



UBC Faculty of Dentistry

IMPRESSIONS

60th Anniversary Special Edition



Celebrating 60 Years of UBC Dentistry!

Sixty years ago, eight students arrived on campus to attend the first UBC Faculty of Dentistry class. Fast forward to today, UBC Dentistry is one of the top dental schools in the country, offering an outstanding education curriculum, renowned research and a commitment to community engagement.

Since 1964, we have graduated over 3,500 dental professionals—from the Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry (DMD) program, Dental Hygiene Degree Program (DHDP), several graduate programs and former Dental Hygiene Diploma Program—who have gone on to practice, educate and do innovative research across the globe, all while making a difference in their communities.

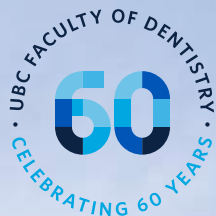
In this special 60th anniversary edition of *Impressions Magazine*, we connect with graduates from each of the last six decades to learn more about their time at UBC Dentistry and how it shaped where they are today. With so many amazing alumni, this edition offers just a small snapshot of the many talented dentists, hygienists, researchers, educators and specialists who are proud to call themselves UBC Dentistry alumni.

Over the course of 2024, UBC Dentistry has planned several signature events, networking opportunities and activities to celebrate you, our dental community, who have been part of our important story. Make sure to keep an eye out for invites!

To kick off our year-long festivities, join us in February for UBC Dentistry Continuing Dental Education “Adventure & Learn” in Maui, which will include some special 60th anniversary alumni events.



The first Faculty of Dentistry graduating class at the UBC Rose Garden in 1973.



We acknowledge that UBC's Vancouver campus is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the x̱m̱əθḵ'əy̱əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwəta (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

A Message from the Dean *pro tem*

It is an immense honour to serve as Dean *pro tem* as the Faculty of Dentistry searches for a new leader. As a proud UBC Dentistry alum, community dentist and serving faculty member for nearly 28 years, I am grateful to our students, faculty and staff for their support.

As UBC Dentistry celebrates its 60th anniversary, it is a time to reflect on the enormous advances achieved over the past six decades. Together, we have created dental education programs that provide opportunities for our students to learn in an innovative and collegiate environment focused on patient-centred care.

We are fortunate to have talented faculty who do significant research and provide our students with the opportunity to explore and be part of inspiring discoveries. UBC Dentistry also has a strong reputation for community engagement. We provide essential dental care to people in need and help students enhance their clinical skills and further shape their sense of social responsibility as future oral health care professionals.

This is an exciting time for UBC Dentistry! We look forward to welcoming our next Dean and seeing the Faculty continue to evolve to advance knowledge and practice in oral and general health through education, innovative research and service-oriented community engagement.

As Dean *pro tem*, I am committed to advocating on behalf of our UBC Dentistry community as it is, first and foremost, the people who provide our framework. We are grateful for the incredible support and investment from our alumni, corporate partners and friends whose generosity has provided essential funding to support our Faculty.

In this special edition of *Impressions Magazine*, we kick off our 60th anniversary by connecting with a few of our distinguished alumni who have helped shape the past 60 years, capturing their stories and time from UBC Dentistry and beyond—we hope you enjoy it!

Please continue to visit our website for news and updates as we embark on a new and exciting time for UBC Dentistry.

DR. ANDREA ESTEVES

Dean *pro tem* and Clinical Professor



1960 - 1970

Don Lewis

DMD 1968

What was being part of the first UBC Faculty of Dentistry class like?

There were eight of us in the class to start with, and only six ended up graduating. We were tight-knit, and I've kept in touch with one of my classmates, Imre Rokus.

I did three years of mechanical engineering before I became interested in dentistry—I always liked to do things with my hands. When UBC introduced the DMD program, I decided to apply but didn't think I'd get in. I still remember getting that phone call inviting me to be part of the first DMD class!

I was married and had two kids when I started the program in 1964, so I still worked odd jobs while being in school full-time.

Can you walk us through your dentistry career?

After graduating, I worked in Parksville for a few years. Then one of my UBC professors, Dr. Lorin Lind, died in a tragic plane accident and I was asked to take over his practice in West Vancouver.

