

# Transforming Vision for a Better Future



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## Transforming Vision

As I reflect on the past year, and my first full year as President, I am grateful for the continued support from the SUNY College of Optometry community. The College continues to thrive and transform as a leading academic medical center for optometry.

This year, we welcomed Dr. Melissa Trego as Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs, announced Dr. Lisa Ostrin as the future Vice President and Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, and appointed Dr. Marina Su, R'13, as Vice President for Clinical Affairs and Executive Director of the University Eye Center. These appointments position the College with a strong and dynamic leadership team to advance our mission and vision transforming eye care through education, research, and innovative patient care.

We also welcomed four new members of the College Council, bringing additional expertise and perspective from highly experienced alumni and outstanding clinician scientists committed to the future of the College.

One of our most significant undertakings this year was the development of the College's next five-year Strategic Plan. Shaped through a process with broad engagement across the institution, the plan encompasses seven core goals touching nearly every area of the College. It provides a detailed roadmap for the years ahead that focuses on collaboration and bringing excellence, innovation, and engagement into everything we do. The full plan will be released in early 2026.

Progress also continued on the Upstate Extension Program. While adjustments to the timeline were necessary, the leadership for the program is now firmly

in place. During the past year we launched the Pilot for Remote and In-person Student Mastery (PRISM), a pilot program with a cohort of first-year students to ensure the effectiveness of our teaching and learning model for the Upstate program. We will continue PRISM to help us roll out the Upstate program and look forward to welcoming the entering class to our Syracuse campus in 2027.

This year also marked a personal milestone with my presidential inauguration. I was deeply honored by an amazing inauguration ceremony and celebration, which brought together representatives and colleagues from across optometric education, partner organizations, and SUNY leadership along with our students, faculty, and staff. The themes highlighted that day — advancing excellence, driving innovation, enhancing patient care and access, and serving communities across New York State — continue to be themes that guide us every day.

We have accomplished so much this past year, and there is much more ahead. As detailed in this report, the College's research programs remain strong and are growing, enrollment numbers and quality of students are high, and our impact on patient lives is transformative.

I look forward to continued engagement with our community at upcoming College events, alumni functions, and around campus.

**David Troilo, PhD**  
President  
SUNY College of Optometry



## Celebrating the Inauguration of Dr. David Troilo

The State University of New York College of Optometry celebrated the inauguration of David Troilo, PhD, as its fourth president during a ceremony on October 21, 2025, at the New York City Bar Association. The milestone event brought together leaders from across the SUNY system, state officials, faculty, students, alumni, families, friends, and representatives from professional organizations including the American Optometric Association, the New York State Optometric Association, and the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry.

Together, they honored Dr. Troilo's years of service and his vision for advancing education, research, and patient care in the field of optometry.



**“Together, by combining our dedication to research, education, and patient care — we become a powerful force that propels the profession of optometry, eye care, and vision health forward.”**

