



Bringing Smiles Dental Enrichment Program interns. Image courtesy of Edwin Chuya.

Bringing Smiles Dental Enrichment Program Opens Doors for Underrepresented Pre-dental Students

One of Betty Delmasi’s fondest memories of participating in the Bringing Smiles Dental Enrichment Program (BSDEP) — a pipeline program that supports and prepares underrepresented minority pre-dental students for successful application and matriculation to dental school — occurred during a school-based clinical outreach.

“There was this one little boy who was smiling and was so happy to have us there,” says Betty. “That made me happy, realizing how we helped make his oral health care experience a positive one.”

Betty, ‘23, has wanted to become a dentist since attending high school in the Bronx, inspired by her mother who used to practice dentistry in their hometown of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. When the family immigrated to the United States, Betty was about 10 years old, and her mom, unable to practice dentistry in the US, turned her attention to helping her husband run a grocery business.

“It means a lot to my mom that I decided to do the same thing she did back home,” says Betty.

A first generation graduate of Hunter College and now a D3 at NYU Dentistry, Betty was among the first five interns to participate in the semester-long BSDEP program. The program was established in 2018 by the NYU Department of Pediatric Dentistry to help increase diversity among dental health care professionals. The program also aims to equip the future oral health workforce with the

knowledge and experience to improve access and outcomes for underserved populations. NYU Dentistry sponsors a similar program for underrepresented high school students — [Saturday Academy](#)— which introduces them to the profession of dentistry, while simultaneously preparing them for the college application process.

The idea for BSDEP began with [Dr. Rose J. Amable](#), the program's director and a clinical associate professor of pediatric dentistry. Born in Peru, Dr. Amable is an NYU Dentistry alumna, a first-generation dentist, a member of an underrepresented minority (URM) group, and a graduate of a pipeline project — the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community-based Dental Education Program.

Since its founding, 24 interns have graduated from BSDEP. Of the program's alumni, seven are currently enrolled at NYU Dentistry, two are at Stony Brook University School of Dental Medicine, one is at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, two are at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine, and one is at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry.

"I see myself in every one of the interns we choose because my route to getting into dental school was not easy," says Dr. Amable. "I was often told that my dream to become a dentist was unachievable. Then I met a mentor who helped open some doors. When I thanked him, he said, 'The only way you can repay me is to do the same thing that I did for you.' "That inspired me to help start this program."