



Dr. Maysaa Oubaidin
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University of Illinois-Chicago

I am an Associate Professor and Associate Program Director in the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Illinois Chicago College of Dentistry. Over the past several years, my career has centered on three areas that I am deeply passionate about: educating future orthodontists, mentoring residents and young faculty members, and conducting research that advances our specialty. As an educator, I have had the privilege of working closely with residents in both the classroom and clinical settings, helping them develop the knowledge, critical thinking, and clinical skills necessary for successful careers. These experiences have reinforced my belief that strong academic programs and meaningful research are essential to the future of orthodontics.

The project supported by the American Association of Orthodontists Foundation (AAOF) focuses on evaluating the impact of the Foundation's awards program on orthodontic faculty development and scientific influence. For decades, the AAOF has invested in the growth of academic orthodontics through research and faculty development funding. While many recipients can personally attest to the value of these awards, there has been limited objective evaluation of their long-term impact. This project seeks to address that gap by examining the academic productivity, career advancement, and scholarly influence of AAOF award recipients using standardized scholarly metrics. By doing so, we hope to better understand the outcomes associated with Foundation support and identify opportunities to further strengthen future funding initiatives.

I believe this work has important implications for orthodontic education. Academic orthodontics relies on dedicated faculty members who serve as educators, mentors, researchers, and leaders. Supporting these individuals is critical to maintaining strong residency programs and advancing evidence-based patient care. By identifying how Foundation funding contributes to faculty success and scholarly achievement, this project can help inform future investments in programs that develop and retain talented educators and researchers. Ultimately, strengthening academic careers strengthens orthodontic education and benefits the residents and students who will become the next generation of practitioners and leaders.

The AAOF has played a vital role in advancing orthodontic research and education, and this project would not have been possible without its support. The Foundation has long recognized the importance of investing not only in research projects but also in the people who conduct them. Its commitment to fostering academic growth has helped countless faculty members establish research programs, pursue innovative ideas, and contribute to the scientific advancement of our specialty. By supporting this project, the Foundation is also supporting a better understanding of how its investments influence the future of orthodontics and where future resources may have the greatest impact.

On a personal level, AAOF funding has been instrumental in my own academic development. The Foundation's support has provided opportunities to pursue meaningful research, collaborate with colleagues, and contribute to questions that are important to our profession. Equally important, receiving Foundation support has served as encouragement to continue pursuing a career that combines education, research, and service. It has strengthened my ability to mentor residents and junior colleagues while continuing to grow as a clinician-scientist and educator.

I am grateful for the AAOF's ongoing commitment to orthodontic scholarship and faculty development. Through this project, I hope to contribute information that will help guide future funding priorities and ensure that the Foundation continues to support the educators and researchers who will shape the future of orthodontics.