DEAN’S WORD
LOOKING BACK ON A MOMENTOUS YEAR

A key focus in 2013 was streamlining our administrative practices. We changed from course-based professional services to a function-based model that enables us to use our expertise across the whole faculty.

This shift in focus has improved admissions, assessment and timetabling, and led to more efficient processes and an improved student experience. Senior students have told me they find course administration more effective compared with several years ago. We have also developed a marketing and communications strategy to improve how we let you know about our exciting research and teaching.

We have worked closely with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services) Shane Houston and the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health to develop pathways for Aboriginal students. Together with the Poche Centre, our students have reduced the burden of acute dental disease in Bourke, making it easier for this town to now recruit dental practitioners.

Continuing education focus
Our range of education and research activities is extensive and we are looking at other ways to use these activities. Enhancing our continuing education is one such strategy. By taking the lead, Professor Ali Darendeliler, head of our orthodontics discipline, is providing a suite of continuing education courses, which have been very well received and oversubscribed. Facilitating expert discipline-specific education to dental professions is led by our continuing education unit, under the guidance of Miriel Hobbs. I encourage you to visit sydney.edu.au/dentistry/ce and check out what is on offer.

We also boosted our student scholarships in 2013, thanks to additional donor funding. These scholarships provide valuable student support.

I appreciate very much the support our alumni provide for our students and strategies. Without this we would not have operating microscopes, virtual simulation units or a range of dental instruments and materials.

Upskilling academics
Educators are focused on improving our students’ experiences; the life sciences curricula have a more defined focus for dentistry students, and refined objectives have been developed for all course material. We are enhancing our clinical educator professional development by creating a number of opportunities to upskill our academic staff. The goal is to provide multiple offerings targeting enhanced teaching and learning. Opportunities range from short, discipline-specific courses to a PhD in the area of educational research and development.

In 2013 we were the only dental faculty in Australia to receive National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding and we continue to advance our research themes. To this end, our clinical database and biospecimen bank will provide an invaluable resource to help researchers develop clinical guidelines and monitor dental health. Our dental implant academics have combined to form an implant research and education group to facilitate collaboration across our courses and research activities.
LOOKING FORWARD TO A YEAR OF PROGRESS

In 2014, we are working closely with NSW Health, Westmead precinct and Sydney Dental Hospital as well as our other professional and community partners to enhance our profiles collectively.

We are increasing political engagement and leading public debate on oral health.

We will work closely with the Australian Dental Council to explore accreditation options with the aim of improving effectiveness and efficiency. While continuing to roll out the Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD), we will review our other two courses.

In March we relocated the faculty’s administrative offices from level six to level seven of the Sydney Dental Hospital and we have learnt that we will be able to maintain our clinical education capacity in that Local Health District. We will, however, continue to work on opportunities to consolidate staff to a single site and optimise central faculty support as they align academic activities to faculty strategies. We also expect to have additional clinical education facilities completed at Westmead mid-year.

We are constantly exploring additional clinical education facilities and, importantly, this includes simulation learning environments.

Simulators boost clinical education

In 2014 we aim to acquire virtual simulators to help our students achieve competency with clinical procedural skills and provide a positive enhancement to our current clinical education models. This will also be linked to a digital dentistry strategy incorporating best practice in teaching, research and administration.

We will promote and foster alumni and student engagement and provide students with experience and exposure to research, leadership and international opportunities.

We will use our disciplines’ external advisory bodies to guide our activities and ensure they are aligned with community needs. We will also be an integral part of the University’s goal of integrating health, education and research and implementing the recent health and medical research review.

Our clinical database and biospecimen bank’s focus on oral medicine will be expanded to other disciplines and will link to the Charles Perkins Centre and NSW health surveillance activities. Our bioengineering unit will be operational and research staff and students will be working with clinicians and other health disciplines. Our research will have a distinct interdisciplinary focus.

These activities can only be achieved with commitment, academic excellence and teamwork from our staff and students.

