

THE AUTHORIZATION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY IN THE STATE OF ALABAMA – PART I

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ABSTRACT

This article explains events leading to the decision to attempt to pass legislation establishing a school of optometry in the state of Alabama. It was the vision of Dr. Donald Springer that prompted the idea that such an accomplishment was possible but the political expertise of Sen. Alton Turner that made the school a reality. There were many members of the Alabama Optometric Association, legislators, education administrators, public officials, and others who played significant roles that contributed to the success of this effort. The establishment of the University of Alabama in Birmingham School of Optometry (UABSO), from its inception, as an integral part of an academic medical center was an educational model that had not been utilized by the profession of optometry before. The school, which began Sept. 1, 1969, has contributed significantly to the advancement of the profession of optometry and vision science.

KEYWORDS

Establishing a need for a school of optometry, Alabama legislative actions during the various legislative sessions of 1967 and 1969, community support, actions by the opposition, selection of consultants, and selection of the first dean.

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of a school of optometry in the state of Alabama occurred because of the efforts of many members of the Alabama Optometric Association (ALOA), the cooperation of several organizations, city and county governments, Dr. Joseph Volker, Dr. Frank Rose, Sen. Alton Turner and many other individual legislators, the Alabama Legislature, Governors Lurleen Wallace, George Wallace, and Albert Brewer, and many determined individuals. These individuals, organizations and legislative bodies demonstrated great persistence in the face of significant medical opposition.

The ALOA has had on balance an impressive legislative history. One must consider its history within the context of its relatively small size, in terms of membership, and total reliance on the volunteer efforts of its leaders and members. Initial attempts to pass an optometry practice act were made in 1911 and 1915, with passage of the original optometry practice act occurring in 1919.¹ Later many attempts were also made to elevate the profession and/or eliminate the commercial aspects of optometric practice. Through all these efforts, its one common denominator has been persistence. This history is even more remarkable given the fact that for most of its first 70 years of existence there was no staff support. The officers, board of directors, and leaders among the general membership of the ALOA evolved into a small, yet ever-changing core group of leaders, who provided all the services necessary to support the members and goals of the organization.

Beginning in 1906, as the Alabama Optical Society (AOS), the ALOA has ultimately been successful in passing significant

legislation. This was especially true, not only during its formative years, but also during the period of the 1960s. The ALOA demonstrated great strategic planning and execution in the passage of legislation to establish a school of optometry. The fact that the school is an integral part of a major academic medical center only makes this achievement even more remarkable.

Some of the history that led to the establishment of the UAB School of Optometry (UABSO) has been described by Dr. Henry B. Peters, the first dean of the school, in the book *School of Optometry, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 25th Anniversary Photographic History, 1969 – 1994*.² Dr. Peters was invited by Dr. Arol Augsburger, the third dean of the school, to prepare this history to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the school of optometry. This article is an effort to expand on the description of events initially provided by Dr. Peters, especially regarding the legislative history of the steps necessary to enable the school's establishment.

Appendices

This article also includes six appendices that help to further elucidate issues related to the establishment of the UAB School of Optometry. Short biographical sketches of each of the four individuals who played key roles in this legislative effort are presented under the heading of "Visionaries" in Appendix I. The individuals included are Drs. Donald Springer, E. C. Overton, E. A. Coshatt, and Sen. Alton Turner.²⁻⁷ However, suffice it to say there were many others involved in this legislative effort as well. Of note were the efforts of Drs. Edgar Warr and L. Don Snellgrove, whose

discussions with Sen. Alton Turner proved the critical link in the success of this legislation. In many ways, Drs. Warr and Snellgrove are the unsung heroes of this effort to establish a school of optometry in Alabama. Dr. Snellgrove served as president of the ALOA during the critical period of 1967-68 when legislation was passed to establish a school and efforts to secure funding were a topic of broad interest.

A "Timeline of the Important Events Related to the Establishment of the UAB School of Optometry" is provided in Appendix II. This timeline is provided in hopes that it will help simplify what is a very complicated and somewhat complex history of the events that led to the legislation that established UABSO. A "Summary of the Debates that Occurred During the 1967 and 1969 Special Educational Appropriations Bills" is included in Appendix III.

Appendix IV includes an "An interview with Governor Albert Brewer" regarding his perspective and memories of events related to the school of optometry legislation. A list of optometrists, companies, organizations, foundations and individuals who contributed to a fundraising campaign in support of the UAB School of Optometry is provided as they appear on the "School of Optometry Founder's Plaque" in Appendix V. Finally, a summary of the many challenges faced by Dean Peters in the "Planning, Construction, Equipping, and Financing of the School of Optometry Building" is detailed to the extent possible in Appendix VI. Appendices I and II will be featured in Part I of this article and Appendices III through VI will appear in Part II.

PRELUDE TO CHANGE

Genesis for a New School

As a result of his involvement over the years in the leadership of the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), Dr. Donald Springer from Anniston, Alabama, was very aware of the critical nature of optometric manpower (workforce) issues.^{2,3} Dr. Springer was especially concerned as to how workforce needs related to the South, in general, and the state of Alabama, in particular, would be addressed. Having served on the Executive Committee of the AAO for several years before and during the early 1960s and as president from 1962-64, Dr. Springer was aware of the need for an increase in the workforce of all the independent health care professions and how this might be accomplished. This need was apparent not only because of the growing population of the United States (U.S.), but of the likely passage of future federal entitlement programs. Programs such as Medicare and Medicaid would not only increase access to health care but add to the need for more health care providers.

In 1963, Dr. Springer persuaded the ALOA to form a Health Manpower Committee to investigate the need for an increased optometric workforce in the state of Alabama. It had become apparent, beginning in the late 1950s, that the current health care workforce would not be capable of meeting the increasing demand for health care services in the U.S., especially if federal entitlement programs were enacted.^{2,3}

Context of the Time

It is important to place the establishment of the UABSO within the context of not only the time leading to its establishment, but to provide some understanding of the importance and the impact of the Health Professions Educational Assistance (HPEA) Act on all health professions. The inclusion of optometry within the HPEA Act enabled many schools and colleges of optometry to receive federal funds to either renovate or build new facilities for their programs. The UAB School of Optometry building received partial financial support for its construction from the HPEA Act. The original HPEA Act, and subsequent acts, would also significantly affect student loans, support for professional education, and the funding of research facilities.⁸⁻¹³

THE PROPOSAL OF THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT

Addressing the Needs for Future Health Care

One of the major public policy issues of the early 1960s was how to address the predicted future health care needs of the U.S. The HPEA Act was one of monumental importance in health care education and addressing the workforce needs for health care providers. This was in anticipation of new federal entitlement programs as well as a rapidly expanding U.S. population. This act would provide for construction of teaching facilities for specified health care providers, scholarship grants and educational cost payments, and extend and improve the health research facilities construction program scheduled to expire June 30, 1962. After public hearings and passage by Congress, the HPEA Act was signed into law on Sept. 24, 1963, by President John F. Kennedy. This law and its subsequent forms continued for several decades.

Reports That Led to the Introduction of the HPEA Legislation

On Feb. 24, 1961, Sen. Lister Hill of Alabama introduced Senate Bill S. 1072 in the U.S. Senate. Sen. Hill's action had been precipitated by the reports of several consultant groups. In 1958, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) Consultants on Medical Research and Education had reported to former Health, Education, and Welfare Secretary, Marion Folsom, that 14 to 20 new medical schools would be required to sustain the physician to population ratio. In a separate report by this same group, at least two dental schools would be required to reestablish the appropriate dentist to population ratio.

In 1959, the Surgeon General's Consultant Group on Medical Education reported that the equivalent of 20 to 24 new two-year and four-year medical, including osteopathic, schools would be needed by 1975 to maintain the 1959 physician to population ratio. In the profession of dentistry, 22 new schools were necessary to keep the dentist to population ratio at its 1959 level.¹³

In 1960 the Committee of Consultants on Medical Research of the Subcommittee on Appropriations produced the report "Federal Support for Medical Research," which endorsed the 1958 recommendations of the Bayne-Jones Report for training additional physicians and dentists, federal scholarship assistance and extension, and a better-quality health research facilities construction program. Finally, in April 1961, the report of the President's Conference on Heart Disease and Cancer stressed the

need for increasing the number and quality of personnel and specifically endorsed S. 1072 for scholarship assistance.⁸⁻¹⁰

The primary goal of S. 1072 was to increase enrollment and graduation rates for physicians and dentists. These professions were to become collectively known as the MOD group within the context of the HPEA Act. The acronym MOD referred to the professions of medicine, osteopathy and dentistry. Several other groups of health care providers, including optometry, provided testimony urging the inclusion of their professions in this legislation as well. This group became known as VOPP referring to Veterinary Medicine, Optometry, Pharmacy, and Podiatry.

Initial Testimony by Optometry for Inclusion in HPEA Act

During these early years several optometrists provided testimony on behalf of the profession because of their position with an educational institution or professional organization or both. Public hearings were first held on Friday, April 28; Wednesday, May 3; and Friday, May 5, 1961, by the Subcommittee on Health of the U. S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.⁸⁻¹⁰ The first optometrist to testify before this subcommittee was Dr. Henry W. Hofstetter, director of the Division of Optometry, Indiana University, and chair of the Committee on Research of the American Optometric Association (AOA). Dr. Hofstetter testified on Friday, May 5, 1961. He was accompanied by Mr. William P. MacCracken, Jr., legal counsel for the AOA located in Washington, D.C.¹⁰

On Jan. 23, 1962, Dr. Alfred Rosenbloom, dean of the Illinois College of Optometry, and a member of the Council on Optometric Education (COE), was accompanied by Mr. MacCracken to testify before the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. Dean Rosenbloom presented information on the decline in the number of optometrists in relationship to the population, the mounting cost of optometric education, and the decrease in the number of qualified applicants.¹¹

Introduction of Legislation that Included Optometry

By coincidence, on this same day, Jan. 23, 1962, U.S. Representative Torbert H. MacDonald, from the Massachusetts 8th Congressional District, offered amendments to H.R. 4999 that would authorize funds for optometry schools and colleges as well as for financial support for optometry students. One of these amendments would authorize the addition of \$750,000 for construction of optometry schools and colleges to the original \$75 million proposed for the renovation and construction of health schools.¹² It seems likely this amendment was coordinated by the staff of the AOA with Representative MacDonald's office, perhaps through some Kennedy connection.

