FIFTIETH COMMENCEMENT

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
College of Optometry

50th Commencement

Gotham Hall
New York City
May 23, 2024
Founded in 1971 and located in New York City, the State University of New York College of Optometry is a leader in education, research and patient care, offering the Doctor of Optometry degree as well as MS and PhD degrees in vision science. The College also conducts a robust program of basic, translational and clinical research. SUNY Optometry is regionally accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education; its four-year professional degree program and residency programs are accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education of the American Optometric Association. All classrooms, research facilities and the University Eye Center, which is one of the largest optometric outpatient facilities in the nation, are located on 42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in midtown Manhattan.

Dr. David A. Heath
President, SUNY College of Optometry

Dr. David A. Heath retires this year after seventeen years as the President of SUNY College of Optometry. He joined the College as its third president in 2007. During his presidency, Dr. Heath led the college through a series of strategic initiatives including expanding enrollment by 30%, growing the Residency Program from 27 to 43 positions, building the research enterprise to $4.0M+ in extramural funding annually, and initiated several collaborations to ensure value-added opportunities for students. He has been a champion for increasing diversity and inclusion among the SUNY Optometry community as well as the overall profession. Focusing on service to the community, over 250,000 patient visits are conducted each year by faculty, students and residents across nearly 100 partner sites and in the University Eye Center. His dedication to the profession will continue as he guides the formation of an optometry extension program at SUNY Upstate Medical University to address the workforce needs in upstate New York.

Dr. Heath has served as the president of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) as well as a member of their Executive Committee; participated as an active member for several American Optometric Association (AOA) committees; and was a founding member of the Board of Directors for the American Board of Optometry (ABO) from 2009-2015. His work spans the globe through over ninety scholarly publications and/or presentations, extensive work with Wenzhou Medical University to increase the quantity and quality of primary eye care providers in China, and a number of awards recognizing his scholarship and contributions.

To celebrate and honor his legacy, especially his commitment to student support, we are pleased to announce a newly formed endowed scholarship. Named the President’s Scholarship, this endowed fund has been generously gifted initially by members of the College Council, the SUNY College of Optometry Foundation, and alumni. The first recipient will be awarded this fall.
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John B. King, Jr.
Chancellor

John B. King, Jr. is the 15th Chancellor of the State University of New York (SUNY), the largest comprehensive system of public higher education in the United States. As Chancellor, King and the SUNY Board of Trustees have established four pillars to guide SUNY's progress: student success; research and scholarship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and economic development and upward mobility. Under Chancellor King's leadership, SUNY has seen its largest operating aid increase in over 20 years, including double-digit percentage increases for every state operated campus and dedicated recurring annual funding for expanding mental health services, services for students with disabilities, paid internships, and research, as well as addressing food insecurity. In fall of 2023, the System saw its first overall enrollment increase in a decade and hired approximately 700 faculty members across all disciplines at SUNY’s State-operated campuses.

Before being appointed SUNY Chancellor, King served as president of The Education Trust, a national civil rights nonprofit, and Professor of the Practice at the University of Maryland College Park. Prior to this, Chancellor King served in President Barack Obama’s cabinet as the 10th U.S. Secretary of Education. Upon tapping him to lead the U.S. Department of Education, President Obama called Chancellor King "an exceptionally talented educator," citing his commitment to “preparing every child for success,” and his lifelong dedication to public education as a teacher, principal, and leader of schools and school systems.

His service in Washington, D.C. followed Chancellor King’s tenure as New York State's first African American and first Puerto Rican Education Commissioner, a role in which he oversaw all elementary and secondary schools, as well as public, independent, and proprietary colleges and universities, professional licensure, libraries, museums, and numerous other educational institutions.

Chancellor King holds a Bachelor of Arts in government from Harvard University, a J.D. from Yale Law School, as well as both a Master of Arts in the teaching of social studies and a doctorate in education from Teachers College at Columbia University.

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

John B. King, Jr.
Chancellor

OPTOMETRIC OATH

With full deliberation I freely and solemnly pledge that:

I AFFIRM that the health of my patient will be my first consideration.

