

Subject: FITD: DCG Honors, Innovations and Community Impact
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AU ranked among the best colleges in the nation

Augusta University was recently recognized as one of the top institutions in the nation by two different rankings and review sites, including moving up into the top 8% for best colleges of value.

For the second straight year, AU moved up in the [U.S. News and World Report rankings](#), improving 23 places over last year. This marks a 59-spot increase since the 2024 rankings.

[Click here to read more](#)



Jauregui honored for individual teaching excellence at annual awards

[Dr. Catherine Jauregui](#), Assistant Professor in the Department of Oral Biology, has been named the recipient of the 2025 Augusta University Individual Teaching Excellence Award.

Jauregui's research explores the complex interactions between bacteria and host cells, but it's her engaging teaching style and devotion to student learning that have earned her university-wide acclaim. Her students and colleagues consistently praise her ability to make science come alive in the classroom through interactive, meaningful learning experiences.

One of her favorite techniques is "Think-Pair-Share," where students reflect on newly learned material, discuss it in pairs, and then formulate questions to challenge the class's Microbiology Mentor Chatbot - a playful but effective way to reinforce their own understanding.

[Click here to read more](#)

USG sets new high record for number of degrees awarded

The overall number of degrees awarded by [University System of Georgia](#) (USG) institutions in FY2025 increased by 7.9% over the previous fiscal year, reaching a new all-

time high for the system of 82,607 degrees conferred annually.



The increase this past fiscal year is the most significant year-over-year increase the system has seen in the last decade.

The number of degrees awarded has risen by 50.6% since 2011; and system enrollment increased 12.8%, meaning the rate of awarding degrees continues to far outpace enrollment.



DCG alum inspires as hooding keynote speaker

Dr. Zach Powell (DMD '99), a first-generation dentist and longtime advocate for patient care in rural and underserved communities, will serve as the keynote speaker for AU's Graduate Hooding and Commencement Ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 10, at the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center.

Powell, CEO and chief dental clinician of The Georgia Smile Group, has spent more than two decades expanding access to oral health care across Georgia. His organization has managed 18 dental practices and provides care in several counties that would otherwise have limited or no dental services.

He and his wife, Elizabeth, also created the Zachary J. Powell Scholarship Endowment at the DCG to support first-generation dental students who plan to practice in rural areas.

A former president of the Georgia Dental Association and an adjunct faculty member at DCG, Powell remains committed to patient advocacy for seniors and children and continues to encourage new dentists to consider careers in underserved communities.

His message to graduates centers on purpose and service: "Life is a journey about service. When you make your profession about helping people, success will follow."

The DCG celebrates Powell's leadership, generosity and long-standing dedication to improving oral health in Georgia, and we look forward to welcoming him back to inspire the next generation of AU graduates.





Messer lauded with prestigious PFA honorary fellowship

[Dr. Regina Messer](#), associate dean for DCG Admissions and associate professor of Oral Biology, has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship from the Pierre Fauchard Academy (PFA), an international dental honor organization.

The PFA Honorary Fellowship recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the art and science of dentistry or to the Academy itself. While Fellowship in the PFA is extended exclusively by invitation to dentists, the Honorary Fellowship is reserved for non-dentists whose work has had a meaningful impact on the profession.

Messer's selection reflects her longstanding commitment to dental education, academic excellence and service to the global dental community - achievements supported by an extensive academic and professional record. She holds a Ph.D. and M.S. in Bioengineering and Biomedical Engineering from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, as well as a B.S. in Engineering Science from the University of Tennessee. Her professional development includes advanced training and certifications in inclusive excellence, diversity and inclusion, emotional intelligence, communication frameworks and community engagement.

She has been recognized for her dedication to teaching and service throughout her career. Her honors include nominations for the Augusta University Program Teaching Excellence Award (2023), the Augusta University Teaching Excellence Award (2023) and the DCG Outstanding Teaching Award (2021). She was named an Honorary Fellow of the American College of Dentists in 2021 and received the Outstanding Service Award from The Graduate School.

Congratulations to Dr. Regina Messer!

Georgia wins ACD National Model Section Award

The Georgia Section of the American College of Dentists (ACD) was honored with the esteemed Model Section

Award at the ACD national meeting held in Washington, D.C. The award recognizes exemplary performance and leadership.

[Dr. William Bachand](#) (photo left), chair of the Georgia Section and director of the DCG AEGD and GPR residency programs, accepted the award on behalf of the state's membership.