Congressman MacDonald's amendments ultimately proved successful and led to optometry's inclusion in this landmark legislation. His initial action proved to be of significance in the inclusion of optometry in these important laws that continued, in some form, into the 1990s.

Brief Biographical Sketch

MacDonald spent several years in Massachusetts public schools before entering Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. Following preparatory school graduation, he attended Harvard

University. There he served as captain of the Harvard football team, was a roommate of John F. Kennedy and graduated in 1940. Following service in the Navy during World War II as a PT boat commander in the Southwest Pacific, he attended Harvard Law School, graduating in 1946.

MacDonald and Kennedy remained close friends throughout their lives and "Torby" served as an usher at Sen. Kennedy's wedding and an honorary pallbearer at the president's funeral. He served in the United States House of Representatives (D) from Jan. 3, 1955, to Jan. 3, 1963. He served as majority whip and as the ranking democrat on the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce.^{11,12} This is the House Committee that held hearings on the original HPEA Act. Perhaps unknown to the profession, optometry owes Congressman MacDonald a debt of gratitude for securing optometry's inclusion in the HPEA Act of 1963.

Enactment of the HPEA Legislation

The Public Health Service (PHS) Act is the body of laws governing federal participation in the development of the nation's health care delivery system. The HPEA legislation was the first Federal program directed at meeting critical needs for increasing the health professions workforce. It transformed the Public Health Service Act from providing support for only "Health Research Facilities" to "Health Research and Teaching Facilities and Training of Professional Health Personnel." The statutes governing federal legislation that aided health care profession's schools for construction of teaching facilities and assistance to students in the form of loans and other types of support were known collectively as Title VII of the PHS Act. In the beginning, optometry was eligible under the program for construction grants but was not included in the student loan program.^{11,13}

The first part of this act authorized a three-year program of grants for the construction of teaching facilities for physicians, dentists, nurses, professional public health personnel, veterinarians, pharmacists, optometrists and podiatrists. The second part of this act established a National Advisory Council on Education for Health Professions. The third part of this act authorized the establishment and operation of a student loan fund for students of medicine, osteopathy and dentistry.^{11,13}

The profession of optometry became involved in Title VII initially through the HPEA Act of 1963, known as Public Law 88-129. This law was approved by Congress and signed into law by President Kennedy in 1963. It became effective for the years 1964-66 and provided \$175 million for construction and scholarships. The need for an increased workforce in the fields of medicine and dentistry had been carefully studied and documented. As a result, construction and student loans and grants for the MOD group were given the highest priority.^{11,13}

On Feb. 7, 1963, Dr. Chester H. Pheiffer, Dean of the University of Houston, College of Optometry and representing the AOA, testified before the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce as to the need for student loans and the increasing shortage of optometrists, especially in the South. Dean Pheiffer was accompanied by Mr. MacCracken, general legal counsel representing the AOA.¹¹

On Aug. 22, 1963, Dr. W. Judd Chapman, president of the AOA, Dr. Lawrence Fitch, president of the Pennsylvania State College of Optometry, Mr. MacCracken, general counsel, and Mr. David Sharman from the AOA Washington Office, appeared before the Senate Subcommittee on Health to testify as to the need for the student loan program and construction funding for facilities. By 1964, several optometry schools or colleges had submitted applications for construction grants. Among those schools or colleges submitting grants were the Pennsylvania State College of Optometry, Pacific University College of Optometry, and Southern College of Optometry.^{2,11}

On May 26, 1964, several more prominent optometrists testified before the House Committee as to the need for student loans and the shortage of optometrists. Among those who testified were Dr. H. Ward Ewalt, immediate past president of the AOA, Dr. Gordon H. Heath, chair of the graduate program in physiological optics, division of optometry, at Indiana University and president of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO), Dr. Donald A. Springer, president of the AAO, Dr. Frank M. Kitchell, senior vice president of the American Optometric Foundation (AOF) and Dr. Nelson F. Waldman, president of the Texas Optometric Association and chair of the AOA Committee on Vocational Guidance.¹¹

U.S. Rep. Kenneth Roberts from Piedmont, Alabama, and later Anniston, Alabama, was chair of the House of Representative's Health Manpower Committee.² He was also a friend and patient of Dr. Springer. Dr. Peters has reported that Congressman Roberts had Dr. Springer testify on the need for more optometrists before his committee in 1963.²

The Impetus for a New School of Optometry in Alabama

Dr. Springer was afforded the opportunity to testify before the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce because of his role as president of the AAO. Optometry's inclusion in the landmark legislation was of vital importance to the profession's future.²

The passage of the HPEA Act of 1963 (PL 88-129) and its Amendments of 1964 (PL 88-654) and 1965 (PL 89-290) had made optometry eligible for funding related to its academic programs.^{13,14} In subsequent years, optometry would also be recognized as a potential member of the health manpower team by the President's National Advisory Commission on Health Manpower in 1967. Furthermore, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Robert Marston, appointed Drs. Glenn Fry and Meredith Morgan, two optometric educators affiliated with public universities, to serve on the National Advisory Eye Council of the newly formed National Eye Institute. Dr. Fry was regents professor of The Ohio State University, College of Optometry; and Dr. Morgan, dean of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Optometry.¹⁵

A letter from Dr. Robert Marston in June 1970 to Rep. Bob Casey provided some insight into the diminishing likelihood that optometry would receive all the grant funding it had requested.¹⁶ This topic is discussed at greater length in the section on Construction Funding in Appendix VI.

ESTABLISHING A NEED FOR A SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY IN ALABAMA

There is little doubt that Dr. Springer, because of his experience with the AAO, his testimony before the congressional committee regarding the HPEA Act, his connections to optometric leaders and local politicians, began to envision a way in which a school of optometry might be established in the state of Alabama.³ Among the first priorities was the necessity of demonstrating a need. This issue posed a challenge for the ALOA because it was not familiar with individuals, institutions or organizations that had access to or could produce such information. However, this issue would not deter the ALOA from moving forward with its goal of establishing a school of optometry in Alabama. It was a courageous undertaking given the known opposition that medicine, especially ophthalmology, would commit to stopping this legislation.

Health Manpower Committee

Dr. Springer initially persuaded the ALOA to form a Health Manpower Committee in 1963. He also served as chair of the New College Feasibility Committee for the Southern Council of Optometrists (SoCO) from 1965-1970. The need for such a committee was given additional credibility by reports from the Bureau of Health Manpower. According to these reports, the state of Alabama ranked 49th out of the 50 states in the ratio of optometrists to population (4.8/100,000). With only 184 licensed optometrists in the state in 1966, it was obvious there was a need for additional optometrists.^{2-3,15} In Alabama this low ratio was further compounded by a relatively low rate of passage of those optometrists taking the state board. During the 1960s, the Alabama Board of Optometry (ABO) was evidently somewhat discerning about such issues as mode and location of practice.¹⁷

Later in mid-February 1969, in what was remarkably fortuitous timing, the Comprehensive Health Planning Office of the Alabama Department of Public Health submitted information to the Division of Health Manpower, Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, certifying medical manpower in each of Alabama's counties. This information was prepared for use related to the HPEA programs and was derived from mid-1968 population data.¹⁵

The release noted that 47 of Alabama's 67 counties were lacking an optometrist, resulting in an optometrist to population ratio of 1/15,000. According to this report, Alabama needed an additional 95 optometrists. The Better Vision Institute (BVI) had also released estimates that 45% of the population wore glasses. The prevalence of visual impairments in the South, including Alabama, was 20.5/1,000 population as compared to a national rate of 17.9/1,000 population.^{2,15} These preliminary reports only added credence to what was to follow.

Developing a Relationship with the University of Alabama

The ALOA deserves a significant amount of credit for undertaking such an arduous task as passing legislation to establish a school of optometry. It had been 15 years since a new school of optometry had been established in the United States. Both Indiana University and the University of Houston began optometry programs in 1952. For a relatively small professional association without an executive director and only a core of

member volunteers to undertake the passage of such important legislation was not only courageous but impressive.

One of the first indirect efforts the ALOA undertook was to establish some type of relationship with the University of Alabama (UA). The ALOA developed a continuing education program in 1964 in conjunction with UA that was held on the campus in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.^{17,18} This continuing education meeting on the Tuscaloosa campus was well attended and continued through 1967.

Later, Dr. Volker suggested that with the passage of the legislation establishing a school of optometry, future meetings should be held in Birmingham. Unfortunately, the date of the 1964 meeting held in Tuscaloosa could not be found in any of the correspondence in the UAB Archives, in the files of the ALOA, or remembered by any ALOA members.¹⁷ However, one of the speakers for this meeting was an optometrist well-known for his research on motorist's vision.

Initially the ALOA was having a difficult time establishing a relationship with the UA Department of Continuing Education. Then Dr. Ed Warr was told by a patient to contact Rep. J. Drexel Cook, who served in the Alabama House of Representatives for three terms (1958-1970) and owned automobile agencies in Elba and Troy, Alabama. Elba was the same town that Dr. Warr practiced in for his entire professional career. It seems very likely that Dr. Warr either knew Mr. Cook personally or understood his sphere of influence in that part of Alabama. Dr. Warr contacted Rep. Cook who knew Circuit Judge Eric Paul, one of the members of the UA Board of Trustees. Judge Paul was able to intervene on behalf of the ALOA with the UA Continuing Education department.¹⁷ Whether Dr. Warr knew of Mr. Cook's relationship with Judge Paul was not in any of the historical recollections.