— Dr. David Troilo

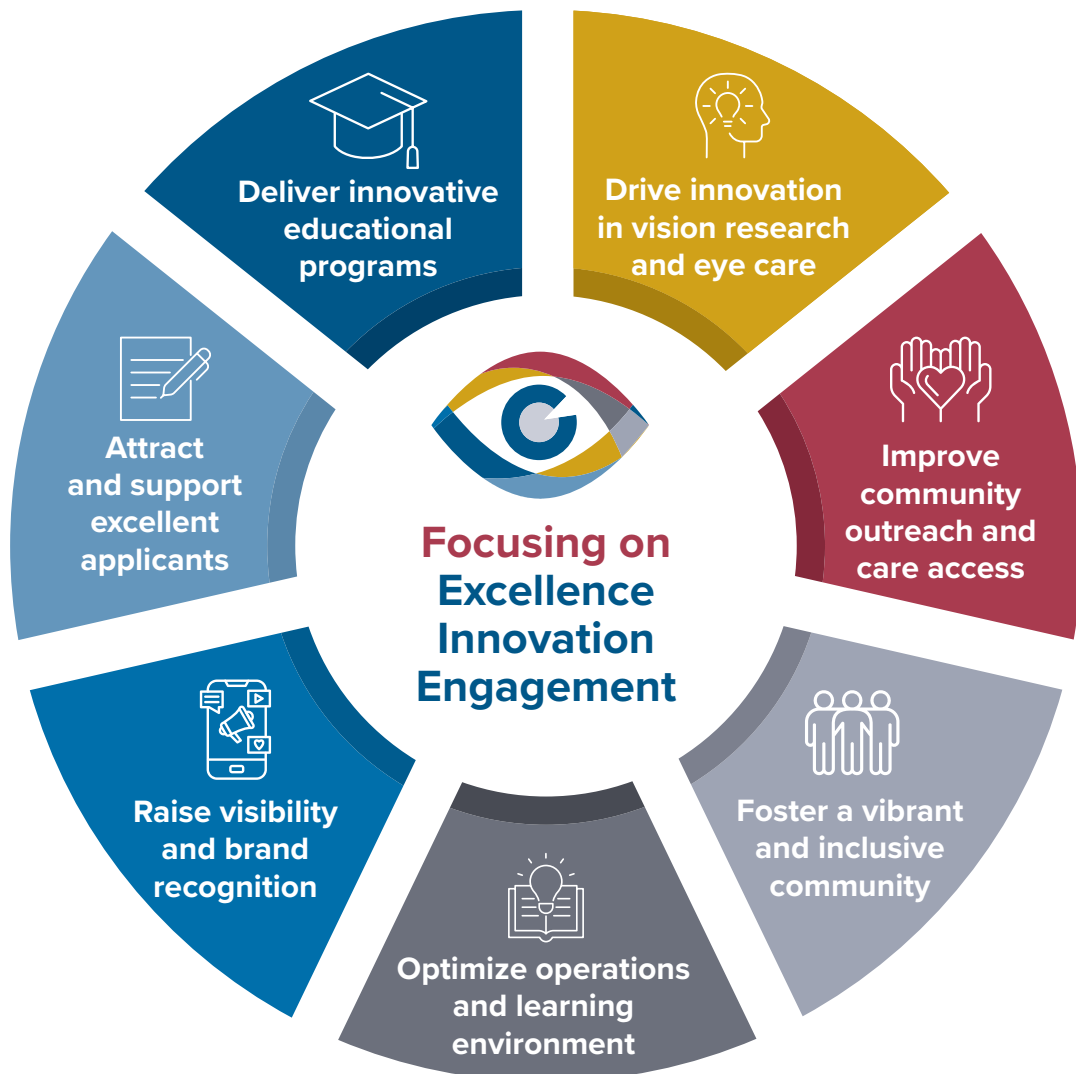




## Transforming Vision for a Better Future

Over the past year, a large working group consisting of faculty, staff, administrators, and students considered and debated the current landscape and future needs of optometry education, research, and patient care. Learning from the previous strategic plan and incorporating feedback from numerous constituencies, the Strategic Plan Working Group developed a five-year roadmap with seven strategic goals to foster excellence, innovation, and engagement across all areas of operation and raise the College's profile as a leading optometric academic health center.

### Our Goals



# Mission

The State University of New York College of Optometry advances eye and health care through leadership in education, research, and service.

# Our Vision

Transform eye and vision care as a world leading optometric academic health center.

# Institutional Values

## Leadership

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

## Innovation

We foster an environment that promotes creativity and discovery to advance the future of eye care.

## Inquiry

We support discovery and understanding through basic, translational, and clinical research and embrace evidence-based practice and lifelong learning.

## Service

We enhance public health by making the highest quality patient care accessible to a broad range of communities.

## Professionalism

We engage the internal and external college communities with integrity, respect, civil discourse, and transparency.

## Diversity

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



Arathy Kartha, PhD, FAAO

## Investigating Vision Restoration and Sensory Processing

*Dr. Arathy Kartha is a low vision researcher working at the intersection of cutting-edge technology and vision rehabilitation. She leads the Multisensory Integration in Visual Impairment Lab at the College. In a recent interview, Dr. Kartha shared insights into her team's work in this space.*

As vision scientists, we want to study and understand vision. Our work in the lab is a combination of vision and neuroscience, assessing how people with visual impairment interact with their environment and perform daily activities. Our translational research involves working closely with clinicians like Dr. Chun in the Low Vision Clinic and patients.

### Low Vision Therapies

People who have low vision, whether from an acquired or a genetic problem, have permanent vision loss – something that cannot be corrected by conventional methods (glasses, medications, surgery). I am very excited that there are many vision restoration treatments that are in clinical trials now.

For example, visual prosthesis is a recently developed technology that replaces the damaged cells with an electronic chip to artificially stimulate the retina. It's an engineering marvel but the outcomes are limited. There is potential for improvement, however, with training and a better understanding of how patients

functioned before the treatment.

### Sensory Processing

A large part of the brain is actually dedicated to vision because vision is the most dominant of all senses. When we don't have visual input because of a visual impairment, those areas get taken over by the other senses and the visual cortex is used to process auditory information or information from touch, smell, and so on.

When a person who has had very low vision for many years receives treatment and regains 20% more vision, they have to actively be involved in retraining and reactivating their brain for visual use.

Every individual integrates their senses differently. That is why we study their visual perception and auditory and tactile processing to understand what is happening before and after treatment. Are they able to process vision while processing hearing? Are those senses balanced or completely dominated by hearing? And at what stage is that cross over between the senses happening?

We have a way to mathematically analyze this with the goal that when people come out of these treatments, they have a customized training program using baseline information. It will help them to slowly transition to a life using the newly gained vision in addition to the other senses. It's still early stages for these treatments and we're testing to see if this program works.

Scan to learn more:





From left: Kang, Rief, Troilo, Wohl, Larbi

### Recognizing First Wohl Lab Graduates

Dr. David Troilo joined Dr. Stefanie Wohl to celebrate the graduation of **Seoyoung Kang, PhD, Alexander Rief, MS/OD, and Daniel Larbi, PhD.** Dr. Larbi and Dr. Rief studied the mechanisms of retinal degeneration and Dr. Kang investigated retinal development and regeneration.



### Research Spotlight

The *Encyclopedia for the Eye* has become a valued comprehensive resource for vision researchers, practitioners, and educators. The 2nd edition included, for the first time, a dedicated section on Müller glial cells, authored by Associate Professor **Dr. Stefanie Wohl.** The predominant glia in the retina, Müller glia constitute the primary research focus of the Wohl Laboratory at SUNY Optometry. These cells play an essential role in retinal health, in particular for cone photoreceptors, and are instrumental in disease progression. Recent findings by the Wohl Lab position Müller glia as critical therapeutic targets for molecular interventions aimed at slowing

disease progression and preventing vision loss and a promising endogenous source for retinal regeneration. The lab's insights into the mechanisms of retinal development paves the way for the development of improved molecular reprogramming tools that hold significant promise for vision restoration therapies.

Scan to learn more:



### Landmark Study on Children's Eye Development

**Dr. Jingyun Wang,** Associate Professor and Director of the Pediatric Vision Research Lab, published a ground-breaking study in *Ophthalmic and Physiologic Optics* examining the developmental patterns of eye growth in children with accommodative esotropia, a common form of childhood eye crossing. The study reveals key differences in ocular growth patterns and informs future care for children with crossed eyes.

Scan to learn more:





From left: Deborah Amster, Jingyun Wang, Marilyn Vricella, Shelby Johnson

### National Award for PEDIG Studies

The Pediatric Eye Disease Investigator Group (PEDIG) awarded a clinical research site team led by **Marilyn Vricella, OD**, with the Performance & Quality Award last spring for achieving a perfect patient quality score for two research studies. Among more than 100 clinical sites, SUNY Optometry was the only site to receive this prestigious honor based in part upon patients completing their required visits within the designated time frames and delivery of outstanding data quality. The College previously received this award in 2017 and has also been recognized as PEDIG Site of the Month three times in the last decade.



From left: Ambrose, Pensyl, Manasse

### Clinical Vision Research Center Faculty Promotions

Clinical Vision Research Center (CVRC) research optometrist **Denise Pensyl, OD, MS, FAAO**, was recently promoted to Adjunct

Clinical Professor. The CVRC's **Daphne Ambrose, OD**, and **Josianne Manasse, OD**, were also promoted to Adjunct Assistant Professors. The three faculty were recognized for their dedication and leadership in vision science research. Each investigator has made important contributions across many kinds of studies, using their experience as clinical caregivers, principal investigators, effective communicators, and teachers.