I did and worked there for 20 years before selling the practice and spending 15 years doing locums—temporary work contracts—across British Columbia.

What changes did you see in the dental profession throughout your career?

When I first started practicing, dental caries were rampant, and many people had rotten teeth, so I spent a lot of time treating pain and doing restorative work. That still exists today, but there's been a lot of good oral health education and prevention work since I started, so now dentists are also focused on aesthetics.

What have you enjoyed about retirement?

I retired 20 years ago, and one of my favourite things is not having to wake up early! Unfortunately, my wife of 40 years died two years ago, but before that, she and I went on many trips across North America together in our van and took several bus tours through Europe. I have many great memories from our trips.



Drs. Don Lewis (left) and Imre Rokus (right) at the 2023 Pacific Dental Conference.

1970 - 1980

Mary Findlay

DIPLOMA IN DENTAL HYGIENE 1971; BDSC 1998

What has your career as a dental hygienist looked like?

After graduation, I worked as a clinical hygienist and for public health. In 1993, I went back to UBC—commuting multiple times a week from the Sunshine Coast—to do my Bachelor of Dental Science, which I completed in 1998. I love learning and being in a university environment, so it was a good fit.

I'm a juggler and still work many jobs to this day! My husband, Don Bland (DMD 1971), and I owned a practice together, which we recently sold to our son Emery, who graduated from UBC Dentistry in 2010.

I continue to practice dental hygiene at my son's clinic while working two days a week as a community dental hygienist in schools and daycares with a focus on education and prevention. Every few weeks, I volunteer as a hygienist at the Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society dental clinic in the Downtown Eastside.

What is one of your fondest UBC memories?

The physical location of the campus is just so special. I lived in residence and vividly remember the leaves in the fall and going for walks along Wreck Beach.

How has UBC Faculty of Dentistry shaped where you are today?

I feel so engaged with the Faculty and valued as an alum even after all these years. A pivotal moment was when my classmate and I approached the Faculty to create an award in memory of our classmate Marilyn, who died shortly after graduation. They were so helpful in setting up the Marilyn Dionne Teed Memorial Award for dental hygiene students, and I was even invited to present the award.

What do you love most about what you do?

The people. At the grocery store the other day, two little girls from a class I support with oral health education ran up to me and said, "Tooth Mary look, we have loose teeth!" They even remembered what I taught them about how important healthy eating is for oral health. It's always rewarding to know you've made a difference.





1980 - 1990

Angelique Leung and Ray Fong

DMD 1988 AND DMD 1989

Tell us a bit about your journey together as dentists.

AL: Ray and I met at UBC during our microbiology undergraduate degree. My mom, Betty, managed the Oral Surgery clinic, and her desire to help patients and students alike was something I admired, so I decided to pursue dentistry. Ray was a year behind me—I might have influenced his decision to apply to dental school!

RF: The big thing in the 80s was finding a cure for HIV/AIDS, so I thought I would do graduate work. But after working a couple of summers in the laboratory, I realized that the environment wasn't for me and I applied to dental school. Ange and I set up a practice in 1989, which we still work at today. In November 2021 we sold the practice to Dylan Olver, DMD 2017, who has been my patient since he was five. And now, he's our boss!

What is it like being part of the Vancouver dental community for over 30 years?

RF: We're very close to our patients, it's not just about taking care of their teeth. We know about their lives, trials and tribulations—they share so much and it's special.

AL: One of my first patients is still a patient of mine, and I also see four generations in one family. It's truly an honour and privilege to look after people all these years.

Angelique, tell us about the British Columbia Dental Association (BCDA) Save a Smile Program.

I've been Chair of the Save a Smile Program for 30 years—some call me the Save a Smile lady. The program provides financial assistance to help children from low-income families across BC get access to dental care. BCDA partnered with UBC in 2009, and we host a Tooth Fairy Gala every other year to raise funds for the program.

Sometimes families have to choose between paying rent or getting dental treatment for their kids. Save a Smile helps these families get back on their feet, and it's so rewarding to see the impact this program continues to have on so many children. Since it's inception, Save a Smile has funded treatment for over 2,600 kids in BC.

What is one of your fondest memories of your time spent at UBC?