The ALOA knew of the importance of offering a high-quality educational program. They invited Merrill Allen, O.D., Ph.D., a world-renowned expert in automobile safety research, from Indiana University, Division of Optometry, to be the featured speaker. Dr. Allen, who was funded by mainstream American automobile manufacturers, lectured on the topic of motorist's vision. The ALOA had invited the colonel who was head of the Alabama State Troopers to attend this lecture. The colonel was very impressed by the lecture and shared his opinion with UA personnel or perhaps members of the UA Board of Trustees. This first continuing education program held on the UA campus was well attended by the members of the ALOA and other optometrists.^{17,18}

Pathway to Legislation

Although there was no record of prior correspondence from Dr. Volker to Dr. Springer or any of those who attended the meeting, there was Dr. Volker's calendar for 1965. In this calendar was found, after a very thorough search of the UAB Archives, a notation for Monday, June 14, 1965. Dr. Overton's name appears on the calendar on this date for a 12:30 p.m. appointment. Dr. Springer had, over the years, known Dr. Joseph Volker through social contacts, and Dr. Overton through his service on the City Council of Birmingham. It is very likely that, as noted on Dr. Volker's calendar, Dr. Overton had scheduled the meeting with Dr. Volker.

Meeting with Dr. Volker

It was on this date in June, Drs. Springer, Snellgrove, Overton and Coshatt had a meeting with Dr. Joseph F. Volker, vice president for health affairs, University of Alabama Medical Center (UAMC).¹⁸ These optometrists inquired as to the possibility of the UAMC beginning a school of optometry. Dr. Volker explained that the University did not begin new schools, but by virtue of being an educational institution in the state of Alabama, such action was the responsibility of the legislature. He reported that all new schools were approved by legislative actions and funding was appropriated by the legislature. Dr. Springer and colleagues thanked Dr. Volker for this information and departed knowing the requirements for such an undertaking.

They felt Dr. Volker was forthright in his assessment of the situation and, perhaps, somewhat sympathetic to their efforts. He certainly was not opposed to the ALOA's attempt to pass such legislation.^{17,18} It was apparent that Dr. Springer possessed the vision for the establishment of a school of optometry in the state of Alabama.^{2,3,17} He and his colleagues had now taken the initial step toward this goal and would move to develop a plan to place in motion actions that would result in accomplishing this goal.

Clearly, Dr. Volker had been honest in his description of the steps necessary for such an effort to be successful. The ALOA leadership knew they had much to do if they were going to be successful in persuading the legislature to enact such a law. Even though a school of optometry was not part of the university's long-term plan, Dr. Volker remained committed to fairness and, if approved, having the best optometry program possible. Dr. Volker remained true to his word during more than two years of intense pressure from the medical community.^{15,19}

The meeting day and date of Monday, June 14, 1965, seem even more accurate since Dr. Volker wrote a follow-up letter to Dr. Overton dated June 18, 1965. Once again Dr. Volker reiterated the university's position. In this letter he stated, "It is not the general policy of the University to advocate legislation establishing new health science units, nor is it their custom to oppose the efforts of groups seeking support of University level educational programs shown to be beneficial to the health of the people of the state."¹⁵ Although this letter was—as mentioned by Ms. Crosswhite, an administrative assistant to Dr. Volker—sent to Dr. Overton, a copy was also likely received by all those optometrists in attendance at the meeting on June 14, 1965.¹⁵

Dr. Overton reported this matter was discussed at the next meeting of the ALOA Board of Directors.¹⁹ Because the annual ALOA meeting was, during this time, held the week before the AOA annual meeting, it is possible the ALOA meeting was held in June 1965. However, it is also possible that a meeting was held later in the summer or during the fall. Regardless of the time of the meeting, it was at this meeting that it was suggested a special ALOA Board of Directors meeting be held in Tuscaloosa during December 1966. This time was selected since it would allow for strategic planning before the 1967 legislative session.²⁰ It was obvious that, in the meantime, there was much behind-the-scenes effort expended by the ALOA membership in developing relationships with legislators and others.

It is certain the ALOA Board of Directors did not want such plans to become widely known. However, Dr. Volker had agreed to

speak to the ALOA Board of Directors during the planned meeting scheduled for later in the year. He did attend the Board of Directors meeting and reiterated what he had explained the previous year to Drs. Springer, Snellgrove, Overton and Coshatt. Unfortunately, the exact date of this meeting was not recorded either.

Meeting With the ALOA Board

A careful examination of Dr. Volker's files and calendar in the UAB Archives did not find any mention of a December date for either 1965 or 1966. However, Dr. Volker's calendar does note a meeting with the "Optometric Association" on Sunday morning, Jan. 8, 1967. It seems likely that Dr. Volker did not attend a December 1966 Board of Director's meeting, if indeed there was one. Perhaps it is more likely the meeting was scheduled for Jan. 8, 1967. Unfortunately, the date of the December 1966 meeting, if it occurred, was not recorded in either Dr. Overton's or Snellgrove's recollections.¹⁸⁻²⁰ Whether a meeting was held in December 1966 and/or a separate meeting was held in early January 1967 isn't especially relevant. The important aspect at this time is that the Board of Directors did meet with Dr. Volker. Exactly how much of the ALOA's plans were shared by the board with Dr. Volker is not known.

Moving Forward with Planning

From this point forward the ALOA's activity accelerated. Immediately after Dr. Volker departed the room, following the Board of Directors meeting, a committee was formed to plan strategic and specific actions. Dr. E. A. "Bert" Coshatt from Aliceville, Alabama, was appointed to serve as the chair of what, in effect, was the Legal/Legislative Committee of the ALOA. He also served, by coincidence, as the president of the ALOA for 1966-67, having progressed through the chairs of the ALOA in the normal manner. Dr. Coshatt had experience in dealing with the members of the legislature. His brother, Dr. Roy Coshatt, was an optometrist and a member of the House of Representatives from St. Clair County, and certainly Dr. Coshatt was dedicated to the task. He had an unmatched passion for politics, especially as it applied to the profession of optometry.

Dr. Coshatt spent many hours developing relationships with legislators and drove to Montgomery, Alabama, for almost every committee meeting or caucus related to optometry for many years.^{2,20} Dr. Coshatt served the ALOA in several capacities, especially in matters related to the legal/legislative issues involving optometry or the ALOA. He was also instrumental in leading the fundraising drive for the optometry building. Dr. Coshatt was also instrumental in optometrists being reinstated in the Alabama Medicaid program several years later.

LEGISLATIVE EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY

An Initial Plan of Action Developed by the ALOA

The first action Dr. Coshatt initiated was to ask that specific members contact key Senate and House members who had been supportive of optometry in the past. Sen. Turner had known about the profession of optometry because, at the invitation of Drs. Warr and Snellgrove, he had spoken to the local South-

Central society long before the school of optometry was ever under consideration.¹⁸ Dr. Warr had learned, perhaps by virtue of being in Senator Turner's district or through other contacts, of the important position Sen. Turner held in the Alabama Senate in 1966. Dr. Warr later recalled to others that he had learned of Sen. Turner's position through Rep. Drexel Cook, who had a car dealership in Dr. Warr's hometown of Elba.¹⁷⁻¹⁹ It is also known that Dr. Joe Watson, the local optometrist in Luverne, Alabama, also knew Sen. Turner. What legislative interaction they may have had is unknown.

Drs. Warr and Snellgrove practiced in the south-central part of the state, which is populated by small towns. It was, and remains, a relatively rural part of Alabama, but this group of optometrists had one unique feature in common. They had a very active study group that met once a month to discuss all things optometric. This study group was based on the model popularized by the Optometric Extension Program (OEP) so common in the mid-part of the 20th century. This study group remains active today.

Sen. Turner Agrees to Sponsor Legislation

In the latter part of 1966, Drs. Warr and Snellgrove went to talk to Sen. Alton Turner to explain the ALOA's desire to have a school of optometry established in Alabama. Dr. Don Snellgrove was the president-elect of the ALOA in 1966-1967 and served as its president during 1967-68 when this legislation was formulated, drafted, introduced and passed. It was this initial contact with Sen. Turner that resulted in a strategy being developed for the next legislative session. When asked who he would like on the Legislative Committee, Sen. Turner insisted that only one person be appointed. As unusual as this request was, Dr. Snellgrove appointed Dr. Ed Warr as the only member of the Legislative Committee.¹⁸ Among the ideas discussed was the formation of a special legislative committee during the January 1967 Organizational Session of the Alabama Legislature. The purpose of this special committee would be for the Legislature to study the feasibility of establishing a school of optometry in the state of Alabama.^{18,20} The approach suggested by Sen. Turner would not likely be one that the optometrists completely understood or appreciated. However, they had great confidence in his legislative knowledge and were willing to abide by his recommendations.

Furthermore, it was also agreed that there would be appointed to this legislative feasibility committee, three House and two Senate members designated by the ALOA. Sen. Turner, widely regarded as one of the most knowledgeable and powerful legislators in the Alabama Senate, if not the entire Alabama legislature, played the key role in the formation of this strategy and the selection of the members of this committee.¹⁷⁻¹⁹ It is very likely there were other legislators who played some role as well.

At this same time, an agreement was also reached in which Sen. Turner was to be hired as the executive secretary of the ALOA.^{18,20} Even though this may seem like a conflict of interest today, this type of relationship with an Alabama legislator was not an unusual practice in the 1960s and for many years thereafter. It is almost certain that this relationship fostered a great sense of interest in the legislative outcome of this bill by Sen. Turner. It is also possible that Sen. Turner knew that former Gov. George Wallace and current Gov. Lurleen Wallace would favor the presence of a school of optometry. The graduates of this program would be more

likely to remain in the state or return to their local communities, or other small communities, to serve the eye care needs of a geographically and racially diverse population. This type of program would have great appeal to a populist governor.

Certainly, it is much easier to kill a bill than pass one. Fortunately, with Sen. Turner's excellent political skills, the ALOA was successful in passing the necessary legislation on its first attempt. Sen. Turner immediately grasped the goal of the ALOA, the likely opponents such legislation would inevitably encounter, and a strategy that would very likely be unorthodox but successful.¹⁷ The optometrists were pleased with the plan because they had not had any legislative success for the past two years.¹⁸ It is clear they placed great trust in Sen. Turner's plan as they were unfamiliar with the nuances of such legislation.

