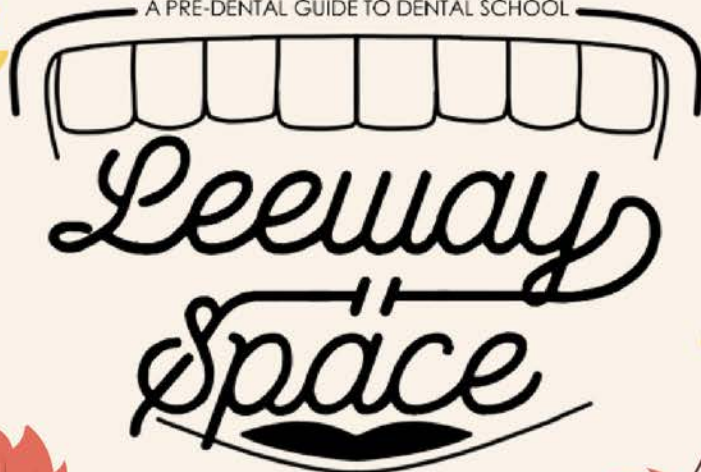


FALL 2022

A PRE-DENTAL GUIDE TO DENTAL SCHOOL



*Leeway
Space*

Volume 7 / Issue 1



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Message from Pre-Dental Outreach Committee



Welcome to the Fall 2022 issue of Leeway Space, a newsletter created by pre-dents for pre-dents to stay informed about topics relevant to dentistry! This year, we were thrilled to receive so many applications from amazing pre-dents from all walks of life, and honored to put together this outstanding team of writers, editors, and graphic designers for this year's edition of Leeway Space. Led by editors-in-chief Frances and Jacqueline, we are excited for you to experience the stories that this issue of Leeway Space will tell.

The purpose of Leeway Space this year is to bring the community of pre-dents together. After the struggles everyone has faced over the past two years from the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope that this newsletter becomes an outlet for how pre-dents across the nation have struggled, persisted, and persevered over the past two years. Resilience is a key trait that we have observed from dentists, dental students, and most importantly pre-dents across the nation. In the face of all the obstacles that we all have faced, our communities have grown closer and stronger as a whole.

With communities once again reuniting in person, and with the transition from the past two years back normalcy, we are excited to rebuild a community of our own. Our community will consist of pre-dental students with irrepressible courage and the experience to overcome any future obstacles. With what we have all gone through during the pandemic, we are fully confident that our writers, editors, and readers will be able to use this newsletter to connect, relate, and understand our individual stories.



Everyone is welcome in this community and we hope you all are able to enjoy this newsletter that our amazing pre-dental group has put together. The opportunities to become involved in dentistry are endless and we encourage you to partake in the many events our UCLA ASDA Pre-Dental Outreach Committee will hold. We will be there every step of the way, cheering you on to your journey to dental school!

Brian Nguyen Jocelyn Chen

Brian Nguyen & Jocelyn Chen

UCLA ASDA Predental Outreach Committee Co-Chairs





Message from Newsletter Committee

Hello readers!

My name is Daniel Mishail I am serving as the 2022-2023 UCLA ASDA Newsletter Committee Chair. I have had the privilege of overseeing the UCLA Dentistry's student run newsletter, The Diastema. Leeway Space is the pre-dental companion publication, and we are so excited to see another brilliant issue come to fruition.



Both the Diastema and Leeway Space have been at the unique intersection where education and creativity meet, and both allow students of all ages and backgrounds to connect, collaborate and thereby flourish. I applaud the Leeway Space Team for all their hard work promoting excellence, and am genuinely looking forward to this new edition where pre-dental scholars can share perspectives, advice and enthusiasm with our broad reader base. We invite everyone to applaud this excellent new edition, to read with open mind, and to grow as individuals.