RF: For me, it was the patients I met. I'll never forget one man. I must have taken 20 impressions to get the perfect bridge. He bought me a mug after engraved with "master bridge maker."

AL: The friendships I made. We had a tight-knit class, and I met one of my best friends in the program.

1990 - 2000

Colin Wiebe

MSC DIP PERIODONTICS 1997

What got you interested in periodontics?

In my third year of dental school, I went to Ecuador for a few weeks to practice as a student. My mentoring dentist suggested I do a general practice residency (GPR) because he said I would see more complex cases in one year at the hospital than 100 years in private practice.

I took his advice and applied for a GPR at the University of Saskatchewan. Almost everyone in the hospital was either a specialist or training to be one and I was very interested in implants, so specializing in periodontics felt like a natural fit.

I'll never forget my first day of class. After my GPR I spent six months in Nepal working as a volunteer dentist at a mission hospital. I flew back to Vancouver the day before our clinic initiations, so I was exhausted—I didn't make the best first impression!

How has UBC shaped where you are today?

During graduate school I became close to Dr. Hannu Larjava, who is my mentor to this day. He sparked my interest in the research side of dentistry, and I went on to publish many papers over my career. He also brought me on as a clinical instructor with UBC Dentistry and I had the pleasure of teaching for over 20 years.

In 2017, I brought the periodontics community together to raise over \$100,000 to establish the Dr. Hannu Larjava Research Fund to honour him.

How has travel played a part in your dentistry career?

Dentistry has given me the opportunity to travel to 35 countries, not just as a tourist but as someone who gets to meet locals, build relationships and provide dental care.

For example, I work with HOPEthiopia as a volunteer dentist, and students applying to dental school join us to learn and observe. They soak it all in and leave knowing things like the tooth numbering system and root anatomy.

What advice would you give to current students?

I spent so much time counting credits and ensuring I did everything right to pass. While that's important, being present and absorbing knowledge from the people around you is just as important. I'm also an advocate for work-life balance. Dentistry can be a demanding career—make time for friends and family and prioritize a healthy lifestyle.



2000 - 2010

Ajay Potluri

DMD 2000

What brought you to Canada?

My love for Canada began during my childhood. One summer, several students from Saskatchewan visited India as part of an exchange program and stayed in my grandfather's village. Hearing their stories fascinated me, and I've since nurtured a deep interest in Canada.

After completing dental school in India and practicing there for many years, I eventually moved to Canada. I started at University of Pennsylvania Dental School and later joined the UBC Dentistry program as a third-year student. I then earned a Master's in Implant Dentistry from the University of Frankfurt and pursued an MBA.

What did you enjoy most about your time at UBC Dentistry?

I vividly recall a Friday evening early in the year when I was still new to Canada. Our class gathered with several faculty members, enjoying beer and sharing jokes. This experience was markedly different from my time in India, where interactions with faculty were more formal.

I cherished the connections I established with faculty members, who showed immense respect for the skills I had acquired through years of practicing dentistry.

Tell us a bit about the work you do outside of dentistry.

I've always been drawn to the intersection of healthcare and technology. I serve as the CEO of Vaccigen, a biotech company at the forefront of cutting-edge gene and cell therapies, as well as COVID vaccines. I also own multiple healthcare software companies and I am involved in various ventures.

I co-founded a newly established Centre of Excellence for Veterans and First Responders, offering diverse services encompassing dental care, primary and mental health care, physio-rehab, post-traumatic stress disorder, and chronic pain management, all under one roof.

What do you love most about what you do?

The people I encounter. I have a particularly touching memory from my dental practice. A couple who faced challenges with conceiving succeeded. After the birth of their baby, they visited the clinic on their way home from the hospital to make sure our team, who had been part of their pregnancy journey, met the newborn. Building these patient relationships is something I genuinely cherish.





2010 - 2020

Abbas Jessani

PHD CRANIOFACIAL SCIENCE 2019

Tell us a bit about your background and why you decided to come to UBC.

I grew up in Pakistan and completed dental school there. The curriculum included an outreach program where we went into rural communities to provide dental care and I realized the huge disparity in accessing oral healthcare in my home country.

