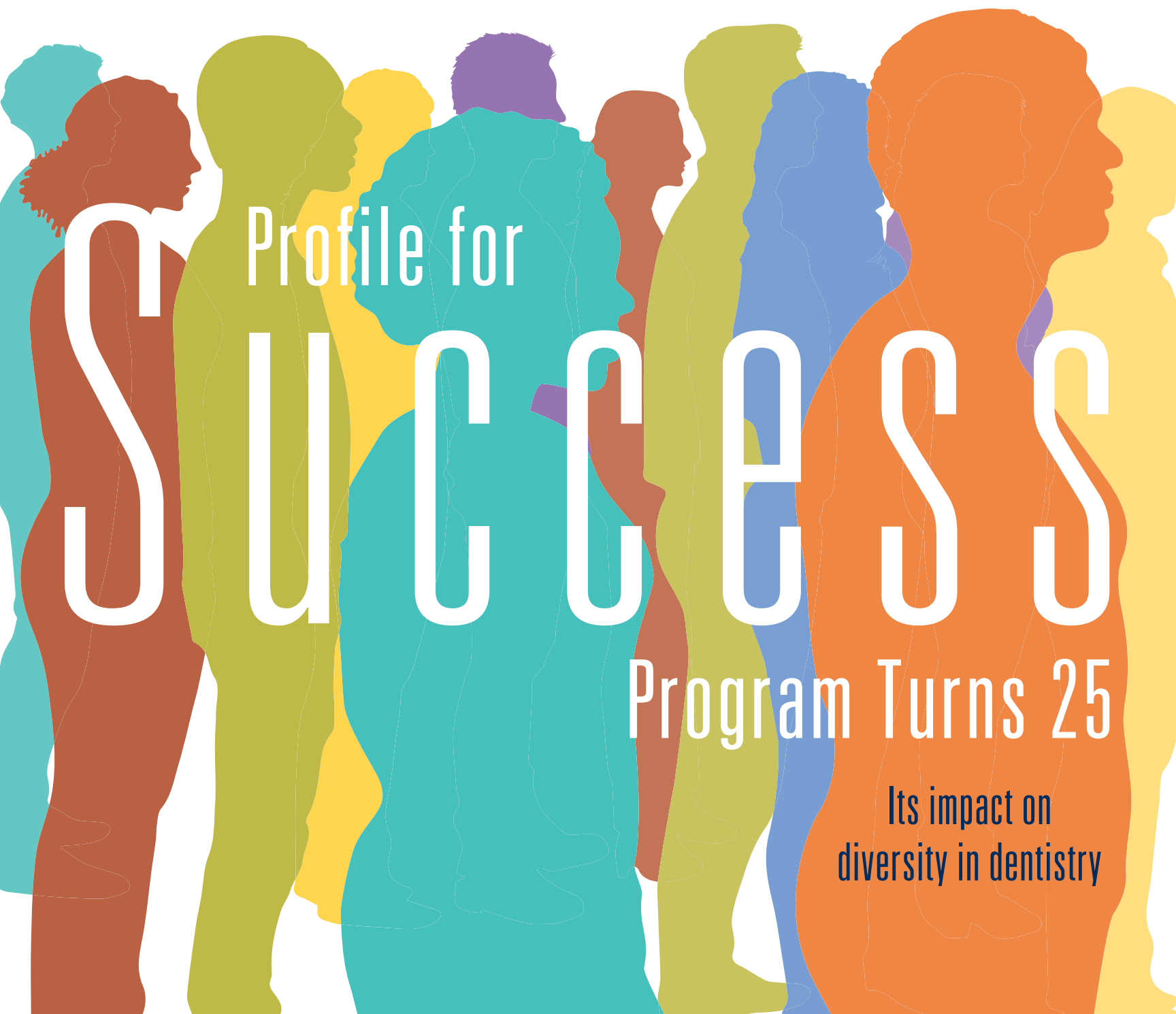


# M | DENTISTRY

For the University of Michigan School of Dentistry Community | Fall 2019



Profile for

SUCCESS

Program Turns 25

Its impact on  
diversity in dentistry





FEATURES

# 'Profile For Success' Celebrates 25 Years

## Program has had national impact on diversity in dentistry

When the 14 undergraduate students from around the country arrived this summer for the Profile For Success program at the School of Dentistry, the welcoming message from **Dr. Todd Ester** was much the same as it was for the very first class 25 years ago in 1994.

"We want you in the profession," he told the students. "We need you in the profession."

That's been the crux of the program, known as PFS, from its first year when the school secured a federal grant through the Health Careers Opportunity Program, or HCOP. The founding grant and program were designed to attract college juniors and seniors from educationally and financially disadvantaged backgrounds to increase diversity, including of underrepresented minorities in the pool of applicants who apply to dental schools each year.

As has been the case from the beginning, much of the six-week schedule is spent tutoring the students in the science and math

coursework they will find on the Dental Admission Test that dental schools around the country consider when admitting students. PFS is also important for the introduction to dentistry it provides for the potential dental students. They perform some of the simple procedures they will encounter as dental students, such as taking impressions, drilling plastic teeth and making mouthguards. They observe patient treatment in clinics and are introduced to faculty, dental students and practicing dentists who can answer their myriad questions about the profession, dental school and treating patients.

Completing PFS doesn't guarantee acceptance to any dental school. Participants must still score well on the DAT, meet each dental school's admissions requirements and go through whatever admissions process is required for the various schools they apply to.

