Freeman, Grant, Franklin Scholarship, a scholarship recently activated to support dental students from underrepresented minority backgrounds. The Scholarship pays tribute to prominent Black figures in HSDM’s history, including Robert Tanner Freeman, DMD1869, George Grant DMD1884, and Dolores Mercedes Franklin, DMD74, PD76, the first Black woman to graduate from HSDM.

"The Freeman, Grant, Franklin Scholarship means more than just a monetary aid. For me, the significance behind the scholarship and the generosity of the donors demonstrates HSDM’s efforts to facilitate greater representation of minorities in the healthcare field," Mahmoud said.

"Growing up, I rarely came across dentists that looked like me. Only later did I make the connection that it was not the lack of interest in the field; rather, it was the lack of opportunities and representation in dentistry. The issue of the lack of minority providers..."
in dentistry is known by most academic institutions; however, there are limited efforts to change the perspective,” she said.

Mahmoud comes to HSDM from Illinois where she was a graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), earning a bachelor’s of science in both chemistry and psychology. During her undergraduate career, she served as the president of UIC’s pre-dental club, providing leadership and guidance to students interested in pursuing careers in the dental field. Throughout her undergraduate career, she spent time working as a research assistant for the Women’s Mental Health Research Program (WMHRP) at UIC, receiving recognition for her capstone project on the correlation between perinatal anxiety and socioeconomic factors.

As she embarks on her academic journey at HSDM, Mahmoud hopes to become involved in public health research, with the goal of minimizing the negative effects that socioeconomic status can have on patient care. She is also interested in exploring the connections between mental health, systemic health, and oral health.

“As the daughter of immigrants, I have witnessed the difference in care and empathy between providers that are well-rounded in their experiences with diverse cultures, and those that have limited encounters with their patient pool,” Mahmoud said. “Empathy comes with experience, and it is an essential trait that is needed in the healthcare field. This scholarship has increased my interest in providing better care for minority groups. With this scholarship, I hope to be a part of the solution.”

Bridge to Dental School Program Recognized with STEM Award

Harvard School of Dental Medicine’s Bridge to Dental School Program has been named a recipient of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine’s 2021 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award. The Award recognizes programs that encourage and assist students from underrepresented groups to enter the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The Bridge to Dental School Program, now in its third year, is aimed at helping pre-dental students navigate the process of applying to dental school. HSDM’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) student fellows organize the program and serve as instructors. This year the program accepted 60 participants, most of whom are from backgrounds underrepresented in dentistry and first-generation college students.

“For this year’s Bridge to Dental School (BDS) program, we completely reimaged the curriculum. We implemented resume workshops, interview tips and mock interviews, personal statement workshops, and more,” said Jordan Middleton, DMD23. “Programs like this are incredibly important for so many reasons. The goal is to mentor students who not only come from underrepresented minority groups, but also those coming from institutions that lack advising resources and other means to work with students throughout the application process. Every student who’s interested in dentistry should have access to resources like BDS, which is why the ODI fellows are happy to run this program every year!”

“We are grateful for our HSDM ODI fellows who have developed this excellent and impactful program. We are appreciative and proud of them for volunteering their time to mentor pre-dental students from across the country. They have demonstrated their strong dedication to improving URM representation in dentistry, are very deserving of this recognition,” said Dean William Giannobile.
Leadership Forum Goes Virtual This Year

Focuses on data and patient-centered care

The COVID-19 pandemic brought into focus the vulnerabilities of the health care system, as well as sparked conversations surrounding data, integration, and technology. During the fourth biannual Leadership Forum, which was hosted by Harvard School of Dental Medicine’s Initiative to Integrate Oral Health and Medicine, experts in the fields of medicine, dentistry, academia, and business convened to discuss such topics and what integration would mean. The all-day event, held virtually on July 20, consisted of presentations and panels by thought leaders in the health care industry on the topic of “Data Driven Innovations and Integration: Achieving Person Centered Care.” This year’s Forum centered on the importance of data and what integration may look like in oral health and medicine for different stakeholders.

