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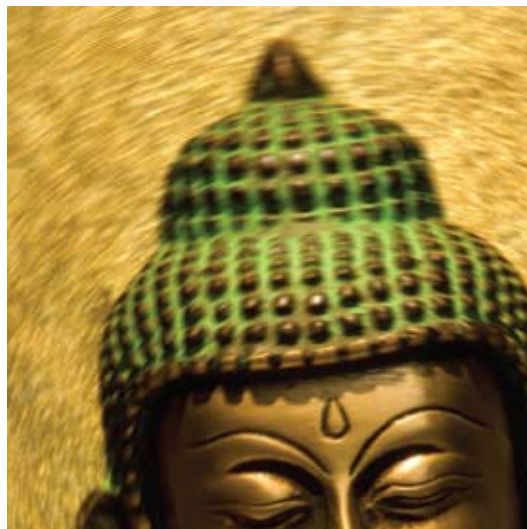


# Developing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educator

By N. Karl Haden, Ph.D.

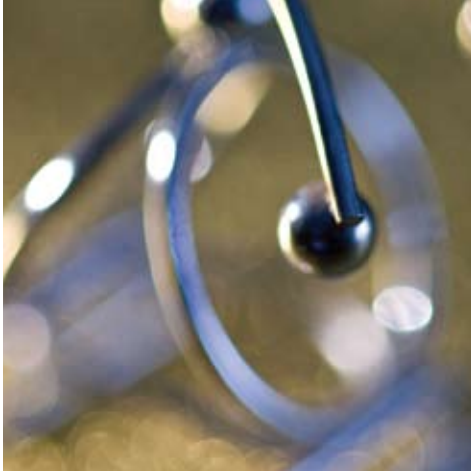
*People* enter academic careers for a variety of reasons. While much is said about the discrepancy between private practice salaries and academic salaries, money has never been the main attraction of an academic career. Studies of dental faculty show that intellectual challenge and stimulation, the desire to be a teacher, interest in science, opportunities for professional development, interaction with colleagues and the work environment are the main factors that attract and keep faculty. In a 2007 study conducted by the Academy for Academic Leadership involving more than 1,700 dental faculty members, 71% indicated that they were either highly satisfied or satisfied with the overall way they spend their time as a faculty member. While faculty satisfaction is positive, U.S. dental school deans recently identified financing dental education and faculty recruitment and retention as the two greatest challenges facing dental schools over the next decade.

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For nearly 15 years, U.S. dental schools have averaged between 300 and 400 vacant budgeted faculty positions. The majority of these positions are full time. Given this trend, one might argue that several hundred vacancies is now the norm. Private practice has become the revolving door through which faculty enter in and exit from academic dentistry. The American Dental Education Association reports that approximately 40% of those who leave dental school do so to immediately enter private practice. At the same time, nearly 50% of new faculty members come from private practice. Those departing dental schools for private practice are on average 10 years younger than those departing from private practice to dental schools.

Maintaining a strong dental faculty workforce requires strategies targeted at both recruitment and retention, and professional development is a critical link. The Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry has a long history of supporting faculty through professional development opportunities. In March 2008, the Dugoni School launched a new initiative, the Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching (CalTEACH), with the Academy for Academic Leadership to foster career development in the areas of learning, teaching and leadership.

## A Brief History

While serving as the founding dean of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine, Dr. Patrick J. Ferrillo, Jr. identified the need to assist new faculty in enhancing their teaching skills. Many faculty members were transitioning into academic appointments from private practice, while others were young faculty in the early stages of their academic careers. Ferrillo contacted me, as founder of the Academy for Academic Leadership, to create a professional development experience to assist faculty in pedagogy, career planning and understanding the overall academic environment. Our work at UNLV led to the establishment of a national Institute for Teaching and Learning. In 2007, the American Dental Education Association became a collaborating partner in the Institute for Teaching and Learning. Dr. Lisa Itaya '98, assistant professor in the Department of Dental Practice and director of the Emergency Clinic, attended the inaugural program.

Ferrillo became a strong supporter of the Institute for Teaching and Learning, and after faculty input, concluded that a similar program customized to the needs of faculty at the Dugoni School would provide essential training in pedagogy for new and existing faculty. In March of this year, the Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching, or CalTEACH, was born. "The program is designed to take the practitioner—who has the skills and knowledge of the practice of dentistry—and prepare them as educators for today's students," said Ferrillo.

Twenty-eight faculty members and alumni participated in the first program. Another 16 faculty members are enrolled for a second course. CalTEACH is one clear example of how the dental school is moving forward with its strategic plan, specifically Strategic Direction 5: Create a resource rich, supportive and diverse culture to develop, retain and recruit outstanding individuals. "The CalTEACH program was highly influential and grounded in many elements of what teaching and learning should be; both for the educator and the student," said Teresa Kuhlman, manager of Integrated Clinical Sciences Curriculum and a CalTEACH participant.

## The Curriculum

In a recent session on teaching and learning, 35 dental educators from various institutions were asked if they had studied or were familiar with the concept of learning style. Learning style includes a number of factors important for educators to understand, such as a person's preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning, information processing, the formation of ideas and making decisions. No one raised a hand to answer the query, even though the room contained nearly four centuries of higher education experience combined. This example illustrates that higher education in general, and dental education in particular, has historically done an inadequate job in preparing teachers to teach.

The assumption seems to be that the educational process itself is sufficient, with most faculty members teaching the way they were taught.

CalTEACH is an initiative to close the gap between professional education, the practice of dentistry and the conveyance of knowledge in an effective learning environment. The program takes place over six days, conducted in two phases, with homework assignments between phases. Approximately 70% of the curriculum focuses on effective teaching. Given the diversity of a faculty member's job, all faculty members need an understanding of how to function in and contribute to the academic environment. Sessions about the academic environment and career planning round out the curriculum. Dr. Doug Young, associate professor in the Department of Dental Practice and a CalTEACH participant, commented, "What I enjoyed most about this program was the ability to combine learning experiences with open and honest discussions of opportunities for improvement at the dental school."

## Future Plans

The Dugoni School plans to offer the six-day CalTEACH program annually. Plans are underway to open the course to other fields in the health professions education. In doing so, the dental school will foster the importance of oral health among other health professions and will assist in addressing the need for teachers that spans nearly all of the academic health professions. Alumni who have an interest in academic careers are encouraged to consider participation in the program. Positioning CalTEACH as a resource available to dentists, dental educators and other health professionals is one means of moving forward with the dental school's vision of "leading the improvement of health by advancing oral health."

## The Leadership Nexus

Learning, teaching and leadership are all connected, especially at the Dugoni School. The Roman statesman and Stoic philosopher Seneca wrote these words to a young protégé, *docendo discimus: we learn by teaching*. This motto might well characterize the motivation of the exemplary teacher, one who is first and foremost a lover of learning. Exemplary teachers pass on their knowledge and, more importantly, the joy of discovery to students. These teachers multiply their impact on patients, society and the profession with each student they influence. Exemplary dental educators are not simply interested in developing excellent clinicians. Like Seneca, they help to weave the moral fiber of their students. They are leaders developing future leaders by shaping character.

The mission of the Dugoni School of Dentistry, its core values and the school's humanistic environment create a unique place to teach and to learn. As CalTEACH evolves, the program will continue to inculcate the dental school's model of learning that goes beyond the acquisition of skills to engage the whole person. Dean Emeritus Arthur A. Dugoni best captures the spirit and the practice of this core institutional value: "We grow people and along the way, they become doctors." □

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