

Annual Report to the House of Delegates, June 25, 2025, from the

Executive Director

As Executive Director, I herewith submit the following report:

Governance

As has been stated frequently in the past, good governance is a continuous work in progress. It is the duty of leaders of this organization to frequently evaluate whether the existing governance structures in place make the most sense for the organization today and for where it wants to go. Sometimes organizations will realize after implementing changes that those changes are not effective or have unintended consequences. Several of the proposed resolutions going before this year's House of Delegates continue to make some small adjustments.

The At-Large Trustee position has been a valuable one since its implementation beginning in 2020. This year a resolution proposes not only modifying the At-Large Trustee's term from one-year to two but also adds an additional At-Large Trustee position, which would, if approved, also have a two-year term.

There is a resolution proposing modifications to the charges and name of the Trustee Selection and Nominations Committee, and also to increase the term of the representatives that serve on that committee.

With the advent of electronic voting, consideration can be put into adjusting the voting procedures at the House of Delegates and the House will be considering a resolution proposing changes at this year's meeting.

To encourage a more collaborative effort between the President and the Board of Trustees, there is a resolution coming before the House recommending that the committee appointments continue to be made by the President but also add approval of the Board to the process.

Dental Practice Support

Throughout the year, the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) has been instrumental in educating its members about key issues impacting dental practice and the evolving landscape of dentistry. One ongoing significant challenge is the shortage of dental assistants, which is affecting dental practices across Massachusetts. In response to this growing concern, the MDS's Dental Practice and Benefits Committee is leading a comprehensive multiyear campaign aimed at raising awareness and engaging key audiences to attract new talent to the dental assisting field.

This program is designed to inform people about the dental assisting profession and the numerous benefits of joining a dental team. Key components of the program include a dedicated campaign website, participation in high school career fairs, presentations featuring dental assisting recruitment tools, paid social media advertising, collaborations with social media influencers, phone support for interested candidates, and video development.

Member Assistance Center

The MDS Member Assistance Center (MAC), which launched ten years ago, is a service exclusive to MDS members. Its purpose is to help members maximize their membership benefits by providing easy access to knowledgeable staff who can answer questions. Instead of trying to identify the appropriate staff member for a specific inquiry, members can simply call 800.342.8747 to connect with a MAC representative.

The MAC representatives are well-versed in a wide range of topics, and in most cases, they can directly address member inquiries. If they don't have an immediate answer, they will make an effort to find the information needed and resolve the issue or escalate the question to a senior staff member. The MAC receives an average of 200 to 300 calls each month. This year, the majority of calls have focused on topics such as practice management, the transition to MassHealth, business concerns, regulatory matters, dental benefits, and membership issues.

Peer Review

The MDS Peer Review Program is a valuable benefit for members, designed to address patients' or peers' complaints against members without requiring a formal BORID process. Over the past year, the MDS has trained District Peer Review Committee members on the guidelines and procedures necessary to ensure compliance with this program.

Health and Wellness

The health and wellness of our members is especially important to maintaining a thriving Society. The MDS Dentist Health and Wellness Committee (DHWC) has the key role of educating our members on health and wellness topics.

The DHWC hosted several member events, including pickleball, Topgolf, and WooSox events, and provided sponsorships for the Frosty 5K and Patriot Dental Conference. The DHWC also offered a Health and Wellness corner of the MDS Membership Booth at Yankee Dental Congress. This was an entertaining and educational area that highlighted the DHWC and valuable wellness resources. Activities included a virtual art show, chair massages, body composition analysis, and professional stretch lab.

The DHWC has continued its online presence with new episodes of the “4th Molar Podcast: Beyond Wisdom,” featuring monthly episodes interviewing guests on various wellness topics. The DHWC also continues to provide content on its Facebook group dedicated to promoting health and wellness guidance to members. Approximately 608 members now participate in this active community.

The DHWC has supported the implementation of a Member Assistance Program in partnership with AllOne Health, an employee assistance program organization, to provide further wellness resources for members. The program will launch on July 1, 2025. The DHWC has also supported the re-establishment of the Molar Rollers, a bicycling interest group.

Dental Student Support

The MDS works closely with the three Boston dental schools and hosted several programs for students throughout the year. The showcase event was the student debate that included teams from Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine, Harvard School of Dental Medicine, and Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine, University of New England College of Dental Medicine, and a pre-dental team. The event takes place annually at Yankee Dental Congress.

