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Fifty Years of Graduate Orthodontics at Western University — The Future Looks Bright!

It is difficult to believe that next year, we will be celebrating 50 years since the start of the Graduate Orthodontic Program at Western University in London, Ont.

In 1972, six years after the dental school was established, Dean Wesley Dunn had the vision to establish the first specialty program at the school. Dr. Stuart Hunter was recruited from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to be the chair and Dr. David Way, a local London orthodontist, retired his practice to become the clinic director. The first four students were admitted to the program in July 1973. At

that time, the duration of the program was 24 months. In 1994, an expanded curriculum was introduced, extending the program to 34 months, with admissions reduced to three students per year to maintain a desirable student-faculty ratio.

Over the past 50 years, the program has graduated more than 160 orthodontists. The graduates are given the designation Master of Clinical Dentistry (MCID), which is unique to the program at Western, and emphasizes the focus on clinical training. Presently, our alumni practise in all 10 Canadian provinces, eight American states, as well as in Australia and Ghana. The first Indigenous orthodontist is also a Western graduate.

Dr. Betty Cragg was the first female orthodontist to graduate from the program in 1983. Notably, the present incoming class of 2023 is composed of three female residents. Selected from a pool of over 40 qualified applicants, we welcome these three women who originate from Alberta, Nova Scotia and Dublin, Ireland, into the program.

Orthodontic treatment mechanics have changed significantly during this time period. Fifty years ago, all teeth had to be fitted with metal bands. Bands were eventually replaced with bondable brackets and today patients are treated with metal brackets, invisible ceramic brackets, or clear aligners. In the not-too-distant future, it is believed that half of all orthodontic patients will be treated with clear aligners.

In 1995, Dr. Antonios Mamandras succeeded Dr. Hunter as the chair of the department. Dr. Mamandras held this position for the past 25 years and has recently



Dr. Mamandras is credited with “creating a 25-year legacy of exceptional outcomes for students and patients” at Western, which is commonly represented by University College, shown here. The Dr. Antonios Mamandras Chair will be the first endowed chair in a Canadian graduate orthodontic program and the first at Western’s dental school.



From left to right, Dr. Len Chumak, Dr. Robert Elliott, Dr. Antonios Mamandras, Dr. Kent Floreani and Dr. Bruce Hill. In 2017, Western University presented the graduate orthodontic department with the challenge of establishing an endowment fund in Dr. Mamandras' name. Dr. Chumak and Dr. Hill led the campaign, with significant help from Dr. Floreani and Dr. Elliott. On March 31, 2020, they surpassed their fundraising goal by securing donations totalling \$1,030,000.

retired. Presently, Dr. Ali Tassi is the acting chair and program director, having previously served as the clinic director.

In 2017, Western University presented the graduate orthodontic department with the challenge of establishing the Dr. Antonios Mamandras Endowment Fund in anticipation of Dr. Mamandras' retirement. Dr. Tassi credits Dr. Mamandras with creating a "25-year legacy of exceptional outcomes for students and patients alike."

The cost to permanently endow an academic chair is \$3 million. Our goal was to raise \$1 million.


Dr. Bruce Hill and I led the ambitious campaign, with significant help in the latter stages from Dr. Kent Floreani and Dr. Robert Elliott. On March 31, 2020, we successfully achieved and surpassed our fundraising goal by securing donations totalling \$1,030,000.

Western University will now match the \$1,030,000 in funds we have raised; this money will be combined with an existing \$1 million fund established in 2009, and the \$3 million (plus) chair will be realized.

The Dr. Antonios Mamandras Chair will be the first endowed chair in a Canadian graduate orthodontic

program and the first at Western's dental school. The endowment will provide the graduate orthodontic program with a source of stable funding to attract and retain top faculty, and preserve the program's reputation as a leading graduate orthodontic program in North America.

The support from graduate orthodontic alumni and friends to achieve our goal has been truly inspiring. Thank you and congratulations to each and every one of you.

The future of graduate orthodontics at Western looks very bright indeed! 



Dr. Len Chumak is a graduate of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Dentistry, 1981, and Western University's Graduate Orthodontic Program, 1985. He maintains a private practice in his native Ottawa, specializing in orthodontics. Among other professional activities he is an Adjunct Clinical Professor at Western University as well as the chair of the Graduate Orthodontic Alumni Committee. Dr. Chumak may be contacted at len.chumak@gmail.com.