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POSITION SUMMARY

The president is appointed by the SUNY Board of Trustees upon the recommendation of the College Council and the Chancellor, and serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the College. The president reports directly to the Chancellor of the University and has overall leadership of and responsibility for all aspects of campus academic and administrative operations including the quality of education, research, and patient care, and faculty and institutional development.

The ideal candidate will serve as the principal ambassador of the College in a manner that develops and strengthens relationships with the alumni, other optometric institutions, professional associations, and government agencies for the benefit of the College. The president represents the campus’ interests within the SUNY system, with local and state elected officials and surrounding communities, and within the national optometric communities. The president of the College of Optometry also serves as a member of the SUNY College of Optometry Foundation Board of Trustees.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The SUNY College of Optometry stands out as one of five academic health centers in the State University of New York System, boasting a remarkable record of having educated half of the state’s practicing optometrists.

The future president of SUNY College of Optometry will be deeply committed to advocating for the college’s needs and recognizing the critical role that optometric education plays in the health and wellbeing of individuals across the city, state, and the wider region. This commitment will involve a balance of priorities, where the future president will be tasked with ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for their professional roles in optometry while also driving forward research initiatives aimed at enhancing patient care. This dual focus will be crucial for maintaining the College’s reputation for excellence in both education and research, contributing to the advancement of the optometric field.

In this essential role, the next president of SUNY College of Optometry will lead the institution through upcoming challenges and seize opportunities to secure its continued success.
Building the Budget

The next president of SUNY College of Optometry will need the fiscal acumen to advance strong financial management across all areas of the College. The president will need to be transparent and detailed, and involve the College of Optometry community, along with other stakeholders, in discussions and actions about revenue generation and expenditure reductions to right size the campus. They will be asked to align strategic planning and budget planning, oversee reliable operating budgets, build strategic academic business models, integrate financial matrices with long-range plans, identify new and existing resources for program and infrastructure investment, and maintain strong internal controls.

Leading Change

The College has experienced substantial growth in several critical areas: student enrollment, research funding, and providing care to the community. In 2022, a significant year that not only marked the College’s 50th anniversary but also its emergence from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the College decided to extend its Institutional Strategic Plan by an additional two years. This extension was a strategic move to incorporate the principles of the Diversity and Inclusion Master Plan into the College’s long-term vision.

With the Strategic Plan set to conclude in 2025, there will be an opportunity for the College to renew and revisit its priorities and plans for the future. This will involve exploring new academic programs and strategic partnerships. Central to these plans will be expanding the campus’ capacity through continued renovation and upgrading of existing facilities, along with the integration of new technology to support innovation in research, teaching potential, and operational efficiency. Increasing physical capacity will also entail further expanding the College’s footprint beyond New York City.

A notable development in this strategic expansion is the partnership with Upstate Medical University in Syracuse to establish an extension site for delivering the Doctor of Optometry (OD) degree program. This collaboration is poised to significantly benefit central New York by increasing the local eye care workforce, offering a more affordable optometry education option within the state, and expanding the College’s OD program enrollment by 35%. Moreover, this partnership aims to establish an “Eye Institute” as a center of excellence in education, patient care, and research, enhancing general and specialty eye and vision care services in the region.

This strategic move will not only extend the College’s footprint beyond New York City but also leverage the combined strengths of both SUNY institutions to deliver a vital health professions program at a lower cost. The collaboration is expected to spur educational innovation, interprofessional education, and collaborative practice, contributing significantly to the economic development of Syracuse and the surrounding area.

Expanding Enrollment and Student Success

SUNY College of Optometry has long been known for academic excellence, including being ranked first nationally in the Optometry Admissions Test (OAT) scores for the class of 2026. The College boasts a higher than average admissions yield and overall lower attrition rates, with its students consistently outperforming the national average on national boards (NBEO). The higher education marketplace for the health professions in the New York area is extremely competitive, especially when considering demographic shifts. This drives a need to increase awareness of the profession of optometry among a broader range of prospective students and health care advisors.
Challenged by declining numbers of traditional students, the College is developing new programs to target constituencies within and beyond the traditional market. However, these efforts will need to continue in order to expand access to a more diverse student body, including first generation and low-income students, while maintaining a deep commitment to student success and achievement. Pipeline programs will be key to raising awareness, particularly to attract racially minoritized and economically disadvantaged populations. In addition to these efforts, the College also continues to increase the number of scholarships, grants, and waivers it offers to students, a positive trend that is imperative to continue in the future.

