

ASCO's leadership, including volunteers at all levels of the organization along with staff, has been hard at work for the last year and a half developing a comprehensive Strategic Plan for the organization, the first such plan in 14 years. The goal has been to create a plan that is flexible enough to address changes, over time, within the practice of optometry, trends in education, and the evolution of health care delivery. This plan articulates a vision for the future and a core purpose for the association, and identifies and prioritizes strategies that will help ASCO deliver on its mission. ASCO's Board of Directors reviewed and approved the final plan at the Annual Meeting, held in June in Washington, DC.

ASCO's new Mission Statement is now:

“The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) advances optometric education and research to enhance the health and well-being of the public.”

This mission is further described this way:

The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) accomplishes this mission through collaboration with educators, administrators, residents, students, industry, government, healthcare organizations, and other stakeholders through its education, research, advocacy and development activities, in order to nurture robust, forward-thinking, and evidence-based optometric education and research.

Our first-ever Vision Statement is:

“The public benefits from enhanced eye and vision health through excellence in optometric education and research.”

This vision is illustrated in the plan with the following description:

The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) serves as a catalyst for the advancement of optometry. ASCO member schools and colleges provide the best education, conduct the most innovative research, and attract and graduate the highest quality professionals who reflect the diversity of the populations we serve. Our graduates go on to serve as doctors of optometry, researchers, educators, collaborators, and leaders in the health care community.

ASCO's Core Values are now:

- **Leadership**

ASCO leads the optometric education community and encourages excellence and leadership in students, residents, faculty, and administrators through the promotion of an inspiring vision for the future. ASCO is a highly trusted source/authority for information about optometric education. Its audiences include the public, the media, and public policy makers. ASCO promotes outcomes that are best for students and patients.

▪ **Innovation**

ASCO is a catalyst for a better future through innovation. Creative approaches to education, research, scholarship, and service are demonstrated by a culture that recognizes and celebrates diversity of thinking and perspectives; strives for excellence; accepts reasonable risk, and appreciates the learning that comes from valuable failures.

▪ **Inclusion**

No individual is as creative or effective as a group of well-focused, collaborative individuals. The same is true for organizations. ASCO sustains a strong sense of community among those involved in optometric education. ASCO creates an environment where students, residents, faculty, administrators, patients and their families, other healthcare practitioners, researchers, and scientists all feel heard, safe, respected, and supported. This value is evidenced by appreciation for a diversity of opinions, perspectives, and backgrounds, by strong teamwork among volunteers and staff, and by actively pursuing opportunities to work cooperatively with other organizations. It is further supported by an inclusive organizational structure that provides opportunity for engagement, allowing a variety of stakeholders to contribute, and providing for enhanced communications and collaboration.

▪ **Integrity**

ASCO acts consistently in accordance with its mission, being honest and transparent in what we do and say, with an unwavering desire to conduct the highest quality programs and to collaborate with other groups and organizations with similar goals. ASCO focuses on pursuits that have a direct impact on people's lives, through the thoughtful establishment of priorities, and the use of evaluation processes, centered on the impact to students, residents, faculty, administrators, researchers/scientists, and patients. This value is demonstrated in behavior that exhibits commitment to high professional standards; that upholds accountability for the trust placed in us by our faculty, students, and residents; that promotes ethical behavior among all individuals involved in the work of the association and in optometric education.

A major part of the Plan is the identification of goals that will lead to the association continuing to meet its mission in a quickly changing healthcare environment. Five Key Strategic Objectives were

established:

- Attract a robust, highly qualified, diverse applicant pool of students pursuing the necessary education required to treat, care for and improve overall vision and health patients everywhere. *(Applicant Pool Development)*
- Establish and promote career and leadership development programs for faculty, administrators, residents and students. *(Leadership & Career Development)*
- Serve as the leading voice for optometric education. *(Advocacy)*
- Develop and facilitate inter-institutional and interprofessional collaboration among ASCO member institutions. *(Collaboration)*
- Develop systems to assure effective governance, responsible resource allocation, and appropriate infrastructure development. *(Organizational Sustainability)*

The accompanying implementation and evaluation plans are currently being finalized.

ASCO thanks the members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their dedication and hard work leading the effort during the planning process: Dr. Karla Zadnik, OSU (chair); Dr. Jenny Coyle, PUCO; Dr. David Damari, MCO; Dr. Larry Davis, UMSL; Dr. David Heath, SUNY; Ms. Dawn Mancuso, ASCO; and Dr. Lewis Reich, SCO;

Progress updates on ASCO's efforts to implement this plan will appear in future issues of *Eye on Education*.