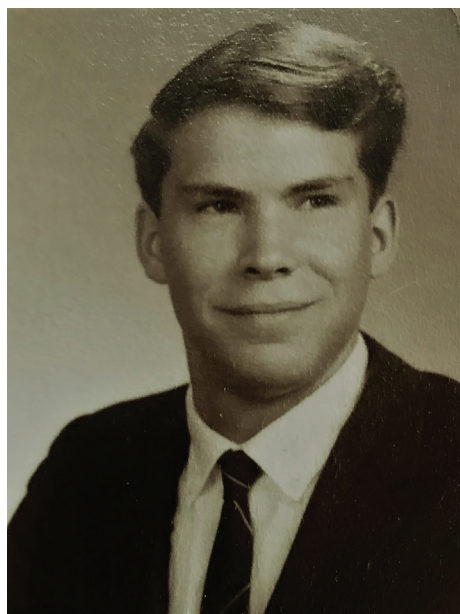




Co-Founder (1967) and First President (1968)
Raymond I. Myers (IU) (Photo courtesy of Ray
Myers).



Co-Founder & Student Review Editor (1968),
Burton E. Worrell, Jr. (UCB) (Photo courtesy of
Burt Worrell).

THE ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC STUDENT ASSOCIATION 1967-1972

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ABSTRACT

The American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) was founded in 1968, and the early efforts made at that time established a framework that has led to the subsequent success of the organization. All U.S. schools were constituent members within five years of its founding, with a membership of 80% of all optometry students, and it became affiliated with the American Optometric Association (AOA) in 1974. Its success as a professional student organization is a result of professionalization, associations with the AOA, and a role in the present and future developments of the optometric profession. This paper examines the origins, founding, and first few years of the AOSA and identifies many of the individuals who played important roles in its founding.

The American Optometric Student Association will reach the 50th year Anniversary in 2018 with a 2017 membership of 95% of the total number of U.S. and Canadian optometry students.¹ Its origins came in the late 1960's at a time of general student unrest, and with some support and counsel from the American Optometric Association (AOA). All schools were constituent members within five years and AOSA became affiliated with AOA in 1974.

In 2012, the AOA News conducted a one year survey presenting about 20 events with articles published over 50

years. They asked readers, "Which were the ten most significant news stories?" The second most significant article was the announcement of the AOSA formation in 1967.²

AOSA's success in part has been from its strong association with the AOA and a student population responding to the opportunities and challenges of a legislated profession.

AOSA PRE-CURSORS

AOSA originated during the last half of the 1960's creating student involvement in the profession, and at a unique time in history when college students were very active in social causes from civil rights, the Vietnam War and opposition to the military draft. During the 1960's, new professional student organizations began, and existing ones established autonomies from their comparable senior organizations. Unbeknownst to AOSA organizers at the time, two well-known Australians, Damien P. Smith,³ former President of the World Council of Optometry, and cornea and contact lens researcher Brien A. Holden⁴ established the Australian Optometrical Student Society. The Student American Medical Association, although previously a part of the American Medical Association, reorganized as an independent organization. Inside their profession, the American Bar Association advocated and established with students the Law Student Division.⁵

AOA's acceptance of AOSA's formation was likely improved by a youthful AOA Board at the time. Of the thirteen AOA officers and

trustees in 1967-68, seven were first elected as trustees at 45 years of age or younger. Four who are recognized in this article as AOSA Founders eventually became President of the AOA (Richard L. Hopping, B.J. Shannon, John C. Tumblin, and Melvin D. Wolfberg). Two of those later became chief executive officers at optometry schools (Hopping and Wolfberg) and one other (H.W. Hofstetter) held a top university position while being AOA Trustee and later President.

