

# Council on Membership

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Bogan, Kyle D., 2022, Ohio, chair  
 Patel, Meenal H., 2023, North Carolina, vice chair  
 Atarod, Ensy A., 2025, Texas  
 Bellamy, Wallace J., 2023, California  
 Berg, Tamara S., 2022, Oklahoma  
 Bijoor, Renuka R., 2025, New York  
 Eggnatz, Michael D., 2022, Florida  
 Kunzman, Nathaniel W., 2025, Colorado  
 Moriarty, Janis B., 2024, Massachusetts  
 Mutschler, Mark D., 2022, Oregon  
 Nelson, Cate E., 2023, Michigan  
 Rao, Aruna S., 2024, Minnesota  
 Simpson, Kerri, T., 2024, West Virginia  
 Sniscak, Thomas J., 2023, New Jersey  
 Sword, Rhoda J., 2024, Georgia  
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 Tiersky, Terri S., 2025, Illinois  
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The Council's 2021-22 liaisons include: Dr. Richard Rosato (Board of Trustees, First District) and Dr. Michelle Skelton (American Student Dental Association).

## **Areas of Responsibility as Set Forth in the *Bylaws or Governance and Organizational Manual of the American Dental Association***

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As listed in Chapter VIII, Section K.9 of the ADA *Governance and Organizational Manual*, the areas of subject matter responsibility for the Council shall be:

- a. Membership recruitment and retention and related issues;
- b. Monitor and provide support and assistance for the membership activities of constituents and components; and
- c. Membership benefits and services.

## **Advancing ADA Strategic Goals and Objectives: Agency Programs, Projects, Results and Success Measures**

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**MEMBERSHIP GOAL:** The ADA will have sufficient members to be the premier voice for oral health

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Increase membership market share of lagging demographics by 2% per year

**Initiative:** Member Value Innovation Strategy

**Success Measure:** Build a new value innovation pipeline and launch 1-3 new initiatives in 2022

**Target:** Pilot test and/or launch a minimum viable product (MVP) for 1-3 new value initiatives

**Range:** 1-3

**Outcome:** Two initiatives have been identified and are in development, with launch dates for each minimally viable product scheduled for Q4 2022.

\**New Dentist Member*

In response to the growing market share gap for early career dentists and lagging segments, the Council on Membership created a 2021-2022 inter-council workgroup to address the value gap for these segments. This Member Value Innovation Joint Action Team (JAT) is comprised of two members from each of the following agencies: Council on Membership, Council on Dental Practice, Council on Communications, and New Dentist Committee as well as the ASDA Consultant to the Council on Membership. Through a volunteer-led strategic process supported by member data and insights, the JAT's charge is to offer input, guidance and support into the evaluation and development process for member value assets that support the recruitment and retention of ADA members across the tripartite. These value offerings are not non-dues revenue driven. They are meant to drive member market share and dues-dollars for the ADA's growing segments: early career (1-5 years in practice), women, racially/ethnically diverse, and dentists in large group practice settings. The Council on Membership outlined the following responsibilities for the JAT:

- Determine unmet member value needs and prioritize their development
- Support the member value innovation pipeline
- Review and respond with strategic guidance to membership trends by leveraging ADA research

The Council and JAT also fully support the Board of Trustees' recent resolution to improve the alignment of resources to meet the needs of dental students and new dentists (particularly in their first 1-3 years out of school) and the inherent diversity within them. New initiatives identified by the JAT that are currently in development include:

