



# Promoting the Dental Mentorship Council's Mentoring Model

## Increasing the number of underrepresented minorities in dental schools through mentoring

### SUMMARY

The [National Dental Association](#), the [Hispanic Dental Association](#), and the [Society of American Indian Dentists](#) formed the Dental Mentorship Council in 2009, to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in dental schools and the profession. The [Dental Pipeline](#) program, a national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF),<sup>1</sup> funded the launch of the council, which trains mentors and links them with prospective dental students. From 2010 to 2011, the council worked to enroll more mentees in the program.

### Key Results

Project Director Nathan Fletcher, DDS, former president of the National Dental Association, reported these results to RWJF:

- The council held three meet-and-greet events to introduce and recruit prospective minority dental students to the program, and pair them with mentors. Some 62 high school, university, and dental students, joined by dental school faculty members and practicing professionals, attended the events, co-sponsored by three universities in these locations:
  - Texas A&M Health Science Center at Baylor College of Dentistry, held in Dallas on May 14, 2011
  - Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health, held in Phoenix on May 21, 2011
  - Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, held in Richmond, Va., on November 5, 2011

The events also provided information to students on opportunities in dentistry, preparing to take tests for admittance to dental school, the process of applying to dental schools, curriculum choices, financial aid, and resume writing.

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<sup>1</sup> Read the [Program Results Report](#) on the *Dental Pipeline*—formally called *Pipeline, Profession & Practice: Community-Based Dental Education*—which ran from May 2001 to October 2011.

- The council enrolled 41 new mentees in the program through the events. For example, Najjiyya Franklin-Huff, became a mentee after attending the Richmond event. She graduated from Norfolk State University, a historically Black college in Norfolk, Va., which she attended with a full academic scholarship. According to Franklin-Huff,

*“The meet-and-greet was an eye-opening experience. It was held around the time that I was starting to apply to dental schools, so it was actually perfect timing. It began early in the morning, with breakfast, and they provided brochures from schools and answered all our questions about the application and interview process.*

*“There were a range of dental professionals there—people who had recently progressed through dental school, oral surgeons, pediatric dentists, general dentists ... And we paired up—mentors and mentees—so we could get more individualized assistance. That helped me narrow down my dental school choices.*

*“I’m kind of a go-getter, so when I learned that Dr. Fletcher lived near my home town, I took it upon myself to make him my mentor. Over the following Christmas break, I shadowed him at his practice for a few days. He also coached me through the application process. It was all very, very helpful.*

*“I ended up applying to six schools, and was accepted at all of them. I chose Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, where I’ll start in the fall. Right now, I’m aiming for a degree in general dentistry, though I’m open to the possibility of specializing later on. But I definitely know that whatever I do, I’ll be practicing with underserved populations. That’s where my passion is. It’s important for me to touch other people’s lives and help them out in the best way I can.”*

## **Funding**

RWJF funded this project with a grant of \$50,075 from December 2010 to December 2011.

## **Afterward**

Continued work to enroll underrepresented minorities in the program depends on further funding, which has not yet materialized, according to Fletcher. However, the council is talking with the American Dental Education Association about disseminating the program.

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