The experience piqued my interest in public health, and I decided to apply to UBC to pursue graduate work because it had a strong public health dentistry program.

What was the focus of your PhD research?

I looked at oral health care access and treatment needs for people living with HIV in BC. This population has high unmet oral health needs, which is related to stigma and discrimination—people living with HIV often fear being mistreated or judged by their dentist.

How did UBC Dentistry influence where you are today?

The UBC Faculty of Dentistry has shaped me on many different levels. From an academic perspective, I had amazing mentors who influenced how I teach and interact with my students and patients.

My time at UBC also shaped who I am as a gay man of colour. I came out while I was a graduate student because the environment was so open and welcoming. Being at UBC was the first time I felt I could be truthful to myself while also being a dentist and an academic.

How did your PhD research influence your current work?

I am an assistant professor directing the curriculum renewal at Western University. My research looks at barriers to accessing oral healthcare in marginalized communities, and I also lead Western's community dental outreach program. I established this program, a collaboration between Western and several southwestern Ontario organizations that work with marginalized populations, to provide resources and training around oral healthcare. All of our third- and fourth-year dentistry students also go into the community a few times a year and provide free dental treatment, which is supported through my competitively secured grants.

I've also developed partnership programs in Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya, where we work with high-risk communities and study the oral healthcare disparities in these populations. We're focused on finding ways to build capacity and train locals on how to provide sustainable dental care.

2020 - 2030

Iris Lin

BDSC 2017, PHD CRANIOFACIAL SCIENCE CANDIDATE

What first got you interested in pursuing research?

The Bachelor of Dental Science program expanded my understanding of a hygienist's different roles outside of the traditional clinical setting. Early in the program, I realized that I was interested in research. I just didn't know exactly what area.

In my third year, I attended UBC Dentistry Research Day, and the topic was oral cancer. I learned about incredible advances being made by researchers at UBC and within the Faculty of Dentistry and found it so inspiring.

I did a summer research program with Drs. Denise Laronde and Leigha Rock, laying the groundwork for my application to graduate school. I started my Masters in Craniofacial Science, but as my mentors say, "Good research always leads to more unanswered questions!" I had so many questions I wanted to pursue that in 2019 I fast-tracked into the PhD program.

Tell us a bit about your research.

I started my Masters knowing I was interested in exploring the link between inflammation and cancer. Research has shown that inflammatory cells communicate with each other and their surrounding environment, which may impact the progression of cancer.

My work is trying to determine if different inflammatory factors can help us predict the progression of pre-cancerous cells into oral cancer down the road.

What advice would you give to a dental hygiene student who is interested in pursuing graduate school?

Graduate work is a marathon, not a sprint. Be patient and remember it's more about the process and your growth along the way and less about the outcome.

Research is also very fulfilling. It's amazing to see the correlation between benchtop research and the impact it can have in real life. For example, researchers have discovered new therapies now available to patients that boost the immune system to find and attack cancerous cells.

How has UBC Dentistry shaped where you are today?

UBC Dentistry offers many unique opportunities to students, and because it's a smaller Faculty, I've always felt like an individual rather than just a number. People are invested in my learning and growth, which has been such a privilege.





"Alumni in Residence"

Jasper Huang

DMD 2024 CANDIDATE

What first piqued your interest in dentistry?

I completed my undergraduate degree in nanotechnology engineering at the University of Waterloo and then went into a PhD program. I liked the teaching component of graduate school, but the actual research was very isolating.

A few years into the program, I took some time off to reassess. After talking with friends, I decided dentistry might be a good fit for me. I like how I can directly interact with people and see the impact I'm making. As it turns out, the materials aspect and some of the immunology I studied as part of my PhD are relevant to dentistry.

How have you gotten involved in the program?

I joined the Dental Undergraduate Society (DUS) in my first year as the class representative, and this year I'm DUS President.

I started dental school as an older student, so I was worried about meeting people and getting involved. What I love about the DUS is it gives people the opportunity to get to know one another and feel like part of a community. As President, it also feels nice to give back—when I was a junior student, the older students provided a lot of guidance, and I want to make sure incoming students continue to have this experience.

What are you most looking forward to about fourth-year and graduation?

