

ASCO's Academic Affairs Committee (AAC), chaired by Dr. Melissa Trego, Dean at Salus Pennsylvania College of Optometry, partnered with the American Academy of Optometry for a student-centered session at the recently held 2017 Chicago Academy meeting. Designed for students interested in research career paths in academia or industry, the session "ASCO-AAO Optometry and Graduate Student Session: Exploring Academic and Research Career Options," featured four educator/clinician scientists who shared highlights from their career path stories in hopes of encouraging students (already are in or considering research degree programs) and sharing with them helpful guidance about research in optometry/vision science and career paths open to them in academic optometry and the vision care industry.

Panelists included session moderator and presenter, Dr. Kelly Nichols, Dean at UABSO; Dr. Mark Bullimore, Dean of SCCOMBKU; Dr. Barbara Caffery, President Elect of the AAO Board of Directors and Professor, University of Waterloo School of Optometry; and Dr. Jeff Walline, Associate Dean for Research, OSU. Opening remarks were given by Dr. David Damari, ASCO President and Dean of MCO. Answers to key questions, including "what can an extra degree do for me" and "how can a clinician get interested in research, and if they do, is it ever too late to go back to school?" were answered by the panelists. The new ASCO research in optometry video [[link here](#)] started off the session.

"In my opinion, no one wakes up one day and thinks, I am going to do research in Vision Science. Interest in optometric-based research occurs through exposure and good mentors that have passion for what they do," said Dr. Kelly Nichols, session moderator. "Curious minds that love the idea of knowledge creation and being on the forefront of new ideas are ready for the challenge of academic optometry—that moment of realization that this is for me can come while in optometry or after years of practice. My advice—just run with it when it happens and see where it leads."

An audio-recording of the session will be posted to the ASCO website soon. The AAC, as per their current yearly charge, plans to discuss more efforts and venues at which to reach out to students interested in academic and research opportunities.