Message From the Dean

Making Connections Through Service

It is a pleasure to share some of the many ways that our alumni, students, faculty and staff are serving our profession and communities throughout the world. Optometry affords us a tremendous opportunity to deliver the precious gift of sight. We should not underestimate the improved quality of life that we share each day. The impact of that service extends well beyond the campus and eye care centers. Similar examples of noteworthy service occur daily in student organizations including the Student Volunteers for Optometric Service to Humanity (SVOSH), the National Optometric Student Association (NOSA) and the Fellowship of Christian Optometrists (FCO). These exemplary service activities often commence before students begin their professional studies (see page 5) and continue long after they complete their degree. The community service contributions of our alumni daily enrich the lives of those living in countless communities throughout the region and beyond.

Best regards,

Larry J. Davis, O.D.
Dean

Dean Larry Davis Completes Term as President of the Heart of America

Dean Larry Davis and Dr. Ellen Weiss (92) enjoying the alumni reception with UMSL alums Brett Liesemeyer (85), Stuart Anderson (84), and Scott Haugen (84)

It was almost 25 years ago when he first came to the UMSL College of Optometry to participate in a postgraduate program. He then joined the faculty of the St. Louis University Department of Ophthalmology where he also became a co-investigator of the prestigious National Eye Institute sponsored Collaborative Longitudinal Evaluation of Keratoconus (CLEK) multi-center clinical study. He then, in 2000, became the youngest Dean in the history of the College of Optometry. He has held numerous leadership positions which have included those associated with the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry, the National Board of Examiners in Optometry, and the St. Louis Optometric Society. However, for Dr. Larry Davis, being President of the Heart of America Contact Lens Society has been particularly special. “The opportunity to serve on the Heart board is among the highlights of my professional career. In the past several years we have also implemented many changes. A few of these changes include: all classes being COPE approved, “Heart” hours accepted in all 50 states, online registration with enhanced website, audience response during CE, live patient presentations, member benefit DVDs and exhibitor vouchers, enhanced emails to registered members, OE tracker, class notes online or with a memory stick, along with many behind the scene changes to make your HOACLS experience better. We had an unprecedented interest from sponsors and exhibitors for our 50th congress. That is a testimony of the great value that the Heart projects throughout the region.” UMSL graduates who now serve on the Board of Directors of the Heart of America feel that Dr. Davis performed his responsibilities very well. Dr. Ellen Weiss (92) commented: “Dr. Davis’s contribution to optometry is commendable, and it’s been my great
Ellen Weiss Elected President of Heart of America

The definition of multitasking is the ability to perform several tasks simultaneously. It can also be defined as Dr. Ellen Weiss. She had three children before she entered optometry school. She graduated four years later after achieving academic excellence at the UMSL College of Optometry. She then became President of the Nebraska Optometric Association. And then, on February 12th, Dr. Ellen Weiss (‘92) was elected President of the Heart of America Contact Lens Society becoming just the second UMSL graduate to achieve this prestigious position. She also follows Dean Larry Davis as President of Heart. How has her history prepared her to handle this important responsibility for the next two years? “I graduated Valedictorian from Omaha Technical High School, and attended the University of NE-Omaha on a Regents Scholarship, earning my Bachelor of Science in Biology Degree. I had three children while an undergraduate. Paul was born in 1982, and twins Adam and Rachel were born in 1984. I half-jokingly tell people that having three children in less than two years is what motivated me to apply to optometry school—I knew I didn't want to be a full-time mom. I entered optometry school in 1988, and found attending optometry school while raising three small children pretty intense. Luckily, my husband Carl has always been a fantastic supporter of my ambitions. I do think having a family while in professional school kept me grounded, helped me to prioritize, and taught me to multitask.”

Her optometric experiences have also demonstrated her ability to be a leader. “My first job out of school was in the ophthalmology department at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. I was the first optometrist they had employed, and am happy to report that although I no longer work there, they currently have three optometrists on staff. Working alongside two glaucoma specialists and a retinal specialist, helping train ophthalmology residents, plus the patient exposure I had, was a great experience for me. Three years later I joined Millard Family Eyecare, and have been here ever since. We now have three full time optometrists. Although I examine patients of all ages, I do see a large number of pediatrics. I'm a consultant for many of the surrounding school districts, and in addition to examining visually-impaired children, I see children with autism, Down Syndrome, and other special needs. I didn't realize while an optometry student that this area of practice would call to me, but I love it. I receive many referrals from parents, vision teachers, and school nurses. My husband Carl and I just celebrated our 29th wedding anniversary. Our three children are all married, and I have three grandchildren, Austin (8), Alaina (6), and Allison (2). Carl is an artist, and these last few years has expanded into large commissioned art pieces for different universities, churches, and monuments.”