Dr. Snellgrove provided eye care for Sen. and Mrs. Turner for many years after these events occurred.¹⁸ Drs. Warr and Snellgrove remained friends for many years with Sen. Turner after the establishment of the UAB School of Optometry.¹⁸ Dr. Snellgrove passed away on Tuesday, June 27, 2017. His recollections were essential to the writing of this article.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGISLATIVE PLAN

Organizational Session of the Alabama Legislature – 1967

The legislative dates of the 1967 Organizational Session by calendar days were three in number: First Day – Tuesday, Jan. 10; Second Day – Wednesday, Jan. 11; and Eighth Day – Tuesday, Jan. 17, 1967. This Organizational Session would provide a unique opportunity for Sen. Turner to implement his legislative plan.

Senate

According to the records of the Journal of the Senate of the State of Alabama, for the Organizational Session of 1967, on the First Day of the Session, Jan. 10, 1967, Mrs. Agnes Baggett, secretary of the State of Alabama, certified that according to the certified returns of the November 1966 election, among those elected to the Alabama Senate for a term of four years were senators from the 20th Senatorial District, Alton L. Turner, and from the 23rd Senatorial District, James S. (Jimmy) Clark.²¹

On Tuesday, Jan. 17, 1967, the Eighth Day of the Organizational Session, the Senate not being in session on the third through the seventh days, following the announcement of names of those members receiving interim committee appointments, the Senate next took up the matter of "Signing of House Joint Resolutions". On this same date, the president of the Senate, in the presence of the Senate, after the reading of the resolutions had been dispensed with by a two-thirds vote of the quorum of the Senate present, and immediately after its title had been publicly read at length by the Secretary of the Senate, signed the foregoing House Joint Resolution, the title of which is set out in the foregoing "Message from the House."²¹

Under the heading of "Resolutions," Mr. Clark offered the following Senate Joint Resolution, to wit:

S. J. R. 18. Resolved by the Legislature of Alabama, Both Houses Thereof Concurring, that there shall be created and established a joint interim committee, composed of two members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate, and three

members of the House appointed by the Speaker. The committee shall make such inquiries and conduct surveys and studies as may be necessary to determine the need for and feasibility of establishing in Alabama a school or college of optometry to be operated in connection with an existing state college or university.²¹

The members of the committee shall elect a chairman and vice chairman from among their number. The Committee shall meet on call of the chairman, at such times and places as he may designate. The committee members shall not be entitled to pay or expenses for performance of their duties. The Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House shall provide the committee with such secretarial and clerical help as may be required by the committee.

The committee shall make a report of their findings, conclusions, and recommendations to each house of the Legislature not later than the fifth Legislative day of the 1967 Regular Session, and thereupon the committee shall be discharged and dissolved.

On motion of Mr. Clark, the Rules were suspended, and the Resolution was adopted by the Senate and signed by the Clerk, Mr. John Pemberton.²¹

Sen. Clark was chair of the Senate Rules Committee, a friend of Sen. Turner, a man of great influence in the state legislature, and a widely regarded master politician. Sen. Clark was a supporter of optometry for many years.

House of Representatives

On this same day and date under the heading "Message from the Senate," Mr. Speaker: The Senate has originated and adopted the following Senate Joint Resolution and sends same herewith to the House for its consideration: By Mr. Clark:

S. J. R. 18. (Repeat of the above Senate resolution). Signed McDowell Lee, Secretary.

Under the heading of "Senate Message", on motion of Mr. Merrill the rules were suspended, and the House concurred in and adopted S. J. R. 18 set out in the above and foregoing "Message from the Senate".

On Jan. 17, 1967, both houses of the Legislature of Alabama passed Act No. 18 or Senate Joint Resolution 18. This resolution was signed by Gov. Lurleen Wallace on Jan. 23, 1967, at 6:58 p.m.. This resolution was sponsored by Sen. Jimmy Clark from Eufaula, Alabama.²¹

Sen. Clark would later become a member of the House as well as speaker of the House. This resolution concurred or approved the creation and establishment of a Joint Interim Legislative Committee (JILC) comprised of two members from the Senate, appointed by the president of the Senate, and three members of the House, appointed by the Speaker of the House. Without this resolution, the JILC would not have been formed. The formation of this committee was, as Sen. Turner had planned, the first action taken by the Alabama Legislature toward establishing a school of optometry.

Approval of the Joint Interim Legislative Committee

The charge to the JILC was to make inquiries and conduct surveys and studies as may be necessary to determine the

need for and the feasibility of establishing in Alabama a school or college of optometry to be operated in connection with an existing state college or university.

The members of the committee were to elect a chair and vice-chair from among its number. The chair would determine the times and places of the meetings. Committee members were not entitled to pay or receive expenses for the performance of their duties. Secretarial and clerical assistance would be provided by the secretary of the Senate and clerk of the House as may be required by the committee.

The resolution specified that the committee shall make a report of their findings, conclusions, and recommendations to each house of the legislature not later than the fifth legislative day of the 1967 regular session, which was Thursday, May 11, 1967. Once the report was made the committee was to be discharged and dissolved.

The copy of Act No. 18 of the Legislature of Alabama had been compared with the original and was certified as true and correct on Jan. 25, 1967, by McDowell Lee, secretary of the Senate.²¹ The JILC was approved during the 1967 organizational session. This organizational session preceded the regular legislative session, and its purpose was to plan and prioritize the legislative strategy for the regular session. It was during the organizational session that Sen. Turner, chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Finance and Taxation, arranged to have Sen. Jimmy Clark introduce the act that created this committee.

As chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Finance and Taxation, among other chairships, Sen. Turner had power and prestige in the legislature of the state of Alabama. Turner's support was considered essential by those optometrists who participated in this effort, in attaining a positive report from this committee.^{2,17-20} In fact, it is safe to say that the establishment of the school by the legislature of the state of Alabama, likely, would not have been achieved without Sen. Turner's efforts.

Appointment of Members of the Joint Interim Legislative Committee

The date of the appointment of the members of the JILC most likely occurred shortly after Senate Joint Resolution 18 was signed. There is no record in either chamber's journal of the appointment of JILC members. These appointments were customarily made in a rather informal manner and could have been by telephone, verbal or written message, or letter. The members of the JILC were: two senators; Sen. Woodrow Albea, Anniston; Sen. Jack Giles, Huntsville; and three representatives; Rep. Hugh D. Merrill, Anniston; Rep. Joe Money, Birmingham; and Rep. Henry L. Pennington, Huntsville. Rep. Merrill was elected by the committee as chair.²

The appointment of the members of this committee was the second action taken in the establishment of a school of optometry. Both Sen. Albea and Rep. Merrill were well-known to Dr. Springer and his wife Rita because they were from Anniston.

Rep. Merrill asked Dr. Coshatt how the committee should proceed and requested that the ALOA provide information of need so the JILC could respond to the charge given the committee.¹⁸⁻²⁰ The manpower study would be underway within the next several weeks. A study of this nature would be critical

in establishing the viability of such a program and for the JILC to approve a school of optometry. As such it was important the study be conducted by a credible person, institution or organization. It was also important that the person or institution selected to perform such a study have experience in determining data sources.

MANPOWER (WORKFORCE) STUDY FOR OPTOMETRISTS

Despite the political success the ALOA had achieved thus far, it was essential to establish a need for optometrists in the state of Alabama. As originally conceived, this school would be established based on the need for optometrists serving only the state of Alabama. Several years after the optometry program had begun, there was an opportunity to accept students from other southern states.

Establishing a Need for Optometrists in Alabama

Meeting with Dr. Sheldon Schaffer

Following the appointment of the JILC and its members, Drs. Springer and Overton once again called on Dr. Volker for advice. It could not be determined if Drs. Snellgrove and Coshatt attended this meeting. There is no mention of an appointment date or time for any of the four optometrists on Dr. Volker's January or February 1967 calendar. It is possible this matter was discussed, if only briefly, during the Jan. 8, 1967, meeting, but it seems more likely they met with Dr. Volker at some time after the JILC was appointed.

Regardless of the type of meeting, Dr. Volker suggested to them that the ALOA may want to find someone to conduct a professional manpower study. When asked who he would recommend, Dr. Volker suggested Dr. Sheldon Schaffer, the prominent research analyst at Southern Research Institute (SRI). At that time Dr. Schaffer was Head of the Industrial Economics Section of SRI and experienced in research on community and social issues.^{2,19} The goal of the study would be to determine the need for a school of optometry based on the number of current eye care providers, the distribution and age of these providers, and the demographics of the population of the state of Alabama.

Drs. Springer and Overton arranged a dinner meeting with Dr. Schaffer at Gulas' Restaurant on Highway 78 near Eastwood Mall in Birmingham. The date of this meeting is unknown, but it seems likely, since time was of the essence, the meeting took place shortly after the initial contact with Dr. Schaffer. Most likely in late January or early February. During this meeting Dr. Schaffer agreed to perform a manpower survey by reviewing the optometric literature and other available information sources such as that available at the AOA Library and in federal government literature. Dr. Schaffer believed that this was all he could accomplish in the time thought to be available. At the time of their meeting with Dr. Schaffer, it was thought there would be a three-month period before the JILC would need the report, since the regular legislative session began May 1, 1967, and the report was to be made no later than Thursday, May 11, 1967, the fifth legislative day of the session.^{15,20}

Dr. Schaffer initially reported the cost for such a survey would be \$5,000. Drs. Springer and Overton reported the results of

the meeting and cost of the survey to the ALOA, and they were instructed to proceed with the project. Within a short period of time the study was expanded to include other southern states and the entire \$15,000 cost of the project was funded by the regional organization SoCO. The concept of the study was also supported by the AOA.^{15,20}

Notice from Sen. Turner to ALOA Leaders

The Legal/Legislative Committee of the ALOA remained busy during the time before, and especially after, the formation of the JILC. Not only was Dr. Schaffer's survey ongoing, but the leaders of the ALOA spent this time monitoring the activities of the legislature. However, Sen. Turner had made it very clear he would handle the matter, and the ALOA leadership should leave it to him.¹⁸

It was essential that Sen. Turner did not have any undue interference, no matter how well intended, because he knew the legislative process he needed to follow to be successful. Sen. Turner's comments were intended to moderate some attempts by state optometric leaders from becoming more involved in the process than he thought wise. It appears that Sen. Turner knew the legislative process he needed to follow but wanted to keep it confidential for fear it would get out of control. This no doubt created some anxiety among a few politically active optometrists. Sen. Turner even found it necessary, on occasion, to make clear to other legislators this was his legislation, and they were to not interfere in the process.¹⁸

Developing Support for UAB as the Location for a School of Optometry

On the local level, Dr. Eleazer C. Overton of Fairfield, Alabama, remained very busy. Dr. Overton, usually referred to as "Doc," or "E. C.," was an elected member of the Birmingham City Council and chair of the council's Education Policy Committee. In a remarkably short period of time, he obtained a letter of support from Birmingham Mayor Albert Boutwell, 30 or more resolutions from many of the surrounding cities' governing bodies, including city councils as well as the county commission, requesting that if it was found feasible by the legislature to establish a school of optometry in Alabama, the new school should be located at the UAMC in Birmingham.

