



FACULTY OF DENTISTRY

2021-2026 Strategic Plan

Progress Report



**DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY**

Message from the Dean



The Faculty of Dentistry's Strategic Plan for 2021-2026 is now approaching its final year. I am happy to report that solid progress has been made toward its four pillars:

- **Exceptional academic experience**
- **A strong culture of inquiry and impact**
- **Service to our communities**
- **Investing in our culture and people**

During this five-year period, we have been guided by our mission, vision, and values to meet goals that will result in our students being well prepared for their professional lives, advance research and enquiry, support the continuous learning of our faculty and alumni, and meet the needs of the diverse patient communities we serve, particularly the underserved.

This is a summary of some of the work we have achieved since 2021. Already we are looking ahead to our next strategic plan. With the support of the current fundraising campaign, we look forward to achieving even more.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Davis".

Benjamin Davis
Dean, Faculty of Dentistry

PILLAR 1

Exceptional academic experience

Ensuring that our students have up-to-date knowledge, are clinically proficient, and are compassionate oral health professionals is the core of our mission as a Faculty. The impact of our efforts is evident as we see our senior dental hygiene and dentistry students successfully transition into professional practice or post-graduate programs after they graduate. All our students have multiple opportunities for experiential, hands-on, patient-centred learning in each program, beginning in year one, which includes caring for patients at a growing number of outreach clinics in our community, and rotations and observations in hospitals and clinics in Halifax, Dartmouth, North Preston, Cape Breton, and – in 2024 – Prince Edward Island. Hands-on experience with digital scanning technology and interprofessional learning opportunities are also important to their education.

Through the small group practice model, students are exposed to full-time instructors who act as their leaders in clinical care, patient management, and ethical approach. Several Canadian faculties of dentistry have asked us about how to integrate this model into their own curricula.

Our student success strategist – a new role for our Faculty – helps our students with resilience, managing stress, writing high-stakes exams, and other areas. Our curricula are regularly reviewed and renewed to integrate current best practices. We also continue to update and develop new programs, including:

- A thesis-based MSc in periodontics
- A Masters/PhD of Applied Oral Health Science program
- A new dental assisting diploma program
- Changing the exit credential of the Diploma of Dental Hygiene program to a baccalaureate degree
- Changing the exit credential of the Bachelor of Dental Hygiene program to an honours credential.

PILLAR 2

A strong culture of inquiry and impact

The Faculty of Dentistry is striving to create an environment in which research and enquiry flourish for students and faculty alike. We have introduced a more formal evidence-based dentistry curriculum and made available a new research fellowship program to both dentistry and dental hygiene students. Research electives are also being developed. Our current MSc in periodontics has received approval from the Maritime Higher Education Council (MHEC) to be modified into a thesis-based MSc. The Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Senate Academic Programs and Research Committee have both approved a graduate program in biomaterial science. Members of the Department of Biomaterials and Applied Oral Sciences are developing international collaborations with biomaterials researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Ropar and the International Medical University in Kuala Lumpur.

Research funds administered for the 2023/24 fiscal year surpassed \$2.8 million, more than double the \$1.26 million administered in 2022/23. A new research support associate, who was hired in May 2024, is now helping faculty members prepare applications for research grants. We are also working to add more multi-user research space and equipment, provide protected time for faculty research, and create Faculty-wide awareness of ongoing research and opportunities for collaboration and interprofessional research.

Our second annual Research Day, which has replaced Table Clinics, was held in October 2024 and highlighted current research in our Faculty. Work is also underway to build external partnerships with government, the public sector, professional bodies, and priority communities to promote meaningful knowledge exchange in the field of oral health and to find ways to move bench-top discoveries to real-world applications.



PILLAR 3

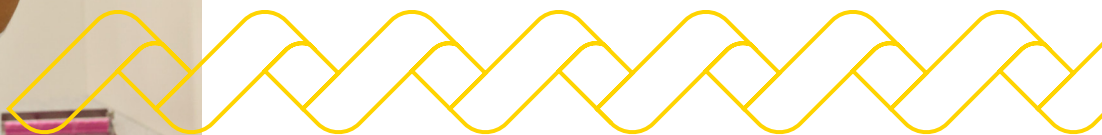
Serve regional and local communities through increased opportunities for community outreach

Meeting the needs of patients in the community, particularly communities that have been traditionally underserved, is an important focus for our Faculty of Dentistry. With the help of our new community engagement and outreach coordinator, we are forming links with community organizations to help us connect their clients to our outreach clinics and we are providing and improving access to quality oral health care for underrepresented populations and remote communities. For example, we have sent senior students to the Eskasoni Dental Clinic in Cape Breton and the PEI public health clinic in Charlottetown. Other externships to Nunavut and Labrador are under discussion.

Our two-year GreenShield grant has enabled us to begin treating adult patients in the North Preston clinic and patients at the Camp Hill Veterans' Memorial Building. It also made it possible for us to fund the equipment needed for a fourth operatory at the North End Community Health Centre dental clinic, which benefits both patients and our students, and to fund several faculty, staff, or student-led oral health promotion initiatives.

OTHER INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Finding ways to attract African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, and francophone applicants to our programs, including updating our admissions policies and procedures.
- Strengthening international partnerships for student recruitment and academic exchange, including partnerships with the Kuwait Cultural Office and the International Medical University in Malaysia.
- Expanding current partnerships to translate research knowledge into practice and policy.
- Creating volunteer and other opportunities for staff, faculty, and students to contribute to local and regional charities and organizations, such as Healthy Smiles and the Canadian Society for Disability and Oral Health Student Chapter.



PILLAR 4

Investing in our culture and people

Ensuring that faculty members are equipped with the skills to provide excellent teaching, learning, and student assessment is central to our work as a Faculty of Dentistry. It is important that both our faculty and staff are trained and well-equipped to meet the needs of our students and patients, and to work cooperatively with each other.

Our Continuing Professional Education (CPE) office continues to increase and diversify its professional and faculty development offerings to address changes in the oral health care field. It also provides both faculty and staff with relevant leadership and personal development opportunities to meet their changing needs and ensure they are equipped to meet the needs of our students and patients.

OTHER AREAS OF WORK:

- Forge long-lasting relationships with our students so that they feel connected to our Faculty, even before they arrive. Engaged students are more likely to become engaged alumni and our hope is that they will return to our Faculty as alumni for CPE courses and alumni events, to serve on committees and teach part time, and support our work as donors.
- The Faculty has become creative in its recruiting methods. A new Dental Assisting program will be introduced in 2026, which will not only provide the region with well-trained dental assistants, but also make hiring dental assistants at the Faculty easier.
- The Faculty now hires more dynamic and diverse staff and faculty members who better reflect the anticipated growth of the Faculty, the community we serve, and our future needs. New clinical staff manager positions have been introduced to provide a more reasonable staff-to-manager ratio.
- The Appreciation and Wellness Committee offers students, staff, and faculty opportunities to participate in health and wellness activities. It also holds events and activities that focus on appreciating the people who work and study in the Faculty of Dentistry.

Looking ahead

As we move into the final year of the current strategic plan, we are already looking ahead to our next goals and objectives. Work will soon begin to map out our future strategic vision, which will be aligned with the broader university's strategic objectives. We look forward to consulting with our students, faculty, staff, alumni, professional bodies, and other stakeholders on their hopes for, and expectations of, our Faculty of Dentistry. Like the field of oral health itself, we must change and adapt so that we are teaching our students well and providing the best possible care to our patients.

