



# StraightTalk

SPRING 2025



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## Our year ahead: Keeping up with the changing landscape of orthodontics

It is a great honor and privilege to address you as the new President of the Florida Association of Orthodontists. My goal is to keep the FAO as the leading representative of orthodontists in the state of Florida and help members succeed in their practices. We have a great number of challenges before us and we will strive to stay ahead to adapt.

The Annual Session in Orlando in March was a great success. For the first time ever, it was in a location different than Tampa. The FAO Board thought that it would be a good idea to have the meeting in a different city to change things up a bit and possibly attract new and different members to attend. Originally, we had planned to be in Orlando again in 2026. However, since the American Association of Orthodontists will have their annual session in Orlando just two months

later, we have moved the 2026 meeting back to the Renaissance in Tampa. We hope to see everyone there to meet up with old friends and make some new ones! The meeting will return to Orlando in 2027.

Thanks to the Expanded Duties Course and Exam committee led by Dr. Chris Mariani, the exam has been revamped and updated. Registration can now be done online. Certification is necessary for orthodontic assistants to function legally under their full capabilities. The course also helps educate orthodontic assistants. Please visit the FAO website at [www.faortho.org](http://www.faortho.org) for more information regarding the exam and to register.

We have two new members joining the FAO Board of Directors. Dr. Heather Burch from Tallahassee and Dr. Vincent Napoli from Stuart.



JOHN CORDOBA  
FAO PRESIDENT

A hearty welcome to both of these dedicated individuals and I look forward to working with them on the Board. We have a great group of orthodontists on the Board and I look forward to working with them over the next year. In June, we will have a strategic planning meeting to plan for the future of the FAO. As everyone is aware, the landscape for dental and orthodontic practice has changed dramatically over the past few years and the FAO will keep up with those changes.

## Florida Orthodontists join the AAO for first State Lobby Day

The inaugural AAO & FAO State Lobby Day took place on March 5, 2025. This was an opportunity for orthodontists to meet with Florida lawmakers and staff to help positively grow the AAO/FAO brand and advocate for important issues impacting current and future orthodontists. Among those representing the specialty were Dr. Steve Tinsworth, SSO past president, of Bradenton and Dr. Cristina Sanchez, a current Orthodontic Resident at the University of Florida. The inaugural Lobby Day proved to be a powerful step forward in shaping the future of orthodontics in Florida. More information about our advocacy efforts will be shared in FAO email updates.



*"It was empowering to speak directly with legislators and share the resident perspective."*

— Dr. Cristina Sanchez





## 2025 Annual Session in Orlando





# Orthodontic Residency Program Updates

## University of Florida

### Class of 2025 Graduates

- Dr. Cristina Sanchez, practicing in Miami, FL.
- Dr. Adrienne Saltos, practicing in Urbana, MD.
- Dr. Alexandra Brown, practicing in Orlando, FL.
- Dr. Mitali Chitre, practicing in Charlotte, NC.

### Incoming Residents

- Dr. Morgan Evans. Grew up in Ocala, FL and earned his bachelor's and dental degrees from the University of Florida.
- Dr. Michelle Patel. Grew up in Clearwater, FL and earned her bachelor's and dental degrees from the University of Florida.
- Dr. Julian Mis. Grew up in Teaneck, NJ. He obtained his bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland and dental degree from Columbia University.
- Dr. Maya Rifai. Grew up in Orlando, FL and earned her bachelor's and dental degrees from the University of Florida.

### Department and Research News:

- Dr. Divakar Karanth has been awarded the 2025 Biomedical Research Award from the American Association of Orthodontics Foundation. The title of his project is "Utilizing AI to Develop a Clinical Decision Support Tool".
- Dr. Sarah Abu Arqub has accepted the role of department chair at Augusta University, Georgia and will be leaving in late May. We wish her all the best in her new role and future endeavors.
- Dr. John Neubert accepted the department chair of Biomedical Sciences at Texas A&M in February 2025. We wish him all the best in his new role and future endeavors.
- The third-year residents presented their research findings at the SSO and AAO annual meeting, while some of our residents attended the Tweed course in Arizona. The first-year residents attended the Graduate Orthodontic Resident Program (GORP) meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



After the AAO midwinter conference, Dr. Nikhilesh R. Vaid, president of the World Federation of Orthodontists, spoke with our residents about early treatment.



In March, Dr. Toro Deguchi, chair of orthodontics at the University of Louisville, took part in our comprehensive oral exam given to the third-year residents.

Dr. Mitali Chitre and Dr. Samantha Montoya were recognized by the College of Diplomates of the American Board of Orthodontics for their joint case display at the AAO 2025 Resident Case Display. The case, which had a complex DI score of 32, was evaluated based on case management documentation, the DI score, CREval, superimpositions, and cephalometric tracings.



