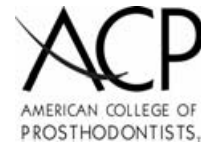


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Kudos

I JUST RETURNED from the American Prosthodontic Society (APS) Annual Session in Chicago, where I was asked to speak on excellence in the discipline of prosthodontics and its relationship to education. While I found the meeting to be excellent, the program to be outstanding, and the venue very nice, perhaps the most exciting part of the meeting was not really one of the presentations at all.

It seems the APS Foundation (APSF) applied for, and received, a \$148,800 grant from the US Department of Education (DOE), through the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The title of the grant was the APSF Scholars Program. The APSF used this grant to identify outstanding third-year dental students from all US dental schools, and to invite them to attend a specially designed program held on Thursday morning, February 23, prior to the APS Annual Session. At the APS meeting, each of these students received a \$2,000.00 scholarship. A total of 41 students were selected by their respective dental schools (one per school) for this prestigious scholarship. It does make one wonder, however, why the other 15 schools did not take advantage of this opportunity.

While a scholarship will certainly help these students financially, the larger impact comes from the fact that a prosthodontic organization took it upon itself to promote the specialty of prosthodontics to predoctoral students. I commend the APS on their initiative, and their dedication to this wonderful program. Who knows what the next 16 months will hold for these outstanding students—were they sufficiently “turned on” at the APS meeting to consider going into prosthodontic training programs? Will they graduate and elect to join the

APS as general practitioners, due to the generosity shown by the organization? Given that the average indebtedness of predoctoral students upon graduation now approaches just over \$100,000, any amount of scholarship funding that can be provided will help these future dentists offset their indebtedness for training. I spoke to several of these third-year predoctoral students during the meeting, and they were all very surprised they had been selected for this scholarship program, and all were delighted with the opportunity to attend the APS meeting, and to be able to see excellent prosthodontics presented at a national venue.

Unfortunately, it seems that, due to the amount of money required to fund the cleanup related to Hurricane Katrina, the DOE will not be able to provide grant money for the next year. However, it also appears that future funding may become available. I would encourage all prosthodontic organizations to consider similar funding mechanisms that will enable us to showcase our specialty to predoctoral students, as we continue to try to recruit the “best and brightest” into the specialty. And, I would certainly encourage the APS leadership to consider sending a list of the predoctoral students who received these scholarships to each of the prosthodontic graduate program directors, and to the leadership of other prosthodontic organizations, such that we can all contact these 41 highly qualified students, congratulate them on their scholarships, and encourage them over the next few months to give serious consideration to entering a postgraduate prosthodontic training program. Keep in mind, most of these students will decide by September or October of this year as to their future.

We can provide them with such wonderful information as copies of the recently published articles by Dr. Kent Nash and Dr. David Pfeifer in the *JADA*¹ and *Journal of Prosthodontics*² that demonstrate the return on investment of a three-year prosthodontics residency program, along with recent private practice salaries that demonstrate the impact of specialty training in prosthodontics on private practice income. All of us in academic venues should be distributing copies of these outstanding articles to potential predoctoral students to encourage their interest in the specialty. If you have not read these timely articles, I encourage you to do so, as they are very well written, the research is sound, and the message is clear—prosthodontics is an exceptional specialty to consider! So, kudos to the APS—but please, do not let

your efforts stop here, as we need good outcome data on the impact of these scholarships on graduate recruitment!

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David A. Felton, DDS, MS, FACP
Editor-in-Chief,
Journal of Prosthodontics
American College of Prosthodontics

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