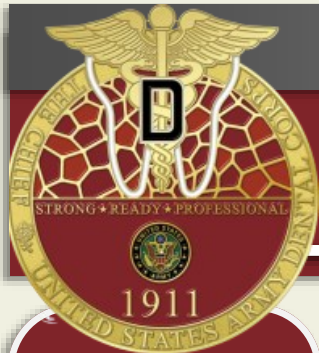




Army Dentistry

July 2025

THE DENTAL CORPS BULLETIN

Useful Link

[Graduate
Dental
Education
LTHET FY26
Information](#)

Important Dates

21JUL:
Application
Closes

31JUL-7AUG:
Interviews via
Microsoft
Teams



LONG TERM HEALTH EDUCATION & TRAINING (LTHET) SPECIAL EDITION





A MESSAGE FROM THE 29TH DENTAL CORPS CHIEF, COL TANNER

Dental Corps Officers,

Your educational foundation built in dental school was just the beginning. Do not let yourself plateau in your clinical skillset! The Army Dental Corps is offering you more, a chance to push beyond the ordinary and step into excellence. The opportunities offered by Long Term Health Education and Training (LTHET) allow you to grow, specialize, and lead with a greater purpose.

The American Dental Association's Commission of Dental Accreditation consistently recognizes the Army's Graduate Dental Education programs among the very best in the nation. These residencies are rigorous, rewarding, and deeply transformative. They will bring out your true potential. You won't just sharpen your clinical skills, you'll evolve into a confident leader ready to guide others and influence the future of military dentistry.

Through LTHET, you'll be mentored by world-class educators who will challenge you, respect you as a colleague, and invest in your success. You'll discover strengths you didn't know you had. You'll build deep bonds with fellow residents, mentors, and instructors; these relationships will be rooted in mutual respect, shared challenges, and collective growth.

This isn't just about earning a specialty, this is about becoming the best dentist, leader, and officer you can be.

You're ready for this. Your patients deserve it and the profession needs it. Apply for LTHET, invest in your future, and be all you can be!

Combat Ready Care . . . This We'll Defend!





A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF OF GRADUATE DENTAL EDUCATION, COL STARK

Pursuing graduate dental education is one of the most important career decisions you can make. By applying for this year's outstanding LTHET programs, you will take the first step toward a more rewarding and fulfilling career. Fortunately, the chances of being selected for LTHET are extremely favorable compared to civilian match-based programs.

While advanced education is competitive, the Army's selection rates are simply unmatched in the civilian sector. Last year, 60% of Dental Corps officers who applied to the LTHET program were selected for training. Several of this year's residency and fellowship opportunities have historical acceptance rates ranging from 75% to 100%. Over the past few years, the most competitive Army residency programs have had an acceptance rate of 25% to 35%, much higher than the 3-4% acceptance rates typical of civilian residencies. Based on the data, there has never been a better time to chase the specialty you've always dreamed of.

Don't miss your chance to apply for graduate dental education (GDE) this cycle. Training positions go unfilled each year, and officers regret not applying. Since candidates are selected almost two years in advance, there's no downside to applying now and declining later for personal reasons. Candidates selected as alternates are more than willing to step in if needed. In fact, nine alternates were activated after the primary selectees declined training last year. If you don't apply now, you'll have to wait until next year to apply, which will delay your specialty training by another year. The financial impact of postponing training in specialties such as comprehensive dentistry, prosthodontics, and oral and maxillofacial surgery can be substantial.

For those who have previously applied and were not selected, don't hesitate to reapply. Applying consecutively demonstrates a commitment to GDE. Show the interview panel that you are a future leader in the Dental Corps by sharing your specific talents and attributes that will enhance Army Dentistry. There are many inspiring examples of officers being chosen for highly competitive specialties without having the highest grades as dental students. Officers are often chosen for training because they are dedicated to the military and demonstrate grit, perseverance, and self-awareness needed to thrive and succeed in a demanding advanced dental education program.

When a military option isn't available or there is insufficient capacity to train enough specialists in military programs, the Army sends officers to train in civilian programs. Army officers frequently excel in civilian programs, receiving top awards for their research and academic achievements, and are often selected as chief residents in their respective specialties. Officers selected for civilian training programs will acquire skills, experiences, and lasting connections with top-tier academic partners. In the long term, forming partnerships with civilian institutions enhances the quality of our GDE programs because officers who graduate from civilian programs are often chosen by the TSG Consultant to attend and eventually teach in military GDE programs.

