teresa a. dolan, d.d.s., m.p.h.
professor and dean

a state-funded loan repayment program for dental graduates working in underserved communities. and the florida legislature approved funding for a school externship or residency programs in safety net facilities, and establishing short-term training programs in pediatric dentistry. ufcd is a national leader in both of these areas and is expanding its programs to improve access for all children and families. high-quality, affordable, science- and evidence-based dental education is an important public resource, and ufcd is grateful for the public investment in dental education. adding dental graduates, particularly with large educational debts, will not increase access to care, particularly for vulnerable florida residents. a more thoughtful, comprehensive view of public policy and state-wide dentist workforce planning to ensure quality and affordable dental education is one we will yield a more positive impact.

our college has a number of ongoing programs in place to help bridge the gap, and we know we’re not alone in trying to make a difference. hundreds of florida’s dentistry volunteers alongside other health professionals in clinics, mobile care centers and outreach programs. from it’s not enough.

the florida board of governors (fbo) discussed dental education during its recent strategic planning committee meetings, and in its presentations to the fbo, i had the opportunity to argue ways to increase access to care including a student expansion of our dental school, and providing relief through a state-funded loan repayment program for dental graduates working in underserved communities. and the florida legislature approved funding for a significant increase in children’s Medicaid during the prior legislative session. the access-to-dental-care crisis is due to the lack of access to available and affordable dental education in our state will yield a more positive impact.

the task force did not recommend expanding the number of dental schools. instead, they recommended expanding learning experiences through dental school externship or residency programs in safety net facilities, and establishing short-term training programs in pediatric dentistry. ufcd is a national leader in both of these areas and is expanding its programs to improve access for all children and families. high-quality, affordable, science- and evidence-based dental education is an important public resource, and ufcd is grateful for the public investment in dental education. adding dental graduates, particularly with large educational debts, will not increase access to care, particularly for vulnerable florida residents. a more thoughtful, comprehensive view of public policy and state-wide dentist workforce planning to ensure quality and affordable dental education is one we will yield a more positive impact.

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When we ask an upset child about her experiences as an undergraduate student, she tells us how she often comes up against the limit of her window in our building. The building’s large window is a symptom of the aging infrastructure within our school, and the problems go far beyond the fact that there isn’t much natural light in which to learn and conduct research.

But things are looking up. This year the college recently received funding from the university to launch a building and construction planning project. The project was completed in January, and we plan to break ground in October 2011 and continue over the course of five months. Faculty, students and alumni are working closely with a sophisticated architectural firm. The goal is to improve the learning environment, to increase class sizes and expand the engineering curriculum.

This year, as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the college of dentistry, let’s also celebrate the 25th anniversary of the college’s faculty at the 2012 Academic Alumni Awards. This year, the Alumni Association recognized 15 of our faculty members for their outstanding contributions to the college and dentistry.

An IADR Award is a significant honor for any distinguished scholar. Indraneel Bhattacharyya, an associate professor in the Department of Endodontics, was selected for the IADR's 2011 Award for Outstanding Dental Research. This award recognizes outstanding contributions to research in endodontics over the preceding five years. Dr. Bhattacharyya is one of four men whose research has been instrumental in the development and understanding of endodontics.

On the research front, we are excited to announce the establishment of the Periodontic Research Laboratory, the first of its kind in Florida, and the upcoming opening of new classrooms, laboratories and a Teaching Hospital. These new facilities will support our faculty and students as we continue to advance the field of dentistry.

To learn more about the college’s research and faculty, visit the Florida Center for Dental Research. The center is a hub for translational research, a focus on innovative clinical and preclinical research, and a leader in the development of new dental treatment modalities.

In the past year, the college has made significant strides in the areas of teaching, research and community engagement. We look forward to continuing our work to improve the health of people around the world and to fostering the next generation of leaders in the field of dentistry.