Message From the Dean

Perfect Timing

Greetings Friends and Colleagues--

It is so easy these days to allow things that might influence our profession and optometric education to distract us from those which already have been influential. Will the new schools challenge our efforts to recruit high quality and motivated students to UMSL... how should we prepare for health care reform... will the debt of our new graduates prevent them from entering their preferred practice... will Medicare cuts decrease the availability of eye care for senior citizens... when will the economy show sufficient strength for Missouri to direct new resources toward public education... how long will Marillac Hall continue to be home for the College of Optometry and so on?

With life’s uncertainties, and so many variables ahead, it is encouraging to recognize and applaud all of the tremendous accomplishments achieved and the projects currently embraced by our students, faculty, staff and alumni. These ongoing accomplishments are among the significant contributions that influence our profession today!

The life of our College is vibrant. Observing the impact of that work within our community is inspiring.

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Jennifer Sidun Elected AOSA President

On Saturday, January 14th, Jennifer Sidun ('13), was elected President of the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA), becoming the first ever UMSL student to be elected to the highest leadership position for a student of optometry in the United States. With the fact that AOSA has 22 chapters and over 6,000 members this is, in fact, an outstanding achievement. And this also follows an exceptional series of events - including the awarding of the AOSA Spirit Award for originality and creativity at the 2011 Optometry's Meeting and two other UMSL students being appointed to national positions (see accompanying article) - which have resulted in much positive recognition for the College of Optometry.

What inspired Jennifer to pursue a national office? “I have always been involved in various organizations both throughout high school and college so I was looking for my niche when I came to optometry school. I was very inspired by the current Trustee and Trustee elect when I was a first year. I pretty much knew from day one that I wanted to be involved in AOSA and specifically on the national level. After my first board meeting in Orlando, I knew that I had to stay involved because I wanted to make an impact on our profession. This thought process led me to my election as president.”

Deservedly proud of this accomplishment is Clinical Professor, Dr. Ray Myers, who was founder of the American Optometric Student Association, and for whom their highest annual award is named. “...This is the culmination of a tremendous effort from students starting with Drs. Whitney Coleman and Jennifer Redfern, and continuing through the successive AOSA National Vice Presidencies of Dr. Remi Miljavec and Alan Wegener. The significance of the students’ accomplishment is to have set up an election system where a first year student in his/her second semester has to “commit” to national aspirations in their campaign including speeches, and then lead both UMSL students and the AOSA Board in the eventual direction of one of four officer positions.”

As President of AOSA she will have many important responsibilities including overseeing the Board of Trustees, serving as the national liaison to the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) and representing the entire membership during numerous conferences during
Message From the Dean

So, I extend a hearty thank you to each of the individuals whose accomplishments and activities serve to redirect our attention to the many things that make the College so special. You add tremendous value to Missouri’s College of Optometry.

Sincerely,

Larry J. Davis
Dean

NEWS & NOTES

Dr. Steve Rice (‘87) was presented with the Missouri Optometric Association’s Optometrist of the Year award at the annual MOA Convention in Branson.

Jennifer Sidun (‘13) shown with the newly elected officers of AOSA.

Dr. Steve Rice shown with associates and colleagues: Drs. Emily Thomas (‘08), Mitzi Lewis (‘02), Brad Lewis (‘02), Katie Robertson (‘11), and Laura Montgomery (‘06).

Dr. Emily Thomas (‘08) was featured in the April edition of the journal "417mag.com." She was recognized for her many accomplishments before the age of 30.

Dr. Troy Johnson (‘05) is the proud father of Solomon, born January 12, 2012.

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Jennifer Sidun Elected AOSA President, cont. from page 1

her one year tenure. And she is prepared for this extremely important responsibility. “My goals this year are to try to help make a smooth transition from AOSA member to doctor by educating students on the importance of organized optometry. The goal of the AOSA is to promote optometry and all its facets. I also want to promote leadership and involvement early in a student’s optometry career. I feel that the students that get involved early will be more likely to stay involved after graduation.”

As she would be the first to admit, Jennifer Sidun’s election as President of AOSA is, in part, due to the efforts of the Class of 2013 as well as the entire student body at the College of Optometry. “With UMSL being a small community, the support has come from all of the classes. This was evident in the school spirit at Optometry’s meeting and winning the spirit award at the student bowl. Our faculty have also been supportive of my endeavors by allowing time off from class and clinic to better myself and UMSL in the optometry community.”