The MDS conducted live Signing Day programs at the three Boston dental schools to encourage graduating students to transfer their membership from the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) to the MDS. The MDS also hosted a graduation celebration event for fourth year students. The MDS also welcomed new students at the three Boston dental schools during their orientations. President Dr. Abe Abdulwaheed and Vice President Dr. Steven Spitz spoke on behalf of the MDS at these luncheon programs encouraging students to get involved in organized dentistry and the MDS. The MDS additionally sponsored several student events throughout the year, attended vendor fairs at all three Boston dental schools, and hosted an apple picking event for MDS members and dental students.

Early Career Engagement Programs

It is essential for us to actively engage early-career members so they can recognize the value of tripartite membership and become engaged in organized dentistry. We analyzed the results of the 2024 Membership Survey from Early Career Dentists and designed programs based on these findings. Specifically, these new dentists expressed interest in connecting with mentors, managing debt, and receiving career development support. Therefore, we focused on several Early Career Engagement programs in 2025.

1. Mentor/Mentee Pod Program

The MDS New Mentorship Pod Program has successfully engaged 80 members. A recent survey of MDS members revealed that early-career dentists are eager to have mentors to help guide them in their professional journeys. In response to this need, we launched a 12-month program consisting of mentorship pods that meet informally throughout the year for support and guidance. Each pod includes two mentors and six to eight mentees. Mentees benefit by gaining valuable practical skills that assist them in their career

development. The pods meet as groups either in person or via Zoom and discuss topics of interest to mentees, including worklife balance and managing difficult employees.

2. Career Accelerator Program

The New Career Accelerator Program (CAP) is a practical business training program designed for new dentists. CAP training is a 4-month business-focused continuum led by subject matter experts that provides early-career dentists with essential business knowledge to enhance and accelerate their career development and allow for more informed decision-making. The program offers a mix of business and social programs, both in-person (at the MDS headquarters, 2 Willow Street, Southborough, MA) and hybrid, to create a community of support for participants. Twenty-eight dentists participated in the complete CAP series, and other dentists enrolled in individual sessions. Featured industry speakers led sessions covering topics such as Understanding Practice Numbers, Protecting Your Career and Finances, Thriving in Your Environment: Building Leadership and Culture, Understanding Practice Operations, and Assessing the Value of a Practice Worth Buying.

3. MDS Leadership Academy – 35 members participated in this program

The MDS Leadership Academy continues to train future leaders. More than 300 members have participated in this program, which was initiated in 2009. This member-exclusive, five-session hybrid program is designed to help dental professionals develop and sharpen their leadership skills and help advance their careers.

Leadership Academy Program

Since 2009, the MDS has offered a leadership program for its members. In 2024, the MDS Leadership Academy returned after a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This five-session hybrid program was designed to help dental professionals develop and enhance their leadership skills and advance their careers. Thirty-six participants attended this program, which began at Yankee with a presentation by Dr. Mark Hyman, titled "Change is Inevitable—Growth is Optional."

Other sessions featured Dr. Kathy O'Loughlin's "5 Stars of Leadership," "Conversations that Count," and "Understanding Your Leadership Style" with Carrie Webber. Amber Auger presented a session on "Effective and Profitable Collaborative Care: Leveraging Communication Between Hygienists and Dentists."

The Leadership Academy concluded with a roundtable dinner with MDS leadership, where participants discussed ways to implement their new leadership skills. Since the start of this program in 2009 nearly 300 members have graduated from the MDS Leadership Academy.

Membership

The MDS ranks as one of the strongest dental societies in the country, with approximately 74% of dentists in the state participating in the organization. This participation rate is exceptionally high compared to other states. However, the profession is facing challenges, including increased regulations, pressure from dental plans and insurance companies to reduce fee schedules, labor shortages, and rising overhead costs. The continued strength of the Society is a testament to our members. In 2025, an impressive 93% of our members renewed their memberships. Their ongoing commitment is crucial for the continued success of organized dentistry and the profession. The MDS is made up of a diverse group of members who share a passion for excellence.

The MDS's efforts were rewarded by winning three awards at the ADA Membership reception last summer. The MDS won the following awards:

- Converting the highest number of women dentists to membership
- Greatest net gain of new dentists
- Greatest net gain in membership

The MDS membership committee is developing programs focused on engaging members as they start their careers. This is the most vulnerable time for dentists to decide whether to join their professional Society. We have instituted a new pilot dues structure for early-career dentists to ease the membership's financial burden. New members must recognize the value and benefits of membership to keep them as members during the first years of membership.