As the dental school's Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Ester

oversees PFS and spends a significant amount of time each year recruiting students for the program and the dental school. He has been involved with or led the PFS program for much of the 25-year history that the school is celebrating this year. "Profile For Success has been amazing in helping students to determine a pathway to the profession," he said. "It shows them that there are steps they can take that will ensure their success. That excites me because it's no secret that without these efforts our profession would be even less diverse than it is right now."

By hosting the program, the U-M dental school has an advantage in making connections with aspiring dental students who will soon apply to dental schools around the country. If students who go through PFS score well when they take the DAT, are accepted for admission at the U-M dental school and decide to attend, they strengthen the school. But Ester takes a much broader view of the value of the PFS program. An

even greater benefit, he notes, is that more than half of those who have attended PFS over the 25 years are now dentists – no matter which dental school they graduated from. That means U-M is contributing to diversity in dentistry all across the country, which is something to be proud of, he said.

**Pattie Katcher**, the school's Admissions Director who has helped administer PFS since its inception, puts it this way: "Bottom line, we want to help these young people get into dental school. If it's at Michigan, that's fantastic. If it's somewhere else, that's also fantastic. Because we want to help them reach their goal of being in this profession."

Since 1994, 460 students have come to U-M for the PFS program. Excluding the approximately 60 PFS students from the last several years who aren't yet finished with dental school, about 56 percent of all PFS participants went on to become dentists. And 33 percent of the program's students are graduates of the U-M School of Dentistry. In recent years, the numbers are even better. Out of 46 PFS participants from 2015-18, 86

percent enrolled in U.S. dental schools and 58 percent enrolled at the U-M dental school. PFS participants who are now successful dentists and educators around the country are effusive in their praise of the program (see related stories). They say the test preparation and tutoring helped their DAT scores, but they also cite the connections they made with faculty and dental students as equally important. Particularly for students

### DEI at the dental school

from families with no experience in higher education or professional graduate schools, having a mentor who provided generous advice and guidance was invaluable, the PFS alumni say.

While PFS is a significant and lasting accomplishment, it is only part of the dental school's longstanding commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion for students, faculty, staff and patients. In a report Ester wrote three years ago about DEI efforts at the dental school, he documented that two dental schools among the country's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBU) – Howard University and Meharry Medical College – are the only dental schools who have graduated more African-American dentists than U-M. More than 400 hold DDS degrees over the school's entire history. U-M has also graduated more than 140 Latino dentists and 25 Native American dentists.

One of the school's earliest distinctions involving diversity came in 1890 when it

*The PFS Class of 2019, the 25th cohort of the program, was joined by faculty, administrators and other PFS alumni during a closing celebration in June.*

graduated the country's first female African-American dentist, Ida Gray. The school commemorates Gray with an annual diversity award in her name presented to faculty, students and staff who demonstrate outstanding commitment to DEI issues.

Today's PFS program is an outgrowth of earlier diversity initiatives that began in the 1970s when low minority student enrollment was an issue nationally for all of higher education, not just professional schools like medicine and dentistry. In 1973, dental school Dean William Mann established the Office of Minority Affairs, dedicated to the recruitment of diverse students, staff and faculty. The office evolved into the Office of Multicultural Affairs in 1999, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Recruitment Initiatives in 2008, and, since 2014, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

The school's current five-year Strategic Plan identifies DEI as a key element of its People Domain. Both the strategic plan process and a 2014-15 Climate Study of the school recommended an increase in the number of underrepresented and other diverse students, faculty and staff. PFS remains an important link in that ongoing process.

**Dean Laurie McCauley** calls PFS a "gem" among the school's many DEI initiatives. "Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is woven into the fabric of everything we do at the school," she said. "Whether it is curriculum, patient care, research, our service activities or leadership training, it fits with our core mission of advancing health through education, service, research and discovery. In order to do that, we have to focus on being able to provide care to all people and develop future health-care providers who will be able to serve the entire population of our country."

McCauley said PFS is an investment not only for the U-M dental school, but dentistry as a whole. "When you invest in someone who will ultimately go into the dental profession and practice for perhaps 50 years, that is a huge long-term investment. And I think that's one of the most important facets of the PFS program – it's an early investment, it's a very tangible investment and it's an investment that will bring benefits for decades to come."

*Continued*





## The Efforts of Many

Ester said the success and longevity of PFS over 25 years is due to the foresight, commitment and hard work of many people. The school's deans dating back to Mann saw the need and found the financial and human resources to support diversity efforts to the present day. **Dr. Lee Jones**, the dental school's Director of Minority Affairs for 25 years, and later interim director **Dr. Emerson Robinson**, were instrumental in recruiting minority students, as was faculty member **Dr. Kenneth May**, who was Director of Multicultural Affairs and Recruitment Initiatives from 2007-13.

In the early 1990s, PFS emerged out of an initial grant-writing effort led by then-admissions director **Dr. Jed Jacobson**, followed by several re-applications to the federal program in succeeding years. PFS was led early on by **Dr. Marilyn Woolfolk**, Assistant Dean for Student Services; **Pattie Katcher**, then a staffer in Academic Affairs; and **Dr. Lisa Tedesco**, who was Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and a nationally recognized expert on diversity in health professions. (Tedesco is now dean of the graduate school at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga.)

Medical students were part of the program for many years, sharing some of the tutoring courses with dental students but meeting separately for pre-med sessions. For one year, in 2018, several pharmacy students joined the PFS tutoring sessions; the College of Pharmacy now has its own program modeled after PFS. Another feature of PFS is that even applicants who aren't selected for the



Dr. Marilyn Woolfolk



Pattie Katcher

summer residency on campus are provided academic advising, access to webinars and a reduced fee for the Kaplan test prep.

