

RUTGERS

School of Dental Medicine



Our  
Global Village

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 2017

## Mission

...to improve oral health and quality of life through the education of oral health professionals and scientists, the conduct of research, the promotion of health and disease prevention, and the delivery of oral health care to communities throughout the state and beyond.

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## A Message from the Dean

In 2016, I had the honor of serving as Chair of the Board of Directors for the American Dental Education Association (ADEA), a role that allowed me to visit other nations. Each trip was an incredible journey, as each country had an amazing story to tell—about life and oral healthcare. During my travels, I try to look at things through a different lens and take home lessons that we can apply at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine (RSDM). One visit made an especially indelible impression. At a train station in Budapest, I saw thousands of Syrian refugees camped out in hopes of travelling to other parts of the European Union. It reminded me that now, more than ever, we need to be vigilant and ensure that our school can continue to welcome our international students and faculty. Our advocacy work must continue, so we can live up to our core values of diversity and opportunity for all.

At RSDM, we provide educational opportunities to people from all over the world—and we are a much richer place because of it. Together, we have the same mission: to learn, discover and heal. But our many different cultural perspectives allow us to excel at all of those things. As a result, our work has reverberated around the globe. Directly or indirectly, we impact millions overseas through our research, educational programs and patient care. Our Oral Biology Department is developing potential treatments for cancer, autoimmune diseases and drug-resistant pathogens, in addition to caries and periodontitis. We have exchange programs with dental schools in India and Ireland, and we are exploring additional partnerships. We embark on annual dental missions to nations such as Sri Lanka and Haiti. Every day, we are reminded to celebrate what makes us unique, as well as



what we have in common. At home and abroad, we work to build a global village where all feel valued for their contributions and comfortable being who they are. This helps each of us, in our own way, meet the universal need for health and happiness.

Sincerely,  
Cecile A. Feldman, DMD, MBA  
*Dean, Rutgers School of Dental Medicine*

## A Message from the Chancellor



Scientific research and the art of healing know no borders. Our village is truly global, as the theme of this year's Rutgers School of Dental Medicine annual report attests. At Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS), we gain invaluable knowledge and experience from the many

faculty, staff and students who come here to learn from overseas—in addition to those who came to the United States before joining our university community. We benefit from the free exchange of ideas and information as we collaborate with scientists and health care providers throughout the world. In turn, the world benefits from our research, our innovative treatment methods, and the care we help provide on an international scale to address global health disparities. As one of the most diverse higher education institutions in the nation, with an international profile, we owe our greatness to the many different nationalities and cultures that leave a mark on our university.

RSDM exemplifies both our global reach and our commitment to diversity. Few dental schools worldwide can boast the same caliber of research, particularly in the field of oral biology. Scientists at RSDM

have received major federal funding and industrial support to develop treatments for cancer and drug-resistant pathogens, in addition to dental disease. Our dental school is nationally recognized for its dedication to holistic admissions, which broadens criteria to include life experience and non-academic strengths, along with the school's demographic diversity. Finally, RSDM students and faculty have personally touched the lives of many patients around the world during missions to the Dominican Republic, Bangladesh, and more. The Rutgers School of Dental Medicine is a key player in our success, as we join together across nations to educate students and help patients, wherever they may live.

Sincerely,  
Brian L. Strom, MD, MPH  
*Chancellor, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences*

# Jersey Roots, (

**Rutgers University** is one of the most diverse schools in the nation. Its students, research and faculty span the globe, seeking knowledge and serving others. Rutgers has more than 300 formal partnerships around the world and is home to more than 1,100 new international scholars who come to Rutgers each year. Faculty and staff make more than 800 trips to more than 100 countries annually for scholarly purposes. Here are just a few of our far-reaching programs:

## North America

Rutgers medical anthropologist Peter Guarnaccia works on community health in **Oaxaca, Mexico**, and **New Brunswick, NJ**—home to Rutgers' flagship campus and to many Oaxacan immigrants. Guarnaccia, Director of the Global Service Learning Course on Culture and Community Health in Oaxaca, hopes to improve the lives of people there and in N.J.



## South America

As a Fulbright scholar in **Brazil**, nutrition scientist Daniel Hoffman gives seminars and develops research projects that promote an interdisciplinary approach to global health research and education.



## Antarctica

Rutgers scientists study the fastest winter-warming place on earth: the **West Antarctic Peninsula**. As a member of the Long-Term Ecological Research project at Antarctica's Palmer Station, Rutgers marine biologist Oscar Schofield looks at declining winter sea ice and rising ice temperatures.



# Global Reach



## Asia

Associate professor of childhood studies Sarada Balagopalan's ethnography on street children and child laborers in **Kolkata, India**, discusses the struggles of impoverished children to transition from labor to school.



## Europe

Each year, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School students do four-week rotations at medical universities in **Austria, Ireland and Spain**. In return, students there travel to RWJMS to rotate in departments such as Family Medicine, OBGYN, Trauma Surgery and Radiology. The program is organized by the school's Office of Global Health.



## Africa

In rural Ghana, treatable conditions can lead to disability, poverty and death due to the limited availability of specialists and specialty training. Tetteh Quarshie Memorial Hospital is a 100-bed district hospital in **Mampong, Ghana**, where surgical cases are performed by only one surgeon. Since 2013, Associate NJMS Professor of Surgery Dr. Ziad Sifri has led a team of faculty to provide clinical support and training at the hospital.

— From *Great Things to Know about Rutgers* by the Rutgers University Communications and Marketing team



*From left, Chelsea Rajagopalan, Siddhi Shab, Nam Hoang,  
Olivia Ike, and Cesar Quezada*

# Education Beyond the Borders

Nearly 47 percent of our students are from minority groups, making RSDM one of the most diverse dental schools in the country.

Many students and faculty are immigrants or children of immigrants. Others come from overseas to receive a top dental education and return home to share their knowledge and expertise. At RSDM, they are a source of great strength, providing a range of perspectives, experiences and knowledge to our community. They enrich the field of healthcare locally and internationally.

The global mix of students in each graduating class is a goal we pursue during our holistic admissions process, which values life experience, compassion, originality and well-roundedness, in addition to test scores and GPA. We seek non-traditional students from all walks of life, including older students and those who are pursuing dentistry after succeeding at a previous career. We are also proud of our reputation as a place where LGBTQ students thrive in a safe and welcoming environment. Our Dental Students for Equality Association was one of the first LGBTQ student groups at a U.S. dental school.

Our flourishing two-year Internationally Trained Dentist Program enables qualified dentists educated outside the U.S. or Canada to earn a DMD degree.

RSDM is highly selective. Of nearly 1,898 applicants for the Class of 2019, 89 were admitted. Our students' reputation for clinical experience and skill is evident in our Match rate. In 2016, 90 percent of students seeking placement through a match were placed, compared to 67 percent nationally. RSDM graduates are sought after for residencies because of our competency-based curriculum, with its strong clinical program.

Our 2017 performance on the Commission on Dental Competency Assessment clinical licensing exams was 96 percent, the best score in the nation.

Within the past year, we created new educational programs and further developed others. We instituted a pilot program that enabled two students to participate in an honors curriculum for special needs dentistry, which helps patients with disabilities. It included working with



the Rutgers School of Social Work and the School of Public Health.

We expanded our interdisciplinary curriculum, providing more opportunities for our students to work with students from other healthcare disciplines, including medical students, pharmacy students and nutrition students, among others.

Last year, with help from a \$2 million federal grant, our students also completed interdisciplinary work at the Rutgers Community Health Center, helping patients in our hometown of Newark. RSDM students screened patients for dental and oral healthcare problems and provided education about healthy teeth and gums while working with nursing students and others.



Sama Soky

## Remembering Syria

Sama Soky cherishes her memories of growing up in Syria, where she was raised by her grandparents as a young girl.

The family lived in Damascus, one of the most developed cities in the Middle East. It typified everything she loves about her native land. “The people are simple and nice, so loving. And it used to be very safe,” she says.

Although Damascus is not the center of the violence that began in Syria in recent years, the war has had a grave effect on residents. Electricity is cut for 12 hours a day and there are shortages of oil and gas, she says. “What’s happened in Syria is heartbreaking,” she declares.

Soky, who is in RSDM’s Internationally Trained Dentist program, also lived in Dubai and Jordan, where she attended dental school and started a residency at a private dental practice.

In the U.S., she hopes to eventually work as a general dentist. She also wants to educate Americans who might be suspicious of Muslims.

“Talk to a person before you judge them,” she advises. “Muslims are good people.”

