

1a Dental Branch

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Administrative and departmental offices are located at:
Dental Branch Building
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Source

John Valenza
Dental Branch

Mission, Vision and History

Since its inception The University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston has set the standard for oral health excellence through its focus on education - training the best dentists, research - discovering new oral health advancements, and service - caring for the citizens of Southeast Texas.

In 2006 the Dental Branch began an effort to raise funds for a state-of-the-art dental school in the Texas Medical Center that could support the expanded needs of oral health and the growing vision of the administration. This vision takes oral health out of the mouth and into every facet of the health sciences including information technology, diagnostics, stem cell research, and public health. The Dental Branch has evolved exponentially from the small pioneering institution that was founded in 1905. As the first professional school in Houston and the first dental school in Texas, the Dental Branch has always occupied a unique place in history. It has remained Houston's only dental school, even as the city has grown to become the fourth largest in the country. From 1905 through 1943 the school reopened its doors as The University of Texas School of Dentistry - later renamed The University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston. In 1945, the UT System Board of Regents authorized the creation of the School of Dental Hygiene as part of the Dental Branch and the first hygiene class was admitted in 1955, the same year the current building was completed.

Fulfilling the mission - Education

The Dental Branch offers ten accredited programs in primary care and dental specialties using a broad-based competency driven curricula and extensive outcomes assessment evaluation. Ongoing curricula development emphasizes evidence-based dentistry and building skills for life-long learning.

In response to the state's need for oral healthcare providers and an increase in the number of highly-qualified applicants, the Dental Branch increased its class size during the 2005 and 2006 academic years. Annual admissions rose from 64 to 84, a 31.25% increase. With the new Dental Branch building, the continuation of a robust applicant pool, and the recruitment of additional outstanding faculty; further growth in class size is anticipated to meet the oral health needs of Texans.

Because community service is an important part of the school's mission, administrators believe that the student body should be as diverse as the community it serves. The Dental Branch has integrated a focus on cultural competency, diversity and inclusion built on the foundation of the American Medical Student Association's Achieving Diversity in Dentistry and Medicine guidelines into all four years of the undergraduate dental curriculum. This focus is supported by two recently established programs. The first, the Dental Branch Hispanic Center of Excellence (HCOE) will enhance and expand faculty and dental student research expertise on Hispanic and other under-represented minority health issues through resources to educate and promote such research. Second, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Summer Medical and Dental Education Program provides intensive and personalized training opportunities for pre-dental and medical students as a preparatory program to ultimately increase the number of under-represented and minority health care practitioners in Texas. As the only dental school in southeast Texas, a top priority of the Dental Branch is to retain its pivotal role as a primary source of quality oral health care to low income families and the traditionally underserved.

Fulfilling the mission - Research

Research brings about progress and advancement that changes and saves lives. Dental Branch faculty members are investigating:

- saliva as a diagnostic tool using proteomic analysis
- mechanisms of autoimmune disease
- mechanisms of mucosal immunity
- advanced imaging for craniofacial anomalies
- molecular imaging of oral cavity and other cancers
- oral manifestations of HIV infection

The Dental Branch has a strong commitment to building the workforce of oral health scientists for the 21st century. Funded by a National Institutes of Health comprehensive research training grant, UT-TORCH, has five tracks for specialized research training in oral health research including opportunities for current faculty to pursue advanced research degrees and short-term training, support for DDS/PhD students as well as pre-and post-doctoral fellows.

Fulfilling the mission - Community Service/Patient Care

Providing people with better health is the reason for the school's existence. Please see page 121 for additional information on Dental Branch community service activities.

Facilities

The Dental Branch is housed in a six-floor building located within the Texas Medical Center. The building consists of 325,483 gross square feet and includes basic science laboratories, lecture rooms, an auditorium, a library and learning resources center, a clinical simulation and learning center, a surgical oral pathology laboratory, a faculty practice clinic, faculty offices, clinics, administrative offices, and service and mechanical areas. There is also space for clinical research and continuing education.