Integration and Technology

Dr. Troyen Brennan, Chief Medical Officer at CVS Health, kicked off the event with a discussion on long-term trends and emerging initiatives in U.S. health care. Dr. Brennan presented four irreversible trends he has observed, which include an increasing federal role in health care, an aging population, higher costs for services, and workers having to pay a larger share of care. Dr. Brennan added that “a system that underinsures people is not a sufficient system,” and America’s expensive health care system is crowding out other public goods. This will only be exacerbated by growing disease burden, however, he said the COVID-19 pandemic has opened up new avenues to accomplish integrated primary care.

“Virtual care is revolutionary,” he said, as it takes the locus of care away from the individual doctor’s office and can provide care from a distance and allow for large organizations to expand their reach. Dr. Brennan said some potential implications of the virtual revolution include the prospect of care management moving entirely out of the insurers to start-ups that use digital management approaches.

Dr. John Halamka, President of Mayo Clinic Platforms, followed by stating that the role of data is extremely salient in a post-COVID-19 world. In his presentation, “Emerging Technology Platforms in Health Care,” he discussed a new paradigm for health care, specifically citing the Mayo Clinic cloud model that includes gathering records and tests, discovering data, validating through data quality and bias detection, and delivering the care. During his session, Dr. Halamka also touched on topics such as privacy preservation, discoveries from longitudinal patient records, virtual care delivery, and artificial intelligence.

Dr. Halamka also explored a historical perspective of medical care, citing that in the early 20th century, house calls were very common, and then transitioned to in-office visits. In the time of COVID-19 and virtual care, that in-house care notion may be coming back in some circumstances. At Mayo Clinic, Dr. Halamka said they have the ability to provide advanced care at home and now have the capacity to perform stat labs and mobile imaging at home. In closing, he said the COVID-19 pandemic has enabled health care professionals to use new models, however, there needs to be real transpar-
ency when it comes to the way the new models are used and patient privacy must be the top priority.

**Health Literacy and Equitable Access**

In a virtual fireside chat, Dr. Alden M. Landry, MPH, Assistant Dean of the Office for Diversity Inclusion and Community Partnership at Harvard Medical School and Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, spoke with Dr. Ben Robbins, Venture Partner at GV, about innovations in health care and access. Dr. Robbins said there has been an increasing movement toward data transparency, and that includes in billing data. Dr. Landry and Dr. Robbins also discussed health literacy issues, specifically regarding how many patients aren’t sure how to interpret notes written in jargon or simply feel overloaded with information.

“We leave people to their own devices to figure out how to enter the health care system,” Dr. Robbins said. Retention of information from medical visits is low, often as low as seven percent, but Dr. Robbins said evolving scribing technology is making it easier for patients to understand the information. During the chat, Dr. Landry also raised the question of how health care professionals will make sure there’s equitable access to telehealth and that the gap isn’t being widened.

**Connecting Oral Health to Overall Health**

During the event, attendees heard from multiple leading medical experts during several panels. Panel discussions included “Integrated Care for Special Populations,” “Promoting Integration through Value-Based Care,” and “Building Effective Strategies for Integration.” A key topic of discussion that streamed throughout the panels was the integration of oral health into general care, and how different patient populations have different needs. There will not be a one-size fits all set of digital tools, and health professionals need to know how best to communicate with their patients and inter-professional colleagues and how best to deliver needed care given the tools and options available.

These discussions included points about treating the patient holistically, the connection between oral health and overall health, teamwork, acknowledging barriers to health care, training medical professionals, and helping patients manage more than one condition. For example, one case study presented depicted how a patient with type 2 diabetes may also experience dental complications, thus furthering the argument for oral health integration.

In one panel, “Will COVID-19 be the Catalyst for Integration?,” participants discussed specifically how the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on disparities and barriers that many people, such as people of color or people with disabilities, face when trying to access health care and how technology can be used to help address them.