Ellen is also very prepared to be President of the Heart of America. “Being a board member of the Heart of America was a goal I set when I was President of my state association. I love the fact that twelve volunteer board members with no paid staff put on this incredible meeting in Kansas City every February. The great thing about being a board member of the Heart is the lifetime friendships I've

Continued, page 3
Carnegie Foundation Honors UMSL

In January it was announced that The University of Missouri-St. Louis has earned a 2010 Community Engagement Classification from the prestigious Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. UMSL was recognized for the depth and breadth of its institutional commitment to—and engagement with—the greater community.

UMSL is one of 115 U.S. colleges and universities to receive the designation—and one of four in Missouri—which encourages colleges and universities to “generate socially responsive knowledge to benefit communities,” according to Carnegie President Anthony Bryk as reported in an UMSL media release.

One of the important factors cited in this report pertained to the College of Optometry and is cited below. “The College of Optometry's Mobile Eye Center travels around the community, serving children with vision problems who otherwise wouldn't receive eye care.

The service is part of the rotation for third and fourth year students in the pediatric specialty clinic and pediatric externship.”

Ellen Weiss Elected President of Heart of America (cont. from page 2)

developed with optometrists from other states, and their spouses. Dr. Larry Davis and I came on the board the same year. In addition to Heart matters, we find time to chat about UMSL and changes that are occurring there. Dr. Davis is very complimentary and supportive of Dr. Weiss. “She and her husband Carl have a love of family and are very generous with their time as consistent and regular volunteers with VOSH. Ellen also volunteers for Lion's International and the Special Olympics in addition to her work as a partner in Millard Family Eye Care, a vibrant professional practice in Omaha Nebraska. She attended the Heart as a student and from that time has wanted to serve as president. She is just one example of the reasons that the board remains committed to providing opportunities for students to attend the congress.”

Ellen, who received the UMSL Distinguished Alumni Award in 2004, has definite goals for her tenure to lead this exceptional organization. “The Heart just celebrated its 50th Anniversary. As President, I'm facilitating a strategic planning meeting for the board, to look at where we want to be 10 years, 20 years, 50 years from now. Our exhibit hall has sold out twice in the last five years, and we're maxed out in the hotel. Industry sponsorship and trends evolve, and I want to make sure going into our next 50 years that the Heart of America Congress continues to be the premier meeting in the Midwest.”

NEWS & NOTES

John Peterson (’11) and his wife Lara are the proud parents of Skylar, born on January 9th.

Amy Foster Herr (’07) gave birth to a son, David Carroll Herr III, born January 19th. He weighed 8 lbs 14 oz.

Tina (Jones) Dunkin (’10) is the proud mother of Kenneth Lowell Dunkin III, who was born on January 28th and weighed 10 lbs 3 oz.

Amanda Williams Bissell (’04) and her husband Greg are happy to announce the birth of their twins, Jacob and Julia, born February 1st. They join an older sister, Katie. Congratulations!
Optometry Faculty Member Featured in UMSL Publication

Dr. Angel Novel (‘02) was featured in the November 23rd edition of “UMSL Newsroom,” a publication read by the campus community and the media, highlighting the accomplishments of UMSL faculty members. As reported by Ryan Heinz in this article, the College of Optometry Eyes on Diversity program has the mission to recruit and retain underrepresented students. Funded by an Optometry Education Diversity Mini-Grant awarded by the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry to Dr. Novel, the College of Optometry will continue to collaborate with the Bridge program at UMSL. This latter program allows St. Louis-area high school students to have the opportunity to learn about the profession of optometry during a five week course beginning in May. Participants will learn how to perform optometric pre-testing procedures, shadow local optometrists, listen to educational presentations, and learn technical skills. It has the potential to increase the diversity of optometrists in the St. Louis area according to Dr. Novel in this article: “Increasing diversity is essential to the profession of optometry, as it will allow optometrists to evolve with the changing dynamics of the patients [for whom] we provide care.” Assisting with this program is Natissia Small, director of the precollege programs at UMSL. Dr. Novel is currently an Assistant Clinical Professor of Optometry and was recently appointed Faculty Coordinator of Admissions.

Alan Wegener (‘12) Elected Vice-President of the AOSA

The UMSL College of Optometry once again has a national optometric student leader. Alan Wegener was recently named Vice President of the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) by AOSA Trustees and Trustee Elects from all schools and colleges of optometry. He will be replacing Remi Miljavic (‘11) who has been serving in that capacity this year. Jennifer Sidun (‘13) will be assuming Alan’s former position as AOSA Trustee from UMSL.

