MENTORSHIP



Dr. Joseph C. Harris

The first time I was nominated for the Academy I was denied Fellowship. Drs. David Campbell and Virginia Merchant, who were at the time Region 4 Trustee and Michigan State Chairperson respectively, both informed me that although I was on the right path for achieving the honor of Fellowship, I had not quite accomplished enough to justify acceptance. They encouraged me to continue in my endeavors and offered any assistance I deemed necessary. I was surprised and honored that I had been "noticed" by two eminent members of Michigan's organized dentistry and I was encouraged by their subtle efforts to offer me mentorship. Two years later, they both approached me with the great news that I was being into the Pierre Fauchard Academy. The integrity of the standards of acceptance accepted into the Academy which they adhered to left an indelible impression on me. Fellowship was earned, not bought. Importantly for me, my deeds and efforts were not going unseen – inspiring me to continue to dedicate myself to my profession and to populations in need.

The above anecdote, though seemingly straightforward, represents various things at various levels. Mentorships can take form in a regimented fashion or in a subtle way. The byproduct of mentorship can manifest itself immediately or evolve much later on. While some mentors take the classical role of teacher to student, others steward by example. Either way, mentorship is at the core of our mission statement and we, as Fellows of the Pierre Fauchard Academy, must keep this at the forefront of our agenda. Students and recent dental school graduates need a connection to the post-academic world of dentistry and we, the seasoned practitioners of our profession, provide a proven and trusted source for them. We must reach out to them and let them know that we are available to them. We must take the first steps and initiate contact; invite them to local PFA meetings, take them out for lunch, direct them to the Academy's website (www.fauchard.org), introduce them to colleagues, give them a tour of our offices and use any other means of creating a comfort zone for them so that they will not feel awkward and uneasy about approaching you, a relative stranger, for assistance.

Presently, the Executive branch of the Academy is investigating means of providing the Sections assistance with creating and administering mentorship programs at the local level. As always, when dealing with Sections, autonomy is the name of the game, so what we, the Executive, will do is create a blueprint for the Section Chairs to follow if they wish to. Derivatives and variations may be deemed necessary, of course, depending on the Section's needs but, most importantly, a resource will be available for the Chairs to refer to if they so desire.

Ideally, a matching system can be created where students/ recent graduates can be connected to doctors who have expertise in their fields of interest. The Section Chair would hold the lists of the participants and act as the "matchmaker" after mutual consent is granted by all parties. Being aware of the bulging, overloaded schedules that we all seem to maintain, we envision the majority of contact to occur via email. Regardless, the important thing to remember is that a support mechanism will be put in place which is not compulsory in nature but ready to use when needed.

The Fellows that comprise the Pierre Fauchard Academy represent the pinnacle of the dental profession. No other group is better prepared to offer guidance and mentorship to the neophytes of our profession.

—Dr. Joseph C. Harris
Immediate Past President of the
Pierre Fauchard Academy