

## **Task Force recommendations: Progress continues**

A process of transformation is underway in the Faculty of Dentistry. The most tangible manifestation of this is the clinic renewal project, scheduled to be completed in spring 2018, that is completely modernising our 35-year-old clinic and bringing about major changes to the way clinical teaching and learning will take place.

Less dramatic – but no less significant – changes also continue to take place throughout the Faculty. Since the discovery of offensive Facebook posts nearly two years ago, the Faculty of Dentistry has been committed to making positive change to the culture and climate and to fostering a safe, inclusive, diverse, and nurturing community for everyone within it – staff, faculty, students and patients. This work remains ongoing and all members of the Faculty are contributing to it.

By continuing to address the recommendations of both the Task Force and Restorative Justice reports, many new and sustainable initiatives have been created. And as we work to change the culture and climate of the Faculty of Dentistry, we strive to be an example and to share what we have learned with others.

This spring, the Faculty completed three major reviews: accreditation of all programs by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, the Senate Unit Review, and the Graduate Studies Review. The results were positive, with the Internal Senate Review Committee reporting that positive change is occurring, with

many examples of initiatives to improve climate and culture. The Senate Review Committee also told us that students feel they are being consulted and have a say in what happens in our Faculty.

For a year and a half, we have been reporting our progress towards the recommendations across four main themes: communication, curriculum renewal, community outreach, and reducing isolation. Here is a summary of some of our main achievements within each theme:

### **Communication**

Improvements to clarity and transparency continue to be made on many fronts, particularly with regard to policies and decision-making processes. All three reviews that took place this spring commended the Faculty for this. In addition, The Faculty has approved our new academic governance model. Now before the Senate Planning and Governance Committee, our academic governance model is the result of an incredibly collaborative process in which faculty, staff, and students participated.

In addition, we continue to hold regular meetings and information sessions with staff, faculty, and students, including “Meet the dean” sessions, to which all members of the Faculty community are invited to attend to provide feedback and ask questions.

## **Curriculum renewal**

Our clinic renewal project is now into its final two years and is having a major impact on how we work and interact. The clinic space itself is now under construction, which means is that our teaching and learning space has been reduced to half its normal size while renovations take place in the other half. In May 2017, the clinic will “flip” and renovation work will take place on the second half. Not surprisingly, we had to make major changes to student – and therefore – staff schedules to ensure that students receive adequate clinic time. With input, buy-in, and accommodation from all parties, we were able to reach an acceptable solution for everyone. Three clinic renewal information sessions were recently held to give everyone an opportunity to hear about progress, see what is happening behind the wall, and ask questions.

## **Community outreach**

Community outreach continues to be a major focus in the Faculty of Dentistry. In June, we celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North Preston Dental Clinic, a partnership that takes dental care to a community that was historically underserved and enables our dentistry students to gain a wider range of cultural and clinic experience. This year, for the first time, the bachelor of dental hygiene students have also begun to provide care there and are currently raising money to provide televisions at the clinic for the children to watch while they receive dental care.

Both hygiene and dentistry students volunteer at Direction 180, a methadone addiction clinic in the North End. For the second year, our dentistry and dental hygiene faculty are working together to raise money to help Direction 180 provide a Christmas celebration for its patrons.

Assistant dean of academic affairs, Dr. Debora Matthews, recently attended a national dental outreach symposium, during which a scoping review and the results of a survey of the 10 Canadian dental faculties were presented. Dalhousie is in the

top three in terms of the numbers of the community-based learning opportunities we offer and is ranked first in the diversity of the underserved populations included in our outreach.

### **Reducing isolation**

In June, the Faculty of Dentistry played a significant part in the successful international restorative justice conference that took place in Halifax, with several of our faculty members, current students, and alumni from the class of 2015 taking leadership roles.

Many steps have been taken to improve the integration of the School of Dental Hygiene within the Faculty and to integrate Qualifying Program students within third and fourth-year classes.

Our interim assistant dean of research is currently in Washington, DC as the American Dental Educators Association Enid A. Neidle scholar-in-residence where she is researching her topic, “Exploring gender and diversity as elements of professionalism”. Our assistant dean of students has been invited to visit and speak with various faculties across the country about professionalism, equity, and the lessons we have learned. On November 25, she was at the University of Toronto speaking on this topic.

By continuing to address the recommendations of the Task Force and the Restorative Justice reports, many new and sustainable initiatives have been created within the Faculty of Dentistry. This work will continue as we strive to make the Faculty an environment in which everyone – faculty, staff, students, and patients – feels safe, respected, and included.

