

S.M.I.L.E. Healthcare Pathway Program Announces Strategic Expansion With Leading Dental Industry Partners

June 10, 2024

MELVILLE, N.Y.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jun. 10, 2024-- The S.M.I.L.E. (Student Mentoring with Immersive Learning and Enrichment) Healthcare Pathway Program, a leader in advancing oral health equity, is pleased to announce the addition of several prominent organizations as supporters of its mission to build a more inclusive healthcare workforce by recruiting students from historically underrepresented backgrounds to enter the dental profession.

The founding partners of S.M.I.L.E. – Henry Schein, Inc. (Nasdaq: H SIC), the National Dental Association (NDA), and the Schattner Foundation – are delighted to welcome the following organizations as supporting partners for the 2024 S.M.I.L.E. Program: the Hispanic Dental Association; the Society of American Indian Dentists; Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry; A.T. Still University's Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health; and, A.T. Still University's Missouri School of Dentistry & Oral Health. Working together, these partners seek to advance the core mission of cultivating a diverse and talented next-generation of African-American, Hispanic, and American Indian dental professionals, ultimately ensuring a more equitable dental landscape.

The S.M.I.L.E. Program engages rising 9th and 10th-grade students by providing an introduction to the many exciting career opportunities available within the oral health profession. Through a week-long immersive experience, participants gain exposure to the diverse roles within dental teams, including assisting, hygiene, and dentistry, along with insights into various practice models and industry positions.

Program highlights include:

- **Mentorship:** Dedicated dental professionals provide valuable guidance and share their expertise with students.
- **Hands-On Learning:** Participants engage in real-world procedures, developing practical skills crucial for future dental careers.
- **Career Pathway Exposure:** Students explore a wide range of dental career options, facilitating informed choices about their professional path.
- **Collaboration & Networking:** Students will meet fellow rising 9th and 10th-graders from around the country, developing social skills and building relationships for a lifetime.
- **Capstone Project:** The program culminates in a capstone project, allowing students to showcase their learnings through a tangible presentation.

2024 Program Details

The 2024 S.M.I.L.E. Program will take place from July 7 to 12 at Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry in Nashville, Tennessee. To learn more about the Program and view highlights from 2023 participants, please watch this [video](#).

For more information about the Program, please visit the official S.M.I.L.E. Program website: <https://ndaonline.org/smile-program>.

PARTNER TESTIMONIALS

Cherae Farmer-Dixon, DDS, MSPH, MBA, FACD, FICD
Dean, Meharry School of Dentistry

"Joining forces with Meharry School of Dentistry through our partnership with Henry Schein signifies a commitment to revolutionizing oral healthcare access. This collaboration is not just about dental care; it's about empowering communities, bridging gaps in healthcare equity, and fostering a brighter, healthier future for all. Together, we aim to redefine the standards of care, break down barriers, and inspire a new generation of dental professionals dedicated to serving the underserved.

Furthermore, it's noteworthy that 27% of the currently practicing African American dentists in the U.S. are Meharry Medical College graduates. Programs such as this partnership not only highlight our commitment to diversity in the field but also serve as a beacon of inspiration for the next generation of individuals, encouraging them to consider dentistry as a rewarding and impactful career path. Through our joint efforts, we aspire to increase representation, improve access to quality care, and ultimately, transform lives."

Dr. Nicole Cheek, 100th President of the National Dental Association

"Being a part of the S.M.I.L.E. Pathway Program is about transforming the lives of students and achieving a future where they can thrive in dentistry and oral health, regardless of their backgrounds. In a world where access to opportunities is unequal, programs like S.M.I.L.E. are needed to bridge the gap and empower individuals to reach their full potential. Through mentorship, education, and support, S.M.I.L.E. aims to cultivate leaders who will make positive impacts in oral health, their communities and beyond."

Maria S. Gomez, Board Member, Schattner Foundation

"The Schattner Foundation is committed to supporting the next generation of dental practitioners who come from underrepresented communities throughout the country. Our intention in participating with our advice and resources is to help support a strong and lasting program that over time will deliver on the promise of recruiting high school students into dental careers who will practice in neighborhoods where oral health is most needed."

Pam Richter, Director, Corporate Affairs and Inclusion, Henry Schein and Co-Lead, S.M.I.L.E. Program Director

"Henry Schein, alongside our distinguished partners, is excited to build on the S.M.I.L.E. program's success. This initiative empowers diverse students to pursue healthcare careers through mentorship and immersive learning, aiming to improve health equity in underserved communities. With the additional support from our partners, we will engage 40 students this year, igniting their passion for healthcare and creating lasting change."

Christina Meiners D.D.S, F.I.C.D, Hispanic Dental Association Past President, Interim Executive Director

"The Hispanic Dental Association is excited to collaborate in this effort to help increase access to and awareness of careers in dentistry and healthcare. We understand the power a diverse healthcare provider has on improving the health of our communities and the influence a program like this has on creating opportunities for our youth. With this partnership we hope to create a network of support for students who want to learn more about this amazing profession."

Ruth Wauqua Bol DDS MPD ICD, (Comanche), Society of American Indian Dentists Past President, 2011-2013

"The Society of American Indian Dentists is honored to collaborate on the S.M.I.L.E. oral health pathway summer enrichment program. Our American Indian and Alaska Native population continues to experience the highest rates of unmet dental need in the country. This unique opportunity allows us to introduce American Indian and Alaska Native high school students to the field of dentistry. It is our sincerest hope that this experience will help smooth the pathway to dental school so these students can one day provide care in our communities."

Clinton Normore, MBA, Vice President, Diversity & Inclusion, MOSDOH & ASDOH Instructor, A.T. Still University

"ATSU has a history of providing access and opportunity for marginalized populations. Partnerships like this are essential for improving workforce diversity and improving health outcomes. We aim for this partnership to engage, energize, and nurture young minds towards a healthcare career."



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Source: Henry Schein, Inc.