1. **Mentorship Program:** Mentorship has evolved. Students and new dentists may often have several mentorship relationships and may connect with their mentors via text, social media groups, video chat, and other ways as well as face-to-face. New graduates may turn to their state or local society for support as well as specialty societies. National level support however, is often found in social media forums, which can be daunting and variable. With support from the Council, the JAT supports exploration of a national level program with a digital component that would live on the new ADA app, which is scheduled to launch in October 2022. This digital resource would offer a way to connect with multiple people in an asynchronous manner. Led by ADA core values, this resource would offer support and guidance to help dentists to grow professionally. The JAT also supports exploration of a "Zoom room" concept which would provide a way for dentists to connect via Zoom on particular areas of interest, such as special needs dentistry, balancing life as a new mom and others. In addition, the JAT recognizes the value of grassroots mentorship and supports further exploration of successes and learnings from dental society mentorship programs which can be applied and tested with other societies this year.
2. **Preparedness Modules:** New graduates are turning to YouTube and discussion forums for advice on clinical procedures and practice management and the ADA has an opportunity to emerge as a top resource in this space. By using a peer-to-peer approach and leveraging talent within the ADA, these preparedness modules can provide resources and guidance from a reliable community while elevating the trusted reputation of the ADA. The modules would be quick refreshers and tips and not CE programs or comprehensive coverage of a topic. The modules could be linked to additional resources for more detailed learnings. The modules would ideally be available in multi-media format – video, audio with supplemental content on ADA.org. The first step in this process is to identify the top needs from new dentists and then to develop themes. Research is currently underway with pilot opportunities slated for implementation this year.

To further assist the JAT and Council in the development of a new value innovation pipeline into 2023, the Council will continue its sponsorship of a Smile Tank event at SmileCon in Houston. At last year's SmileCon, the Council, in collaboration with the New Dentist Committee and the Board of Trustees' Standing Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, debuted a new Smile Tank competition to generate ideas in support of the ADA's diversity and inclusion core values and engage members in a unique way. It also helped to demonstrate the opportunities that the ADA had to bring D&I work to life. This year in Houston, the Council will sponsor a new Smile Tank competition focused on new member value ideas, targeted to early career dentists, to help fill the innovation pipeline for next year's JAT to consider. The top five finalists will be invited to present their ideas in person at SmileCon for the chance to win cash prizes.

**Initiative: Large Group Practice Membership Strategy****Success Measure:** 2% annual growth in market share of large group practice dentists**Target:** Acquire mid-large group practice dentist members from 1-3 group practices by EOY 2022**Range:** 1-3**Outcome:** Conversations are currently underway with a large regional practice to negotiate membership for their nonmember dentists. Results TBD by the end of Q4 2022.

Building a culture of inclusion around large group practice (LGP) supported dentists is crucial to the ADA's long term viability and success, especially over the next decade as the consolidation trend continues. Working in support of the success measure and target goal, ADA staff initiated discovery meetings with 10 large and medium-sized Dental Support Organizations (DSOs) over the past year to better understand their unique needs, challenges and barriers to ADA membership. Key learnings from those meetings include:

- A long and sometimes contentious relationship history among DSOs, the ADA, and state dental associations, all of whose leaders are risking reputations and political capital when choosing to engage.
- Universal feedback that DSO-supported dentists don't feel that the ADA organization welcomes them, driving their decision not to become a member.
- The larger DSOs not only provide support to their affiliated dentists, they provide robust resources often duplicating and eclipsing the ADA's offerings.
- DSOs are innovating powerfully in many areas, from business models to their focus on the mouth/body connection. The ADA Tripartite is seen as slow-moving and archaic.

To proactively address these issues, the Council formed an ad hoc workgroup to discuss the unique challenges and sense of urgency for creating a welcoming environment for LGP dentists at the grassroots level. To support these efforts, the Council has begun development of an LGP-specific toolkit that will be available through the ADA Membership Outreach portal for dental societies to access. The toolkit resources are currently under development and scheduled for completion by end of Q3 2022. Toolkit items will include:

- Talking points including a DSO definition, DSO business models, ADA business case for engaging with DSOs including long-term strategic goals, growth trends, etc.
- PowerPoint slides that dental society staff and volunteers can use in their own presentations including HPI research on the number of dentists working in a DSO setting, solo practice declining, practice ownership declining, etc.
- Guidance on how dental society staff and volunteers can best approach DSOs and LGPs and define areas of opportunity for collaborations where they are in alignment.
- Success stories from state and local dental societies that have achieved successes.

