

Optometry, and indeed all health professions, have entered a major period of disruption. It began with the onset of electronic health records, which doctors across all disciplines [still struggle to integrate into their practices](#). It continues with advancing technology that collects clinical data (I am including images in my definition of clinical data) much more quickly, less invasively, and more accurately than any of the techniques clinical programs teach over several academic terms, and that are still tested in some professions' national board examinations. As the technology continues to improve, it is also becoming more portable, with many new developments coming as apps for smart phones or tablet devices.

As I wrote about in my [previous column](#), ASCO is working with other optometric and cross-disciplinary organizations to make sure our institutions stay current with these trends, and that we all have a voice in how these trends affect the profession as we try to prepare our students for their future practice. As part of that effort, this March we will be hosting a discussion about the future of optometric education, **Opening Our Eyes**. We envision this discussion, which will be limited to invitees from each of our institutions and select others from organized optometry, including the AOA, AOSA, Academy, ARBO, and NBEO, as the first in a series of events in optometry. The series will help us to understand the future of healthcare and assure that optometry, the patients we serve, and those who were underserved in the old system all benefit from the changes that are coming. Some of the subsequent events will be hosted by ASCO and many others will be hosted by the other organizations that we collaborate with. Open Eyes will focus on the issues that specifically affect what we, as optometric educators, do every day and will need to do in the future, and because of that narrow focus, we have necessarily kept the scope of invitations relatively narrow.

The topics we will discuss include the declining applicant pool and its potential impact on the quality of education, the role of student debt levels, the expansion of our profession's scope and the impact of that expansion on education, the perception that a minority of our graduates are practicing to the full scope available to them by law, and the impact of technology and social media on the future of optometry. It is a very ambitious agenda for a one-day discussion, and we hope all the participants will be forthcoming so that the outcomes can help guide our profession's path to the future.