Recognition of changing demographics includes increasing the diversity of both students and faculty, as well as advancing the culture of the college in support of these goals. Excellence in teaching and commitment to student success are already hallmarks of the College’s faculty and staff. These efforts will soon be reinforced by a new Center for Teaching and Learning, which will be dedicated to supporting and inspiring inclusive teaching and learning environments.

**EXTENDING REACH AND IMPACT**

SUNY College of Optometry is successfully graduating students who go on to become licensed practitioners, contributing to the vision care workforce. Despite this, the growing demand for vision care has created a greater need for optometrists across the U.S. The College houses the University Eye Center (UEC), one of the largest outpatient vision care clinics in the country, with newly renovated space including a pediatric wing and expanded adult primary care. The UEC serves over 60,000 patients annually, which is sufficient to meet its educational mission, although it has the potential to serve as many as 100,000 patients. While the population rebound in New York City is still below pre-pandemic levels as remote work patterns continue, in New York State the need is especially acute Upstate, which has urgent need for all health care providers. In response to this demand, the College’s partnership with Upstate Medical University not only aims to address the acute need for vision care providers in Upstate New York but also represents a strategic expansion of the College’s footprint.

The College has a rich network of community partnerships totaling 99 sites supporting students’ clinical rotations and residency programs, providing clinical, educational, and research opportunities for our students and faculty. The College has significantly expanded its role within the broader New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (NYC Health + Hospitals), the largest urban public health system in the country. Through the UEC and its extended clinical network, the College’s students, residents and faculty support over 250,000 patient visits annually.
Innovative Academic Programs

The College takes pride in the strength of its degree programs, the embrace of educational innovation and its array of value-added educational offerings. The College’s academic offerings are both broad and unique, including degree programs in optometry and vision science, as well as non-degree programs such as optometric residency education through 16 residency programs (with 43 residency positions). In addition, the College offers a range of micro-credential programs, a Graduate Certificate/MBA Program along with international programs for optometry students and optometrists and Continuing Professional Education for optometrists.

Ensuring a Strong Academic and Administrative Team

The College is a leader in education, patient care, and research, and this breadth requires ensuring a strong team into the future. As a health professions educational institution, the College must also rapidly transform its students into professionals, training them broadly, so they are prepared to practice anywhere in the U.S. Recruitment and retention of talented and committed faculty, staff, and administrators is vital for the continued success of this work and presents an ongoing challenge in the current competitive labor market. In addition, with anticipated retirements in the next five years, establishing a sustainable organizational structure and team building effort will be critical.

To do so, early career faculty require training as they assume their roles. The College has created an Early-Career Faculty Development program with mentoring support and individualized development plans.

SUNY College of Optometry is located in New York City, a global center for health care and research with a broad range of providers and expertise. Midtown Manhattan is an attractive location, centrally located with easy access to public transportation. However, the high cost of living poses a challenge for recruiting junior team members, as well as individuals from outside the region.

Advancing Research

Within the SUNY System, the College of Optometry is designated as a doctoral-research institution and is included as part of the Academic Health Center/Hospital sector. While the UEC and Clinical Vision Research Center (CVRC) provide rich opportunities for clinical research, the CVRC is under the broader umbrella of the Graduate Center for Vision Research (GCVR), which also contains basic and translational research programs. Additional opportunities for research will emerge as teaching labs are transformed into Translational Research labs and as extension sites are added and partnerships expand.

The College is home to a highly regarded Ph.D. program and enjoys $4+ million in research revenue annually. Its faculty have one of the highest per capita research revenue totals in the SUNY system and are active in a range of projects in basic and translational research. CVRC’s impressive accomplishments include 100 studies, 100% enrollment of subjects, significant funding from NIH, and over 3,500 active subjects.

