

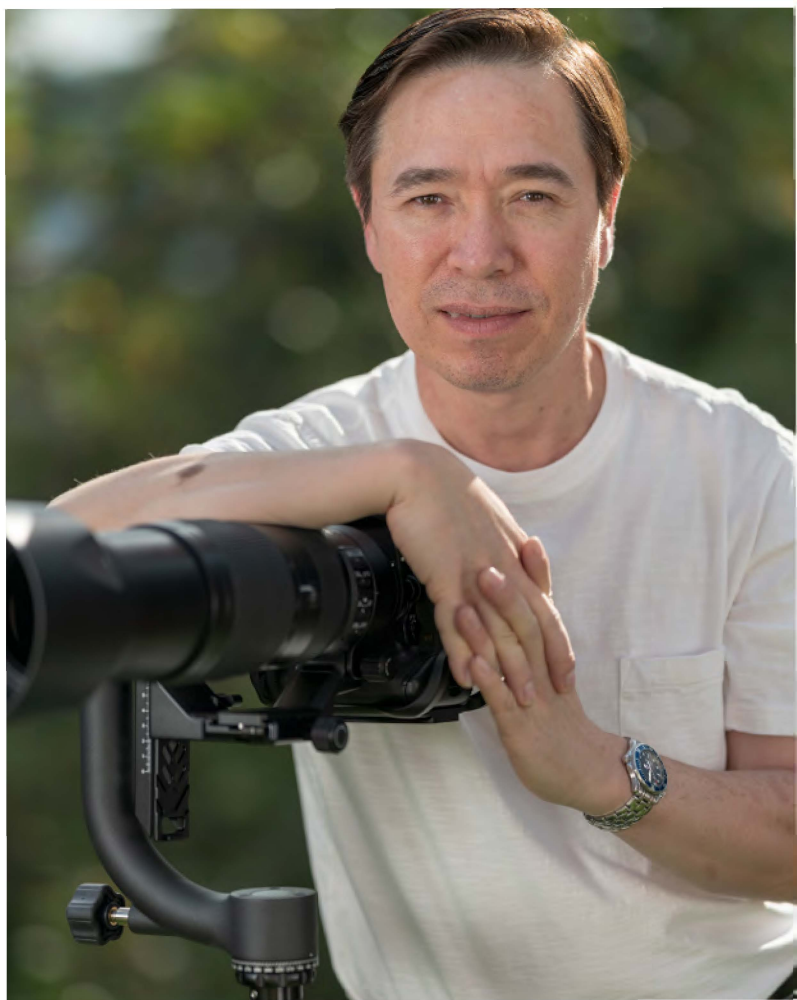
HOW I GOT TO DENTAL SCHOOL

ANDREW PHAM

Andrew Pham is a fourth-year student (DS4) in the pre-doctoral DMD program. He was born and raised in Vietnam. Near the end of the Vietnam War, people in South Vietnam began to flee due to the rise of communism. After finishing high school, he left his home to pursue freedom and liberty. During his journey, he stayed at the Bataan Refugee Camp in the Philippines. While there, he volunteered in the camp dental clinic and met a woman who everyone called Dr. Rose. He recalled how she was the only dentist who provided free dental care to the refugees. Andrew assisted her and was able to discover his passion for dentistry. He would help during procedures, sterilize instruments, and clean the operatory. Looking back, Andrew remembers how he wished he could have been a dentist at the time so that he could help more children, women, and older people suffering from various dental diseases.

One day, after several months of working together, Dr. Rose asked if Andrew wanted to become a dentist. He told her that he did, but he was unsure what the steps were to achieve what seemed to be an impossible dream. She told him it was possible and encouraged him to pursue dentistry in the United States.

Once in the United States, the dream of pursuing a career in dentistry was put on the back burner so that Andrew could establish the foundation of a new life in his new country. He worked incredibly hard and saved a little money to take classes at Portland State University (PSU). Andrew recalls, "I signed up for evening and weekend classes to study electronics, photography, and cooking. After saving enough money, I started taking daytime classes at PSU to prepare for dental school while working a part-time job 7 nights a week." He eventually earned a degree in biology and



Pictured above: DS4, Andrew Pham

was accepted to his dream dental school, OHSU's School of Dentistry.

During these past 3 ½ years of Dental School, Andrew has worked for the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a home care provider. In his spare time, Andrew enjoys taking beautiful pictures and spending time with family and friends. When asked if he had any advice for people considering dental school, he replied, "Spend as much time as you can now sleeping."

It was 25 years ago that Andrew set his sights on becoming a dentist, and in June 2021, he will graduate and be able to put the abbreviation "DMD" behind his name. Andrew feels incredibly blessed to be supported by his classmates and faculty. "Thank you to Dr. Knight, Dr. McPharlin, and many others, who have given me the chance of a lifetime to turn a forgotten dream into a reality," Andrew shared. "Thank you all for believing in me!"