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### **College of Dentistry- CDSS Spring 2021 Report to Council**

It is my pleasure to provide a report to CDSS Council regarding the College of Dentistry. In this report, I will provide an update regarding the teaching, research, and service mandates as well as new initiatives in the College of Dentistry.

#### Teaching

With regards to our teaching mandate, the biggest influence continues to be the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Students are limited to our 21 enclosed operatories for AGPs which, in addition to the six former faculty offices on the clinic second floor that were renovated and equipped between April and September 2020, now include the seven former faculty offices on the first floor which were fully renovated into operatories between December 2020 and March 2021. Students are continuing to operate in a “bubble system”, with Years 1 and 3 limited to Monday and Tuesday, and Years 2 and 4 limited to Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. This has resulted in some lost preclinic and clinic time, however, to regain that time, we are now operating three labs/clinics per day instead of the usual two, and students in Years 2 and 3 will make up the remaining lost time by returning to full-time lab/clinic efforts after final exams and working until mid-June. Additionally, all didactic/classroom instruction remains online, with many of our faculty becoming experts and instructing in this virtual manner and others waiting for things to return to normal.

I am pleased to say that our “bubble system” and strong COVID IPAC protocols have repeatedly been proven effective this year in several instances when faculty, staff and students have contracted COVID through community exposure. Each of these situations was handled in consultation with the SHA and we have avoided any wholesale lockdowns of the dental college. To date, we are not aware of any college-related transmission to patients, students, staff, or faculty.

As I am sure many practicing dentists can attest to, COVID-19 has also caused our patients numbers to reduce significantly, down by perhaps 30%. This has caused some logistical concerns for our Year 4 cohort, and we have been preferentially allocating patients and more complex procedures (endo, crowns, RPDs, etc.) to these students to help ensure they are ready to graduate. I am pleased to say that despite the challenges we have faced with COVID-19, patient and procedure experience for our Year 4 students remains typical of previous non-COVID years.

In previous reports I have mentioned that another impact of COVID-19 we have experienced is the loss of student preclinical “practice time” in the evenings and weekends. Our preclinical students have informed us that they feel this loss of practice time is impacting their skills development. In response,

we have opened the lab for two additional open sessions during work hours and have purchased 10 portable dental units that students have been signing out on a rotating basis since January 2021. Students take their typodonts, a desk-mount, and a portable dental unit home and have replaced the additional practice time that was lost due to COVID-19 restrictions. The portable units have built-in compressor, water, and suction and run both high and low speed handpieces.

With all the challenges we have faced, I am pleased to report that COVID-19 has strengthened the integration of our dental program and the Dental Assisting program. All students are now performing AGPs paired with a dental assisting student. This has been an important advantage for both programs during COVID-19.

While the University of Saskatchewan has seen tough financial times and widespread budgetary cuts for most programs, the College of Dentistry's success with moving forward its [strategic priorities](#) has resulted in a \$1 million increase to our annual operating budget for the upcoming academic year (May 1, 2021-April 30, 2022). With this budgetary increase, partly due to our large increase in research productivity, the college is expanding our number of faculty and staff that support the clinical program. This will include two new full-time GP clinical faculty, and three new clinic support staff members.

### Research

Despite research activities being severely restricted during COVID, researchers at the College of Dentistry have been able to show a substantial increase in research productivity. Since May 2020, our researchers have published 35 manuscripts in academic journals, with studies focused on COVID-19; dental student education; and biological and biochemical approaches to diagnostics, therapeutics, and disease biomarkers using specialized approaches.

Our notable grant successes over the last year, as lead or co-lead, include studies focused on: periodontal disease detection; children's oral health in collaboration with a Chinese university; COVID-19 studies in collaboration with researchers from institutions across the country, including point-of-care COVID-19 diagnostics and COVID-19 incidence rates and experiences for dentists and dental school students; as well as our college's first research chair – the Centennial Enhancement Chair in One Health.

In addition to these research successes, the college has entered into a research agreement with a new dental simulation company, which has donated four prototype simulators that have been distributed to two teams of researchers in the college. These researchers are investigating the merit of the simulators for student education and psycho-motor skill development.

### Service

The Prince Albert Campus Dental Clinic opened in October 2020 and is off to a great start. The clinic has been slowly building its patient base and targeting populations that face barriers to accessing oral health care. The clinic rotation is very popular with our Year 4 students, who tell us that Dr. Wong and his staff

give them excellent experience and training. In fact, several of our students have asked for permission to do a second or third rotation through this clinic.

Additionally, the college has been approached by several First Nation communities regarding dental services. While discussions have occurred, COVID-19 restrictions have precluded any clinical services.

*New Initiatives*

The college is moving the Dental Assisting program to a dual intake model, with September and March intakes. This will better meet the needs of the college and further improve the integration of our two clinical programs. Additionally, this will allow us to increase our annual dental assisting student intake numbers from 40 to 56 to better help fill the shortage of trained dental assistants in the province.

The college has also partnered with Saskatchewan Polytechnic and NITHA to develop a full proposal to start a Dental Therapy training program in the province. This project was recently awarded \$150,000 from Indigenous Services Canada to aid in the proposal development. The partnership is now one month into the planning, and further details will be made available as planning progresses.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Brothwell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Doug Brothwell  
Dean, College of Dentistry