**Initiative: Acquisition, Retention and Conversion (ARC) Program****Success Measure:** Maintain a net-positive gain in membership recruitment of all dentists within 70% or more of constituents.**Target:** Reach 5,000 potential members/members through allocated ARC programs**Range:** 4,000-6,000**Outcome:** To date, 19 programs have been completed and over 1,500 dentists and students have been reached. Some programs were delayed in Q1 due to the residual effects of COVID-19, but all have been rescheduled and the target is expected to be met, with final results TBD in December 2022.

The Council on Membership oversees the annual distribution of \$250,000 in grants to state and local societies to support their recruitment and retention efforts targeted toward the ADA's priority and growing markets, including students, early career, women, and ethnically/racially diverse dentists, and those in large group practices.

For the 2021 ARC program, the Council approved 100 grant applications out of the 106 applications submitted. Eighty-one of the originally approved programs were completed, and over 12,500 total students and dentists were impacted by the programs. Nineteen of the programs were cancelled due to COVID-19 and 11 new programs were initiated with reallocated funds. Additionally, \$10,000 of the unspent funds were allocated to support a few states in piloting a new video content marketing platform to engage early career dentists.

For the 2022 ARC program, the Council received 141 applications for a total funding request of \$675,000. The Council approved funding for 124 programs, totaling \$250,000.

Looking ahead to the 2023 ARC program, the Council brainstormed ideas to continue to evolve the program and focus efforts even more on dentists who are most vulnerable to dropping membership 1-3 years post-graduation. One idea the Council asked staff to pursue is development of a "First Year Fever" program to inform and energize new grads about ADA/state/local value and engagement.

#### **Initiative: D&I Policy Implementation Strategy**

**Success Measure:** 2% annual growth in market share of racially/ethnically diverse dentists

**Target:** Develop an action plan for increasing diversity in leadership and provide a report to the Board of Trustees at its August meeting

**Range:** N/A

**Outcome:** The action plan and report are in development and scheduled to be submitted to the Board of Trustees at its August meeting.

The Joint Action Team (JAT) on Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) was first formed in 2021 to take the lead in drafting a new D&I Policy, which was submitted to the 2021 House of Delegates and approved. The Council reappointed the JAT in 2022 to identify strategies to support and ensure accountability across the organization of the ADA's new D&I Policy, as well as the Sustaining the Pipeline of Volunteer Leaders Policy. The 2022 JAT is comprised of two members from each of the following agencies: Council on Membership, Board of Trustees' Standing Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, New Dentist Committee, and the Council on Communications.

The JAT discussed the need to align on *why* diversity in leadership is an important extension of these policies, and strategies for developing best practices to build a more diverse pipeline of leadership at the national, state and local levels. The JAT also reviewed research conducted in November 2021 with grassroots ADA members about their opinions on leadership representation. Fifty-six percent of new dentist respondents reported that diversity, or lack of diversity, among ADA leadership **impacts their decision to be an ADA member by a great to moderate amount**. Additionally, over 90% of new dentists said generational diversity in leadership representation is important, 73% said racial/ethnic diversity in leadership representation is important, and 72% said gender balance in leadership representation is important.

In support of this research and to build on the work of the D&I policies, the JAT recommended a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Lens to assist leaders at the national, state and local levels, to help enhance discussions about inclusion and belonging and ensure that leadership is reflecting and supporting the diversity of ADA members and the communities they serve. A DEI Lens was developed, approved by the

Council, and shared widely with other ADA volunteer agencies, and state and local societies. This step-by-step tool can help leadership think about opportunities from a new perspective, identify unintended and unconscious biases, and be intentional about creating welcoming spaces.

Additionally, The Board of Trustees adopted the following resolution at its April 2022 meeting:

**Resolved**, that opportunities identified and discussed during the joint session of the Board of Trustees and New Dentist Committee be forwarded to the Council on Membership's Joint Action Team on Diversity and Inclusion for further exploration, and be it further **Resolved**, that a formalized action plan for increasing participation in new dentist leadership, including 1) creating new dentist pathways and 2) amplifying new dentist voices be created by the Joint Action Team and shared with the Board at its August 2022 meeting.