Woolfolk, who was instrumental in starting and guiding PFS for most of its history until she retired from the school in 2013, said students who came to the program needed encouragement about how to succeed in

dentistry. "A lot of these students would have found their way to dental school anyway, but I think that the part that Michigan can be the most proud of is helping the PFS students make the connections in many areas. We encouraged them: You need to do research, you need to do these things if you want to get into a certain specialty, you need to talk to these people. What we have been able to do is to get them to think about all the possibilities."

The ongoing legacy of PFS is that it improves not just the individual students but the profession of dentistry. "I think the argument that is hitting home, finally, is the fact that it leads to better outcomes for all patients," Woolfolk said. "If you are trained within an environment that is inclusive and if you are looking to be the ultimate

professional, then you translate the fact that you are going to be inclusive in your practice and looking for opportunities to make a difference in patient care."

Ester also praises several long-time contributors to the program. **Dr. Geri Markel** is an educational psychologist and executive coach who has been with the program from the start. Her presentations supplement the Kaplan test preparation sessions by helping students focus on their individualized learning methods, thus increasing their study productivity and retention. Also from the beginning, Professor **Dr. Marita Inglehart**, the dental school's only faculty member in the behavioral sciences, has researched various aspects of the program's effectiveness and how it affects students' confidence levels. Associate Professor **Dr. Kenneth**

**May** has introduced class after class of PFS students to the hand skills they will need as dental students, teaching them how to make mouth guards and drill plastic teeth, among other hands-on tasks. **Dinella Crosby**, Student Affairs Program Specialist in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, is program coordinator and handles the countless details necessary for the application process and bringing each class to campus for several weeks each summer.

Ester said it is gratifying to see how the program has grown over 25 years to have a national impact. "If we didn't have PFS, without question we wouldn't have as many young people in dentistry, which would have ripple effects in our society," he said.

"When I think about those who have gone through the program, I think about those

1. Xavier Bradford (right), a 2017 PFS class member and now a D2, observed dental student Nathaniel Hock (DDS 2018) in a dental school clinic in 2017.
2. Kloanna Fetolli, a member of the 2018 PFS class and now a D1, answers a question from faculty member Larry Salzman during a practice session in 2018 for the Multiple Mini-Interviews, or MMI, used during the dental school admissions process.
3. Dr. James Lee (center) talks with the 2016 PFS class at his Ann Arbor dental office. Lee (DDS 1990) and Dr. Samuel Malcheff (DDS 2003, MS 2007) of Canton, Mich., (far right) answered questions about all things dentistry, including the intricacies of running a practice.
4. Dr. Todd Ester makes a point during a counseling session as 2019 class member Nyle Wilson of Hampton University listens.
5. Faculty member Ken May helps Randon Campbell, a 2016 PFS class member and now a D3, finish a mouth guard.
6. Educational Consultant Geri Markel makes a presentation to the 2017 PFS class.

dentists who have worked or started clinics in underserved communities and donate some of their services. I think about those who have gone to work on Native American reservations, or those who have gone into urban and rural areas where they don't have enough dentists to serve those populations. I think about how many young people would not be inspired to the profession without our PFS alumni."

"So that's why, for me, I have a passion for recruiting students and keeping Profile For Success strong – because I know it makes a difference. Without this effort, we would not be 'leaders and best' in dental education," Ester said. "Indeed, diversity equals excellence."



# PFS Program Details

## Admission Criteria

Program applicants must self-select which one of the following four categories apply.

- **Economically disadvantaged:** From a low-income family as defined for health profession program by the Department of Health and Human Services.
- **Educationally disadvantaged:** Numerous criteria can apply, including attending schools with standardized test scores below national norms; attending high school in a low-income district; or parents/guardians who did not graduate from high school.
- **Socially disadvantaged:** Numerous criteria, including first-generation college students; those from areas or regions with less educational opportunities, such as rural, inner city or reservations; students with learning or physical disabilities; those from single-parent households.
- **Demonstrated commitment to improving the health of the underserved and**

**disadvantaged populations:** Local, national or international volunteer work, community service or personal life experiences that have inspired the applicant to focus on helping the underserved.

## Who is eligible?

- College juniors and seniors, recent graduates or individuals making a career transition to dentistry.
- Students must have completed prerequisite math and science courses and have a cumulative and science grade point average of at least 2.8.
- PFS participants come from colleges and universities throughout Michigan and the United States. A significant proportion have come from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Alcorn State and Jackson State in Mississippi; Morehouse, Savannah State and Spelman College in Georgia; Oakwood University in Alabama; Prairie View A&M

in Texas; Hampton University in Virginia; Florida A&M; and Howard University in Washington, D.C. Students have also come from all three campuses of the University of Michigan; Michigan State; Eastern and Western Michigan universities; Southern Illinois; Murray State in Kentucky; Clemson in South Carolina; Arkansas-Pine Bluff; and Fort Lewis College in Colorado, to name a few.

- Class sizes have fluctuated over the years, starting with a dozen students in 1994, then growing to as many as 30 for several years in the early 2000s. The last two classes have had 14 students.

## What is paid for?

- Travel to and from the PFS summer session.
- Dormitory and meal plan costs.
- A small stipend for other expenses.

# Alumni Discuss How PFS Got Their Dentistry Careers Off to a Good Start

## Drs. Michael and LaTisha (Williams) Glass

Battle Creek, Mich.

