

The work we do to improve oral health for all —exemplified by the award winners— matters as much to those outside the academy as to those within.

In this month's letter, Dr. Rick Valachovic, Executive Director of the American Dental Education Association, celebrates this year's recipients of the William J. Gies Awards for Vision, Innovation, and Achievement.



Award Winners Shape Our Community and the World Beyond

It feels as if I have barely caught my breath since saying goodbye to many of you at the 2010 ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition. I am eager to share my thoughts on the many stimulating discussions in which I was privileged to take part. But time is short, and I want a few more weeks to digest what went on, so look for that topic in this letter next month.

Right now, I am focused on why we do this work we call dental education and the virtues of collaboration in doing it well, both of which bring me to this year's [William J. Gies Awards for Vision, Innovation, and Achievement](#). The individuals and the institutions honored this year may be familiar to many of you, yet I suspect that a number of them have been working, if not in the shadows, then beyond the radar screens of many of our members. The fact that each is accomplished will come as no surprise, but why they were chosen to receive the awards and how their work is impacting our community and the world beyond—well, therein lie some astonishing stories.

The first award conveyed at this year's ceremony went to Michael R. Sudzina for Outstanding Achievement by a Public or Private Partner. Mike was honored for fostering an environment of collaboration among the corporate world, dental education, and organized dentistry during his 35-year tenure at [The Procter and Gamble Company](#). Bringing such diverse constituencies together to achieve common goals is no small feat—sometimes we don't even speak the same language. But Mike's understated leadership style, wisdom, and generosity succeeded in breaking down barriers.

True to his innate modesty, Mike told those gathered, "My being here this evening has been a group effort. My colleagues make me look good, and senior leadership provides me with the latitude and the time to pursue projects with the dental education community."

Mike served two terms as Chair of the ADEA Corporate Council and had a major impact on ADEA's diversity and equity initiatives through sponsorship and his personal involvement.

The evening's next honoree also provided invaluable guidance and support to the ADEA Center for Equity and Diversity (ADEA CED). Barbara J. Sabol, recipient of the Gies Award for Outstanding Vision by a Public or Private Partner, assisted ADEA CED in developing sustainable programs to meet the demands for future dental school faculty and to provide access to oral health care for vulnerable populations.

This former Program Director for the Food, Health and Well-being, and Policy teams at the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) began her acceptance speech with the words "open wide," but the words were not delivered in jest. They were the start of a book title, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir* by Dr. Dorothy Height, who (in Barbara's words) "honors me, ADEA, and its work by joining us here tonight." It was fitting for this veteran of the civil rights movement to be present as we honored a contemporary champion of the underserved. Barbara went on to say that as a nurse, she was reminded of the significance of partnerships such as those between ADEA, Kellogg, and other foundations, and closed by thanking all those who will continue to open gates of opportunity.

The next award went to Dr. No-Hee Park, the longest serving dean at the [University of California, Los Angeles \(UCLA\) School of Dentistry](#) for Outstanding Achievement by a Dental Educator. No-Hee restored the once struggling dental school to financial health and went on to reform the school's curriculum and academic structure, transforming UCLA into a research-intensive dental school.

No-Hee spoke of the long journey that took him from South Korea through Georgia and Boston to L.A., and shared his pride in the achievements of the more than 100 young scientists whose careers he has guided. "Teaching and mentoring magnify our impact like nothing else," he told the audience. "I've no doubt his words resonated with many in the crowd and imbued them with a similar sense of pride."

The next individual to take the stage was Dr. Patrick Lloyd, who accepted the Gies Award for Outstanding Vision by an Academic Dental Institution on behalf of the [University of Minnesota School of Dentistry](#) (UMSD). UMSD took the leading role in transforming the process by which dentists are licensed in Minnesota. The state will use the results of the Canadian National Dental Board examination for initial licensure of dentists, becoming the first state in the country not to use patient-based examinations.

As Dean of UMSD, Patrick accepted the award on behalf of his institution with 20 students, staff, and faculty members in attendance. He also expressed his sincere thanks to the National Dental Examining Board of Canada and the Minnesota Dental Association, praising "what we can accomplish when we collaborate." Most believe this effort will have far-reaching implications, perhaps leading the way to a single national licensure examination.

I personally had the pleasure of presenting the Gies Award for Outstanding Vision by a Dental Educator to Prof. Patricia Nunn, Dental Hygiene Program Director at [Texas Woman's University](#). In earlier positions in Oklahoma and Utah, Patricia established high-quality degree-completion programs, accelerated programs, and distance learning opportunities in dental hygiene. She was only recently asked to bring her vision and leadership skills to Texas, but I have no doubt she will make her mark there as well.

I have known Patricia for many years, and her personal story is a testament to the transformative power of education. During her acceptance speech, she thanked many people, most especially her colleagues and mentors. When she closed by thanking "my family and God for the many blessings that have brought this high school dropout to this stage tonight," I was deeply moved.