A partial list of government or organizations that provided such resolutions besides the Birmingham City Council and the Jefferson County Commission, were the Bessemer City Commission, the Homewood City Council, the Birmingham Downtown Action Committee, the Greater Birmingham Area Chamber of Commerce, the Bessemer Chamber of Commerce, the Ensley Chamber of Commerce, and a positive editorial in the Birmingham News. In addition, the Mobile Board of Commissioners passed a similarly worded resolution that urged the Alabama legislature to establish a school of optometry at the University of Alabama, Birmingham and/or the University of South Alabama in Mobile.^{15,20}

Once it became known that a new school was under consideration, several universities expressed interest in having the school located on their campus. In addition to the University of South Alabama, in Mobile, AL other universities such as Jacksonville State University and Auburn University had also

expressed similar interest.^{15,20} It was clear the ALOA wanted to have a school of optometry in an academic health center such as existed at the UAMC. The placement of a school of optometry at the UAMC would not only be the first time an optometry school was, from its inception, an integral part of an academic medical center but enjoy many other advantages as well.

JOINT INTERIM LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE HEARINGS

The manpower (workforce) Report 1 was officially submitted to the SoCO because it was the organization funding the project. Although the date of the published Report 1 was June 26, 1967, it is possible that an executive summary or preliminary report or the contents of the report may have been shared with the JILC, perhaps as early as May 11, 1967, or before, because this was the date originally specified for the committee's report in the Senate Joint Resolution.

Manpower Report – Report 1

This study was entitled, "The Demand for and Supply of Professional Refractive Eye-Care Services in Alabama and Surrounding States" and was 23 pages in length.^{15,22} This first report included a Table of Contents; Introduction; Summary, Conclusions, and Implications; Demand for Professional Eye Care; Supply of Eye-Care Specialists; and an Acknowledgement. Each of the major headings had several subheadings describing various aspects of the study in greater detail. The report did discuss several approaches that might be considered to help correct apparent deficiencies in eye care in the state of Alabama.

The report included a significant amount of information, but the two primary recommendations were:

- "The establishment of training facilities in Alabama that can graduate at least two dozen optometrists per year, the expansion of present ophthalmology residencies in Alabama so that they can graduate about a dozen additional ophthalmologists per year, or the establishment or expansion of programs for both optometrists and ophthalmologists, respectively"; and
- "The increase in the average patient load, especially among optometrists, through the use of sub-professional specialization and division of labor".
- Among the suggestions in this report were the following:
- New training facilities might be established for professional eye care specialists in Alabama or existing programs might be expanded or utilized more fully.
- Another approach suggested was to increase the number of present patient/specialist loads. This might be accomplished by the greater use of well-trained subprofessionals (technicians) in delivery of care.
- New approaches might be considered for providing care in predominantly rural areas with the use of mobile screening units, more extensive use of multi-county offices by eye care specialists and establishment of special clinics in existing rural hospitals.
- Indigent care programs might be considered in areas that have significant concentrations of low-income residents.

Several interesting aspects of this report related to manpower were noted. First was the fact there had been a decrease in the number of optometrists in the U.S. from 22,066 in 1956 to only 20,818 in 1966. However, the number of ophthalmologists in the U.S. had increased from 3,694 in 1955 to more than 8,000 in 1966. In Alabama, the number of licensed optometrists fell from 204 in 1956 to 184 in 1966. In 1966 only eight Alabama residents were known to be enrolled in optometry programs and historically few non-residents had chosen to practice in the state.²² Approximately 160 hospitals currently offer ophthalmology residency programs and 97% had been filled recently. The ophthalmology residency program at UAMC had filled only two positions out of the six available.²²

The final report was to provide additional data on the items covered in this report and other information that may be available on such topics as the impact of government programs, industrial needs, contact lenses, federal standards for automobile drivers, military needs, and the use of skilled technicians to increase productivity.^{15,22}

Manpower Report – Report 2

In the 1969 report prepared for Dr. Volker for presentation to the Alabama legislature, the second and final manpower report was included. This report was issued on August 15, 1967.^{15,22} This second report, known as Report 2, was 34 pages in length and contained some of the same data as in Report 1. However, Report 2 did provide more detailed information related to the Future Need for Professional Eye-Care including such factors as population growth, contact lenses, driver's license testing, Medicaid and the outlook for Alabama's future. It also included more detailed information related to the supply of eye care specialists such as the present supply and Alabama supply of these specialists, and sources of educational programs such as schools and colleges of optometry and ophthalmology residencies.²² This report concluded there was a need for more eye care specialists based on the following:

- Substantial numbers of persons in Alabama and surrounding areas are not obtaining needed refractive eye care services.
- Existing training facilities in Alabama and surrounding states are not producing a sufficient number of trained professional eye care specialists to serve those who need refractive care.
- The study suggested several steps that could be considered to correct this imbalance.²²
- The establishment of training facilities in Alabama that can graduate at least two dozen optometrists per year, the expansion of present ophthalmology residencies in Alabama so they can graduate about a dozen additional ophthalmologists per year, or the establishment or expansion of programs for both optometrists and ophthalmologists, respectively.
- An increase in the average patient load, especially among optometrists, could be achieved using subprofessional (technician) specialization and division of labor.
- There exists an imbalance in the geographic distribution of eye-care specialists among Alabama counties, which has resulted in limited refractive care.

- Special rural county programs might provide increased availability of eye care in areas which have little or no such service now.
- Limited eye care in Alabama reflects the fact that per-capita income is relatively low in the state and to some extent the problem of limited eye care for low-income families may be resolved with the establishment of indigent-care programs for those whose low incomes preclude obtaining necessary eye care.
- The study also found that Medicaid and driver reexamination programs, when implemented, can be expected to intensify the need for additional professional eye-care services within the next several years.

Testimony of the ALOA

On May 9 and May 19, 1967, the JILC held hearings concerning the establishment of a school of optometry.²¹ The protocol of the hearings was that optometry would present their case first, followed by the medicine/ophthalmology testimony, and then a rebuttal by optometry.

As president of the ALOA, Dr. Don Snellgrove testified on behalf of the association.^{18,19} Dr. Snellgrove was briefed by Sen. Turner as to the protocol of the hearing. Dr. Snellgrove's recollections do not mention what his testimony included.¹⁹ However, it may be surmised he included such basic elements as pre and professional educational requirements, the number and distribution of optometrists in Alabama, certification by passing the Alabama State Board, among other matters. The opposition's testimony centered on the issues of the educational qualifications of optometrists, that the optometrists dispensed glasses as well as prescribing them, and that there were no other university affiliated schools or colleges of optometry.^{18,19}

Dr. Snellgrove's rebuttal testimony served to correct the matter of university affiliated schools or colleges of optometry. There were, in fact, four public university affiliated schools or colleges of optometry at the time of this testimony. In addition, Dr. Snellgrove had collected the records of physicians, lawyers, judges, dentists and other patients and their families who had received optometric care. This was an effort to demonstrate that these individuals believed optometrists were qualified to be entrusted with caring for their families.¹⁸ Of course, privacy of health records would prevent sharing such information in contemporary times.

As had been expected, the establishment of the JILC prompted a vigorous effort by the Alabama ophthalmologists to defeat the establishment of such a program. Thus, a major letter-writing campaign to newspapers, the administration of the University of Alabama Medical Center, University of Alabama Board of Trustees, individual members of the legislature, Gov. Lurleen Wallace, and Lt. Governor Albert Brewer had begun.^{21,15} The ophthalmologists would be aided in this effort by members of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama (MASA).^{19,20}

Memorandum to Administrative Leaders of UAB

In a May 4, 1967, memorandum to Drs. Hill, McCallum, Barker, Dunbar and Brann, with a copy to Dr. Stephen Kelly, chair of the UA Department of Ophthalmology, Dr. Volker reiterated his

concern with an article that appeared in the Birmingham News relative to a school of optometry. The article had quoted Dr. Overton and stated: "Overton said the University of Alabama has given assurance that it would favorably receive efforts by the optometry profession and the Alabama legislature to establish a school, but that the efforts must be initiated by the profession, not the university." Dr. Volker stated "he knew this article had been of concern to many members of the faculty and the following comments seem pertinent:

- (1) That the University of Alabama understands it is a legislative prerogative to establish new educational programs.
- (2) That the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) has presented data which support the case for a school of optometry in the southeastern United States.
- (3) Public Law 88-129 provides matching funds for the construction of schools of optometry, gives financial support to their educational programs, and provides loans to their students.
- (4) The University of Alabama Medical Center, Long Range Plan blueprints our needs and establishes our priorities. These needs are also attested to in appropriations requests to the present legislature.
- (5) The aforementioned documents do not mention optometry, but stress (a) increased support for existing programs, (b) construction funds for the College of Nursing, (c) construction and operating funds for the College of General Studies, and (d) required resources for expanding our programs in Public Health.

If you have any questions on this matter, please let me know." The memorandum was signed J. F. Volker, Vice President for Birmingham Affairs and Director of the Medical Center.²³

Dr. Volker's response to Rep. Merrill

Perhaps in response to a committee request or, because of other reasons, on May 22, 1967, Dr. Volker stated the university's position in a letter addressed to State Rep. Hugh Merrill, chair of the JILC. It repeated some of the points made in the above memorandum to UAMC administrators.