Michael: PFS 1998, U-M DDS 2003

LaTisha: PFS 1999, U-M DDS 2004

Growing up in Battle Creek, Michael always wanted to be a dentist, but the road to getting there was “a little ambiguous” because neither of his parents had gone to college, let alone a professional graduate school.

“You didn’t know exactly how to create that path to reach that goal, but you knew that’s where you wanted to go,” he said. “I think that’s why Profile For Success was so key for me, because it was like the first target you could reach. So you say: OK, I’m going to go to school, get some good grades and I’m going to try to get into this program. It seemed like it was a good stepping stone.”

LaTisha, a Detroit native and also a first-generation college student, was encouraged by her mother to be resourceful in looking for educational programs and scholarships. She first enrolled in the school’s Pipeline tutoring program for first- and second-year undergrad students, then was accepted into PFS, one year behind Michael. The tutoring and DAT prep helped, she says, but the greatest benefit was getting to know administrators including Dr. Todd Ester and Pattie Katcher and connecting with students already in dental school.

“The relationships that were formed were some of the best things that I could have gotten from the program,” she said. “The student facilitators were awesome because they were closer in age and going through dental school and they could share their experiences.”

Meeting minority role models was important to Michael. “Being a minority and coming from a community where you do not see a lot of professionals who are minorities, it’s almost one of those things where you think, ‘Oh, I can’t do that. That doesn’t include me,’” he said. “One of the things that helped me at Profile for Success was to see other minorities who were professionals already in the career and doing well and willing to help others.”



Today the married couple returns the favor by mentoring local high school and college students through their general dentistry practice, which they opened in Battle Creek in 2004. The couple points out that PFS not only helps the individuals who become dentists, but the profession of dentistry becomes a better reflection of the diversity of society. They said PFS and the dental school exposed them to cultures and ethnicities that they hadn’t experienced before. It was good preparation for the diversity of patients they have in their practice.

“It definitely prepared you for a career in a field where all that really matters is that we all have a mouth,” Michael said.



Fifteen of the 21 PFS alumni who are currently enrolled at the dental school: Front row, from left: Jade Gilbert, Alvaro Malaga, Kayla Tillman, Briana Lung, Chelese Moore, Torrey Talifer. Second row: Xavier Bradford, Sarah Radden, Natani Atsitty, Robert Harvey, Patrick Lucas-Perry. Third row: Raurie Petrich, Randon Campbell, Jaerae Dell, Jelani Holliday. Not pictured: Zahraa Ahmad, Kloanna Fetolli, Diego Garcia-Ortega, Brenden Walter, Amanda Krieger and Tiffany Valencia.



## Dr. Kristi (Sutton) Thomas

Lathrup Village, Mich.  
PFS 1994; U-M DDS 1999

The School of Dentistry doesn't have to go far to find a member of the very first PFS class from 1994. Kristi Thomas is director and lead dentist at the dental school's Community Dental Center in

downtown Ann Arbor. A member of the Michigan Board of Dentistry, she has practiced in private, corporate and community dentistry since earning her DDS from U-M. She is the dentist representative for the Clinical Services Committee for the Michigan Primary Care Association and was a National Oral Health Learning Institute Scholar in 2015-16.

The native Detroit remembers being impressed with PFS and the dental school from the first day, particularly the way so many departments and people worked together to treat patients, educate students and generously share their knowledge.

"It was amazing to be able to see how patient services, sterilization, faculty and staff – all of the areas in the school – came together to make this experience for me and my PFS classmates," she said. "We did the hard work of studying for the DAT, but we got to come here to the school and see how life as a dental student would be. And it made studying and taking the test, maybe not easier, but it made all the hard work feel worthwhile."

Bringing dental care to underserved populations in community health centers has been her focus in recent years. "What I love about community dentistry is that it brings people from all walks of life. It doesn't matter what your socio-economic status is, your history, your ethnicity. The main thrust is to provide good quality care to all people, regardless of their abilities or challenges."

That was a message that was inherent in PFS. "There were so many people from different backgrounds. We can appreciate our differences and what makes us alike. It made you realize it is important to do dentistry from all different aspects."

Today she tries to give back those lessons she has learned, particularly the importance of teamwork, when students from the dental school perform rotations at the CDC.

"I saw the team at the School of Dentistry prepare students to go out into the real world, and that just resonated with me so much that I wanted to give back. As students rotate through our clinic, I want to give them that same positive experience that I had. I want them to see how this teamwork is important to make you not only a great clinician, but just a great human being doing what you love to do."



## Dr. Carlos Smith

Richmond, Va.  
PFS 2001; U-M DDS 2007

As an assistant professor and director of the ethics curriculum at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, Carlos Smith has spent considerable time analyzing the all-important connection between dentist and patient. One of the key factors for providing excellent oral healthcare for everyone, he said, is making sure the pool of dentists is as diverse as the pool of patients.

"When it comes to dentistry and dental care and patient outcomes, as someone who is an ethicist and teaches professional and dental ethics, I think that you cannot separate out diversity from ethical practice," he said. "I don't think you are an ethical practitioner if you don't have a mindset that incorporates principles and benefits of diversity, equity, access and inclusion."

That's why the PFS program is as important today as it was when Smith came from his home in South Carolina that summer nearly two decades ago. Smith's parents were college-educated – his father holds a PhD – and several relatives attended graduate or law school, but dentistry was new territory.