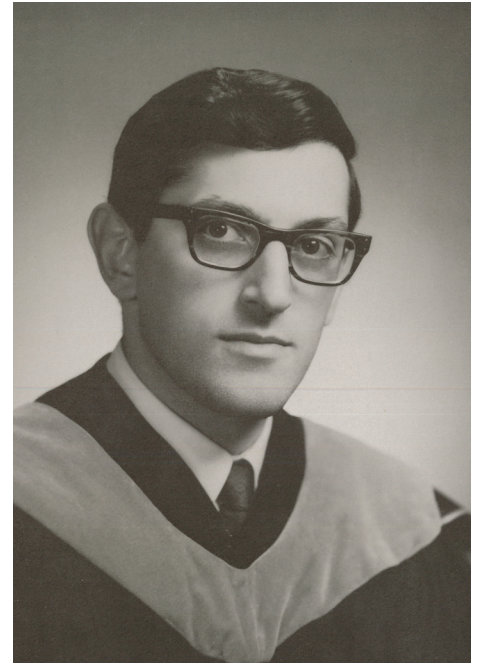
If he had his way in 1942, Irvin M. Borish, one of the dynamos in optometry and then a young faculty member at Illinois College of Optometry, would have established the AOSA. The biography of Borish⁶ authored by educator William R. Baldwin discussed these efforts and recognized that leaders in optometric education and in political optometry worked against Borish in establishing a student organization. Borish noted the major difference compared with the 1960's was that students lead the effort in an era of strong student unrest in that latter time. Both Borish and Baldwin were intimately involved in optometric education in the 1960's and they recognized there was still a significant opposition toward AOSA development by those same groups.

AOSA ORIGINS

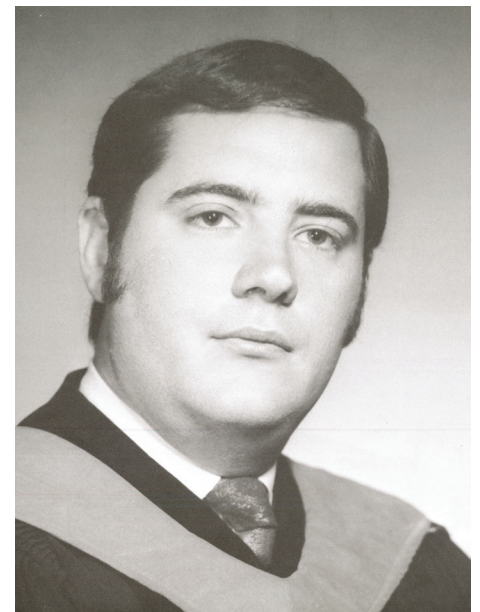
In this article, the author chose the period of 1967-1972 because he was personally involved with AOSA,⁷ and an important benchmark was met in 1972 when all American schools were affiliates and student membership reached 80%.⁹ Three individuals are often considered AOSA co-founders, because they were largely responsible for its origin and subsequent continuation from 1967 to 1970. They were Ellis J. Hoffman of Pennsylvania College of Optometry

(currently named Salus University), Raymond I. Myers of Indiana University, and Burton E. Worrell of the University of California Berkeley. Two of the three individuals, Myers and Hoffman, had strong associations with AOA. At least one year before AOSA establishment, Hoffman had created Project Envoy under AOA auspices, a national student organization for pre-optometry recruitment. In 1967 and before, Hoffman created the Project Envoy Board with student leaders from each optometry school. It was coordinated with the AOA Committee on Vocational Guidance and staff member William L. McCracken. Approximately six months later and independent of Hoffman, Myers was looking at AOA for a summer job after his first year at Indiana University. This began a five year association first as a part time student, then full time for three years after graduation. Myers' connections with AOA and optometric education were solidified through IU Director (Dean), H. W. Hofstetter, who was also moving through AOA Officer positions.