Ultimately, the Army needs highly trained professionals who can deliver exceptional care for our warfighters and their families. Furthermore, the Dental Corps requires residency and fellowship-trained dental officers to instruct in Army GDE programs and provide patient care throughout the enterprise. Fortunately, now is the perfect time to apply for Graduate Dental Education and the selection rates for Army programs cannot be beat!



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

MAJ Austin Stubbs, 63B

Fort Hood Comprehensive Dentistry Graduate, Class of 2025

Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

What made me a strong applicant was my proactive approach to growth, both clinically and professionally. I consistently sought out opportunities to take on advanced clinical roles, demonstrating not only competence but also initiative. I worked closely with specialists as a general dentist, intentionally positioning myself to absorb their expertise and elevate my clinical judgment.

At the same time, I focused on becoming an asset to my DENTAC by stepping into roles that extended beyond the operatory, supporting mission readiness, mentoring peers, and filling gaps where support was needed. This combination of hands-on experience, continual learning, and commitment to the broader mission shaped me into a well-rounded and dependable officer, ready to take on the challenges of advanced education.



Looking back, is there something that you wish you had completed before submitting your application?

I wish that I had the opportunity to take on an operational assignment before starting residency, which would have broadened my understanding of the Army's larger mission and how dentistry directly supports readiness in diverse environments. Additionally, I regret not taking the initiative to conduct site visits at the various residency programs. Gaining firsthand insight and connecting with current residents and faculty could have provided a shared understanding of expectations, culture, and clinical focus.

How would you describe your overall residency experience, to include the typical workweek?

The typical workweek at Fort Hood Comprehensive Dentistry Resident Program is Monday-Wednesday seeing patients through clinical rotations in all the different specialties, including sometimes scrubbing in an operating room case (either pediatrics or oral maxillofacial). Thursday and Friday are didactically driven, consisting of lectures, resident-prepared and delivered case presentations, literature reviews, and treatment planning board presentations. Throughout the year, there are opportunities to work on your research project and continue to develop the knowledge and skillset needed to be a board-certified general dentist.



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

What is your favorite memory from residency?

There are many great experiences that I'll be able to reflect upon from my time in residency, but I would say that the time spent in our resident office will be the most memorable. That space became a second home, filled with engaging conversations, shared laughter, and unspoken bonds built through both challenges and triumphs. We helped each other through tough cases, lifted one another during personal and professional hardships, and celebrated every win, big or small, as a team. These moments of connection, support, and camaraderie will always be my favorite memories from residency.

What is your upcoming assignment?

I'll be replacing MAJ Caitlyn Menicucci as the next Executive Fellow.

What advice do you have for applicants?

My advice is to apply! Even if you have doubts, even if you feel you're not ready; be willing to take a chance on yourself. Continue to push yourself every day, even in small ways, whether it's sharpening your clinical skills, strengthening your leadership, or expanding your knowledge base. Focus on becoming just a little better each day, those small efforts compound over time into meaningful progress. Seek mentorship early and often; surround yourself with people who challenge you, guide you, and help you grow. And most importantly, don't be discouraged if you're not selected the first time. Use that as feedback, not failure. Reflect, regroup, and come back with a stronger application. The path isn't always linear, but with consistency and heart, it is absolutely worth it.





QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

MAJ Han Kim, 63D

Fort Gordon Periodontics Graduate, Class of 2025

Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

I believe my success as a LTHET applicant was driven by a combination of strong academic performance, leadership in clinical settings, and a clear vision of how residency training would enhance my ability to serve in the Army. I remained actively engaged in continuing education, sought out mentorship, and took the initiative to visit the residency program in person. This allowed me to gain firsthand insight into the training environment and demonstrate my genuine interest.

My application reflected not only past achievements but also a strong commitment to continue growth and future contributions.

Looking back, is there something that you wish you had completed before submitting your application?

In hindsight, I wish I had gathered more firsthand insights from current residents before applying. Although I thoroughly researched the program, speaking directly with those in training would have given me a clearer understanding of the day-to-day demands. It also would have helped me better prepare my family in advance for how rigorous and time-intensive the residency experience would be.





QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

How would you describe your overall residency experience, to include the typical workweek?

Residency was intense, humbling, and incredibly rewarding. Each week typically included three and a half days of hands-on clinical work centered on surgical and comprehensive patient care, and one and a half days devoted to academic lectures, literature reviews, and presentations. The learning didn't stop at 1630—early mornings, late nights, and weekends were often filled with studying and preparing for surgeries and academic responsibilities. Despite the demanding schedule, the strong camaraderie among residents and the unwavering support from faculty made the experience both formative and fulfilling.



What is your favorite memory from residency?