## Select Federal Grant Recipients of \$100k+

In a challenging year for federal grant funding, the College's research enterprise continues to remain strong.

### Dr. Jose-Manuel Alonso

Functional Connectivity in Primary Visual Cortex

### Dr. Alexandra Benavente-Perez

Molecular Mechanisms of Emmetropization and Experimental Myopia at Single Cell Resolution, Myopia and Glaucoma, Linked via Mechanotransduction Mechanisms Affecting the Ganglion Cell Complex

### Dr. Arathy Kartha

Development of a Multi-sensory Rehabilitation Program for People with Ultra Low Vision

### Dr. Carol Ren Lin

The Effect of Myopia on Retinal Ganglion Cells, Astrocytes and Vasculature, and its Relationship to Glaucoma Susceptibility

### Dr. Robert McPeck

Saccade Target Selection in Naturalistic Visual Search

### Dr. Stefanie G. Wohl

The Role of Retinal Progenitor microRNAs for Late-stage Progenitor Cell State and Müller Glia Reprogramming

### Dr. Qasim Zaidi

Shape Distortions seen by Amblyopic Children: Perceptograms and Neural Models, Orientation Processing Deficits in Amblyopia: Neural Bases to Functional



**\$3.79M**

Total Grant Activity



Melissa E. Trego OD, PhD

## New Dean Focuses on Faculty and Student Support

*A seasoned educator, clinician, and leader in optometric education, Dr. Melissa E. Trego joined the College in June as Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs. She recently reflected on what drew her to optometry, her career in academia, and the future for optometric education.*

### **Q: How did you get interested in optometry?**

My grandfather was a diabetic who wasn't doing well with his vision. And he just wanted to read his

Bible. I remember taking him to his appointments and his ophthalmologist said there was nothing he could do. Then, when I went to see my optometrist, John Ciummei, OD, who had gone to the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO), he said "bring your grandfather in." Dr. Ciummei ended up helping my grandfather, utilizing various devices, so my grandfather could read his Bible.

When that happened, I thought to myself this is it, this is what I want to do — because this was someone who I loved so much who wanted something to improve his quality of life and Dr. Ciummei made it happen. I was a biochemistry major, so I had all of the prerequisites. I applied to PCO — I wanted to go where Dr. Ciummei went — and that was the best decision I ever made. Second only to coming here.

### **Q: How did that lead to teaching and academic affair ?**

I've always described optometry as a choose-your-own-adventure, because you can go into a VA hospital, into private practice, a commercial practice, industry, or academia.

For me, academia made sense. I love working with students, I love teaching, I love thinking outside of the box. Every year there are questions that students will ask and I think, I can't believe they made that connection. It makes me realize that there are many different ways to teach something

and that makes me a better teacher.

Plus, in academia and academic leadership you can influence the profession exponentially because you're able to influence students and the way they are going to practice, the clinicians they will become, which then impacts the lives of their patients.

### **Q: Can you describe your leadership style?**

It's important for me that the people I interact with feel heard and supported. I have a responsibility to be transparent and accountable and, ultimately, I view my role here to make sure that students, faculty and staff have the resources they need in order to do what they need to do and be successful. And I want to make sure that I'm not going to ask them to do anything that I myself wouldn't do.

### **Q: What's the academic landscape for the next 5 to 10 years?**

I think it will be a completely fluid process because the profession is changing, how we learn is changing, and how we deliver healthcare is changing. We are going to embrace the use of all these newer technologies — artificial intelligence, machine learning — to make sure that our students are well equipped to understand critical thinking even in light of all these various technologies. And one of my goals is to make sure that SUNY is at the forefront of that.

**“I've always described optometry as a choose-your-own-adventure – because you can go into a VA hospital, into private practice, a commercial practice, industry, or academia.”**

— Dr. Melissa E. Trego



## From Local to Global, Optometry Students Provide Community Care

Students demonstrated their commitment to making the highest quality patient care accessible to a broad range of communities through local and global service work this year. The **Student Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (SVOSH)** club conducted multiple trips to provide vision care services to those who do not have access to regular eye care in Grenada, Mexico, Panama and Senegal.

The **Fellowship of Christian Optometrists** also traveled overseas last spring. Six members joined alumna Dr. Mariana Maeda '20 in visiting different indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Mexico to provide free eye exams, glasses, sunglasses and eye drops.

Closer to home, a number of students partnered with the **Lions Club** to provide vision care at the summer and fall Special Olympics games in New Jersey. In early September, students joined Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman for her district's 5th Annual Community Day, providing vision screenings to over 50 adults and children. Students also collaborated with Tzu Chi Medical on a vision screening event for nearly 40 patients in Queens, NY. Dr. James Chuang organized the event with Dr. Joy Harewood and Daria Harrison in November.



## College Receives Prestigious HEED Award

For the third year in a row, SUNY College of Optometry was the recipient of the Health Professions Higher Education Excellence in Distinction (HEED) Award. The annual Insight Into Academia HEED Award recognizes colleges and universities committed to academic excellence and fostering inclusion and belonging across their campuses. SUNY Optometry was one of a handful of optometry schools to receive this distinction.

## PRISM Evaluates New Model for Hybrid Learning

The Pilot for Remote and In-Person Student Mastery (PRISM) launched in Fall 2025 to evaluate remote instructional elements planned for the SUNY Optometry Upstate Extension Program in Syracuse, which is set to launch in Fall 2027. A select cohort of first-year students opted into the program. PRISM adapted two of their required courses to include both in-person and remote elements aligned with the future academic model for Upstate. Early feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with students noting the benefits of a small cohort and enhanced faculty interaction.