Professor Chris Peck
Dean

Graduates (from left): Gianna Isaac, Bachelor of Oral Health; Hunida Elfallah, Master of Philosophy; Joseph Saouma, Bachelor of Dentistry.

Proud awardees recognised for academic excellence by Professor Chris Peck, Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry (second from right).
A high-tech clinical simulator is helping to reshape dentistry learning and research.

At the 26-year reunion and gala dinner in May, the graduating year of 1988 and their guests tried their hand at the Simodont trainer, an example of next-generation clinical simulation technology. It will enable students to develop manual dexterity skills safely and confidently. The Simodont trainer also fosters collaborative, global research and the development of curriculum and training programs to be delivered across institutions.

Our supportive network of alumni is always looking for new ways to help our future dental professionals become global leaders, and several generous contributors are opening the door to a new way of learning and research.

Investigating this new direction in simulated learning is Dr Susie Dracopoulos. A teacher at the faculty who is studying for a master’s degree in education, she is a firm believer in the principles of pedagogy.

Susie knows how important it is for first-year dentistry students to acquire the fine motor and technical skills that are crucial to becoming a first-rate clinician. “The Simodont trainer will bring the blended learning environment into traditional simulation and bridge the gap between theory and practice,” she says.

“The trainer will provide students with instant feedback on their performance and exactly where they went wrong, rather than waiting for a tutor to view the end result and guess what may have occurred. The learning then becomes student-paced, allowing for varying rates of learning and adapting to individual learning styles.

“Most dental procedures are irreversible and learning how to perfect procedures on patients is no longer acceptable. With the trainer, students are able to make as many mistakes as needed to gain expertise and build manual dexterity.

“Because of the trainer’s ability to instantly connect, research and teaching can take place without the traditional boundary of proximity. It is a really exciting time for dentistry and health – whether it be collaborating with the global research community leaders, or delivering education in remote areas of the world.”
Federal government scholarships are giving our students invaluable study experiences in challenging environments.

Dr Robyn Watson was surprised and overjoyed to learn of her successful application and award of all 10 of the scholarships offered by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education for the 2014 Study Overseas Short-Term Mobility Program.

The program supports Australian students undertaking meaningful short-term international study experiences in the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas.

This funding enables Sydney dental and oral health students to participate in rural placements in dental schools and private practices to enhance their awareness of providing dental care in a different and more challenging environment. Under the guidance of the Vanuatu Dental Health Department, two Bachelor of Oral Health students will join in training local community personnel to enhance the oral health of disadvantaged populations.

Several dental students will also have the opportunity to join in the One2One Cambodia Foundation in collaboration with the Children's Global Dental Health Fund as part of their elective experience.

“I was incredibly fortunate to join in this important community action and strongly recommend it to dentistry students and dental practitioners,” says Dr Andre Tedjasukmana, Dental Officer at Westmead Hospital. “Despite the challenges, I see myself returning to Cambodia or other countries for more volunteer work in the future. “It is an extremely rewarding experience and allowed me to see how we are able to make a real difference in a short time, cementing my role as a global citizen. The smiles on the children’s faces say it all.”
The findings of an orthodontic research project could lead to reduced treatment in adults and adolescents.

In orthodontics, there has always been the desire to achieve the most efficient and rapid tooth movement possible with minimal side effects, including root resorption. Recent studies have shown that two new techniques, piezocision and mechanical vibration, show promising results with their potential to accelerate tooth movement.

Under Head of Discipline of Orthodontics Professor Ali Darendeliler’s supervision, Dr Hui Theng Chong’s research focus is two-pronged: first, how the application of piezocision and mechanical vibration affect the root surfaces and how the quantitative properties of the resorption craters are altered during orthodontic force application.

Her second focus is to investigate the effects of piezocision and mechanical vibration on the rate of tooth movement — including the duration of accelerated bone response — and determine if the rapid tooth movement generated by piezocision and mechanical vibration has additional preventive effects on root resorption.

It is anticipated that the results of the study may lead to reduced orthodontic treatment in adults and adolescents, with fewer side effects, and have potential benefits for public oral health.

