

The State University of New York College of Optometry (SUNY) recently shared with the optometric community the sad news of the passing of its Founding President, Dr. Alden N. Haffner. Current SUNY President Dr. David A. Heath remembered Dr. Haffner's contributions, saying in a press release, "Dr. Haffner has an enormous legacy that reverberates here at the college and throughout the optometric community. Without his tireless support for the profession of optometry, both in New York and beyond, as well as his prescient vision, not only for optometry but for public health and education, the college and optometry would not be where they are today." Dr. Haffner served as ASCO President in 1977-1979.



Dr. Alden N. Haffner

SUNY Optometry began classes in 1971 with an inaugural class of 23 students. Dr. Haffner remained President until 1978, by which time enrollment had grown to approximately 230 students. That year he became Vice Chancellor for Research, Graduate Studies and Professional Programs at SUNY System Administration in Albany. He served in that role for a decade, returning to SUNY Optometry in 1988 to begin a second stint as President until his retirement in 2005.

Dr. Haffner was a major champion of public health throughout his career, which was recognized through numerous American Academy of Optometry, city and federal appointments and awards. He also had nearly 200 scholarly publications during his career, mostly in the fields of public health, healthcare policy and optometric education. Dr. Haffner was credited with helping to lead a profound shift in the way optometry was practiced beginning in the late 1960s, aiding the transformation that the profession made from non-therapeutic practice toward a more broad "medical model" that was better suited to the training that optometrists received as well as the public health needs of the community.

Also: On July 7, 2016, Dr. Daniel Laby, Associate Professor and Director of the SUNY Sports and Performance Vision Center, and four third-year optometry students from his summer sports vision elective course traveled to Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox, to examine the visual abilities of 40 baseball prospects. They tested visual function, hand/eye coordination and reaction times of the players, all of whom are college prospects hoping to enter the Major League Baseball draft in 2017. Dr. Laby noted in a press release, "It was a wonderful experience for the students to put into action on the 'field' what they have been learning in class for the past several years."



Dr. Daniel Laby with students Jackie Molinda, Taylor Wolke, Emily Cheng and Catherine Dardenne at Fenway Park in Boston.