## Student & Resident Spotlight

**384**  
Students

**26**  
Student Clubs

**38**  
Residents

**19**  
Residency Programs

**422**  
Enrollment



**88**  
Foundation Scholarship Winners



## Class of 2029 Snapshot

**104**  
Students

**3.7**  
Average GPA

**350**  
Average OAT Score

**7%**  
Former CSTEP Interns

**20%**  
First Generation College Students

**26%**  
EyeCARE Camp Alum



## The Journey to Become a Healthcare Professional



Dina Gad, Class of 2027

*Dina Gad, Class of 2027, is the current Student Council President. She acts as a liaison between students and College leadership on topics related to the student body. Originally from Brooklyn, Dina graduated from Seton Hall with a BS in Biology and an English minor.*

### **Q: What drew your interest to optometry?**

I always knew that I wanted to do something in the medical field but I wasn't necessarily drawn to medical school. I was looking for alternatives and found a shadowing position in optometry that was open. In my last semester of undergraduate, I took the OAT and then interviewed with Optometry - one thing led to another and I thought this is the path that I'm destined to be on.

### **Q: What surprised you most about the program?**

The commitment. It's definitely a huge time commitment because you have either labs or lectures in the mornings and your day can end at 8:00 pm with clinic.

It is also a major personal commitment because you're dedicating yourself to becoming a healthcare professional. You have to invest in yourself to a major degree because you're transforming into this person who's not just responsible for themselves, but also responsible for the health of other people. The program is just as much a personal transformation as it is an academic one.

### **Q: How does your class support each other?**

You get really close to your own lab section, typically about 25 students. A lot of the time you'll practice techniques on other students before you see patients in your third year. You have to lean on each other in terms of learning your clinical skills because you can mess up on classmates but not on a patient!

Learning from the older students is also very valuable, leaning on them as well for their support, expertise, and experience.

### **Q: What's your advice for first year ?**

Give yourself grace: you're entering in a new environment that is different from everything you experienced before. While the school does provide you with resources and support, it does take time to adjust to the new lifestyle. You won't learn it all on the first day, so remember not to put too much pressure on yourself and give yourself grace to make mistakes and grow from them.

### **Q: Any thoughts on post-graduation plans?**

I'm not entirely sure though I'm potentially interested in academia. I like working with younger students. Even though they are just two years younger than me, they're so new to everything optometric that everything is taught from scratch; it really is a whole new world of knowledge. I like helping people in that way, so I think academia could potentially be a career option, in addition to seeing patients. I'm very interested in vision therapy and head trauma and would like to explore those subspecialties as well.



From left: Lucille Hindley, Sia Pyati, Melanie Feliz, Lauren Hermina, Anny Shi, Namira Zaman, Edgar Cuapio-Diaz, Sammie Hersh, Teresa Tai, Renee Chan, and Dr. David Troilo

### College Launches New Presidential Scholarship

This fall, SUNY Optometry proudly introduced the Presidential Scholarship, one of the most significant student awards in the College’s history. Established under the leadership of **Dr. David Troilo**, the Presidential Scholarship provides one full year of in-state tuition to three students in each class, recognizing academic excellence, leadership, clinical proficiency, and research innovation. Over the course of the four-year OD program, 15% of the class will receive one year of free tuition, reducing financial barriers and opening doors for students from every background. The first twelve recipients of the award were announced during the College’s and Foundation’s annual Scholarship Dinner event in November.

### SUNY Students Embody Leadership

The Muslim Optometric Student Association (MOSA) Treasurer **Fatima Al-Jahmi** and First-Year Liaison **Rowan Almontaser** accepted Charity Week USA’s Seeds of Service trophy in recognition of MOSA’s fundraising to support orphans and children in need around the world.



The New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians gave the Presidential Special Recognition for Student Leadership to **Sophia Kahn** and **Lorenzo Stampone** in honor of their work as club presidents.

### Student Wins ABB Challenge

ABB Optical Group named **Kaitlyn Nguyen** one of the winners of their annual Optometry Student Challenge. Nguyen will present her research poster in Las Vegas at the 2026 Global Specialty Lens Symposium.

### Investing in Health & Well-Being

As a healthcare degree, earning an OD requires a high level of mental and physical commitment from students who can sometimes feel overwhelmed. Recognizing this concern, SUNY Optometry continues to invest in supporting its students. **Jacyln Hunt, LCSW**, the on-campus mental health provider, spearheads mental health support from presentations on the importance of prioritizing mental health to providing psychoeducation on adjustment to the OD program and living in New York City. The aim is to connect students with information, resources, and services needed while reducing concerns on stigma. Additional mental health and wellness resources include individual counseling, access to SUNY telepsychiatry network, and TalkCampus, which provides confidential peer to peer connections. Interactive group programming such as therapy dogs, yoga, and meal prep 101 also brings the campus community together around wellness.





Nicole Greevy with her husband, Todd Faulkner

## Our Impact: From a Patient's Viewpoint

*Nicole Greevy is a long-term University Eye Center (UEC) patient who experienced a traumatic episode with her vision.*

Sight is a gift and often one that is not fully appreciated until something bad happens. I learned this firsthand three years ago.

In August 2022, I injured my eyes in a “perfect storm” of unrelated events. I was going to a concert and had put in contacts for the first time in a while. Before the concert, I spent some time in an overly chlorinated indoor swimming pool. I had also just started a nasal steroid spray because of lingering COVID symptoms.

Throughout the evening my contacts really bothered me. I repeatedly removed them, rinsed them in the proper solution, and reinserted them — probably five times over seven hours. When I finally got home and took the contacts out, my vision was a little cloudy, but I figured it would be

fine by the morning. But, it was not.