In support of this, the JAT requested staff to develop an outline of best practices to help diversify leadership at the national, state and local levels. At its most recent meeting, the JAT reviewed and approved the draft outline of an action plan for increasing participation in leadership, not only among new dentists, but also women, racially/ethnically diverse, and dentists in all practice modalities. The action plan is currently in development and will be submitted to the Board of Trustees at its August meeting.

### **Initiative: Improve Inclusion and Collaboration with the Dental Team through a New Dental Team Member Category**

**Success Measure:** House of Delegates support to strengthen the relationship between dentists and their team

**Target:** Adoption of a resolution to add a Team Member Category by the 2022 House of Delegates

**Range:** NA

**Outcome:** At its June meeting, the Council on Membership approved a resolution to the House of Delegates recommending adoption of a new ADA dental team membership category. The report is in the final stages of development. Results TBD in October 2022.

As the ADA and the dental profession have emerged from the impact of COVID-19, differing opinions on return-to-work safety issues, followed by an increase in workforce shortage issues have created lingering challenges between dentists and their teams, and ultimately the recovery and success of dental practices. Several ADA agencies have been working to address these challenges, including the Council on Dental Practice, Council on Government Affairs, ADA Science and Research Institute and ADA Health Policy Institute. The Council on Membership strives to support these efforts through its proposal for a new dental team membership category, focusing on inclusion and team building between the dentist and their team.

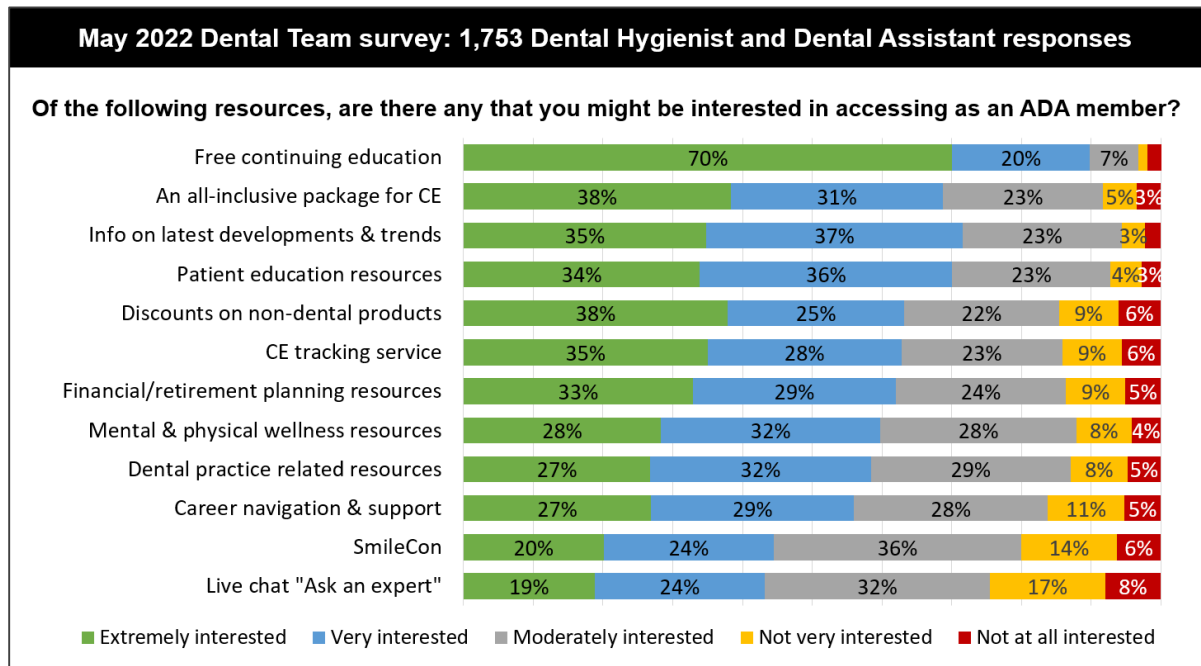
As a first step in the Council's exploration of this potential new membership category, a survey of grassroots ADA members was completed in November 2021 to assess their level of interest. Five hundred eighty-nine members completed the survey, and of those 68% said they thought it could benefit members of their team. Some of the potential benefits they cited in their verbatim comments supporting this included:

