

VP Position Paper

The term “society,” according to Merriam-Webster, is defined “as a voluntary association of individuals for common ends.” The history of the American Dental Association dates back to 1859 when twenty-six dentists met in Niagara Falls, NY to form a professional dental society composed of a national representative membership of dentists dedicated to promoting high professional standards and scientific research. The members of the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS), part of the tripartite organization led by the ADA, share a common interest and work collaboratively to achieve the society’s goals. Our society, since its inception, has evolved and changed. The society would not exist if the organization did not embrace new ideas, concepts, and expectations of our members. I believe we are at a crossroads and need to understand that the newer dentists of today are choosing to practice their talent differently than those of our later career dentists. This change does not mean that we still do not share a common interest. If as a society, we do not consider alternative and creative paths to attract the membership of newer, younger dentists, our society will cease to exist and will no longer be relevant.

Newer dentists have a multitude of career options upon graduation. One of the options for example, is to forgo the practice of being a sole practitioner in lieu of joining a DSO. Upon my completion of Dental School the concept of a DSO was just starting to emerge and I don’t think any of my classmates chose this as a career option. Today, DSOs make up a larger number of dental offices. In addition to the newer dentists joining DSOs, many current or previous dentists are selling their practices to a DSO. Dentists no longer choosing to own or pursue their own practice has been a topic of conversation throughout the last decade. Other options of newer dentists include owning their own practice, becoming an associate, joining the military, or establishing themselves as a professor at a dental school. The time is now to embrace the changing makeup of dentistry and the dentists who are pursuing these alternative paths. As a society, we have an opportunity to show our newer members the value of being a member of the society. We are all dentists and that is who we represent.

As treasurer of the Massachusetts Dental Society I have already taken strides to retain our younger dentists. Last year I brought forward a new dues model that significantly reduced the amount of dues early career dentists would have to pay. The concept was to hold onto these members longer so they can start to see what the dental society has to offer. I am also proud to be a part of our new mentorship program, serving as a mentor for these younger dentists to help them in their career and to get them involved in their society. I strongly believe you get what you put in. I was fortunate enough when I graduated from dental school to work as an associate for someone who was involved in our society and he personally showed me the value of it. Without that mentorship I wouldn’t be where I am today and I am proud to pass this on to our future members.

As Vice President I will make it my mission to ensure every dentist regardless of their career path finds a home here at MDS. We are all dentists, and we all share a common interest. We need a society that will fight for these common interests, but we need members to sustain our mission. The time is now to attract our younger dentists - if we don’t we will look back and regret it. This is our future and our existence depends on it.