The UNC School of Dentistry has nine academic departments, three clinics providing direct patient care, and a very active research program. The School has an academic program for every specialty recognized by the American Dental Association. The nine departments are Dental Ecology, Diagnostic Sciences, Endodontics, Operative Dentistry, Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, Orthodontics, Pediatric Dentistry, Periodontology, and Prosthodontics. The School has 96 full-time faculty, and 540 students enrolled annually including 24 in Dental Assisting, 72 in Dental Hygiene, 324 in DDS, and 120 in Advanced Education.

Because UNC is a state-supported institution committed to providing medical and dental care to the citizens of North Carolina, the Dental School has three patient care clinics to provide direct care, often at a reduced cost to the patient: student, graduate student, and faculty practice clinics. In the Student Clinic, preventive and other dental care is delivered by students who are enrolled in the doctorate in dental surgery program (DDS) and allied dental education programs (dental hygiene students and dental assisting). Dental treatment is provided in all areas of dental care, with faculty supervision at all times. In the Graduate School Clinic, advanced dental care is provided by practitioners who are seeking advanced education as general dentists or are becoming specialists. Dental Faculty Practice (DFP) dentists are faculty members of the UNC School of Dentistry serve as the exclusive treatment providers for their patients on a fee for service basis; the DFP takes a team approach to providing dental care, working across all specialties to provide the best care for each patient. In total, the three clinics provide care at more than 115,000 patient visits annually.

The School’s faculty members conduct research that includes basic science studies, clinical and translational research studies, health services research, behavioral studies, and population studies. The goal of their research is to improve oral health and overall health. Dental School faculty, students, research fellows, and visiting scholars generate new knowledge in the basic, applied, and clinical sciences, and in the areas of health services, health policy, and health education. The overarching emphasis is on the promotion of oral health and function. Discoveries in these areas not only offer the potential to improve oral health but also overall health. New knowledge is shared through presentations at scientific forums and publications in the scholarly literature. School of Dentistry scientists interact and collaborate with investigators on the UNC-CH campus and with leading scientists and institutions elsewhere in the United States and abroad. In 2015, faculty in the School of Dentistry received more than $10.4 million in research funding, and are ranked 5th in the nation in NIH/NIDCR funding.

The School of Dentistry has created three Research Centers and Institutes that allow investigators with common interests to work together to study specific research questions. The centers typically involve scientists from multiple disciplines to work on common problems in a unified manner. The Centers are the North Carolina Oral Health Institute, The Center for Pain Research and Innovation, and the TraCS Institute General and Oral Health Clinic.

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