Daniel E. Mishail

Daniel E. Mishail

DDS Candidate | UCLA School of Dentistry
ASDA Newsletter Committee Chair



Message from Editors-In-Chief



To our readers,

We are so delighted to share Volume 7: Issue 2 of Leeway Space! Leeway Space is a student-led newsletter that allows pre-dental students from all across the United States and internationally to share their pre-dental stories and experiences. By bringing together the wide variety of our team's perspectives, we hope it encapsulates the diversity in dentistry and how everybody's journey to dentistry is unique.

In this issue, we cover a variety of everyday extracurricular activities that pre-dental students can be involved in, such as shadowing, dental-related community service, and pre-dental societies in undergrad. The American Student Dental Association (ASDA) is a large national organization for dental students, but one writer discusses how you can take advantage of what it has to offer right now as a pre-dental student! Additionally, some articles cover the post-dental school part of the journey by talking about post-doctoral programs, the future of dentistry, and more profound issues such as oral health disparities in communities of color. We hope that this combination of articles provides a fresh perspective on various parts of the pre-dental journey and inspires you to be involved with more extracurricular activities that pique your interest.



Frances Lee
Emory University '22



Jacqueline Ha
UOP '23

After initially hearing about Leeway Space, we got involved as a writer and graphic designer, and we immediately fell in love with everything that Leeway Space had to offer. From our past experiences being a part of the Leeway Space team, we learned that despite being distant from one another, we can still form a robust virtual community where we can uplift and support each other. We are both so grateful to have the opportunity to return to the team this year as Editors-in-Chief because we really enjoyed fostering a collaborative community amongst the team and talking to them about their past experiences all throughout the publication process.

Through the stories showcased in this issue, we hope that you find comfort in knowing that there are many people out there who are also tackling the same challenges that come with being a pre-dental student and are able to feel motivated and empowered to continue down your pre-dental journey. We would like to thank you again for taking the time to read this issue, and we wish you the best of luck with all your pre-dental endeavors!

Warm regards,

Frances Lee Jacqueline Ha

Frances Lee and Jacqueline Ha
Leeway Space Editors-in-Chief





NEWSLETTER TEAM



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Yena Jang
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The Gems of Dental Shadowing

Sunali Patel

UOP '24

7



Shadowing, at first, can seem like a daunting experience. You have been to the dentist countless times, yet you know nothing about everything that goes into being on the other side of the chair. We have experienced talking to the dentist about our day while they are cleaning our teeth, but for once we can finally get the opportunity to have a glimpse of the other side while shadowing.

Expectations of what I was going to get out of this experience; being able to learn some basic procedures, how to clean dental tools, and observing how the dentist interacts with the patients. I was excited to learn about procedures that I have experienced myself, such as fillings and tooth extractions. I certainly was not disappointed. For every procedure the dentist performed on the patient, he invited me to stand chairside where I was able to closely observe what he was doing and hear his explanations for each step of the procedure. Besides simply explaining the procedure's protocol, he talked me through different tips, techniques, and ways to be efficient while ensuring the comfort and safety of the patient - which I learned is the top priority for dentists. For example, the dentist demonstrated how excellent communication skills and jiggling the cheek or lip while administering a local anesthetic can help comfort and distract patients from the pinch of the needle. This was a highlight of my shadowing experience because it was something that I had never seen or heard about before. The dentist told me he learned this tip from a dentist he shadowed, and I know that this is a technique that I would like to adopt when treating my future patients.

While I learned a lot from observing the dentist perform procedures, I learned there was a side to dentistry that I took for granted as a patient: comfortability. The dental office, as a whole, is a place that often has a negative stigma to it. You always hear people complaining that their teeth feel weird after getting a simple cleaning, or that their gums hurt after they get an extraction. These experiences shape how people perceive the dentist, and for some, it will cause them to be nervous and anxious when they have to go to the dentist in the future.

From my shadowing experience, I could tell that some patients were visibly nervous, even from the moment they stepped into the office. However, I noticed that the dentist was very patient and took their time to explain every step and what to expect, despite their busy schedule. Once the dentist had finished all of his work on the patient, you could see a change in the demeanor of the patient as they left. I learned that these small actions by the dentist actually play an integral role in the patient's overall experience. When I shared this observation with the dentist, he told me that "it is this skill of making the patient feel comfortable that is key to being a successful dentist; ensure patients are as content as possible." This remains as one of the biggest takeaways I had from all of my shadowing experiences.



