

IU Dental School Establishes New Office for Civic Engagement and Health Policy to Manage Expanding Role School Plays in Community

Three Indiana University School of Dentistry professors with extensive experience in community dentistry have received new administrative responsibilities as the school strives to keep abreast of a community engagement program that has grown both swiftly and substantially over the past decade.

John N. Williams Jr., D.M.D., dean of the IU dental school, has announced the creation of an Office for Civic Engagement, effective July 1, with Karen M. Yoder, Ph.D., M.S.D., serving as director of civic engagement and health policy. A professor of preventive and community dentistry, Dr. Yoder formerly directed the school's Division of Community Dentistry as well as the statewide Seal Indiana mobile preventive dentistry program.

"The role of the director of Civic Engagement and Health Policy is to promote health policy skills and advocacy among students and faculty and to facilitate local, national, and international service-learning (ISL) programs, secure grant and foundation funding to enhance civic engagement, and serve as a central point for public inquiry about the dental school's many outreach programs," said Dean Williams.

The office, which will be located near the office of the dean on the school's first floor, will also work to enhance public awareness of the school's community-engaged programs across the IUPUI campus and university and throughout Indiana. The office will provide a central location where students, faculty, and staff can better coordinate their volunteer efforts.

"Under Dr. Yoder's expert direction we will align Dentistry's Civic Engagement program with IUPUI's RISE initiative," said Dean Williams, referring to a component of the IUPUI Academic Plan that focuses on increasing student participation in research, international, service, and experiential learning programs.

Originally a dental hygienist, Dr. Yoder has been involved with public health for most of her career, beginning when she and her husband, Keith Yoder, D.D.S., lived for five years in Tanzania, working in a referral hospital there. She joined the IU School of Dentistry faculty as director of Community Dentistry in 2002 after serving for many years as a part-time faculty member on the Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne and IUPUI campuses and as a dental public health consultant for the Indiana State Department of Health.

Together with IU dental professors Drs. Timothy J. Carlson and E. Angeles Martínez-Mier, Dr. Yoder initiated the school's ISL



Angeles Martinez-Mier



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Armando E. Soto



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program for students and faculty, which has developed partnerships and annual programs with nine communities in eight countries. Most recently, in 2010, she established and led a service-learning team to Eldoret, Kenya, in cooperation with the IU-Moi University partnership. In 2003 she launched Seal Indiana, the dental school's statewide mobile preventive dentistry program that to date has provided services, including protective dental sealants, to more than 22,000 Hoosier children from low-income families.

She holds four IU degrees, including a master's degree in Public Health and a doctorate in Dental Science.

Dean Williams has appointed two of Dr. Yoder's dental school colleagues in the Department of Preventive and Community Dentistry to fill her previous administrative positions: E. Angeles Martínez-Mier, D.D.S., Ph.D., M.S.D., is the new director of the Division of Community Dentistry; and Dr. Armando E. Soto, D.D.S., M.P.H., new director of Seal Indiana.

Dr. Martínez-Mier, associate professor of preventive and community dentistry, directs the Oral Health Research Institute's Fluoride Research Program and IUPUI's dental school-based Binational/Cross-Cultural Health Enhancement Center, one of the campus's Signature Centers. She will retain those appointments as she moves into the new directorship.


A member of the IU faculty since 2000, Dr. Martínez-Mier was the architect of the dental component of an ISL program in Calnali, Hidalgo, Mexico, for IU students of medicine, nursing, and dentistry, and she has led many dental team visits to this state in the past 10 years. She and Dr. Timothy Carlson developed the curricular elements common to all of the school's ISL programs. The partnership established by Dr. Martínez-Mier and her colleagues in nursing and medicine with the state university, Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Hidalgo, would later be chosen as one of the three IUPUI strategic international partnerships.

As a researcher, one of her key interests is in community-based studies designed to identify and address disparities in dental health for Latino/Hispanic native and immigrant populations.

Dr. Martínez-Mier holds a dental degree from Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico in Mexico City, and two IU degrees (master's in Preventive Dentistry, Ph.D. in Dental Science). She also completed an IU clinical fellowship in the specialty of periodontics. Before coming to Indiana, she chaired the preventive dentistry department and coordinated undergraduate periodontics at Universidad Intercontinental in Mexico City.



Karen Yoder

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Dr. Soto, assistant professor of preventive and community dentistry, has already acquired comprehensive knowledge of Seal Indiana, having joined the program in 2004, the year he was appointed to the faculty, and having served as its associate director since 2007. He has guided hundreds of dental students in their preventive care of children in need through the fourth-year dental classes' Seal Indiana clinical rotations, and has taken the program to every part of the state.

In 2010, he started one of the school's newest international service-learning programs, which sends pediatric dentistry residents to work in Mayan communities in Yucatan, Mexico, in partnership with Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Yucatan.

He has pursued a number of research, education, and community-service projects, helping the Binational/Cross-Cultural Health Enhancement Center achieve permanent status as an IUPUI Signature Center.

After earning his dental degree from Universidad Intercontinental, Dr. Soto completed a master's degree in Public Health at King's College School of Medicine and Dentistry, University of London. He also completed a postdoctoral fellowship at IU's Oral Health Research Institute.

He, too, is a former chair of preventive dentistry at Universidad Intercontinental. He conducted research at one of Mexico's leading research institutions, where he also worked with special needs patients. In the 1990s, he collaborated with the Mexican government to develop a dental clinic for AIDS patients.

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