## Can Do Spirit

While going to school to be a medical technologist, Maria Ambrosio was told she could never be a doctor because her English wasn’t good enough.

But Ambrosio, an RSDM assistant professor, ignored the naysayers and graduated with her dental degree.

“I did it anyway,” she says today. “I’m the only one that can say how far I can go.”

Ambrosio immigrated to the U.S. from Peru at age 14 and paid for her own college tuition by working in a shoe factory and doing a stint as a janitor.

After graduating from dental school at Fairleigh Dickinson University, she opened a private practice in Wayne and later achieved another goal: teaching. Ambrosio completed RSDM’s From Practice to Preceptor program, which equips private practitioners with the skills to succeed as academic instructors.

Ambrosio, who is also a motivational speaker, hopes to be an inspiration to students who might feel discouraged about achieving their dreams. “I want to let them know that they can do it. If I can do it, anyone can.”

Aside from teaching and working at her private practice, Ambrosio has been involved in several dental missions, including trips to Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and her homeland of Peru.

The missions help remind her that dentistry involves compassion and sensitivity. “I tell my students, ‘people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.’”



Dr. Maria Ambrosio with a student in pre-clinic.



Nnamdi Anosike

## Dreams of Building a Clinic in Nigeria

Nnamdi Anosike will never forget the 12-year-old dental patient he examined at a Nigerian dental clinic a few years ago.

“The agony on her face, every day I see that,” remembers Anosike, a former resident in RSDM’s orofacial pain program who is now enrolled in the Internationally Trained Dentist Program.

The young girl suffered from constant, excruciating tooth pain, and yet Anosike could find no sign of decay. It turned out to be his first time treating a case of trigeminal neuralgia, a rare disorder that results in chronic pain of the mouth and face.

The girl was given a medication that provided some relief, but the family had trouble affording it. Plus, they had to travel

across two states in Nigeria to get to the clinic. Anosike never saw the patient again.

But the experience inspired his plans to start the first orofacial pain clinic in Africa. “I want to set up a center so I can provide better situations for patients,” says Anosike, who attended dental school at Nigeria’s University of Lagos. “Where I come from, orofacial pain as a specialty is still very much in its infancy.”

Anosike hopes to establish the non-profit center partly through contributions and partly through some of his own salary from working in the U.S. He envisions building a team to train Nigerian practitioners and eventually running it as a combination orofacial pain specialty center and dental clinic.

SIDDHI SHAH:

“The international students are always willing to tell us stories: what dental school in Iran was like or dental school in Egypt. It just helped me realize that dental school is tough around the world. They brought a whole new level to our commiserating. Everything was richer because of them.”



CESAR QUEZADA:

“The diversity here was a deciding factor for me. I didn’t feel like I would stick out like a sore thumb. It’s part of the fabric of the school, part of its identity. At RSDM, I have friends from all over the world. It’s the best kind of environment. You learn something every day.”

CHELSEA RAJAGOPALAN:

“At RSDM, so many organizations and clubs have their foundation in cultural, religious, or ethnic backgrounds. It’s incredible to see classmates and faculty who are so passionate about their heritage, all celebrating those differences, while uniting with others in the RSDM family.”



OLIVIA IKE:

“Being here has given me an opportunity to branch outside myself and my comfort zone. Every day you’re asking somebody, ‘in your culture what’s the standard?’ The feedback they give about how to communicate with your patients and make sure they feel comfortable and respected is invaluable. You have no excuse for not knowing how to talk to people who aren’t like you.”



*Students celebrate Holi.*

## Cultural Exchange

At RSDM, a diverse range of student groups bond over common traditions. But for many, another goal is sharing their culture with others.

The Indian Student Dental Association is proud of its reputation for hosting festivals and other events that welcome students of all nationalities.

For three years, the association organizes a mini Holi festival, where students throw colored powder at each other to celebrate a Hindu rite of spring.

Although elements of Holi have been adapted in America as “color runs,” ISDA members give a brief talk about its spiritual significance and symbolism before the school-wide color throwing begins.

Founded by club advisor and RSDM professor Dr. Asha Samant, ISDA began more than a decade ago as a way for Indian students to enjoy their heritage and support each other.

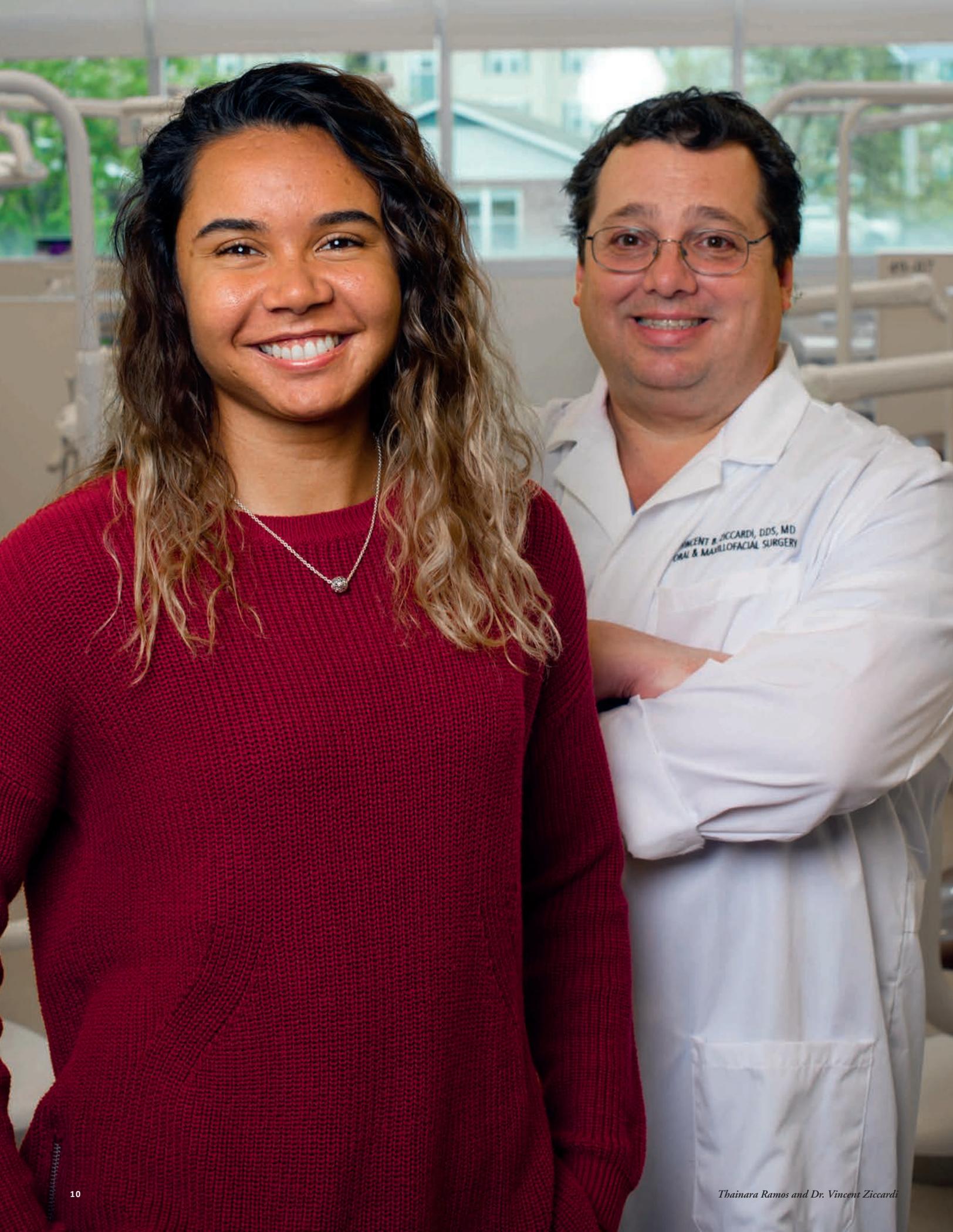
These days, it organizes fundraisers to help supply clean water to citizens of India, in addition to hosting parties for Diwali, the festival of lights, and holding a popular “senior sendoff,” where Indian and non-Indian students alike wear traditional Indian clothes and participate in elaborately choreographed Bollywood dance routines.

“People learn about the major religious holidays through the club, but it’s mostly about good food, dancing and music—things that anyone can be part of,” says 2017 ISDA president Varsha Agnihotri.

A group of students are celebrating Holi in a park. They are wearing white t-shirts and dark pants, and are covered in colorful powder. They are throwing powder into the air, creating a vibrant display of colors. The background shows trees with green and yellow leaves, suggesting an autumn setting. The overall atmosphere is festive and joyful.