While at PFS, Smith connected with several African-American faculty members and graduate students who served as dentistry role models and mentors. PFS was also important in convincing Smith that U-M and its dental school didn't just talk about diversity, but lived it. "There was this instant fabric of community that I knew I was going to have at Michigan versus other places, where I might have to initiate it or create it."

Smith was class president his first three years at the dental school, relinquishing the role his senior year when he was elected president of the Student National Dental Association. He went on to community dentistry, private practice, a master's degree in divinity and his current role as dental school faculty member at VCU.

"The PFS program has been around 25 years so not only has it elevated and changed the landscape of practitioners that Michigan produces, but I don't think it's a stretch to say that the program has had an effect on the national landscape of diversity by creating more providers who are going out into underserved communities and communities of color."

Despite the progress, much work remains, Smith said. For example, only about 3-5 percent of dentists and dental students are African-American in a country where African-Americans constitute 12-13 percent of the population. "I think Michigan has done a spectacular job of leading the charge in admissions and leading a clarion call nationally to talk about this issue," Smith said. "But there is so much work to do there and everywhere else. I think the diversity and inclusion piece of dental education touches every aspect of who we are as professionals and who we are as healthcare providers."



## Dr. Margaret Gingrich

Big Rapids, Mich.  
PFS 1999; U-M DDS 2004

Margaret Gingrich's father, grandfather and an uncle were dentists so it wasn't much of a surprise when she declared at age 7 that she wanted to be a dentist. A few years later, however, that future seemed in doubt when poor reading and spelling grades in elementary school led to tests that established she had severe dyslexia and a 50 percent hearing loss.

With the help of a hearing aid and tutoring for the dyslexia, Gingrich proceeded through the rest of her K-12 education with high marks. She enrolled at Ferris State University in her hometown of Big Rapids, Mich., determined to find any resources that could help her achieve her dream of being a dentist. She encountered plenty of people who doubted that a deaf person could become a dentist.

One day in 1998, Pattie Katcher, then a student affairs staffer at the dental school, was at Ferris State to recruit for Profile For Success at a meeting of the pre-dental club. As the daughter of a dentist, Gingrich didn't qualify for PFS in the traditional sense of "economically disadvantaged." After she explained the difficulties of her educational journey, Katcher encouraged her to apply for PFS and she was accepted.

Going to Ann Arbor by herself for the six-week summer program was an initial test for the college student who had rarely been away from her family support group. Would she be able to keep up with the difficult science and math tutoring? Were her interpersonal skills up to speed for the demands of dentistry? Could she communicate effectively during the practice admissions interviews? Yes, yes and yes.

Gingrich says her positive PFS experience provided an early confirmation that she could achieve her dream. "It helped me realize that the University of Michigan is very welcoming, even if you have a disability, in finding what you needed to be successful. They wanted to make sure you could learn in the best way possible for you, not conforming to everybody else." She completed PFS in the summer before her junior year at Ferris State, applied to the U-M dental school that fall and was accepted after only three years of undergraduate study.

In dental school Gingrich took advantage of various technologies for the deaf. Faculty members became accustomed to using the specialized microphone that helped her hear lectures more clearly. She used a computer transcription program to capture the lecture information. It was a case study in the value of diversity and inclusion: Other students and faculty gained a better understanding of the obstacles faced by people who are deaf. Gingrich finished her difficult four-year journey because of her own merits – intellect, determination, non-stop studying – but she remains grateful for the boost provided by the PFS program.



After graduation she returned to Big Rapids and joined the practice of her father, Arthur (DDS 1976). Gingrich says most people don't realize she is hearing-impaired because she lip-reads and can follow most conversations. If anyone asks, she is open about her impairment. In her practice, a dental assistant helps if she has trouble understanding a patient.

Gingrich has been active in local, state and national levels of organized dentistry. She has accompanied Ferris State students on eight trips to Guyana to provide free dental care. She volunteers with several charitable organizations, including Special Olympics, and has organized and provided dental care in numerous free clinics for underserved patients. She is a former president of the West Michigan District Dental Society and earlier this year began her term as president of the Michigan Dental Association.

It's a rewarding professional life, made more so when she remembers some of the comments earlier in her life from those who doubted that she could be a dentist. "Well, why *can't* I be a dentist?" she would reply.

## Dr. Evelyn Lucas-Perry

Grand Blanc, Mich.  
PFS 2005; U-M DDS 2011

Evelyn Lucas-Perry says the DAT test preparation, which takes up most of the PFS schedule each summer, was a big help. But of even greater value was the time spent observing the dental school routine and the typical day of a dental student.

PFS class members carved wax teeth models, shadowed patient treatment in the clinics, learned how to improve study habits and discussed the finer points of dentistry professionalism. That shared experience created a bond for the class.

"What mattered to me the most was becoming a part of a cohort driven to succeed and having a set of colleagues who became a part of my dental school and, ultimately, professional career," she said. "My PFS cohort was comprised of highly motivated and intelligent students driven to become a part of the profession at the highest level. We had a sense of community instead of a competitive atmosphere, which was extremely important." Lucas-Perry remains in contact with many of her PFS classmates who attended dental schools around the country.

"I cannot stress enough that mentorship was the most important piece of the program. Dr. Todd Ester, Dr. Marilyn Woolfolk, Dean Peter Polverini and other faculty members served as strong mentors and helped with things like interview preparation. We felt comfortable with the professors and that familiarity with administrators carried

*Continued*



into dental school. Also, after dental school, our mentors were still there for us, regardless of which dental school you went to,” she said.