- A better informed/educated staff
- More engaged staff and feeling of inclusivity
- Better education of patients
- CE in one place for all staff

Following the positive feedback from members, the Council directed staff to survey members of the dental team. Eight hundred eighty-one hygienists and 872 dental assistants completed the survey, for a margin of error of 3%. Without knowing any details about potential ADA membership, 30% of hygienists say they would be extremely or very interested in ADA membership, and an additional 46% say they would be moderately interested. Dental assistants expressed even stronger interest, with 48% saying they would

be extremely or very interested, and an additional 37% saying they would be moderately interested. Below is a table of member benefits and resources they reported being interested in from the ADA:

Table 1



Based on this positive feedback and interest, the Council is developing a more detailed report regarding Dental Team membership for House of Delegates consideration at its 2022 meeting in Houston.

### Emerging Issues and Trends

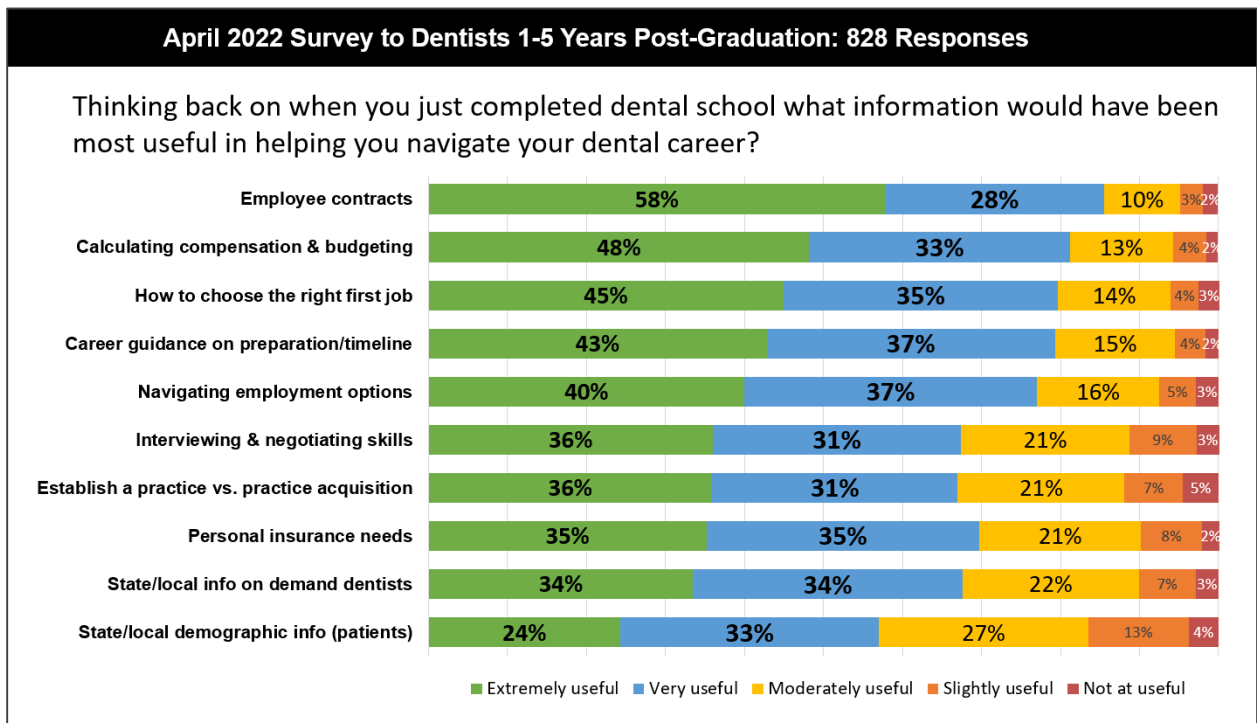
As referenced in the Council's 2021 Annual Report, new research was conducted earlier this year in collaboration with the Council on Communications to identify the intersection between dentists' values and the value of ADA membership. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilized to get at the heart of the intangible reasons why dentists join organizations and (more specifically) what matters to them when joining professional associations such as the ADA. Key learnings included:

