Inspire a Future Optometric Educator



Recently, Pacific University had the honor of hosting two outstanding events promoting InfantSEE, the public health program managed by Optometry Cares – The AOA Foundation. The events featured inspiring talks by Tom Sullivan, author, composer, motivational speaker and previous winner of the American Foundation for the Blind's Helen Keller Achievement Award, and Dr. Glen Steele, Southern College of Optometry professor and chairman of InfantSEE. The messages they delivered reminded me of my journey in the optometric profession. I began my career with the aspiration of returning to a hometown practice and specializing in pediatric care. The ability to instantly impact the life of an individual, often a baby or child, is one of the hallmark reasons why our profession is so unique. However, in my second year of optometry school, I discovered a new avenue in optometry and my career path was transformed. I was inspired by one of my professors, Dr. Cristina Schnider, to become an optometric educator.

What I have found for more than two decades in optometric education is that every single day a student or colleague challenges me in a way that provides the opportunity to expand my knowledge base. I became a teacher because I love to learn. I also became an educator, researcher and eventually an administrator because someone took the time to recognize my ability to seek, apply and share information. In addition to being a good role model, a true mentor sees something in you that you might not recognize in yourself.

I challenge every one of you to be that role model, mentor and talent scout to inspire future optometric educators. When you encounter that moment, interacting with a motivated and talented student, and that thought crosses your mind – this individual should be an educator and scholar – have the conversation about the rewards of optometric education.

I have no doubt that many outstanding optometric educators of the future will have first had their lives changed by an InfantSEE Doctor of Optometry.