**“I can’t imagine being at a school that’s homogenous. The world’s a big place. Before I came to RSDM, I never knew about Holi or Indian dances and discovering that was really cool. Also, having salsa lessons on campus. It brings a lot to the table when you have so many different cultures and identities.”**

**—NAM HOANG**



# Healing at Home and Away

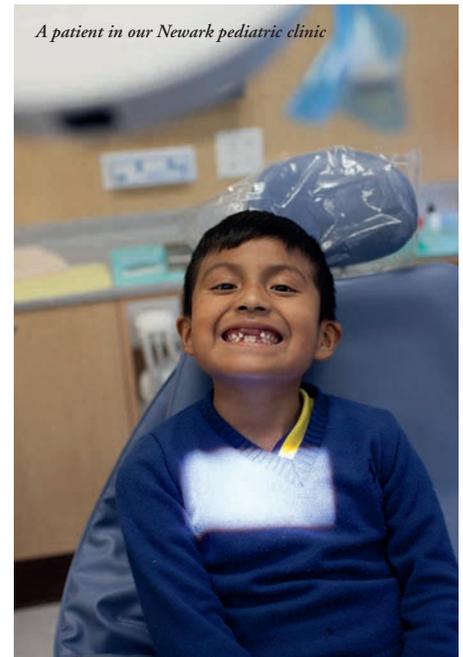
Our faculty and student doctors treat patients of every nationality and ethnicity. That's not surprising since we are New Jersey's largest oral healthcare provider and our state ranks number 8 on the list of most diverse states in the nation. In 2016, we had more than 125,000 patient visits. Our pediatric patient visits numbered nearly 7,000.

We provide several levels of care and house practitioners from all oral healthcare specialties under one roof, where they can work together as an interdisciplinary team. Our student clinics, where pre-doctoral students are closely overseen by faculty, logged more than 104,051 visits in FY 17. Part of the curriculum includes training in "cultural competency," which teaches student doctors to be mindful of different cultural norms and how they might affect patient behavior and treatment. Students learn the best ways of expressing respect and sensitivity to a broad range of patients.

Post-doctoral students at RSDM include residents at our new Dental Specialty Center, which opened in April of 2016 with \$10 million in state funds and \$3 million in matching funds. The center is located on the school's Newark campus and includes 80 new dental operatories and seven surgical

suites for teaching advanced implantology, periodontal surgery, endodontic surgery, maxillofacial prosthetic surgery and advanced restorative dentistry. It has received thousands of visits since it opened.

At Rutgers Health University Dental Associates, our faculty practice, top oral healthcare providers treat patients directly in a private-practice setting. Because of their work in academia, care is informed by the latest research and providers are skilled at the newest treatment techniques. In the fall of 2016, we opened a new, state-of-the-art office in New Brunswick, in addition to our faculty practice office in Newark. Both are part of the newly established Rutgers Health brand, which encompasses the clinical components of Rutgers schools, institutes and centers. It is the most comprehensive health care provider organization in New Jersey.



*A patient in our Newark pediatric clinic*

Other patient care facilities at RSDM include our Delta Dental of New Jersey Special Care Center, which treats disabled patients and is one of a small number of similar facilities nationally and internationally. Last year, it received nearly 5,000 visits. Our Center for Temporomandibular Disorders and Orofacial Pain is staffed by internationally known experts and researchers who care for many patients with rare disorders and syndromes that have been misdiagnosed by previous providers.



*Student doctors at work*

## Expert Care

Catherine Deamus is an alum of Douglass College (Class of '70), who grew up in New Brunswick, the daughter of a dentist who practiced downtown. When she heard Rutgers was opening a dental practice on Somerset Street, she quickly booked an appointment.

As she settled into the dentist's chair at Rutgers Health University Dental Associates, Deamus said, "I feel like I've come home."

RSDM's second faculty practice office opened in November at the heart of Rutgers College Avenue Campus. There is also a faculty practice office in Newark.

Providers at both are faculty who treat patients in a private practice setting rather than overseeing students. They offer a full range of expert care, from family dentistry

to complex, specialty needs. Skilled in the latest treatment techniques, staff keep abreast of the best and newest evidence-based research. The team is also extremely diverse with practitioners from Egypt, Nigeria, India and Greece, among other nations.

Deamus sought treatment at Rutgers Health University Dental Associates after her long-time dentist retired. "I knew I needed a lot of work, and the people there seemed like they would have the

most recent technology and be on top of new developments because they're at a university," she said. "I liked that all the specialties were under one roof."

So far, Deamus has been pleased with the care she's received during initial visits and is ready for dental implant procedures to begin. "Everyone there has been very nice and compassionate," she said.

**Our Special Care Dentistry clinic received nearly**  
**5000**  
**patient visits in 2016.**

“It’s important that you don’t condemn people...to educate them, to say, ‘let’s make a change and move forward from here.’”

DR. UCHENNA AKOSA



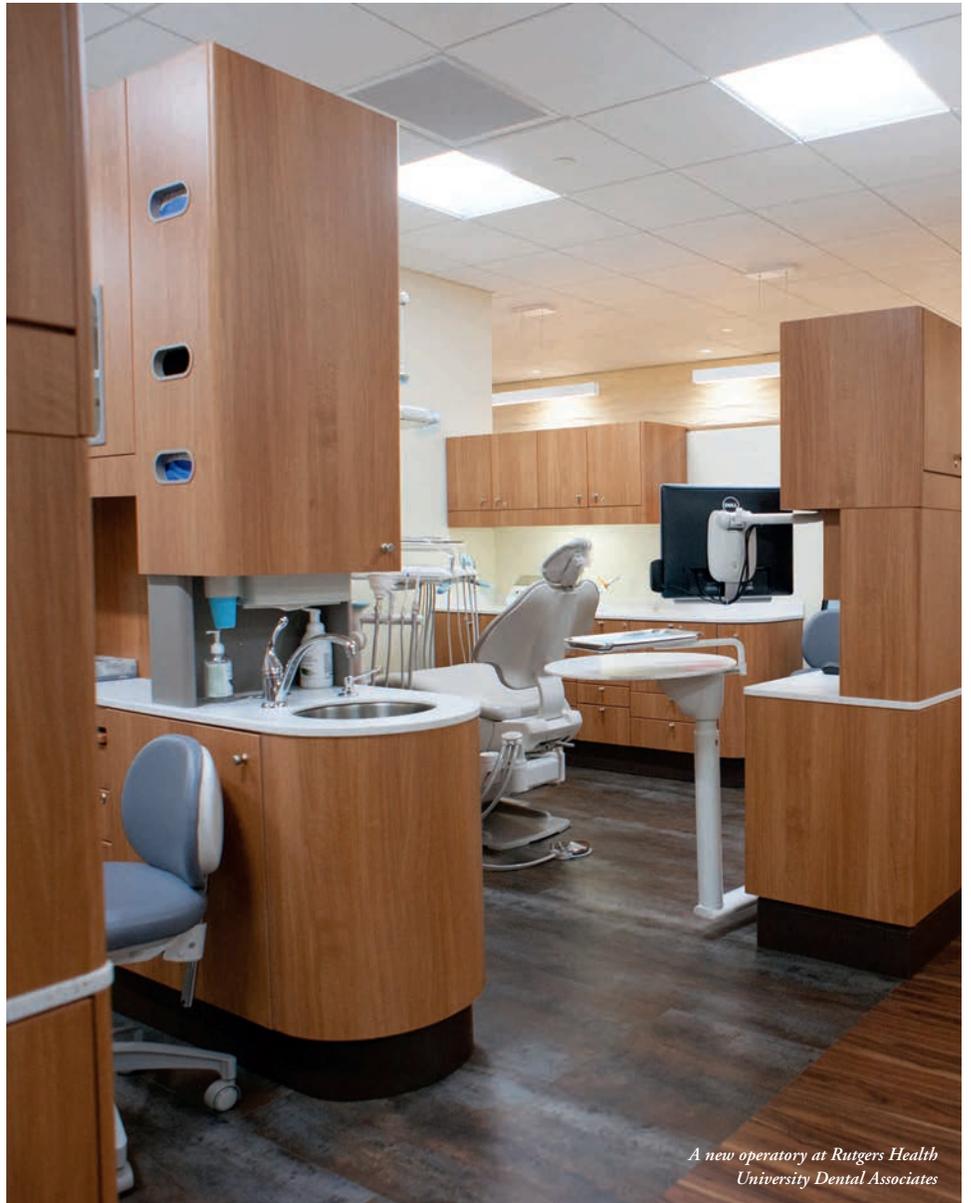
*Our newly opened faculty practice in New Brunswick*