The American Optometric Student Association was initiated in 1968 by then-student Raymond I. Myers, OD, Clinical Professor at the College of Optometry and he is understandably quite proud of the recent impact our students have had on a national level. “I have had the privilege of watching some of the student activities this year and the students are active in representing us well nationally. Locally, Alan Wegener led a successful campaign to tie AOSA membership directly to student fees that was part of a larger effort he led nationally for AOSA to reduce this routine but time consuming organizational effort. Alan’s officership is the second in a list of victories which started several years ago with Drs. Brett Sobiersalski, Whitney Coleman, and Jennifer Redfern. They began to encourage AOSA local leaders to get involved with national optometric affairs either in committees or aspiring to national officerships. Since AOSA trustees were elected in the second semester of first year, an immediate effort that produced Remi and Alan as national officers is a measure of their success.”
UMSL Pre-Optometry Club Help Countries in Need of Vision Correction

The UMSL Pre-Optometry Club and their Advisor, Dr. Barbara W. Brown (‘88), were highlighted in a recent UMSL media release. The following represents excerpts from this release.

After last year's tragic earthquake in Haiti, Pre-Optometry Club students at the University of Missouri-St. Louis wanted to do something. So they sought used eyeglasses for Haitians and people in other developing countries. They collected 223 pairs (see photo on right). Now, they're shooting for even more. "There is always a need," said Cortney Luehrmann, club president.

Dr. Brown said the kindness of the UMSL community last year was partly responsible for the collection returning this year. That generosity, however, was not a surprise, she said.

UMSL, student-decorated collection boxes are set up on the Millennium Student Center Bridge on North Campus and in the Marillac Hall lobby on South Campus.

Once the collection ends, the eyeglasses will be turned over to Volunteers of Optometric Services to Humanity (VOSH), an international organization dedicated to the provision of eye-care services for those below the poverty line or without access to local eye care. The UMSL College of Optometry has a very active Student VOSH chapter.

Luehrmann, who also oversaw last year's collection as the Pre-Optometry Club president, said she experienced first-hand, as a child, what it was like to not clearly see. "I don't wish that frustration on anyone," said Luehrmann, a Los Angeles native and senior at UMSL. "Helping people is the main reason that I want to be an optometrist. It is even more important to help the people in developing countries who cannot easily receive these health-care benefits."

For more information how and where to donate eyeglasses, e-mail Cortney Luehrmann at cm1q6b@umsl.edu or call Dr. Barbara Brown at 314-516-6030.
pleasure to serve on the Heart board with him these last five years.” Dr. Tom Greene (‘85) agreed: “Working with Dean Davis as been an honor and a pleasure. This is my first year on the Board of the Heart of America and his steady hand and guidance has enabled us to have a very successful 50th anniversary congress.”

Dr. Davis is also quite aware of how the Heart is able to consistently provide an outstanding educational meeting without any staff members. “Everyone on the board is invested in the success of the meeting and ultimately the organization. Without exception they have been accomplished practitioners, leaders in their region and dedicated participants in this organization. I am humbled to have had the opportunity to be part of that rich tradition. Everyone recognizes the great tradition and feels an obligation to carry that into the next generation.”

It began as a small educational meeting among friends to enjoy each other’s company and learn more about contact lenses. Fifty years later, while other regional meetings have declined or ceased to exist, the Heart of America Contact Lens and Primary Care Congress continues to flourish with record numbers of attendees and exhibits. Why has this meeting thrived while other regional meetings have been less successful? According to Immediate Past President Dr. Larry Davis it is the result of camaraderie, education and innovation. “Fifty years ago, a small group of friends led by Dr. Frank X. Hartigan recognized the need for post-graduate education related to the art and science of contact lens care. Their vision was to provide a forum for doctors to interact, educate, and challenge one another in order to become outstanding contact lens and vision care practitioners. As they pursued that goal there was a commitment to invite the best and most innovative speakers and thinkers to lead the education programs. The legacy of that formative group was the largest continuing education meeting in the world devoted primarily to contact lenses. Recognizing the need and seeking to remain relevant, the Heart leadership has broadened the topical areas for CE throughout the decades. Now the Heart hosts approximately 1500 doctors, para-professionals, students, exhibitors, and sponsors each February.

While the topical areas may have shifted, that commitment to high quality and innovative CE has remained.”