During the second half of 1967 much of the AOSA activity was among Myers, Hoffman, and McCracken. McCracken had proposed to the Assistance to Graduates and Undergraduates Committee several years earlier that AOA take the lead in organizing a national student organization, but it never proceeded any further. Hoffman recognized that Project Envoy might be difficult to maintain on a national level given its limited purpose, but its structure could hasten AOSA development. Among the board, Burton E. Worrell, President of the Student Optometric Society of the University of California Berkeley, showed great interest in this new pursuit. His major contributions extended until his graduation in June,



Co-Founder Ellis J. Hoffman (1967-68), PCO (Photo from Salus University Alumni Affairs).



AOSA President (1969) Robert J. Mittleman (PCO) (Photo from Salus University Alumni Affairs).

1969. As editor of the newsletter *Student Review*, he was more correctly the mass communicator with students and chapters.

AOSA CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

AOSA's Constitutional Convention on January 8-10, 1968, took place fortuitously in Philadelphia, as did America's Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention approximately two hundred years earlier. Although the committee would eventually include input from students of all schools and multiple representatives from the three schools of the co-founders, the AOSA Constitutional Convention consisted of five to eight Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO) students, Ellis Hoffman, and Raymond Myers. Strangely, they met at a stock brokerage office in Philadelphia, where a video ticker tape displayed instant stock exchange results. Since this was during Christmas vacation, Hoffman determined that the most expedient way to keep the PCO group together for several days was to meet where some would be otherwise. Myers agreed, but thinking of his IU student cohorts in the Midwest, none would likely have stepped into a brokerage office during vacation. This was the first important lesson that students learn to this day at AOSA national conferences: the most interesting comparisons are the mores and contrasts among students from different schools!

Constitutional and by-laws issues in Philadelphia were important to this fledgling society. At least three days of spirited deliberation were followed later by back and forth communication among the co-founders, PCO, and Indiana University committee members, as well as the Project Envoy

Board from every optometry school. Several matters deserved more attention by the group. One was how to keep the organization strong when individuals had a potential of office for only a few years. Partly, this involved tying in and promoting existing school councils. Considering that the presidents and other organizations had allegiances to local activities, an AOSA chapter wherever possible would still be the existing student council. Another tenet was that the national board member was separate from the council president. A third tenet was to allow any optometry student regardless of class or position to be eligible for national officer positions.

A further dilemma was, what should be the relationship of AOSA to AOA? Students did not particularly appreciate the need for a strong relationship or see what was to be gained. Also, as Borish observed, not everyone in political optometry

or education wanted a national student association. There was little dissension among all parties that some type of involvement and recognition was desirable. This might include committee involvement, but not necessarily an immediate AOSA representation in the AOA House of Delegates.

In March, 1968, the AOA Board of Trustees considered the proposal to grant AOSA recognition. The proposal¹⁰ was most importantly a blueprint how AOSA would proceed with its development. Any AOA recognition would not affect the short term. The AOA Board chose to table official AOSA recognition at their meeting, and it was not until 1974 that AOA established an official affiliation of AOSA.¹¹ They have been the largest affiliated association ever since.¹

AOSA PROGRESS

Ellis Hoffman graduated in June



*Irvin M. Borish, an optometry dynamo and primary author of *Clinical Refraction*, was a sympathetic supporter of AOSA's 1968 founding. Later in his elder years, he appropriately represented excellence in optometric education at the Optometry Student Bowl, the game show format quiz competition held as part of the annual AOSA meeting. (Photo courtesy of AOSA).*

1968, but until then Hoffman communicated with the schools and strengthened ties with AOSA, leaving Myers and Worrell to maintain the continuity in the second year. Early in the year Donald S. Teig of PCO and Larry G. Sayre of IU were responsible for communicating with their respective student councils.

The first AOSA officers (June, 1968-June, 1969) were Raymond Myers, President; Jeffrey M Furman, Vice President; and Burton E. Worrell as Editor of the *Student Review*. Furman (PCO) took Hoffman's place and implemented AOSA at his school which became and remained an important model for others schools¹² on how to bring close to 100% of the student body quickly into AOSA. Myers maintained the interaction with AOA which also helped in some of the administrative functions and costs. Worrell communicated with optometry students nationally, which was always larger than the number of dues-paying members, and he implemented strategies for adding AOSA member services.