*A student prepares to treat a patient.*



*Dr. Steven Singer explains new diagnostic technology to a patient.*



*A new operator at Rutgers Health University Dental Associates*

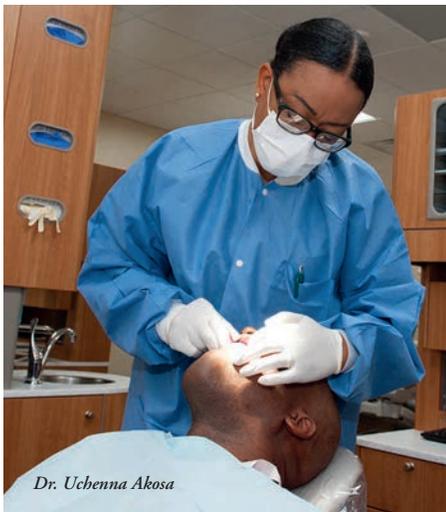
## Cultural Sensitivity

After more than 10 years as a dentist in the U.S., Dr. Uchenna Akosa knows that ethnicity and nationality can play a role in oral hygiene and influence how patients respond to treatment. “I’ve worked with different cultures and I find different behaviors, and that’s helped me learn,” said Akosa, dental director of Rutgers Health University Dental Associates in New Brunswick, RSDM’s faculty practice.

In some cultures, diets heavy in starches and fruit have hastened tooth decay. Some patients come from countries where brushing isn’t properly taught, while others might be more inclined to distrust doctors or be especially attuned to any signs of disrespect, said Akosa, who was raised in Nigeria.

Akosa’s sensitivity to patients from around the world helped her build a thriving private practice in diverse Middlesex County before she arrived at Rutgers Health University Dental Associates, where she has also been successful.

“It’s important that you don’t condemn people,” said Akosa. “If they feel you’re looking down on them, they never come back. It’s important for me to educate patients, to say, ‘let’s make a change and move forward from here.’”



Dr. Uchenna Akosa



Thainara Ramos before and after

## Finding Balance

As a young child growing up in South America, Thainara Ramos could not open her mouth to speak properly or eat solid food. Her condition was caused by an untreated ear infection, which spread to her face, fusing shut the bones in her jaw. With little hope and few resources, her family moved to the United States.

At University Hospital in Newark, she found oral and maxillofacial surgeon Dr. Vincent Ziccardi of Rutgers Health University Dental Associates, who devised a long-term plan that would accommodate Ramos as she grew.

“Without treatment, she would have debilitating social consequences that would result from the continued facial distortion,” said Ziccardi, who is chairman of RSDM’s

Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery department.

When Ramos was 8, he performed surgery to free up her jaw and promote growth. Later, he corrected the position of her jaw. Last year, Ziccardi restored symmetry to her face through the insertion of custom-made, computer-generated implants, a relatively new technology that is not yet widely used in private practices.

Ramos, now 23, plans on becoming an occupational therapist and says Ziccardi’s treatment has given her confidence and a profound sense of relief.

“I don’t have that burden on the back of my shoulder saying, ‘Oh, you look a little different than everyone else,’” she said. “When you find hope, it’s sensational. Right now, I feel unstoppable.”

“When you find hope, it’s sensational.  
Right now, I feel unstoppable.”

THAINARA RAMOS, PATIENT



*Dr. Cibele Nasri-Heir*

## Support System

Dr. Cibele Nasri-Heir has received calls and emails from people around the globe who suffer from an extremely rare disorder called burning mouth syndrome.

An expert who has treated the condition but now focuses on research, Nasri-Heir provides information and understanding. Burning mouth syndrome causes a chronic, burning pain that has nothing to do with scalding food or drink. It can be associated with a dental procedure but usually occurs for no apparent reason. The cause remains a mystery.

Patients who have burning mouth syndrome are often dismissed by practitioners and specialists, who know little about the condition and assume their problem is psychosomatic.

“Many providers think it’s in the mind, but it’s not,” said Nasri-Heir, an assistant professor and coordinator of clinical research at RSDM’s Center for Temporomandibular Disorders and Orofacial Pain. “They need to be believed; otherwise, they feel abandoned.”

While medication can help decrease the pain, often it doesn’t disappear completely and patients must learn how to live with it.

Nasri-Heir began treating patients with burning mouth syndrome in her homeland of Brazil several years ago. At RSDM, one of her early research projects demonstrated how diminished function of nerves that carry taste can result in the syndrome. Recently, she found evidence that the pain inhibitory system of these patients may not function well.

While the cause and cure are still unknown, her work and compassion are reassuring to patients, she says. “I tell them, ‘there are researchers working on this. Don’t lose hope.’”



# A World of Discovery



Research at RSDM has had a worldwide impact. Our reputation in the field of oral biology and the emerging field of orofacial pain is international. We are working on potential treatments for cancer and drug-resistant pathogens. We collaborate with overseas companies on industrial research to develop products that improve oral health around the globe. We have joined with researchers all over the world to help create a diagnostic code for orofacial pain that will help patients receive proper treatment.

In the past year, faculty have presented their work in Europe, Korea, Brazil and other nations. Led by Dr. Daniel Fine, our Oral Biology Department takes the innovative approach of exploring how the origins of microbial disease can be the basis for groundbreaking work that transcends dental medicine and paves the way for treating systemic illnesses.

In 2016 and 2017, we received new awards totaling \$5.7 million and a total of \$12.5 million in funds, including money from multi-year grants awarded in previous years.

We have received international recognition for our work developing products that fight gingivitis and caries. Our clinical work with Colgate, Johnson & Johnson and others has resulted in products that have advanced the field of oral health and hygiene.

Doctors from RSDM's Center for Orofacial Pain, who often treat rare and frequently misdiagnosed forms of chronic pain, are also recognized overseas for their research.

The diversity of our research faculty and students contributes to our success. They come from many nations: Israel, Ghana, India and Japan, to name a few.

"Our department is very multicultural," says Fine. "Diversity always makes things better because people present different ways of looking at things. It broadens our horizons and increases our ability to educate."



## Scientific First

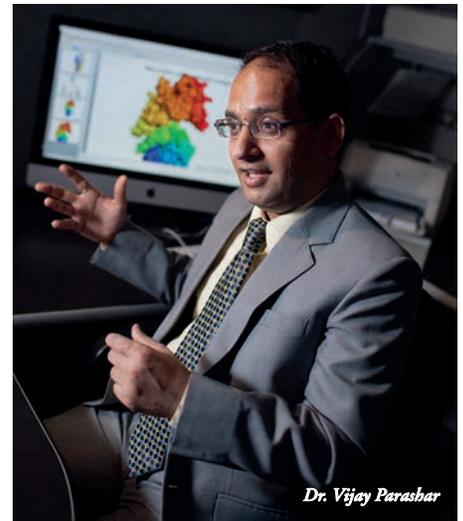
RSDM and NJMS researchers Drs. Daniel Kadouri and Nancy Connell achieved a breakthrough that made international news last year.

They found evidence that predatory bacteria can kill pneumonia in a rat animal model.

Their research showed that predatory bacteria, which are lethal to microorganisms that cause disease, might have therapeutic uses that could help fight the rise of multi-drug resistant bacterial infections. For more than a decade, Kadouri has studied two types of bacteria: *Bdellovibrio bacteriovorus*, which penetrates prey and kills from within, and *Micavibrio aeruginosavorus*, a vampirish organism that devours germs from the outside.

In addition to eradicating bacteria that cause lung disease, and germs found in wounds and burns, the predatory bacteria could prey on food-borne pathogens like *E. coli* and *Salmonella*.

The research has been funded by the U.S. Military Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Pathogen Predators program for work that explores alternative methods of fighting infections and disease.



