



Representatives from the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), the American Optometric Association (AOA), the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO), the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO), and the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) met in February to identify new ways for these associations to collaborate in addressing issues facing the entire profession.

Six different potential areas of collaboration were identified:

- *Scope of practice – Stakeholder organizations support recognition of optometry’s physician-level role in the health care system and seek to help ensure that scope of practice: (1) is commensurate with the education, skills, and abilities of practicing doctors of optometry; and (2) addresses patients’ visual well-being and health needs. All five associations will be involved in this initiative.*
- *Public awareness – Although optometry has been a healthcare profession for several generations, the public remains largely unfamiliar with the optometric profession. Many have a negative or limited perception of optometry. Increasing the public knowledge and understanding of what optometrists do, their training and scope of practice, and their value as a critical component of the healthcare team would contribute to patients’ improved health outcomes. By raising the public awareness of the depth and breadth of care and practice modalities within the optometric profession, there could be an increase in the pursuit of optometry as a career. Groups leading this initiative will be AOA, AAO, and ASCO.*
- *Applicant Pool Development – Attracting a robust, high-quality, and diverse pool of applicants helps the optometric profession by assuring that qualified students go on to practice successfully to the fullest scope of practice available in their individual states. These graduates fulfill their personal potential and represent the profession positively to patients, other healthcare professionals, and the public, with the ultimate goal being the best possible patient outcomes. Recent applicant trends point to challenges with optometry’s competitive position vis-à-vis other career choices. The optometric community needs to work together to identify the root causes of the limited size of the applicant pool relative to the number and size of optometric institutions and to recommend interventions that will increase the number, diversity, and quality of*

applicants. Lead groups will be ASCO, AAO, and NBEO.

- *New Technology – Advancements in technology offer opportunities for improving the delivery and accessibility of health care. Benefits and barriers to the adoption of new technologies for delivering optometric care should be identified and considered. Guidelines should be developed for the expanded use of technology as an appropriate and efficient means of improving eye care delivery in the context of appropriate standards of care. Lead groups will be AAO, AOA, ARBO, and ASCO.*

- *Optometry as a Potential Entry Point into the Healthcare System – The profession of optometry not only represents primary eye care, but optometrists are often responsible for the detection of systemic diseases. The role of optometrists in the healthcare system should be emphasized through public awareness initiatives and through collaborative education with other health care professionals. This could include patient testimonials, case presentations, continuing education initiatives, partnerships with family medicine in caring for patients with diabetes, accreditation standards and testing that require proficiency with Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice (IPECP), etc. May also include increased exposure of medical residents to optometrists to help medicine understand the value of optometry in the healthcare system. Lead groups will be AAO, AOA, ARBO, and ASCO.*

- *Post OD Education – The long-term health of the optometric education enterprise and the profession as a whole, initially rests on the shoulders of educators who train optometry students. Currently, there is limited support for advanced, post-OD educational programs designed to attract qualified, motivated recent graduates to academic optometry. Opportunities to be recognized for a specialization within the field, expansion in the number and variety of optometric residencies, financial support for those residencies and graduate education (both MS and PhD levels), and research about optometric education, would change this landscape. Lead groups will be AAO, ASCO, and NBEO.*

The participants at the meeting were:

American Academy of Optometry (AAO)

Tim McMahon, OD, FAAO – Secretary-Treasurer

Pete Kollbaum, OD, PhD, FAAO – Board Member

Lois Schoenbrun, CAE, FAAO – Executive Director

American Optometric Association (AOA)

Robert Layman, OD - Trustee
James DeVleming, OD - Trustee
Renee Brauns - Associate Executive Director

Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO)

James Campbell, OD - Vice-President
Jeffrey Yunker, OD - Board Member
Lisa Fennell - Executive Director

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)

David Damari, OD, FCVD, FAAO - President
Karla Zadnik, OD, PhD, FAAO - Past-President
Dawn Mancuso, MAM, CAE, FASAE - Executive Director

National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO)

Elizabeth Hoppe, OD, MPH, DrPH - President
Jerry Richt, OD - Vice-President
Jill Bryant, OD, FAAO, FSLS - Interim Executive Director

The meeting was held on February 16th & 17th, 2018 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The next meeting of the IOCCC will be held in June during AOA's conference in Denver.