

# RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

## TRANSLATING SCIENCE TO PRACTICE

WHILE RESEARCH and scholarship have always been integral to the mission of Penn Dental Medicine, this summer, a new role was created to help advance goals in these areas with the naming of a Vice Dean for Research and Scholarship. Appointed to this new administrative post in August was Dr. Dana Graves, Professor, Department of Periodontics. Soon after his appointment, we had a chance to ask him about this new position and get some of his views on the School's research efforts now and going forward.

**Q: How would you describe this new position of Vice Dean for Research and Scholarship?**

**A:** Scholarship involves students, staff, and faculty and is critical to the integration of the School within the fabric of a research-intensive university such as the University of Pennsylvania. This position will provide a unique opportunity for me to help shape and promote activities that enhance scholarship. It provides an opportunity to develop programs that better integrate basic and clinical research. In this position, I will also participate in some of the financial processes and decisions faced by the School, which is both interesting and challenging.

**Q: What are the key goals for the School in terms of its research/scholarship?**

**A:** One of the key areas is the recruitment of strong researchers to the School. Penn Dental Medicine has been successful in recruiting outstanding basic and translational scientists over the last few years despite the difficult economic environment (see related stories on the appointments of Dr. Henry Daniell, page 8, and Dr. Michel Koo, page 2). It is important to maintain this trajectory, to build upon the current strengths in basic research, and to include growth in clinical research.



### Q&A with Dr. Dana Graves, *Vice Dean for Research and Scholarship*

**Q: What aspects of the School's research enterprise are growing and changing the most?**

**A:** Penn Dental Medicine has one of the most successful groups of researchers of any dental school. Areas of strength are microbiology, including virology; the study of pathologic processes, including inflammation and the host response; and cellular aspects of tissue regeneration, which provide a strong core to build upon. At the University level, there has been a re-emphasis on corporate-sponsored research, including the development of a Corporate Relations Office. This provides opportunities for our School to leverage many of its clinical strengths to enhance scholarship and research.

The recruitment of scientists into clinical departments is ongoing and will help develop research infrastructure that enhances interactions between basic scientists and clinicians. And, lastly, there has been a conscious effort

to bring investigators to Penn Dental Medicine who interact with other schools and centers at Penn. This builds upon the current research strength and enhances the School's visibility internationally and within the University.

**Q: What role do you see student research playing within the School?**

**A:** The School has had a strong predoctoral student research program through the Summer Research Program for many years. More recently, an Honors Degree Program was developed for predoctoral students that also has a strong research component. At the Master's level, a scholarship program supported by the Dean's Office was initiated that encourages students in clinical specialties to work in basic science laboratories and strengthen interactions between clinical and basic science departments. Lastly, a DScD program was established to provide formal research training for residents in Periodontics, Endodontics, Orthodontics, Oral Medicine, and Pediatric Dentistry that will prepare students to enter academics. This program also has a Dean's Scholarship to reduce financial barriers for students interested in research. All these programs highlight the School's strong commitment to student research and to building scholarship at Penn Dental Medicine.

**Q: What else about research/scholarship do you see as important to the School's mission?**

**A:** Research and scholarship are central to Penn Dental Medicine and represent one of its core missions. Virtually all of the new full-time faculty members hired by the School, including those in clinical departments, have formal research training with research degrees. The University of Pennsylvania is one of the foremost international research centers and is committed to scholarship. Penn Dental Medicine is part of that culture and has the highest commitment to fostering knowledge at both the basic science and clinical levels. I hope to contribute to this effort. ■