Dr. Vijay Parashar

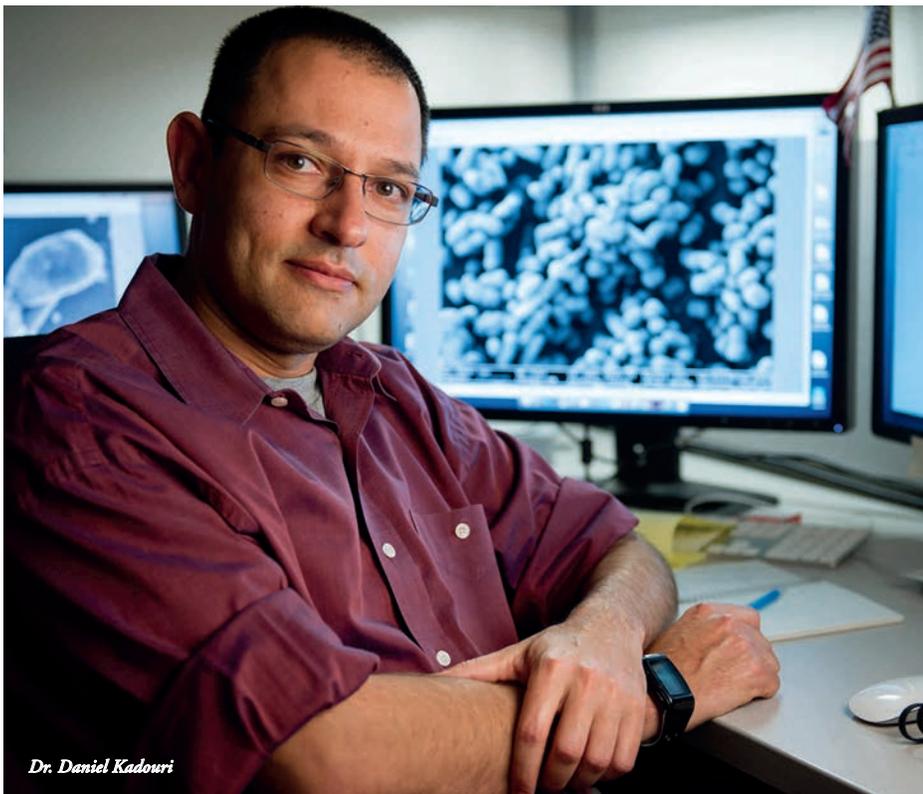
## Himalayan Journey

Dr. Vijay Parashar has travelled to the hot water springs of the Himalayas to find better tools for genetic engineering.

Before he came to RSDM, Parashar, a native of India, discovered enzymes that could survive at higher temperatures and be used in the engineering process. His discovery, which was later patented and licensed, allowed the enzymes to be shipped and stored, saving money.

At RSDM, Parashar, a structural biologist, has built a successful career exploring how bacteria adapt to their hosts' immune system. Learning more about bacterial signaling mechanisms, and how they can be manipulated, could pave the way for an alternative to antibiotics, he says.

Last year, Parashar was awarded a \$1.5 million NIH MIRA grant, the multi-year grant that's given to "foster important breakthroughs from the nation's most talented and promising investigators," according to the NIH.



Dr. Daniel Kadouri



Dr. Daniel Fine

## Unprecedented

Dr. Daniel Fine is the world’s foremost expert on local aggressive periodontitis (LAP), a rare form of gum disease that affects two percent of African-American children ages 11 to 17.

For 10 years, Fine and his team have worked with more than 2,000 adolescent subjects in Newark, monitoring them at six-month intervals for LAP, which only affects central incisors and molars, resulting in disfiguring tooth loss and difficulty eating among a demographic that often has limited access to dental care.

Fine’s team uses Next Generation genome sequencing and other new technologies to study oral diseases. In 2014, he received \$3.2 million from the NIH for his work. His groundbreaking team discovered a marker in the saliva of children with LAP that can be detected six to nine months prior to radiographic evidence of bone loss and can be used as a tool for early detection of the disease.

Another offshoot of Dr. Fine’s work with LAP was the discovery that children

with the disease had lower rates of dental caries due to a salivary protein that kills the bacteria that cause caries but has no effect on LAP.

As a result, he is developing and patenting a synthetic peptide to kill caries.

We received new awards totaling

**\$5.7 Million**



## Multi-Purpose

Dr. Scott Kachlany’s development of a promising treatment for cancer could help treat other diseases, too, according to his research.

It’s also a potential therapy for autoimmune inflammatory diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis and Crohn’s disease.

Nearly a decade ago, Kachlany discovered that an oral bacterium that causes periodontal disease could kill leukemia cells in animals.

With help from a \$2 million NIH grant, received in 2014, he has been working steadily on preclinical trials that will allow him to obtain U.S. Food and Drug Administration approvals.

He patented the protein as Leukothera and founded a company, Actinobac Biomed, to begin developing it as a treatment for cancer and other illnesses.

In July of this year, Actinobac received \$4.4 million in venture capital funding to complete the final stages of preclinical development so Leukothera can be tested on humans. Kachlany expects that to happen within three years.



Dr. Scott Kachlany



*Dr. Rafael Benoliel*

## Finding the Right Words

Pain is a universal language. But the response to pain varies from culture to culture, according to Dr. Rafael Benoliel, Director of RSDM's Center for Temporomandibular Disorders and Orofacial Pain.

"If a 15-year-old American kid comes home with a headache, his mom might give him a Tylenol," said Benoliel. "A mother in a Third World country might say, 'Keep doing your work and then you can rest.'"

Differences like these are one reason why it's so important to have a uniform method for doctors to diagnose and treat pain. This can be especially challenging with orofacial pain, which is still a relatively new field. Many conditions and syndromes are familiar to experts in the field but not to other practitioners, said Benoliel.

As part of his research into orofacial pain, Benoliel, and RSDM's Dr. Gary Heir, have been meeting with the world's leading authorities to create a diagnostic lexicon for their field.

As clinicians, RSDM's orofacial pain experts like Benoliel and Heir encounter symptoms that range from muscular and joint pain to various types of neuropathy.

Benoliel hopes that next year, the committee will be finished and the results will be published in the International Classification of Diseases.

## Pulp Faction

Dr. Emi Shimuzu's research could some day help end a procedure most dental patients dread: the root canal.

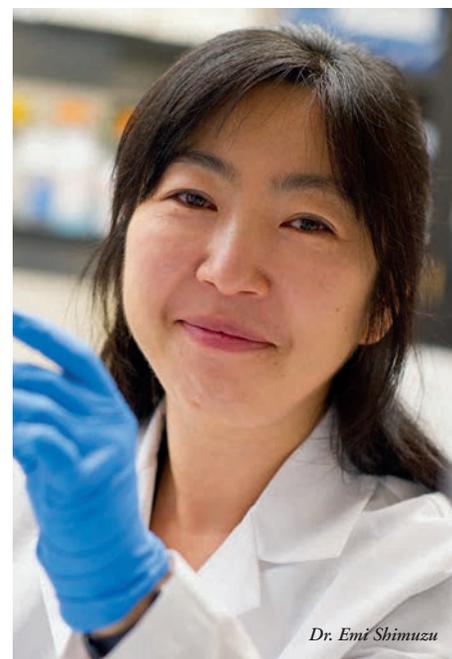
Shimuzu, who is from Japan, is an endodontist studying how to regenerate dental pulp and dentin as an alternative to removing the pulp during root canals.

During the procedure, the pulp is extracted, and the remaining root is filled with synthetic material. But although the tooth remains, it is essentially dead. Pulp maintains healthy teeth and without it, they become vulnerable to injury and caries, says Shimuzu, who arrived in the Oral Biology Department of RSDM last year as an associate professor. It can even lead to an abscess of the bone because nerves within the pulp are no longer there to cause pain—a warning sign of infection.

"My approach is that you should leave the nervous system inside as long as possible," said Shimuzu.

Her work involves isolating stem cells and cultivating them to form the vascular systems that comprise the nervous system of dentin. At New York University College of Dentistry, where she worked before arriving at RSDM, Shimuzu received a \$1.5 million five-year NIH grant to pursue her research, which has carried over to RSDM.

Japanese researchers have made progress in the regeneration of pulp and Shimuzu plans to advance the field in the U.S. "I hope people will have a choice between a root canal, which would be cheaper, or a regenerative procedure. This should be worldwide."



*Dr. Emi Shimuzu*

"Diversity always makes things better because people present different ways of looking at things. It broadens our horizons and increases our ability to teach."

DR. DANIEL FINE

Dr. Emi Shimuzu's research  
on dental nerve regeneration  
is funded with a

**\$1.5 Million**  
NIH GRANT

## Reaching out to Scientists in Africa

At a science convention in San Francisco 19 years ago, Dr. Vincent Tsiagbe and his colleagues noticed only seven black scientists at the event.

“You don’t often see people who look like me going into biomedical science,” he says now.

Those seven scientists became the first members of the Association of African Biomedical Scientists. “We had our first meeting right there on the convention steps,” said Tsiagbe, who is president of the Association.

A professor in the oral biology department, Tsiagbe, who immigrated to the U.S. from Ghana, researches the role of endogenous retrovirus in frequent types of B cell lymphomas, work that in past years has received funding from the NIH National Cancer Institute. Important findings include the development of reagents to detect aggressive cancer via the saliva of patients. One goal is to use the reagents as a diagnostic tool, he says.