The faculty are also recognized for their research contributions in a wide range of areas. However, supporting this breadth of research requires significant facilities and resources. Partnering more effectively for these research endeavors, including with other academic and health care institutions and industry, will be essential for continued success in this important work.
**EXPANDING FUNDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Careful management of resources, along with a clear sense of priorities, has contributed to a strong financial profile for the College. Despite facing challenges from the global financial crisis in 2008 and the pandemic that began in 2020, the College’s reserves have more than doubled, increasing from $9 million to $23 million. In addition, access to State construction funds has facilitated the renovation of nearly 60% of its facilities.

Continued growth of the institution in terms of new programs and continued facility improvements will require significant financial resources. To that end, a strategic approach to advancement along with development of new degree programs should be considered. Furthermore, exploring other sources of revenue, such as grants and contracts, will also need to be aggressively pursued.

Situated in the heart of Manhattan, the College enjoys tremendous facilities, made possible through access to State funding for construction. The next president must continue this success by ensuring a high level of visibility at the state and SUNY System levels.

Health care education, clinical practice, and research are distinctly important yet complementary endeavors. However, there are also competing pressures on achieving success in each area, including advances in technology, the need for exceptional personnel and facilities, and operating in a heavily regulated arena. To be effective in this environment, the next president must demonstrate visionary leadership, as well political and operational acumen.

**ATTRACTING NEW RESOURCES**

The new president will build on the current momentum and collaborate with alumni, industry partners, and other stakeholders to obtain the resources necessary to ensure that the strategic vision for the College is realized. They will need to take stock of needs in academic and student services areas, encompassing both facilities and personnel, as initial steps toward formulating new strategies for fundraising. A plan for endowment growth will necessarily be a part of that process.

Development of new resources will involve establishing relationships with corporate leaders across a wide range of related health care industries, as well as community leaders and government entities. Pursuing grant activity with foundations and government agencies will also provide other sources of revenue and provide students with additional opportunities for experiential learning.

The SUNY College of Optometry Foundation plays a vital role in securing critical resources to support the College as a leader in vision health through education, advancing research, and providing patient care. The president works with the Foundation to support the College’s key initiatives, including the development of its extension program, increased student scholarships and program support, and addressing an expanding need for charitable patient care.
QUALIFICATIONS AND DESIRED ATTRIBUTES

Degree Qualifications: An earned doctorate; a Doctor of Optometry (OD) is preferred.

Other desired attributes of the next president include:

- A visionary leader with a passion for student success, dedicated to establishing an inspiring vision for the College’s future through the development and implementation of the next strategic plan.
- A steadfast leader with unwavering commitment to academic excellence including clinical education, research, and patient care.
- A diplomat with political savvy to ensure system-wide recognition of the significant contributions of SUNY College of Optometry to both the economy and health care of New York State.
- A proven advocate for funding through state and local government, industry partnerships, and foundations to support new educational endeavors, clinic operations, and facilities projects.
- Demonstrated commitment to the growth and development of faculty, staff, and students.
- A leader with a track record of building relationships with industry, health care systems, institutions of higher education, and state and local government.
- An accessible leader who fosters an open-door policy and encourages interaction with students, faculty, and staff.
- An innovative and forward thinker with a proven record of support for acquiring technology to elevate patient care and maximize student success.
- Demonstrated experience managing large-scale capital projects.
- Ability to lead and establish effective partnerships and collaborations across the SUNY System.
- Proven ability to navigate the complex institutional rules and regulations of a large institution, skillfully managing various levels of oversight, and possessing the flexibility in learning the processes.
- Demonstrated understanding of the political landscape in optometry at the state and national levels, recognizing the importance of advancing the scope of practice in New York state.
- Demonstrated commitment to equity-minded practices, the spirit of collaboration, and an inclusive approach to leadership and learning.
- Ability to understand the challenges students experience while transitioning to a professional program and to provide compassion and support together with student affairs.
- Strong cultural competency and a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- A commitment to the highest level of personal and professional integrity.
- Familiarity with collective bargaining is critical.
The **SUNY College of Optometry**, founded in 1971, is dedicated to the education of optometrists, to the advancement of eye and vision care through research and graduate education, and to the care of communities through the provision of comprehensive visual health services. The College of Optometry is one of the 64 campuses that constitute New York’s comprehensive public university system. The campus is located in a 20-floor facility at 33 West 42nd St. in midtown Manhattan.

