ST. LOUIS — Through its Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of Faculty, progress is being made in the American Association of Orthodontists’ (AAO) quest to seek long-term, sustainable solutions to the crisis in orthodontic education.

“We are beginning to realize our goal of putting realistic and lasting solutions in place to address the faculty recruitment and retention,” Task Force Chair and AAO Past President Donald R. Joondeph, DDS, MS, said.

First steps

The Task Force’s first initiative, implemented in the AAO’s 2006–2007 fiscal year, was disbursement of $2 million to augment salaries of full-time faculty at accredited post-doctoral orthodontic programs in the United States and Canada. One-time awards of up to $50,000 were distributed to 142 orthodontic faculty members in recognition of their contributions to the specialty and as an incentive to remain in orthodontic education.

More measures implemented

AAO efforts during its 2007–2008 fiscal year secured commitments for more than 60 years of teaching through a new initiative: full-time faculty teaching fellowships. Eleven faculty members received two- or three-year fellowships. Fellows receive $50,000 for each year of the fellowship and must commit to teaching a number of years equal to the length of the fellowship. Two-year fellows must teach a total of four years. Three-year fellows must teach a total of six years. The 2008 AAO House of Delegates extended this initiative for new fellowships that will range from two years to five years, yielding four to 10 years of teaching per fellow.

The Task Force is launching a clearinghouse on faculty job opportunities on the AAO’s member Web site, AAOmembers.org, to make these positions known to a wide audience. A presentation on academic careers was developed for orthodontic students and residents as they consider their post-graduation options.

In addition, the AAO Foundation (AAOF) has made significant contributions to orthodontic education for more than a decade. Since 1994, $6.9 million in endowment earnings from the AAOF’s “A Case for the Future” campaign have been awarded to support orthodontic faculty, teaching fellowships and research. The AAOF has made it possible for many educators to remain in the classroom.

(Source: AAO)