

# Dental group knocks UCF plan for new school

**Denise-Marie Balona**, Orlando Sentinel  
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The Florida Dental Association has issued a three-page letter sharply criticizing the University of Central Florida's plan to open a dental school.

The letter to the Florida Board of Governors comes just a week before the board is scheduled to decide whether to let UCF open a College of Dental Medicine.

University of Florida Food and Drug Administration Executive Branch Government Tallahassee (Leon, Florida) Nova Southeastern University FAMU Gainesville The FDA's president outlined numerous concerns in the letter, concluding that UCF has failed to show a need for a fourth dental school in Florida.

He also questioned the university's repeated assertions that it could run such an expensive program without state funding. That's an important issue during tough economic times because UCF has been adamant that it would never seek state money for its dental program – a promise that sets its proposal apart from one being offered by University of Florida and Florida A&M University.

"Given the historically high overhead costs of operating dental schools," wrote association President Cesar Sabates, "the FDA is convinced that UCF will inevitably approach the state for some form of assistance, whether it be faculty, building maintenance, renovation, satellite clinics, etc."

Even the private dental school operated by Nova Southeastern University in South Florida relies on some public funding, Sabates wrote. He also questioned whether UCF could achieve the enrollment it needs, considering Florida dentists are seeing their patient loads drop because of the economy.

UCF spokesman Grant Heston stood by the university's guarantee to not rely on state money.

"We believe this is an innovative proposal that requires no state funding," he said Friday.

In a separate letter from FDA to the board, Sabates voiced support for a new joint project proposed by UF, which runs a dental school in Gainesville, and FAMU, a historically black college in Tallahassee, to boost the number of minorities studying dentistry at UF.

Kelly Layman, a Board of Governors spokeswoman, said both letters will be taken into consideration.

"The board will definitely value the input from this stakeholder group just as it would with any affected stakeholder group," she said.

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