It is also Jennifer’s intent to continue her service to the profession upon graduation. “I would like to make as much of an impact on optometry as possible. I am passionate about having a unified profession and I will do all that I can at this level to help educate the students on working together.”

We are all justifiably proud of Jennifer Sidun and with the knowledge that the College of Optometry has other students in national leadership positions as well as other organizations that have achieved national recognition, it would not be unrealistic to state that no other College of Optometry has a student body as active and service-oriented as UMSL.
Professor Invents Breakthrough Testing Device

As reported in the March issue of “Spirit of Innovation”, the official newsletter of the Office of Research Administration, UMSL recently signed an exclusive licensing agreement with Q3D Visual Diagnostics, LLC – located in downtown St. Louis – to develop and market an innovative breakthrough device that quantifies visual suppression. The Quantitative Three Dot (Q3D) device potentially allows for much earlier detection of disorders such as amblyopia. This device was invented and patented by Carl Bassi, PhD, Associate Professor and Director of Research Studies, with co-inventors Michael Howe, Senior Research Engineering Technician at the College of Optometry, and Wayne Garver, retired Research Scientist, Department of Physics and Astronomy. Whereas the gold standard for suppression has always been the Worth 4 Dot Test, the Q3D represents an important upgrade over this important test. The Worth 4 Dot Test shows whether significant suppression already exists; however, small amounts of suppression can be detected with the Q3D which can also track changes in suppression as well as the progress of treatments over time. Dr. Bassi is excited to see his efforts come to fruition. “I am happy that the Q3D is going to finally come to market. I am happy it is a local start-up company that will be producing the device. I think the Q3D is going to help us diagnose and assess outcomes for patients with visual suppression. We look forward to eventually bringing our other recently patented device, the LSM, to market too. It will be the first commercially available device to measure light sensitivity in patients.”

Mattias Orion was born on February 16, 2012 to Chris and Shawna (Hill ‘05) Vanderhoof.

Kyle Porisch (‘06) is the proud father of Makenna Lynn born January 16, 2012.

Mark Wilkins (‘12) and wife Erin became the proud parents of Emma Ruth who was born on February 17, 2012.

Amanda (‘09) and James Brenci welcomed Lana into the world on March 10, 2012.

Layton Thomas was born January 19, 2012, to Darcy (Hermann) Stanley (‘07) and Matt Stanley (‘06). Mom, Dad, and older sister Sophie are all doing great!

Dr. Brian Foutch (‘99) and his wife Becky welcomed Eleanor Jean on Jan 11, 2012. She is welcomed by older twin siblings Maddie and Ken.
The UMSL Chapter of the National Optometric Student Association (NOSA) Continues Their Outstanding Community Service

It is rare that an issue of the Eyewire fails to highlight the many community-related activities of our NOSA chapter, perhaps the most service-oriented such chapter in the country. A minority-based national organization, UMSL’s chapter has always appealed to non-minority students as well as students who want to help those in need. NOSA faculty liaison, Dr. Alex Harris concurs: “The UMSL Chapter of the National Optometric Student Association is an inclusive organization that has a reputation for providing optometric services to underserved communities. The organization is also dedicated to increasing the number of underrepresented minorities in the field of optometry.”

No less than five of the national officers and leaders in NOSA are UMSL students and former students. This includes National NOSA Executive Board members Wynter Rice (‘13), Vice-President, and Recording Secretary Vanessa Braimah (‘13), 2011 Residents Kimberly Mark (‘09), and Eric Harris (‘11), and Executive Board Corresponding Secretary Allison Coleman (‘12). Chapter President Vanessa Braimah continues the fine tradition of leadership and involvement in the community. "Over the past few years, NOSA’s involvement has truly grown here at UMSL. Our members have increasingly been active and engaged in the community. Just this Spring semester, we have volunteered at MLK Day of Service, in which we painted a local church and at St. Louis Science Center for the Scientist Showcase. I am most excited about our upcoming Easter Egg Hunt for the Visually Impaired on April 7th, in which local visually impaired children are able to locate the easter eggs by the beeping noises they emit. Overall, NOSA looks forward to continuing our community outreach in subsequent years."