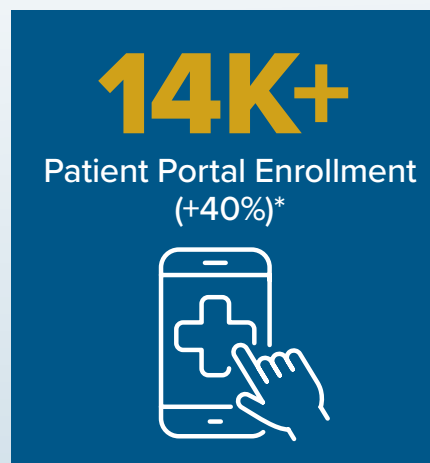
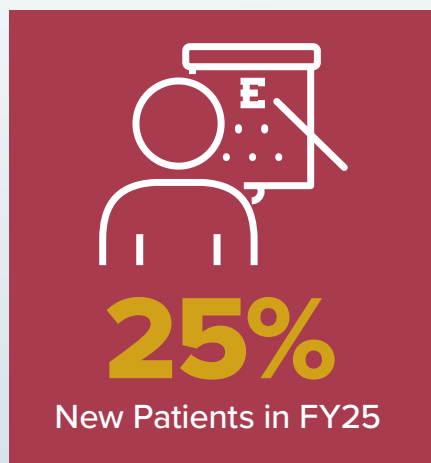
The next day, I felt like I was looking through a very dirty window and when I rubbed my eyes, they started to hurt — a lot. It was terrifying. My husband led me to the University Eye Center where the staff could not have been kinder or more patient as they quickly figured out what happened. We learned that the

combined events from the previous evening had led to scraping off 80% of the top layer of both corneas! If I had not sought immediate treatment, I might have permanently damaged my eyes.

Luckily, I got amazing care at UEC. They saw me every single day for the next week and gave me contact lens bandages to protect my eyes while they healed, along with antibiotics and eye drops. They even contacted my GP over the weekend to request pain medication. Every step of the way, they explained everything so I understood what they were doing and why. I felt safe and cared for.

I was lucky; my corneas healed with no scarring, and the doctors at UEC helped educate me to reduce the chances of it happening again. One doctor even wrote a paper about my injury, making it a learning experience for future students. Maybe someday it will help someone else who also has a “perfect storm” of things that happen to their sight. That person will be very lucky to be cared for by a SUNY Optometry graduate.

All I know is that I’m so grateful to the University Eye Center for saving my eyesight.



\*increase from prior year

# \$203,594

Charitable Care



## Enabling Access to Care

Providing high-quality eye and vision services for individuals with little or no access to care has been a cornerstone of the SUNY College of Optometry patient-care mission for decades.



For the last decade, the UEC has partnered with Care for the Homeless (CFH) as a referral site for clients in need of eye and vision care so that they may meet health care, educational and employment goals. In the last year alone, UEC received more than 300 referrals from CFH. For some homeless patients, a visit to the eye doctor may be their only opportunity to receive health care services all year.

Homeless and marginally housed populations have a higher prevalence of visual impairment relative to the general population. They are at greater risk for health conditions which can remain undiagnosed and untreated, such as glaucoma, diabetes, and hypertension. This is also a patient population that believes they'll be turned away by providers, treated poorly by the system, and/or that they can't afford care.

Eye and vision care are essential for these individuals, as appropriate visual functioning including prescription eye glasses can help them take part in the tutoring, remedial education, GED preparation and computer skills training that can put them on the path to gainful employment and independence through CFH.



# 55,976

Patient Visits

# 16,334

Referred Visits  
(+10%)\*



\*increase from prior year

## University Eye Center Leader Retires

**Liduvina Martinez-Gonzalez, MS, LFACHE**, retired from her role as Vice President for Clinical Administration and Executive Director of the University Eye Center (UEC). During her 35-year tenure, she progressed from an assistant director for clinical administration in the then University Optometric Center to UEC Executive Director.

Under her guidance, the center expanded clinical services and enhanced clinical and patient service technologies in response to the evolving needs of a growing and diverse patient base. She oversaw the dramatic modernization and renovation of the Pediatric and Primary Eye Care Clinics. Martinez-Gonzalez also prioritized staff development and mentored numerous individuals, fostering professional growth opportunities.

As a mark of the community's esteem, she received the College's inaugural President's Merit Award in Excellence and was named one of Vision Monday's 2015 Most Influential Women in Optical. Her retirement celebration drew a number of special guests including former and retired colleagues such as Monica Fuller, Dr. Ralph Gundel, Nancy Kirsch, Dr. Cathy Pace, and Dr. Richard Weber who all joined the College community in thanking her for her years of dedication and service to the College.





# Engagement with Our Community



## Dr. Robert Chun Participates in Groundbreaking NASEM Report

As a member of the consensus committee convened by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), Associate Clinical Professor **Robert Chun** participated in the creation of a highly influential report on visual field testing methods for disability determinations. NASEM, the leading scientific body

in the United States, brought together leading vision experts to assess current practices and recommend standards for evaluating visual impairments. In recognition of his significant contributions to low vision rehabilitation, vision science research, and public health, Dr. Chun was the only optometrist to participate among the distinguished group of experts.



## New Vice President and Dean for Research

Nationally recognized vision scientist **Lisa Ostrin, OD, PhD, FAAO, FARVO**, brings extensive NIH-funded research, teaching innovation, and leadership experience to her new role as Vice President and Dean for Research. Dr. Ostrin will join SUNY Optometry in June 2026 from the University of Houston College of Optometry, where she is a tenured professor and a primary investigator for two NEI R01 awards.



## Celebrating Our Community

The College community celebrated its 17th Annual Recognition Awards Ceremony to mark the exceptional contributions and achievements of Optometry's faculty and staff.

## Years of Service Honorees 2025

### 20 Years of Service

Rockley Lawes  
Brian Martin

Audra Steiner

Susan Weinstein  
Andrea Yang

### 35 Years of Service

Dalphanie Heyward  
Evan Kaplan  
Liduvina Martinez-Gonzalez  
John Rivera  
Mark Rosenfield

### 45 Years of Service

Sherry Bass  
Richard Soden

### 25 Years of Service

Wayne Chen  
Robert Pellot

### 30 Years of Service

Jacqueline Martinez  
Marilyn Vricella



**Students Receive Highest Academic Honor From SUNY Chancellor**

Brandon Cohenmehr, '25, and Kendra Kim, '25, received the prestigious 2024-2025 Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence, the SUNY system's highest honor for students. The award recognizes students for their achievements throughout their time at a SUNY institution, including their success in academics, leadership, campus involvement, community service, and the arts.

