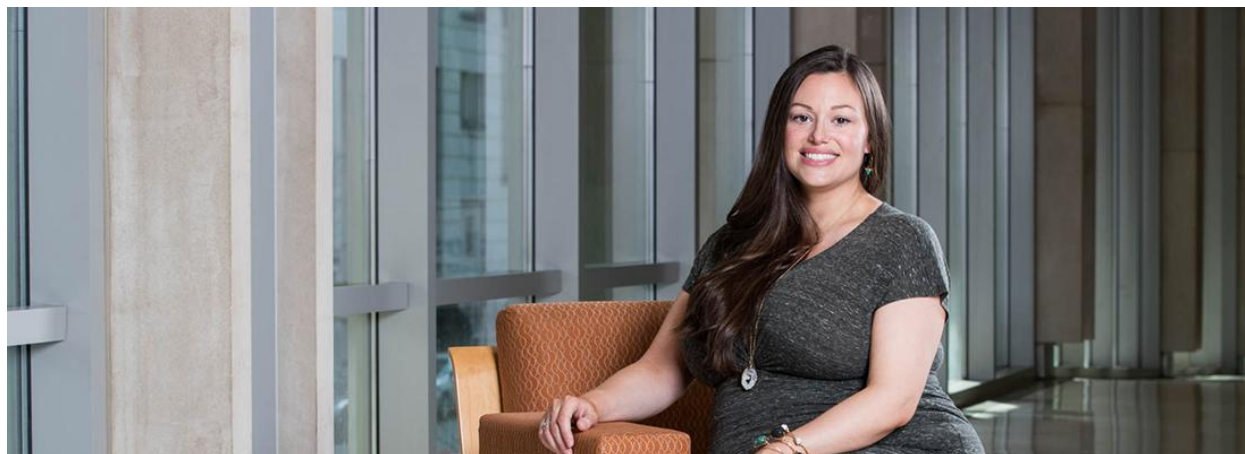




# UMB Champions of Excellence

## Sculpting Smiles to Shape Oral Health



*Emily Poulos, DDS '18 | University of Maryland School of Dentistry*

[View Full 2017-2018 Champions of Excellence Gallery](#)

[Find Out More About the Champions of Excellence Campaign](#)

Dentistry was not always the path Emily Poulos, DDS '18, thought she'd take. An avid jewelry maker since childhood, she began college intending to turn her hobby into a career – and quickly changed her mind.

“After the first semester, I was like, ‘This is not for me!’” says Poulos. “It’s way too subjective, and after you graduate, what do you do? It’s not that certain a career. I wanted something more guaranteed.”

She decided to major in chemistry and biology, and in her final year of undergrad chose to pursue dentistry, interestingly, because of its connection to her artistic roots. She recalls the moment when she was first issued orthodontic pliers: their comfort and familiarity reminded her exactly of her jewelry tools.

“When you’re carving amalgam fillings and shaping composite veneers for people, it really is sculpture. It really is art,” she says. “Dentistry has the science side and the art side. And that is what pulled me toward the field.”

She came to study at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, where she graduated in May 2018. For the first time, her childhood pastime and career goals were fully molding together.

As a student, Poulos maintained a 3.98 GPA, was a member of the Gorgas Odontological Honorary Society and the Gamma Pi Delta Prosthodontic Honor Society, and volunteered more than 120 hours for initiatives including Mission of Mercy and Special Olympics. She is also a member of the American Student Dental Association, where she served as the newsletter editor for the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) chapter in her junior year.

“I do enjoy writing,” she says. “I had written some pieces for [the newsletter], and then I thought why don’t I run for the editor position? And I got elected! It’s been fun communicating with my classmates and organizing various articles for everyone to read.”

On top of that, she is also a member of the Maryland Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, where she served as a lunch-and-learn coordinator. Her job was to bring in speakers, related to the field of dentistry or in other disciplines, during lunch hours to talk to groups of students. These events happen monthly and, as Poulos describes “are a really fun way to get outside of our normal curriculum.”

Her decision to complete her education in dentistry at UMB is one she says she will never regret. But what really makes UMB unique for Poulos is the diversity of the students and faculty.

“I really appreciate the diversity our class has,” she says. “We have people from all different countries, speaking different languages. ... I think that it’s great because you get to learn about different backgrounds and cultures. Back when women weren’t allowed to become dentists, [UMB leaders] were pioneers in letting women come in and get an education. The diversity we have here is something that’s special.”

Outside of her classes, Poulos channels her creative passions into a personal blog and web shop called Wired & Flossin’. Here, she has a space to express her inner dental soul by selling her handmade jewelry and other personalized pieces while also writing about her journey to becoming an orthodontist.

“Since I can remember, I have been bending wire and forging jewelry with my hands. Something about transforming my creative visions into reality is liberating and fulfilling to me,” she says. “You’ve got to find balance when you have so much going on with school and life. Making jewelry and crafting definitely helps keep me sane.”

After her graduation, Poulos will make a big move across the country to begin her orthodontic residency program in Arizona. After the 2 ½-year program, she will officially be an orthodontist, achieving the dream she set forth so many years ago.

The recent birth of her and her husband’s first child makes her life even more full.

“I think it’s important for people to see that women can have strong careers, be leaders in the community, and also be mothers. You don’t have to choose one over the other,” she says. “I think that is something that dentistry can offer for women: to have a career and be able to provide for a family while still having the flexibility to care for a family.”

Overall, Poulos is inspired to continue giving back to her community and is grateful for the opportunities UMB has provided for her to achieve her goals and participate in outreach programs.

“Everybody deserves a right to good oral hygiene and health care,” she says. “I would love to find new ways to help people who can’t afford it get the care they need.”

---

The University of Maryland, Baltimore is the founding campus of the University System of Maryland.  
620 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, MD 21201 | 410-706-3100  
© 2019-2020 University of Maryland, Baltimore. All rights reserved.