Message From the Dean

Meeting the Challenge through Opportunities

Community—“We are committed to supportive and productive relationships within our college, campus, professional and surrounding communities.” (from College of Optometry Vision, Mission and Values)

Greetings Friends and Colleagues--

These are without a doubt the most challenging economic times in the brief history of the College. Resources available to operate programs are shrinking. Timelines to advance strategic initiatives have been extended and many plans await the day when they can be fully funded. In all of this our dedicated faculty and staff continue to be mission driven, seeking to deliver relevant and high quality professional and graduate programs, transformative research and compassionate patient care.

In this issue of the EyeWire it is a pleasure to highlight a few examples our faculty, staff and students meeting challenges by discovering opportunities that provide positive change. We are also fortunate and indebted to many like-minded alumni and friends who share that spirit of service and innovation enough to contribute to our many opportunities to Enrich Lives Through Vision.

All the best,

Larry J. Davis, Dean

Eye Live & Learn Provides an On-Campus Community for Optometry Students

Until recently students had few affordable options for housing on campus. Although a comprehensive housing guide has been available for many years on the College website, and is updated annually, many of the apartment complexes are 15 - 20 minutes away from the College. The opening of University Meadows apartments, located behind the College of Optometry, in the late 1990s, provided some students with a much closer location, albeit at customary apartment fees with only a partial sense of community. However, recently this has all changed. About five years ago, Dr. Barbara Brown, Manager of Student and Special Services, met with representatives of UMSL Student Life about the potential for a living and learning community for optometry students. “We dreamed of a community where all years of professional students could live and learn together, learning from one another, and sharing a house as an extended family” states Dr. Brown. “To do this, we hypothesized that it would require our post-undergrad students to want to be together in community at a reduced price to what could be found in the larger St. Louis area. We found such a potential space on campus in Villa (now referred to as Villa North). Our group has grown from the first year to a thriving, vibrant community today serving all four years of students here in Optometry. We now refer to our optometry community as "ELL" (Eye Live and Learn).
News & Notes

Dr. Ed Bennett was a member of the Program Committee and presented a lecture at the Annual Global Specialty Lens Symposium in Las Vegas, January 28-31, 2010.

Dr. Linda Marks and Dr. Thomas Landgraf attended the Annual Clinic Director's Meeting in Chicago in October, 2009.

Dr. Howard McAlister recently returned from a humanitarian mission with One Sight in Thailand. The team saw in excess of 17,000 patients in two weeks.

Dr. Jeffrey L. Weaver (Adjunct Professor) has been named Executive Director of the American Board of Optometry. Dr. Weaver will serve as the CEO of the newly-formed organization that will oversee board certification and maintenance of certification for the profession. Prior to accepting this position, he had served as Director of the American Optometric Association's Clinical Care Group for 12 years. He was recently also named the 2010 Armed Forces Optometric Society Reserve Forces Optometrist of the Year.

Dr. Ed Bennett was featured in an article on contact lenses in a supplement on vision in the October 2, 2010 issue of USA Today.

UMSL graduates who became Fellows of the American Academy of Optometry at the November Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida included Bethany Jean Whitesell (‘04), Alison C. Ramsey (‘01) and Olivia K. Do (Cornea & Contact Lens Residency ’09).

Eyad Yehyawi (‘04) was featured in the Fall, 2009 issue of “UM St. Louis” (The Magazine of the University of Missouri-St. Louis).

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Eye Live & Learn

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It has shared Thanksgiving together, Gray's Anatomy nights, and Super Bowl parties. It is truly a living and learning community.

Eye Live and Learn is located directly behind the College of Optometry and provides a sense of community for the 21 students who live there. They can study together, socialize together and always have classmates to walk over to the College of Optometry and practice clinical techniques, have review sessions, etc. ELL also provides affordable housing, which includes not paying for many utilities as well as internet hook-ups and cable television.