UMSL Pre-Optometry Club Stays Very Active

The UMSL Pre-Optometry Club, under the direction of Dr. Barbara Brown, Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions, has been very active in recent years and this was the focus of an article in the February 8th edition of “UMSL News”. As a result of Dr. Brown’s efforts as well as the Club, numerous community activities have been performed including a recent glasses drive that resulted in over 1100 total glasses collected. The glasses were then donated to the UMSL Student Volunteers for Optometric Services to Humanity for upcoming mission trips to provide eye care to those in need in foreign countries. Dr. Brown’s efforts with the UMSL Pre-Optometry Club have also resulted in an increase in UMSL graduates entering the College of Optometry as she relates. “I am so blessed to have such a great group! We will be blessed with two of this group coming into school this fall…but they have taught the rest well.”
UMSL Students Appointed to National Leadership Positions

Jennifer Sidun’s election to the position of President of AOSA was not the only national leadership position assumed recently by UMSL students. Both Carrie McDowell ('13) and Robert Ensley ('13) were appointed to national liaison positions. Carrie was appointed National Liaison to the College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVID). This important position was one she coveted and intends to ultimately increase the opportunities for students to become more involved with vision therapy. “I chose to apply for this position after serving as the UMSL Local Liaison for COVID. I was given the chance to attend COVID’s Annual Meeting this past year, and saw a wonderful opportunity for more students to become active in this organization. I hope to spread ideas between the schools of optometry for more exposure. When I attended the conference, there was a wide division between the many schools’ participation in COVID. I would like to be able to work between the other liaisons and build ideas for other local COVID chapters to obtain more exposure to what COVID offers to students, residents, visual therapists, and optometrists.”

Rob Ensley’s passion is in the field of contact lenses. A three year Class Representative (i.e., President), he has served as a staff member of a prestigious local contact lens specialty practice, Vision Care Consultants (VCC). In addition, he will be serving one of his eight week externships at another prestigious contact lens practice, Davis EyeCare (Drs. Rob and Harold Davis) in Oak Lawn, IL. His interest in contact lenses has not gone unrecognized as he was recently appointed the National Student Liaison to the American Optometric Association Section on Contact Lenses and Cornea with specific responsibilities pertaining to their excellent online newsletter. He is excited about this new position. “It’s hard not to become interested in contact lenses with the contact lens education UMSL offers, and the faculty support here. My work experience at a practice (VCC) that fits many specialty contact lenses, and my involvement as a student with AAO have also guided me towards the CLCS. Contact lenses have a great history and an exciting future. The National Liaison position is a great opportunity to increase my involvement with both the AOSA and the CLCS.

I hope to be able to represent the students’ interests in maintaining a strong contact lens education nationally. I also will have the opportunity, I believe, to contribute to the CLCS monthly newsletter. Lastly, I will be able to attend the CLCS section meetings at the AOA Optometry's meeting this summer.” And Rob fully intends to utilize this position as an opportunity to help him in his journey toward specializing in contact lenses. “I will definitely get the chance to learn more about cornea and contact lenses. After graduation, I would love for the opportunity to do a residency in cornea and contact lenses and eventually become a Fellow in the AAO. I think this experience will be a benefit. I’m excited for the opportunity!”

UMSL College of Optometry Well Represented at SECO 2012 in Atlanta

The Class of 2009 had a reunion at the 2012 Southeastern Conference of Optometry in Atlanta. Shown in this photo with Dr. Ed Bennett are Drs. Taylor Walden, Jacqueline Smith, Kimberly Marks, Jeff Harter, Susan Nixon, and Charlie Schlievert.

The Class of 2012 was well represented at SECO as well. Shown with Drs. Eric Harris ('11), and Kimberly Marks ('09) are Dan Myers, Natalie Nguyen, Nicole Pogue, Jessica Young, Patrick Stark, and Chase Parker.
Recently the UMSL College of Optometry received a gift of $25,000 from a very satisfied contact lens patient to be used toward indigent contact lens care. The donor, who wished to remain anonymous, was successfully fit into scleral contact lenses which had a life-changing experience as he relates. “Your facility has solved a vision problem that I have chased specialists around for 20 years to solve but no one wanted to invest the time it would take for my special circumstance of being a post RK patient. Based on this I would like to make a donation in honor of the doctors that helped solve my vision problems, Drs. Jamie Gold and Chris Gilmartin.”