I WILL practice the art and science of optometry faithfully and conscientiously, and to the fullest scope of my competence.

I WILL uphold and honorably promote by example and action the highest standards, ethics and ideals of my chosen profession and the honor of the degree, Doctor of Optometry, which has been granted me.

I WILL provide professional care for those who seek my services, with concern, with compassion and with due regard for their human rights and dignity.

I WILL place the treatment of those who seek my care above personal gain and strive to see that none shall lack for proper care.

I WILL hold as privileged and inviolable all information entrusted to me in confidence by my patients.

I WILL advise my patients fully and honestly of all which may serve to restore, maintain or enhance their vision and general health.

I WILL strive continuously to broaden my knowledge and skills so that my patients may benefit from all new and efficacious means to enhance the care of human vision.

I WILL share information cordially and unselfishly with my fellow optometrists and other professionals for the benefit of patients and the advancement of human knowledge and welfare.

I WILL do my utmost to serve my community, my country and humankind as a citizen as well as an optometrist.

I HEREBY commit myself to be steadfast in the performance of this my solemn oath and obligation.
Stephen A. Burns, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor
Indiana University School of Optometry

Stephen Burns received a B.S. in Engineering from Lehigh University and a Ph.D. in Biophysics from the Ohio State University. He is currently a Distinguished Professor of Optometry at Indiana University and the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs in the School of Optometry. Dr. Burns is a gold fellow in ARVO, as well as a fellow of the Optical Society of America (OSA) and the American Academy of Optometry. He is the 2010 awardee of OSAs Tillyer Award for contributions to vision science and the American Academy of Optometry’s Prentice Award.

Dr. Burns’ research interests are varied. While in graduate school at the Ohio State University, he worked on opponent color theory and that interest in color and early visual processing has been a major interest for his entire career. He developed his interest in the impact of disease on vision during his postdoctoral studies in the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Chicago. He has continued to pursue research that involved both clinical and basic aspects of eye research in his subsequent positions at the University of Pittsburgh (1979-1987), the Scheie Eye Research Institute and Harvard Medical School (1987-2005) and now at Indiana University. Dr. Burns’ research has typically included both the development of new technologies for studying the eye and the application of these technologies to focused investigations of the eye’s structure and function. Thus, he developed and applied psychophysical techniques for measuring cone photopigment kinetics, used nonlinear analysis of electrophysiological (ERG) and psychophysical responses, as well as developing and applying optical techniques for measuring the optical aberrations of the eye and measuring the Stile-Crawford effect.

Currently his lab is a major contributor to advances in using adaptive optics to better understand the impact of diabetes and glaucoma on the eye. His research has been funded continuously by NIH since 1982.

Richard E. Feinbloom
CEO and President
Designs for Vision, Inc.

Richard Feinbloom is the president of Designs for Vision, headquartered on Long Island NY with seventy-three offices worldwide. The company was founded in 1961 by Mr. Feinbloom’s late father, Dr. William Feinbloom, with a goal of manufacturing optical devices to help people from all walks of life through better vision. Mr. Feinbloom has continued this vision and exponentially grown Designs for Vision through his dedicated leadership, innovation, and business acumen.

Specializing in wearable devices that provide enhanced visualization through magnification and illumination, more than 100,000 optical products developed and manufactured by Designs for Vision help healthcare professionals in clinics and operating rooms across the United States improve the quality of life for their patients. The precision optical research and manufacturing conducted by Designs for Vision is among some of the most sophisticated in the world. More than 100 of these devices were created and patented by Mr. Feinbloom himself. Further, the company has the distinction of being involved with multiple NASA missions, and Mr. Feinbloom personally fitted President Ronald Reagan with telescope spectacles at the President’s request.