Lucas-Perry added a Master’s of Public Health degree to her DDS in 2011 and initially ventured into policy, research and analysis of factors that affect oral health in the population. She completed a Dental Public Health Residency at the National Institutes of Health, then spent four years as Director of Public Policy Research at the American Dental Education Association. Among the longstanding and important issues in oral health and for dental schools is increasing diversity in the dental profession, a need that Lucas-Perry and other minority students in PFS were well aware of during their discussions. “We have a lot to offer and it is important for patients to see dentists of different backgrounds,” she said.

Lucas-Perry left the public policy track to practice with Aspen Dental in Taylor, Mich., over the last several years. This fall she was preparing to open her own Aspen Dental office in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. She credits PFS with getting her off to a great start. “PFS was the first step into dental school and into the profession,” she said. “I left feeling prepared and excited for dental school.”

## Dr. David White

Reno, Nev.  
PFS 1998; U-M DDS 2003

It would be difficult to find a bigger PFS advocate among program alumni than David White, a dentist in Reno, Nev., who describes his participation in the program as life-changing. “There is no question that one single program at a single institution forever changed the direction of my life,” he said.

In 1994, White left his home state of Nevada to start his undergraduate studies at a university in California, then transferred after a year to a university in Arizona. After only a semester there, he returned home to attend the University of Nevada, Reno. Three universities in three years was an uncertain start for a young man with Native American and Mexican heritage who was trying to find his path.

While doing career research online, he came across a description of PFS at U-M. Traveling out of state again, particularly to far away Michigan, would be a bit of a risk, but he applied and was accepted. He now calls the PFS program and attending the U-M dental school the best decisions he ever made.

“There were certain people – Marilyn Woolfolk, Pattie Katcher, Todd Ester – these are instrumental people who were put into my life at a pivotal time to complete my growth, my exposure, almost to complete the purpose of my life,” he says. “It was training to be a dentist, but it was more about what we gained at the University of Michigan. For me, it was really thorough leadership development, really thorough appreciation for culture and cultural differences, and the need to go ahead and mentor throughout our lifetime.”



Those are principles White lives out today, in many ways. His general dentistry practice serves patients in Reno and Elko, four hours away, as well as inmates at the local jail. He is an adjunct faculty member at both the University of Nevada, Reno, and at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, School of Dental Medicine. For the last 15 years at UNR, he has been director of the Pre-Dental Society, teaching and advising prospective dental students, including some who have attended PFS and the U-M dental school. A former president of the Nevada Dental Association, his service to local, state and national dentistry organizations includes leadership positions and numerous awards. After more than a decade of engaging in governmental affairs issues for his state association, in 2017 he joined the American Dental Association’s Council on Government Affairs and will be its chair in 2020.

In that national position, where he lobbies to improve dentistry for all dentists and ultimately all patients, White often thinks back to the diversity and inclusion lessons he learned in PFS from Todd Ester, what White calls “higher-level thinking.” “I feel like it is my job to go learn something and share it,” he says. “A lot of people gave me an opportunity and I ran with it. So I try to teach that to all my pre-dental and dental students and new dentists: What can I do to provide you with resources to make you incredibly successful so you can help us as a dentist?”

“How do I help my really diverse group of students get into school so that we can all be better for it in the long run? These things take time to create the revolutionary change, but it is based on getting people into school and slowly but surely exposing people to different experiences that change people’s minds.”

## Dr. Eboné Jordan

Southfield, Mich.  
PFS 2005; U-M DDS 2010,  
MS perio 2014

When Eboné Jordan thinks back on PFS, her description would be apt for any young person considering any profession: It’s about the people you meet, how they inspire you, how they help you, how you learn from them and how you then make your own way.

With a love of science and art, along with some skills in manual dexterity, Jordan was exploring health careers as an undergrad at U-M when she took the course, “Introduction to Health Professions.” Dr. Todd Ester and other dental faculty were among those making presentations. “Dr. Ester was very informative, very enthusiastic and inspiring about his journey through dentistry, and that initially piqued my interest in dentistry,” she recalls. She learned about PFS from friends and it confirmed her decision to pursue dentistry.

“In starting the program, I got to meet the faculty – Dr. Ester, Dr. Woolfolk, Dr. May – they were very instrumental and encouraging figures, especially the fact that they are African American. That was



such a reaffirming thing to witness, especially seeing them in prominent roles in the dental school. It was the same with some of the other dental specialists that they would invite to talk to us. It made it seem like a very attainable goal, seeing others who looked like me in the profession, then also just understanding what strengths you need to excel in dentistry.”

Being around other students with the same goals and interests was invigorating. “That was really a synergistic environment for us, to brainstorm, to encourage each other. It’s really just magical what happens during that six-week process. It seems much longer because we go through so much, we form so many bonds. It really is transformative. I had an amazing experience. I can’t say enough great things about PFS.”

Jordan’s career path started in Milwaukee, Wisc., at a multi-specialty group practice for three years. Then she returned to Michigan and practices at Great Expressions Dental Centers in Bloomfield Hills and Sterling Heights, while teaching at the dental school as an adjunct in perio a half-day each week.

She’s come full circle and now is a role model like the ones who influenced her.

“I hear it on a daily basis from my patients, especially my older patients, who say, ‘I am so happy to see you.’ And that statement carries so much weight. First of all, they are happy to see me because they like me, but then also they are happy to see a black woman who is a professional, not only a dentist but a specialist. Experiencing that is a reinforcement of the notion that we need to have a diverse number of practitioners in the workforce. There is a certain comfort level that some populations have when they are seeing someone who is similar to them, or looks like them. That may encourage them to continue on with treatment. They feel like they have someone who can advocate for them and understands where they come from. That’s extremely important.”