Panelists also discussed alternative payment mechanisms, global payments, bundled care, how to get CMMS to include dental, and the need for diagnostic codes to help measure quality and demonstrate improved outcomes. They also talked about whether we are closer than ever before to a Medicare dental benefit and the potential for Medicaid to develop an adult benefit along the lines of CHIP for children.

**Driving Change Through Leadership**

To conclude the Forum, Dr. Ron Heifetz, King Hussein bin Talal Senior Lecturer of Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School, discussed the importance of adaptive leadership and what leadership means in terms of effecting change in the field of medicine. He said while many people tend to think about leadership as a set of characteristics, he views it more as a line of work and practice. A good leader will serve as a driving force for the change professionals hope to see in the industry, and these leaders will need to assess what is conserved and what losses may be experienced.

He also said innovation is a trial-and-error process, and one has to be willing to fail. To him, people don’t necessarily resist change, but rather the losses from change. To stay alive in the practice of leadership, people must assess and learn, listen carefully, have supportive partners, and distinguish themselves from their roles.

“People can practice leadership everywhere,” he said. “Help each other rejoice in the fruits of your good work.”

During the closing remarks, HSDM Dean William Giannobile discussed how trends show a dynamic environment has exacerbated disparities and access challenges but has led to swift adoption of new technology and new modes of care and communication. With COVID having served as a catalyst for change and integration, he said we see consumers and politicians pushing for change — and adaptive leadership is critical in effecting that change.
Predicting Tooth Loss

New research suggests machine-learning algorithms can help identify those at risk

Tooth loss is often accepted as a natural part of aging, but what if there was a way to better identify those most susceptible without the need for a dental exam?

New research led by investigators at Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM) suggests that machine learning tools can help identify those at greatest risk for tooth loss and refer them for further dental assessment in an effort to ensure early interventions to avert or delay the condition.

The study, published this June in *PLOS ONE*, compared five algorithms using a different combination of variables to screen for risk. The results showed that those factoring socio-economic variables in addition to medical characteristics, such as race, education, arthritis, and diabetes outperformed algorithms that relied on dental clinical indicators alone.

“Our analysis showed that while all machine-learning models can be useful predictors of risk, those that incorporate socio-economic variables, can be especially powerful screening tools to identify those at heightened risk for tooth loss,” said study lead investigator Hawazin Elani, MMSc15, assistant professor of Oral Health Policy and Epidemiology at HSDM.

The approach could be used to screen people globally and in a variety of healthcare settings even by non-dental professionals, she added.

Tooth loss can be physically and psychologically debilitating. It can affect quality of life, well-being, nutrition, and social interactions. The process can be delayed, even prevented, if the earliest signs of dental disease are identified and the condition treated promptly. Yet, many people with dental disease may not see a dentist until the process has advanced far beyond the point of saving
a tooth. This is precisely where screening tools could help identify those at highest risk and refer them for further assessment, the team said.

In the study, the researchers used data comprising nearly 12,000 adults from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey to design and test five machine-learning algorithms and assess how well they predicted both complete and incremental tooth loss among adults based on socioeconomic, health and medical characteristics.

Notably, the algorithms were designed to assess risk without a dental exam. Anyone deemed at high risk for tooth loss, however, would still have to undergo an actual exam, the researchers added.

The results of the analysis point to the importance of socioeconomic factors that shape risk beyond traditional clinical indictors.

“Our findings suggest that the machine-learning algorithm models incorporating socioeconomic characteristics were better at predicting tooth loss than those relying on routine clinical dental indicators alone.”

—Dr. Hawazin Elani

“This work highlights the importance of social determinants of health. Knowing the patient’s education level, employment status, and income is just as relevant for predicting tooth loss as assessing their clinical dental status.”

Indeed, low-income and marginalized populations have been long known to experience a disproportionate share of the burden of tooth loss, likely due to lack of regular access to dental care, among other reasons, the team said.