Dr. Volker's letter to Rep. Merrill states "this will reiterate our recent conversation. I believe my comments on a school of optometry may be summarized as follows:

- (1) That the University of Alabama understands it is a legislative prerogative to establish new educational programs.
- (2) Whenever a program in the health sciences has been assigned to it by legislative action, it has made every effort to provide adequate leadership. Examples of this attitude are the Medical College, School of Dentistry, and School of Nursing.
- (3) If a School of Optometry is created by legislative action and this University is asked to operate it, a similar degree of cooperation can be anticipated.
- (4) The University of Alabama Medical Center Long Range Plan, a copy of which is attached, details our best estimates of current needs and their priorities. These matters are also attested in appropriations requests to the

present Legislature.

- (5) The aforementioned documents stress (a) increased support for existing programs, (b) construction funds for the College of Nursing, (c) construction and operating funds for the College of General Studies, the principal resource for education and training in the allied health sciences, and (d) required resources for expanding our programs around public health."

This letter was signed, very truly yours, J. F. Volker, Vice President for Health Affairs, University of Alabama, Birmingham.²⁴

Clearly the letter to Rep. Merrill is different in several respects from that sent to the UAB administrators, but it demonstrates that, if approved, there was a commitment to have a school of optometry that aspires to excellence.

It is interesting to note that one of the goals mentioned by Dr. Volker in item five were resources for expanding programs around public health. After the UAB School of Optometry was established, Dr. Volker supposedly told several individuals, "He had asked for a school of public health but in their wisdom the legislature gave him a school of optometry." This clever retort may have held a grain of truth based on the Long-Range Plans of the University.

MEDICAL OPPOSITION TO A SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY

As was anticipated, the establishment of the JILC on Jan. 23, 1967, set in motion a major effort by the medical association, especially by the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology, to defeat this action.

Dr. John H. Nelson's Testimony

In fact, as early as the attempts to pass the original optometry practice act, medicine had opposed optometry in the legislative process. On July 9, 1965, Dr. John Hall Nelson, an ophthalmologist from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, had testified before the Alabama legislature related to the practice of optometry. In the newspaper article that appeared, he had identified himself as a faculty member with an appointment in the Medical College of Alabama. Dr. Volker's letter of July 9, 1965, to Drs. Charles Grant and Stephen Kelly, co-chairs of the University of Alabama Medical Center's Department of Ophthalmology, cautioned that when faculty testify it was wise to divorce personal opinions from university pronouncements.²⁵ In other words, Dr. Nelson did not speak on behalf of the University.

Dr. S. Richardson Hill's Testimony

On Friday, May 19, 1967, Dr. S. Richardson Hill testified before the JILC.²⁶ On Monday, May 22, 1967, Dr. Hill, Dean of the Medical College of Alabama, sent a letter to Sen. Hugh Merrill, responding to his request for his comments regarding the position of the Department of Ophthalmology. This was the same message Dr. Hill provided in testimony before the JILC the prior Friday.²⁶

Dr. Hill believed the Department of Ophthalmology was inadequately funded and did not have any full-time faculty. Therefore, he thought it unwise to appropriate funds for the operation of a school of optometry at a time when the only Department of Ophthalmology in the state was inadequately staffed because of insufficient operating funds. Furthermore,

unless new revenues were obtained for higher education, adequate funding for the Department of Ophthalmology would most likely not be forthcoming. If additional funding for the department was provided it could, within two years, develop sufficient personnel and programs in the department to provide the necessary training for ophthalmologists in this state.²⁶ It was evident that Dr. Hill considered it his duty to speak on behalf of one of the School of Medicine's departments.

Medical Organization's Testimony

MASA, the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology (AAOO), the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), the Birmingham Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Association (BEENTA) and the Association of Dispensing Opticians (ADO) all opposed this proposal.^{15,20} Initial opposition by the ophthalmologists was led by Drs. Joseph Dixon, Birmingham; John Hall Nelson, Tuscaloosa; and Louis Johnson, Dothan. Others from within and outside the state further confounded the issue.^{15,27} An attempt to determine the total number of individual opposition cards/letters deposited in or referring to this legislation in the UAB Archives, was estimated to be several hundred written responses opposing the legislation.

Since the 1967 legislative action, there had been a flow of petitions and resolutions opposing the action sent to the members of the medical community throughout the state. The publications of MASA had been used in a rather sensational manner, and one demeaning the profession of optometry, but ultimately did not reflect positively on the medical association. In addition, letters were written to the UA's Board of Trustees that deprecated Dr. Volker's stature and character.¹⁵

Summary of Events from the Perspective of the UAMC Administration

Margaret D. "Peggy" Crosswhite was an administrative assistant to Dr. Volker. Peggy was assigned by Dr. Volker to coordinate the activities of the university regarding the optometry school. In her summary of events leading to the establishment of the school of optometry, she characterized the pattern as one of opposition to a legislative action. This opposition had come from a minority within the medical profession, even continuing after the legislation had been approved. However, the University Administration was aware of only an affirmative public response. The opposition continued in the form of refusal to instruct optometry students and an attempt to reduce the profession of optometry to one of technician status. In addition, she noted the current effort was directed toward tearing down the reputation of the UAMC.¹⁵ The basic points of opposition were that:

- (1) Because an optometrist does not have a medical degree, they are not qualified to determine the presence of disease.
- (2) There is a greater need for ophthalmologists than optometrists.
- (3) The presence of a school of optometry in the Medical Center or within the University of Alabama in Birmingham would not increase the effectiveness or stature of the Medical Center.

Instead of seeking information based on the facts or a rational discussion of their points of view, Ms. Crosswhite noted "that those with these opinions had smothered them by ambiguous, misleading, and unsupported statements." Usually these were expressed in hastily drawn-up petitions, resolutions or letters to the editor. She also noted that unfortunately no documentation of grievances or formal proposals for development of the Department of Ophthalmology were received.¹⁵

The University Administration had offered to provide information based on the facts and to discuss the problem with the ophthalmologists, but these offers were ignored.¹⁵ There are copies of more than 700 postcards or letters in the UAB Archives that were sent to Drs. Volker or Hill, medical organizations, legislators or the University of Alabama Board of Trustees, from physicians and others opposing the establishment of a school of optometry.²⁷

The exact number of postcards or letters will likely never be known but suffice it to say there were a significant number not including several petitions, resolutions or other forms of dissent. Interestingly there were perhaps 10 pieces of correspondence in this collection that favored an optometry program. A more complete description of the atmosphere in the gallery on days of legislative action is provided in Appendix III.

REPORT OF THE JOINT INTERIM LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

On June 23, 1967, at 2:10 p.m., the Joint Interim Legislative Committee made their report during the 1967 regular session of the Alabama legislature. Their report was: "We the Committee appointed to investigate the feasibility of locating a school of optometry in Alabama, beg leave to report as follows: We find that there is need for a school of optometry to be in the State of Alabama. We therefore recommend that such a school be located at an existing state university." This approval was the third action taken in the establishment of the school of optometry. This approval made the passage of a specific act unnecessary, if funding could be included in the State of Alabama Educational Appropriations Bill.²¹⁵

Legislative Action to Establish a School of Optometry

There are several ways in which state-supported, specialty-education schools of higher learning may be created in Alabama.^{27,28} Clearly, the approach utilized in this situation was not a process with which many ALOA members, or others, were familiar.

The first way a new program may be approved is by traditional act, or statute, enacted by the state legislature. For example, this is the way the University of Alabama Schools of Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing (1947-49) and later Social Work (1965) were established. The Medical College of Alabama was established in 1859 by Josiah Knott, M.D., without legislative approval.²⁹ The next year the school received a state appropriation of \$50,000 and became a department of the University of Alabama. However, development ceased with the onset of the Civil War and the post-war economy that followed for several years after the Civil War. The program reopened in 1868, but unfortunately did not flourish, and over the next 40 years, Alabama's dismal post-Civil War economy hindered any chance for improvement. In 1922, the School of

Medicine was moved from Mobile, Alabama, to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama and reduced from a four-year to a two-year program.

In 1943, the four-year program was revived by the Alabama legislature. In 1944, a building commission was charged with selecting a site for the program. The commission narrowed the field to Mobile, Tuscaloosa, and Birmingham. Birmingham offered all the elements needed to support a four-year medical school. It had distinguished physicians, a large population and growing industrial economy, and two hospitals. In 1945, the program moved to Birmingham to the UAMC campus. This campus included the Jefferson and Hillman Hospitals and several adjoining blocks.²⁹

However, there are many such programs throughout the state that came into being without specific statutes.^{27,28} Usually, a specific act is necessary when a new institution is established such as the University of South Alabama. Interestingly UAB's College of General Studies was also funded by appropriations.

Separate Bill to Establish a School of Optometry

A search of the Journals of the House and Senate for 1967 did not reveal a separate bill that was introduced for the establishment of a School of Optometry. This was confirmed in two ways. First, in 2008, Anita Smith, a historian familiar with the UAB Medical Center schools, and Peggy Striplin, the senior director of development and alumni affairs of the UAB School of Optometry, were accompanied by the UAB Archivist, Mr. Tim Pennycuff, on a visit to the State of Alabama Archives. With the guidance of Norwood Durr of the State of Alabama Archives, they searched the archives for a separate bill establishing a School of Optometry but were unable to locate one.²⁸ It should be noted that Mr. Pennycuff was also instrumental in assisting Virginia Fisher in the publication of the book describing UAB's history in *Building on a Future*.²⁹

Secondly, in 2011 the staff at the Legislative Reference Service, Mr. Frank Caskey and Ms. Carma Marks, by authorization of Rep. Jim McClendon, and at my request, also searched these journals and did not find a separate bill.³⁰ Therefore, it seems most likely that when Sen. Turner called Dr. Snellgrove to inform him "it passed," the "it" was referring to the 1967 Appropriations Bill for Education as opposed to a separate bill for a School of Optometry. This in fact was later corroborated in an interview with former Gov. Brewer.

By all accounts, Sen. Turner was a master politician, legislator and an excellent parliamentarian. As chair of the Senate Committee on Finance and Taxation and the Joint Senate and House Appropriations Committee, he approved everything that went into the appropriations bill. As chair he would also be a member of any conference committee. It was customary for the presiding officer of each chamber to appoint the chair of the Finance and Taxation Committee along with the sponsor of the legislation to the conference committee. In this case, Sen. Turner was both. In addition, the other members of the conference committee were known to be friendly to Sen. Turner.

