The need for qualified managers was identified as one of the top five issues currently impacting the dental laboratory industry. NADL University was developed to meet those growing educational needs of today’s dental laboratory managers. The program allows eligible professionals to earn a Certificate in Dental Laboratory Management during an intensive course of study.

The 2019 NADL University will be held September 12-14. Find out more at nadl.org/events/nadl-university/2019.
Since its inception in 2005, approximately 300 students have graduated from NADL University. The first program started as a six-day course held in Atlanta and included courses on marketing, personnel management, production standards, purchasing and inventory control, profitability and operating ratios, technology, quality assurance and leadership. Over the years the location changed to Tempe, Arizona and length of the course has been concentrated to three days. Speakers address profitability and operating ratios, purchasing and inventory control, human resources management and regulations, marketing and chairside services, quality assurance systems and manufacturing practices, production standards and production pay, leadership and client relations. Much of the faculty are fully committed to the course and have given their time to teach year after year, including Jeff Stronk, Chuck Yenkner, MBA, Mark Murphy, DDS, FAGD, and representatives from SafeLink Consulting and Seay Management Consultants.

After every meeting, feedback is requested from attendees. Each year, one of the primary positive takeaways, above and beyond the flood of knowledge gained, is the sense of unity and bonding with other managers. The small class size, between 20–25 students, enhances the cohesive atmosphere and the comfort level for attendees to ask what they don’t know, share mistakes made and learn more about potential solutions. After learning together during the day, the group attends dinners together at night and can further network in a relaxed setting. On a personal note, as a former attendee of the class of 2015, I can attest that the lifelong connections I made at NADL U have undoubtedly contributed to and bettered my knowledge of the profession to this day.

While nothing can compare to the in-person experience of NADL U, NADL recognized that there are many members that might not have the chance to attend, but should still be able to access this invaluable information. As a result, many of the seminars are now recorded and available online at http://nadl.learnercommunity.com. There are even scholarships available.

Knowing that cost might be a prohibitive factor, the Foundation now offers the SCDL Business Enterprise Education Grant. This grant awards two
individuals up to $2,500 to supplement expenses related to business management continuing education the recipients wish to attend, including NADL University. More information is available at http://dentallabfoundation.org/scholarshipsgrants/business-enterprise-education-grant.

Many other exciting changes are in store for 2019 and beyond. Due to the retirement of faculty members Chuck Yenker and Mark Murphy, it seemed like a good time to mix in some fresh ideas along with the established. New speakers and topics have been introduced and the 2019 line-up includes Profitability, Operating Ratios and Benchmarking by Travis Zick; Human Resources Management and Employment Regulations by Kylie Luff; You Were Promoted to a Manager, Now What? by Anthony Calonico, CDT, TE; New Business Models and Changing Demographics for Today’s Dentist by Ricki Braswell, CAE; Marketing and Chair Side Services by Jeff Stronk; Quality Assurance Systems and Good Manufacturing Practices by Gary Morgan, CDT; Getting the Maximum Business Performance out of Your Lab by Warren Rogers; and The Future is in Your Hands… Take the Lead! by Tom Laughon.

Find out more at nadl.org/events/nadl-university/2019.

Gary Morgan, NADL U Faculty

Why did you decide to teach at NADL U?

The opportunity to focus strictly on important areas relevant to laboratory management prompted me to be on the faculty of NADL U. There is no other learning experience quite like it for dental laboratories; where owners and managers can concentrate on learning and applying good business management principles into their business operations. Too many labs fail because, while they may be great technicians, they are not great at managing a business. For me, having the time to spend with attendees on Quality Management Systems was very important. Other trade shows and meetings really focus on technical programs and only want a one-hour regulatory course to meet CDT requirements and one hour is not anywhere near enough time to present the information. NADL U allows that time and interaction which really creates a great learning experience.

Has there been anything you have gained?