Overall, I was able to learn and was rewarded through my shadowing experiences more than I was initially expecting. Shadowing is about taking the opportunity to learn not only about the procedures and application of techniques but also the insider tips of an experienced, successful dentist. Your dentist may not openly volunteer to share all of their knowledge, but asking a lot of questions while you are shadowing and being constantly curious about the field you are going to work in is very important. Additionally, taking the time to talk to the dental assistants and the front desk staff is crucial because, in a dental office, you are all working as one team. The dental assistants and receptionists often have beneficial insight that differs from what the dentist tells you. The biggest takeaway I had from my experiences is that being a dentist requires a lot more than knowing how to perform procedures; being able to communicate and read how a person is feeling, as well as working as a team, is just as valuable as performing the actual procedure. This is the silent part of dentistry that is often overlooked but becomes increasingly apparent as you shadow.



Post-Doctoral Plans: AEGD and GPR Programs



Kimia Tashakor
UC Davis '22



Upon reaching the second or third year of dental school, it becomes time to start considering what your post-doctoral plans may be. Some students may consider jumping straight into private practice, applying to specialty programs such as orthodontics or oral surgery, or working in public health at federally qualified health centers. However, others may desire more clinical experience to gain confidence and skills beyond what is taught in dental school before working full-time. For these students, Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) and General Practice Residency (GPR) are two program options that may fit their interests.

What are AEGD and GPR programs?

AEGD and GPR programs are post-doctoral training programs in general dentistry that are typically 12 months in length. Unlike specialty residencies, AEGD and GPR programs do not focus on just one branch of dentistry; instead, they provide training, support, and hands-on experience with a variety of dental procedures. These programs allow graduates to increase their knowledge by gaining experience with procedures not previously encountered, making them a great option for dentists who would like to advance their skill set prior to joining the workforce. ("Advanced Education")

What is the difference between an AEGD and a GPR?

Although AEGD and GPR programs initially seem quite similar, GPR programs typically take place in a hospital setting and tend to focus on "dentistry in the context of whole-body medicine" (Copeland, 2021). GPR residents go through medical rotations, which may require on-call shifts, allowing them to gain experience in surgical and emergency procedures.

On the other hand, AEGD programs typically take place in an academic setting more similar to the dental school environment. Although AEGD students are not typically exposed to hospital-based dentistry, they still gain a lot of experience in typical clinical dental procedures that may be encountered in private practice dentistry. Every school's program has unique expectations and goals for their post-doctoral students, which means that it is important to do careful research when choosing which program will best suit your interests (Copeland, 2021).

What steps do I need to take to gain acceptance into a program?

Applying for a residency program is similar to applying for dental school in that you must submit a personal statement, letters of recommendation, and a list of extracurricular activities you participated in during dental school through the application portal called ADEA PASS (Craig, 2022). There are two types of residency programs, Match and non-Match, which follow different admissions processes. The

National Resident Matching Program uses a special process to fairly match "the preferences of applicants for U.S. residency positions with the preferences of residency program directors" ("About the National Resident Matching Program"). Non-Match programs, on the other hand, operate on a rolling admissions process (Craig, 2022).

Ultimately, the decision to pursue an AEGD or GPR depends on several factors. It is most important to consider your career goals after dental school and what particular skills or knowledge you hope to gain from attending such a program. Other factors such as location and cost should also be considered. Some programs are tuition-based while others offer residents a stipend and employee benefits (Timetable). Anyone considering an AEGD or a GPR should carefully research the programs they are interested in and talk to current residents to gain a better understanding of what to expect from the program before applying.

Mentorship in Dentistry

Lawrence Nguyen
NSU '22



Growing up, I heard people commonly say “it takes a village to raise a child”.