Our new model aims to give early-career dentists a reduced dues rate while beginning their careers. As the Health Policy Institute has previously reported, dental school graduates have approximately \$300,000 in student debt. This debt burden is in addition to other major milestones these members may be considering such as buying a home and/or car, getting married, starting a family, etc. The new dues model for these early-career members would lessen the MDS dues burden on them at a time when their personal financial situation may be the most challenging. The model is:

- Year 1 - \$0
- Year 2 - \$120 (\$10 per month)
- Year 3 - \$120 (\$10 per month)
- Year 4 - \$240 (\$20 per month)
- Year 5 - \$240 (\$20 per month)
- Year 6 – full dues

The MDS requested that the ADA align our dues structure with theirs; however, the ADA chose not to do this for 2025. The MDS Board recently authorized the Executive Director to collaborate with peers across the country in support of an ADA resolution to create a version of the MDS early career dues model at the ADA level. Without the ADA's support for an innovative dues structure for this cohort, Massachusetts dentists in year 3 of membership are required to pay nearly \$800 a year for membership, which is still too expensive for early career members. The initial results of the dues model remained unchanged for the year. MDS plans to continue with our early career dues model in 2026 and will reevaluate the impact of the pilot dues at the end of that year.

In the coming year, the Society will need to assess the current pilot dues model to see if it is moving us forward. This assessment is crucial to ensure we provide a structure that encourages growth in future membership while also offering opportunities for new dentists to engage with the Society. Strengthening their connection to organized dentistry will ultimately increase the value of membership and improve the likelihood of renewing membership.

The Journal of the Massachusetts Dental Society

The *Journal of the Massachusetts Dental Society*, the Society's flagship publication, continued setting an example of editorial excellence this past year. The *Journal* is known for providing content highlighting a wide range of clinical and practice management subjects to benefit readers. The *Journal* continues to have a strong online presence through our digital version, which allows readers to access the publication on all devices.

This year's featured articles included a cover story on the association of pet ownership with the oral health of older adults, how internationally trained dentists should be allowed to apply for a hygienist license in Massachusetts, the integration of oral health into the medical school curriculum, the mental health needs of dentists, and the surgical lid technique for retrofilling.

Our regular features for each edition included EDIC contributions on risk management, Clinician's Corner, Pathology Snapshot, and dental book reviews.

The *Journal* continued highlighting members with the 2024 William McKenna Volunteer Hero, Dr. Joseph Beninato, and the annual 10 Under Ten recognition program through the Membership Committee. We continued to provide the *Journal* to the Rhode Island Dental Association members and expanded our resource for manuscripts to include Rutgers School of Dental Medicine.

Beacon Hill Day

After a COVID-Hiatus – the MD held its Beacon Hill Day on Wednesday June 4 at the Statehouse with nearly 100 members in attendance. Dentists converged on the State House, where a morning presentation was held with speakers including State Representative Angelo Puppola, Chair of the Oral Health Caucus, State Senator John Cronin who has sponsored numerous legislative items on our behalf, and the keynote was given by Speaker of the House of Representatives Ron Mariano. All speakers thanked the MDS for their advocacy and spoke about the importance of our presence in the State House, working on behalf of dentists and patients across the Commonwealth.

A highlight of the day was when Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll addressed our group to conclude the event. During her remarks, she discussed the current disruptions in MassHealth payments and emphasized the Healey Administration's commitment to resolving the situation promptly.

Legislative Wins

2025 has been a monumental year for MDS with two key legislative wins.

Chapter 394 of the Acts of: Dental Hygienist Reciprocal Licensure—SIGNED INTO LAW JANUARY 2025

This law provides a responsible and safe pathway for foreign-trained dentists to practice dental hygiene in Massachusetts. It's a solution that protects access to care, ensures practices are adequately staffed, and extends opportunity to immigrant communities who are integral to the fabric of our state.

Chapter 285 of the Acts of 2024: Dentist Diversion Program—SIGNED INTO LAW DECEMBER 2024

Governor Maura Healey signed into law H.5143, An Act Relative to Treatments and Coverage for Substance Use Disorder and Recovery Coach Licensure (which included language from bill H.300 to create a Dentist Diversion Program). This landmark legislation includes provisions to establish a dental diversion program within the Bureau of Health Professionals Licensure (BHPL), which oversees both the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Dentistry (BORID) and the Unified Recovery and Monitoring Program (URAMP), a key initiative first introduced through House Bill 300.

