



A Monthly Newsletter from ADEA Executive Director Richard W. Valachovic, D.M.D., M.P.H.

In this month's letter, Dr. Rick Valachovic, Executive Director of the American Dental Education Association, showcases ADEA programs that contribute to solving the faculty shortage.



ADEA is moving ahead to cultivate consensus around the ethics of professionalism.

Future Faculty: ADEA's Multipronged Approach to Alleviating the Current Crisis

You've heard it before: 400 faculty positions in U.S. dental schools vacant, faculty in all of our member institutions approaching retirement age, numerous applicants to dental schools and allied dental programs turned away each year, 45 million Americans living in Dental Health Professions Shortage Areas (Dental HPSAs), and an estimated 9,000 additional dentists needed to provide them with care. It doesn't take much to recognize the connections among these problems. It takes considerably more to address them. For ADEA, the first step is clear: generate more faculty. Bringing more faculty to dental education will eventually allow a boost in enrollments in predoctoral, allied, and postdoctoral dental education. And from there, we will all start to hear something new—the placement of more newly minted general dentists, specialists, and allied dental professionals into the communities that need them the most.

ADEA has taken a multipronged approach to alleviating the current crisis facing dental education by developing future faculty with programs that reach out to those at every stage of their professional lives: young faculty who need support in developing satisfying careers, experienced practitioners wishing to embark on second careers, and students with the interest and aptitude for the professoriate.

It's especially important that we reach this last group early on so they can become the career academicians who form the backbone of dental education. A shining example of a successful ADEA-developed program that does just that is the [ADEA/AADR Academic Dental Careers Fellowship Program](#) (ADEA/AADR ADCFP). Each year the ADEA/AADR ADCFP provides a small cadre of students with the opportunity to experience the benefits and rewards of teaching. The year-long fellowship includes training sessions, practicums in teaching and research, and perhaps most critically, long-term mentoring relationships that can help these young people throughout the time they are working on their degrees—and, moreover, throughout their lives.

The ADEA/AADR ADCFP began in 2006 with a grant of \$100,000 from the American Dental Association Foundation. We are so convinced that this program is essential for generating future faculty that ADEA and its partner, the American Association for Dental Research, are now keeping it going with association funds. Dr. Dave Brunson at ADEA leads this program. He can be contacted at brunsond@adea.org.

The [ADEA/W.K. Kellogg Minority Dental Faculty Development Program](#) (MDFD) takes a decidedly different approach. Funded with a six-year, \$2.4 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the ADEA MDFD strives to promote health systems change focused on primary care, prevention, and public health by building a network of universities and organizations focused on developing health leadership.

Dr. Jeanne Sinkford, who heads [ADEA's Center for Equity and Diversity](#) and leads the ADEA MDFD program, says that the institutions supported by the program gain their strength through a "grow-your-own" philosophy of recruitment, mentoring, and academic career enhancement for postgraduate dentists. Specific initiatives such as formal mentoring programs, academic partnerships, and community-based practice projects give ADEA MDFD schools the new infrastructure they need to nurture talented students for academic careers.

Dr. Tawana Feimster was doing her residency in New York when her former professors

at the Howard University College of Dentistry made her aware of MDFD. Their support and encouragement planted the seeds that motivated her to choose an academic career, and the MDFD award allowed her to pursue advanced education in endodontics at the University of Maryland with the understanding that she would return to a full-time teaching position at Howard. She says, "My familiarity with the environment at Howard really eased my transition into teaching. I could also rely on relationships with faculty members that I began to develop while I was still a student here. Those have proven invaluable."

"The beauty of this program lies not only in the impact it has on individuals," says Dr. Sinkford. "It also promotes the kind of institutional growth that fosters a sustained commitment to faculty diversity." (Dr. Sinkford can be contacted at sinkfordj@adea.org.)