Growing up, I heard people commonly say “it takes a village to raise a child”. Through my pre-dental experiences, I have learned that it also takes a village to build a successful dentist. Having supportive family, friends, and mentors can shape your journey in becoming a dentist and it all starts with a simple conversation. Mentorships are crucial relationships formed between a mentor, who is typically more skilled and experienced in the field, and mentee, the person who is seeking guidance.

Having mentorship as you navigate your way towards the professional field is a great way to expand on your knowledge and understanding of what the field will entail. There is no better way to enhance your dental journey than seeking advice from someone who is already in the field. A mentorship relationship is not limited to any particular age group or stage in professional development. Mentorship is equally as important to a high schooler seeking pre-dental advice and a practicing dentist seeking professional guidance. Mentees can learn from a professional in the field through conversations ranging from the stats needed to gain acceptance into dental school to owning a private practice. Mentors can help challenge you in any stage of your career to achieve your highest potential.



I have sought out mentorship within dentistry multiple times as a student navigating the pre-dental journey and in retrospect, I owe much of my growth to these relationships. I shadowed a general dentist where I was allowed to observe procedures and gain an insight to dentistry. From this, I was able to get an inside scoop on running a private practice, work flow, and everyday procedures. Aside from that mentorship, I kept in contact with a current dental student, who gave me tips and tricks on the DAT, words of encouragement and support, and guidance to the application cycle. Without both of these types of mentorships, I don't think I would be able to reach it this far without their support.

Looking back on my journey, I can confidently say now that I have achieved goals beyond my expectations all due to the mentors that I have in my life that have helped guide and motivate me towards the right direction. I have bonded with my mentors over our many supportive and uplifting conversations, while also receiving the constructive criticism I needed to improve on my weaknesses. Once a mentor-mentee relationship has been established, you will learn invaluable lessons that will help propel you towards your professional goals. It is also comforting knowing that you have a mentor by your side to confide in through the high and lows that constitute every person's pre-dental journey.





Sue Lee
UCLA '22



Growing up, my family and I never had the same access to dental care compared to most other families. We would only

pay the dentist a visit when the issues escalated and became irreversible. Throughout my childhood, a persisting insecurity of mine was my crooked smile that resulted from extracting my own teeth at home or having to get my teeth extracted prematurely due to cavities. However, my mom faced the worst of it. Her oral health problems were much more severe than mine because our family was never able to afford dental care for the both of us. Every time, she would choose to take care of my oral health over hers. Even as a child, the thought of having to sacrifice one's oral health for another frustrated me as it was unfair and inhumane. My biggest frustration comes from the fact that my parents never viewed dental care as a necessity, but more as a luxury or choice. The years of neglecting dental visits resulted in the decline of my family's oral health, which they placed the blame on the consumption of candy rather than not receiving adequate dental care. However, I realized there are many other factors that can play into the decline of one's oral health and simple precautions can help avoid serious complications.

A few of the biggest factors that I noticed play into the decline in oral health were genetics, external environmental factors, and most importantly at-home dental hygiene habits. I vividly remember being told as a child that flossing would create gaps in my teeth. Since I was so young and did not know any better, I believed this for years on end until I visited the dentist and was taken aback when they told me otherwise. Once I became more knowledgeable about how to maintain good oral health, I realized how so many other people in my community were equally as clueless about oral health as I was which helped fuel my passion to make it my goal as a future dentist to educate others on oral health and help those who have limited access to dental care.



WE FIGHT FOR ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE & A CONFIDENT SMILE

Growing up in a rural community of Dillingham, Alaska made me believe that the majority of the world other than Alaska had access to affordable dental care, but it was not until I began my pre-dental journey at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) that I realized that I was wrong. The sad truth is that dental care is still inaccessible to many struggling minority and low-income communities mainly due to the understandably costly fees. My family and I experienced the hardships of this first-hand because we did not have insurance and we did not receive coverage like the other Alaskan Native residents, so oral health care was very unaffordable. Even though Alaskan Natives are able to receive affordable care, there is limited access to dentists in most areas of Alaska and most importantly, there is limited knowledge of the importance of dental care. The mobile clinic at the University of Southern California (USC) is an organization whose mission I find inspiring. Their mission is to provide accessible and continuous healthcare to those in need. They ensure that they promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice to acknowledge room for continuous growth and education to the community. As a future dentist, I aim to fulfill my lifelong dream of bringing the same mission statement back to the rural communities of where I grew up in Alaska.