Dr Chong was awarded the Australian Dental Research Foundation’s 2014 Colin Cormie Grant for her research entitled The effect of piezocision and mechanical vibration on the extent of root resorption – a micro-CT study, a joint-venture research project between the University of Sydney and the Dental School at Ondokuz Mayis University, Turkey.
Aboriginal high-school students recently had an exciting hands-on dentistry experience as part of the University’s Wingara Mura (‘thinking path’) Summer Camp.

In January this year Bachelor of Oral Health (BOH) staff, alumni and students joined 90 Year 9 and 10 Aboriginal students from the Wingara Mura Summer Camp participating in the health component of the BOH program.

Our young visitors’ curiosity was piqued when ‘real-life’ scenarios were discussed, such as a motor vehicle accident resulting in multiple fractures and health complications, and a broken jaw incurred during a football match.

The students listened attentively as health professionals demonstrated the kind of assistance they could offer to aid recovery.

Later, 25 students from Years 11 and 12 at the Bunga Barrabugu (‘to make tomorrow’) Summer Camp gained insights into the faculty’s oral health programs with a lecture in dental anatomy and tooth morphology.

Following a tutorial on the subject, the 25 eager students donned gloves, masks, protective glasses and gowns and learned to place a fissure sealant on a premolar tooth in the simulation clinic. Their efforts were rewarded with a ‘tooth’ key ring to take home.
A dose of friendly rivalry between students and alumni makes for an entertaining soccer spectacle.

With pizza aplenty and soft drinks flowing, spectators battled the rain to rally behind their favourite teams – on one side Faculty of Dentistry students, and on the other, its alumni.

The night kicked off with an exciting social curtain raiser between ‘The Juniors’ (BOH1, DMD1 and DMD2 students) and ‘The Seniors’ (BOH2, BOH3, DMD3 and BDent4 students).

Full of youthful confidence, the Juniors thought they would walk all over the clinic-fatigued Seniors. However, they hadn’t counted on the cat-like reflexes of Naheed Janmohamed (Seniors). He was an absolute fortress in goals and led the Seniors to the immensely entertaining score of 5–1.

Soon enough the main event, Alumni versus Students, got under way. The Alumni, headed by former Sydney University Dental Association president Michael Rutledge, were restless, warming up with carefully rehearsed drills and displaying the professionalism they were taught by Dr Evelyn Howe.

A speedy start to the game, much to the delight of the spectators, saw the half time score hit 5–5. Then the Students introduced their defensive fortress, aka Michael Spiteri. This kept alumni Mark Bennett quiet, as did Naheed’s ever-rapid reflexes.

The game finished at 5–5, forcing it into extra time under the golden goal rule. DMD1 student Josh Park was a constant menace to the alumni defence and when he had an opportunity to strike, he scored the crucial goal, breaking the tie, 6–5 in the Students’ favour.

Congratulations to the students and a big thank you to all alumni for a fantastic performance.

The Jennings Shield cricket match is still a big hit with the faculty, 77 years after it all began.

The Jennings Shield has become a highlight in the sporting calendar for students and graduates of the University of Sydney, and the 77th edition was played out late last year. The match was a 30-over contest between current students and graduates of the Faculty of Dentistry.

The 2013 match-up certainly had its exciting ups and downs. With strong leadership from Captain James El-Khoury, the Students claimed a wicket with the first ball of the day. The Graduates, fighting their way out of the situation, went on the offensive, finished with 142. Faced with tight bowling and fielding, the Students collapsed to finish 107 all out by the early afternoon.

After a fantastic match, a dinner hosted by the alumni provided an excellent opportunity for students to mingle with future colleagues and learn more about the match, which is deeply ingrained in faculty history.

This game might be one of those events overlooked at the end of the year, but many of the students who attended will say it was one of the best experiences of University life.
It was both a joyous and sad occasion as the faculty bade a fond farewell and wished Dr Evelyn Howe and Associate Professor Peter Dennison well in their journey from academia at the University of Sydney.