While this is inspiring news, the work is not over. The State now needs to promulgate the rules and regulations that will put the new laws into effect. The MDS is closely monitoring the process and will continue to provide input to the State when appropriate. We will continue to keep members informed as the process progresses.

Marketing

The marketing team has been diligently enhancing key processes related to dues, membership, and Yankee marketing initiatives. Collaborative brainstorming sessions across teams are in progress to generate innovative ideas for budget planning in the upcoming fiscal year. The exhibitor sales team has finalized materials and contracts for shows across the United States.

The recent refresh of yankeedental.com was a concerted effort completed over the past year. It resulted in an enhanced digital presence that prioritizes usability for exhibitors, registrants, speakers, and staff, facilitating annual fresh content updates.

The video content gathered at Yankee is currently being edited for year-round use, and promotional teasers are being made for membership projects such as the "4th Molar" podcast. Additionally, plans exist to expand video initiatives relating to membership and Yankee activities.

Communication and event marketing strategies are always at the forefront, including support for membership renewal campaigns and events such as CAP and Beacon Hill Day. The MDS website is being refreshed, with a targeted launch set for mid-summer. The refresh is a large-scale cross-departmental project as we aim to provide and be a resource for the most important, timely information to our members. Additionally, planning is in progress in collaboration with the CE team for the 2026 Yankee Program book and improvements to the mobile application.

Yankee Dental Congress 2024 & 2025

We are pleased to report that this year's annual tradeshow was a tremendous success, marked by increased attendance, renewed energy, and a strong focus on enhancing the attendee experience.

One of the most significant improvements was the transition from traditional paper tickets to integrated chips in attendee badges. This innovation streamlined check-in and on-site access, reducing wait times and allowing attendees to move through the event with greater ease and efficiency. This change sets the stage for the introduction of Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) technology in 2026, which will streamline event operations and enhance the attendee experience even further.

Yankee 2025 introduced several innovative educational offerings to attendees, including a comprehensive two-day course from the Dawson Academy focused on occlusion and smile design. The meeting also featured intensive learning tracks, allowing attendees to tailor their experience across a range of key areas, including business strategies, dental sleep medicine, and emerging technologies. With the success of these programs, Yankee 2026 will follow with a two-day Spear Education program and the addition of tracks to include esthetics.

This year also marked a milestone—our 50th anniversary. In celebration, we brought back many beloved elements of the tradeshow experience, including live entertainment, which added vibrancy and excitement to the event. These enhancements contributed to an atmosphere we haven't seen in years—one filled with energy, enthusiasm, and connection.

Our focus this year was clear: make the event about the attendees. We are proud of the small but meaningful touches that helped deliver on this promise. Complimentary coffee stations, event-branded t-shirts, the return of the ever-popular chowder tasting, Boston cream pies, and even time with puppies on the show floor—all contributed to a more engaging and memorable experience for our guests.

Feedback from our general Yankee survey confirms the impact of these efforts. Of those surveyed, 74% reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with their experience, and just over 80% indicated they are likely or very likely to attend again.

With the success of this year's event behind us, planning is already underway for 2026. We are energized by the momentum and committed to delivering an even better experience in the years ahead.

Yankee Study Club

The Yankee Study Club (YSC) has become a cornerstone of continuing education, offering members and their teams consistently high-quality programming. Developed by leading educators from Massachusetts, many with strong backgrounds in higher education. These programs are finely tuned to the evolving needs of dentists at every career stage. Whether just starting out, mid-career, or well established, participants benefit from a well-rounded curriculum that reflects current trends and best practices in dentistry.

Key topics covered this past year included:

- Diagnosis and Classification of Periodontal Disease
- Contemporary 3D Printing Practices
- Strategy and Technique of Immediate Implant Placement
- Third Molar Extractions

Planning for Fall 2025 is complete and will feature new sessions on digital workflows and prosthodontics.

Looking ahead, the YSC planning group has developed a new initiative for Yankee: the "Breakfast Club" lecture featuring 2–3 Yankee headline speakers, aimed at providing early-morning insights rounding out the overall meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin C. Monteiro, MBA, CAE