“As oral health professionals, we know how critical early identification and prompt care are in preventing tooth loss, and these new findings point to an important new tool in achieving that,” said Jane Barrow, SM87, director of the Office of Global and Community Health, and executive director of HSDM’s Initiative to Integrate Oral Health and Medicine. “Dr Elani and her research team shed new light on how we can most effectively target our prevention efforts and improve quality of life for our patients.”

The research was done in collaboration with researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the University of Sao Paolo in Brazil, and the University of Otago Faculty of Dentistry in New Zealand. Co-investigators included André F. M. Batista, W. Murray Thomson, Ichiro Kawachi, and Alexandre D. P. Chiavegatto Filho.

Dr. Elani’s research was funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities of the National Institutes of Health.
Reshaping Research at HSDM
Priorities emerge from external review process

This spring, HSDM carried out an external review of the School’s research activities, infrastructure, and training programs. An eleven-member panel of internationally recognized clinician-scientists were engaged to conduct the review. The committee was chaired by Dr. Amy Wagers, Forst Family Professor of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology at the Harvard Medical School and Dr. Peter J. Polverini, DMSc77, PD77, Jonathan Taft Distinguished University Professor of Dentistry at the University of Michigan.

The robust review process included the compilation of a 300-page self-study report and a three-day virtual site visit featuring departmental presentations, and focused interviews with junior faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and students – engaging over 45 HSDM and Forsyth Institute stakeholders and collaborators.

The review committee produced a comprehensive and objective report of forward-focused recommendations to inform the future of the School’s research programs. In their report, the committee noted HSDM’s existing strengths include “a strong core of basic and clinical researchers, many opportunities for interacting with the strong scientific and clinical environment in the local community, and an incredible pool of talent, particularly among the trainees, junior faculty, and extremely invested educators, who value and want to support their students.”

Looking at opportunities for growth and collaboration, the committee suggested HSDM leverage existing areas of strength and momentum in the areas of public health, global health, and health policy research. They also recommended the School’s existing research excellence of basic sciences in developmental and skeletal biology could be expanded to align with clinical-translational interests and research in the areas of regenerative medicine, genomics, stem cell and craniofacial biology. Opportunities to capitalize on existing partnerships with other Harvard schools, institutes, and hospitals were noted to allow clinical faculty to engage in larger projects and programs, and offer the chance for co-recruitment of research talent. The committee found that these partnerships, and generating a culture of collaboration between basic science researchers and clinical faculty and between Forsyth and HSDM investigators, would additionally strengthen the School’s research endeavors.

Faculty recruitment, mentorship, and career development were also identified as key areas for improvement. The committee recommended that expanded resources be made available for junior faculty, from initial recruitment through promotion, to bolster support mechanisms for early-career scientists. Additionally, greater focus and support could be given to HSDM students to aid them in research requirements and fellowships.

“I am grateful to the committee for dedicating themselves in reviewing HSDM’s research programs. Their insights and recommendations will advance our mission as we look at ways to strengthen our research community to attract and cultivate talented clinician-scientists to advance dental, oral, and craniofacial research at HSDM,” said Dean William Giannobile.

Earlier this year, Dr. Yingzi Yang took on the role of Associate Dean of Research at HSDM, expanding on her previous role as Associate Dean for Translational Research. Dr. Yang, an accomplished developmental geneticist, joined HSDM in 2015 and has expanded HSDM’s capabilities in skeletal, craniofacial-dental, and liver research to better understand morphogenesis, regeneration, and signaling interactions between tissue resident cells and systemic regulation.

“I look forward to building on the recommendations of the committee. We have exciting new opportunities ahead to increase research diversity, establish new collaborations, and scale our funding, which will better bridge basic and clinical research with enhanced vigor and excellence,” Yang said.
A Special Send-Off for the Class of 2021

On Thursday, May 27, 2021, family, friends, and Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM) community members gathered, both near and far, to celebrate the graduation of the Class of 2021. Virtual Commencement and Class Day exercises, combined with a celebratory outdoor send-off at HSDM, provided the backdrop for a special graduation experience for the School’s newest alumni.