- Students and early career dentists want the ADA to deliver on both Value **and** Values.
- Regarding VALUE, they want tangible benefits and to see that value delivered authentically, representing the personal and professional diversity of ALL dentists. They want the ADA to consider their diverse demographics, needs and practice modalities, and deliver the value through speakers and content that reflect their diversity and practice choices.
- They also want the ADA to deliver on its VALUES – to address oral health inequities and access to care, and support all practice modalities – including public health and solo through large group practice. They want the ADA to support dentists in improving their patients' health through advocacy, resources and support for their underserved patients – not just those with the ability to pay.
- They want the ADA to walk the walk on diversity and inclusion. Without these values, it doesn't matter how good the products or services are that the ADA offers; the newer generations will not purchase it if they do not see the ADA living its values. Also, they want the ADA to deliver CE, speakers and leadership opportunities at all three levels of the ADA that reflect their gender, age, diversity and practice choices.
- They want to feel a personal connection and proud of their affiliation and involvement with the ADA. They want the ADA to demonstrate that it cares about them and shares their personal and professional values, and helps them deliver the best possible care for their patients.

- Many students and early career dentists engage most at the grassroots (state/local) level. Value and Values must be delivered consistently at all three levels to be effective. Build communities around shared identity-based affinity groups, and identify and deliver value that is most effectively facilitated at each level of the tripartite.

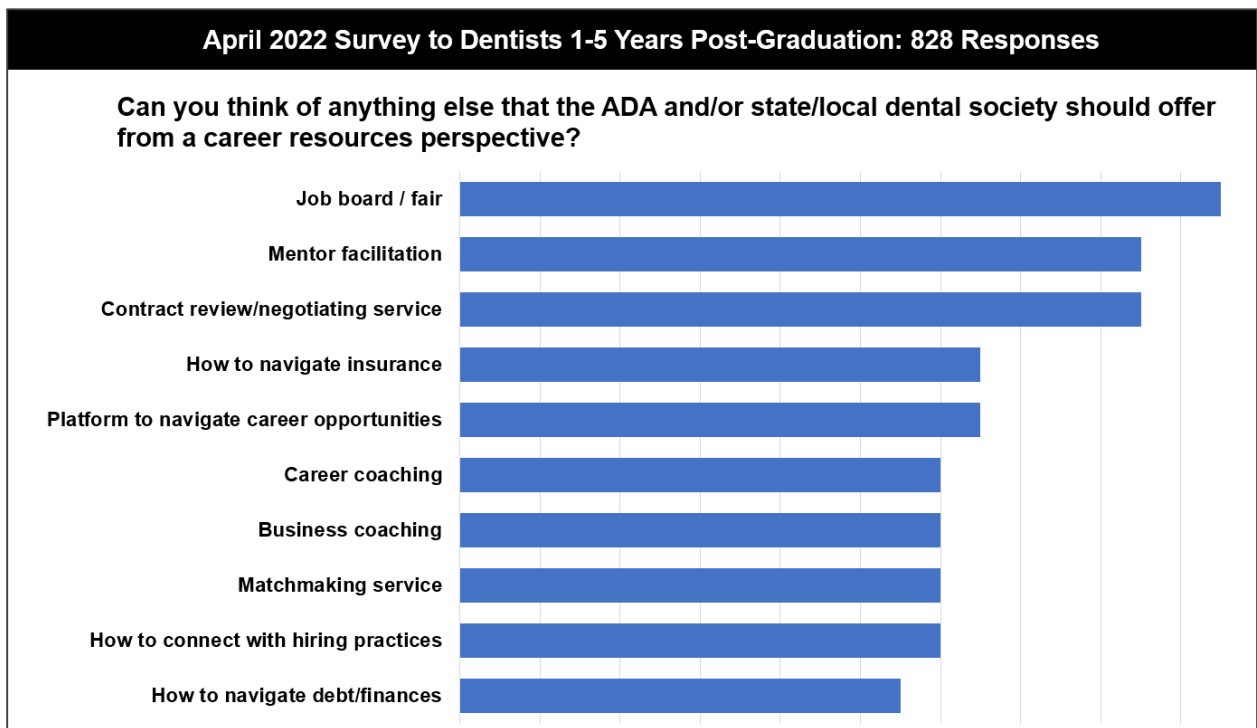
Additionally, to support the Council’s work to deliver on both Value and Values for early career dentists, further quantitative research was conducted in spring 2022 with member and nonmember dentists 1-5 years post-graduation to better understand their career support needs. Eight hundred twenty-eight dentists responded to the survey. Below is a list of information and resources these new dentists wish they had when they graduated.