# Jacksonville University

## Residents News

- The JU Class of 2024 celebrated their graduation last August, earning both a Certificate in Orthodontics and a Master of Science in Dentistry (MSD). We are proud to share that all 15 residents successfully passed the written ABO exam. Additionally, 12 JU graduate Orthodontists passed the clinical board exam and are now ABO-certified.

## Faculty News

- We said farewell to Dr. Griffith, who retired in January. We are interviewing candidates to join us at JU.

## Residents Research News

- We are proud to announce that Dr. Andrew Berhold and Dr. Carolina Garcia, residents from the JU School of Orthodontics, have been awarded the 2024 Resident Research Grants by the Southern Association of Orthodontists (SAO). Additionally, 25 residents' research abstracts have been accepted for presentations at national and international conferences, including: AAO in Philadelphia, AADOCR/CADR in New York and IADR in Barcelona, Spain.



Jacksonville University Faculties, Drs. Othman and Tabbaa and their Residents displayed nine Research posters at FAO in Orlando.



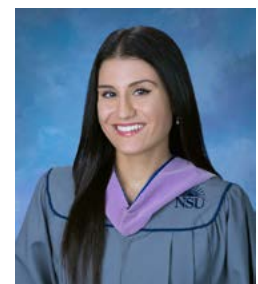
JU Faculty and Graduates at the Poster Research Presentation at The AADOCR/CADR in New York City.

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# Nova Southeastern University

## Class of 2025 Graduates

- Beau Byers
- Saba Dolatshahi
- Mitchell Hong
- Charles Moll
- Thimanthi Withana
- Ana Martins Wright



## Class of 2028

- Roa Altell (Columbia)
- Colton Dougher (University of Utah)
- Miya Eberlein (UCSF)
- Peter Koseck (University of Utah)
- Peyton Ross (University of Florida)
- Eden Sabag (University of Florida)

Congratulations go out to Drs. Sally Claassen (2024), Vivek Manda (2024) and Anastasia Tsolaki (2024) for passing the American Board of Orthodontics (ABO) September 2024 Clinical Exam and earning their ABO Diplomate status!

## Faculty Positions

The program is currently searching for three full-time faculty and part-time clinical instructors (adjunct faculty). Interested individuals should contact:

Dr. S. Prem Premaraj at 402-470-7598  
e-mail: [spremara@nova.edu](mailto:spremara@nova.edu).



The second annual Meister Lecture featured keynote speaker Dr. Glenn Krieger, a distinguished Class of 2014 alumnus from our program. He delivered a highly engaging lecture titled "Ten Lessons for a More Productive, Lower-Stress Practice and a Happier Personal Life."



# Work-Life Balance: A Journey of Intention & Relationships

By Dr. Edwin Witcher

If you're anything like us, you've probably felt the tension between chasing professional success and being present for what matters most—your family, your faith, your relationships, and your peace.

The good news? You don't have to choose one over the other. You can build a thriving practice and a fulfilling life. But it doesn't happen by accident—it takes intention.

When we—Dr. Edwin Witcher, orthodontist, and my wife, a pediatric dentist—began our journey, we made a conscious decision: we wouldn't sprint out of the gate only to burn out. Instead, we committed to a path of intentional, methodical growth—rooted in purpose. During our first year out of residency, we were fortunate to work alongside exceptional practitioners who served as mentors, showing us how to deliver high-quality patient care while managing busy, thriving practices. Today, we carry those lessons forward as we operate three practice locations—while raising three children under the age of five.

Here are six lessons we've learned along the way that may help you on your own journey toward true work-life balance:

## 1. Define Your Values First

Before you build a business, build a foundation. For us, that foundation is faith in Jesus, family, and relationships. These values guide every decision we make—because when life gets busy (and it always does), your values need to lead the way. We all have a first day, a last day, and a few thousand days in between. Intentionality matters. As we often say, “The only thing we can take with us to heaven is other people.”

## 2. Grow at Your Own Pace

It's easy to compare yourself to others

and feel pressure to scale quickly. But fast growth isn't always the best growth. Don't sacrifice your peace or quality for speed. Sustainable growth allows you to enjoy the life you're working so hard to build.

## 3. Time > Money

As our friends and fellow orthodontists Chris Trockle and his brother put it: “Money comes and goes, but time only goes.” Be mindful of how you spend your time. Set boundaries. Take vacations. Make memories. We've taken our three kids (all under five!) to places like Prague, the Bahamas, Vail, and the Virgin Islands—not because it's flashy, but because those moments matter. They're the ones you'll never get back.

