

SDM Shout Out

Weekly News Updates for SDM Faculty, Staff and Students

Sharma Named Interim Chair of Oral Biology



Ashu Sharma, PhD
Interim Chair and Professor, Department of Oral Biology

Ashu Sharma, professor of oral biology, has been appointed interim chair of the Department of Oral Biology in the School of Dental Medicine.

He assumed the role on Jan. 1.

Sharma succeeds Frank A. Scannapieco, who will return to his faculty role as SUNY Distinguished Professor of Oral Biology and associate dean for faculty and professional development.

"This is a huge turning point in the history of the oral biology department. Dr. Scannapieco has been a cornerstone for almost two decades, enhancing the department's high national and international reputation," says Stefan Ruhl, professor of oral biology and interim dean of the School of Dental Medicine. "Under his visionary leadership, the department has undergone a generational transition through hiring highly talented, successful and well-funded investigators. The high ranking of our school is in great part due to Dr. Scannapieco's success with the research output and grant funding of the oral biology department.

"I am grateful to Dr. Scannapieco for his dedicated service as chair," Ruhl says, "and am also glad that Dr. Sharma, an experienced and well-known scientist who knows the department inside-out, has agreed to take on the leadership role until a new chair is appointed."

A highly respected scientist, Sharma joined the Department of Oral Biology as an assistant professor in 1994. His research focuses on gaining a better understanding of how pathogenic bacteria colonize the oral cavity to form biofilms and initiate disease.

He has published more than 100 journal articles, books and book chapters in the field of oral biology and has received numerous multimillion-dollar grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In 2021, Sharma received a Sustained Achievement Award from UB in recognition of his outstanding scholarly work. Sharma earned a doctorate, a master's degree in biochemistry and endocrinology, and a bachelor's degree in zoology from the University of Delhi in India.

The Legacy of Dr. Frank Scannapieco



Frank Scannapieco, DMD, PhD
SUNY Distinguished Professor, Department of Oral Biology

Scannapieco is an internationally recognized scholar in the field of oral biology and a pioneer in connecting oral and systemic diseases, including respiratory diseases, diabetes and cancer. A faculty member of the School of Dental Medicine for more than 30 years, he has spent most of his academic career in Oral Biology, including serving as chair of the department for the past 18 years.

Under his leadership, UB's department — the first such department established in the United States — has grown to become one of the most renowned oral biology programs in the country.

His research focuses on the mechanisms of dental plaque formation and their implications on health and disease, the interactions between saliva and bacteria, and the relationships between oral and systematic disease.

Scannapieco has received more than \$13 million in grant funding, mostly from the NIH, and has published nearly 200 research articles, books and book chapters. Over the course of his career, he has mentored a notable number of faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, graduate and dental students, and undergraduates.

He has received numerous awards, including the 2020 Irwin D. Mandel Distinguished Mentoring Award from the American Association for Dental Research (AADR), the 2019 Research in Oral Biology Award from the International Association for Dental Research, the 2009 William J. Gies Award for Achievement from the American Dental Education Association, and a SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities.

A fellow of the AADR, Scannapieco received a doctorate in dental medicine and a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Connecticut, a doctorate in oral biology from UB and a master's degree in biology from Northeastern University.

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