Following Worrell as *Student Review* Editor 1970-71 was Richard T. Trask of the University of California. (See Table 1) His success in communication was evident in the rapid expansion in numbers of AOSA members and college affiliates during the next two years when Trask advanced to President and John E. Fawcett of Indiana University became his Vice President. One year later Fawcett advanced to President and announced that four schools were added to complete affiliation of all US schools, while AOSA membership advanced to over 80%!^{9, 12}

During AOSA's Constitutional Convention, one of the most crucial issues was how to utilize best the experience and knowledge of a

revolving and short tenure of student officers. During the period of 1970-73, arguably AOSA's most expansionary period for membership and affiliated organizations, four AOSA officers held two AOSA officerships or editorship. Not mentioned so far was Cecil Furer of PCO who in 1972 as Vice President traveled to Massachusetts College of Optometry (currently, New England College) with a delegation, a strong cadre of other PCO leaders and brought New England into AOSA. Further history from the 1971-74 period is included in Ronald Ferrucci's article¹² in this issue. Ferrucci succeeded Furer as President and was vital in establishing the chapter at Massachusetts.

AOSA FOUNDERS

Such a meaningful organization could not have been a result coming from primarily one or even several individuals, but included many others during the formative years of 1967 to 1972. "AOSA Founders" listed in Table 2 recognize the following groups: 1) PCO and Indiana University Committee members; 2) Project Envoy Board; 3) AOSA national officers, editors, and two key committee chairs (Anthony di Stefano and Ronald Ferrucci) through 1972; 4) key faculty advisors from the title page of the 1968 Proposal⁹; and 5) key AOA officers and staff.

In August 1970, the AOA hired Myers as Director of Career Guidance, and as staff liaison to AOSA. Myers facilitated communications through 1972 with various AOA committees, particularly the Committee on Assistance to Graduates and Undergraduates. AOA also expanded their services to students including restarting the AOA-AOSA Placement Service and creating the AOA Student Loan Fund. Gradually, AOSA under the leadership of third President Richard Trask brought

officers together for the first National Congress in Houston in 1971.

In 1972, AOSA membership would increase to 80% and include all schools, and AOSA had their second National Congress at Memphis, Tennessee, chaired by Dan E. Owen (SCO). There were several hundred students including 16 students from the University of Waterloo from Ontario, Canada who drove the furthest distance of almost 1,000 miles.

An important demonstration of AOSA's potential at its inception was an interprofessional effort by multiple student health organizations leading to the National Coalition of Student Professional Organizations. Among numerous initiatives from the Health Manpower Act of 1966, Congress dramatically increased funding benefitting training, school construction, and healthcare facilities. After providing health students ample scholarship and loan funds for several years, Congress then decided to reduce the funding substantially. Robert Mittleman, AOSA's second President, represented the allied health coalition and AOSA, along with the Student American Medical Association, and testified before Congress. In future years, other administrations continued the alliance to preserve student funding and interprofessional communication.

AOSA NEARLY 50 YEARS LATER

The American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) will reach its 50th year Anniversary in 2018 with a membership of 95% of the total number of optometry students. The success of AOSA 50 years after its founding is a result of forces that have built on each other over many years. Major innovations in the profession often proceed through changes in optometric education where student

input provides perspective and acceptance. AOSA's potential was apparent early. The value in giving the students a stake in their future is important not only for their future capabilities, but also for adding their inexperienced but reasoned opinions to current debates.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge contributions by Ronald Ferrucci, President of the Optometric Historical Society; David Goss, *Hindsight* Editor; Robert Foster, former Executive Director; and Kirsten Pourroy Hébert, Heritage Services Specialist, The Archives & Museum of Optometry.