Mr. Feinbloom earned a Business Administration degree at Baruch College, and completed the Optical Design program at the Institute of Optics. In addition to being a past president of SUNY Optometry’s affiliated foundation and a current board member, Mr. Feinbloom has served on multiple boards of directors and advisory groups, including several specifically related to vision.
CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREE, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN VISION SCIENCE

Carol Lin
Myopia’s Influence on the Retinal Neurovascular Unit: Implications for Glaucoma Susceptibility
Advisor: Dr. Alexandra Benavente-Perez

Stephanie Aguilar
Development of a Pediatric Digital Eye Strain Questionnaire
Advisor: Dr. Mark Rosenfield

Nada Fareed
Upregulation of Gap junction Connexins in Glaucoma
Advisor: Dr. Stewart Bloomfield

Derek Ng
Digital Eye Strain and Pupillary Response to Blue Light
Advisor: Dr. Mark Rosenfield

Elianna Sharvit
Cognitive Demand, Concurrent Viewing Distances, and Digital Eye Strain
Advisor: Dr. Mark Rosenfield

Jia Ying Tan
Influence of Glaucomatous Structural and Functional Parameters on ON-OFF Perimetry
Advisor: Dr. Mitchell Dul

Sakshi Vasiu
Retinal Ganglion Cell Function in Diabetes Mellitus
Advisor: Dr. Suresh Viswanathan

Jesse Wang
Diurnal Variations in Scotopic and Photopic Flash Electroretinogram
Advisor: Dr. Suresh Viswanathan

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Diurnal Variations in Scotopic and Photopic Flash Electroretinogram
Advisor: Dr. Suresh Viswanathan

CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREE, DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY

Nouralison Abdella **
Jency Abraham **
Shaiy Agrawal *
Phoebe Ahe **
Faisal Aiwaizli
Andrea Gorczynski Alfaro *
Sadiqah Mariam Ali
Kevin Darnell Anthony Atkinson
Rachael Avizova
Rodnell Stephen Gonzales Batac *
Stacie Morgan Beene
Ilana Bronfman
Tu Cao
Kasey Kwong-Yin Chan
Lindsey Chan +
Shaoheng Chen *
Brian Chu
Kevin Cohenmehr
John DeMartino
Patrick Doughten **
Nia A Ebrahim *
Vanessa Eger
Hassan Elhage *
Nada Fareed *
Zara Farooq
Annum Fatima
Margaret Fernicola
Melanie Zena Fleyshmakher
Esther Gurell ***
Naira Hassan
Aimon Syed Hazari
Michelle Hennesch
Max Herbig *
Mariam Hessen
Howard Ho
Tram Le Thuy Hoang *
Jodie Houng *
Ahmed Mustafa Iliahi
Jasmine Fatihna Jethwa
Annika Jung
Gurleen Kaur **
Franc Kolaru
Janet Lam
Joanna Latke *
Jennifer Grace Le **
Jenilee Yuan Liang
Samantha Mahajan
Ezza Malik
Samjhana Mandal **
Alex A. Martin
Emily McDermith
Lesaw Grimmy Mebrahtu **
Laura Medina **
Simon Sakkina Faizy Mohamed Sharfraj
Jessica Moskovich **
Martin Mundackal
Kateryna Nahornyak
Derek Ng *
Andrew Nguyen
Jasmine Yen-Binh Nguyen
Elena Niyazov *
Kelsey Orzol
Nishiha Patel
Priyanka Patel
Alisa Perla ***
Jennifer Ngoc Pham
Rena Pinkhasov **
Rida Pirzada **

* Beta Sigma Kappa member
** 4-year BSK member
+ Gold Key Society member
° Microcredential Certificates
CANDIDATES FOR THE ADVANCED CERTIFICATE IN OPTOMETRY BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

RESIDENCY CANDIDATES FOR THE CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED CLINICAL COMPETENCY*

Alexis Brianna Abernathy, O.D.
Stephanie M. Aguilar, OD
Hira Alam, O.D.
Eman Al-Yousefy, O.D.
Guilnoza Azieva, O.D.
Krupa Baxi, O.D.
Lindsey C. Boody, O.D.
Veena M Bokka, O.D.
Graham K. Chung, O.D.
Tyler D'Agostino, O.D.
Caroline Quinn Donato, O.D.
Diana Marianne Doscas, O.D.
Zachary William Graham, O.D.
Elaine L. Ho, O.D.