One of my most memorable moments from residency was our final short course presentation. In the world of Army period residency, short course is like the World Series—an event that showcases the culmination of years of hard work, growth, and dedication. I vividly remember attending my first short course as a 63A, completely inspired by the depth of knowledge and professionalism on display. It was one of the key moments that solidified my desire to pursue periodontics. Years later, standing alongside my co-residents to present our short course presentation was both surreal and deeply fulfilling. It wasn't just a reflection of how far I had come, but how far we had all come together. We shared our most challenging cases and recognized the transformation we had undergone—both as clinicians and as a team. That day captured the spirit of accomplishment, growth, and camaraderie that defined our residency experience.

What is your upcoming assignment?

I'll be heading to Fort Meade, Maryland, to serve as a staff periodontist. I'm looking forward to applying what I've learned in residency to support the oral health mission and mentor younger providers when possible.

What advice do you have for applicants?

Be authentic and intentional in your application. While it's important to highlight your achievements, it's even more critical to clearly articulate why you're pursuing an Army residency over a civilian program. Show how your goals align with the Army's mission and how you plan to contribute beyond just clinical excellence. Start seeking mentorship early, stay organized, and remember that LTHET values leadership, teaching potential, and a commitment to service. Understand that residency is both demanding and transformative. It requires long hours, intense focus, and significant time away from family. Have open and honest conversations with your loved ones early on—ensuring they understand the level of commitment required and are fully supportive makes a world of difference. Just as vital is the ability to be a team player. Residency is challenging and often stressful, and your success depends heavily on collaboration and mutual support. The bonds you form with your co-residents will be some of the most important aspects of your journey. You'll learn from each other, lift each other up during tough times, and grow together as clinicians and leaders. A strong, cohesive team doesn't just survive residency—it thrives.



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

MAJ Heung (Jason) Yoo, 63E

Fort Gordon Endodontics Graduate, Class of 2025

Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

I believe what truly set my application apart was the unique blend of leadership experience from my time in the military. The military instilled in me a sense of discipline, teamwork, and problem-solving under pressure—qualities that are directly applicable to the rigors of a residency. My performance as an Officer and clinician was confirmed by top-block OERs, which helped assure the interview panel of my capabilities. I was also incredibly fortunate to have the unwavering support of exceptional mentors who provided invaluable letters of recommendation. They didn't just speak to my skills; they vouched for my character and my deep commitment to the field.



Looking back, is there something that you wish you had completed before submitting your application?

If I could go back, I would have tried to get more in-person exposure to the program. Due to COVID, I didn't have the opportunity to attend the short course in person and interact with the residents and program directors. I believe those interactions are valuable for demonstrating genuine interest and personality. It also benefits you as an applicant, as you can observe the dynamic of the residency firsthand. My GPA was not the strongest part of my application, so proactively taking the ADAT and receiving a competitive score could have further boosted my application.

How would you describe your overall residency experience, to include the typical workweek?

My residency was incredibly demanding, but I am truly grateful for the experience. Every day was a chance to learn and grow, both as a clinician and as a person. I was fortunate to be taught by truly exceptional mentors and to work alongside an outstanding group of co-residents. Despite the long hours and challenges, the support and camaraderie we residents shared made the experience not just manageable, but truly rewarding. I feel incredibly lucky to have been a part of it.

What is your favorite memory from residency?

My favorite memories are simple moments with my co-residents. We were a close-knit group and found ways to support each other and laugh through the demanding schedule. Whether it was sharing a funny story or just talking through a difficult case, the teamwork and friendship made all the difference. I also enjoyed the chance to connect with other professionals at conferences; it was a great way to learn from others in the field.

What is your upcoming assignment?

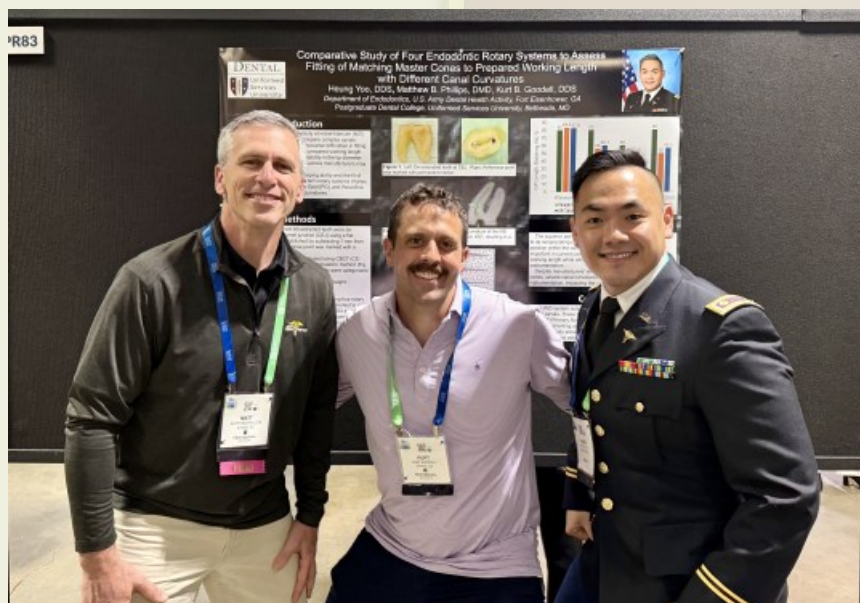
I will be going to Fort Carson for my next duty station.

QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

What advice do you have for applicants?

From my own experience, I've learned that applying for a residency is about more than just numbers on a transcript.

- ♦ **Build Authentic Relationships:** The letters of recommendation from your mentors are incredibly important. My advice is to not just seek out a letter, but to build a genuine relationship with your mentors over time. Let them get to know you as a person—your work ethic, your character, and your genuine interest in the field. When they write a letter for you, it won't just be a list of achievements; it will be a heartfelt testament to who you are, and that sincerity shines through.
- ♦ **Know How to Appeal to the Interview Panel:** It's easy to get caught up in comparing your GPA or your test scores to others. While academic performance is certainly important, it's not the only factor. If there are areas where you feel your application could be stronger, be honest with yourself and be proactive. For example, you can take the ADAT to demonstrate your current knowledge and drive if your past GPA was not stellar. Discussing the weaker parts of your application and how you overcame will show the interview panel that you have the resilience and determination to improve and succeed, regardless of past challenges.
- ♦ **Check Out the Programs :** If you have the opportunity, I would encourage you to visit the program, shadow residents, and have conversations with as many people as you can. It's a chance for them to see you as a future colleague, not just a name on a resume. This personal connection can be incredibly powerful and can help you determine if the program is truly the right fit for you.
- ♦ **Embrace the Process with Humility:** This journey is challenging, and there will be moments of self-doubt. Remember to be kind to yourself and to trust the process. Show your passion for the work and your desire to learn. Approach every interaction with humility and a willingness to grow. Ultimately, programs are looking for someone who is not only capable but also someone who will be a great teammate and a compassionate clinician.





QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

CPT Michael Chew, 63F

Fort Gordon Prosthodontics Graduate, Class of 2025

Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

I applied to LTHET as a dental student. I think from an academic standpoint, my strong relationships with professors, involvement with teacher assisting, research and publication background contributed my the strength of my application. Outside of academics I was involved with volunteering and dental CE courses like the Pankey Institute.



Looking back, is there something that you wish you had completed before submitting your application?

I would have tried to get more hours shadowing prosthodontists, or visit the residency program at Fort Gordon.

How would you describe your overall residency experience, to include the typical workweek?

Residency is non-stop. Being a human, Soldier, student, and provider is a lot. Typical work week is class in the morning Mondays-Thursdays for first and second years and clinic in the afternoon Tuesday

through Thursday. Third years see patients in the morning on Monday, and all day Tuesday through Thursday. Fridays are for research and sometimes guest lectures or seminars.

What is your favorite memory from residency?

I did win the infamous Yasu stacked-porcelain crown course two years in a row!

What is your upcoming assignment?

I am doing a Maxillofacial Prosthodontics fellowship at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas for a year.

What advice do you have for applicants?

Make sure you love lab work and are willing to put in the hours! Also, don't forget prosthodontics is like quarter backing. You have to make sure all the moving parts are working together to get the best outcome.

QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

LTC Shenice Williams, 63H

University of Iowa Dental Public Health Graduate, Class of 2025



Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

I believe I was a strong applicant because of the amount and type of experience I gained in dental public health. I had worked in public health roles for several years prior to applying to the residency program. During that time, I focused on prevention, access to care, and community-based programs. That experience showed my commitment to the field and helped demonstrate that I was prepared for formal training.

Looking back, is there something that you wish you had completed before submitting your application?

Yes, I think it would've been helpful if I had completed a one-year residency earlier in my career. Although it wasn't required, I believe it would have strengthened my clinical foundation and added another layer of depth to my application.

How would you describe your overall residency experience, to include the typical workweek?

It was a challenging experience, but I grew significantly. The program prompted me to shift from relying on what I had always seen done in practice to focusing on what the evidence actually supports. My typical week involved 3–4 days of class, weekly assignments, quizzes, and literature reviews (typically 10+ articles tied to a single topic like water fluoridation or caries prevalence). It kept me busy, but it sharpened the way I think and approach dentistry.