What has been equally remarkable over the years has been the growing relationship between the Heart and the College of Optometry. Beginning with the first alumni gathering consisting of the graduating class of 1984, an alumni reception is held annually on Friday night at the Heart of America. Although the Heart serves the Midwestern region (i.e., Kansas, Missouri, and surrounding states) and generously provides $10,000 in grants to deserving optometry students from that area, the relationship of such a large regional meeting with one specific College of Optometry may, in fact, be unique. UMSL’s students and alumni are almost exclusively from this region. Most UMSL graduates and all interested students are located within a few hours of one of the best educational meetings in the country. For the students it represents a great networking opportunity with both practitioners and exhibitors, the opportunity to observe timely clinically-based presentations from some of the most knowledgeable

Class of 2013 students enjoying the UMSL reception: Brandon Ridder, Katie Volk, Angel Husher, Jake Hayward, and Steve Branstetter
Heart of America and UMSL (cont. from page 6)

UMSL College of Optometry Heart of America grant recipient Stephanie Loy (‘11) (fourth from left) is surrounded by the other award recipients as well as Dean Larry Davis and Dr. Ellen Weiss. (hoacs.org)

experts in the world, an opportunity to work as a monitor, and a well-deserved break from the rigors of the optometric curriculum (see sidebar).

For UMSL alumni, it is an opportunity to see old friends with the likelihood that a large number of their graduating class will be present at the meeting. This tradition began with the first graduating class. “Not only has Heart of America become a tradition that enables me to obtain quality CE, but is also a way for me to keep in touch and reconnect with current classmates and friends,” according to Dr. Scott Haugen (‘84). “I look forward to it each year, not only for the excellent education, but also for the wonderful camaraderie. It is definitely worth the trip back for me.”

Dr. Tom Greene (‘85) agrees: “The relationship between the College of Optometry and the Heart is very important to both organizations. The Heart provides faculty and students of the College an exciting place to obtain quality continuing education, to speak with exhibitors and hear about exciting changes in technology, as well as visit with friends and colleagues from around the mid-west. The College provides the Heart with hard working student volunteers that make our lives as board members much easier. Graduates of the College provide the Heart with a large amount of attendees.”

The Heart of America Contact Lens and Primary Care Congress is rich with tradition and the bond that it holds with the UMSL College of Optometry is—and will continue to be—very strong. For UMSL graduates who attend numerous meetings—such as Dr. Mary Beth Rhomberg (‘97), the Heart is very special. “I have attended many different optometric continuing education meetings and each has a unique flavor. I look forward to attending Heart of America for several reasons. Not only is the quality of the continuing education program outstanding, but this is the meeting where I will get to catch up with more of my UMSL classmates and alums. Contrary to popular belief, not all UMSL grads stay in St. Louis. Several classmates are in other parts of Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Illinois. This meeting encompasses more camaraderie and friendship for me. It is wonderful to see students attending, as they will return as alums to enjoy these meetings in the future with their classmates.”

“The HOA contact lens symposium is unlike any other conference. Besides the exceptional contact lens and primary-care continuing education courses offered, this symposium, in particular, facilitates interaction between students and doctors more than the larger conferences. As a student monitor for the first time, I had ample opportunities to really get to know the influential doctors in the field of contact lenses. Attending the conference gave me aspirations of being intricately involved in these types of conferences as I continue my career and education. This mutualistic interaction fuels the fire under many optometric students and practitioners and improves our clinical effectiveness.”

Natalie Crothers (‘11)

The atmosphere at HOA makes collegiality out of doctors and students. This can be the first time that students are able to build relationships and see themselves as a part of something larger, the optometric community.”

Tuesday Warner (‘12)

“HOACLS 2011 was my first experience at a major optometric conference. After looking back, I was ultimately pleased that I chose to make this conference my initial encounter mainly because of the professionalism it portrays. It was shown whether I was learning from the various presenters or dialoging with the multitude of exhibit booths. The CE hours were also beneficial and interesting because I was actually able to track what presenters were talking about and correlate it with what I’m currently learning in class. With the time I had this year, Heart of America will certainly be a conference that I will include for years to come.”

Jake Hayward (‘13)
Heart of America (cont. from page 7)

UMSL students enjoying the Saturday evening gala at Heart Of America

Upcoming Continuing Education Events

**Nutrition and the Eye IV**, April 16 & 17, 2011
- 12 hrs COPE/CEE
Coordinator: Stuart Richer, O.D., Ph. D.

**Coding Update 2011**, May 9, 2011
- 4 hrs COPE/CE
Speaker: John McGreal, O.D.

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http://optometry.umsl.edu/news/EyeWireArchives.html