



The American Association of Orthodontics Foundation Surpasses \$10 Million Donation Mark

St. Louis, MO – March 22 , 2015 – The American Association of Orthodontists Foundation (AAOF) has announced a historic accomplishment in orthodontic education and research. Since its founding 20 years ago, the AAOF **has awarded more than \$10 million in grants and donations to advance the specialty, primarily in support of junior faculty.**

Each year, the AAOF Awards Program supports students and faculty with promise to offer significant and original contributions to the field of orthodontics. The AAOF's Planning and Awards Review Committee (PARC) reviews the various applications and recommends which are to be funded. The program has defined seven award priorities, including:

- Biomedical Research Awards
- Orthodontic Faculty Development Fellowship Awards
- Center Awards
- Postdoctoral Fellowship Award
- Educational Innovation Awards
- Program Awards
- Research Aid Awards

“The AAO Foundation Board of Directors acknowledges with the most sincere appreciation the many contributions of the PARC team,” says Robert James Bray, DDS, MS, President. “We could not have reached this important milestone without them!” Current members of PARC include: Sunil Kapila(Chair); Laura Iwasaki (Vice-Chair); Cal Dolce; Sarandeep Huja; Carlos Flores-Mir; Martin Palomo; Cristina Teixeira; and Orhan Tuncay.

Lasting Value of the AAOF Awards Program

By supporting education and research projects, the AAOF Awards Program adds to the value of orthodontics as an academic discipline and the professional development of residents, junior faculty and mid-career faculty. With the AAOF “seed money,” award recipients have the opportunity to fund their ideas and independent research projects, collecting the data and experience necessary to forward their careers with credible data, publications and scholarly presentations.

“I have encouraged and mentored many junior faculty to take advantage of this figurative and literal wealth of opportunity to gain momentum in their careers while advancing the orthodontic profession,” says Dr. Sunil Kapila, BDS, MS, PhD., Graduate Orthodontics Program Director at the University of Michigan and AAOF PARC Chair. “Undoubtedly, AAOF Awards offer a wonderful mechanism to achieve two laudable goals at the same time that benefit the fundee in career advancement and the profession with new discoveries that enhance patient care. “

A vital stepping-stone for those in the early stages of their academic careers, AAOF Awards often set individuals up for future funding from federal or corporate sources, like the National Institutes of Health.

“The AAOF awards are a lifeblood for students and residents who want to pursue careers as orthodontic researchers and educators,” says Laura Iwaski, DDS, M.Sc., and Ph.D at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and PARC member since 2011. “Overall, the PARC has served the AAOF to identify developing projects and people with potential to influence the orthodontic profession and practice.”

Launch Pads for Success

Dr. Iwaski credits AAOF support as vital to her career and academic development. “Starting in 1998, the AAOF funded a series of our projects concerning the speed of orthodontic tooth movement that has not only shaped our orthodontic teaching and clinical practice but has resulted in numerous presentations and 14 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters co-authored by me and my collaborator Dr. Jeff Nickel,” she says.

“It has certainly been a dream career come true,” adds Sunil. “The outcomes are a direct result of the support provided the AAOF during the early stages of my career.”

AAOF Awards were also an instrumental building block for Dr. Kapila, who cites the extraordinary opportunities that flowed from AAOF funding: “In a nutshell, I have received a total of \$120,000 of funding from the AAOF, which has resulted in an additional over \$7 million of funding from NIH and other extramural sources, discoveries into the possible causes of TMJ diseases, modulating orthodontic tooth movement and retention, enhancing mandibular growth, the training of over 25 classes of orthodontic residents at two of the most outstanding academic institutions in the world, and mentorship of numerous young faculty members at many programs.”

Notable AAOF Award Projects

For more than twenty years the AAOF Awards have empowered educators and researchers to explore advancements in orthodontics. A UCLA School of Dentistry project that first received support from the AAOF more than 18 years ago is now heading to the International Space Station in 2016 as one of its first mammalian studies. The project is in conjunction with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space.

The mission, "Systemic NELL-1 Therapy for Spaceflight-induced Osteoporosis," will allow astronauts on the space station and scientists on Earth to collaboratively test a potential new therapy for accelerating bone growth in humans.

"Without the initial seed funding from the AAOF, all of this would not have been possible," says Kang Ting, DMD, DMSc, at the Orthodontics at UCLA School of Dentistry. "The AAOF was the very first group that put not only their support, but also their trust in an orthodontic junior faculty 18 years ago and proved that reaching for the sky – or heading into space – is not a dream but rather a reality 18 years later."

Long-Term Investment

Mentorship is a cornerstone principle of the AAOF, says Eric R. Nease, DDS MDS, and AAOF PARC Board Liaison. "Our mission is not just to support education and research, but also to encourage development of qualified academics to ensure the long-term survival of orthodontic programs." Nease encourages individuals interested in submitting a proposal to contact the AAOF for guidance in submitting a quality proposal.

The AAO Awards Program is funded by generous donations from individual orthodontists and sponsors.

Those interested in furthering the profession of orthodontics with a financial contribution are encouraged to visit <http://www.aaofoundation.net/>.

"The AAOF, through the work of PARC, supports the next generation of orthodontic leaders in education and research," says Nease. "Our results speak for themselves. Many of the past award recipients are now chairpersons and/or ranking faculty of orthodontic programs throughout the US and Canada. We hope to extend that success well into the future."

For more information on the AAOF and to view video testimonials, visit <http://www.aaofoundation.net/>.

About the AAO Foundation

The AAO Foundation, the charitable arm of the American Association of Orthodontists, provides support to orthodontic education programs and orthodontic research. Foundation funding ensures the future viability of the orthodontic specialty by investing in the next generation of educators and researchers.

Since 1994, the AAO Foundation Awards Program has provided \$10.1 million in funding, primarily in support of junior faculty. The AAO Foundation is incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit corporation in the state of Missouri. The AAO Foundation's website is www.aaofoundation.net.