To earn this distinction, Sections must demonstrate high achievement in four key areas: membership, section projects, support of the ACD Foundation, and commitment and communication.



Bachand accepted the award with colleague and friend [COL Pete Guevara](#) (photo right), an active-duty U.S. Army dentist who will assume the role of President of the ACD next year.

[Dr. Nancy Young](#), DCG dean, currently serves as the Section's Secretary/Treasurer.

The mission of the ACD is to advance excellence, ethics, professionalism and leadership in oral healthcare.





Historic dental instruments donated for permanent display

The DCG proudly received the donation of a remarkable piece of its early history: the original gold-plated dental instruments created in 1970 by members of its founding faculty. The set was formally gifted to the College by [Dr. David Heid](#) (DMD), his daughter [Dr. Karen Heid](#) (PhD) and her husband, Augusta University Vice Provost [Dr. Zach Kelehear](#) (EDD), during a reception held in Dr. Heid’s honor on December 3.

The donation celebrates a story that has long reflected the ingenuity and collaborative spirit that shaped DCG in its formative years. Since enrolling its first doctoral students in 1969, DCG has fostered an environment where curiosity drives creativity and teamwork sparks innovation.

That spirit was on full display in 1970 when Heid was invited to present at the American Dental Association conference in New York City on the use of gold as a restorative dental material. Before he left Augusta, colleague Dr. Robert Kinzer playfully suggested that he capture the audience’s attention with gold-plated dental instruments.

Inspired by the idea, Kinzer, Dr. Donald Beglau and Heid worked under the direction of Dr. David Beaudreau, Chair of the Department of Restorative Dentistry, to bring the concept to life. They used an electrolysis process to remove the chrome plating from a set of instruments and re-plate them with gold derived from extracted teeth—estimated at 16 to 18 carats.

Whether the gleaming instruments stole the show in New York may be lost to time, but the story endures as a shining example of DCG’s founding culture of creativity, resourcefulness, and camaraderie.

Now, thanks to the generosity of the Heid family, this one-of-a-kind set has returned home to DCG. The instruments will be permanently displayed in the college, where they will be preserved and showcased for generations to enjoy. Their presence serves as a powerful reminder of the “gold standard” established by DCG’s earliest faculty - one that continues to inspire excellence across the institution today.



Who hit 100 percent for IGIVE 2025?

Thank you, DCG Family, for your enthusiastic participation in the 2025 AU IGIVE Employee Campaign!

This year, the DCG made a powerful impact. Not only did overall AU employee participation rise to 47% (up from 41% last year), but DCG employees played a significant role.

University-wide, we are proud to share that 1,961 donors contributed a total of \$385,561 - support that strengthens our community and expands opportunities for everyone at Augusta University.

We are deeply grateful for the dedication shown across the DCG. Several DCG offices achieved 100% participation, demonstrating an extraordinary commitment to our mission. We will see you all at the pizza party for offices that achieved this milestone:

- 5th Floor Admissions & Student Affairs
- 5th Floor Deans Hall
- Finance/Insurance
- Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry
- OMFS Ambulatory Surgery Center
- Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery

Your generosity and engagement continue to inspire us. Thank you for showcasing the strength and unity of the DCG family!



DCG students invited to bring fresh ideas to the 2026 Augusta University Pitch Competition - open now!

Innovation can grow in any field, including dentistry. The Augusta University Pitch Competition invites students to explore challenges in the community and present creative ideas. The event began in 2019 with inspiration from Emma, a determined 15-year-old who lived with a colostomy bag. Her story encouraged students to search for better solutions in everyday life.

Participants receive a 5-minute platform to present an idea that supports positive change. Ideas may involve products, services, or plans that improve life for others.

Prize Opportunities

- 1st Place: \$5,000 plus a provisional patent through the Pabst Patent Office
- 2nd Place: \$3,500

- 3rd Place: \$2,500
- Audience Choice Award: \$500
- Sponsored Community Entrepreneur Award: \$5,000

[Click here for more information or to apply.](#)

Schoenbaum invited to serve on NIH study section

[Dr. Todd Schoenbaum](#), DCG director of clinical research and professor in the Department of Restorative Sciences, received an invitation to participate in a National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) study section. The invitation reflected national recognition of his expertise and the DCG's growing national reputation.

The study section brought together reviewers in oral, dental and craniofacial sciences for the evaluation of R01 and R21 research applications submitted under PA25-301 and PA25-304.



Schoenbaum's background in implantology offered valuable perspective during the review process.

