

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Reframing the Future of Prosthodontics

**P**ROSTHODONTICS has made great strides in recent years, demonstrated by a long litany of accomplishments: the opening of new programs, an improved applicant pool, an expanded scope of Prosthodontics, the launch of the ACP's new website, public relations successes, a revitalized central office, the development of a more nimble governance structure, the ACP Education Foundation, and much more. As recently reported on MSN.com, we are sixth in the ranking of America's highest paying jobs (U.S. government's salary data, Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics). This is ahead of all business careers and almost all other medical and dental careers.

While things have dramatically improved, we need to continue to make things better to attract the best and brightest. We are poised to continue the successes for Prosthodontics and our patients; however, this requires careful planning.

On June 11–12, 2006 a group of 20 dental and prosthodontic leaders gathered to consider the future of Prosthodontics. The intent was for key leaders to collaborate and identify the critical strategic issues facing prosthodontics and our graduate educational programs.

An external facilitator was used as part of a structured brainstorming session to develop a series of propositions and strategic goals and plans. This involved the assimilation of a large amount of background information. Some of this was available from previous surveys or the dental literature.

Much of it was newly developed information from surveys and contact with the other specialties. The materials included:

- Need for Care and Patient Demographics
- Private Practice
- Educational Programs and Environment
- Science and Technology
- Information on the Other Dental Specialties

A series of core questions was used to direct the discussions. For example, "Do Prosthodontics and our Advanced Prosthodontic Programs need to grow? What role does developing science and technology play in the future of Prosthodontics?"

The knowledge base was enlightening for those who participated in the summit. For example, there are approximately 90 graduates from our Prosthodontic Programs staying in the United States each year. This is inadequate by any measure. It is less than one-half of the other core specialties, and inadequate to meet the demands for care. We need to act now.

A formal summary for the summit is in development. This will be shared with all communities of interest as soon as it is available. The core conclusions include:

- There is an urgent need to transform and grow the field of prosthodontics within the next ten years.
- The numbers of prosthodontists and advanced training programs need to grow.
- Science and technology will be the driving forces in this transformational growth.

---

*Excerpts from this column were published in the Fall 2006 ACP Messenger.*

- The culture of prosthodontics needs to change to leading the specialties and educational environment in restorative, implant, esthetic, and reconstructive dentistry.
- Patient advocacy efforts must be increased.

There was overwhelming recognition of the need to grow prosthodontics. This growth needs to encompass: (1) the number of prosthodontists, (2) the size and number of our specialty educational programs, (3) our presence in the academic environment, (4) continuing education offerings, (5) the organization and membership, and (6) our resources. In addition, there is a need to focus on establishing prosthodontics as the science and technology leader.

The participants developed a series of visions and prioritized strategies to address the key issues. The list of recommendations was long. The top eight were:

*Workforce:* The expanded prosthodontic workforce will support growth and innovation in practice, education, and research.

- Recommendation 1 – Increase the number of trained prosthodontists
- Recommendation 2 – Grow ACP membership

*Science and Technology:* Prosthodontics will lead the use and innovation of new science and technologies to improve the quality of life and the position of the specialty; promote the integration of new technologies into educational, research, and patient care programs; and lead the generation of new knowledge.

- Recommendation 3 – Be at the forefront of science and technology as inventors, beta testers, and early adopters
- Recommendation 4 – Increase prosthodontic competency in science and technology through Centers of Excellence
- Recommendation 5 – Integrate new science and technologies to the UG and PG dental school curricula
- Recommendation 6 – Leverage new technologies for educational advances

*Patient Care, Treatment Standards, and Education:* Prosthodontists will be creators and purveyors of the prosthodontic knowledge base for patient care.

- Recommendation 7 – Be leaders in dental school curriculum reform
- Recommendation 8 – Continue efforts to increase the public and professional awareness of the specialty of prosthodontics

The summit outcomes will be the driving force behind two subsequent invitational meetings with key stakeholders in the field of prosthodontics to be convened by the ACP in early 2007. The two invitational follow-up meetings—one for corporate partners and one for the Prosthodontic Forum organizations—will serve as venues for review of the summit recommendations, where strategies for collaboration with stakeholder groups can be developed.

Through the lens of the summit, I see the most incredible future for prosthodontics! The vision is so clear. I see the future of a growing prosthodontic community. I see an organization and foundation that embrace our core value of improving the quality of life through prosthodontics. I see a future of an active and strong membership, an organization of 4,000 members, a Central Office equaled by none. I see a future of widespread public awareness and the best continuing education programs. I see a new organizational structure that will position us to be nimble and responsive to our membership and the demands of the environment—a structure that will help us realize our future.

I see a future of the top students from every dental school pursuing prosthodontics, a future of more and larger Prosthodontic Programs, providing leadership in the educational and patient care environments. I see a future of 200 new prosthodontists graduating every year; not just numbers, but the best and brightest the specialty has ever seen. I see a future of patients in need seeking the expertise we offer, a public that benefits from the best of care and the growth of our specialty.

A series of task forces will be established in the coming months to further develop and realize the series of visions and actions defined by the summit.

Please become involved. It will take each and every one of us.

Stephen D. Campbell, DDS, MMSc  
President Elect  
American College of Prosthodontists

Copyright of Journal of Prosthodontics is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.