



## Introduction

Changes in the culture of higher education institutions have led to an increasing number of integrity related concerns<sup>1</sup>. Professionalism initiatives in colleges of health professions education have been focused on students, residents and/or faculty members. None included staff members, important members of the college community. Thus, an innovative approach to enhancing professionalism across the college community was developed to include all stakeholders in the college.

Surveys of the public indicate that dentists are among the most trusted professionals<sup>2</sup>. However, incidents of unprofessional behaviors in dental schools could undermine the public's trust of dental professionals. Thus, it is imperative that colleges of dentistry promote professionalism across their college community.

**Goal:** Make the Ohio State University College of Dentistry known nationally for the importance the college community places on professionalism.

## Professionalism Task Force

A task force led by an outside consultant was charged to evaluate the current state of professionalism in the college, and to investigate options and make recommendations for enhancing professionalism. Task force members were chosen to ensure that students, staff, faculty stakeholders in the college community were represented. In addition, a representative from organized dentistry and a medical bioethicist were also members of the task force.

## College-wide Seminars

The Task Force invited speakers to talk about topics or their experiences with issues raised by the Task Force (Table 1).

**Table 1: Invited Speakers**

**Janet Osuch, MD; Assistant Dean of Pre-Clinical Curriculum, College of Human Medicine, Michigan State University**  
*The Virtuous Professional: A System of Professional Development for Students, Residents, and Faculty*

**Katherine Kelly, PhD; Associate Dean for Assessment and Strategic Initiatives, College of Pharmacy, The Ohio State University**  
*Cross-Validation of and instrument for Measuring Professional Behaviors*

**Ashley Fernandes, MD; Associate Director, Center for Bioethics and Medical Humanities, College of Medicine, The Ohio State University**  
*Attitudes Toward Professionalism Among First-Year Medical Students- Bridging the Generational Gap as a Challenge in Professionalism Education*

**Roberta Gibbons, PhD; Merit Consulting**  
Process for developing a professionalism climate survey for students, residents, staff, and faculty members.

**Ryan Nash, MD, MA; Director, Center for Bioethics and Medical Humanities, The Ohio State University**  
*The Ties That Bind Us: Complex Considerations of Professionalism in the Healing Professions*

**Dorothy Perry, PhD; Associate Dean for Education and Student Affairs, School of Dentistry, University of California, San Francisco.**  
*Pass/No Pass Curriculum- how does it work or does it work at all?*

**Ed Morales, DPT; Director of Sales, ExamSoft**  
Use of Computer-based Examinations for Secure and Valid Evaluation of Student Knowledge

**Annette McMurry, JD; Director of Admissions, College of Dentistry, The Ohio State University**  
The process of admission to the Ohio State University predoctoral dental program and what role, if any, professionalism plays in the process.

**John Davis, MD; Associate Dean for Medical Education, College of Medicine, The Ohio State University**  
*Lead, Serve & Inspire (LSI) curriculum*

**Cynthia Beeman, DDS, PhD; Associate Professor, Division of Orthodontics, College of Dentistry, University of Kentucky**  
Discussion of why faculty members at the University of Kentucky, School of Dentistry reverted back from Pass/Fail grading to letter grading for the predoctoral dental program.

**Sara Fowler, DMD, MS; Assistant Professor, Division of Endodontics, College of Dentistry, The Ohio State University**  
*It Never Really Goes Away: Professionalism Violations in the Digital Era*

## PTF Subcommittees

After reviewing the literature and hearing from experts in areas related to professionalism, the task force identified five areas of focus for enhancing professionalism in the College of Dentistry. The subcommittees and their charges are listed in the Table 2.

**Table 2: PTF Subcommittees and Charges**

- Initiating & Branding New Initiatives
  - What should the new initiative be called?
  - Should it have subparts such as values, principles, behaviors, etc.?
  - What graphic (brand) should represent it?
  - What are three best ways to introduce initiative to the college community?
- Change, Augment or Increase Curricula in Professionalism
  - Identify how, where, what, formal curriculum is in place
  - Can an informal curriculum be identified?
  - Is the current curriculum sufficient in eyes of students, staff, faculty, and administrators?
  - If not, what are options for improving it?
- Increase Awareness of Professionalism in the College
  - What are options to emphasizing the importance of professional behavior to all?
  - Is it best to approach this as a college or to work in concert with other University units?
  - What resources may be important?
- Developing Better Assessment Methods for Professionalism
  - How do we assess professionalism now for students?
  - How do other institutions evaluate students, staff, and faculty members?
  - What behaviors should be included in the assessment?
  - What needs to happen before new assessment schemes are implemented?
- Reward Examples of Especially Strong Professionalism
  - What types of behavior should be recognized?
  - What would be the mechanisms for nomination, selection, and bestowing the awards?

## PTF Subcommittee Recommendations

Each subcommittee met at least twice, developed a written report and gave an oral report to the Task Force. A sample of the recommendations from the subcommittees is listed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Examples of Subcommittee Recommendations**

- Evaluate the professionalism of each student, staff, and faculty member including input from appropriate stakeholders.
- Examine approaches used by other health professions colleges that emphasize the importance of professional behavior.
- Sponsor seminars and annual presentations on aspects of professionalism.
- Institute a professional mentor/ambassador program.
- Institute an award for exceptional professional behavior that includes students, residents, staff and faculty members.
- Identify important points to include in an "elevator speech/mission statement" about the professionalism project.

## Professionalism Survey

A survey was developed by the Professionalism Task Force and Dr. Roberta Gibbons (Merit Consulting). Survey questions were drafted based on interviews of college community members and from instruments described in the literature<sup>3-6</sup> and then mapped to the values of the ADEA Statement on Professionalism<sup>7</sup>. The survey will be administered this summer and the results will be used to refine the recommendations of the Task Force for enhancing professionalism in the college. Subsequent surveys and focus groups will be conducted to determine the effect of activities to enhance professionalism in the college.

### References

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