I always take away information and new knowledge from NADL U, whether it is sitting in on other faculty members’ presentations, or from the interaction of the attendees in the classroom or social gatherings. Peer-to-peer is always one of the best ways to exchange knowledge. Learning from their successes and failures is just as important as what is presented by the instructors.
Why should managers attend?

Good managers are integral to having a well-run laboratory, even for a small lab. An owner, if they are not a manager themselves, must rely on the skills of managers to oversee different operations on their behalf. The courses offered at NADL U better prepare managers, in diverse areas of responsibility, to understand their roles and the interrelationship of activities such as accounting, marketing, human resources, and quality management.

Jeff Stronk,
NADL U Faculty

Why did you decide to teach at NADL U?

I felt I had something to offer lab owners and managers as I'm in the profession but not on the technical side. Marketing and customer service have been my strengths to not only attract new clients, but to retain them over the long haul. There are so many great technicians out there that don't know how to tell their story or appreciate the importance of doing so correctly. So often a technical owner gets caught up in the microcosm of work needing to get out the door that they don't look at the bigger picture of how they could be growing their business with ideas that can be learned through NADL U.

Has there been anything you have gained?

Every year I teach, I walk away from NADL U with more knowledge than when I went in. I love hearing what other labs are doing to attract new customers, or how they've learned to differentiate themselves from their competition.

Why should managers attend?

Managers should definitely attend NADL U! Not only for the knowledge gained by the instructors, but also for the comraderies and friendships developed through the time spent with the other students. It's invaluable! Ten years later, I am in still constant contact with the others who were in the class I attended. We share hardships and successes all the time. Rarely a week goes by where I don't speak with one of my classmates.

Joe Young, Young Dental Lab, Inc., inaugural NADL University class of 2005

Why did you decide to attend NADL U?

To seek industry-specific management training.

Describe your experience.

As I recall, the first NADL U was a week long. Each day was filled...
with multiple sessions and speakers and highly informative workshops. As with all NADL events, it was well-organized. A major side benefit of a week-long course is the comradery and friendships you create there.

What did you gain? Anything you still incorporate currently?

I mainly gained a better understanding of daily operations (personnel management, production standards, etc.) and finances (operating for profit, inventory control, etc.). I absolutely still incorporate what I learned, especially the financial aspect. Getting a better handle on lowering overhead, supply ordering, other related expenses to preparing, and discussing these with my accountant are being used to this day. Any industry-specific business course is a benefit to the company. Even if what I learned didn’t get incorporated into daily activities, at the very least, I am equipped to understand them should the need arise.

Jed Miller, CDT, regional director for Apex Dental Laboratory Group, Class of 2018

Why did you decide to attend NADL U?

My role has been expanding and changing with Apex Dental Laboratory Group. As I’ve been overseeing more labs, I wanted to build and strengthen my knowledge foundation to better handle situations that arise in the lab.

Describe your experience.

A takeaway from my experience was best summed up by Chuck Yenker, faculty, in one of his presentations. He went over a lot of information and drilled down on what numbers you need to look at to make your decisions. He stated that our knowledge of these numbers and understanding key business indicators doesn’t make a decision any easier, but it does help us to make a well-informed, educated decision toward the future direction of the company.

I still keep my three ring binder on my desk with all of the materials from the class. The group I attended with brought a lot of knowledge from across all different laboratories and it really helped my understanding that others also struggle with the same issues I do on a daily basis. Our discussions provided a precedence for how I can best move forward.

Randi James, Renstrom Dental Studio, Inc., Class of 2018

Why did you decide to attend NADL U?

I decided to attend NADL U to broaden my knowledge of dental laboratory management. It is hard to do that when you are in the lab on a daily basis, facing the daily challenges that arise. You get to learn in a small group format from highly experienced speakers, as well as from your peers. You also get to hear different ideas of what people are doing, from labs all around the country, in a comfortable learning environment. NADL U definitely brought up new ideas, forcing us to look at things from new perspectives. JDT