The College is a specialized, post-baccalaureate, doctoral-degree granting research institution with about 400 full-time students. Of these, approximately 95% are enrolled in the Doctor of Optometry professional degree program, and 10% are pursuing graduate studies through the Ph.D. degree program in vision science or the combined OD/MS program. The professional degree program attracted over 426 applications for 98 seats for the class entering in the fall of 2023. Average entrance examination scores (the Optometric Admissions Test) are among the highest in the nation, with an average entering class G.P.A. of approximately 3.60. Slightly over 50% of students are from New York State, with the remainder drawn from across the country.

To address health care workforce shortages in upstate New York, the College launched its major initiative in collaboration with the SUNY Upstate Medical Center to establish its extension program for doctoral candidates. When fully implemented, the program will accept an additional 32 Doctor of Optometry degree candidates annually (128 total enrollment).

The College supports a robust research program focused on translational applications in vision research and developing next generation evidence-based practices in eye care. At the end of FY2023, the College ranked third in the nation among schools and colleges of optometry, holding $17.4 million in grants, with an annual expenditure of $4.076 million in extramural funding. The College’s graduate research program is highly competitive with an average acceptance rate of 20% over the past five years. The Ph.D. program typically has a total enrollment of 14 to 15 students while the OD/MS program has a total of 15 to 20 students in any given year.

In support of its clinical education program, the College also provides vital vision care services to the New York City community with over 60,000 patient visits to its campus-based University Eye Center (UEC) each year. The College is home to one of the largest optometric residency programs in the country, offering unique training elements for clinician scientists, including our residency/graduate program. The College also maintains over 70 local, national, and international clinical affiliations through which students, faculty, and residents support an additional 200,000 patient visits. Central to the college’s system of affiliates is a contract-based network with 16 health care organizations that extends eye care services to all five boroughs and tens of thousands of additional patients in the New York City area.
The College of Optometry has an all-funds annual operating budget of approximately $40 million (excluding benefits), with approximately 28% percent of revenues coming from state support. Twenty-seven percent of revenues are derived from patient care; 32% from tuition and fees; and 16.4% from grants, contracts, and other sources. The College has consistently maintained a positive operating margin and held institutional reserves of over $22.38 million at the end of FY 2023.

Accreditation: The State University of New York College of Optometry is authorized to operate by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York (New York State Department of Education). The College is regionally accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Its professional degree and residency education programs are accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE).

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The **State University of New York** is the largest comprehensive system of higher education in the United States, and more than 95% of all New Yorkers live within 30 miles of any one of SUNY’s 64 colleges and universities. Across the system, SUNY has four academic health centers, five hospitals, four medical schools, two dental schools, a law school, the country’s oldest school of maritime, the state’s only college of optometry, and it manages one U.S. Department of Energy National Laboratory. In total, SUNY serves about 1.4 million students amongst its entire portfolio of credit- and non-credit-bearing courses and programs, continuing education, and community outreach programs. SUNY oversees nearly a quarter of academic research in New York. Research expenditures system-wide reached nearly $1.1 billion in fiscal year 2022, including significant contributions from students and faculty. There are more than three million SUNY alumni worldwide, and one in three New Yorkers with a college degree is a SUNY alum.

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<th>ABOUT SUNY COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY FOUNDATION</th>
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The **SUNY College of Optometry Foundation** (until recently, known as the Optometric Center of New York) provides opportunities to support vision education and eye care and to advance optometric education. As the college-related, tax-exempt foundation for SUNY College of Optometry and its affiliated patient care clinic, the University Eye Center, the Foundation stands as an example of what partnership among visionary community leaders, education, and businesses can accomplish. Since its inception, the Foundation has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to supporting vision care for underserved populations; educating the next generation of optometrists, including providing merit and need-based scholarships to students; and advancing research into the complex human visual system.