The festivities began in the morning with a virtual University-wide Commencement ceremony. In remarks recorded in Harvard Yard, Harvard University President Lawrence Bacow commended the Harvard community for its resilience in the face of the many challenges presented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This, too, shall pass. A global pandemic has kept us apart this year, but we’ve learned together; we’ve grown together; and we have overcome together. I’ve never seen such grit, such determination, and I have never, ever been prouder of this institution,” said Bacow.

The deans from each of the Harvard graduate schools and Harvard College had the opportunity to recognize their graduates, and degrees were conferred ceremonially. HSDM Dean William Giannobile awarded 59 degrees—15 Master of Medical Sciences, 10 Doctor of Medical Sciences, and 34 Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) degrees.

After the University-wide Commencement Exercises concluded, HSDM’s DMD degree recipients joined their Harvard Medical School (HMS) classmates for the annual Class Day Ceremony.

Ashiana Jivraj, DMD21, served as HSDM’s Class Day speaker. “As Harvard School of Dental Medicine graduates, we have an inordinate power to shape policy and to make a difference in this space. We have learned to hear our patients, giving names to those once nameless and empathizing with those who have problems beyond our scope,” Jivraj said. “We have learned that not only is the mouth the gateway to the body, but that we can have an immense impact daily on the field of healthcare.”

In his message to the Class of 2021, Dean William Giannobile commended the graduates for their commitment to creating a more equitable and sustainable environment for each other, their patients, and other community members. He noted that when the COVID-19 pandemic demanded flexibility and leadership, the Class rose to the occasion.

“I’ve witnessed our students treat patients with kindness, caring, and dignity, and I admire this class for your tenacity and your true desire to help others without worrying about your own recognition... This year you faced so many hurdles with grace and determination, and you have become skilled clinicians and compassionate caregivers. The grit you have demonstrated over these four years has prepared you well for a critical time in our nation’s health care system—a system I am confident you will contribute to and innovate.”

Giannobile concluded his remarks by welcoming the graduates into the HSDM alumni community. “You will join a distinguished group of alumni who are making a difference through leadership roles in global health, research, academia, healthcare, government and business. I know you will represent your School well in everything you choose to do.”
Strengthening Oral Health Care Systems in Africa

New Agreement Between HSDM and the WHO Will Address Critical Needs

Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO) have teamed up to address critical oral health challenges in the African region, worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project aims to build the capacity of primary care workers in oral health promotion, and oral disease prevention and control, to better address the unmet demand for oral health services and strengthen oral health care systems. The team will develop an online oral health training program that will leverage digital technologies and mHealth (mobile health technology) initiatives for workforce development. HSDM was selected to support the project based on extensive faculty expertise and experience in global workforce development, including in the African region, with existing partnerships in Rwanda. Additional work in this area also includes HSDM’s leadership in the design of the Global Health Starter Kit, an online, open access curriculum now in use in 30 countries. Dr. Brittany Seymour, MPH, associate professor of Oral Health Policy and Epidemiology (OHPE) who developed the curriculum will serve as project lead.

“These collaborative efforts are among the first to translate exciting progress in policy and research into practice through responsive workforce capacity building.”

—Dr. Brittany Seymour

The first phase of the project will involve the creation and implementation of a pilot training program focused on community health workers in Angola, Kenya, Liberia...
and Senegal, with a goal to scale to remaining WHO AFRO member states and expand training for additional primary care workers in the future.

Earlier this year, recognizing the global oral disease epidemic and scarcity of dental human and financial resources available, a groundbreaking WHO resolution placed oral health front and center into the global health and development agenda. This call to action emphasized improving oral health as part of universal health coverage and non-communicable disease prevention and control efforts.

Dr. Donna Hackley, PD95, instructor in OHPE, will also serve on the project. Dr. Hackley has played a significant role in the Human Resources for Health Rwanda, Dentistry program since 2013, where she led the implementation and accreditation of the first dental school in Rwanda.