“I think it’s important for everyone to see that anyone is able to achieve these types of roles or to become whatever you dream. Little girls and little boys need to see that they can do it and their friends can do it.”

## Dr. Bryan Williams

Fairfield, Calif.  
PFS 1996; U-M DDS 2001,  
MS pros 2009

Bryan Williams was a football player at U-M for four years, from 1993-96, so his undergrad years were a busy time. He had never thought about being a dentist until he took a class about health careers. He decided to learn more by going through PFS, which was then in its third year, and it opened his eyes to not only being a dentist but also how he could go even further and shape a career as a dental educator.



“I would have to say that PFS had a huge impact on me. I don’t know how I would have passed the DAT without it,” he says of the test prep part of the program. But PFS gave him more than just academic tutoring. The people he met inspired him to excel at dentistry, specialize in prosthodontics, enter teaching, do research and keep striving upwards.

Today he is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, stationed at Travis Air Force Base in the San Francisco Bay area of California. He is Base Dental Laboratory Flight Commander for one of the largest dental labs in the Air Force. He is also Chief of Prosthodontics and Director of Residency Education in Prosthodontics, leading the education for Air Force dentists who take their Advanced Education in General Dentistry training at Travis. His earlier Air Force assignments were in San Antonio, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio.

He says he advanced through dentistry one step at a time as each new door opened. PFS gave him connections with faculty members and admission office staffers who knew his name “and what you are about” when it came time to apply for dental school admission and, later, a graduate specialty. He said there are too many people to thank, but mentions admissions director Jed Jacobson and admissions staffer Pattie Katcher, administrator Marilyn Woolfolk, and faculty members Todd Ester, Ken May and Lee Jones.

Williams took advantage of the Gateway Future Faculty program that steered promising students into academia. He did a one-year fellowship in maxillofacial prosthetics at the prestigious MD Anderson Cancer Center in Texas, then returned to the dental school to teach from 2005-2011. He also practiced part-time with Dr. Darnell Kaigler, Sr. in Detroit. He finished his thesis in 2009 to obtain his master’s degree in prosthodontics, then joined the Air Force in 2011.

As he works with young Air Force dentists from all around the country on a daily basis, it reinforces the importance of diversity programs like PFS and the dental school’s commitment to inclusion. “Most students have at least some desire to go back to their communities and set up practice. So if those students who come from more urban or minority backgrounds go back to those communities, then that helps to serve those populations that might not otherwise have access to dental care. In the grand scheme of things, diversity in dental school classes significantly affects access to dental care in the larger community.”

## Alvaro Malaga

Ironwood, Mich.  
PFS 2015; U-M DDS 2020

Alvaro Malaga was 12 years old when he moved with his mother from Peru to Ironwood, a small town on the west side of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. He didn’t speak English and there were no Spanish-speaking tutors for Alvaro in the local school, so he learned



*Continued*



English by watching movies with subtitles in both languages.

It wasn't until his senior year of high school that he felt comfortable with his English, which corresponded with a significant improvement in his grades. He started his higher education with two years at a local community college before finishing his undergrad degree at U-M.

Along the way, he thought about a dentistry career because as a child in Peru he had cavities and other problems with his teeth. He remembered getting in line at a clinic at 6 in the morning and waiting hours to have his pain or problem dealt with. When he moved to this country, access to dentists was much easier and he saw how happy his mother was with her dental care. With that experience as background, and the encouragement of a dentist in Ironwood, dentistry seemed like a good career.

"Before I even heard about PFS, my biggest worry was the DAT exam. So, for me, one of the biggest resources was the DAT preparation that PFS offered," Malaga said. "I ended up doing really well on the DAT, and I know if I didn't take the class I wouldn't have done as well."

Another pragmatic benefit was going through PFS's multiple mini-interviews, or MMI, which differ from traditional one-on-one dental school admission interviews. "During my actual interview I

felt prepared and confident since I already had an idea of what type of questions to expect," he said. PFS also allowed him to learn the culture and values of the dental school by observing and interacting with faculty and students in person, which confirmed it was a supportive and inclusive atmosphere. When he finished PFS, he was one of three students in his class who were accepted to the U-M dental school and they remain close friends after going through the rigorous academic tutoring together.

As president of the dental school's Hispanic Dental Association for the last three years, Malaga has gone each summer with several students to 10 Michigan communities where migrant farm workers and their families are counseled about good oral healthcare. His fluency in Spanish helped as he and the other students explained good brushing and flossing techniques, provided toothpaste and floss samples, and assessed which patients needed specialized care, which was then coordinated with local providers.

Malaga is in the process of applying to graduate programs in orthodontics. Although he's not yet sure where that training will take place, he has a confidence that was strengthened by going through PFS and the dental school. His plan is to practice orthodontics where he first landed in this country – in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

## Looking Ahead: Building the PFS Endowment

Two generous gifts, one from an alumnus and the other from a retired professor and administrator, have jump-started a new push to endow the Profile For Success program on a permanent basis.

**Dr. Darnell Kaigler, Sr.**, a Detroit prosthodontist who earned his master's degree at the dental school, and **Dr. Dennis Lopatin**, who retired as professor and Senior Associate Dean in 2014, have each contributed \$150,000 to a fund that supports diversity initiatives, including PFS.

