



**MARQUETTE  
UNIVERSITY**

**Testimony of Dr. Sheila Stover, Director of Rural Outreach Programs  
Marquette University School of Dentistry  
Before the Special Legislative Study Committee on Review of Higher Education  
October 7, 2010**

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Ballweg, Vice-Chair Risser and members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Sheila Stover and I am an assistant clinical professor and Director of Rural Outreach Programs at the Marquette University School of Dentistry (MUSOD). With me today are Ms. Amanda Falkowski, the Practice Placement Coordinator at the Marquette University School of Dentistry and Ms. Mary Czech-Mrochinski, Director of Governmental and Community Relations for Marquette University.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak with you here today regarding the Marquette University School of Dentistry's Outreach Program and the School's dual mission of dental education and service such that we train dentists capable of providing effective oral health care in a variety of practice settings. This training is consistent with the focus of the Wisconsin Health Professions Loan Assistance Program (HPLAP) which was established to assist rural and underserved communities in recruiting and retaining primary care health and dental professionals. The Marquette University School of Dentistry actively engages with the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health to identify oral health care providers to participate in this loan forgiveness program.

I would like to share with you some activities at the Marquette University School of Dentistry. At present, the School provides services in six clinics around the state.

In 2008-09 the Marquette University School of Dentistry provided oral health care services to nearly 25,000 patients with approximately 91,000 patient visits. These patients were from 64 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. Our Main Clinic in Milwaukee alone saw patients from 52 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. We truly are the State's dental school.

Of the six sites at which the School operates, three are managed and operated entirely by MUSOD and include the Main Clinic on campus within the School's current facility and two urban outreach clinics in Milwaukee: Marquette University Community Dental Clinic-North (on West Capitol Drive and North 2nd Street) and Marquette University Community Dental Clinic-South (on Oklahoma Avenue and South 20th Street). The other three are in Stevens Point, Eau Claire, and Appleton. Ministry Dental Center in Stevens Point serves only Medicaid patients; the clinic at Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire serves patients below 200% of the

federal poverty level; and the majority of patients served at the Tri-County Community Dental Clinic in Appleton are on Medicaid. MUSOD is one of the state's largest dental Medicaid providers and is often the provider of last resort for many individuals throughout Wisconsin.

MUSOD has taken a proactive role in creating opportunities for future practitioners to settle in more rural and underserved areas throughout Wisconsin by developing several programs to address the needs in these communities. While graduates of Marquette University's School of Dentistry are located in 69 of Wisconsin's 72 counties, a recent Wisconsin Dental Association workforce study revealed that almost half of all dentists are located in the four largest counties—Brown, Dane, Milwaukee and Waukesha counties.

Consistent with MUSOD's mission to provide clinic experiences outside the walls of the dental school and to proactively help address the distribution issue in more rural areas of the state, Delta Dental of Wisconsin began supporting the Delta Dental of Wisconsin Rural Oral Health Fellowship Program at MUSOD in the 2007-08 academic year. The Rural Health Fellows participate in a one-year post-graduate training program and have a D.D.S. degree and are licensed to practice within the State of Wisconsin. Fellows receive a one-year experience designed to augment their clinical skills and bring confidence levels to a point where they feel comfortable serving as a solo practitioner in a small community, perhaps independent of other oral health care providers. The Delta Fellows treat patients in the MUSOD-affiliated clinics throughout the state (Appleton, Eau Claire and Stevens Point). There have been six Delta Dental Fellows to date. Five continue to practice in Wisconsin's underserved communities. One treats underserved residents in Colorado.

Also through the support of Delta Dental of Wisconsin, MUSOD recently hired Amanda Falkowski as the Practice Placement Coordinator who seeks to match graduating students with practice opportunities or dental service needs in underserved and/or rural areas of Wisconsin, including the state's loan forgiveness program. Amanda works collaboratively with organized dentistry, various community groups, tribal councils, local chamber of commerce representatives, rural dentists in the state, community health centers, and related state agencies to develop programs and to serve as a liaison to help connect dental students with various opportunities that exist in rural areas of Wisconsin. The practice placement coordinator is responsible for establishing and coordinating a range of programs resulting in direct contact and outreach in rural areas and communities within Wisconsin that may be interested in attracting a dentist.

The placement coordinator will be instrumental in helping to address the uneven distribution of the state's dental workforce. Some cases might require local chambers of

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commerce to incentivize the hiring of a dentist or to help secure financing for the purchase or creation of a private practice. Financing is often an obstacle given that the average dental school debt for an MUSOD graduate is approximately \$200,000. The purchase of a dental practice may be upwards of \$500,000.

A 2003 study by the American Dental Association, "Economic Impact of Dentists," found that a single dental office has a direct impact of \$442,161 on the nation's economy and a total impact (direct, indirect and induced) of \$1,278,253. MUSOD understands not only the important role graduates play in delivering quality oral health care, but also the economic benefits to the Wisconsin communities in which they establish practices. Dentists are small business persons who are often active in their communities.

The Marquette University School of Dentistry is supportive of the Wisconsin Health Professions Loan Assistance Program (HPLAP). This program is one piece of the puzzle to provide access to quality oral health care for Wisconsin's citizens.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions that Committee members may have at this time.