To date ADEA MDFD has supported direct educational costs for nearly 40 students at Howard University, Baylor College of Dentistry, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Michigan, the University of Oklahoma, and the five dental schools that comprise the New York State Academic Dental Centers consortium. The numbers of students supported are impressive in themselves; equally important, these seven programs serve as models that can be replicated at other institutions to bring additional faculty into the pipeline.

Future faculty will also include many older professionals. Currently about 50% of new faculty are career switchers who leave private practice to enter academia. With an average age of 53, these new faculty members are well versed in their subject areas, but only marginally acquainted with other demands of the faculty role.

The [ADEA/AAL Institute of Teaching and Learning](#) (ADEA/AAL ITL), conducted by ADEA in partnership with the Academy for Academic Leadership (AAL), started as a means to attract private practitioners to academia and to help retain junior faculty. This week-long program has two goals: to give participants the tools they need to succeed as teachers and to position dental education as a viable career alternative for dental practitioners.

Dr. Brent Martin attended the 2007 ADEA/AAL ITL at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Although Dr. Martin is approaching an age at which many start thinking about retirement, he says, "Retirement is not an option. I've got way too much energy." He enrolled in ADEA/AAL ITL because he wanted additional credentials and expertise, and as he put it, "I wanted to know what I didn't know before moving into the academic job market."

ADEA/AAL ITL also appears to be providing the skills and the vision needed for success in the faculty role. Dr. Maria Focchi, a periodontist at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, taught part time before attending ADEA/AAL ITL in 2006. "The ITL has given me the educational tools to ease my transition full time into academia. I feel that I will not be guessing what may work for my students; I now have information to practice evidence-based teaching. I have already observed the positive changes in my students' learning experience."

In just its first two years of operation, ADEA/AAL ITL has served nearly 90 participants at institutes held on the campuses of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In this short time, the program has generated awareness of dental education as a viable career option for dentists in private practice. Dr. Martin observes that the program's growing reputation has made him a more desirable candidate in the eyes of the deans whom he has met during his job search.

Also, three organizations (the American Academy of Periodontology Foundation, the American Association of Orthodontists, and the American Association of Pediatric Dentistry) have begun providing scholarships to ADEA/AAL ITL participants. If that's not a ringing endorsement, I don't know what is.

A similar program focused on the needs of allied health professionals, the [ADEA/AAL Institute for Allied Health Educators](#) (ADEA/AAL IAHE), was new in 2007. Most participants, but not all, were dental hygiene educators. This two-and-a-half day professional development program helps participants refine teaching skills and facilitates confidence, job satisfaction, and professional growth.

Allied dental educators can also gain the skills needed for success in academia through the [ADEA Allied Dental Faculty Leadership Development Program](#) (ADEA ADFLDP), started in 2002. ADEA ADFLDP was designed for allied dental faculty and program directors who have fewer than three years experience in academia. The program gives participants training in leadership, management, mentoring, negotiation, team-building, policy, and advocacy. It fosters a new sense of self-awareness in three jam-packed

days.

According to the Special Liaison for the ADEA Council of Allied Dental Program Directors, Dr. Linda Hanlon, who directs the ADEA ADFLDP, the program is working. "Everyone who goes through this program just raves about the experience. Most of our next class is referred by ADFLDP graduates. A lot of us in the allied dental disciplines ended up in education or administration by accident or by default. We never had any formal administrative development training in how to manage, how to lead; that is, until ADFLDP." (Dr. Hanlon can be contacted at hanlon@tds.net.)

The noise made by faculty shortages in dental education, while loud and persistent, is being subdued by ADEA's multipronged approach to developing future faculty. By providing exposure to academia, teaching skills, and leadership training, ADEA is both contributing to the flow of new faculty into academia and nourishing current faculty members' skills with the goal of encouraging long and satisfying careers in academic dentistry. Small enough to nurture their individual participants, collectively, these ADEA programs are making a sizable noise that is starting to be heard across our institutions. I'm certainly proud to shout about it, and I hope you will be too.



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