

Frequently Asked Questions About Academic Dentistry For Practitioners

Is it realistic to seek a faculty position from a background of private practice?

Yes. In fact, according to the most recent data from dental schools, private practice is the number one source of faculty appointments, both full time and part time.

Do I need additional training or education?

Not necessarily, it depends on your objectives. Among dentistry's disciplines, the greatest numbers of faculty openings are in general/operative dentistry, for which a dental degree and practice experience may be good qualification. That can be true in a number of other areas also. Advanced or graduate education may be required for some types of positions, as in specialty departments, and is generally the case for faculty who conduct independent research.

Can I still practice dentistry if I become a full-time faculty member?

Generally, yes. Nearly all dental schools offer opportunity for participation in a faculty practice plan. This generally also allows generation of income above salary. And, of course, interaction with patients occurs in teaching clinics.

What are some of the advantages of an academic appointment?

Many dental academicians say that the principal advantages are the daily intellectual and professional stimulation from outstanding colleagues in the school and university settings, and the opportunity to interact with and influence bright, young students who are the future of the profession. Additionally, an academic career offers excellent opportunity for participation in professional and community organizations and for engaging in research independently or with colleagues. Time for personal and professional development is usual, and daily schedules have interesting variety. The employing institution often supports travel for professional purposes. When fringe benefits over a lifetime are included, mean total compensation compares favorably to mean practice income. For additional information, you can obtain a video in DVD format, *Academic Careers in Dentistry*, from the American Dental Education Association (ADEA).

What are usual fringe benefits?

For full- or substantially full-time appointments, most institutions will offer retirement plans, health insurance, prescription drug plans, other types of insurance at reduced rates, e.g., life, long-term care, tuition benefits for the faculty member and his/her family, and perhaps other benefits in addition to salary. Under "cafeteria" benefit plans, many benefits can be on a pre-tax or tax-deferred basis, and employees of public institutions can participate in tax-deferred supplementary retirement plans.

What's the difference between non-tenure, tenure track, and tenured faculty positions?

Non-tenure track positions generally are for defined specific purposes, usually one or two but not all three of the academic triad of teaching, service or research. These appointments generally are by renewable contractual arrangements between the institution and the faculty member. Contracts may be for varying lengths of time, including possible multi-year terms. Tenure track positions are probationary appointments intended to lead to tenure, and generally require productivity in all three of the principal academic areas teaching, service and research. At the end of the probationary period (usually six years), a decision for or against awarding tenure is made based on peer and administrative review of accomplishments and needs of the institution. Tenure provides academic freedom by protecting against dismissal except for cause.

How do I find out about available faculty positions?

You should contact the Dean's Office, or appropriate Department Chair if you know the structure, of the school(s) of interest to you. Specify your areas of competence and interest, and include a *Curriculum vitae*. Further you can monitor the *Bulletin of Dental Education* published by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) and consult relevant specialty journals in which schools will advertise their open positions. Also, ADEA provides a web-based employment database and search tool called Academic Dental Careers Network (ACDN) for individuals interested in a faculty position and for institutions seeking to fill vacant positions. The ACDN can be accessed by link at www.adea.org.