I'm excited to spend more time in a clinical setting. I spent the summer being mentored by dentists in Prince George, Vancouver and Fort St. John as part of the Summer Student Practitioner Program, which laid a great foundation for the skills I'll further develop in fourth-year.

After graduation, I'm hoping to jump into work at a dental practice—after many years in school, it will be a nice change to be on the right side of the balance sheet!

What advice would you give to current students?

Everyone is unique and has their strengths and areas for improvement. Don't compare yourself to others. Seek improvement and growth on your own terms.



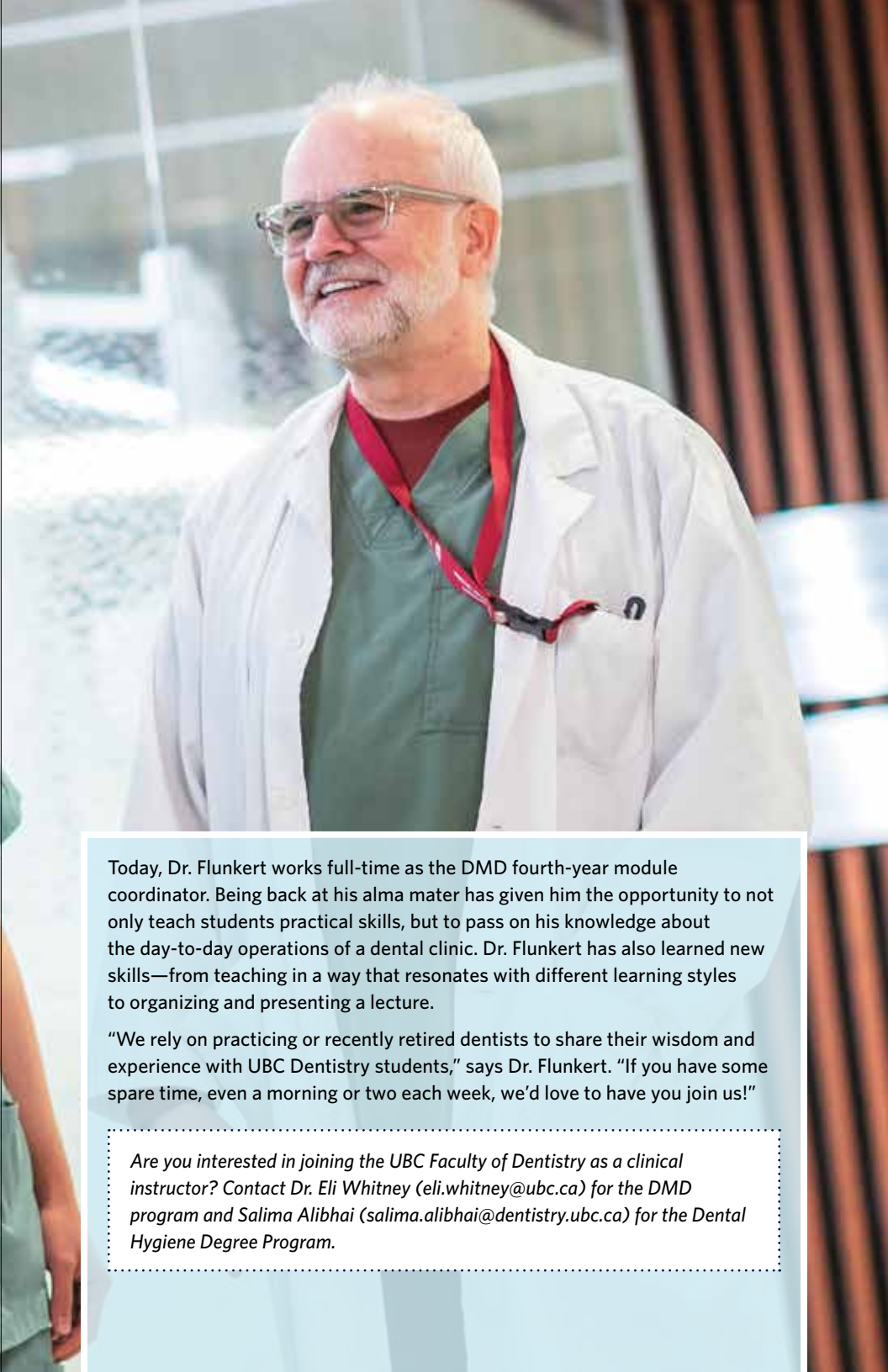
We need YOU! Join UBC Dentistry as a Clinical Instructor

For Dr. Michael Flunkert, becoming a dentist always felt like a natural fit. His mother worked in healthcare, and at nine years old he spent the summer in Germany visiting his uncle, a dental technician. With a passion for science and exposure to dentistry and healthcare at a young age, Dr. Flunkert knew dentistry was for him.

