



Alumni Profile: Alyssa Greenberger (D'02)

It was after Alyssa Greenberger (D'02) returned to Penn Dental Medicine for her 10th-year reunion that the seed for reconnecting with the School was planted. By then, Dr. Greenberger was practicing general dentistry in Tampa, Fla., and was married with a toddler. She began by interviewing local undergraduate applicants and then followed up on a notice in the *Penn Dental Medicine Journal* about getting involved with the Alumni Society.

“Penn is bigger than you,” she says. “It makes you want to give back to make it even better.”

From there, her connection to Penn Dental Medicine blossomed in a big way. Dr. Greenberger joined Penn Dental Medicine’s Alumni Society Executive Committee and, a few years later, became chair of the newly formed Penn Alumni Interview Program Bio-Dental Committee.

The accelerated Bio-Dental program allows students to earn their undergraduate and dental degrees in seven years — three years for a BA/BS followed by four years at Penn Dental Medicine. High school students can apply for the program through the University of Pennsylvania or four partner institutions — Villanova, Lehigh, Muhlenberg and Hampton. Once admitted, students must maintain high academic standards to continue to the DMD program.

The Bio-Dental Committee, run through Penn undergraduate admissions, recruits

Penn Dental Medicine alumni to interview prospective students. Previously, applicants were interviewed by alumni of any Penn program.

As chair of the Bio-Dental Committee, Dr. Greenberger has helped grow the pool of Penn Dental Medicine alumni interviewers to about 250 volunteers. “This is so special to me,” she says. “I have seen classmates and alumni who may not have participated in the past join us, and then get even more involved with the school. I find it very rewarding if it brings even one alum back in the fold as a proud ambassador of Penn Dental Medicine.”

In this year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of Bio-Dental applicants for fall 2021 climbed to 280, up from 200 to 250 or so in a typical year, notes Dr. Greenberger,

who believes this is, in part, affirmation that students see a career in dentistry as providing stability, something in short supply during a time of upheaval.

Typically, between four and nine students matriculate to Penn Dental Medicine each year through the Bio-Dental program from the five undergraduate institutions, notes Director of Admissions Corky Cacas. The program was established more than three decades ago.

Admission to the program is highly competitive and, in addition to stellar academics, Dr. Greenberger says she looks for students who understand and are committed to a dental career. “I always tell applicants ‘this is a time and financial commitment, and you need to do your homework on dentistry to make a better choice for your future.’”

And when students she interviews are accepted into the program, Dr. Greenberger is thrilled. One of the first students she interviewed “was in tears when she was accepted,” recalls Dr. Greenberger, who lives in Florida but is retired from practice due to a health condition.

In addition to chairing the Penn Alumni Interview Program Bio-Dental Committee and membership on the Alumni Society Executive Committee, Dr. Greenberger also manages Penn alumni interviews in her region, thus interviewing a dozen or so students each year applying for undergraduate admission. She has also been part of the alumni engagement committee for The Power of Penn Campaign, the University’s capital campaign that will soon be coming to a close.

Except during this year’s COVID-related restrictions, Dr. Greenberger makes it a point to return to campus at least once a year to attend one of the four meetings of the Alumni Society Executive Committee in person — and reconnect with the school, campus, and city.

“I will always do what I can when asked,” Dr. Greenberger says. “This is part of what keeps Penn Dental Medicine thriving — being a place that young people aspire to and which has such a great alumni network.”

For more information about participating in the Penn Alumni Interview Program Bio-Dental Committee go to: www.dental.upenn.edu/alumni/participate/penn-alumni-interview-program/