This service highlighted Dr. Schoenbaum's standing in the research community and reinforced the DCG's role in advancing oral health research.

COP partners with Hindu temple for health event

Right (L-R): Jasmyn Smith, Tanya Thakkar and Jaylan Johnson (DMD Class of 2028)

DCG Community Outreach Programs (COP) joined forces with BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Evans on Oct. 12 for a community outreach event focused on connecting local residents with essential health resources and services, including those offered by the DCG.

With the enthusiastic participation of dental student volunteers, the COP distributed nearly 100 oral health essential kits to families and provided valuable dental care education. The team also connected with nearly 20 community members seeking dental care, helping them find access to a dental provider.



Special thanks go to the COP team - Director Ketarya Hunt Bass, and Oral Health Outreach Coordinator Steve Huston, for their outstanding leadership and continued dedication to advancing community engagement and public health.



Membership available to dentists of any licensure

Regardless of Georgia licensure, this year all dentists on faculty are eligible for membership in the Georgia Dental Association (GDA), American Dental Association (ADA) and the Eastern District Dental Society (EDDS).

International dental degrees now qualify, thanks to updated GDA bylaws. [Dr. Rhoda Sword](#), professor in the Department of Restorative Sciences and editor of GDA Action magazine, was a crucial part of the committee that worked to expand this opportunity for faculty from all countries of origin.

- Visit the [membership renewal page](#).
- Log in with your ADA number and credentials.

- Click "I am ready to renew my membership"
- A pop-up will note: "Dues amounts listed do not reflect any specialty dues rates including faculty, retirement, life membership, etc. Discounts and specialty rates will be reflected in final, processed payments."
- Complete payment. The correct dues amount will be charged automatically

No Georgia unrestricted or teaching license is required for eligibility. Questions? Contact [Sword](#) or [Dr. William Bachand](#).



Future dental professional Pediatric Dentistry Family

The Department of Pediatric Dentistry is excited to announce the arrival of a new member of our Pediatric Dentistry family!

Dr. Mason Welch and his wife, Chloe, welcomed their daughter, Lucy Claire, on Oct. 17.

Lucy joins her older siblings, Mia and Henry.

Congratulations to the Welch family on their newest addition!

DCG Alum opens renovated practice in Milledgeville

DCG alum **Dr. H. Taylor Farr** (DMD, 2020) has reopened Farr Family Dentistry in Milledgeville, Georgia. The newly renovated practice provides dental care in a modern, family-friendly environment.

After completing his DMD, Farr completed an Advanced Education in General Dentistry residency at the Charlie Norwood VA, gaining experience in implants, endodontics and prosthodontics.

He returned to his hometown of Milledgeville to establish a practice serving the local community.



The office features CBCT imaging and digital intraoral scanning. Services available include preventive care, restorative and cosmetic dentistry, dental implants, endodontics, clear aligner therapy, sedation dentistry and emergency dental care.

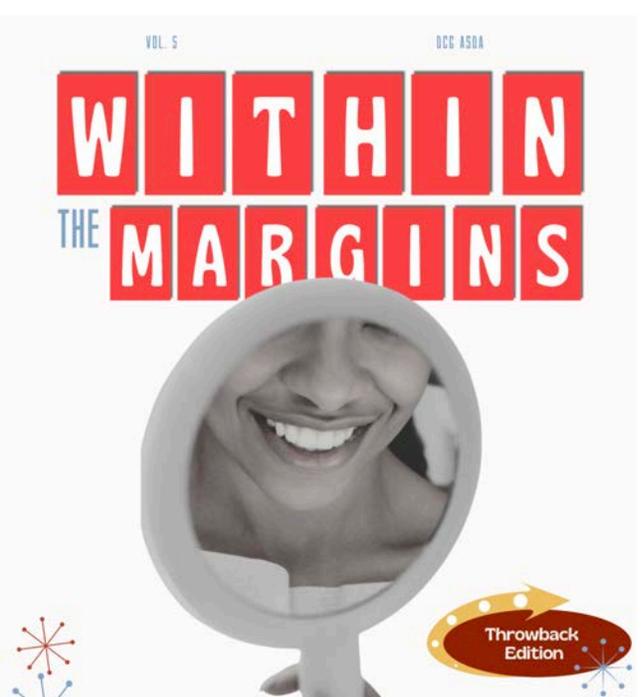
Visit farrfamilydentistry.com.