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<th>ABOUT THE COLLEGE COUNCIL</th>
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The **College Councils at SUNY** are established under Article 8, Section 356 of the New York State Education Law. Each state-operated campus has a Council consisting of 10 members, with nine appointed by the Governor and one student member elected by their peers. The chair of the Council is designated by the Governor. Appointees by the Governor serve a term of seven years. Councils are encouraged to include a faculty member and an alumni representative in regular meetings. Councils aim to build strong connections between the campuses and their surrounding communities, advocating for both the campus and the wider SUNY system. Mission, Goals, and Values
MISSION STATEMENT

The State University of New York advances visual health and patient care through leadership in education, research, and service.

INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

Leadership
We develop leaders and scholars in education, research, and patient care.

Professionalism
We conduct ourselves with integrity and civility, and embrace evidence-based practice and lifelong learning.

Inquiry
We support discovery and understanding through basic, translational, and clinical research.

Innovation
We foster an environment that promotes creativity in optometric education, research, and patient care.

Diversity
We respect the dignity of all individuals and value their unique cultural traditions and perspectives.

Service
We enhance public health by making the highest quality patient care accessible to a broad range of communities.
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

Building a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community of faculty, students, and staff is at the heart of our mission and values. As a part of the 2018-2025 Strategic Plan, the College emphasized the shared value of “service to diverse communities,” with a broad goal of making its programs accessible to all. The plan promotes the enrollment of a highly qualified and diverse student body that is reflective of the communities we serve.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) provides leadership and counsel related to inclusive excellence SUNY Optometry.

EDUCATION

DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY PROGRAM

The professional program leading to the Doctor of Optometry (OD) at The SUNY College of Optometry is four years in duration. The curriculum integrates the basic biological and vision sciences that form the foundation of clinical practice, teaches the fundamentals of optometry, and develops critical thinking for patient care and clinical decision making. Patient care begins early and continues throughout the program with increasing responsibilities under the supervision of our clinical faculty at the University Eye Center (UEC). Supervision continues through a minimum of two quarters during the fourth year at externship sites nationally and internationally.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS

The micro-credential program was launched in 2019-2020 to address anticipated future developments in eye and vision care, including the rise of new subspecialties. The college currently provides four micro-credentials: Corneal and Contact Lenses, Ocular Disease and Low Vision, Glaucoma, Advanced Vision Rehabilitation, and Pediatrics. Each micro-credential allows students to delve deeper into specific areas of optometric practice that interest them, enhancing their expertise.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN OPTOMETRIC BUSINESS LEADERSHIP/MBA

The MBA in Healthcare Leadership Program, which is awarded by SUNY Empire State College, is geared toward doctors who aspire to hospital or medical practice leadership, as well as to health care executives and senior managers in health care fields.

RESIDENCY EDUCATION

The College has had a long-standing commitment to post-graduate residency education and now has one of the largest residency programs in the country. The College began its first residency program in 1974, when the in-house Vision Therapy Residency was established. Since that time, the residency programs affiliated with and at the College have expanded to include 20 programs with 43 positions available. Program areas include Cornea and Contact Lenses, Ocular Disease, Primary Care Optometry, and Vision Rehabilitation.

RESEARCH & GRADUATE STUDIES

The Graduate Center for Vision Research (GCVR) oversees and supports cutting-edge research, ranging from studies on the fundamental properties of the brain visual system to new ways to prevent, treat, or even reverse vision loss. Current research at the College focuses on a broad range of optometric and vision science areas.
These include basic, translational, and clinical studies in state-of-the-art facilities. In the area of eye growth and refraction, investigators focus on visual control of eye growth, changes in vision function in Alzheimer’s disease and glaucoma, biometric and physiological factors in human ocular perfusion, myopia and retinal defocus, and mechanisms of accommodation and refractive error. In molecular and biology labs, researchers study mechanisms underlying cell death related to glaucoma, ocular neuropathy, and retinopathy of prematurity and pursue new avenues of neuroprotection and cell regeneration in the retina and optic nerve.

