

Meet Thomas Boyle, DMD

Assistant Professor of Clinical Dental Medicine

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Dr. Boyle currently holds a full-time faculty position. His primary responsibilities include clinical supervision of the Advanced Education General Dentistry (AEGD) Residents. He is responsible for lecture preparation, monitoring of their clinical performance, and program direction such as scheduling and curriculum development. Prior to entering academics, Dr. Boyle was in private practice for thirty-one years. Watch this video to learn how Dr. Boyle made the transition into teaching dentistry.

Video Transcript

DR. THOMAS BOYLE: I came into academics kind of out of a clear blue sky. I was in practice for thirty-one years. Never had any intention of becoming associated with the dental school. What happened was stunningly, to me, was that the first day I walked in here and I fell in love with teaching. Mostly, I think it was some specific students that I came in contact with, very impressive people, and just something hit me about this is what I should be doing with my life. I had this awful feeling that I was doing the wrong thing with my life; now, how am I going to be able to do this? Because being in private practice, not having any academic background, it seemed like an impossible feat to me that they would want me here. In short, I volunteered, from probably 2003, one day a week until 2006.

So kind of being at the right place at the right time, a position part-time came up for me, and it was a little difficult decision because I wasn't really old enough to retire, but I didn't feel this brass ring would come around again. I had become so enamored with being here, even one day a week, that I didn't feel I could pass up the position even to be part-time. I did have a working practice of thirty-one years, and it was kind of a tough decision to give it up. On the other hand, I didn't feel I could turn this down and when I got board certified, I pushed a little more heavily to be taken on full-time, and once they said yes, I gave the practice up like that – because I'm much happier coming to work here than I was going to private practice.

Even if you were going to do it one day a week, although you have to give up time in your office, it's definitely going to make your time there more productive. I consider myself extremely lucky that I was able to come here and do this full-time, because it's kind of stunning to me that I found something that I like so much about my job after all this time, and it's just nice to be able to have the intellectual stimulation, the camaraderie, the learning new things – how to do power point; how to lecture; how to teach somebody to give an injection. This is a tough job. At least at my point in life, I felt I had something to say. I do think other dentists, no matter how young, at the other end of their careers they are, they have something of value to give to a student, more than just academics. Just being around them is stimulating and fun. So I would definitely give it a try. Definitely.

I teach dentistry because I'm good at it. I teach dentistry because it's fun. And I teach dentistry because I feel it really gives an importance to my life, to be able to pass on what I've learned – if it's academic, if it's just patient relations, if it's just as an example as a human being, to learn how to relate to a patient. Because the dentist who's thinking about his – I'm sure my thoughts were, Who is he? What are they going to say when I walk into an Ivy League place and say I want to teach? They're going to say, So what? What about all these people who have been here all this time, working on a career in teaching? Now you expect to come in here and just pick up from the word go. I consider myself very lucky that I was able to do it, but it is doable. If you find enough enjoyment in it, it's going to be easier. I like it every day. I still can't wait to get here in the morning.