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Video Transcript

DR. DENNIS MITCHELL: I ended up in academics by mistake. I did not come into dentistry in order to be in academics. I came to dentistry to practice dentistry with my uncle. I have an uncle who's a dentist here in the city, and I did practice with him for ten years. During my residency training at Harlem Hospital, in the late 1980's, there was an opportunity to do research, to look at the oral manifestations of HIV. When I finished the residency in '91, I came aboard two days a week, part-time, doing research, and was practicing the other four days. I've always worked a six-day week. After a year they wanted another day, and I was here three days a week. And, before I knew it, I was running that cohort. So the rest is history, from there. I went on to do a master's in public health, here at the Mailman School, in the executive program. When I came out of that, I came on board full-time faculty. Then I was practicing on the side, rather than doing research on the side of practice, and I've been that way ever since.

I love practice. I love treating patients. I love my discipline, and I love my academic work as well. Together, it really breaks up my life very well. I don't have a single day that is the same, ever. So I can guarantee that nothing I do, in any one day, is the same as the day before, and I've loved that. That's something for me, that has been invigorating.

I teach dentistry because I love it. I love giving back. I love making a difference. I love watching young men and women evolve, and I love helping them navigate their way into our profession. They are our future, and I love being a part of helping them – helping them help us as a profession. They're our future. So I'm ecstatic about the opportunities that have been given to me, to help shape the early part of their development. If you're interested in coming into academics as a full-time, practicing dentist, I would say start part-time. Start as a volunteer. Immerse yourself into the experience of academics. Learn a little bit about how your dental school works and what it's like to be a faculty member there. Maybe that's for a semester, maybe that's for a year, but get some experience and then go for it. We need so many talented men and women in academia, in our profession, that the doors are wide open to all of you. So we encourage you to participate. At dental school, we need you. So I would absolutely tell them to come on and join.