



PRESS RELEASE—Contact DSPS Newsroom at dpsnewsroom@wisconsin.gov

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"Historic Decision" Could Keep More Wisconsin-trained Dentists in Badger State

Madison, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) continues to find efficiencies that strengthen the state’s workforce.

The Department announced today a recent vote by the Wisconsin Dentistry Examining Board that eliminates a redundant, post-graduate examination. This will speed up the licensing process for young dentists hoping to join Wisconsin’s workforce.

“We’re looking at places where we can innovate and make common-sense changes that improve the licensing process in Wisconsin, while simultaneously meeting our public safety mission,” DSPS Secretary-designee Dan Hereth said after the vote. “DSPS will continue to diligently review our practices and credentialing requirements to find greater efficiencies for applicants, educators, the healthcare industry and all of our partners.”

The Dentistry Examining Board voted unanimously in its July meeting to make Marquette University’s School of Dentistry the administrator of practical examinations required to be a licensed dentist in Wisconsin. Currently, all applicants seeking a dentist license in the state must pass a written national exam, then undergo a practical examination administered by a third party. Marquette already included assessments of the same practical competencies in its own curriculum. The Board’s move to make the School of Dentistry the approved administrator for the practical exam enables Marquette students to satisfy this credentialing requirement prior to graduation.

“This unanimously approved change keeps the emphasis on the dental graduates complete practical experience, and approving Marquette University School of Dentistry as a testing agency increases the speed of licensing for our state’s dental school graduates and creates an incentive for Wisconsin-trained dental students to seek licenses and practice in the Badger State,” said dentist and Dentistry Examining Board Chairperson Dr. Matthew Bistan.

“The historic decision by the Wisconsin Dentistry Examining Board naming Marquette University School of Dentistry as a dental testing site will have a positive impact on the ability of our new graduates to deliver dental care immediately upon graduation. As part of a student’s clinical education, the School of Dentistry sends students on rotations to urban and rural areas of Wisconsin with large numbers of underserved patients to provide much needed care. Marquette University School of Dentistry is the State of Wisconsin’s only dental school, and similar to the diploma privilege to practice in place for law school students at both Marquette Law School and UW-Madison Law School, streamlining the licensure process for dentistry will be an additional tool to retain dentists to practice throughout the State,” said Dr. Conrad Nenn, Associate Dean, Clinical Affairs at the Marquette University School of Dentistry.

The dental profession is one of many struggling to attract more workers in recent years. Data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) indicates Wisconsin is below the national average for dentists per 100,000

residents. Dr. Russ Dunkel, the Wisconsin State Dental Director & Chief Dental Officer representing DHS, provided input and support at the July Dentistry Examining Board meeting in favor of this historic decision.

“The amount of time previously required for Marquette School of Dentistry graduates to obtain their dental license had a profound impact for many Wisconsin Free & Charitable, Safety-Net and Federally-Qualified Health Center dental clinics. On many occasions, this resulted in the postponing of urgent and emergent dental treatment needs for our most under-resourced and vulnerable populations,” Dr. Dunkel said. “In addition, this initiative will hopefully help to address the current number of Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) within Wisconsin, thereby increasing access to dental care.”

The Wisconsin Dental Association, which represents more than 3,100 member dentists in Wisconsin, supports the Board’s decision.

“This is a change many of our members have been calling for,” said Wisconsin Dental Association President, Dr. Chris Johnson of Eau Claire. “We’re proud to support this effort that maintains standards for excellence in dentistry while more efficiently moving young professionals into our state’s dental workforce.”

This adjustment to licensing processes is the most-recent example of Wisconsin DSPPS, under the Evers Administration, advocating for changes that improve efficiency of licensing in Wisconsin while maintaining the integrity of the process to ensure the safety of Wisconsin residents. Other recent efforts include a collaboration with the state Board of Nursing to adjust timing of credentialing requirements to facilitate faster approval to sit for the national nursing exam, and the development of a secure higher education portal that enables schools of nursing to better monitor and support students during the licensing process.

About DSPPS

DSPPS issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, DSPPS is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.

About Marquette University School of Dentistry

Founded in 1894, Marquette University School of Dentistry has been a significant provider of oral health care to patients and excellent clinically based dental education to dental students and recently celebrated 125 years of providing dental education and community service. Programs are guided by dedicated faculty and practicing professionals who uphold Marquette’s vision to train highly skilled oral health care practitioners to bring top-quality dental care to urban and rural communities across the country and around the world.

As Wisconsin’s only dental school, MUSOD and its clinics throughout the State of Wisconsin serve nearly 30,000 patients with more than 110,000 patient visits from 66 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties annually and is one of the state’s largest dental Medicaid providers.

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