William J. Gies II joined us to present the Gies Award for Outstanding Innovation by a Public or Private Partner to the [Student Clinicians of the American Dental Association](#) (SCADA) program. He revealed a touch of envy when he shared his reaction to a video shown earlier in the evening showcasing his grandfather's accomplishments. His take-away message? "Boy, he had a lot of hair!" He went on to assure those gathered that his grandfather couldn't be happier about the research represented by the 2010 Gies Awards.

Dr. Leo Rouse, Dean of [Howard University College of Dentistry](#) and current President of SCADA, accepted the award on behalf of the SCADA Board of Directors, program sponsor [DENTSPLY International, Inc.](#), and the [American Dental Association](#) (ADA). The 51-year-old program invites U.S. dental students to represent their schools at the research table clinic competition held during the ADA Annual Session. By fostering interaction around research ideas and cooperation among dental professionals and students, the program has had a global impact, creating leaders in dental education, research, organized dentistry, and industry.

Collaboration was once again the theme as the oldest continuous clinic studying the impact of fear of dental treatment received the Gies Award for Outstanding Innovation by an Academic Dental Institution. The [Dental Fears Research Clinic](#) at the [University of Washington School of Dentistry](#) was represented by Clinic Director Dr. Tar Chee Aw. He surprised the audience by saying that he never would have met Dr. Peter Milgrom, the clinic's cofounder and presenter of the award, had it not been for the Internet. The two colleagues work in the same building!

Aw complimented Peter and psychologist Dr. Phil Weinstein, the clinic's cofounder, saying "I stand on the shoulders of giants." These scholars' interprofessional collaboration has produced a training ground for students of all levels seeking specialized skills in providing dental care to anxious and mentally challenged patients. Many of the innovations developed at the clinic have been adopted both here and abroad.

After dancing his way to the microphone, the next award recipient, Dr. Israel Kleinberg, elicited applause for his "moves" by announcing he was just two months shy of his 80th birthday. The audience was eager to hear tales of his long and stellar career, and Israel happily obliged.

The Distinguished Professor and Director of the Division of Translational Oral Biology in the Department of Oral Biology and Pathology at [Stony Brook University School of](#)

[Dental Medicine](#) spoke of training more than 50 Ph.D. students and of the strong partnership he continues to enjoy with former student Lorne Golub, who presented the award. He argued for applied research, likening basic research to “milking a cow without a pail,” and he defended his study of mixed flora rather than pure cultures, tantalizing the audience with the prospect his work may soon lead to a discovery that will change flora in the colon, so people can eat whatever they want without getting fat. In short, Israel’s innovations have revolutionized dentistry, and their impact may ultimately be felt far beyond our discipline.

This year’s Gies Award for Outstanding Achievement by an Academic Dental Institution went to [The Forsyth Institute](#). Founded in 1910 to provide dental care to Boston’s disadvantaged children, it has evolved into one of the premier dental research institutions in the country while retaining its commitment to public health. Since the 1960s, it has ranked in the top four in National Institutes of Health research funding, and it has a top publication record in oral and craniofacial research over the last 40 years.

In receiving the award, Forsyth’s President and CEO, Dr. Philip Stashenko alluded to Forsyth’s rich 100-year past and praised the amazing cadre of scientists who have made the institute such a force in the dental education community. We can expect more of the same in the years ahead as Forsyth takes up residence in a new state-of-the-art facility in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The evening ended on a poignant note as [MIT Knight Science Journalism Fellow Mary Otto](#) ascended the stage to receive the Gies Award for Outstanding Achievement by a Public or Private Partner. You may not recognize her name, but you are almost certainly aware of her achievement. Mary is the journalist who broke the story of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver in [The Washington Post](#), alerting the nation to the potentially fatal consequences of an absence of dental care.

Although a writer by trade, Mary struggled to find words that could adequately express her emotions. “I’ll spend years living up to this,” she began, and went on to express her awe at sharing the stage with people actively working to provide care. She credited the Deamonte Driver story with opening her eyes to the needs that surround oral health and expressed a desire to keep telling the stories of those who need care.

This last speech of the evening was the shortest by far, but captured the essence of why the work we do matters as much to those outside the academy as to those within. The presence of a journalist among accomplished researchers, advocates, and educators speaks once again to the vital role of collaboration in advancing our ultimate mission: to improve oral health for all.

As for the event itself, let me just say what a pleasure it was to see the award recipients standing on stage in the lavender glow of the hall, basking in the recognition of their peers. René Syler, our emcee, enlivened the evening with self-effacing jokes that endeared her to one and all and insisted that everyone dance their way to the microphone. As always, we have the generosity of many academic, foundation, and corporate sponsors to thank for making this event possible, especially [Johnson & Johnson Healthcare Products, Division of McNEIL-PPC, Inc.](#), which is a champion of the [ADEAGies Foundation’s](#) initiatives for advancing excellence in dental education in the nation’s dental schools. If you are able to join us for next year’s awards ceremony, I promise you will be entertained, enlightened, and awed by our visionary, innovative, and accomplished community.



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