Tsiagbe began his career in science studying immunology and returned briefly to Ghana to study Burkitt’s lymphoma,



*Dr. Vincent Tsiagbe*

a form of non-Hodgkin lymphoma that mostly afflicts people in west and central Africa.

A major goal of the association, which now has over 500 members, is to foster the development of science in Africa and promote career development opportunities for Biomedical Scientists in North America. “There are not enough opportunities,” he says.

Each year, they hold a meeting at the conference of The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology,

where students, fellows and faculty give presentations. While the association has helped aspiring scientists in Africa, it has also helped students at Rutgers. “I have had great success mentoring students of African descent who wanted to go to dental school,” said Tsiagbe. “When they came into the program, they often felt discouraged, but with persistence, mentoring and guidance, they turned out to be very successful.”

*An annual overseas dental mission helps children in Haiti.*





# Going Global

The deep need for affordable, accessible oral healthcare is universal. We see daily evidence of this at our clinics in New Jersey and on our dental missions around the world.

RSDM students and faculty make annual trips to Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Bangladesh to treat patients who live in remote corners where oral healthcare and skilled oral & maxillofacial surgery procedures are unavailable, substandard and unaffordable. Within the past year, we also embarked on an additional mission to the Dominican Republic and travelled to Sri Lanka, where we plan on establishing

a temporary clinic for patients disfigured during the nation's civil war and in need of facial reconstruction. In the U.S., we travel each year to work at an Arizona dental clinic located on a Native American reservation.

Journeys like these not only help patients around the world, they are incomparable learning opportunities for our students, who gain an understanding of worldwide

healthcare needs. Many say the missions have had a profound effect on their awareness of global inequities. Because they treat a high volume of patients, who often need more intensive procedures than patients in New Jersey—such as surgical dentistry and complex restorative work—they greatly develop their skills.

At home in New Jersey, where RSDM is the state's largest oral healthcare provider, we also make a difference.

Since Obamacare took effect in 2014, making pediatric dental care an essential benefit and expanding care for underserved adults, our volume of Medicaid patients increased from 30 percent to 50 percent. It allowed us to better serve a population that frequently has no access to dental treatment since most dentists don't accept Medicaid. Many of our patients live in Newark, one of the most economically disadvantaged cities in the state, where 30 percent of residents live below the poverty level. At our Community-Oriented Dental (CODE) program in South Jersey, fourth-year students treat many disadvantaged patients.

Our Delta Dental of New Jersey Special Care Center, which treats patients with disabilities, including those with autism, cerebral palsy and mental illness, is the only one of its kind in the region. In 2016, we logged nearly 5,000 patient visits.

We have also been leaders in dental treatment for HIV/AIDS patients. We have received federal Ryan White funding since 2002 to increase access to clients in underserved regions.



*Teaching proper brushing technique in the Dominican Republic*



*Patients in Bangladesh*

Smiles Across Bangladesh

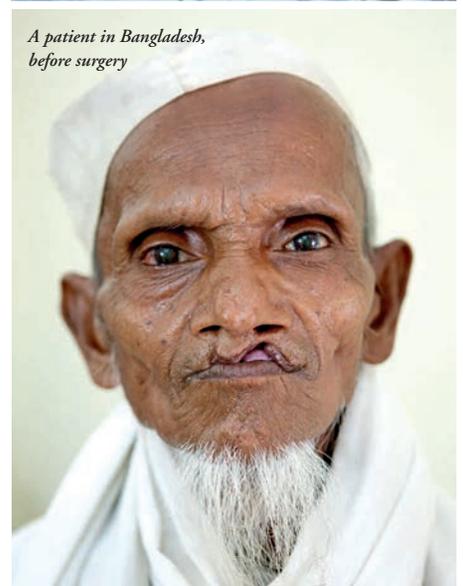
1,110  
PATIENTS

This year, they were also given a boost in funding from a charity ice hockey match between RSDM students and Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. Together, the teams raised more than \$8,500 for Smiles Across Bangladesh, which also includes a volunteer medical student.

“I am very grateful for the initiative taken by the organizers of the hockey game,” said Aziz. “There’s a tremendous need. The work in Bangladesh demonstrates how our university makes a difference globally.”



*A toddler rests after treatment in Bangladesh.*



*A patient in Bangladesh, before surgery*

## Smiles Across Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, there are 300,000 people with cleft lips and palates and only about 20 surgeons capable of performing the surgery.

Since 2006, RSDM oral surgery residents have teamed with nurses and other providers to make two annual trips to Bangladesh to help change the statistics. The team is led by RSDM’s Dr. Shahid Aziz, an oral & maxillofacial surgeon and Bangladesh native who founded a non-profit to fund the trips.

In the U.S., cleft palate surgery, which takes only an hour to complete, is commonly performed on infants. But in

Bangladesh, Aziz operates on many older children and adults who have lived with the deformity all their lives.

They suffer ostracism, social isolation and often have difficulty eating and speaking. On a recent trip, an 18-year-old with a severe facial cleft told providers, “I just want a normal life. I want to be able to get a job and support my family.”

Since the mission began, Aziz’s team has treated more than 1,100 patients.



School children in Sri Lanka

## Healing in Sri Lanka

The six-year civil war in Sri Lanka ended in 2008, but many citizens still bear the scars: burns on the face and body, untreated facial fractures and missing ears and noses, the result of shrapnel and other attacks.

Dr. Shahid Aziz, an RSDM oral & maxillofacial surgeon, plans to lead a facial reconstructive surgery mission to the nation this year.

Last year, his team, which normally travels to Bangladesh, was unable to make the trip due to security issues abroad. Instead, they travelled to the Sri Lankan city of Jaffna, the epicenter of the war, and found many patients who were disfigured.

“It became clear that we were in the right place to help, however, we found that many needed more than we could provide for them at the time... A facial reconstruction camp is what’s most needed,” Aziz determined.

Although his group was able to help a handful of injured residents, they will need more sophisticated resources to perform advanced reconstructive surgery. With some funding from the Lions Club, which sponsored their first trip to Sri Lanka, they are scheduled to return. “It will be an unprecedented challenge for us to run. But one we are willing to take on head first,” vowed Aziz.

“It will be an unprecedented challenge for us to run. But one we are willing to take on head first.” DR. SHAHID AZIZ



Faculty and staff on a dental mission to an Arizona Native American reservation

## Navajo Mission

Many residents of the Navajo Nation reservation in Red Mesa, Arizona live 50 miles or more from the nearest dental clinic.

“I treated patients who hadn’t been to the dentist in years,” said graduate Aileen Zaydel, who as a fourth-year student volunteered to join RSDM’s annual mission to the region’s Indian Health Services dental clinic.

In 2016, Zaydel and seven other students spent a week treating patients at the federally run clinic while doctors were on vacation, a tradition that dates back to 2004, when RSDM faculty and students first made the journey. Before they arrived, students learned about Native American culture to help them understand the best ways to offer treatment.

As part of the mission, led by RSDM’s Dr. Robert Shekitka, Native American staff and RSDM students had a “cultural exchange lunch,” where they shared pizza and Navajo tacos (“which are really good,” noted Zaydel).

She was thankful for the many opportunities to learn from the mission. “It was a great experience, serving a population that’s so in need here in the U.S.,” she said.

La Romana,  
Dominican Republic

111  
PATIENTS



## Cane Fields of the Dominican Republic

On a first-time dental mission to the Dominican Republic last month, RSDM students worked at a clinic near a sugar cane plantation, treating the children of workers and those from a nearby orphanage.

Tooth decay was rampant—in part because of the kids’ habit of gnawing cane and a diet high in sugars and starch—but mostly due to poverty. Dental care was out of reach for many, said Dr. Hermino Perez, who led the trip to the village of La Romana, where they also treated patients at a mobile clinic.

“There were a lot of fractured and broken teeth,” said Perez. “Many of them didn’t want to smile, but when they saw results of our work, they were smiling all over the place.”

The outreach program was a collaborative effort between World of Smiles, Fundacion Mir and Rutgers School of Dental Medicine with the support of Henry Schein Cares, the International College of Dentists and the New York Academy of Dentistry.

In four days, the team provided dental services to 111 patients ranging from 6 to 17, and a total of 170 dental procedures.

For student Zak Yermolenko, the trip was a chance to educate children about oral health and help them feel at ease with dental work.

He remembers one 11-year-old girl who had never been to a dentist before and needed a cavity filled. She was terrified by the tray of dental instruments, but Yermolenko put her at ease, slowly talking her through the steps, from anesthesia to drilling. “I was able to be calming and reliable, so now she can have trust in the dentist and not be afraid. I feel like I changed her perception of dental care,” he said.



