

# Dental School Launches Mentoring Program

## For Alumni, Students, Faculty, and Staff

**I**t's an opportunity for anyone...and everyone...to make a difference.

The University of Michigan School of Dentistry recently launched a mentoring program that offers everyone — alumni, students, faculty, and staff — an opportunity for professional and personal growth and development.

“The hundreds of students, faculty, and staff here at this School, along with the thousands of alumni we have in this country and around the world, are a rich resource of experience and expertise that all members of our School of Dentistry should be able to access,” Dr. Marilyn Lantz said during the spring meeting of the School's Alumni Society Board of Governors.

Lantz, associate dean for academic affairs who spearheaded the mentoring program, said the School's initiative is not confined geographically to southeast Michigan.

“Since nearly everyone has a personal computer and access to the Internet, this program is one that can become national and even international in nature,” she said.

### One-Year Pilot Program Begins

Although the School has a tradition of encouraging and supporting mentoring and mentoring relationships, some students, staff, and faculty members experience difficulty finding mentors.

In an effort to address the issue, the School has been considering trying an online mentoring program for some time.

It received a boost more than a year ago when a group of dental students told the School's Board of Governors that they were looking for ways to connect with the School's alumni. “We need the help of dental school alumni to serve as mentors and to help us develop networks

with other professional colleagues,” said dental student Rajeev Prasher. [*DentalUM*, Fall 2005, p. 53].

Now, the School is involved in a one-year pilot program with Triple Creek Associates, a suburban Denver-based company that designs software to enhance mentoring.

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Although used extensively in the corporate world, the U-M School of Dentistry is the first academic organization in the country to use the company's software that allows students, faculty, staff, and alumni to participate by helping mentees find mentors. It can also support both new and ongoing mentoring relationships.

Lantz said there was no cost to participate and that registering was easy.

### How it Works

Interested individuals visit a Web site, [www.3creekmentoring.com/umich](http://www.3creekmentoring.com/umich), register as a mentor, mentee, or both, and then fill out a brief biographical form.

To register and retrieve information, mentors and mentees must enter a six-digit code. For mentors, it's 420110; for mentees, it's 650121.

Mentors use dialogue boxes to identify their skills or competencies which are grouped into areas of professional development, interpersonal issues, and personal development.

## Dental Students Seeking Mentors

### Highlights

- Individuals can be a mentor or mentee.
- Mentors share their expertise.
- Mentors can choose to mentor students, faculty, staff, or alumni.
- Mentees can be students, faculty, staff, or alumni.
- Mentees learn from mentors about professional and personal development.

### Benefits

- Lifetime personal and professional development.
- Can help students make critical career decisions.
- Can help faculty and staff successfully navigate career paths.
- Can help alumni reconnect with each other and the School of Dentistry.

Individuals seeking to develop certain skills, or enhance those they already have, can become mentees.

Depending on their goals and objectives, mentees then receive a list of mentors along with their profiles. The mentees can talk to potential mentors, make their decisions, and then pursue the mentoring relationship with defined goals and timelines. Mentees can have more than one mentor.

### Participants Decide

“The process is mentee driven,” Lantz said. “It’s up to the mentee to tell their mentor what they’re trying to achieve.”

Mentoring interactions can take place face-to-face, on the telephone, or by using e-mail. It can be short term, several months, or, if necessary, longer term. That’s decided by individual mentor/mentee pairs. It can also take different forms, from informational to advocacy.

“Typically, we think of faculty members mentoring students,” Lantz said. “But very effective, less traditional mentoring relationships might also be developed, for example, between a staff member mentoring a faculty member on a particular subject or topic. We just have to assist mentees in finding appropriate mentors.”

Reflecting on her experiences as both a mentor and mentee, Lantz said, “I’ve had some incredible mentors. It’s very rewarding to be a mentor because you grow and develop professionally and personally while helping someone develop and succeed.” ■

### You Can Be a Mentor

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree(s) and year(s) received: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred daytime telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to....

- Allow students to shadow me at my office.
- Talk to students on the telephone about careers.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to:

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