First year students benefit from the mentorship and guidance provided by upper class students. This is, in part, the results of the “Fab Five” third year students who currently reside in ELL. Led by the Resident Assistant, Natalie Crothers, and joined by other members of the Class of 2011 (Dinita Bockhold, Hanna Kim, Tim Hougland, and Sarah Burgett), these students have not only mentored first and second year students but have also have initiated a program this year that has allowed many applicants to have the opportunity to spend the night at no cost prior to their optometric interview. This was the brainchild of both Natalie and Dr. Brown. “It’s not only convenient for visiting students, as they don’t have to pay for an expensive hotel, but more importantly, gives a positive impression of the university as I try to give them the best service possible,” states Natalie. “They are often given a ride from the airport and the chance to meet (and have dinner if possible) with one or more of the optometry students living in the Eye Live & Learn community. They have the chance to interact with students in a low stress situation and ask anything they want, and get any questions answered before the interview day. The residential life and conference services have been very gracious to take on the minimal cost that is involved to accommodate our guests. I worked closely with Dr. Brown and Sally Truong on the details of the room, in order to make it as nice as possible for the applicant. When an applicant comes to stay, I have a whiteboard outside the room that I try to personalize with their name and a good luck message.” In a very competitive environment, in which students often interview at numerous Colleges of Optometry, this program could make the difference for a student to attend UMSL over other institutions.

Eye Live and Learn provides the College of Optometry with a benefit not available to most other colleges, and the students love the sense of community. “Without a doubt, deciding to live at Villa is the single best decision I’ve made concerning optometry school,” states Tim Hougland. “Those of us who live at the Villa have become best friends over the past few years and I know we wouldn’t have the same relationship if we didn’t all share the same living space. The really neat thing is that I can see the same rela-

The fab five: Tim Hougland, Sarah Burgett, Hanna Kim, Natalie Crothers and Dinita Bockhold.
tionships developing between the current second and first year students as well. It is really a special place to live.”

STUDENTS TESTIMONIALS

Natalie Crothers ('11). “It’s a great learning environment because we all watch out for each other, I’ve never missed an assignment because I have friends here who remind me when things are due. We also have fun together, like playing Rock Band, working out together, watching movies, play pool or ping pong, celebrating a birthday, etc. You can learn time management from others because you see what they are doing and how they are studying for a particular class. You also get to know classmates outside of class, and you appreciate people’s differences and perspectives. In addition, there is encouragement during the “adaptation period” in your first year; when you get discouraged people just tell you to “keep going...you will get through it.”

Dinita Bockhold ('11). “There are always students from each class living in villa, and each student can offer their own personal perspectives on school-related topics, as well as personal topics. We’re always there to help! Plus, the proximity to school is a HUGE benefit, especially for late-night studying and practicing for practicals/proficiencies/etc. We are all optometry students, so we all understand that we have to study quite a bit, and have things to do, so we are all VERY respectful of each floormate’s needs as far as auditory levels are concerned, and we also respect each other’s privacy. Also, ELL is a very secure place. We have swipe card access, and only us optometry students are allowed that access.

Tim Hougland ('11). “For starters, you can't beat the cost of living at the Villa. The rent is low and the gas expense for driving to class is zero. In addition, there’s always a classmate around to interact with. Whenever we have questions about school or we just need some emotional support in our personal lives, someone is always here who is in the very same or a similar situation. In my mind it has made optometry school much, much easier to endure. Those of us who live here have been through so much together that we feel like a real family at this point.”

Jake Hayward ('13). “A benefit would be the camaraderie that I've developed with the fellow 1st years and upperclassmen. When living in off campus housing, the only time you're really able to interact with fellow colleagues is during class time. Living in Villa has provided a venue to eat together, have fun, and have a network of people I can turn to if I need help with a class. I didn't think I would like it because it reminded me of an undergraduate dormitory. Once I arrived, I recognized it become more of an apartment complex full of fellow students and found that it really started off my professional career on a good note.”

First year students Jake Hayward and Caryn La Buda.

NEWS & NOTES

This story describes how Dr. Yehyawi overcame adversity with health and fitness and is now considered one of the nation’s experts in the area of fitness and nutrition and is the author of a book on this subject.

Remi Miljavac ('11) was recently appointed to the position of Vice President of the American Optometric Student Association Executive Council.

