Koelbl appointed dean of College of Dental Medicine at University of New England

University of New England (UNE) President Danielle N. Ripich, PhD, has announced the appointment of new Dean of the College of Dental Medicine James J. Koelbl, DDS, MS, MJ, of Claremont, Calif. Koelbl is the founding dean of the College of Dental Medicine at Western University of Health Sciences, Pomona, Calif., and will join UNE in April.

The college must be accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) prior to opening and a dean must be in place for the accreditation process. UNE’s publicly stated intent is to open the college in the fall of 2012, and an aggressive fundraising campaign is under way.

To date, $6.8 million has been raised with a lead gift of $2.5 million from Northeast Delta Dental and donations from Unum Life Insurance Company of America, New Hampshire’s Endowment for Health, Dr. Robert Card and other major contributors. In November 2008, the UNE board of trustees approved the lion bond to increase access to dental medicine degree.

In the recent election, a $5 million bond allocates $3.5 million to establish a dental school’s community-based teaching clinic, which UNE will apply for through a competitive bid process and as part of its effort to raise money for the UNE College of Dental Medicine. Prior to his current position at Western University, Koelbl served as the dean of the School of Dentistry at West Virginia University from 1999-2007; he held several senior positions at the American Dental Association from 1994–1999, including the position of associate executive director, served as associate dean for clinical affairs and professor at the University of Louisville School of Dentistry from 1992–1994, and held several administrative and faculty positions at the Loyola University School of Dentistry from 1977–1992, including: director, general practice residency; chair, operative dentistry; assistant dean for admissions and student affairs; and associate dean for academic affairs.

Koelbl was an instructor at the University of Illinois College of Dentistry from 1975 to 1977, has received numerous awards and honors and the critical shortage of dentists in Maine and Northern New England. The $5 million bond allocates $5.5 million to establish a dental school’s community-based teaching clinic, which UNE will apply for through a competitive bid process and as part of its effort to raise money for the UNE College of Dental Medicine.

In response to a high prevalence of neck and back pain among working dentists and dental hygienists, the dean of the University of Maryland Dental School, Christian S. Stohler, DDS, DrMedDent, has launched an initiative to bring renewed attention to ergonomics into dental education. Starting with the current semester, every incoming student must take the school’s course “Ergonomics in Dentistry,” before he or she can practice simulations or live-patient dental work. The school wants to be the place where dentists and dental hygienists learn to practice ergonomically correct practices, says Stohler. “Three out of every five dentists live with the pain,” due to years of practicing with poor posture and other unwise positioning, guest lecturer Lance Rucker, DDS, director of clinical
has written multiple publications and articles during his career. Koelbl received his DDS from the University of Illinois College of Dentistry, his MJ in health law from the Loyola University School of Law and an MS in oral biology from Loyola University. He received his undergraduate degree from John Carroll University.

“I am very pleased that Dr. Koelbl is joining us at the University of New England,” said Ripich. “UNE will benefit greatly from his extensive experience in dental medicine and as the dean of two dental schools. I am confident Dr. Koelbl will enable UNE to expedite the accreditation of the College of Dental Medicine and will also greatly assist in our fundraising efforts for the college.”

“I am honored to be selected as the founding dean for the UNE College of Dental Medicine, and appreciate all of the hard work that has been accomplished to date,” Koelbl said.

“We have the opportunity to create a state-of-the-art and technologically advanced dental education program at UNE where a rich environment for collaboration exists, both internally and externally. I appreciate the support that has already been provided by the dental community, and look forward to meeting and getting to know the dentists throughout the New England area.”

Koelbl noted that while many details are yet to be developed, the UNE dental program will focus on a strong foundation in science and research, realistic simulation, early and extensive clinical experiences, interprofessional education and significant community-based education.

“We recognize our strong obligation for the college and its graduates to help improve the health of individuals, families and communities in New England and beyond,” Koelbl added.

Named one of the best regional universities in America by U.S. News & World Report, UNE is a leader in health sciences education, biomedical research and the liberal arts.

It offers student-centered, interdisciplinary programs in the College of Osteopathic Medicine, the Westbrook College of Health Professions, the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Pharmacy and the College of Graduate Studies and Pharmacy and the Graduate School of Bioscience and Environment.

“Many dentists eventually need years of physical therapy, go to a chiropractor or even have surgery, but seldom do you hear about the need for preventive solutions, the etiology of the problem,” says Belenky.

Barten added, “This should increase alumni financial support for the school as well.”

Barten and Belenky have created an instructional video that begins with the profession with musculoskeletal problems, due to poor ergonomic working conditions. Barten said: “I don’t want students developing musculoskeletal problems from chronic stress on the neck, shoulder, back and low back. We start all the dental students off with knowledge of the proper posture as a dentist for avoiding such career-limiting problems.”

(See University of New England)

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(See University of Maryland Dental School)