## Two Towns, Two Nations

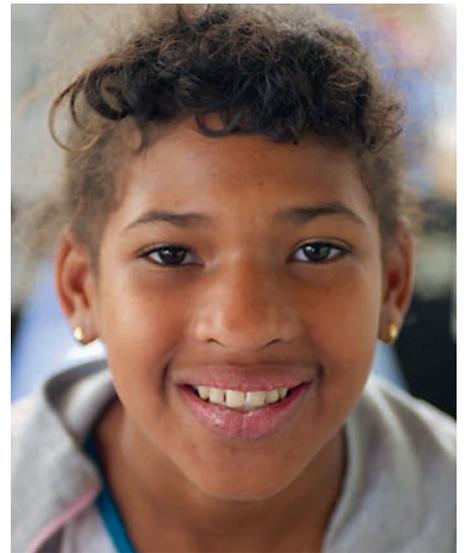
On one dental mission, RSDM students are able to help patients from two different cultures and countries: Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The Cheerful Heart mission began seven years ago in a makeshift hospital clinic in Restauración, Dominican Republic, and also treated patients across the border in nearby Tilori, Haiti, where conditions are especially impoverished and toothbrushes are considered a luxury.

Led by RSDM's Dr. Pamela Alberto, the mission is now able to provide two separate clinics in each country. Alberto, who was joined this year by RSDM's Dr. Robert Shekitka, was also able to see the results of the mission's past work. Because of the team's preventive care efforts, including sealant applications and fluoride

treatments, children had fewer cavities than they did in 2010, when the trips began. On a mission in March, the team treated more than 800 patients in two weeks, far more than on earlier visits.

Third-year student Hector Suazo, who is from the Dominican Republic, remembers repairing the broken tooth of a self-conscious middle-school boy who suddenly looked forward to attending his first school dance. "He felt like no one invited him places because of his teeth. He worried that girls didn't like him," said Suazo. "He was ashamed of smiling but when I fixed his tooth, he was so happy he gave me a hug."



*Above and left: Pediatric patients from the Cheerful Heart dental mission*



The mission was especially meaningful for fourth-year student Patricia Larosilliere, a Haitian native. It was not only a chance to alleviate dental pain and help ensure a healthier life for patients, her presence showed children what is possible.

"Here I am, a girl who grew up in Haiti with a background very similar to them, and now, I'm going to be a doctor," she said proudly. "They're seeing nurses and doctors who look exactly like them. I really wanted to show them that."



# A World of Difference

Our network of alumni, donors and the professional dental community spans the globe. Graduates have landed everywhere from Texas and Colorado to Greece, Italy, Jamaica and India. But much of the networking and support happens here in the Garden State.

RSDM alumni are a diverse group, numbering in the thousands, who serve as donors and mentors to students, bolstering RSDM's mission of education, patient care and service. Some join us on our dental missions overseas while others mingle and re-connect at our annual reunion and other Rutgers events.

Our Continuing Dental Education program has a broad reach, educating state of New Jersey dentists and beyond on the latest in research, technology and treatment techniques through lectures, hands-on experiences and patient programs. Each year, we are one of a handful of institutions worldwide that offer the American Academy of Implant Dentistry's Implant Dentistry Maxicourse, which shares the

field's newest advances. Last year, 100 percent of our participants passed the written portion of the exam.

Our online Continuing Dental Education course, Update in Orofacial Pain, has taught students from around the world, including Australia, Europe, Zambia and the Philippines.

The six-month course, founded in 1999, when few other dental schools were offering online classes, allows dentists to learn the latest in pain diagnosis and management. Instructors are RSDM faculty who are experts in orofacial pain. More than 600 dentists and residents around the globe have completed the course.



*Class photos from RSDM yearbooks line school halls.*



“It helps so much to have someone who went through the same thing giving you advice.”

DR. HERMINIO PEREZ

After graduation, Perez did his residency at Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center, where many patients reminded him of the people he grew up with in Old San Juan. “I was taking care of Puerto Ricans, only outside of Puerto Rico,” he said. “Patients respond to you differently when you can speak their language and they know you understand them because you came from the same background. It was very rewarding.”

Perez, who began volunteering as an RSDM instructor in 2006, knows how important it is for minority students, especially those who are disadvantaged, to see people like themselves successfully navigate college and the professional world. They can share knowledge and insights that others can't.

But Perez knows first-hand that dental school can be isolating and overwhelming for anyone. To that end, he has worked hard at developing programs that foster a sense of community and trust among students, such as the Houses program, which divides students into groups that learn and socialize together.

It's his mission to make sure that all students at RSDM find support, not only from staff and faculty, but from each other. “They need to have something in their environment that lets them know they're more than welcome,” says Perez.

## Overseas Alum Guides Students

Growing up in Barrio Obrero, a poor sector in Puerto Rico, RSDM's Dr. Herminio Perez never visited a dental school or had a conversation with a dentist.

There was one “community dentist” who made annual visits to schools but was mostly a stranger to Perez, Director of Student and Multicultural Affairs at RSDM.

“I didn't have anybody who was my role model. There wasn't really a way for you to know what dentistry was like,” recalls Perez, Class of '04.

When he arrived, he spoke little English and knew nothing about college life in the U.S. “It was one of the biggest challenges

I've ever had. You leave your family members behind and come to another place to meet different people in a different educational system,” says Perez.

One thing that helped him through was the support of mentors, like Dr. Kim Fenesy, Vice Dean of RSDM. Dr. Mayra Mesa, a former oral pathologist at RSDM, was also a role model. “They offered to be the family outside of my family,” says Perez who began his full-time job at RSDM in 2013.

## Like Father, Like Daughter

As a child, Dr. Lauren Lapinski remembers hanging out in her father's dental office, helping him mount x-rays and learning about facial anatomy.

Little did she know that she would some day be working with him.

Lapinski and her dad, Dr. Robert Lapinski, are both RSDM alums who have their own practice, Lapinski Dental, in Hillsborough. Lauren is Class of '05 and Robert is Class of '71.

When Lauren decided she wanted to go to dental school, Robert wasn't exactly encouraging. "He said it was a nightmare. He said, 'Are you sure you want to do it? It's very difficult, it's a hard road,'" recalls Lauren.

She was undaunted and enrolled at RSDM, where Robert also worked as a clinical instructor from 2001 until 2004.

After graduation, she went to work with her dad and also did a stint at other practices. Eventually, she decided to join Robert's practice full-time. But even though she's the boss's daughter, she still had to prove herself. "He told me up front, 'If

you're not good, I'm not letting you work with me,'" Lauren says with a laugh.

Luckily, that has not been the case, according to Robert. "The patients love her," he says. "She's a very good dentist."

While Lauren admits that both she and her dad are "Type A personalities," their working relationship has been a success. "We've always respected each other," she says. "And he's always treated me like a professional."



## Special Delivery

When Drs. Justin Stone and Robert Kroll opened their dental practice in 1961, they knew that patients with disabilities had trouble finding dentists.

Most dentists had little or no experience treating patients with special needs and many were too nervous or uncomfortable to attempt it.

But Kroll and Stone spread the word that these were just the type of patients they wanted to help. They built a thriving Essex County practice with a reputation for specializing in patients with disabilities, and after they retired, RSDM invited them in 1993 to open a clinic devoted solely to patients with special needs.

In addition to offering treatment, they trained students until they retired as faculty. The clinic is now known as the Delta Dental of New Jersey Special Care Center and is one of the only clinics of its kind in the region. It treats patients with physical and mental disabilities, including cerebral palsy, autism and behavioral disorders. It also specializes in geriatric patients.

To recognize their efforts, an endowed scholarship for RSDM Special Care Honors Program students was created in their name with \$100,000 from The Atlantic Philanthropies. The donation will allow annual scholarships to be awarded in



From left, Dr. Robert Kroll, Chelsea Rajagopalan and Dr. Justin Stone

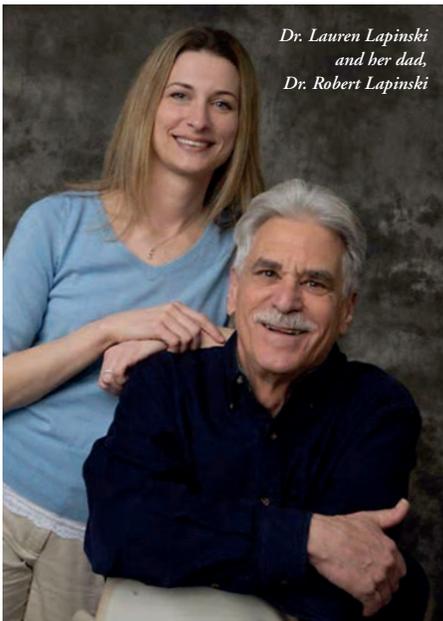
perpetuity to other students focusing on the special care population.