At the Heart of America Contact Lens Society’s 49th Annual Contact Lens and Primary Care Conference, held February 12-14 in Kansas City, Amy Garbo ('10) was a recipient of a $2,000 scholarship awarded by the Society.

Suzanne LaKamp ('12) was featured in a January Channel 5 news segment focusing on the St. Louis Ballroom Dance Club. She was interviewed on the benefits of this organization in learning how to ballroom dance.

Congratulations to Mark Wilkins ('12) and his wife Erin on the birth of Abigail Elizabeth on December 19, 2009.

Congratulations to Jordan Gwaltney ('06) and husband Kevin on the birth of their second child, Alyssa, on November 23, 2009.
NEWS & NOTES

Congratulations to Jenny Redfern (‘10) and husband Alex on the birth of Macy Lynn on November 17, 2009.

Congratulations to Jenna Kryder (‘12) and her husband Dan on the birth of Keaton Lawrence on November 12, 2009.

Congratulations to Will (‘13) and Kate Walder who welcomed Christian Davidson on November 26, 2009.

Congratulations to Dr. Mercy Elahi-Neal (‘02) and her husband Kelby on the birth of Lily Morgan born July 16, 2009.

UMSL Professor’s Association with the Gateway Lions Club Provides Many Rewards

Dr. Raymond Myers

To provide the gift of sight to all individuals in need requires the resources to help those in need and the individuals who recognize the availability of these resources and use them accordingly. Dr. Raymond Myers, Clinical Professor at the UMSL College of Optometry is one such individual. A Board member of the Gateway Lions and Partners organization, his efforts to help one patient were featured in the January 4th edition of the Belleville News-Democrat in an article entitled: “The Gift of Sight: Lions Clubs Provide Safety Net for People with Vision Problems.” The story featured a 58 year old patient by the name of Malcolm Fox who reaped the benefits of saving thousands of dollars for a procedure he otherwise would not have been able to afford. According to Dr. Myers: “Mr. Fox was just such a patient who was seen first by Dr. Lee Browning at the East St. Louis Eye Center and because of the diagnosis of a macular hole, he was propelled through the Gateway Lions & Partners Lions and associated Lions organizations to have his surgery in an accelerated fashion.” The surgery was successful and the patient showed his appreciation during a recent Lions Club meeting in which his tears of joy were sincere as a result of the restoration of his sight. “The UMSL partnership with the Gateway Lions provides interns with a rich reserve of patients including those with challenging ocular disease as well as a means where their own patients without insurance or money can get their needed care,” stated Dr. Myers.

The compassion demonstrated by Dr. Myers in such cases is complimented by his innovativeness. As an optometry student he was co-founder and first President of the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) and the annual award presented by the AOSA is the Raymond I. Myers Award. Dr. Myers has also been granted a patent entitled, “Lenticular Refractive Surgery of Presbyopia, other Refractive Errors, and Cataract Retardation” (US#7,655,002). According to Dr. Myers: “The patent describes methods to modify the crystalline lens using a focusable laser (eg., femtosecond) without any ocular incision. Laboratory research began in early 2000, and has continued until now with several companies pursuing similar ways to modify the patient’s own crystalline lens as a future form of refractive surgery.” Congratulations to Dr. Myers for his efforts on behalf of both those in need and to the optometric profession.

Upcoming Continuing Education Programs

April 17 & 18, 2010 - Nutrition and the Eye Symposium III
May 11, 2010 - Coding Update
Pepose Vision Institute Pledges $1,000,000 for Refractive Surgery Initiative with College of Optometry

Jay Pepose, M.D., and the Pepose Vision Institute have pledged $1 million to continue a refractive surgery initiative in cooperation with the UMSL College of Optometry. This funding will assist in the education of UMSL optometry students in the learning of pre-operative examination methods associated with laser vision correction procedures which are provided to the UMSL College of Optometry operated East St. Louis Eye Center by Pepose Vision Institute cornea-trained surgeons. This also allows for no-cost vision correction surgery to low-income families living in the East St. Louis area as well as firefighters, paramedics, and police officers serving that area. Dean Larry Davis concurs. "The program between our East St Louis Eye Center, Pepose Vision Institute and the Midwest Cornea Research Foundation is truly unique. In addition to improving access to refractive surgery for those living in the East St. Louis Community the program serves as an excellent inter-professional model for effective and efficient eye and vision care. The program also aligns with an important national priority to increase opportunities for interdisciplinary learning for health professionals."