Fifth Edition of ASDA's *Within the Margins* Out Now

Take a trip down memory lane with the American Student Dental Association's magazine. This throwback-themed issue explores issues in dental education and recaps all the exciting events from this semester.

If you would like to contribute to volume 6 of *Within the Margins*, email georgia_asda@augusta.edu.

[Click here to read the issue](#)





DRS membership grows both size and reach

The DCG Dental Research Society (DRS), a student organization to promote and support student research participation, reports significant growth and engagement during the fall semester. The society provides a support system for students to strengthen their personal and professional research goals through education, peer-reviewed article discussions, and collaboration with dental research leadership.

The academic year began with the DCG Student Organization Fair, where members highlighted ongoing research projects and introduced students to the society's mission and activities. Membership has grown to 79 students this year, up from 54 last year.

DRS hosted four general body meetings, including an interest meeting, a student-initiated research session, and two journal club meetings. To support students' research development, the society launched its Mentor-Mentee survey to connect students with research mentors and expanded its Student Initiated Research initiatives, creating a pipeline for students pursuing independent research projects.

Looking ahead, DRS is actively pursuing additional sponsorships and preparing for upcoming events, including a fundraiser run, trivia night, volunteer coordination for the Southeastern Dental Research Symposium and two additional journal club meetings.

If you are interested in joining or participating, email DRS president [Josephine Widjaja](mailto:Josephine.Widjaja).

COP supports student volunteer at teen event

For National Health Literacy Month, DCG Community Outreach Programs (COP) supported a DCG student volunteer as she educated teens during the Augusta Seventh-day Adventist Church's Teen Spa Day on Oct. 26. This event provides young women with a day of self-care, rejuvenation and education.

Autumn Zorn (pictured) a Class of 2027 dental hygiene student, educated participants on the importance of dental hygiene and distributed 20 oral health essential kits provided by COP.

We thank Zorn for her service to the community. Special thanks to the COP team - Director Ketarya Hunt Bass, and Oral Health Outreach Coordinator Steve Huston - for leadership and support.



Health fair benefits from DCG volunteerism

On Nov. 8, the DCG chapter of the Student National Dental Association (SNDA) along with the students from the DCG dental hygiene program, joined Via Cognitive Health for the Richmond-Columbia County Healthy Fair.

This event includes many health and wellness organizations. Vendors shared health information and resources along with providing free health screenings.

[Dr. Geoffrey Thompson](#) and student volunteers provided free dental screenings to those interested. To help support this event, DCG Community Outreach Programs (COP) distributed nearly 150 oral health essential kits to promote healthy smiles.

We thank DCG volunteers who gave their time and services for the betterment of the community's health. Special thanks to the COP team - Director Ketarya Hunt Bass, and Oral Health Outreach Coordinator Steve Huston - for leadership and support.

SCAAPD trains students on safety, injury prevention

Photo (L-R): Max Choi (D2), Sarah Brandt

(D4), Kaitlyn Carpenter (First-Year Pediatric Dental Resident), Dr. Tara Schafer and Macy Capps (D2).

DCG Pediatric Dentistry and volunteers from the Student Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentists (SCAAPD) participated in the Pop-Up Safety Town event on Sept. 27.



The event focuses on teaching preschool and elementary students about safety and injury prevention.

Alongside multiple health and safety vendors, [Dr. Tara Schafer](#) and SCAAPD volunteers provided free dental screenings and shared oral health education with children.

To support this initiative, DCG Community Outreach Programs (COP) distributed 50 oral health essential kits to promote healthy smiles. Thank you to the DCG volunteers for their outstanding service to the community. Special thanks to the COP team - Director Ketarya Hunt Bass, and Oral Health Outreach Coordinator Steve Huston - for leadership and support.



Welcome, DCG New Hires

- **Dr. Hope Amm** joined Oral Biology as an Assistant Professor on Oct. 1.
- **Dr. Brian Stancoven** joined Periodontics as Associate Professor on Oct. 1.
- **Shannon South** joined Academic Administration as DCG Senior Administrator on Oct. 1.
- **Connie Portwood** joined DCG Business Office as DCG Clinics Support Specialist on Oct. 6.
- **Mariah Ware** joined Central Supply/Dispensary as Office Specialist on Oct. 6.