Dr. Barbara Brown, Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions, worked with the donor to find an appropriate home for this unprecedented donation. “In the end . . . it was decided it would be added to the “Sight for St. Louis” patient care fund. This fund was raised by alumni and friends to help provide funding for our patients who have no other means to provide for their own (or their children’s, or grandchildren’s) vision care and eyecare. Our donors’ very generous gift doubles the amount that we have in the principle of this account. From this fund, we are able to see about 20 patients a year, and this very generous gift will double that number. We are humbled and grateful for their kind and thoughtful support, and the thoughtfulness to do this in honor of our faculty who made it all possible.”

The UMSL Contact Lens Clinic is a full service clinic and the student-clinicians and attending doctors pride themselves on the ability to fit all types of contact lenses. The high utilization of scleral lenses by the last three Cornea and Contact Lens residents (Drs. Gilmartin, Gold, and Stephanie Woo) has resulted in changing the quality of life for a large number of patients such as our donor. Dr. Gilmartin comments: “For patients who suffer from the most severe corneal conditions requiring contact lens management, a successful fit can be nothing short of life-changing. It is an honor to work in a facility that affords us the full spectrum of resources to provide solutions to even the most complex and challenging cases. All of us at the Center for Eye Care are grateful to this donor for such a generous contribution.” Dr. Gold concurs: “Accessibility. Consistency. Results. These three things set the Contact Lens department at the College of Optometry apart for patient care. Access to the latest in corneal mapping and technology, most contact lenses in the marketplace, and many lenses not yet available to the public, position the students and doctors at the College of Optometry to bring consistent results to our patients. Such was the case Dr. Gilmartin and I employed with our donor/patient, who was post RK. One of the lenses we used with was a corneal scleral. These larger diameter specialty lenses provide an avenue to vault over irregular corneas, allowing for stability of the lens and providing desired vision. He was the perfect candidate for these lenses. He came to us having previously failed with multiple lens designs. We were able to provide him with optimal vision, as well as address the difficulty he experienced seeing in low light situations. Our patient also enjoyed greater comfort from the larger diameter of these lenses.”

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**Continuing Education Opportunities at the College of Optometry**

**Nutrition and the Eye V**
April 14 & 15, 2012
Saturday & Sunday - 12 hrs COPE/CEE
Coordinator: Stuart Richer, O.D., Ph. D.

**Coding Update 2012**
May 8, 2012
Tuesday evening - 4 hrs COPE/CE
Speaker: John McGreal, O.D.

**Annual Optometry Academy**
August 18 & 19, 2012
Saturday & Sunday - 16 hrs CE

Please call Lis Ellerbusch with any questions (314) 516-5615.
Heart of America 2012

Angel Husher ('13) lending her exceptional vocal talents to Kaylor and Tomasino on Saturday night.

Dr. Tom Greene ('85) performing back-up to Kaylor and Tomasino on Saturday night.

Class of 2011 members with Dr. Ed Bennett at the UMSL Alumni Reception: Drs. Chris Boschen, Jessie Carson, Jordan Jones, Kim Folwarski, Christie Hayes, Laura Brammer, Joe Castellano, and Tim Houglad

Class of 2012 members Andrew Piester, Toan Nguyen, Melissa Schmidt, Jeffrey Enevoldsen, and Patrick Stark

Class of 2014 members Alaina Mudder, Jennifer Dovich, Vance Lewis, and Andrea Peerson

At the UMSL Booth Jennifer Hunter (Alumni Activities), Jennifer Dovich ('14) and Tuesday Warner ('12)
Shown at the MOA legislative conference in January: Jeffrey Weaver, OD, MOA President and Adjunct Professor for the College of Optometry, The Honorable Steven Tilley, OD ('98) Missouri Speaker of the State House of Representatives for 2010-12, and Lee Ann Barrett, OD ('85) Executive Director Missouri Optometric Association.

The **EYEwire** is published by the Office of the Dean at the University of Missouri-St. Louis College of Optometry.

Dr. Ed Bennett, Editor
EBennett@ums.edu

Janice White, Designer
janice.white@ums.edu

Dr. Larry J. Davis, Dean
ljdavis@ums.edu

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