



It is my honor and privilege to be named President of ASCO at our Annual Meeting in Washington, DC this past June. Because we educate people to enter an independent, doctoral-level health-care profession, our member institutions often face multiple challenges. It seems too many people, including me, feel we are at very important crossroads that brings almost existential concerns about our future. These include the flat or even decreasing number and quality of undergraduate students applying to optometry schools and colleges, at the same time we have an increasing number of institutions offering more seats; pressure from some states to increase the scope of our profession into minor adnexal surgical procedures and the training required; increasing demands for accountability on our educational and career placement outcomes; increasing demand for residency positions; introduction of technology that gives patients a larger role in “self-diagnosis” which could eventually lead to the small-scale, individual manufacturing of spectacle and contact lenses; and our profession’s place in an increasingly inter-professional, patient-centered healthcare system.

Now, I would argue that these challenges could be largely positive for our profession and its place in the healthcare marketplace, with the notable exception of the first one. However, I know that many of these issues carry some controversy and all of them require careful planning and management to ensure Doctors of Optometry continue to serve our patients with outstanding, personalized care for the remainder of the 21st century.

ASCO can and should be a leader in that planning and management, and our new Comprehensive Strategic Plan gives us a roadmap for that leadership. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Karla Zadnik for chairing the Strategic Planning Committee, to our Executive Director, Dawn Mancuso, for ably managing the planning process, and to the members of the committee and the larger community who helped create that Plan. You can find more information on our [Strategic Plan](#) here and previous issues of Eye on Education. I encourage everyone to read the Plan and to participate in its implementation, including offering suggestions for improvement and next steps.

It will require all our energy and talents to navigate the difficult course we have ahead but I am confident that our profession, and especially the educators and other professionals at our member institutions, have the skills and creativity to ensure our profession will have a great future. We owe it to people throughout the country and the world to graduate Doctors of Optometry who can care for patients and improve the quality of their lives in ways that no other profession can match.

Sincerely,

Dr. David A. Damari
ASCO President