At the backbone of our research are our graduate degree programs, an MS and Ph.D. in Vision Science, which are also offered through the GCVR. There are several graduate programs offered at the College, leading to a Ph.D., OD-Ph.D., Residency-MS, Residency-Ph.D., or OD-MS degrees in Vision Science.

**PATIENT CARE**

The University Eye Center (UEC), the patient-care facility of the State University of New York College of Optometry, is one of the largest eye-and-vision care clinics in the country examining over 60,000 patients annually.

**STUDENTS**

The College prides itself on enrolling a brilliant and diverse student body with leadership skills that contribute to the creation of a vibrant community. SUNY Optometry students are among the best in the nation, demonstrating academic preparedness, commitment to the profession, along with leadership skills and engagement.

To further enrich its diverse student body, the College has historically made efforts to attract students from underrepresented groups in optometry. The College developed a plan with goals and strategies to further increase diversity and inclusion, and continues to obtain funding for the College Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP). CSTEP primarily aims to increase the number of economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented minority students entering optometry.

Student-centeredness is at the core of SUNY College of Optometry’s mission. The College currently offers a robust student support system, composed of student services; campus life; registrar; tutoring; financial aid; admissions; mental health; diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and the career development center. The student services offered by the College are currently being augmented with the imminent opening of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The center—staffed by a learning specialist, a curriculum designer, and a mental health counselor—provides a wealth of resources and programs that enhance student learning experience and promote academic success.

As part of the College’s focus on student-centeredness, the College elevates student voices by providing feedback mechanisms. Students are invited to participate in College governance through representation on various committees and Town Halls.
The College is committed to providing students with meaningful career development and advancement. To that end, the Career Development Center provides services that meet the career needs of an ever-changing workforce. Signature programs such as the Family of Mentors Program and the Annual Career Symposium, along with individualized services such as counseling, resume writing and mock interviews, enable students to envision, develop, and achieve a fulfilling career.

**FACULTY**

The College currently employs 77 full-time and 51 part-time paid faculty members. These individuals possess academic qualifications suitable for their respective roles. Many hold doctorates in related fields, often accompanied by post-doctoral research experience, and primarily instruct basic science courses. Clinical courses are typically led by residency-trained ODs, supplemented occasionally by lectures from Ph.D.s and MDs. Clinical instruction is delivered by New York State licensed clinicians credentialed by the UEC. The quantity and quality of faculty members support the College in fulfilling its educational, research, and service missions. Student-to-faculty teaching ratios in laboratories vary from 12 to 1 to 6 to 1 based on course requirements. In third-year clinics, the student-to-faculty ratio ranges from 3 to 4 to 1, while in the fourth year, it is 4 to 1. All faculty members are assigned primary appointments in either the Department of Biological and Vision Sciences, Department of Clinical Education, or the University Eye Center (UEC) and may have secondary appointments in the departments or UEC services.

**STAFF**

Currently, the College employs 282 full-time staff members, along with 51 part-time and 21 fee/hourly staff. These staff members are affiliated with various unions on campus, including United University Professions (UUP), Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), Public Employees Federation (PEF), Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU), NYS Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA), and the Police Benevolent Association (PBA).

**APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS**

Interested candidates should submit a Cover Letter and CV as well as a Diversity Statement addressing the following: “What are your philosophy and commitment related to DEI and social justice, and what demonstrable outcomes have you achieved?” to AGB Search at President, SUNY College of Optometry.

For a confidential discussion about this opportunity or to make a nomination, please contact Joy Yablonsky, Executive Search Consultant, or Concetta M. Stewart, Ph.D., Principal, at SUNYOPTPresident@agbsearch.com.

The first review of candidates will continue through April 30, 2024. The search process will be confidential throughout.

The State University of New York, College of Optometry, is an Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity/Americans with Disabilities Act employer. The College actively seeks applications from women, veterans, individuals with disability, members of underrepresented groups, or anyone that would enrich the diversity of the College.