

23 August 2024

Dear WSDA Leadership and House of Delegates Members:

I bring you greetings from the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences—School of Dental Medicine (SDM) in Yakima. I am happy to report exceptional progress on multiple fronts as we establish our dental school. Below are highlights of some of our significant accomplishments to date and our plans through August 2025, when our first class of DMD students will be on campus.

Accreditation:

I am excited to share that the SDM received Initial Accreditation from the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) on August 8th, 2024. It was a team effort involving the SDM faculty and staff, the PNWU administration, and our FQHC partners. Receipt of our Initial Accreditation will permit us to begin recruiting our inaugural class (which is currently underway). We will receive the second of three site visits from CODA in Spring 2027.

Fundraising:

The SDM was founded on the commitment of many partners who share the mission of recruiting from, training in, and returning to dentists to provide care in rural and underserved areas of our state. The university and its partners' financial commitment is critical when starting a new dental school. Delta Dental of Washington made an initial commitment of \$2 million to support the initial start-up of the school and added \$10 million through 2025 to support the construction of facilities and operations. We are deeply grateful for this leadership-level commitment on the part of Delta Dental in supporting our program.

Thanks to the efforts of Senator Curtis King, with support from many other legislators, in 2023, the SDM received \$5 million in state funding to support the construction of our Dental Education Center on the Yakima campus. In addition, the legislature approved \$7.4 million in construction funding to support our Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) partners in Kennewick and Tacoma. This past budget cycle saw an appropriation for construction funding for our Yakima Neighborhood Health clinic, bringing the total funding from the state in support of our program to \$18.4 million. Delta Dental added \$1.5 million to support the Yakima clinic, continuing the public-private partnership model the State Legislature prefers for these projects. The table below summarizes the funding received and in-progress funding opportunities. The school thanks the WSDA for supporting our funding from the state, Sen. King, and the entire state legislature for

providing this funding and demonstrating their support in addressing Washington's dental workforce challenges.

The SDM has established a development workgroup, made up of local business members, practitioners, and WSDA representation, to support our continuing efforts to raise scholarship funds. I look forward to sharing our progress in the future.

Partner	Financial Contribution
WA Legislature	\$18.4 Million
WSDA	\$1.0 Million
Delta Dental of WA	\$13.5 Million
Sea Mar	\$7.0 Million
YVFWC	\$1.5 Million
YNHS	\$2.9 Million
PNWU	\$5.0 Million
Total	\$49.3 Million

Active Fundraising: \$1.0 Million – Murdock Trust
\$2.8 Million – Federal Appropriations
\$1.0 Million – Scholarship Fund

Construction:

The Multicare Learning Center (MLC) building, Phase 1, opened in August 2023. It provides collaborative and simulation teaching space for all campus programs. In September 2023, the construction team began the second phase of construction (Delta Dental Equity Hall), which includes the SDM's WSDA Dental Education Center – a 48-station simulation lab, a virtual reality lab, and support areas. I am pleased to report that the construction is complete, and we will be hosting a ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 28th.

In July, the construction team began developing the final building in PNWU's expansion plan, the Dental and Occupational Therapy building (DOT). This building will provide space for the dental school's administration, faculty offices, and teaching space. It is expected to be completed in June/July 2025. We will post updates to our website at www.pnwu.edu/school-of-dental-medicine.

Our FQHC partners (Sea Mar Community Health Centers, Yakima Neighborhood Health Services, and Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic) will begin construction of their respective student clinics in October 2024, with completion in early 2026. Students report to the community clinics in August 2026.

Faculty Recruitment:

Faculty recruitment has been highly successful. I am happy to report that we have secured commitments to fill all our full-time academic positions and have approximately 80% of our part-time positions filled through 2026. The faculty represents a diverse group of educators regarding experience and background. We will continue recruitment efforts to fill the remaining positions and begin recruiting for faculty who will start in 2027 sometime in mid-2025. If you or you know someone interested in teaching, please have them contact me.

This past May, we hosted our second annual booth at the Pacific Northwest Dental Conference (PNDC) meeting. I hope you had time to stop by and visit us! We were busy the entire meeting. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet practitioners, staff, and potential students. We look forward to continuing our participation in 2025.

Admissions:

As I reported last year, potential applicants have responded strongly since the school was announced. We have been holding well-attended monthly information sessions for interested students and one-on-one sessions with students with additional questions about our program, prerequisites, etc.

The SDM Admissions Committee has been hard at work the past few months finalizing our applicant review and interview process. With accreditation approval, we officially launched our admissions cycle for the inaugural Class of 2029 in August. We will begin in-person interviews in September and will send out our first acceptance in December.

In closing, I want to thank the WSDA leadership, the HOD, and its members for supporting our new program. I am excited about our progress and look forward to reporting on our official opening next summer at the 2025 HOD meeting.

With Gratitude,

Fotinos S. Panagakos
Dean