**Chancellor's Awards Faculty and Staff**

Scholarship and Creative Activities:  
**Jingyun Wang**  
 Associate Professor  
 Director of the Pediatric Vision Research Lab

Excellence in Teaching:  
**Amy Steinway**  
 Associate Clinical Professor

Excellence in Faculty Service:  
**Diane Calderon-Villanueva**  
 Associate Clinical Professor

Excellence in Professional Service:  
**Sudeep Lamichhane**  
 Director of Capital Projects

**SUNY Optometry Welcomes New Clinical Faculty**



**Tak-Man Kimberly Fung,** '20, 'R21  
 Clinical Instructor



**Daniel Epshtein,** '15  
 Associate Clinical Professor



**Blair Germain**  
 Assistant Clinical Professor



**Divya Nandwani,** '12, 'R13  
 Assistant Clinical Professor



# Alumni Engagement



## Alumni in Focus Tour

The Alumni in Focus Tour is SUNY Optometry's new traveling event series designed to bring our alumni community together beyond New York City. Hosted by President David Troilo and the Alumni Affairs team, these casual receptions take place at local venues in cities across the tristate area and beyond.

Scan to learn more:



The first events took place in Syracuse and Nassau County this fall. Each stop on the tour fostered open dialogue and provided opportunities for professional networking, social connection, and updates on the College's latest initiatives. Visit our alumni relations site for updates on 2026 cities and dates.



## Alumni Weekend & Honors



Alumni Honorees from left: Lam, Petrosyan, Tai

celebrated three outstanding alumni with **Dr. Tamara Petrosyan** '09, R'10 leading the honors as the College's 2025 Alumna of the Year; **Dr. David Tai**, '18, recognized as Alumni Mentor of the Year; and **Dr. Amy Lam**, '15, R'16, named the Alumni Rising Star.

Alumni from as far as Australia and across the country came together this fall to celebrate with former classmates and honor distinguished colleagues as part of the Alumni Weekend programming. During the reunion, the Class of 1985 reactivated their class giving to secure a legacy scholarship supporting an OD student.

The College also recognized its first 50th Anniversary Class from 1975.

At the annual President's Brunch & Alumni Awards, the College

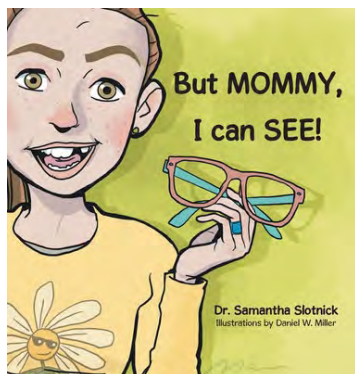


## VOSH/International Appoints Dr. Molnar Weiss as President

**Dr. Victoria Molnar Weiss, '89**, was recently installed as the new President of VOSH/International. A volunteer-driven organization, VOSH facilitates vision care worldwide for underserved communities. As an optometry student, Dr. Weiss joined the SUNY Optometry SVOSH chapter. Today she continues as a VOSH member, offering humanitarian vision services in Honduras, Guatemala, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua and the United States. Dr. Weiss provides patient care for residents of more than 15 nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Central Virginia.



## Alumna Publishes Children's Book About a Child's Eyeglass Journey



**Dr. Samantha Slotnick, '04, R'05**, a behavioral optometrist practicing in Scarsdale, New York, published her new book, *But MOMMY, I can SEE!*, that centers around a young girl who has trouble remembering to use her glasses for learning and reading in school. The charming tale helps to normalize wearing glasses and encourages children to listen to their optometrist in order to have healthy vision for a lifetime.

## Dr. Saysha Blazier Elected NYSOA President

**Dr. Saysha Blazier 'R11** was elected to serve as the New York State Optometric Association (NYSOA) President in 2025. A partner of South Shore Eyecare Associates in Staten Island and a fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, she has served on both the NJSOP & NYSOA Board of Trustees. Dr. Blazier has received numerous awards for her leadership within the field and remains dedicated to the development and mentoring of future optometric leaders.



## Richard Soden Receives AOA Award

**Dr. Richard Soden '79**, a longtime faculty member and leader at SUNY Optometry, received the American Optometric Association's (AOA) 2025 Distinguished Service Award, recognizing more than four decades of contributions to clinical education, low vision rehabilitation, and healthcare policy. Dr. Soden has served in numerous leadership roles at SUNY Optometry, including Vice President for Clinical Affairs and Executive Director of the University Eye Center. He currently serves as the Director of Healthcare Development for the College and as the Board President for SUNY College of Optometry Foundation.



# Infrastructure & Facilities



From left: Dr. David Troilo, VP of Clinical Administration Liduvina Martinez-Gonzalez, Dr. Diane Calderon-Villanueva, and Dr. Michael McGovern at the grand opening of their new, state-of-the-art Primary Eye Care Clinic in March.

## Creating Modern, Sustainable Spaces

Nearly every floor was touched by upgrades in 2025 as the College renovated laboratory, classroom, patient care, and administrator space. Incorporating modern design, utility, and comfort in the planning, the revamped areas optimize space use and provide energy efficient sustainable facilities necessary to support the College's teaching, patient care, and research needs.



**Eyewear Center**



**Eleventh Floor Classroom**



**Center for Teaching & Learning  
Conference Room**



**Center for Teaching & Learning  
Reception Area**



**Third Floor Student Lounge**

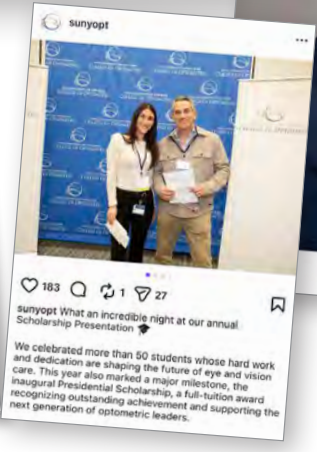
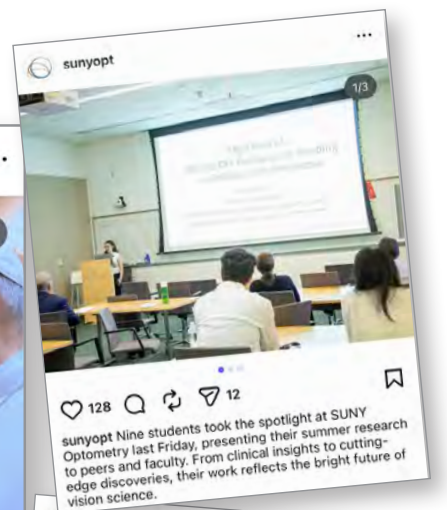


# Visibility & Engagement

## Expanding Our Reach & Growing Our Community

From welcoming our students to NYC to being welcomed at the Vatican, the past year has been full of opportunities to celebrate our relationships both locally and globally across our social media and digital platforms.