- **Dianna Aaron** joined DCG Central Supply/Dispensary as Dental Dispensary Supervisor on Oct. 6.
- **Renata Smith** joined DCG Academic Administration as DCG Medical Coder on Oct. 13.
- **Rivisha Ginyard** joined DCG Academic Administration as Sterile Supplies Specialist on Oct. 13.
- **Antoinette Richardson-Smith** joined DCG Admissions & Academic Support as Administrative Assistant 2 on Oct. 20.
- **BreNae Williams** joined DCG Patient Services as Dental Assistant on Oct. 27.
- **Dr. Marlina Manhiani** joined the Department of General Dentistry as Assistant Professor on Nov. 1.
- **Jaquria Gilbert** joined Patient Services as a Dental Assistant on Nov. 3.
- **Tiffany Harris** joined the Department of Restorative Sciences as an Office Associate on Nov. 3.
- **Kareem Mohamed Mostafa Saad** joined the Department of Periodontics as Postdoctoral Fellow on Nov. 3.
- **Sheila Hunter** will join AU Dental Associates as a Financial Coordinator on Dec. 22.
- **LaTasha Johnson-Graham** will join AU Dental Associates as a Senior Dental Assistant on Dec. 22.
- **Jessica Roberts** will join DCG Operations as a DCG Clinics Support Specialist on Dec. 22.
- **Christopher Gray** will join DCG Sterilization as Central Sterilization and Instrument Control Manager on Jan. 5.
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Upcoming Events

- Dec. 5: Georgia Board of Dentistry meeting at AU
- Dec. 9: AU Graduate Commencement & Hooding
- Dec. 10: DCG employee Grits & Gratitude
- Dec. 10: AU Undergraduate Commencement
- Dec. 17: DCG employee Forum Day for faculty, staff, and residents
- Dec. 25-31: AU Winter holiday (campus closed)
- Jan. 1: New Year's Day (campus closed)

- Jan. 11: National Clean Off Your Desk Day
- Jan. 16: MLK Tri-College Celebration
- Jan. 19: Dr. Martin Luther King Day (campus closed)
- Jan. 24: Dental Hygiene White Coat Ceremony for Class of 2027
- Jan. 27: AU Horizon Motor Coach Truckers Clinic
- Jan. 28: AU Healthy Grandparent Geriatric Clinic
- Jan. 28: AU Stuff the Stadium

Enjoy recent DCG and AU media coverage

Jagwire: [First-gen dentist's message to graduates: 'Life is a journey about service' - DCG Alum will serve as commencement speaker](#)

[AU named one of state's top employers by Forbes for seventh straight year](#)

[The Graduate School expands professional development opportunities](#)



[Outdoor Recreation opens new climbing tower, challenge course](#)

[AU Athletics moves to digital ticketing](#)

WRDW: [WRDW TV and Peachtree Sports Network to Broadcast 10 Augusta Basketball Games](#)

From the Dean

With Thanksgiving and Giving Tuesday behind us, AU now



enters a season of celebration, generosity, and gratitude. In the weeks ahead, we will gather for Grits & Gratitude and for DCG Forum Day. We will also welcome two important groups shaping the future of oral health in Georgia: the Georgia Board of Dentistry and the Dental Hygiene Liaison Committee.

Each of these gatherings reminds us how deeply connected we are and how much good we can create - especially in public health - when we work together. Through these opportunities to build community, I witness care in action every day at the DCG. Together, we serve our patients, support one another and grow as a vibrant, compassionate community.

Gratitude and giving hold great importance within a healthy community. Reflection is also vital to our mental well-being and personal growth. Yet too often, we thank others without pausing to appreciate ourselves. We overlook the ways we have loved, served, guided and grown - though we should acknowledge them. This isn't arrogance; it's recognition. Celebrating your progress, resilience and compassion helps you continue to thrive both personally and professionally.

As you look back on the year, take a quiet moment to appreciate the ways you have cared, learned, and led - here at the DCG, at home, and in all the communities where you share your time, creativity, and passion.

Alongside gratitude for the good people in your life, extend that same appreciation to yourself. It builds confidence, joy and renewed purpose in both our work and our journey.

Our events during December and all throughout the year exist to support your journey. Growth, knowledge and community remain central to our success. This season, I hope you find to give freely and accept gratefully. I'm thankful for each of you and for the care you bring to our patients, our students and one another. Have a wonderful holiday season. Be safe, relax, have fun, and recharge with people you love.

This issue of Filling in the Details closes our 2025 year, but we are already at work on employee appreciation and growth opportunities for 2026. As always, we invite you to share your thoughts and ideas with the dean's office any time. You can reach us at dgc_deans_office@augusta.edu.

This email was sent to the Dental College of Georgia faculty, staff and students.
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