What is your favorite memory from residency?

Presenting my thesis/research. That moment was a culmination of hard work, and knowing my research could help shape how clinicians utilize teledentistry in the future.

What is your upcoming assignment?

DENTAC Commander at Fort Stewart.

What advice do you have for applicants?

Choose a residency you're genuinely passionate about. This field will likely shape the rest of your career, so it should be something you enjoy, if not love. Additionally, gain as much experience in that specialty as possible before applying. It helps confirm that it's the right path for you and shows that you're serious about it.



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

LTC Stephanie Helmus, 63K

Texas A&M College of Dentistry Pediatric Residency Graduate, Class of 2025

Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

I have been incredibly fortunate to attend both the 2-year AEGD residency and now a pediatric dentistry residency through the LTHET program. I believe several key factors contributed to my ability to be a competitive applicant:

- 1) **Academic Excellence:** Strong didactic performance is foundational. This includes high dental school rankings, a competitive GPA, and strong board/test scores. If your dental school did not report class rank or GPA—as is increasingly common—then strong letters of recommendation, extracurriculars, leadership positions, research, and meaningful volunteer experience can help set you apart. Additionally, continuing education in your intended specialty shows a commitment to lifelong learning and further strengthens your application.
- 2) **Military Experience:** Diverse and challenging assignments speak volumes. Volunteering for additional duties, completing military schools, taking on leadership roles, and experience in operational settings—such as deployments or brigade time—demonstrate your dedication as a Soldier first and your ability to lead and perform under pressure.
- 3) **Mentorship:** Mentorship is critical. Identify specialists in your area of interest and take the time to shadow them clinically, ask questions, and build professional relationships. Mentors can offer perspective, application advice, clinical insight, honest feedback, support as you navigate the process.



Looking back, is there something you wish you had completed before submitting your application?

I've been privileged to experience a wide range of assignments and complete multiple military schools throughout my career. That said, one thing I encourage all applicants to consider is how residency might shape your future military opportunities.

After completing a specialty residency, most providers will fulfill a utilization tour in a garrison environment. With the exception of OMFS and the 2-year AEGD, specialists are less likely to deploy or serve in operational assignments. If you are passionate about FORSCOM roles, such as serving as a brigade dentist, try to pursue those opportunities before you specialize. Ultimately, it's about aligning your clinical goals with the type of military career you envision.



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

How would you describe your overall residency experience, including your typical workweek?

The Pediatric Dentistry Residency at Texas A&M is unique because, for the most part, you're in a civilian status during the two years of training. Our weekly schedule includes a mix of clinical care, didactics, hospital rotations, teaching in the dental school undergrad clinic, and on-call shifts. We provide care at one of the largest children's hospitals in the U.S., as well as a pediatric orthopedic hospital, dental school, and several community clinics throughout the Dallas metroplex.

A standout feature of this program—and a significant learning curve for myself having treated a primarily healthy adult population—has been treating medically complex and special needs patients. These children often have extensive medical histories, are on multiple medications, and receive care from several specialists. Learning to conduct thorough reviews and determine safe treatment—whether in the clinic or the operating room—is a vital skill developed in this program.

We're constantly on the move—different locations, different challenges—so flexibility and adaptability are key. Fortunately, those are the same skills we rely on when treating kids!

What is your favorite memory from residency?

It's tough to pick just one, but a particularly meaningful moment comes to mind. A non-verbal adolescent with autism came to our clinic with painful, non-restorable second molars. His mother was distraught after being turned away by several offices. The next day, I was able to safely extract the teeth using protective stabilization (a papoose) and anxiolysis. The child did incredibly well, and his mother was overwhelmed with gratitude.

Moments like that remind me how meaningful our work is. Being able to use my comprehensive dentistry training to provide compassionate care to a vulnerable population is incredibly fulfilling. Beyond that, the nitrous giggles, high-fives, kid hugs, and the hilarious things they say truly make each day special.

What is your upcoming assignment?

I'm headed to Fort Hood, where I'll serve as the pediatric mentor for the 2-year AEGD program. It feels like things have come full circle—my love for pediatrics first sparked during my time in the 2-year AEGD at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, thanks to some amazing mentors (shout out to COL (Ret) Marien, COL Stark, and LTC Ramage!). I'm excited for the opportunity to mentor general dentists and show that treating kids doesn't have to be intimidating—and with the right approach, it can even be fun!





QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

What advice do you have for applicants?

