SUNY Optometry Honors Naidoo, Schaeffel with Honorary Degrees During 44th Commencement



SUNY Trustee Eunice A. Lewin presented honorary degrees to Dr. Kovin Naidoo, chief executive officer of the Brien Holden Vision Institute, and Dr. Frank Schaeffel, professor of neurobiology of the eye at the Institute of Ophthalmic Research at the University of Tübingen, during SUNY Optometry's 44th commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 24.

In his keynote address, Professor Naidoo, who received the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, delivered a call to action for eye care practitioners "at a crossroads" due to the increase of myopia, or nearsightedness, in both developed and developing nations. "By 2050, half of the world's population will be [nearsighted]," he said, adding that children learn better and adults earn better with good vision. "Your generation has to carry the burden of addressing this public health crisis."

An internationally celebrated public health leader, optometrist, academic, former anti-apartheid activist and political prisoner, Professor Naidoo described the Class of 2018 as an "unencumbered generation" free to think and express themselves. He encouraged them to proceed into their careers with love, hope and a bit of rebellion. "We need more ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Small contributions can change our world," he said.

Professor Schaeffel received the honorary Doctor of Science for his significant impact on the understanding of visual regulation of eye growth and the development of myopia for 33 years. He discussed an appreciation for research due to its unpredictability.

"You can never predict what you'll find, but this is not a frustrating experience," said the world-recognized vision scientist. "In fact, there's a great chance that you can get a 'big fish' out of this system and change things."