UMSL Graduate Distinguishes Himself in the Air Force

Major Brian Foutch, OD (‘99), PhD (‘07) was recently deployed with the Navy aboard the USNS COMFORT for a 120-day humanitarian/civic assistance mission in Latin/Caribbean/South America. He spent 12 days at each of the following stops: Haiti, Dominican Republic, Antigua-Barbuda, Panama, Colombia, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. He and his team performed over 35 thousand examinations, dispensed 30 thousand glasses (fabricated 1200 glasses) and 10 thousand sunglasses, and prescribed/ dispensed five thousand therapeutics. He also seized the unique opportunity to earn the Navy's Surface Warfare Medical Officer device. That was a first for an Air Force optometrist. Major Foutch is currently Deputy, Optical Radiation Branch, the Brooks City Base, Texas.

On January 28, 2010, the College of Optometry chapter of the National Optometric Student Association (NOSA) held its annual ‘ODs of Tomorrow’ program. Major Walter Wright and ten JROTC students from Beaumont High School in St Louis participated. Students received a tour of the College, participated in demonstrations in the pre-clinic laboratory, viewed a presentation about optometry/ admissions and NOSA. NOSA members Dr. Alexander Harris (Advisor), Allison K Coleman, (President), Courtney Wilson (Vice President), Nicole Pogue (Secretary), Natalie Nguyen, Chase Parker, Eric Harris, Vanessa Brainah, and Wynter Rice, Renee Newman, Eric Jerde, and Jennifer Marcell were present.

The College of Optometry and Pre-Optometry Club hosted the College of Nursing’s Explorer Post in our College February 23, 2010. High School students from local schools visited Dr. Carl Bassi’s lab and Dr. Guoqiang Li’s lab to learn more about vision and vision processes. Because this Post also explores education, Dr. Barb Brown answered questions about what optometrists do and how to be a great applicant for those exploring optometry as a career. Several members of the Pre-Optometry Club (Meredith Busch/SLU, Cortney Luehrmann/UMSL/Club President, Alisha Hester/Jefferson County Community College, and Elizabeth Phillips/Maryville University) were present to help with the event.

Major Brian Foutch, O.D., Ph.D. examines a six month old baby.

Major Brian Foutch, O.D., Ph.D. pictured with friends.
Dr. N. Rex Ghormley: A Tribute

Dr. Rex Ghormley on November 4th. Dr. Ghormley served 14 years on the American Academy of Optometry's Executive Council, serving as President from 1991-92. He was named “Optometrist of the Year” in 1985 by the Heart of America Society and served as Co-Editor of International Contact Lens Clinic. He established Vision Care Consultants (VCC) in 1970 and to this day, it remains one of the most prominent primary care and contact lens specialty practices in the country.

The UMSL College of Optometry has benefited greatly from Dr. Ghormley's efforts. As an adjunct faculty member he was a popular visiting lecturer in the Contact Lens II course. Three UMSL graduates practice at VCC including Drs. Dave Seibel ('87), who bought the practice in 2001, Craig Brawley ('01) and Dan Friederich ('08), with a fourth graduate expected to begin practice at VCC later this year. Beginning in 1988, Dr. Ghormley began hiring UMSL optometry students to be employed as part-time staff members and it would not be uncommon for him to have as many as six students at one time and they benefited greatly from his mentorship. He will be dearly missed.

UMSL National Optometric Student Association Continues to Serve the Community

The University of Missouri-St Louis College of Optometry Chapter of the National Optometric Student Association has had a significant increase in membership this year. There are now 32 members for the 2009-2010. In addition, they have been very active.

UMSL annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration program at the Touhill Performance Hall, followed by service projects throughout the St Louis area performed by UMSL student participants. NOSA visited a local retirement home for veterans, where they visited with the residents.