- 1) Find a Mentor: This is key. Find someone in the specialty you're considering, shadow them if possible, ask thoughtful questions, and build that relationship. The road can be tough—military life, clinical demands, and the intensity of residency—so having someone to guide and support you is invaluable.
- 2) Consider the 1-Year AEGD: If you're unsure about a specialty and you're an HPSP student, the 1-year AEGD can be a valuable experience. It offers exposure to every specialty, opportunities for complex treatment planning, and one-on-one mentorship. It's a rigorous year—but it's excellent preparation and looks great on an application.
- 3) Stay Persistent: If you're not selected the first time, don't get discouraged. Use the time to gain more experience, broaden your resume, and grow as both a clinician and Army officer. Every LTHET board has a different dynamic—just stay the course and reapply with even more to offer.





QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

MAJ John Wilson, 63M

Tri-Service Orthodontic Residency Program Graduate, Class of 2024

Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

I think the overall theme of what made me a strong applicant is that I never stopped trying. I know that sounds cheesy and not particularly helpful, but it's true. I don't think I did anything out of the ordinary. It was hard and I got rejected multiple times, but I dug down deep and just told myself, "They haven't told me to stop applying yet and until they do I will continue my efforts." Orthodontics is what I wanted to do.

In dental school, I tried to demonstrate my interest in orthodontics by completing extra coursework and electives in the specialty. I worked to keep my grades up the best I could. I didn't have a bent for research and never pursued that in dental school, but I understood that for civilian orthodontic residency programs that was a big deal.

After dental school, I did a one-year Army-sponsored AEGD at Fort Campbell where I got to branch out of my comfort zone and go to Air Assault School. I also received tremendous support from my mentors as they encouraged me to go Captain's Career Course en route to my first assignment. It was here that I got to visit the Tri-Service Orthodontic Residency Program and see what it was all about. The vision just becoming more solidified.

As a general dentist, I tried to be an active participant within my DENTAC. A stand-out moment I think for me was volunteering to go help another DENTAC with their readiness mission. I was there for about two and a half months and I was so surprised by this experience in a good way. I made so many friends and it was so rewarding to simply answer a call for help!



Looking back, is there something that you wish you had completed before submitting your application?

I don't think there is a silver bullet in what you have to complete before submitting your application. Now having gone through the application process a few times I can see where I was weak. I think my interview and letters of recommendation were a weak part of my application packet at first and then they became one of my strongest assets. I know it is difficult at first to get personal letters of recommendation but this just comes with time and consistent interactions with those writing your letters. If you ask someone for a letter, give them time to write it and keep them informed on what you have been doing. Keep asking your commander how you can be involved, how you can help them out, and do it with a good attitude. Be known as this type of person and then by the time it comes to writing a letter of recommendation, the letter is not only full of all the amazing things you've done but the great character and everything else you've been able to demonstrate.



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

How would you describe your overall residency experience, to include the typical workweek?

I can't talk about my residency experience without first talking about the people that surrounded me. My co-residents and mentors were all such gifted and talented people who showed me love, kindness, and patience. I learned so much from every one of them and because of them I get to look back and say that going through residency was positive. Because of them I got to maintain my sense of humor and got to share true genuine belly laughs through a very difficult and demanding program.

But that is not to say residency was a breeze. The residency was fast-paced. The days could be long with things on the to-do list never really whittling down. You are trying to balance synthesizing new information as it comes to you with teaching your co-resident cohort along with your "littles." The cases that need to be worked up, diagnosed, and treatment planned pile up. And you have a master's level research project that must be completed somewhere in the background. As a first-year resident, you jump straight into the clinical treatment of patients early on to finish your cases within two years all while learning the new language and procedures of orthodontics.

As residents, you are highly responsible for each other's learning and spend a lot of time with one another in the resident room. So once you have made it you are there to help each other out and support each other!

What is your favorite memory from residency?

I think some of my favorite memories from residency are just the small moments laughing in the mentor's offices, whether we were coming up with a character (Angry Drill Sergeant with braces) or talking about my terrible Shrek impression.

I was also responsible for coming up with the quote or fun fact of the day. That was a total highlight because everyone was so patient as my goofy energy was channeled.

What is your current assignment?

My assignment after residency was working as a clinical orthodontist at the Stuttgart Dental Clinic in Germany. This is one avenue that can happen post-residency. I had several co-residents go straight into a teaching assignment. I think teaching would be something that I would enjoy but I am glad that I got to go abroad and see a wide range of patients and see what it's like to establish an Army ortho practice.

What advice do you have for applicants?

My advice to applicants is to not get discouraged if it doesn't happen the first time. When you go through the process and take notes, you will be surprised about how much you learn simply from talking to other people in the field. I learned a lot about orthodontics specifically military orthodontics just from the few interactions I had with other active-duty specialists. It helped mature my perspective. Change the things you can change to make you a stronger applicant and know how to address and talk about the things you can't change. Keep adding to your experience. Get to know your commanders and let them know you are interested in applying for a residency and be a team player for your DENTAC.

QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

MAJ Edward Rynkowsky, 63N

Fort Gordon Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery Residency Program Graduate, Class of 2025

Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

I think the strongest part of my application was my military background. I was not a traditional applicant. I enlisted in January 2001 and later commissioned as officer serving two combat tours in Afghanistan. I had many unique past experiences. Of those, I think the most meaningful revolved around leadership, planning, working as a member of a team, and problem solving.

How would you describe your overall residency experience, to include the typical workweek?

Challenging. At first, it is overwhelming. Success did not come easy. I focused on getting through one day at a time, and then one week at a time and so on. The workweek is long, requiring early morning and late night hours including time on the weekends. However, this is countered by the satisfaction you will achieve through patient care and your surprising ability to learn a great deal in a relatively short period of time.



What is your favorite memory from residency?

Completing it!

What is your upcoming assignment?

Staff / Mentor at Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery Residency Program at Womack Army Medical Center, Ft. Bragg, NC

What advice do you have for applicants?

In residency you are training to achieve competency in a specific skillset. You're expected to be self-learning, resourceful, creative, with the ability to solve problems, manage time, and prioritize. You are a member of a team. There will be difficult times, especially if you have a family. It requires careful consideration for that the amount of dedication and effort required will be great.



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

CPT Reed McKinney, 63P

Naval Postgraduate Dental School Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology Residency Graduate, Class of 2025



Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

Seeking out mentors early in my career benefited me in so many ways. I was fortunate enough to complete my AEGD-12MP at JBLM in Washington, one of the few 1-Year Programs with an Oral Pathologist on staff. After deciding to pursue a position in the Oral Pathology residency, I immediately sought out COL Heather Olmo and tried to spend as much time learning from her. We were able to publish several articles together and spend time looking at cases together. She introduced me to a field that – admittedly - dental students and residents do not get too much exposure to outside of the classroom. Her mentorship prepared me for my LTHET interview and subsequent residency program. I also had an amazing group of Dental Officers at my AEGD who not only prepared me

for success in that program, but beyond throughout my military career.

Looking back, is there something that you wish you had completed before submitting your application?

Not necessarily. I was fortunate enough to attend Captain's Career Course before beginning residency to enhance my Military knowledge and leadership capabilities. Coming into my residency program pretty much straight from the AEGD, I was able to spend a few months at Ft. George Meade, MD as a general dentist where I had tremendous military leadership. I wasn't there for long, but knowing I wanted to go straight into Oral Pathology, I was alright with not doing too much endo.



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

How would you describe your overall residency experience, to include the typical workweek?

Overall, I have had an extremely positive experience. Being an Army Officer at a Naval installation poses some unique challenges – adapting to a different branch of service’s culture, always being the odd man out in our dress uniforms (thankfully I wasn’t alone in this) – but my time at the Naval Postgraduate Dental School has been a great three years.

Oral Pathology residency is a truly unique experience, in that every year of the program, there are widely different expectations, roles to fulfill, and responsibilities. A typical workweek consists of classwork, case sign outs, and independent study.

Our first year is primarily didactic, taking classes with the other NPDS dental residents, as well as learning Anatomic Pathology with the medical students at the Uniformed Services University. During that time, we learn how to properly and independently gross specimens from fibromas to complete neck dissections, work on research projects, begin diving into learning histology with staff, and spend a ton of time reading and going through slides.

Second year, we are attached to the Anatomic Pathology residency with the medical residents at Watler Reed. 9 of our 12 months are spent treated effectively as a medical resident, which comes with new expectations and a steep learning curve. This year is where we learn to apply our didactic training in Anatomic Pathology, gross large medical specimens, and really expand our breadth of clinical and anatomic pathology. Some clinical time is spent on our Dermatology rotation, which I really enjoyed.

Third year, we spend our mornings at the Joint Pathology Center in Silver Spring, MD preparing for and attending case sign outs with the staff Oral and Maxillofacial Pathologists there. Our cases come from all over the DOD – from VA hospitals, general pathologists, and oral pathologists – for consultation. Most of these cases require significant work-up, molecular testing, and clinical-radiologic correlations to arrive at a definitive diagnosis. These cases best prepare us for our AAOMP Fellowship examination in the spring, and ABOMP Board exam in the fall.

A “typical” workweek doesn’t really quite exist with every year being so unique, but the experience of working with such a wide range of both Military and Civilian clinicians and pathologists has really been a great way to see multiple perspectives.

