



Andy Mackner, President, AOSA (Photo courtesy of the AOSA)

HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY AOSA

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I would first like to express my gratitude for the leadership and participation of those before me. As the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) begins its 50th year, it is important to recognize the dedication and leadership that empowered this organization to be in the thriving state that it is today. It is thanks to our members, sustaining members, past leadership and our many industry partners that we are able to provide opportunities to our students that will aid in their success upon graduation and will foster active membership within the American Optometric Association (AOA) and their state affiliate. I am humbled to have the opportunity to serve as the 50th president of the AOSA and am eager to continue the strong tradition of student leadership in our profession.

As the son of an optometrist, many ask if I chose this career path because of my Dad. Initially, I was hesitant to give him any credit but looking back I can see how many of those childhood experiences were pivotal in my decision to pursue optometry. My father graduated from Pacific University College of Optometry in 1991, he owns five practices in rural Minnesota and is a past-president of the Minnesota Optometric Association. I have many fond memories of my Dad's involvement in our state affiliate. They include traveling to Minneapolis for the annual meeting and our family vacation to Washington D.C. for Optometry's Meeting in 2009.

Little did I know, these experiences were exposing me to a vital part of our profession. That is, optometry is legislated and it is thanks to the sacrifices, dedication and devotion of the generations before us that we are privileged to provide the level of care that we do. Ultimately, these experiences not only shaped my decision to become an optometrist but also my motivation to share with my classmates the importance and value of being engaged members in their association.

It is an exciting time to be an optometry student. Being AOSA members gives us tangible experiences to know that we are in the process of shaping our future. The AOSA continues to offer unique experiences and opportunities that will undoubtedly aid in a student's professional development. This year, the AOSA board of trustees has been working on initiatives to ensure that we are fulfilling our mission and continue to meet the needs of our student members. These initiatives include bolstering membership benefits, continued work on our strategic plan, connecting students with their state affiliates and the development of the AOSA student of the year. At our June meeting, the AOSA board voted and approved the development of an AOSA student of the year award to recognize the contribution that a student can make to the profession.

Our current initiatives continue to follow the objectives that were set forth when this organization was first established. We strive to be a resource for optometry students, informing them about all issues regarding their chosen profession, instill in optometry

students a spirit of professionalism and engage and motivate them to be advocates for patients and the profession.

It was 1968 when Raymond Myers founded the American Optometric Student Association, giving a voice to students across the country. The organization now represents more than 7,100 students at 24 schools across the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. At that time, optometrists couldn't dilate the pupil of the eye and were not allowed to use therapeutic pharmaceutical agents. We are entering the profession at a much different time and we would be mistaken if we took the rights we have now for granted. As we look to the next 50 years, we must think about the future that we are going to create. Where are we going to take this profession? Optometry will continue to face opposition that threatens the health of the patient and the quality of care that we provide. However, we are strongest when we are united, and through our steadfast involvement in the AOA, AOSA and state affiliates we can ensure a bright and vibrant future for the profession of optometry.

From the Archives: Early Optometry Education



New York Institute of Optometry, circa 1909. Collodion print on paper. Donated by Dr. E. LeRoy Ryer 1969, New York. Original image held at The Archives & Museum of Optometry, St. Louis, MO. First row, left to right: A.L. Merin, E.E. Hotaling, E.L. Ryer, A.J. Cross, S.H. Brooks, F.A. Woll.

Establishing educational standards for optometry students was critical to distinguishing professional optometrists from tradesmen and merchants. When the first law regulating optometry was passed in 1901, dozens of private optometry schools provided training to prospective optometrists. The New York Institute of Optometry (1907-1909) provided a rigorous two-year training program in optics, anatomy and physiology and clinical methods. This curriculum likely provided the groundwork for the first university-based school of optometry, which was founded at Columbia University in 1910. NYIO faculty seated in the first row in the photograph above went on to teach at Columbia, and were founding members of the American Optometric Association. For more on the history of optometric education, check out back-issues of *Hindsight!*