My goal of becoming a dentist has always been to boost all my patients' confidence in their smiles - which was something that I lacked growing up - and to share knowledge about the importance of good at-home oral hygiene habits. Many people do not realize the importance of maintaining their oral health and how it is a basic necessity that much of the population does not get to have. I hope to one day be able to travel back to the rural communities of Alaska and other underserved areas to help educate them on proper at-home dental hygiene. This will aid in the prevention of serious oral health diseases and compensate for the lack of access to dentists in those areas while we as a community work towards increasing access to affordable dental care for all.





Serena Anaya
UCSD '23

Oral Health Disparities in Communities of Color



As a little girl, I was lucky to have been raised around many of my cousins in our barrio. A barrio is simply a Spanish-speaking neighborhood within a city. Our time spent in the barrio is a core memory of mine because I was surrounded by the love of my family, who were also our neighbors. However, I'll never forget wondering why so many of my little cousins had silver teeth. Later I came to discover that their teeth were silver as a result of Baby Bottle Syndrome.

Baby Bottle Syndrome is also referred to as 'Nursing Caries,' which are cavities babies get due to prolonged exposure to sugar-containing liquids like milk and baby formula. In my case, my Tias would rock their babies to sleep while keeping the baby bottle of milk in their babies' mouths. Does this make them bad mothers? No, it does not. They simply did not know any better, let alone know that they were causing harm to their babies. Essentially, pain and swelling occur around the teeth, leaving children in a state of discomfort and pain. Again, this directly results from oral health disparities among communities of color.

Oral health inequalities are prevalent in the form of preventable and unfair systems whose determinants are social factors. Health should not mean wealth, however, this is the unfortunate reality for minorities in modern America. According to a comparative study by Nicole Kelesidis, an NYU's College of Dentistry educator, "differences in education attainments, socioeconomic status, and access to dental care... [ignite dental inequalities among people of color]." Data supports that communities of color are at a disadvantage in accessing the proper care they need. Why has there been no legislature or big attempt in changing his reality? Education attainments have close ties to socioeconomic status, ultimately contributing to oral health disparities in communities of color.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, "the youngest mothers are indeed women of color consisting of, but not limited to, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Mexican, Non-Hispanic Black, and Puerto Rican mothers." However, amongst these young women of color, less than half of the women of their ethnic background have been undergraduate or graduate students.

Now let us reflect. Why do we go to school, let alone college? Maybe because our parents tell us to or perhaps to be enlightened about the ways of the universe, or because we want personal growth to open doors for us in the future? Everyone has different reasons, but I'd like to assume most are in the last option. These possible open doors consist of job opportunities that give us professional and financial independence. In the United States, levels of financial autonomy construct one's socioeconomic status. This is how education attainments and socioeconomic status tie together. What a luxury to pursue higher education, right? Young mothers like my mom and tia's never felt like they had this chance and privilege to attend college. Maybe many more women of color feel or have felt the same way.

Let us do some quick math now. Let's say a pediatric patient seeks dental treatment for one cavity. Depending on the treatment plan the dentist moves forward with, the patient can get a pulp cap to preserve the nerve (average \$110) and a crown (average \$200). An oral sedative such as nitrous may also be administered for roughly \$100. Worst case scenario, the dentist may have to perform a pulpotomy to save the tooth by removing the nerve (average \$190). Thus, a child whose parents have little to no dental insurance is estimated to owe \$300-\$410 to give their child the dental care they need. Does this sound fair? Does this sound morally correct, charging for proper oral healthcare? The purpose of this hypothetical example was to reveal the harsh realities that low-income people of color deal with when trying to access proper dental care. Let's be the change we want to see in the world.