## 4. Redefine Success

Success doesn't have to mean “bigger, faster, more.” For us, success looks like having dinner as a family, reading bedtime stories, and creating a culture of joy and purpose in our practices. It's not about what the world sees—it's about what feels right at home.

## 5. Put in the Work (Intentionally)

Balance doesn't mean taking it easy—it means being strategic. Build systems. Train your team. Create margin. And that margin? It doesn't create itself. It's the product of long-term, intentional decisions. Whether it's launching a novel idea, investing aggressively, developing a patent, or acquiring real estate—the goal is to build a structure that supports your life and values. For us, that meant investing in commercial real estate—buildings that house companies much larger than our own. These properties provide places for others to work, while generating consistent, passive income. It could be an article of its own.

But here's the truth: there's no “easy button,” no La-Z-Boy shortcut. It takes grit, endurance, and long-term vision. The reward? Freedom. That margin



lets us take time away from the practice when needed—without compromising long-term goals. “Dreams don't work unless you do.” So put in the effort today so your future self can enjoy the margin tomorrow.

## 6. Don't Let Distractions Derail You

When you're clear on your written goals, protect them fiercely. Not every opportunity deserves your time or energy. “The plans of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.” —Proverbs 20:5 Don't just keep your goals and priorities in your head—write them down. Clarity comes when thoughts are made visible. Stay focused, stay aligned, and never compromise what matters most.

## Final Thought

We're not perfect, but we're striving. And the goal is simple: to build a life that reflects our values, honors our relationships, and leaves space for both success and peace. You don't have to choose between a meaningful life and a meaningful career. You can build both. Just be intentional. Here's to creating the life you truly want!

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*Got a question about balancing practice growth and family life? Dr. Witcher would love to hear from you. Write to him at [jewitche@gmail.com](mailto:jewitche@gmail.com).*

# Spotlight on Our Two New FAO Directors

**Dr. Vince Napoli** is the owner and orthodontist behind Napoli Orthodontics, a boutique, high-touch legacy practice located in a 120-year-old historic Florida home in Stuart. He is the third orthodontist to serve patients from this same location, where orthodontic care has been delivered continuously for over 40 years. Dr. Napoli earned his Bachelor of Science from the University of Florida, his Doctor of Dental Medicine from Nova Southeastern University, and completed his orthodontic residency at Jacksonville University. Known for combining clinical excellence with a hospitality-driven experience, he has built a practice culture rooted in accountability, community connection, and superior results. He is married to Dr. Jenny, a cosmetic dentist who practices in Jupiter, FL, and together they are proud parents to two beautiful daughters, Valentina and Viviana, and their loyal Doberman, Gio.



**Dr. Heather Burch** wrote: I am so happy to be a part of the board for the Florida Association of Orthodontics. I started going to the meetings in residency at the University of Florida and have continued to attend throughout my time in practice. The meetings and lasting friendships have contributed to my success as an orthodontist. I have been blessed to practice for twenty-two years in Tallahassee, FL. I started from one patient and now have a very busy solo practice. I enjoy every day of practicing orthodontics and love the long-term relationships I have built in my community. I have two perfect children (ha) and have been married to my husband Allen for thirty-one years. I love watching all sorts of sports (especially the NOLES) and enjoy walking and running with my friends.



## 2025 FAO Survey Findings on Practice Stats

**FAO Survey results** help the FAO plan best ways to serve members. The questions included here can help you benchmark your practice against averages in our state.

### Number of Case Starts for 2024

Less than 250	45%
250-550	22%
Over 550	33%

### Case Starts Up or Down for 2024

Increased	38%
Stayed the same	16%
Decreased	46%

CASE STARTS OVER THE YEARS	80%	reported starts were up in 2022
	38%	reported starts were up in 2025

### Average Time in Treatment

Less than 12 months	3%
13-16 months	3%
17-20 months	38%
21-24 months	49%
Over 24 months	8%

### Percentage of cases are clear aligner type

Less than 10%	16%
11-20%	35%
21-30%	27%
31-40%	11%
Over 40%	11%

### Staff Salary Changes in 2024

Raised	84%
Stayed the same	14%
Reduced	3%

### Top three most challenging issues for Florida orthodontists surveyed:

- #1 Attracting and retaining talent
- #2 Balancing practice costs with profitability
- #3 Keeping up with advancements in orthodontic technology

**SIDE NOTE:** The next two most challenging items after the above are potentially more clinical—managing patient expectations/concerns and increasing complexity of orthodontic treatments.

**Least challenging issues** among those listed in the survey were all related to competition—from direct-to-consumer orthodontic providers, DSOs/OSOs and general dentists.



*Save the date*

## **FAO Annual Session** **March 5-7, 2026**

**RENAISSANCE TAMPA  
INTERNATIONAL PLAZA HOTEL**