Manner for the Establishment of a School

A second manner for the establishment of such programs is in what has been termed legislative "evolutions" birthed by resolutions enacted through committees of the state legislature.²⁸ Clearly, this is the route by which the need for a school of optometry in the state of Alabama was established. However, the recommendation by the committee that such a school be located at an existing state university did not provide a funding source.

A third option is that components of or addendums to budgets of state-supported institutions, such as the University of Alabama, include funding for such a new program. As will be shown, this was the way the UAB School of Optometry received its initial funding.²⁸

The fourth option is that a program can be begun by executive order of the governor. Clearly, both Govs. Lurleen and George Wallace and Gov. Albert Brewer supported the establishment of a school of optometry, but the school was not begun by way of an executive order.²⁸

By all accounts the UAB School of Optometry was established by recommendation from the JILC report and moved directly to include initial funding in the educational appropriations act for 1967 and additional continuing support from the educational appropriations act and general fund budgets in 1969.²⁸

There was some confusion regarding the matter of a separate bill or act to establish the School of Optometry. Dr. Don Snellgrove remembers a bill on the calendar of the 1967 regular session. He was concerned that the bill was near the bottom of the calendar and time would expire before it was enacted. Sen. Turner informed Dr. Snellgrove that everything was fine and he should not worry about the bill. With this reassurance, Dr. Snellgrove returned to his home in Greenville, Alabama.¹⁸ As illustrated by Dr. Snellgrove's expectation of this legislation being in the form of a bill, this legislation involved a procedure of enactment that very few optometrists were familiar with or understood.

SUMMARY OF PART I AND PRELUDE TO PART II

In summary, Part I of this article described the many events that led to, and included, the decision by the JILC that there existed a need for a school of optometry in the state of Alabama.

Part II of the article describes the actions of the Alabama legislature with regards to the approval of a school of optometry by its funding, university affiliation and other actions taken to affect the outcome.

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House and Senate. All the legislative actions cited in this paper are from these journals.

Likewise, I am grateful to Drs. G. Robert Crosby and L. Don Snellgrove for sharing their remembrances of these many past events. Dr. Snellgrove willingly shared information from his files. I thank Janice Turner Carter for providing information about her father, Sen. Alton L. Turner. I also want to thank Anita Smith and Peggy Striplin for conducting interviews of those individuals involved in the early history of those legislative efforts that led to the passage of this important legislation. Mrs. Smith's summary of the interview with Governor Brewer has proved to be most helpful in further elucidating the history of the events that led to the establishment of the school. I also thank Jerry R. Pederson, O.D., and Peggy Striplin for their careful review of this paper and helpful suggestions. In addition, I want to thank Mrs. Donald (Rita) Springer for reading the final draft of this chapter and Dr. Ronald Dachelet for confirming additional information. I dedicate this article to all those past and present who worked so tirelessly to bring about the remarkable story and success of the UAB School of Optometry.

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APPENDIX I

Visionaries

There are four individuals, among the many who played important and significant roles in this history, who are deserving of special mention. These individuals are Dr. Donald A. Springer, Anniston, Alabama; Dr. Eleazer C. Overton, Fairfield, Alabama; Dr. Elbert A. Coshatt, Aliceville, Alabama; and Senator Alton L. Turner, Luverne, Alabama. A brief biographical sketch of each of these individuals is presented to more completely explain the background of those who played a significant role in the history of the establishment of the UAB School of Optometry.

Clearly there were many optometrists and others involved in this effort but the most notable were Drs. Edgar Warr and Don Snellgrove. Without Drs. Warr and Snellgrove's connection and discussions with Senator Turner, there would likely have not been a School of Optometry at UAB. These humble optometrists preferred their role in the background, but they are equally deserving of recognition.

Dr. Donald A. Springer

Dr. Springer was a second-generation optometrist whose father, Dr. Nathaniel Springer, had immigrated to America from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He began the original Springer practice in 1919 after receiving further training from Kellan and Moore Opticians in Atlanta. Dr. Nathaniel Springer was brought to this country as a very young child and built a successful optometry practice. Dr. Donald Springer was born in Anniston, AL in 1922 and attended public schools in that city. He completed his pre-optometry education at the University of Alabama and, in 1941, entered The Ohio State University College of Optometry. His optometric education was interrupted by service in the Army Ordinance Corps during World War II from 1943 to 1945. Following his discharge from military service, he completed his optometric education at OSU in 1946 and returned to Anniston to join his father in practice.

He quickly became involved in his community and organized optometry. Dr. Springer served the profession in many capacities. He became one of the first Fellows of the American Academy of Optometry from Alabama, obtaining this distinction just one

year after joining the practice. He served as the President of the Alabama Optometric Association (ALOA) in 1949-1950. In 1963, he persuaded the ALOA to form a Health Manpower Committee. He served as the President of the American Academy of Optometry in 1963-1964. He provided testimony before the Subcommittee on Health of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee related to optometry's inclusion in the Health Professions Educational Assistance Act in 1964. He served as a member of the Review Committee on Construction for Schools of Optometry from 1964 to 1967. Dr. Springer's goal of establishing a school of optometry was based on his years of contemplating the need for a stronger optometric workforce in Alabama. He was also influenced by the perspective he gained through his leadership role as an Officer and President of the American Academy of Optometry. The need for a greater workforce in all the independent health care professions was becoming more apparent during the late 1950's and early 1960's. Dr. Springer was the catalyst for the establishment of a school of optometry in Alabama. It was Dr. Springer who had the vision for this program.^{2,3}

Dr. Eleazer C. Overton

Dr. Eleazer Claiborne "E. C." Overton was born in Birmingham, Alabama, attended public schools and graduated from Ensley High School in 1937. Following graduation, he worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Southern Optical Company. In 1942, Dr. Overton entered the naval pilot training program eventually flying 85 missions over Japan with Air Group 16, attached to the USS Randolph. He attained the rank of Lieutenant while serving as an aviator in the Naval Reserve during World War II. After the War, he enrolled at the Northern Illinois College of Optometry, graduating in 1948.

Dr. Overton returned to Birmingham and established a practice in the Five Points West area of the city in 1949. Dr. Overton was involved early in the efforts by the ALOA to establish a school of optometry. He was elected to the Birmingham City Council where he served from its inception in April 1962 until October 1981. His length of service on the Birmingham City Council was more than 18 years.

In this capacity he served as Chairman of the Public Improvement Committee and as Chairman of the Education Policy Committee. It was in the arena of public service he became acquainted with many area educators, those individuals in elected office or active in Jefferson County politics. Dr. Overton was able to utilize these relationships to gain support from city and county governments for the establishment of a school of optometry at the University of Alabama Medical Center. The significant level of community support marshaled by Dr. Overton was instrumental in the eventual success of the legislation and the school's location at UAB. Dr. Overton also served on the fundraising committee for the new school around the business and industry communities in Birmingham. This Committee raised \$250,000 within eight weeks in the latter part of the 1960's.^{2,4,5}

Dr. Elbert A. Coshatt

Dr. Elbert A. "Bert" Coshatt was born in Maylene Alabama in 1921. After graduating from high school, he served in the military during World War II. Following the war, he attended the Northern Illinois College of Optometry and on graduation, returned to

Aliceville, Alabama to open a practice. Dr. Coshatt was active in his community serving as President of the Aliceville Chamber of Commerce. However, it was his keen interest in politics, with a desire to help others, and his dedication to the profession of optometry that was his real passion.

Along with Drs. Springer and Overton, Dr. Coshatt recognized Alabama's desperate need for more practicing optometrists. To this end, he worked tirelessly to ensure that a school of optometry would be located at UAB. He served as President of the ALOA in 1966-1967 and during this same time was selected to serve as the Chairman of the Legal/Legislative Committee for the ALOA. This latter position was one Dr. Coshatt held for several years after his term as President of the ALOA. He was also instrumental in securing legislation that increased license fees assessed by the Alabama Board of Optometry. Excess monies not utilized by the Board would be used to provide support for optometric education in Alabama.

Dr. Coshatt also helped organize a vigorous fundraising campaign and served as the Chairman of the Fund Drive Committee for the UAB School of Optometry. He was also the driving force in helping optometry regain the right to participate in the Alabama Medicaid program. He was twice selected as Optometrist of the Year by the ALOA and in 1976 was named as the Optometrist of the South by the Southern Council of Optometrists. The first endowed scholarship to assist a deserving optometry student of the UABSO, was named in his memory.^{2,6}

Senator Alton L. Turner

Senator Alton L. Turner was born in Rutledge, Alabama but spent his formative years attending public schools in Luverne, Alabama. On graduation from Luverne High School Mr. Turner enlisted in the United States Navy on July 1, 1943. He served as a navigator in the Navy Air Corps during World War II and was discharged at the rank of Ensign on July 19, 1946. He entered the University of Alabama after being discharged from the Navy and received the LL. B. degree in 1950.

Mr. Turner returned to Luverne and Crenshaw County where he lived and practiced law for 35 years. He developed a substantial law practice and a reputation as an outstanding defense attorney. Mr. Turner served as Crenshaw County Solicitor from 1952 to 1958. He was elected to the State Senate for the first time in 1958 and served as the Senator from District 25 from 1959 through the 1962 term. He was elected to the Alabama House of Representatives in 1962 where he represented Crenshaw County and served from 1963 to 1966. He was elected again, in 1966, to the Alabama Senate, and served the 20th District from 1967 to 1970. He served as Chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee on Finance and Taxation during the 1967 Special Session.¹ He was also Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance and Taxation during the Regular Session of his second Senate term. He also served as Chairman of the Joint Senate-House Appropriations Committee of the Alabama Legislature, Chairman of the Legislative Council, Chairman of the Committee on Grounds and Public Buildings (and later a member) and was a member of the Committees of the Judiciary, Constitution, Local Legislation, and Banking.