Table 2



The recent grads were also asked if there were any additional career resources that the ADA, state or local society should offer. Below is a summary of topics they provided in verbatim comments.

Table 3



These survey results can help the ADA develop new products and services going forward to better serve the needs of new dentists, and enhance their member value at a time when the ADA has traditionally been losing 30-40% of these members.

**Responses to House of Delegates Resolutions**

**Resolution: 102H-2021 —Strategy for Engaging Dental Residents**

**102H-2021. Resolved**, that starting with the 2022 House of Delegates, the appropriate ADA agencies provide regular status reports on the efforts to engage, connect, recruit and develop long-term relationships with dentists in post-graduate programs.

The Council on Membership is currently developing a report for the 2022 House of Delegates summarizing the ADA’s efforts to recruit and retain dentists in post-graduate programs.

**Resolution: 40-2020 —Request that ADA Explore New Dues Structure Reflecting Evolving Dental Practice Models (Trans.2020:255) was referred to the Council.**

**Resolved**, that the American Dental Association direct its appropriate agency to explore a new tripartite membership dues structure that more accurately reflects evolving practice models, and be it further

**Resolved**, that their findings be reported to the 2021 ADA House of Delegates.

The Council continued its work from 2021 into 2022 to explore a wide range of dues models that could more effectively attract large group practice-supported dentists and decision makers within these organizations. The Council validated again that offering membership dues discounts is not a sufficient strategy, nor is offering direct (national only) membership for dentists working in large group practices. New ideas the Council explored in 2022 include:



1. Spouse and family discounts:
  - Based on the theory that relatives share ADA memberships when they practice together, and that a discount might entice the non-member relative to join.
  - Initial modeling showed that related pairs of dentists do not appear to have much of a market share lag, and implementing this concept would result in a loss proportionate to the discount provided.
  - Initial modeling was not indicative of success.
2. Sliding dues rates for individual dentists within group practices, based on member count:
  - Based on the theory that group practice provides some of the benefits of ADA membership and reduces the need for other benefits, so a discount could be constructed that drives an exchange of revenue for market share growth.
  - Analysis of 10 randomly selected group practices indicated that revenue would be lost even with 10% growth.
  - For groups of 50+ a sliding dues rate yields revenue losses unless membership grows more than 13% in the first year.
  - Initial modeling was not indicative of success.

To date, a new model has not been identified that could be more effective in attracting the growing market share with demographics and practice modalities than the ADA's existing dues structure, so work on this initiative is expected to continue into 2023. As a next step, the Council plans to socialize these ideas with state societies for their feedback, as well as solicit new ideas from them.

### **Self-Assessment**

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The Council is next scheduled to conduct a self-assessment in 2025.

### **Policy Review**

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In accordance with Resolution 170H-2012, Regular Comprehensive Policy Review (*Trans.2012:370*), the Council did not review any ADA policies related to membership this year.

### **Council Minutes**

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For more information on recent activities, see the Council's [minutes](#) on ADA.org.