What is your favorite memory from residency?

Working alongside such a wide variety of dental and medical specialists truly enhanced my residency experience. Our training prepared us to be able to “play ball” with a lot of our medical colleagues with their cases, which was fun. Getting to know many of the ENT and OMFS surgeons who were sending us cancer resection cases personally, with a lot of them coming down to the grossing bench to make sure their specimens were oriented correctly really demonstrates the commitment to excellence that the Military Healthcare System delivers. Fostering relationships with this wide group of individuals, professionally and personally, was rewarding. I’m looking forward to continuing to work with many of them for years to come.

What is your upcoming assignment?

I will be PCSing to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas.



QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

What advice do you have for applicants?

I remember being terrified to apply, especially since I was so “young” as a Junior Captain just about halfway through an AEGD. I did not have a ton of Army experience besides BOLC and C4 through the AEGD curriculum, so I did my best to bolster my application in other ways through publications, completing CE, and preparing my best for the interview process.

I would also mention a sense of accountability. Taking any time you are given to grow and develop as a lifelong learner and Soldier should be a priority. In Oral Path, and other residencies I’m sure, there is a lot of time for independent learning built into our schedule to work on research projects, go through slides on our own, or read a chapter or two of a textbook – none of the work is forced, but it is expected. I think being able to be accountable for yourself and your time is a key aspect of being successful not only in residency but in daily life.

I would say if you are considering applying, go ahead and go for it – the worst you can hear is to try again. No one on the interview panel tried to “trick” me with any questions, it was a genuine conversation and showed me quickly the caliber of people I would be working with if selected. I am so grateful for the opportunities I have received throughout my training and look forward to continuing to serve the Army Dental Corps as an Oral Pathologist.





QUESTION AND ANSWER FROM RECENT LTHET PARTICIPANTS

MAJ Kellie O'Keefe, MEDCOM Executive Fellow



Regarding your military and academic success, what do you think made you a strong applicant for LTHET?

One of the requirements for the MEDCOM Executive Fellow position is having completed a dental specialty residency. I am a prosthodontist and had leadership experience as a clinic OIC. I think that having a diverse background in the military helps you be more successful as an Executive Fellow because you can draw on past experiences to support initiatives. I'd recommend emphasizing the experiences that make you stand out as a candidate, be they operational, leadership, research, GDE, being previously enlisted, etc.

How would you describe your overall experience, to include the typical workweek?

The initiatives that the MEDCOM Dental Readiness Division supports are constantly evolving based upon mission needs. Overall, we analyze dental readiness and support policies and initiatives to improve readiness. This involves integrating with other departments including DHA, MEDCOM, FORSCOM, HRC, CDID, etc. As an Executive Fellow, you are encouraged to learn from and support other offices as much as possible. There are also opportunities to attend a diverse array of courses and conferences, including How The Army Runs, the Operational Dentistry Symposium, the Tactical Combat Medical Care Course, the Dental Senior Leader Forum, etc.

What is your favorite memory from being an executive fellow?

My favorite experience as an Executive Fellow is administering the AEGD-1 application and selection process with Graduate Dental Education. It has been very fulfilling creating a system and seeing it progress over a year from initial communications with 4th year HPSP students, to the AEGD-1 selection board, then slating board, and now dental school graduation and transition to starting AEGD-1 programs. I really appreciated the opportunity to guide dental students through the challenges of transitioning to Active Duty and reduce an inherently stressful process.

What advice do you have for applicants?

Apply! Executive Fellow positions are an incredibly unique opportunity to see the departments and systems that work behind the scenes to shape military healthcare. You will be exposed to a broad range of experiences and problem sets that will make you a more well-rounded Army Officer and better prepare you for any subsequent assignment.



RESOURCES

Chief of Graduate Dental Education (GDE):

COL Thomas Stark at thomas.stark17.mil@army.mil

GDE Applications sent to:

usarmy.jbsa.medical-coe.list.dhet-dc-ameddcs@army.mil

General Questions to the Army Dental Corps:

usarmy.jbsa.medical-coe.mbx.dental-corps@army.mil



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- Periodontics (63D)
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- Public Health Dentistry (63H)
- Pediatric Dentistry (63K)
- Orthodontics (63M)
- Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (63N)
- Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology (63P)

Questions about a residency program(s) or the Army Long Term Health Education & Training (LTHET) application requirements/process/timeline?

Want to learn how to become a more competitive applicant?

Curious about life and career as a specialist (63B-P) in the Army?

The Army GDE Ambassadors are here to help!

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Army GDE Ambassador today!**

MAJ Eric Hu (eric.c.hu.mil@health.mil)