“We value community-based collaboration and input; local insight and expertise will be essential to the success of this project.”

—Dr. Donna Hackley

Jane Barrow, SM87, director of the Office of Global and Community Health and executive director for HSDM’s Initiative to Integrate Oral Health and Medicine, will work closely with the project team. Barrow was initially involved in the 2011 United Nations (UN) Summit on oral health, as well as the 2019 UN Summit on Universal Health Care—efforts that drew attention to growing global oral health concerns.

“Our new collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Africa builds from the 2011 UN Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, which named oral diseases as a major global problem,” Barrow said. “We will work to align this training program with goals and policies emphasized at the UHC Summit oral health meeting, which include strengthening efforts to address oral health as part of universal health coverage and primary care.”

The workforce training project was initiated within the WHO Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases, Oral Health Programme. The HSDM team will work directly with Dr. Yuka Makino, World Health Organization (WHO) Technical Officer for Oral Health at the WHO Regional Office for Africa, and author of Ending Childhood Dental Caries: WHO Implementation Manual, 2019.

“I am honored and grateful to be a part of this exciting effort,” said Seymour. “It really is an opportunity to turn vision into reality, to build on the incredible momentum from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Summits. I have high hopes for what we can achieve together for oral health in Africa moving ahead.”
ALUMNI NEWS

Shahid Aziz, DMD96, a faculty member at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine’s Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery had several HSDM students rotate with his department and sit in on a recent orthognathic case.

Stephen Campbell, MMSc82, PD82; Lawrence Gettleman, DMD66; George Kaye DMD80, PD84; Edwin Riley DMD73, PD75, served on a committee chaired by Paul A. Schnitman, PD74, to write a tribute to the late Douglas A. Atwood, MD46, DMD51, Professor of Prosthetic Dentistry, Emeritus, at HSDM. The Memorial Minute about Dr. Atwood documents his life and many contributions to HSDM serving as professor and head of the Department of Prosthetic Dentistry, as well as other leadership roles at the School and in the profession. The Memorial Minute is available online at fa.hms.harvard.edu/memorial-minutes and will become a part of the permanent archives of the University.

David Greenfield, DMD72, PD73, had his photography featured this summer in an exhibit at the Bromfield Gallery in Boston’s South End. The exhibit titled “Streetwise” featured New England photographers and interesting Decisive Moments in street photography.

Erinne Kennedy, PD18, MMSc19, Kansas City University (KCU) College of Dental Medicine Director of Predoctoral Education, was named one of the 2021 40 Under 40 by Incisal Edge dental lifestyle magazine. Incisal Edge celebrates brilliant achievers in dentistry, ages 40 and under, with its signature award. Fewer than 600 of America’s best young dentists have earned this prestigious designation.

Current and former HSDM alumni and faculty reunited during a recent visit to Virginia. Philip Kang, PD02, currently serves as postdoctoral periodontology program director at Columbia University, John Chang, MMSc04, is a part-time lecturer on Restorative Dentistry and Biomaterials Sciences at HSDM, Juan Loza, previously served as post-graduate prosthodontics program director at HSDM and now is in private practice, David Kim, DMSc05, is associate professor of Oral Medicine, Infection, and Immunity at HSDM and current director of the periodontology program, and Wahn Khang, is a part-time lecturer on Oral Medicine, Infection, and Immunity at HSDM.

FACULTY NEWS

Jane Barrow, SM87, was selected to receive a Harvard Senior Administrator Fellowship for Executive Education. This fellowship provides full tuition support to participate in outstanding professional learning experiences offered through the University’s Executive Education and Continuing Education programs.

Steffany Chamut, instructor in Oral Health Policy and Epidemiology, was awarded the 2021-2022 Health and Aging Policy Fellowship. The program is based at the New York State Psychiatric Institute, Columbia University, in New York City. Fellows selected represent outstanding scholars and practitioners from across a range of disciplines who are committed to shaping policies for older Americans. Dr. Chamut was selected as the first dentist since the inception of this program in 2008. As a Health and Aging Policy Fellow, Dr. Chamut is committed to working on policies that support oral health equity and disease preventive measures as critical elements to aid older adults achieve optimal oral and overall health.

