

Connecting to College Students Throughout Louisiana

An innovative event designed to educate college students about applying for the dental and the dental hygiene programs attracted 175 students from 14 colleges and universities throughout Louisiana. It was the first time such an event, entitled *Pre-Dental 101: A Brush-Up on Dentistry*, was held in the 42-year history of the LSU School of Dentistry.

The idea came from two students, Sabrina Portwood and Brent Benoit. Both are pre-dental students at LSU and also leaders in the LSU Pre-Dental Society. About a year ago, Sabrina was among 25 student volunteers assisting dentists during a community outreach event in Baton Rouge. During that experience, she realized that students could make more informed decisions about careers in dentistry if they knew more about the profession and the admissions process. This led to the concept of creating an all-day information event. Sabrina and Brent evolved their concepts into a 90-minute presentation they made to Dean Henry Gremillion and Dr. John Ritchie, admissions director. From there, the idea took flight.

Members of the faculty, dental community and students provided 28 presentations on topics such as how to apply and interview for dental school, financial aid, chalk carving, dental waxing, dental anatomy, CAD-CAM, the history of dentistry, dental hypnosis, dental forensics, careers in dentistry and overviews of each of the dental specialties. In addition, the dental hygiene faculty spent the morning giving classroom presentations and a clinical orientation to about 45 pre-dental hygiene students.

"Getting into dental school is very competitive," said Dr. Gremillion. "This year, we received more than 600 applications for the Doctor of Dental Surgery program and could accept only 65 students."

Carrie Mason, director of the dental hygiene program, reports that the school receives about 130 applications for 38 positions (32 for New Orleans and six for Lafayette).

The 175 students came from McNeese State University, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana Tech, University of Louisiana at Monroe, Centenary College, Southeastern University in Hammond, Xavier University, Loyola University, University of New Orleans, Southern University in New Orleans, LSU in Baton Rouge, LSU in Shreveport, Baton Rouge Community College and Delgado Community College. There were also



Dean Henry Gremillion, Sabrina Portwood, Brent Benoit and Dr. John Ritchie

four students from out-of-

state colleges and one international student. Dr. Ritchie urged the students to apply by October 1. He provided information on how the admissions process works and the criteria used to evaluate dental school applications. He detailed what to expect on interview day and mistakes to avoid. Throughout the day, student affairs director Darlene Brunet led a team that gave tours of the school. Two of the most talked-about sessions were "How to Survive Freshman Year" by second-year student Brandon Mack and "Looking Back...Reflections of a Dental Student" by fourth-year student Jared Harris.

"Creating this kind of proactive, innovative educational event has been invigorating for all the dental school faculty members and students who participated," said Dr. Gremillion. "The tremendous turnout proved that there was a real need for information. Based on the feedback, it appears that this program went a long way towards meeting that need."

Planning is underway to offer a similar event during the 2011-2012 academic year. For information, email pritchie@lsuhsc.edu.



Students are shown a demonstration of chalk carving, which is part of the admissions testing.