

“You Are Not Alone”
White Coat Ceremony
University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry
Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, San Francisco
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Dr. Natasha Lee
President, California Dental Association

Our dental school had its first ever White Coat Ceremony 20 years ago. I was in that class. And while it smarts a bit to acknowledge that, it also brings back great memories of dental school.

When I was a student, I remember sitting down in Dr. Nadershahi’s office to seek advice whenever I was struggling to deal with any of my more challenging patients. Dr. Nadershahi was a Group Practice Leader back then, and now I’m proud to call him my dean.

I had classmates who invited me into their study groups when my motivation was low. With an undergrad degree in anthropology, I needed all the support I could get to make it through biochem... and my classmates were there for me.

When I was feeling down, I relied on being able to go to Dr. Peltier to share my woes and lift my spirits.

When I needed advice on finding my first job as an associate dentist, Dr. Hayashida introduced me to my very first employer.

In school you have your student leaders lobbying on your behalf in Washington D.C.

You have excellent faculty providing you with the education you need to earn your degree and pass board exams.

You have classmates to turn to when you need to commiserate, big sibs when you need advice, and mentors to help you when you feel you’ve lost your way.

As a student here at the Dugoni School, you have a family and a community and people looking out for your best interests.

So you may be worried that after graduation it may be hard to find that same support system and sense of community. You may worry that you’ll feel all alone to face the challenges of being a dentist or hygienist. But I promise you that won’t be the case... you won’t be all alone.

The American Dental Association, California Dental Association, and your local dental societies are groups of dental professionals working together on the national, state, and local levels to support our profession, the patients we serve, and each of us as individual practitioners.

When the largest dental insurance plan decided to unfairly and illegally breach the terms in the contracts they had with the majority of dentists in California, we the members of the California Dental Association, decided to fight back. That insurance company must now pay back \$65 million dollars to dentists in California.

When frivolous lawsuits were out of control and the cost of malpractice insurance was skyrocketing in California, the dentists of the CDA decided to create The Dentists Insurance Company, our very own malpractice insurance company.

Now, when I have to deal with the occasional “challenging” or threatening patient, I can call up the TDIC Risk Management hotline and receive expert advice on how to handle the situation and stay out of trouble.

When my staff and I need continuing education classes so we can keep up with the latest technology and clinical advances, or need to shop for new equipment, we go to CDA Presents... a massive dental convention held in southern California in the spring and here in San Francisco in the fall.

And because the cost of running a practice just keeps on going up, CDA dentists decided to create a company called The Dentists Supply Company where members can buy dental supplies at 20-25% less than the retail prices offered by the big dental supply companies.

When I need help in my practice in keeping up with ever-changing regulatory requirements, employment laws, or needed to know how to bring on an associate dentist, I relied on CDA’s Practice Support Center website and call center to give me the advice I needed.

As dental practitioners, we all feel a need to give back to our communities and support those with unmet needs. Our CDA Cares charitable events provide that outlet. Two times a year we hold CDA Cares events in different parts of the state and at each event provide over a million dollars in free care to thousands of underserved patients.

When I was a new dentist aspiring to own my own practice, I went to the San Francisco Dental Society where I found mentors who gave me advice on starting my practice from scratch, which accountants to use, and which contractors to avoid.

And still today, when I've had a really tough day at the office and just need a friend who will understand, I have a group of dentist friends I've made through the dental society who are there for me.

So just like you are not alone as a student here at the Dugoni School, you will not be alone as long as our profession has organized dentistry.

On behalf of the California Dental Association and all of organized dentistry and hygiene, I congratulate you today on earning your white coats and taking your place within the greater community of the dental profession.