

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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I am committed to take an unwavering stand with concrete actions to have “zero tolerance” towards racism and gender harassment. We will build a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that will make our community far stronger and better than before.

When I first entered UCLA School of Dentistry in 1994, I was the first Asian junior faculty to be in the tenure-track position in the school’s entire history. I was also the only tenure-track faculty ever recruited without any start-up funds or laboratory space. In 2001, I was the second Asian who became fully tenured at the UCLA School of Dentistry. When I first took over as the chair of orthodontics, over 90 percent of the residents identified as white males. The program had not accepted an African American or Middle Eastern individual for over 40 years. Nineteen years later, in 2020, we had over 70 percent of our residents from diverse backgrounds, over 60 percent were female, and all were selected from a pool of the most competitive candidates. Full-time faculty from our section and division changed from one female to 60 percent female faculty. We have established a fair and transparent admission process that provides equal opportunity for students of all genders, cultures, and ethnicities. I have zero tolerance for racial discrimination or sexual harassment regardless of the parties involved. I possess an unwavering motivation to protect equality and diversity in academia. Creating a safe space where education and innovation flourish is of utmost importance. I can fully attest that our program has become much more robust and better since introducing more diversity and equality.

In addition to research, teaching, mentoring, and other professional activities, I have also dedicated my time to community outreach and public service. Specifically, I serve as a mentor for the NIH-sponsored summer undergraduate student research training program. The primary goal of this summer research program is to mentor and assist under-privileged students transitioning from a community college to UCLA. I have found this experience especially rewarding and thoroughly enjoy working with these youth by guiding them through an exceedingly formative period of their lives.

I also served as the volunteer liaison of UCLA Operation Mend, orchestrating the communication and execution arms of its operations at the School of Dentistry to provide state-of-the-art, pro bono dental care from the school’s senior faculty for wounded servicemen and women. Operation Mend is a groundbreaking program that serves United States military members who have been wounded during service in Iraq and Afghanistan and service members who suffer from severe facial and other medical injuries by providing access to the nation's top plastic and reconstructive surgeons. Furthermore, UCLA Operation Mend provides comprehensive medical, dental, and mental health support for the wounded and their families.

Most importantly, as the Division Chair of Growth and Development in charge of pediatric dentistry and orthodontics, we have built one of the nation's most comprehensive outreach patient clinics and programs. Our craniofacial orthodontic clinic serves over 3000 patients per year. Our Venice Clinic community operation is also a model example for other dental schools. I

have volunteered in the UCLA Craniofacial Clinic at the UCLA Medical Center for the past 26 years. I have served as a non-paid California Children Services Consultant for over two decades.

One of my most significant accomplishments is the establishment of the International Orthodontic Foundation, a non-profit charity foundation established in 2022 (www.IOFglobal.org). I am one of the key founding members and the Executive Director. The mission of IOF is the improvement of patient care by providing comprehensive quality training and education, innovative and clinical research grants, as well as an international network where professionals in orthodontics and related fields can collaborate as lifelong learning partners. We outreach to regions that do not have similar education development resources as North America.

I hope my personal experiences in encountering racial prejudice, my track record in combating the EDI related problems by positively transforming the structure and culture of my division, and my outreach efforts in the community have demonstrated my life-long commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. I will work closely with the academic community as a part of our mission to uphold diversity, equity, and inclusion.”