Kristin Joseph, O.D.
Inwah Joshua Lee, O.D.
Courtney Shuiying Liang, O.D.
Avaleen Abigail Linsky, O.D.
Rachel M Luke, O.D.
Hania Mahmood, O.D.
Christina Marzelli, O.D.
Kaya E. McGuiness, O.D.
Anushka Mitesh Mistry, O.D.
Daniel Kowalsky Moskaliuk, O.D.
Jasmine Fatima Nouravi, O.D.
Travis M. Pfeifer, O.D.
Greta Danielle Pucci, O.D.
Jacob S. Rosenberg, O.D.
Monica Sanago, O.D.
Nand Shah, O.D.
Angelo Hideo Shimada, O.D.
Tara Tagami, O.D.
Nazia Tahia, O.D.
Lydie Tshiyouy Tubene, O.D.
Tiffany Tsai, O.D.
McKenna Lynn Turrill, O.D.
Sadthrika Venkat, O.D.
Jamie Wang, O.D.
Donald Matthew Graham Weatherbee, O.D.
Max Williger, O.D.

* to be presented during residency ceremony

COMMENCEMENT AWARDS

CHANCELLOR'S AWARD
for Student Excellence
Hassan Elhage
Sakshi Vasiu

BETA SIGMA KAPPA AWARD
for Academic Excellence
Kristin Joseph
Sakshi Vasiu

DR. FREDERICK W. BROCK MEMORIAL AWARD
for Outstanding Clinical Performance in Vision Training
Andrew Gorczynski Alfaro

COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRISTS IN VISION DEVELOPMENT AWARD
for Excellence in Vision Training
Michelle Hennes

COLUMBUS CLASS OF 1936 AWARD
for Academic & Clinical Achievement in Ocular Disease
Kateryna Nahornyak

CLASS OF 1991 PACE SETTER AWARD
for Excellence in Primary Care
Shraiy Agrawal

DR. STANLEY EISENBERG MEMORIAL AWARD
for Excellence in Practice Development and Administration
Jennifer Grace Le

DR. WILLIAM FEINBLOOM MEMORIAL AWARD
for Outstanding Clinical Proficiency in Low Vision
Celesse Vazquez

IRA GOLDFARB MEMORIAL AWARD
for Excellence in Low Vision
Nia A. Ebrahim

DR. LOUIS HERRMANN MEMORIAL AWARD
for Outstanding Compassion in Patient Care
Kelly Li Zhu
COMMENCEMENT AWARDS presented during a ceremony this morning

MR. AND MRS. IRVING UNGER AWARD for Excellence in Optometry
Jessica Moskovich

THE JOSH WALLMAN, PHD MEMORIAL RESEARCH AWARD
Elianna Sharvit

ESTHER J. WERNER MEMORIAL AWARD for Academic Excellence
Jessica Moskovich

DR. MAX COHEN MEMORIAL AWARD for Volunteer Commitment to Community Service
Jina Yoo

DR. BENJAMIN FREED MEMORIAL AWARD for Community Service
Yanlei Wu

MORTON L. KIMMELMAN MEMORIAL AWARD for Student Leadership in Organized Optometry
Lindsey Chan

BILLIE M. LYONS MEMORIAL AWARD for Distinguished Service to the College Community
Jennifer Grace Le

NEW YORK STATE OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION AUXILIARY AWARD for Outstanding Service to the Class of 2024
Margaret Fernicola

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AWARD
Sponsored by the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
Celesse Vazquez

ABRAM A. HUBAL, OD, STUDENT SERVICE AWARD
Sponsored by The New York State Optometric Association (NYSOA)
Aafreen Zaidi

ALCON AWARD
Sakshi Vasiu
for the Outstanding Case Report on the Use of an Alcon Product

GP LENS INSTITUTE CLINICAL EXCELLENCE AWARD
Elianna Sharvit
for Outstanding Clinical Proficiency in Contact Lenses

DR. WILLIAM M. EISENBERG MEMORIAL AWARD
Gurleen Klair
for Excellence in Ocular Disease

