

School of Dentistry Curriculum Restructure

Mark Estey, DDS

Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs, Loma Linda University School of Dentistry

“...the School of Dentistry has undergone several changes in the last few years to implement change towards a unity. As we move to the future with a new structure to our curriculum, we look towards working outside the walls of Prince Hall.”

Over the past decade the Loma Linda University School of Dentistry has been working towards a plan for creating a unified School of Dentistry. Through changes in Dental National Board Exams and self-evaluation of clinical procedures, and an Accreditation Site visit have led to some significant changes to the School of Dentistry.

On July 19th, 2013 the Dean, Ronald Dailey, began a Clinical Task Force to look at some of the clinical concerns that we had as a school. There were concerns over the students achieving the level of clinical experiences that the school desired them to achieve prior to their graduation. It also was looking at the clinical processes and the efficiency of those systems as well as their redundancies. The committee met over the next several months to assess and evaluate systems and processes that were being utilized at the time at LLUSD. On March 3, 2014, the Task Force reported back to the Dean with their recommendations. Several recommendations were made, one of which was the recommendation to modify the structure of the school and create a Division or Department of General Dentistry. With the goal of creating a greater emphasis on the predoctoral DDS program.

As a result of the report, Dean Dailey made the decision with the support of Administrative Council and Executive Committee to take the Oral Diagnosis team from the Department of Oral Diagnosis, Radiology, and Pathology, and combine it with the Department of Restorative Dentistry into the new Division of General Dentistry. The Division of General Dentistry (DGD) would be focused on the clinical management and oversight of the clinical education of the predoctoral program. The Division of General Dentistry "Head" was selected, and then the remainder of the Division's Administrative team was selected. The goal of this team was to bring together all the departments for the school of dentistry involved with the predoctoral education to work as a team. In July 2015 the DGD was officially launched and began its work of creating a unified predoctoral clinical program.

In February 2016, the dental school had its Accreditation Site visit by the Commission of Dental Accreditation (CODA). During the site visit there were a few areas of concern which after evidence of assessments the School of Dentistry was given non-reporting accreditation status. But one thing became clear from the site visit and that was a concern over how our International Dentist Program looked too much like a separate program from our traditional four-year DDS program. In 2017, the decision was made to modify the matriculation and graduation months of the International Dentist Program and the traditional DDS program. In July of 2018, the first IDP class was matriculated in July to align the 1st year of IDP with the 3rd year of the traditional students. This also allowed for the first class to graduate at the end of the Spring quarter of 2020, at the same time as the traditional students. At Commencement, during graduation weekend for the Class of 2020, it will be the first year that the IDP and traditional

students will be lined together in alphabetical order and graduating as one united class not as two separate bodies of students. As we looked around the nation, we recognized that a 24 month International Dentist Program is at the lower end of the time frame on average across the United States. After careful evaluation it was determined that by adding one additional quarter to the 24 month program, creating a 27 month program we could, after 2 quarters of preparation, integrate the IDP and traditional programs at roughly 95%. A few outlying courses outstanding, this would be the closest to completely integrating the IDP students with our traditional program students. With the goal of having truly one class graduating together at the end. As a result, the first IDP class for the new 27-month program has been accepted to matriculate into the program in the Spring Quarter of the 2020. After 2 quarters of classwork and preparation, the IDP students will become integrated with the traditional students and we will have 132 graduates of our DDS program in the Class of 2022.

In 2009 the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations made a decision to start working on an Integrated Board Exam which would combine the material in it's existing Part I and Part II National Board Examinations into one INBDE. Over the next few years several validation studies were performed by the JCNDE. Between 2014 and 2017, the examination began to be written and pilot testing was done. Then finally in 2018 the JCNDE and the Committee for an Integrated Examination announced that the INDBE would be launched on August 1, 2020. After that date, the Part I boards would no longer be given as of July 31, 2020. Part II of the National Dental Board Examination would no longer be given after August 1, 2022.

As a result, in the Fall of 2015, a Curriculum Transformation Task Force was created to start looking at the overall curriculum. They were charged to come up with recommendations as to the modifications, if necessary, to the existing curriculum to better prepare the School of Dentistry for the upcoming INBDE and the future.

The Curriculum Transformation Task Force met for approximately 1 ½ years to get where the movement to creating 4 General "Threads" of curriculum content of which we would move all of our current courses under. The four common "threads", also the names of the new courses, are Dental Fundamentals, Biomedical Sciences & Oral Ecosystems, Professionalism, Missions, and Personal Development, and Patient Centered Care. The New University Catalog was written for the D1 class starting in the 2019-2020 academic year to include the 4 courses. Each of the existing content in the D1 year was restructured to fit into the 4 courses. The curriculum was also developed to move content from the D2 - D4 years into their respective courses in the respective years. Under our current structure all Departments participate in the curriculum via the new structure by having Chairs of Departments participate in Executive Committee which

is the main approval body for curricular changes. Each Department has representation on Curriculum Committee which is the working committee in regard to curriculum development and implementation. At the content level we have Course Directors and Content Experts who are faculty from departments. This allows more ability for aligning the timing and content to be able to provide a better “in time” learning experience for the students.

So, as you can see, the School of Dentistry has undergone several changes in the last few years to implement change towards a unity. As we move to the future with a new structure to our curriculum, we look towards working outside the walls of Prince Hall. With the new curriculum structure coming into play it creates more flexibility for ongoing improvement. While LLUSD does have some Interprofessional Education activities with other schools on campus, we have had ongoing conversations with several schools within LLU about how we can collaborate even more moving forward. We currently have IPE events with Medicine, Pharmacy, Public Health. We look forward to adding to our interactions and including other schools within LLU.