That defining moment was brought to mind the first time he saw one of his students light up when they realized they could make that same impact.

“Students absorb so much. It’s a true pleasure to work with them and help motivate them to be the very best they can be. That’s one of the reasons I teach,” he says.

“When the knowledge dawns on them that they can make a true difference to each patient they work with, it’s energizing.”

Lately, Dr. Atlas has seen a lot of those aha moments for students in the Endodontic-Restorative Microscopy and Technology Clinic, where he is co-director. This new clinical instruction initiative was recently launched to provide DMD students experience in using the dental microscope as a precision tool in restorative care along with digital technologies.

“This is truly a unique training initiative that our students have enthusiastically embraced,” he says.

Key to using technology for better patient outcomes are what Dr. Atlas calls his three pillars for success: doing dentistry well, motivating patients to higher levels of health, and using the right materials and equipment.

“Easier and faster is not always better. It’s all in the detail and the precision of the practice,” Dr. Atlas says.

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— DR. ALAN ATLAS (D’86)
LOOKING AHEAD TO A NEW ERA IN DENTISTRY
Since graduating from Penn Dental Medicine, Dr. Atlas (the 2006 Alumni Award of Merit winner) has witnessed a vast change in the practice of dentistry.

“I graduated at the start of a tremendous renaissance in dentistry,” he explains. “At that time, adhesive, esthetic, and implant dentistry became a global phenomenon, with tremendous research that initiated a major shift in treatment planning and delivery of dental care.”

Today, new digital technologies are bringing forward another era in dentistry, with exciting potential to help practitioners improve their ability to diagnose, plan treatment, and deliver optimal care.

“Penn Dental Medicine is highly involved in ushering in this new era [digital dentistry] with many leaders coming from and teaching at Penn,” he says. “I’m proud to be among these outstanding colleagues and am continuously inspired by those who are fully committed to teaching the next generation of dentists.”

Dr. Atlas hopes to connect with other alumni when he’ll be speaking at the 2018 American Dental Association annual session, as well as the Yankee Dental Conference, the Hinman Dental Meeting, and Chicago Mid-Winter meeting, all in 2019.

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