GOOD-LITE PEDIATRIC AWARD
Nouralison Abdella
for Excellence in Pediatric Optometry

ESHENBACH LOW VISION AWARD
Nouralison Abdella
for Excellence in Low Vision

JOHNSON & JOHNSON EXCELLENCE AWARD
Janet Lam
for Excellence in Clinical Contact Lenses Patient Care

OPTELEC LOW VISION AWARD
Alisa Peña
for Excellence in Low Vision

COOPERVISION 4TH YEAR CONTACT LENS CLINICAL EXCELLENCE AWARD
Jasmine Jethwa

COMMENCEMENT AWARDS presented during a ceremony this morning
GREETINGS & CONGRATULATIONS

The College Council extends our deepest congratulations to the Class of 2024. We are proud of all you have accomplished to reach this pivotal milestone in your academic journey. As Doctors of Optometry and vision scientists armed with the finest professional education, you will play a vital role in our healthcare system, and in doing so, change lives for the better. We salute you and all the good work you will do in the years to come.

Gretchen Stone, MAT
Chair, College Council

Today you join the alumni network with nearly 3,600 members who offer you best wishes as you celebrate Commencement. This marks the beginning of your journey as part of the alumni community and we are so proud to welcome you. We hope you enjoy this profession as much as we do, and we encourage you to become involved in advancing the profession and the alumni association.

Vito Proscia, OD ’91
President, Alumni Association

GREETINGS & CONGRATULATIONS

The SUNY College of Optometry Foundation Board of Trustees salutes the Class of 2024 on your tremendous achievement. You are well prepared to join the community of eye care professionals and rise above whatever challenges may appear. Be proud of your SUNY Optometry connections and remember those who supported you along your journey, reaching out to help those who come after you. Congratulations!

Richard Soden, OD ’79
President, SUNY Optometry Foundation

The New York State Optometric Association (NYSOA) offers our most heartfelt congratulations and welcome into the profession upon your graduation. As you begin your careers, we look forward to working alongside you as mentors, colleagues, and friends. Become a member today and help champion this wonderful profession for those who will work alongside you. Best of luck!

Marina Su, OD R’13
President, NYSOA
ACADEMIC REGALIA

The academic gowns that you see today represent a tradition inherited from the universities of the Middle Ages. Those institutions were founded by the Church; the students, being clerics, were obliged to wear clerical gowns and caps at all times.

Throughout the ages, this regalia has been altered to accommodate both fashion and fancy. The once round caps were transformed into square mortarboards and the cowls, originally attached to the gown and used for warmth as a shoulder cape and bag for the collection of alms, became a separate garment that was fashioned into the colorful hoods currently worn.

These gowns are usually black or the official color of the institution in the United States. The way they are worn and their cut distinguish the wearer’s academic degree.

The hood is the most outstanding and colorful feature of the regalia. It is lined with the color of the institution from which the wearer received the degree. Its size and shape indicate the wearer’s degree; and its collar is the color of the academic discipline: Liberal Arts, white; Fine Arts and Architecture, brown; Science, golden yellow; Music, pink; Divinity, scarlet; Law, purple; Engineering, orange; Philosophy, blue; Medicine, green; Public Health, salmon; Forestry, russet; and Nursing, apricot.

Seafoam green is the color adopted by the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry and filed with the Collegiate Bureau of Academic Costumes. The velvet trim on the hood is seafoam green. The blue and gold satin lining of the hood represent the traditional colors of the State University of New York.

CEREMONIAL MACE

SUNY College of Optometry commissioned a ceremonial mace in honor of the College’s 50th anniversary. The mace reflects the three pillars of our mission – education, research, and service. It further incorporates elements related to optometry and the patients we serve in the heart of New York City.

The ceremonial mace is used by Colleges and Universities to symbolize scholarship and integrity. It is used to signify that the proceedings of an event have an official sanction and is only present when the president and other presiding dignitaries are in attendance.

The mace was designed and fabricated by Preston Jones.

Congratulations Graduates!
Welcome to the Alumni Family!