

## A dental school in Wisconsin benefits public and profession alike

**Mara Brooks** Director of Government Services [mbrooks@wda.org](mailto:mbrooks@wda.org)

Wisconsin Dental Association representatives have frequently interacted with other states facing a severe decline in membership and potential shortages of dentists to care for the public's needs. Further discussion reveals that these states tend to have one thing in common: there is no dental school within their borders.

As Wisconsin's only dental school, Marquette University School of Dentistry is an essential statewide resource for providing our residents with future dentists.

Two out of every three licensed dentists actively practicing in Wisconsin are MUSOD<sup>1</sup> graduates. The public-private partnership between the state and MUSOD provides meaningful economic and oral health care benefits. While this may seem obvious to most of us, some policy-makers have questioned the benefit of having a dental school in the state. This article will provide dentists with more information so we can educate others on the public benefits of supporting this educational institution.

MUSOD has three annual contracts with the state of Wisconsin:

(1) The state provides \$2.8 million

per year to MUSOD to provide clinical services at their main clinic and low-income clinics throughout the state; during a recent fiscal year, the value of services provided at the MUSOD main clinic and Parkway clinic on Milwaukee's south side alone was \$11.4 million.

(2) The state provides an annual "tuition subsidy" in the amount of \$8,753 (out of \$43,080 tuition) per student for up to 160 Wisconsin residents who attend MUSOD (there are 40 Wisconsin residents in each dental school class of 80 students). For more than three decades, this program has created a steady stream of dentists for Wisconsin.

(3) MUSOD receives a \$60,500 contract to provide pediatric dental care in Milwaukee to low-income children.

Several years ago, the state funded approximately half the capital costs (\$15 million) of building the current dental school. More recently, the state designated \$1 million in federal income augmentation money to help fund about half the costs of setting up clinics



on Milwaukee's north and south sides to replace the Johnston and Cogg's clinics.

State funding for the dental school helps Wisconsin maintain its state-of-the-art reputation with advanced technological and educational innovations that continue to attract the best and brightest students from across the nation. By having a dental school in the state, we encourage Wisconsin students to stay in the state to pursue their dental education and thereby help encourage them to stay and set up practice here upon graduation.

The WDA supports increasing state funding for Marquette's clinical operations, the amount of which has

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not been increased since 1997. This funding allows MUSOD to partially offset financial losses associated with treating low-income individuals and Medicaid recipients at various clinics throughout the state.

The subsidizing of clinical operations allows MUSOD students to treat a wide variety of patients in both rural and disadvantaged urban settings. This



clinical outreach program also enables students to explore future practice locations outside of Milwaukee which may help address the dental maldistribution issue facing Wisconsin.

While MUSOD is a part of a private university, we are fortunate it has developed a partnership with the state that allows resident students a slight financial benefit for staying in Wisconsin for their dental education; albeit, this

is much smaller than that given to residents who pursue a professional education within the University of Wisconsin system.

When the tuition subsidy/capitation program began in 1973, tuition at MUSOD was \$2,608 and the annual state capitation payment per resident was \$3,000; the value of the payment as a percentage of tuition was 115 percent. For the 2008-09 academic year, the value of the capitation payment as a percentage of tuition has eroded to 20.3 percent. Unfortunately, during the 2003-2005 budget cycle, the subsidy was actually cut from a previous amount of \$11,670 per student to the current amount of \$8,753 per student.

Historically, 70 percent of Wisconsin residents enrolled at MUSOD remain in the state to practice compared to only 10 percent of non-residents. However, from 1997 to 2007, 80.3 percent of Wisconsin residents enrolled at MUSOD have remained in the state to practice and 12.8 percent of non-residents have remained as well.

By coupling these statistics with the expected retirement of the baby boomer population, the WDA is aware we may need to have more dentists staying in

the state to practice dentistry upon graduation. In an effort to address this potential need, the WDA is currently partnering with MUSOD to advocate for state funding to subsidize 10 more Wisconsin residents per class and to increase the amount of the tuition subsidy per resident student.

By using this information, the WDA continues to educate legislators and policy-makers on the important contributions MUSOD makes to the Wisconsin economy by providing future entrepreneurs and employers in a wide variety of locations throughout the state.

<sup>1</sup>2003 Wisconsin DHFS Dental Workforce Survey - raw data results.