Be sure to follow @SUNYOpt and @universityeyecenter to stay connected on upcoming alumni events, news about the College, and occasions to connect. For more information about clinical services, visit [universityeyecenter.org](http://universityeyecenter.org).





# Foundation Impact

## Annual Value of Vision Awardees

In October, with nearly 150 attendees, the SUNY College of Optometry Foundation celebrated three outstanding leaders with its Visionary Awards:

**Dr. Millicent (Millie) Knight; Michelle Lewis; and Susan Olivo.** Each has advanced access, equity, and innovation in health and vision care through their advocacy, partnership, and support of the Foundation's mission. They exemplify the transformative impact of working across healthcare, business, and philanthropy to improve outcomes in vision and health care.

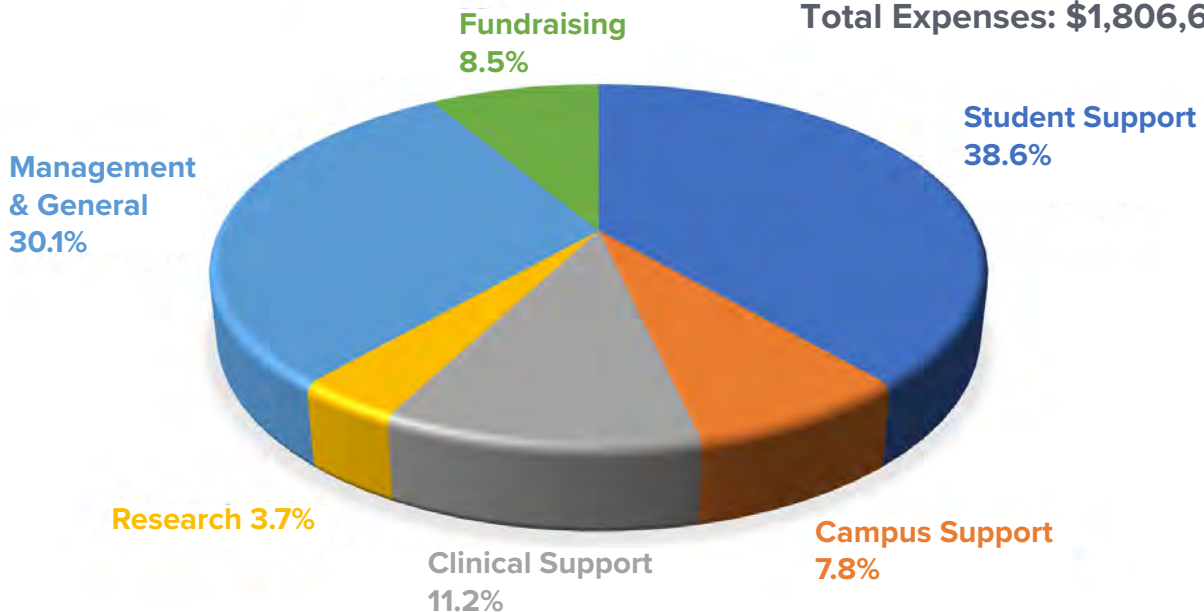


Scan to learn more:



## 2025 Functional Expenses

Total Expenses: \$1,806,649



As of December 31, the Foundation's net assets are approximately \$14.5 million. The 2025 audit conducted by Sax, LLP shows how funds were used to support students, patients, research, and the College community.



From left: Dr. Blair Germain and Dr. Ritu Bajaj

## Grant Bolsters Resources for SUNY Optometry and Syracuse Community Health

This year, SUNY College of Optometry Foundation received a generous \$400,000 grant from the **Lavelle Fund for the Blind, Inc.** The two-year grant will transform eye care services in Upstate New York and bolster resources for SUNY Optometry’s development of a new OD program on the campus of SUNY Upstate Medical Center in Downtown Syracuse, which will address Central New

York’s eye care workforce shortage. It also establishes a partnership between SUNY College of Optometry and Syracuse Community Health to expand eye care services for underserved populations in Central New York. The grant includes the hiring of **Dr. Blair Germain**, an additional optometrist at Syracuse Community Health, outfitting additional exam space, and community outreach programs.

The Lavelle Fund has developed and grown a strong partnership with SUNY Optometry and its Foundation that extends well over 15 years. This long-term collaboration has allowed SUNY Optometry to create a partnership in China with Wenzhou Medical University, offering externship opportunities for students and providing care to members of the community. Within the partnership, they have also provided funding for several community health centers to extend eye care access across the state. This grant and the subsequent creation of the SUNY Optometry program in Syracuse are yet another example of the success of this ongoing partnership, creating workforce opportunities while serving communities across the state.

Scan to learn more:



## Named and Endowed Scholarships Create Lasting Impact

SUNY College of Optometry honored more than 70 students at its annual Scholarship Presentation in November, awarding over \$1 million in total scholarship support — including \$619,250 distributed by the SUNY College of Optometry Foundation.

This year also included two additional new scholarships, underscoring the continued growth of the College’s scholarship and philanthropy programs. Over the past two decades, scholarship support at SUNY Optometry has expanded significantly, now benefiting more students than ever before and helping reduce debt for future eye care providers across New York and beyond.

