What does the future hold for orthodontic education?

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How can postgraduate orthodontic programs promote faculty survival and success?

According to Dr. Richard S. Maselka, Executive Professor, Department of Orthodontics, College of Dental Medicine, Nova Southeastern University, “At every academic turn, career opportunity lurks. Many potential and neophyte dental educators follow their passions. Higher education institutions, including dental schools, are giant factories for advancement. Educational growth is explosive and nonstop, especially in the health professions, with all valuable aspects of life, an academic career is not a one-way fun journey, but one that has its ups and downs.”

“Ample personal satisfaction awaits the dental educator in helping train the next generation of professionals, including individual professional interests, and serving as a model of professional conduct. The latter includes the singular opportunity to define professionalism as a caring and humanitarian activity that respects patients, collegiality, and compassion to give something back to community and profession. Another gift is the prospect of discovery that transforms science and education and benefits humanity. All lie in the educator’s purview.”

“Given the importance of recruiting and retaining dental faculty,accurate informed consent regarding the dental schoolwork environment is crucial. Awareness of reality minimizes surprise and helps the academic secure a positive outcome” (Maselka, R. 2005. Internal Dental School Environmental Factors Promoting Faculty Survival and Success. J Dent Educ. 69(4):340-445).

Internet-based resources replace postgraduate orthodontic faculty?

Three universities and $500,000 from the AAO have implemented an Internet-based Distance Learning Project. This is a collaborative research effort to determine effective methods of interactive Internet-based instruction, including small group and seminar discussions, for graduate orthodontic programs. This research will utilize advanced network applications available through Internet2, a more powerful, faster version of the Internet. Using video conferencing and Internet2 network applications, the Ohio State University, University of Louisville and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill will conduct pilot tests on multiple combinations of interactive multi-centers and Internet-based instruction, which will be compared to traditional teaching methods. Project goals include determining the effectiveness of distance learning through seminar-based instruction and on-demand teaching materials.

“The AAO, to its great credit, is interested in helping orthodontic education,” said Dr. Proﬁt, who is highly interested in developing more effective teaching methods and has been conducting research on Internet-based instruction for some time.

“We want to make sure that when we conduct distance-learning seminars, we feel like we are sitting across the table,” said Dr. William Engling, clinical instructor in orthodontics at the University of Louisville and a member of the AAO Council on Information Technology.

Will surfing the digital highway of knowledge, better known as the Internet, replace mentoring and save the future of orthodontics?

So much for Socratic learning. Fifty years ago, who would have dreamed of an educational transformation that would encourage learning without a teacher or classroom? With the advent of the personal computer and the Internet, we are all part of this technological reform and explosion. This “virtual university” concept extends educational access to the masses as well as through the “knowledge industry” (for-profit higher education institutions). Will orthodontics become part of this virtual learning concept?

Along with this growth, new ethical issues develop that have no precedent,.results of which become policy and standards that focus on consequences, duties, and rights.

And let’s face it, what part-time or full-time orthodontic instructor is there for the “modest” financial rewards? To the credit of these caring, devoted, and dedicated, they probably spend more money in gas, tolls and other traveling expenses than they earn teaching, not to mention loss of income from their office.

Not long ago at a White House press conference, a harassed public relations ofﬁcer responded to a reporter’s tough question with an out-of-scope answer; “Hey, that’s history.” By placing an issue in the historical domain, you are going unless you know where you came from” (John F. Kennedy, source unknown). Who can defy these important words?

As I got older, my father got smarter...he insisted that change is not an issue but one that has its ups and downs.”

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The AAO Board of Trustees will appoint a ﬁve-member ad hoc committee to admit and deliver this funding, which will be equally distributed to all U.S.- and Canadian-accredited postdoctoral orthodontic programs that successfully apply. The chair or program director of each department will decide how the funds will be allocated to existing program faculty and/or used for recruiting new faculty. (To learn more about this program, review the resolution approved by the House of Delegates.)

Over the next year, the AAO Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of Faculty will study the feasibility of developing an alternative approach to orthodontic education, a program to support alumni associations, and alternative faculty practice models. During the 106th AAO Annual Session, the House of Delegates and the Board of Trustees passed several resolutions speciﬁcally for faculty force responsibilities.

Contact
For information about the American Board of Orthodontics eligibility and certification process, go to the AAO Web site: www.americanboardortho.com or write to: The American Board of Orthodontics 101 N. Lindbergh Blvd., Suite 508 St. Louis, MO 63141-7839 Phone: 514.452.8150 Fax: 514.452.8170 E-mail: info@americanboardortho.com

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