New Strategic Objectives Will Lift ASCO and Our Member Institutions to Greater Heights

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships"

— Michael Jordan


Dr. Karla Zadnik

ASCO has embarked on a strategic planning process — the first in more than a decade — to define its goals and help construct its most important initiatives over the next three to five years. Two of the strategic objectives emerging from the process involve talent and teamwork/intelligence.

One of those objectives is the ongoing development of a highly qualified, diverse applicant pool for the schools and colleges of optometry. This talent-oriented goal — to attract the best and the brightest to optometric careers — is essential to the future of our institutions and our profession. When we meet a talented young person who has already chosen optometry, it's easy. At that point, we are generally just helping guide that applicant to the institution that best suits him or her, and, let's face it, we are a little competitive in those pursuits. When, however, we encounter that talent in someone who happens not to be myopic and perhaps isn't aware of optometry as a career, our task is a little harder. We first have to introduce the "talent" to the profession and make him or her aware of optometry as a viable career choice. At that point, once the potential applicant has been turned on to optometry, the usual recruitment and academic institution selection can begin.

You may know that I have a member of my extended family in the Class of 2017 at The Ohio State University College of Optometry. She is my great-niece, and her initiation to optometry goes like this. She was a sophomore at her undergraduate institution in California. A big group of us were at dinner celebrating my husband's birthday, and she was describing her undergraduate work in biomedical engineering. I casually asked whether she'd ever considered optometry as a career. My daughters went on immediate alert, telling their cousin that she was now, forever, on my radar. Nonetheless, a seed was planted. Later that year, she came to Ohio and spent time investigating pharmacy, medicine, biomedical engineering and optometry. One patient with TBI later, she was intrigued. After a couple more days of observing, she was hooked. A change in undergraduate major, superior OAT performance, an offer of admission, and a tough decision to forgo a bachelor's degree soon followed, and, here she is, five years later, just completing her first senior extern rotation. Those are the narratives we need to craft with our future students and colleagues and with the adults who counsel

young people about their career choices.

The second objective relates to the teamwork and intelligence needed for a collective group to succeed. ASCO has spent a decade training current and future faculty to commit to academic optometry and to excel in that arena. Our strategic planning discussions have focused on the need for more leadership activities. These would train new administrators to be better administrators from the very start. Programs that enhance our abilities to motivate and inspire others to follow our vision will make ASCO's member institutions better. Learning more about how teams are formed and how to move a team of people toward a common goal faster and with better outcomes can only benefit all of us.

We can craft our future. We will bring in talent and work together, intelligently, to take ASCO and our member institutions to greater heights.



Dr. Karla Zadnik