



As part of its ongoing effort to promote graduate education and recruit potential optometry students and residents into graduate programs (through the “Marketing Plan for Graduate Education in Optometry”), the ASCO Academic Affairs Committee (AAC), in conjunction with the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), piloted a new “Ask the Experts” event on Nov. 8 and 9 at the expanded ASCO Exhibit Booth during this year’s Academy meeting in San Antonio, TX.

On hand to talk with interested students were a total of six featured experts: Dr. Heather Anderson, Associate Professor, UHCO; Dr. Joseph Bonanno, Dean, IUSO; Dr. Kelly Nichols, Dean, UABSO; Dr. Rachel Redfern, Associate Professor, UHCO; Dr. Mitch Scheiman, Dean of Research/Director of Graduate Programs, Salus/PCO; and Dr. Dean VanNasdale, Jr., Assistant Professor, OSU.

Students and residents attending Academy were made aware of the event through a variety of targeted Academy mailings and pre-conference and on-site materials; and ASCO also publicized the new opportunity via its *Eye on Education* newsletter, social media, and through exhibit hall flyers. The events attracted a total of 80 students over the two days.

“This year’s Ask the Experts event was a creative way to talk one-on-one with students considering post-OD graduate education, and even some students that wanted to get more involved in research while in optometry school,” said Dr. Kelly K. Nichols, one of the featured experts and Dean at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Optometry. “Events like this that allow specific questions to be answered in real time are often better at jump starting ideas and plans than lecture-based events. Graduate school is a very unique experience for every student, and if we could help even one student embark on a research path, we’ve succeeded,” she continued.

Ms. Carol Brubaker, Manager of Professional Affairs at ASCO, and liaison for the past eight years to the

AAC, staffed the Ask the Experts check-in area, encouraging interested students to question the experts about their own career paths and share their thoughts about the myriad career choices available in academia and research.

Materials featuring research contacts and graduate programs at ASCO institutions were available for students to peruse. “We had a lot of incentives for students – raffles, games, to-go snacks – to encourage attendance, and a really great showing our first time out at Academy,” Brubaker said. “Awareness of the importance of research, the availability of graduate programs, and the mechanisms of support are the pillars of the AAC’s marketing plan for graduate education in optometry and were embodied in the events. We were delighted to partner with Academy for this important outreach effort.” She added, “Students and residents considering academic research and career options who missed out on the personal interactive opportunities are welcome to explore opportunities online via the ASCO website.” Three ASCO YouTube Channel resources and additional print information is available at the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=holyeU0k01g> – Video: “Exploring Academic and Research Career Options” [2017] AAO Meeting (56 min.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeVqabhnawM> – Video: “Academic Research in Optometry” (4 min.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qc9s9vbxng> – Video: “[2015] Charting Your Career in Academic Optometry and Research...” (98 min.)

<https://optometriceducation.org/jobscareers/career-opportunities-for-ods-in-academia-teaching-research-needs/> – PowerPoint Presentation: “Career Opportunities for ODs in Academia: Teaching and Research Needs”

<https://optometriceducation.org/graduate-programs/> – List: Graduate Programs at ASCO Schools and Colleges