

# BU program successful in preparing minority students for dental school

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Boston University's Oral Health Sciences (OHS) master's program is a successful credential-enhancing program for dental school applicants, while also serving as a pipeline to increase the number of qualified applicants from underrepresented minority (URM) groups.

There are a variety of academic enrichment programs for medical school applicants however, development of pre-dental enrichment programs has lagged behind. In 2005, BU's Goldman School of Dental Medicine (GSDM), in collaboration with Boston University School of Medicine's (BUSM) Graduate Medical Sciences, introduced the OHS pipeline program to enhance the academic preparedness of students from URM groups for [dental school](#) admission.

In order to evaluate the OHS program's success, acceptance to dental school and performance at GSDM in the first and second years among URM students was measured from 2005-15 and compared to non-URM OHS graduates and non-OHS dental students. A total of 55 URM students completed the OHS program during this period, with 49 successfully matriculating to a dental school in the U.S. and 33 attending GSDM.

The researchers also found the average OHS GPA was higher for those URM students accepted to dental school than for those who did not gain admission (3.36 vs. 2.94). Evaluation of the academic performance of URM OHS students in the first year and second year at GSDM showed that these students performed as well as the non-OHS and non-URM

OHS students.

"These results demonstrate that the OHS master's program has been successful in its mission of increasing the number of qualified applicants from groups historically underrepresented in the dental profession. It is one of our strongest master's program helping to fulfill our mission of promoting diversity, equity and inclusion," said corresponding author Theresa A. Davies, Ph.D., director of the Oral Health Sciences program at BUSM.

"The collaboration between OHS and GSDM prepares its graduates to practice as expanded [healthcare providers](#), integrating the concepts of dentistry, medicine and public health. The academic foundation established by OHS Masters' Program positions our students for personal and professional success," added co-author Larry Dunham, DMD, director of Diversity at GSDM.

Although pipeline programs have positively impacted the number of URM enrollees in dental [school](#), a low number of URM dental students and practitioners still exists. "Attempts to diversify faculty along with effective recruitment and retention strategies for URM students must continue."

These findings appear online in the *Journal of Dental Education*.

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