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Table 1. Early AOSA Officers

1968-69 Officers

President:
Raymond I. Myers (IU)
Vice President:
Jeffrey M. Furman (PCO)*
Student Review Editor:
Burton E. Worrell (UC)

1969-70 Officers

President:
Robert J. Mittleman (PCO)*
Secretary-Treasurer:
Andy L. Nemeth (IU)*
Student Review Editor:
Richard T. Trask (UC)*
Journal of the AOSA:
Martin Rothchild (PCO)*

1970-71 Officers

President:
Richard T. Trask (UC)*
Vice President:
John E. Fawcett (IU)
Student Review Editor:
David C. Allen (UC)

1971-72 Officers

President:
John E. Fawcett (IU)
Vice President:
Cecil D. Furer (PCO)*
Secretary:
Albert Velasco (SCO)
Treasurer:
Connie M. Pollack (IU)

1972-73 Officers

President:
Cecil D. Furer (PCO)*
Vice President:
Ronald E. Dachelet (UA)
Secretary:
Dan E. Owen (SCO)
Treasurer:
Connie M. Pollack (IU)

**Deceased as of June 1, 2015*

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Table 2. AOSA Founders, 1967-72

Mark Abelman (PCO)*	Robert J. Mittleman (PCO)#	Richard Weber (PCO)*
David C. Allen (UCB)#	Thomas M. Moore (IU)*	Burton E. Worrell, Jr. (UCB)#*^
Kenneth D. Clanton (UH)#	Raymond I. Myers (IU)*#	Kenneth R. Zuroff (PU)^
David Clark (PCO)*	Andy L. Nemeth (IU)#	Weston P. Zeuge (ICO)
William E. Cochran (SCO)#	Martin Newman (PCO)*	
John E. Fawcett (IU)#	Dan E. Owen (SCO)#	
Ronald R. Ferrucci (NECO)#	Algernon A. Phillips (PCO)*^	
Mary L. Freitag (IU)*	Connie M. Pollack (IU)#	
Cecil D. Furer (PCO)#	Richard Raymond (PCO)*	
Jeffrey M. Furmon (PCO)*	Martin Rothchild (PCO)#	
Herbert Glatt (PCO)*	Larry G. Sayre (IU)*	
Harold Gottlieb (TOSU)^	Philip Schub (PCO)*	
Marvin J. Hertzal (NECO)^	Melvin Simmons (PCO)*	
Ellis J. Hoffman (PCO)*	David Souza (SCCO)^	
Avery G. Hill (IU)*	Anthony F. di Stefano (PCO)#	
Gary Hollenbeck (IU)*	Donald S. Teig (PCO)*	
Jorge D. Huston (IU)*	Alan J. Touch (IU)*^	
Judson R. Ireland (PCO)^	Richard T. Trask (UCB)#	
Edward Johnston (PCO)*	Lewis Verdelli (PCO)*	

Faculty and American Optometric Association Advisors

Anthony J. Adams (IU)
 Jack W. Bennett (IU)
 Irvin M. Borish (IU)
 Henry W Hofstetter (IU, AOA)
 Richard L. Hopping (AOA)
 William L. MacCracken (AOA)
 Meredith W. Morgan (UCB)
 B.J. Shannon (AOA)
 Lewis A.F. Stockley (IU)
 John C. Tumblin (AOA)
 Melvin D. Wolfberg (AOA)

Key

* 1968 Committee on AOSA Development
 ^ Project Envoy Board and School Respondent
 # AOSA Officer, *Student Review* Editor, recognized leader
 AOA – American Optometric Association
 ICO – Illinois College of Optometry
 IU – Indiana University
 NECO – New England College of Optometry, formerly Massachusetts College of Optometry

PCO – Pennsylvania College of Optometry
 PU – Pacific University
 SCO – Southern College of Optometry
 SCCO – Southern California College of Optometry
 TOSU – The Ohio State University
 UCB – University of California Berkeley
 UH – University of Houston