American Student Dental Association (ASDA) Pre-Dental Roadmap

Roa Saadeh
UCI '22



As pre-dental students, we are often well acquainted with the necessary or strongly encouraged activities within the dental field, such as shadowing, dental assisting, and community service, among other things. But have you ever heard of organized dentistry? The American Dental Association ADA describes organized dentistry as the "combined efforts of all the organizations that work to positively contribute to the dental profession [1]." Or simply put, a group of professionals who are passionate about the work they do come together to envision a better future for their dental career and collaborate to make those goals a reality. Organizations within Dentistry exist in many forms, such as through the local, state, and national levels. This distinct categorization is referred to as the "tripartite" by the American Dental Association.

The American Student Dental Association (ASDA) is one example nationwide organized dentistry organization and one you may find yourself becoming active not just as a dental student but even as a pre-dental student. ASDA is "a student-run organization that protects and advances the rights, interests and welfare of dental students [2]." Under ASDA, the U.S. and Puerto Rico are divided into 11 total Districts, with representation from each dental school divided into districts. Some districts are divided across multiple states, whereas others, such as District 11, represent all dental schools within one state, California. The seven dental schools within District 11 include Loma Linda, Los Angeles Northstate, Pacific, San Francisco, Southern California, and Western Schools of Dentistry.

As the ASDA District 11 Pre-Dental Liaison, I encourage all pre-dental students to explore and discover their passion among the endless tripartite opportunities. There is no better way to start investing in your future career than getting a headstart as a pre-dental student and leaving a mark within your district. Many of us pursue dentistry for different reasons, such as community service, but all share a goal to contribute positively to communities.



ASDA District 11 Pickleball Social May, 2022

ASDA District 11 Advocacy and Public Health Academy Conference: Dental Management of Individuals with special healthcare needs by Dr. Reeva Miner

ASDA District 11 Advocacy and Public Health Academy Conference: Incorporating philanthropy into your dental practice, making a difference and choices after dental school by Dr. Jay Grossman

ASDA Resources and Benefits

As a pre-dental member of ASDA, you will have access to many resources, with only the first three points exclusive to paid ASDA members. There are many benefits of joining ASDA as a pre-dental member and opportunities to get involved.

- 1. Guide for Pre-dental Students:** All pre-dental members have access to a comprehensive handbook that includes invaluable resources for both traditional and nontraditional students. In addition, the guide offers insight into what each year of dental school looks like, detailed information for every U.S. territory dental school, and tips for navigating schools when deciding where to apply.
- 2. Newsletters:** You will also have access to two newsletters, "Contour," a dental student-written newsletter in which you hear about the experiences of dental students all across the country. There is also "The Polished PreDental," a quarterly pre-Dental newsletter that features pre-dent stories across many topics where you also have the opportunity to be published.
- 3. Monthly webinars:** In monthly webinars, you gain insight into dentistry's most common trends and professional building skills. Various online forums on wellness, diversity and inclusion, leadership development, and career resources exist.
- 4. Advocacy Efforts:** ASDA takes on many projects and initiatives to advance the welfare and rights of dental education. Participate in contacting lawmakers to ensure they understand the importance of passing legislation for student debt reform, licensure reform, and racial injustices, among other concerns.
- 5. Conferences:** Attending the District 11 conferences is one of the most exciting activities as a pre-dental member and a way to surely make you catch ASDA fever. You are meeting professionals that are leaders in their field, from how to make the most significant impact in non-profit executives to less commonly known areas of work such as prison dentistry or the push for greater inclusion and accessibility for special patient care. Each conference includes various workshops that explore unique career options within dentistry, community service initiatives, and opportunities to learn about California dental legislation and the influence these policies have on public health dentistry.
- 6. Socials:** You can network with dental students and professionals who can be instrumental to your desired future career. Exciting socials always follow district conferences at a night out and/or community services such as beach cleanups. There are also socials typically held in NorCal and SoCal locations to lookout for, which are held throughout the year.
- 7. School Chapters:** Each dental school within District 11 has an ASDA chapter, including dedicated pre-dental co-chairs who organize events that support the student's journey to dental school. Resources include insight into life as a dental student, advice for the dental school application, school visits, and close mentorship.