On January 21, 2010 NOSA held its annual Wal-Mart Sponsored Presentation/Luncheon. Wal-Mart Representative, Gwendolyn McWilliams, Pharm. D., gave an interesting and informative presentation about Conflict Management Styles and a new scholarship, sponsored by Wal-Mart, available to UMSL students.

There were over 40 optometry students in attendance.

NOSA is now making plans for fundraising to help raise money to assist its members in attending the National Optometric Association annual convention, which will be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Donations are welcomed and would be greatly appreciated. NOSA is also making plans for a vision screening, an Easter Egg Hunt for Visually Impaired Children, and a presentation at the St Louis Science Center for the YES! Kids Program.
UMSL Optometry Student Distinguishes Himself as a Mystery Book Author

A professional program, such as the UMSL College of Optometry, is challenging and time-consuming, allowing little free time for hobbies. Nevertheless, it is important for students to have other interests for enjoyment and stress-relief. How about authoring a popular book? Joshua Keil ('13) was prominently featured in the December 23, 2009 issue of the “UMSL Messenger” as a result of the publication of his text, entitled “Delaying Death”. A native of Alaska, Joshua has worked in the United States Navy as a civilian health-care administrator and as an emergency medical technician (EMT) for an ambulance company in Nebraska. Growing up in Alaska, Joshua worked on salmon boats, was employed by the Alaskan railroad, and observed sled dog races. These experiences - supplemented by high school teachers and college professors who encouraged him to continue writing - were instrumental in inspiring him to write this book. Delaying Death is set in Nebraska in a time of upheaval for the city's firefighters and the EMT system with the firefighters desiring to take over this service. Politics are at play and the author provides an intriguing mystery based on this theme. (www.amazon.com/Delaying-Death-Joshua-Keil/dp/1442167882). Delaying Death was also a featured book on the Main Street Books in historic St. Charles (www.mainstreetbooks.net) and the author recommends for anyone in the St. Louis area interested in obtaining the book to visit this popular bookstore.

Dr. Li Receives Two Grants

Guoqiang Li, assistant professor, received two grants totaling $640,000. Wallace H. Coulter Foundation funded $240,000 for development of an adaptive lens with continuous focusing powers, enabling entire lenses to switch focus interchangeably between long-range and up-close, eliminating drawbacks of bifocals or trifocals.

A $400,000 grant from NIH’s National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering funds development of biomedical optical imaging devices to capture real-time images of living cells, which could improve diagnoses of diseases. Collaborators include colleagues from Optometry, Physics and Astronomy, and Chemistry and Biochemistry.

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Caryn LaBuda ('13). “Everyone takes an active role in each other's lives and wishes people luck or helps them accomplish things, and there is always an open-door policy, that you can always go and ask anyone for help, whether it be for optometry classes or advice in general, the people here are always willing to go out of their way to help one another. You have the best of both worlds; if you want quiet time to study by yourself, you can accomplish that, and if you want to see other people or do something fun, there are areas here for that too. The Eye, Live & Learn Community has made the transition to optometry school a smooth one for me and looking back on it, I couldn't have made a better decision. You have a built-in support network right from the start, and I couldn't imagine living anywhere else while attending UMSL.”

Sarah Burgett ('11). "The other students who live here are amazing! They became my St. Louis family. We support and encourage each other inside and outside the classroom. If you have a question while studying, you can always knock on your neighbor's door to discuss the answer. Villa is a less expensive housing option, especially when trying to keep student loans to a minimum. I never have to worry about driving to school in inclement weather. Our learning community offers students a built-in support network. Everyone can relate to what you are going through because we’ve been where you are, or are going through the same thing. Villa is quiet, especially around test time because other students are studying for exams too. There is a master calendar so we know when to keep the noise level down and to wish others luck on their exams. There is always someone around to study with and practice procedures on."
Heart of America Student Grant Winners

Pictured from left to right: Steve Gildersleeve, Southern California College of Optometry; Jackie Burress, Oklahoma College of Optometry; Amy Garbo, University of Missouri-St. Louis College of Optometry; Lindsay Sicks, Illinois College of Optometry; Andrew Peter, Pacific College of Optometry.

If you have missed a previous issue of the EyeWire you can locate the archive page as well as the current issue at:

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