He graduated from UBC Dentistry in 1985 and went on to have a successful career. After more than 30 years in private practice in Vancouver and ready for a change, in early 2020 he applied to return to his old stomping grounds as a clinical instructor.

Thirty-five years after leaving UBC, Dr. Flunkert returned, kick-starting his teaching career by lecturing fourth-year DMD students over Zoom during the global pandemic.

"It's an exciting challenge helping students get to the point where they feel competent in their skills, and where the instructor feels good knowing these students will be out in the world providing dental care," says Dr. Flunkert. "There's a great community here at UBC Dentistry and working as a clinical instructor is the perfect way to give back to the profession."



Today, Dr. Flunkert works full-time as the DMD fourth-year module coordinator. Being back at his alma mater has given him the opportunity to not only teach students practical skills, but to pass on his knowledge about the day-to-day operations of a dental clinic. Dr. Flunkert has also learned new skills—from teaching in a way that resonates with different learning styles to organizing and presenting a lecture.

"We rely on practicing or recently retired dentists to share their wisdom and experience with UBC Dentistry students," says Dr. Flunkert. "If you have some spare time, even a morning or two each week, we'd love to have you join us!"

Are you interested in joining the UBC Faculty of Dentistry as a clinical instructor? Contact Dr. Eli Whitney (eli.whitney@ubc.ca) for the DMD program and Salima Alibhai (salima.alibhai@dentistry.ubc.ca) for the Dental Hygiene Degree Program.

Dentistry by the Numbers

Students *(current enrollment)*

248

Doctor of Dental Medicine

92

Dental Hygiene (entry to practice)

62

Dental Hygiene (degree completion)

104

Graduate Programs

11

Post Graduate Dental Residents

Faculty and Staff

95

Full-time Faculty

468

Part-time Clinical Faculty

109

Clinic and Administrative Staff

Alumni

2,289

DMD

1,002

Dental Hygiene

298

Graduate Programs

Your Generosity in Action

Annual support from alumni, friends, and corporate partners is vital to the success of UBC Dentistry. Your contribution directly supports exceptional education, research, and service to our community—thank you!

In 2022-23, your giving had a significant impact in five key areas. Below is the percentage of total funding that supported each area.

Equipment and Supplies (62%)*

Having top-grade equipment and clinical supplies ensures UBC Dentistry offers the best possible learning and teaching environment for students and clinical educators.

**Including gifts in kind*

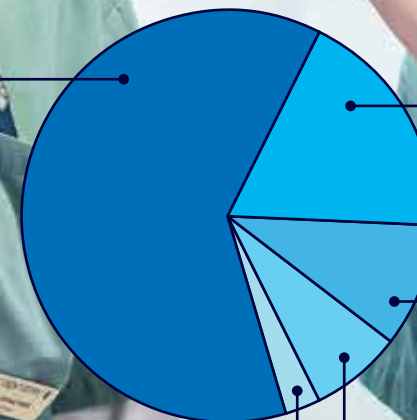
Student Awards and Bursaries (3%)

Awards provide the opportunity to recognize outstanding academic achievement and student leadership, while bursaries offer financial assistance to those in need.

Visit our website to learn about how you can support student awards.



Together, we can make a lasting impact. Learn more by visiting dentistry.ubc.ca/donate



Community (18%)

UBC Dentistry extends beyond the classroom and laboratory in support of underserved populations through outreach and community development efforts.

Research (10%)

We foster visionary research that advances knowledge and translates discoveries to improve the oral health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Capital Projects (7%)

Capital projects are critical to UBC Dentistry's success and allow for new and innovative state-of-the-art educational learning environments.



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