The gifts to the **Dr. Lee Jones Endowment for Diverse Dentistry Summer Programs** will provide the foundation for an upcoming \$1 million fundraising campaign coordinated by the school's Office of Alumni Relations and Development and by Dr. Todd Ester, Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and director of PFS.

The Lee Jones summer programs fund was established to honor Jones' service as the school's director of minority affairs for more than 25 years. The fund's first major boost came in 2014 after federal funding for PFS ended in 2013. PFS was discontinued for a year in 2014, prompting concern from PFS alumni about the program's future.

**Dr. Norman Clement** (DDS 1981) answered the call with a \$75,000 gift to the fund that allowed PFS to re-start with additional support from dental school resources and university funding. Ester said the two new major gifts, from Drs. Kaigler and Lopatin, have similarly



Darnell Kaigler, Sr.



Dennis Lopatin

answered a need, to jump-start an endowment campaign to ensure that PFS continues its mission for future generations.

Kaigler has practiced in Detroit for many years and can be described as a master clinician-scientist who conducts research on developing technologies and discovering new ways to provide care and cures in dentistry. He said his gift to the dental school is both looking forward to helping future dental students and looking back to thank those who helped him in dental school and during his dentistry career. He earned his DDS from Detroit Mercy in 1976 and his masters in prosthodontics from U-M in 1986.

"It's really simple. I'm committed. As well as being grateful," he said. "I'm committed to making a difference in the lives of others, particularly those who have chosen the profession that has been so good to me. I'm committed to making a difference in the way we have gone about treating patients through my career as a dentist by looking at it through the lens of 'there has got to be a better way.'"

That process of thinking through problems and finding solutions, taking an idea from concept to reality, needs to be shared with the next generation of dentists, he said. He credits his success to those who went before him and who generously shared their knowledge with him. He wants to return the favor for today's young dentists.

"I just feel like it is my responsibility to make people aware of the importance of giving and what could happen if the giving was actualized. If everybody would do a little something, no one person would have to do a whole lot," he said. "To have a vision is one thing, to act upon that vision is another. I have a responsibility to those kids, to make sure they have access to not only Profile For Success, but I have responsibility to assist them in achieving their success. That's my vision, that's my purpose, that's my commitment and that's my responsibility."

Lopatin came to U-M in 1976 as an immunologist in the Dental Research Institute, moving to assistant professor in what became the Department of Biologic and Materials Sciences & Prosthodontics. His role changed over time from researcher to teacher to administrator, and throughout his career his immunology research was continuously funded. His last 10 years at the dental school as Senior Associate Dean involved oversight of faculty affairs, human resources, budget and finance, information technology, emergency preparedness and facilities.

"I want to leave something meaningful to the school and I believe that PFS is critical to the future success of the school and the profession," Lopatin said. "Over the years, I've had many students in my lab with varied backgrounds. My lab had always been incredibly diverse. I mentored numerous pre-doctoral students who sometimes came from very challenging backgrounds. If someone hadn't recognized their promise, they never would have ended up at our school. I believed that it was our responsibility to continue to foster that promise so that

it would come to fruition. Failure would have been a loss, not only for the student, but for the profession. I hope that by supporting PFS, dreams can be realized and the profession will be enriched with the diversity of those dreamers."

Lopatin said he prefers to invest in people rather than bricks and mortar. "I tend to support initiatives that help people today, folks who have immediate needs," he said. "I want to help these students who are thinking about careers in dentistry and medicine and help them get into the pipeline."

Ester is optimistic that alumni and friends of the dental school will support the endowment fund that has been seeded with the major donations of Clement, Kaigler and Lopatin. "Our alumni of PFS and the dental school have stepped up in profound ways in terms of their time, their talent and their treasure. And we're thankful for that," Ester said. "They have said Profile For Success should never go away, that we need to continue to demonstrate that inclusion in our profession is important. There needs to be a strategic goal, a focused effort, to ensure that it happens. Let's keep it going. It makes sense that Michigan will lead in this space."

## How to Help: Your Gift Can Make the PFS Endowment Grow

For more information about making a financial gift to the endowment fund for the Profile For Success program, contact the Alumni Relations and Development Office at 540 E. Liberty, Suite 204, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210. The phone number is (734) 763-3315.

Gifts may also be submitted online by going to the university's "Leaders and Best Online Giving" website. Donors can directly access the page for contributing to the Lee Jones Endowment for Dentistry Diversity Programs by typing the following into their web browser:

[bit.ly/JonesDiversityProgram](http://bit.ly/JonesDiversityProgram)

## Upcoming 2020 Alumni Events

School of Dentistry Alumni,

Make plans now for two of the signature events held each year as an opportunity for alumni to join together for fun and camaraderie based on your mutual ties to the School of Dentistry. Save the following dates:

**June 19, 2020 – The Annual Alumni Golf Classic** is held in Ann Arbor. Join your fellow alumni and golf aficionados for a day of good golf, good food and good fun. You can also start the day with the event's optional Continuing Education course.

**November 5-7, 2020 – Reunion Weekend** brings alumni from not only around Michigan but around the country to celebrate their dentistry alma

mater. This year, Reunion Weekend is designated for classes that graduated in years ending in 5 and 0. Members of the Class of 1970 will receive special honors as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of their graduation and join the ranks of Emeritus Alumni. Every year, alumni, friends, and family return to campus to reconnect, share memories, and enjoy one of Ann Arbor's greatest annual events – a University of Michigan football game at the Big House. Please consider joining the Reunion Weekend fun this year!

More information on these and other alumni, development and continuing education events can be found on the School of Dentistry website at [dent.umich.edu](http://dent.umich.edu).