Sung Choi, instructor in Oral Health Policy and Epidemiology, received a $50,000 research award from the Delta Dental Institute to evaluate policies to reduce disparities in oral health. The study aims to conduct an economic evaluation of health care workforce-related policies that have promise for advancing access to care and thereby, oral health among vulnerable populations. Choi will develop a cost-effectiveness-based framework to estimate the impact of policies related to expanding National Health Service Corps loan repayment and scholarship programs on oral health care utilization and outcomes in underserved areas.
John D. Da Silva, DMD87, MPH87, SM92, PD89, PD91, associate dean for Faculty Affairs and Development was elected by the commissioners on the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations (JCNDE) to be their vice-chair during the upcoming year.

William Giannobile, DMD96, PD96, dean of HSDM, has been named the recipient of the Galileo Galilei International Award by the Italian Society of Periodontology and Implantology. The Award, named after the great researcher, teacher, innovator, and father of the modern scientific experimental method, is presented every two years during the Society’s International meeting.

Sathish Gobichettypalayam joined HSDM as a part-time lecturer on Restorative Dentistry and Biomaterials Sciences.

Francesca Gori, assistant professor of Oral Medicine, Infection, and Immunity received the Burton C. Borgelt Faculty Award from the Student Competition for Advancing Dental Research and its Application (SCADA) for her work as a research mentor. The award honors a faculty advisor who has distinguished themselves as a dental scientist and has had a significant impact on the lives of dental students as a research mentor. The Board of Directors of SCADA noted Dr. Gori’s dedication to dental student researchers for more than ten years as a faculty member of HSDM as one of the factors in her being chosen as the recipient.

T. Howard Howell, PD76, A. Lee Loomis Professor of Periodontology, began serving as interim chair of the Department of Oral Medicine, Infection, and Immunity (OMII) on September 1, after succeeding Dr. Roland Baron who served as chair for 13 years. In addition to being an active periodontal researcher and maintaining a strong clinical practice at the Harvard Dental Center, Dr. Howell has held significant administrative leadership positions in the School, including his successful tenure as Dean of Dental Education. An international search for a new department chair for OMII will be launched later this fall.

David Kim, DMD05, was awarded a Clinical Research Award from the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) for his article entitled, “American Academy of Periodontology Best Evidence Consensus Statement on Modifying Periodontal Phenotype in Preparation for Orthodontic and Restorative Treatment.” The award is presented to the most outstanding published article with direct clinical relevance in periodontics. Kim will be presented with the award at the AAP annual meeting in November.

Shibani Sahni, MMSc21, joined HSDM as a lecturer on Oral Medicine, Infection, and Immunity. She is involved in both the Masters in Dental Education program as a mentor and faculty member, and in the predoctoral DMD program as a clinical educator and course director of Diagnosis and Treatment Planning course. She is also the faculty lead for the Scholar’s in Dental Education program for DMD candidates.

Brian Swann, MPH08, began serving as interim dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging in July, as a search for a full-time faculty member to take on the role is conducted. Dr. Swann has previously served as a lecturer and assistant professor at HSDM, and is the emeritus chief of Oral Health for the Cambridge Health Alliance where he conducted the Oral Physician Program within the General Practice Residency. Dr. Swann is well known for his involvement in local, national, and international outreach work with vulnerable populations.