Many considered Senator Turner one of the most powerful and influential Senators, if not Legislators, of this time. Mr. Turner

served as floor leader for Governors John Patterson, George Wallace, Lurleen Wallace, and Albert Brewer. Following elected office, Mr. Turner served as Assistant District Attorney, City Attorney for Luverne, Alabama and Rutledge, Alabama, attorney for the Crenshaw County Commission and Crenshaw County Hospital. Among his many honors was the Award of Merit for Distinguished Service from the Southern Council of Optometrists.^{2,7} It was Senator Turner's mastery of the legislative process that enabled the ALOA to realize its goal of a school of optometry in Alabama. The optometry community and the patients they serve are indebted to Senator Turner for his service to the profession, university and state.

APPENDIX II

Timeline of Important Events Leading to the Establishment of the UAB School of Optometry

Events Leading to the Introduction of Federal Legislation

- With the anticipated passage of legislation for federal entitlement healthcare programs (Medicare and Medicaid) and growing population, there was likely to be a critical shortage of healthcare providers.
- Dr. Donald Springer from Anniston, AL, who served as President of the American Academy of Optometry, was aware of the critical need for an increase in the health professions, especially optometric manpower (workforce), both in Alabama and the southeast.
- Dr. Springer had served on the Executive Committee of the American Academy of Optometry during the late 1950's and early 1960's and had become aware of this looming shortage in the health professions.
- Several studies performed by various entities had attempted to predict the shortage of physicians and dentists in the coming decade.
- In 1963, Dr. Springer persuaded the ALOA to form a Health Manpower Committee to investigate the need for an increased optometric workforce in Alabama.
- On February 24, 1961, Senator Lister Hill of Alabama introduced the bill, S. 1072, the Health Professions Educational Assistant (HPEA) Act, in the United States Senate.
- The HPEA was one of the most comprehensive health care funding acts ever introduced. It included funding for construction or renovation of buildings, special project grants, and scholarships all to increase the number of healthcare providers.
- On Friday, May 5, 1961, Dr. Henry Hofstetter, Director of the Division of Optometry, Indiana University and Chairman of the AOA Committee on Research, became the first optometrist to testify on behalf of the profession in support of this legislation before the Subcommittee on Health of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.
- On January 23, 1962, U. S. Representative Torbert H. MacDonald from the Massachusetts 8th Congressional District, offered amendments to House Legislation H. R. 4999

that would authorize funding for optometry schools and colleges as well as financial aid for optometry students.

- The Health Professions Educational Assistance Act was signed by President John F. Kennedy on September 24, 1963, and became effective for FY 1964-66.
- On May 26, 1964, Dr. Springer, President of the American Academy of Optometry and a practitioner from Anniston, Alabama, was among several prominent optometrists to testify before the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. Their testimony related to the need for optometry student loans and more optometrists.
- Also, the ALOA set about establishing a relationship with the University of Alabama by holding its continuing education program on campus beginning in 1964. The featured speaker for the first program was Dr. Merrill Allen, a widely respected researcher and expert on motorist's vision.

Pathway to Legislation for Establishing a School of Optometry in Alabama

- On Monday, June 14, 1965, Drs. Springer, Snellgrove, Overton, and Coshatt met with Dr. Joseph Volker, Executive Vice-President for Health Affairs, of the University of Alabama Medical Center (UAMC). The purpose of this meeting was to inquire about the UAMC establishing a school of optometry. Dr. Volker explained that as a state university only the Alabama Legislature could approve legislation establishing a school and appropriating the funds to support it.
- Sensing that Dr. Volker was not opposed to such a program, the members of the ALOA, after agreeing to move forward, began to get involved in the political process at the local and state level.
- In late 1966, Drs. Edgar Warr and Don Snellgrove met with Senator Alton Turner of Luverne, AL. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the possibility of introducing legislation to establish a school of optometry in Alabama. Senator Turner was widely regarded as the most influential legislator in the Senate, if not the state of Alabama. Senator Turner was well-versed in the procedures and rules for passing legislation in Alabama.
- During the Organizational Session of the Alabama Legislature, Senate Joint Resolution 18 was passed on January 17, 1967, and signed by Governor Lurleen Wallace on January 23, 1967.
- On Friday, June 23, 1967, the Joint Interim Legislative Committee (JILC) reported during the Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature there was a need for a school of optometry in the state.
- During the Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature in 1967 the bill, H. 24 which was the Educational Appropriation for the state, as recommended by the Committee on Conference, was passed by the Senate on Wednesday, August 23, 1967, by the vote Yeas 29; Nays 2 and passed by the House on Thursday, August 31, 1967, by the vote of Yeas 90; Nays 0.

- This bill was signed into law as Act No. 383 by Governor Lurleen Wallace on September 6, 1967. It contained funds for the initial study required for the establishment of a school of optometry and the operation and maintenance of such a school. The funds of \$50,000 each for fiscal years 1967-68 and 1968-69 were for planning, curriculum development, and estimated costs associated with a school. These funds were placed in the budget of the University of Alabama Medical Center.
- During the Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature in 1967, the ALOA also put forth four additional bills. The most important of these bills related to the school of optometry was Senate Bill 381. This bill changed the Alabama Board of Optometry rules to increase license renewal fees from \$12 to \$112 each year. This bill was introduced by Senator Alton Turner on Tuesday, July 11, 1967. The bill was passed by a vote of Yeas 80; Nays 0. Senate Bill 381 was approved (signed) as Act No. 520 on September 7, 1967, by Governor Lurleen Wallace.
- On September 15, 1967, Dr. Don Snellgrove notified Dr. Volker he had appointed a Liaison Committee as he requested. The members were Drs. Donald Springer (Chair), Coshatt, Banks, and Gibson.

Activities of the UAMC and ALOA in 1968

- Beginning in February 1968 Dr. Volker initiated a process in which individuals agreed to serve as consultants to the Advisory Committee. Over a two-year period nine optometrists associated with optometric or ophthalmologic education met on the UAMC campus with the Advisory Committee established by Dr. Volker.
- On May 31, 1968, Dr. Volker announced to the university community the action of the legislature regarding the establishment of a school of optometry at the UAMC. He also announced the appointment of an Advisory Committee.
- A Fund Drive Committee was established in the summer of 1968 to raise funds for the construction of a school building. This appeal was made to state optometrists, the Birmingham business community, optometric organizations, and corporations, as well as the profession at large across the United States.
- A brochure was developed, and a Resolution was passed by the Executive Committee of the UA Board of Trustees establishing a UA fund known as the UA School of Optometry Fund for contributions made by the public for use as outlined in the resolution. This Fund was established on or about July 25, 1968.

Final Approval for Funding of a School of Optometry located at the University of Alabama Medical Center

- As part of the study process for the establishment of a school of optometry, Dr. Joseph Volker, Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, was to deliver a report regarding the feasibility of such a program to the Legislature in 1969.
- Dr. Volker assigned Mrs. Margaret "Peggy" Crosswhite the task of collecting information about the profession of optometry

and optometric education. Mrs. Crosswhite prepared the report Dr. Volker would submit to the Alabama Legislature in 1969.

- During the Special Session of the Alabama Legislature in 1969 on Tuesday, April 1, H. 22 was introduced to make annual appropriations for the support of public education for fiscal years 1969-70 and 1970-71. This bill was passed on Wednesday, April 3, 1969, in the House by a vote of Yeas 93; Nays 0 and on Friday, May 2, 1969, in the Senate by a vote of Yeas 35; Nays 0. The bill as amended by the Senate was returned to the House where it was adopted 77 to 21.
- This appropriation included under UMAC's budget \$200,000 for FY 1969-70 and \$300,000 for FY 1970-71 for operation and maintenance of a school of optometry. The House Bill, H. 22 was approved as Act Number 91 by Governor Albert Brewer on May 14, 1969, at 2:10 PM.
- During the Regular Session of the 1969 Alabama Legislature on Tuesday, June 3, Mr. Matthews introduced H. 621. This bill was to make appropriations for ordinary expenses of the executive, legislative, and judicial departments of the State, for interest on public debts, and for public education.
- This bill was passed on Wednesday, June 25, in the House by a vote of Yeas 90; Nays 2 and in the Senate on Thursday, September 4, by a vote of Yeas 27; Nays 0. This bill was signed on Friday September 12, 1969, as Act Number 995 by Governor Albert Brewer. This Act provided \$23,000 for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a school or college of optometry from the General Fund budget.
- On August 10, 1969, Dr. Volker announced that Dr. Henry B. Peters had been appointed as the first Dean of the UAMC School of Optometry. The UAB School of Optometry officially began on September 1, 1969, the first day that UAB was established as a separate campus of the UA system.
- The first class of the UAB School of Optometry had eight students who according to Dean Peters, matriculated on Saturday, September 27, 1969. The first student admitted to the professional program was Ronald E. Dachelet. One class member recalled the first day of class being Thursday, September 25, 1969. The latter date would seem to perhaps be more likely given it was a weekday. Those graduating from the first class in June 1973 were: Drs. Neil Bleakley, Nelson Crandall, Ronald Dachelet, Michael Raim, Bernard Scott, Ernest Spohn and Alan Tavel.
- On September 2, 1970, Dr. Peters received a request from Mr. Henry Cram for the legislative history of the UAB School of Optometry. On September 2, 1970, Mr. James White III, University counsel responded to Dr. Henry Bruce, Director of Education Research Facilities, National Institutes of Health, detailing the legislative history of the UAB School of Optometry in answer to questions related to its being lawfully constituted.
- On this same date, Mr. White also sent a response to Dr. Bruce in answer to the authority of the UA Board of Trustees to establish such a program. Mr. White stated there is no constitutional or statutory requirement that specific schools or departments of the University of Alabama be established by legislative act. It is clearly stated in the law the Board of Trustees has general supervisory powers over the University, and that these powers include the power of establishing schools and departments within the University.
- On September 18, 1970, more than a year after the program began, Senator Turner wrote a letter to Roger Engberg, Under-Secretary for Health, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, detailing the legislative steps taken to establish the UAB School of Optometry. This letter was in response to some disgruntled ophthalmologists' complaints.
- In 1973 the UAB School of Optometry began participating in the Southern Region Educational Board (SREB) out-of-state contract program. The school provided 15 contract places in each entering class beginning in 1975.