All the above opportunities just scratch the surface of the many ways to immerse yourself within ASDA. To follow up on resources and events within the District 11 schools and tailored pre-dental resources, visit <https://www.district11asda.org/> and follow the D11 Instagram page @d11asdapre dental. We look forward to you joining and supporting the larger dental community! Your diverse experiences and input offer a unique perspective to the future of dentistry and hopefully will push for an even greater profession.

[1] Diversity and inclusion. Diversity and Inclusion | American Dental Association. (n.d.). Retrieved September 22, 2022, from <https://www.ada.org/about/principles/diversity-and-inclusion>

[2] American Student Dental Association: Asda: Asda. ASDA_W_Letters. (n.d.). Retrieved September 22, 2022, from <https://www.asdanet.org/>



The "Craziness" of the Pre-dental Club Journey: One Step at a Time

Kaylie Huynh
UCI '24



If you told first-year me that by my third year, I was going to start a community service organization dedicated to raising oral healthcare awareness and helping underserved areas dealing with financial barriers, I (1) wouldn't be talking to you because I had a fear of public speaking and (2) I would think you were crazy.

The undergraduate experience for a pre-dental student is nothing but crazy. Whether crazy stressful due to maintaining a sufficient GPA and grades or crazy good due to volunteering and making friends along the way, there is no between. It can be even more overwhelming when you have to make sure that the field of dentistry is the right path for you to pursue. This was my whirlwind of thoughts and worries as a first-year starting my undergraduate experience, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. I was anxious and timid, but I knew I had to put myself out there to expose myself to the world of dentistry and make the most out of my time at college.

I started by looking at my university's activities and club roster to see which clubs suited me the most. Knowing I wanted to be part of a community of pre-dental students, I joined my school's Pre-Dental Society (PDS) and Delta Delta Sigma (DDS), a pre-dental fraternity, to gain more experience and ensure dentistry was right for me. These pre-dental organizations offered me a lot of valuable experiences, whether it was the supportive community to dental volunteer opportunities, and I was set on becoming a dentist while growing my love and passion for the field. I could network with dental students, dental school faculty, and other pre-dental students through these communities, which instilled a sense of belonging in me. I was exposed to various education enrichment programs, community service and philanthropic events, dental shadowing and volunteering experiences, manual dexterity workshops, professional presentations, and panels. Most importantly, I developed my leadership skills, qualities I lacked and was always intimidated by.



With fear of public speaking and barely any leadership experience in high school, I really wanted to stay hidden in my shell and enjoy my experiences as a general member of these organizations since I was already receiving so many benefits from being in them and learning about what dentistry had to offer. However, as I got more involved and consistently went to all the enrichment events they offered, I found myself eager to confidently talk to people and eventually wanted to work behind the scenes to pay it forward and help other pre-dental students alike after learning so much. Thus, I applied for board positions in PDS and DDS and got accepted!

The one experience I valued the most at my pre-dental clubs was volunteering because I was giving back to my community and discovering more about myself, which allowed me to build up the confidence to take on more responsibilities. Along with community service and my board position, I was able to break out of my shell to be more involved, and eventually start an independent oral health awareness and community service club at my university called "Anteater Smile Project" (ASP) with a friend that I made through my pre-dental club experience. I wanted to focus more on volunteering for my pre-dental journey because that fueled my passion for dentistry and thus started an organization due to my immersive pre-dental club experiences.



Through it all, my pre-dental club experiences will always hold a place in my heart as I continue navigating through the craziness of the pre-dental endeavor. Not only do you ensure that dentistry is the right field for you, but you also get to meet like-minded individuals embarking on the same pre-dental journey. You also have various community service and volunteer opportunities to give back and can increase your leadership skills. Most importantly, you discover more about yourself and develop valuable qualities that will positively impact your dental profession. I never thought I was able to go out of my comfort zone to gain these valuable leadership experiences, but after developing them through my involvement in pre-dental clubs, I eventually was able to find my club as well!