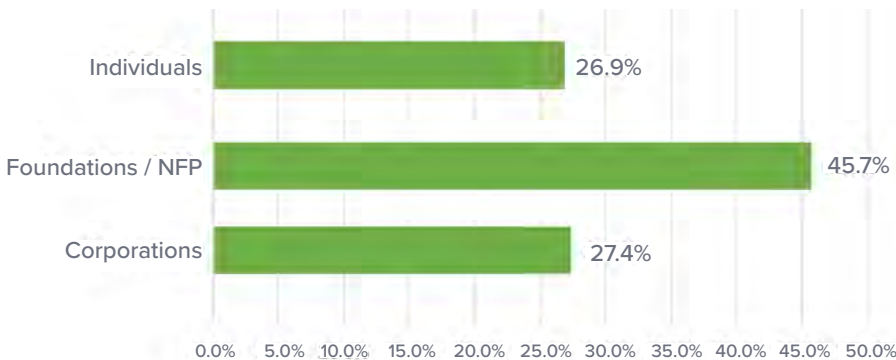
Scan to learn more:



**“With growing demand for skilled eye care providers, these scholarships help ensure that cost does not stand in the way of training the next generation of optometrists. We are grateful to every donor whose commitment strengthens our College and our community.”**

— Dawn Rigney, Executive Director of the SUNY College of Optometry Foundation

## Giving by Constituency



The Foundation seeks support from a variety of sources each year. As we look to 2026 and the 70th anniversary of the Foundation, we will be working to strengthen fundraising to support key strategic plan initiatives for the College including scholarships, free and low cost patient care, and community outreach programs.



President's Council

## Foundation Board of Trustees

- Richard Soden, OD, '79**  
President
- Thomas P. Farrell**  
Vice President
- Dennis P. Gehr**  
Treasurer
- Dawn Rigney, MPH**  
Executive Director and Secretary
- Marge Axelrad**
- Jason Eckert**
- Mark S. Feder, OD, '83**
- Richard Feinbloom**
- Kevin E. Gioia, MD**
- Ronald M. Millman, OD**
- William J. Moran, MBA, CPA**
- Christopher J. Quinn, OD**
- Aravella Simotas**
- David Troilo, PhD**
- Jerry Warner**
- Claudia Rouhana\***
- Beryl Snyder, Esq.\***
- Harold Wilshinsky\***
- Ryan Raynaud '26\*\*\***

## President's Council

- David Troilo, PhD**  
President
- Guilherme Albieri, PhD**  
VP for Student Affairs and Engagement
- Stewart Bloomfield, Ph , FARVO**  
VP for Research
- David Bowers, MP, MBA**  
VP for Administration and Finance
- Guerda Fils, MS**  
Assistant VP for Human Resources
- Carolina Gomez-Jones, MS**  
Executive Associate to the President
- Joy Harewood, OD**  
Chief Diversity Officer
- Liduvina Martinez-Gonzalez, MS**  
VP for Clinical Administration and Executive Director, University Eye Center
- Wendy Ravitz, JD**  
Chief Campus Counsel
- Dawn Rigney, MPH**  
Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Executive Director, SUNY College of Optometry Foundation
- Richard Soden, OD**  
Director of Health Care Development
- Melissa Trego, OD**  
VP and Dean for Academic Affairs



New Members of the College Council:  
From left: Murray Fingeret, Ali Freese, Chris Colburn, Dawn Chivers (Donald Hood not pictured.)

## College Council

- Gretchen Stone (Chair)**
- Dawn Chivers, OD**
- Christopher J. Colburn, OD**
- David J. Dexter, OD**
- David P. Dozack, OD**
- Murray Fingeret, OD**
- Ali M. Freese, OD**
- Donald Hood, PhD**
- James R. Ruhl, PhD**
- Dina Gad, '27\*\*\***

## Alumni Association Board

- Mary Botelho, OD, '17**  
President
- Kaira Kwong, OD, '12**  
Vice President
- Sophia Johnson, '23**  
Secretary
- Samar Awad, OD, '92**
- Sherry Bass, OD, '80**
- Katie Brogan, OD, '18**
- MJ Bustamante, '23**
- Marianna Butera, OD, '21**
- Anna Marie Fernandez, OD, '85**
- Mark Gendal, OD, '80**
- Vito Proscia, OD, '91**
- Diane Russo, OD, '10**

\* Trustee Emeritus  
\*\*\* Student Representative



## Financials

<b>2024–2025 Receipts</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>IFR</b>	<b>Research Foundation</b>	<b>Total</b>
Tuition, Fees, Deposits	\$13,871,161	\$470,400	-	\$14,341,561
State Support	\$12,344,152	\$653,464	-	\$12,997,616
Clinics	\$1,550,004	\$10,207,354	-	\$11,757,358
Other	\$2,011,564	\$(498,222)	\$3,797,487	\$5,310,829
	\$29,776,881	\$10,832,996	\$3,797,487	\$44,407,364
From (to) Fund Balance Reserves				(\$200,961)
<b>Total Receipts</b>				<b>\$44,608,325</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>IFR</b>	<b>Research Foundation</b>	<b>Total</b>
Payroll	\$26,207,933	\$6,526,622	\$2,101,223	\$34,835,778
Other than Payroll	\$4,670,944	\$3,528,949	\$1,572,654	\$9,772,547
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$30,878,877</b>	<b>\$10,055,571</b>	<b>\$3,673,877</b>	<b>\$44,608,325</b>

<b>2023–2024 Receipts</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>IFR</b>	<b>Research Foundation</b>	<b>Total</b>
Tuition, Fees, Deposits	\$13,364,411	\$337,469	-	\$13,701,880
State Support	\$11,951,562	\$23,790	-	\$11,975,352
Clinics	\$1,550,004	\$10,301,993	-	\$11,851,997
Other	\$2,255,562	\$459,899	\$3,923,052	\$6,638,513
	\$29,121,539	\$11,123,151	\$3,923,052	\$44,167,743
From (to) Fund Balance Reserves				(\$1,858,345)
<b>Total Receipts</b>				<b>\$42,309,398</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>IFR</b>	<b>Research Foundation</b>	<b>Total</b>
Payroll	\$23,186,770	\$7,560,035	\$1,816,950	\$32,563,755
Other than Payroll	\$4,793,522	\$3,024,020	\$1,928,101	\$9,745,643
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$27,980,292</b>	<b>\$10,584,055</b>	<b>\$3,745,051</b>	<b>\$42,309,398</b>

Source: For State support, including campus-generated revenue, receipts and disbursements are taken from the SUNY Business Intelligence data system. For the Research Foundation, receipts and disbursements are taken from the Expenditure Profile Report, including both sponsored programs and corporate accounts.



33 West 42nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036 • (212) 938-4000  
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