Last month, the inaugural scholarship was awarded to Chelsea Rajagopalan, who graduated this year and will pursue a residency at the Helen Hayes Hospital for patients with physical disabilities.

"Before I came to RSDM, I didn't know that special care dentistry was a thing, that it could be an option for me or a route I could take," Rajagopalan said at a ceremony attended by Kroll, Stone and their family members, friends and colleagues. "You are both an inspiration to me."

Kroll and Stone met during their residencies at Martland Hospital in Newark. They shared the same desire to treat patients that other dentists avoided and the two went into business together.

When Kroll was asked why the duo was able to succeed as pioneers in the field, he was modest. "We're both pretty empathetic people," he said. "As professionals, we were sincere about what we did."



Dr. Lauren Lapinski  
and her dad,  
Dr. Robert Lapinski

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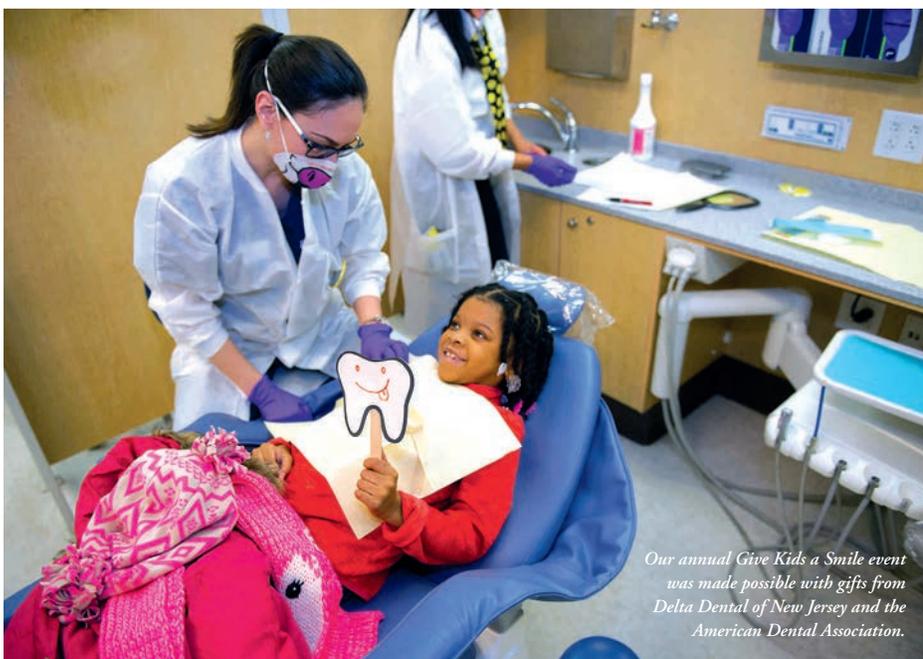
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*With funding from Nobel Biocare, the annual AAID Implant Dentistry Maxicourse held at RSDM was a success.*

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# 2016

## Timeline



### April

RSDM celebrated the grand opening of its Dental Specialty Center, which integrates state-of-the-art patient care in one clinic. Completed with \$13 million in state and matching funds, it allows postdoctoral students to work with faculty members in five specialties.



### May

The 110 graduates who said goodbye to RSDM included a baton twirler, a former marketing manager for the Baltimore Ravens, an acclaimed cake decorator and many others.



### January

At our Match Day ceremony, Dean Feldman announced that 90 percent of RSDM students seeking a match had found one, compared to the national average of 67 percent. Our students found matches all over the U.S.



### February

Hundreds of Essex County children received free dental screenings and preventive treatments at RSDM's annual Give Kids a Smile event. There were also student doctors dressed as tooth fairies and a chance to play the Wheel of Dentistry game.

### March

At Balbo Day, RSDM's annual expo showcasing student research, presenters displayed everything from oral biology findings to patient case studies.





## June

RSDM celebrated its 60th anniversary. Since its founding as the Seton Hall College of Medicine and Dentistry, it has helped lead the profession's evolution. The birthday also coincided with Rutgers University's 250th anniversary.

## July

Structural biologist Vijay Parashar received an NIH-MIRA Outstanding Investigator award of \$1.6 million for his research on bacterial signal transduction mechanisms.



## August

The Class of 2020 was officially welcomed to the dental profession at the White Coat Ceremony, which marks their new role as caregivers.

## September

Rutgers Health University Dental Associates opened its new faculty practice office in New Brunswick, where world-class dentists and specialists offer the latest treatments.



## October

Staff, students and faculty stopped short of giving out candy on Halloween. But they did celebrate the holiday by dressing up on the clinic floor.



## November

RSDM and NJMS researchers Daniel Kadouri and Nancy Connell found evidence that predatory bacteria can kill pneumonia in a rat animal model. The discovery was hailed as a scientific first.

## December

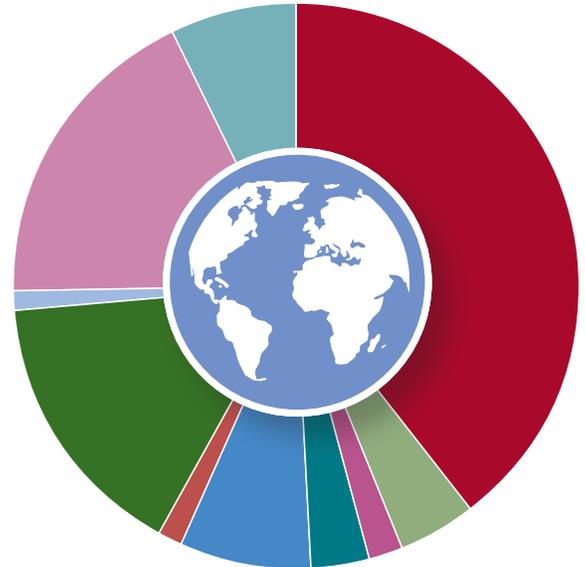
Students and faculty from our Northfield CODE site raised awareness on World AIDS Day in Atlantic City and May's Landing. Residents were invited to participate in free health screenings and HIV testing.



# Financial Report 2016 – 2017

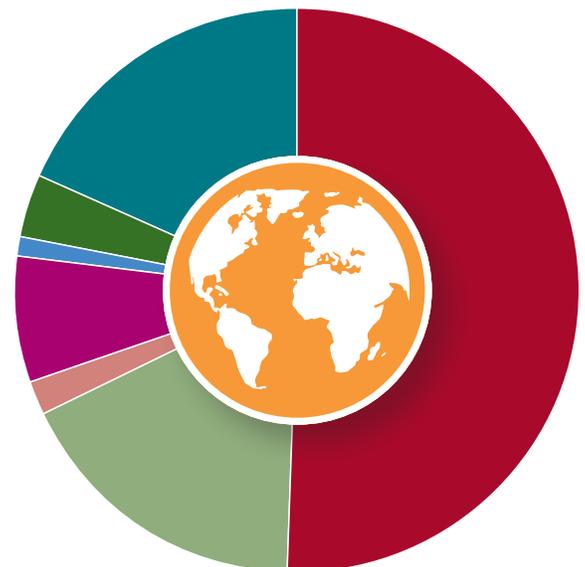
## Revenues

	2016 Actual	Percent
● Tuition and Fees	\$25,228	39.6%
● Faculty Practice Plan Services	\$2,882	4.5%
● Housestaff Recoveries	\$1,208	1.9%
● Affiliate Revenues	\$2,025	3.2%
● Recoveries of Dir. Grant Exp.	\$4,821	7.6%
● Indirect Cost Recoveries	\$907	1.4%
● Net Patient Service Revenues	\$9,939	15.6%
● Donations and Endowment Inc	\$660	1.0%
● State Appropriations	\$11,555	18.1%
● Other	\$4,538	7.1%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$63,764</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Expenses

	2016 Actual	Percent
● Salaries and Wages	\$33,382	50.5%
● Non-Salary	\$11,496	17.4%
● Housestaff Salaries	\$1,212	1.8%
● Direct Grant Expenses	\$4,816	7.3%
● Life Cycle Management	\$624	0.9%
● Interunit Transfers	\$2,461	3.7%
● Central Administration Cost Pools	\$12,049	18.2%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$66,041</b>	<b>100.0%</b>





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