Lorenzo Tavelli joined Harvard School of Dental Medicine’s Department of Oral Medicine, Infection, and Immunity in August as a full-time faculty member in the Division of Periodontology. He will teach periodontology, conduct clinical research, and treat patients in the Harvard Dental Center. Dr. Tavelli graduated from the University of Milan in 2017. He completed his residency in Periodontics and his Master of Science in 2020 at the University of Michigan and served as a clinical lecturer in the Department of Periodontics and Oral Medicine at Michigan before coming to HSDM.
Shenam Ticku, instructor in Oral Health Policy and Epidemiology has received an Eleanor and Miles Shore Faculty Development Award in honor of Aina M. Auskaps, DMD for her project, “Providers’ Attitudes toward Mental Health Screening for Adolescents in a Dental Setting.” Ticku aims to assess the current landscape and attitudes of dental providers on incorporating screening for depression and anxiety disorders. Additionally, she will evaluate challenges and facilitators around incorporating mental health screening and referrals among pediatric dental and orthodontic practices.

Theodore Vincent Tso, MMSc18, joined HSDM as a part-time lecturer on Restorative Dentistry and Biomaterials Sciences and as a sub specialist in maxillo-facial prosthetics.

Diana Wang, DMSc21, joined HSDM as a part-time lecturer on Oral Medicine, Infection, and Immunity.

HSDM NEWS

DMD students Michael Chen, DMD23; Joshua Heller, DMD22; Camille Herzog, DMD23; Yuanyuan Luo, DMD22; Elizabeth Perry, DMD18, PhD22; Olivia Watrous, DMD23; and Natalie Wen, DMD22, have been accepted to participate as fellows in the ADEA Academic Dental Careers Fellowship Program (ADCFP). The goal of the program is to discover and grow tomorrow’s dental faculty and researchers. It consists of faculty and student pairs who work in collaboration on a research or teaching project.

Lisdany Pazos joined the Harvard Dental Center as a billing coordinator. Andrea Orozco joined HSDM as a Research Assistant. Angelina Rosa joined the Harvard Dental Center as a Patient Services Liaison.

HSDM students, faculty and staff gathered for an outdoor ice cream social in early August to welcome the new classes of DMD and Advanced Graduate Education students.

The Class of 2024 transitioned to HSDM after their first year at the medical school. Transition Week included new introductions, and opportunities for the class to bond and celebrate with scavenger hunts and a baseball game at Fenway park.

Corinthia Wilkerson, MMSc24, and Danni Burgess, MMSc23, have been named the recipients of the Periodontology Fellowship for the 2021-2022 Academic Year. Each of them will receive tuition support of $15,000.
Upcoming Events

Thursday, October 7, 12:00pm - 1:00pm
Science Speaker Series (webinar)
Lynda F. Bonewald, PhD, Distinguished University Professor, Anatomy, Cell Biology, Physiology and Orthopaedic Surgery, Indiana University

Saturday, October 16 to Saturday, November 20, 8:00am - 11:00am
Continuing Professional Education: Advanced Education in Implant Therapy (webinar)
Course participants will have an opportunity to interact with talented periodontists, oral surgeons, and prosthodontists highly skilled in treating challenging cases and will be introduced to diverse treatment planning philosophies, as well as proven surgical and restorative techniques.

Wednesday, October 20, 12:00pm - 1:30pm
Goldhaber Award Lecture (webinar)
Goldhaber Award recipient Ichiro Nishimura, DMSc86, DMD93, PD93, Professor of Dentistry and Bioengineering at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) will give a lecture to the community. The Goldhaber Award is HSDM’s highest research honor and is presented to a recipient who is held in international esteem in his or her field related to oral and systemic health.

Thursday, November 18, 12:00pm - 1:00pm
Science Speaker Series (webinar)
Tamara Alliston, PhD, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, Department of Medicine, UCSF

Thursday, December 9, 12:00pm - 1:00pm
Science Speaker Series (webinar)
Jean X. Jiang, PhD, Professor and Zachry Distinguished University Chair, Department of Biochemistry and Structural Biology, University of Texas at San Antonio

Friday, January 28, 2022
Alumni Reception at Yankee Dental Congress
Virtual or in-person reception TBD

See a full list of events at: hsdm.harvard.edu/calendar
Congratulations to the Class of 2021!

The Class of 2021 graduates took a celebratory (physically-distanced) graduation photo on the steps of Gordon Hall.