- ①
- ②
- ③

- Getting involved in a pre-dental club or organization
- Developing your leadership skills
- Serving your community

Key Takeaways

The Future of Dentistry: Innovative Technology

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The field of dentistry is becoming increasingly digitalized as technological advancements have allowed for more precise treatment plans with cost and time-efficient procedures, revolutionizing the way modern dentists practice dentistry. Such advancements include digital labs, augmented reality, and virtual reality, which make dentistry more clinically accurate and enhance patients' visitation experience.

The use of artificial intelligence allows dentists to make better clinical decisions and more personalized care for their patients' treatments. Integrated A.I. algorithms have big data, including health data, genomic data, research discoveries, and different treatment techniques (Khanagar et al., 2020). In the field of orthodontics, dentists have used A.I. algorithms to identify patterns from large datasets while making more accurate treatment plans, such as the need to make an irreversible procedure of tooth extraction (Nguyen et al., 2021). A.I. algorithms are also known to improve the early detection of oral cancers and periodontal diseases, which increases the likelihood of a successful recovery in the future (Nguyen et al., 2021). Utilizing A.I. algorithms allows dentists and dental researchers to offer the best treatment plans to aid in dental conditions, increasing the chances of successful treatment.

Digital labs are also a recent development in the field of dentistry, which lowers production costs and the time it takes to create precise dental models. These labs include computer-assisted design and manufacturing, which are similar to 3D printing (Doheny, 2021). Traditionally, to make crowns, dentists would have to manually create a mold of the patient's teeth and make a temporary crown placeholder until a dental laboratory makes a permanent one. However, with the newest technology, a digitally scanned image of a drilled crown is taken for a specialized machine to immediately construct the crown right in the office instead of the traditional mold (Doheny, 2021). 3D printers are also able to efficiently manufacture dental equipment, aligners, retainers, and more models at a cheaper cost.

Augmented reality has also been an increasingly popular method of technology both in educational and clinical settings. The emerging technology of augmented reality provides dentists with virtual information, like static or dynamic diagnostic images, in addition to a three dimensional view of their surroundings while operating on patients (Pellegrino et al., 2019). Dental schools have recently adapted to the new technology of augmented reality simulators in order to create possible dental procedures and scenarios with which dental students may practice. This technology can provide instantaneous feedback regarding their hand movements along with the area of skills they should continue to improve on (Mahrous et al., 2022). Augmented reality is also instrumental during reconstructive and aesthetic dental procedures because it provides both the clinician and the patient with a visual illustration of their teeth before the procedure is performed (Hoffmann, 2017). As a result, patients can better communicate their preferences with their clinician, such as adjustments to the height and spacing of their teeth before the procedure is carried out.

Most patients dread going to the dentist because their perception of dental procedures is one that is negative and unappealing to them. Patients may be in fear of the pain it may cost them or the pure invasiveness of dentistry. However, with the help of virtual reality goggles, patients can immerse themselves in a peaceful setting, temporarily distracting them from the stressful environment in the dental practice. This technology can be beneficial in pediatric dentistry as children experience the most agony with the idea of visiting a dentist (Dahlander et al., 2019). Virtual reality goggles thus ensure a smoother and more pleasant dental experience for anxious patients. The virtual reality goggles also allow dental students to observe and virtually assist dental procedures, which may have not otherwise been accessible before (Mubtadi et al., 2021; Nafarrete, 2015). Specific simulations can also help dentists strengthen their sense of empathy by assisting them in visualizing the patient's perspective and experience throughout a procedure.

Advancements in technology will continue to upgrade the field of dentistry, making it more affordable, more expeditious, highly personalized, and more positively associated with. The future of dentistry is truly heading towards a revolutionizing path for both the patient and the clinician!



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