Greetings Friends and Colleagues--

It is my distinct pleasure to share this year-end edition of the EyeWire. One of the benefits of being in education is that we have an opportunity to work with future leaders who will shape the course of optometry and vision science for generations to come. As you will see in the pages ahead, the future of our profession will be influenced by folks with many talents and abilities that extend far beyond the art and science of optometry.

Looking forward, without a doubt our graduates will enhance the visual welfare of those living in communities throughout the region. Beyond that in a broader sense they also hold great promise to enrich the overall quality of life within those areas.

Wishing you all the best in the coming year!

Sincerely,

Larry J. Davies
Dean

Residency Day: Informative and Successful

Several years ago, Director of Residencies Dr. Vinita Henry (’85) established “UMSL Residency Day” when all residents affiliated with the UMSL College of Optometry have the opportunity to provide a clinical presentation in the presence of students and faculty. This program has grown consistent with the efforts of Dr. Henry in expanding the number of residency programs affiliated with the College of Optometry. For this year’s symposium, held on October 20th at the Student Millennium Center, ten residents were given the opportunity to present interesting and important case studies and clinical reviews. This symposium is important, not only in the clinical education of our students, but also in allowing the resident to have the opportunity to develop presentations and present it in front of a large audience.

It is also worthy to mention that several former UMSL students as well as current residents provided presenta-
Dr. Andrea Washington (‘04) was highlighted in the November issue of AOA News. She discovered that a patient of hers was at high risk of having a stroke and may have saved this patient’s life.

UMSL was very well represented in the November issue of Women in Optometry. The cover article featured Dr. Brighid Williams (‘99) and her Orlando, FL practice Eola Eyes. An article entitled “After Years of Organic Growth, Doctors Chart More Defined Course” featured Dr. Mary Gregory (‘99) and her practice, Uptown Eye Care in Monticello, Minnesota. Dr. Gregory was also the 2007 Minnesota Optometric Association “Young OD of the Year”. Dr. Angela Oberreiter (‘05) was also recognized for being the 2011 “Young OD of the Year” recipient from the Illinois Optometric Association.

Drs. Cale (‘07) and Amy (‘09) Seavers are proud parents of Clayton Robert Seavers, born on November 3rd.

Dr. Ariann Kalkowski Brown (‘05) gave birth to Addelyn, on November 27th.

Congratulations to Vance Lewis (‘14) and his wife Britney on the birth of their son, Andrew Perry Lewis, on September 27th.

Dr. Eyad Yehyawi (‘04) became the proud father of Zane Jazaeri (“ZJ”) on September 20th.

On Friday night November 4th the UMSL National Optometric Student Association 3rd Annual Artistic Vision Talent Show was held at the JC Penney Auditorium. Once again it was an outstanding program which demonstrated the many - and varied - talents of our student body. Whether it was very good comedy skits, music and singing, the violin, or ballroom dancing, every performance was exceptional and enjoyed by a record number of attendees necessitating that this event be moved to a larger facility on campus.

First place award was awarded to the Class of 2015 comedy team of Jerika Kirwan and Kate Gettinger who had the crowd roaring with their many impressions of life as a first year student. Second place went to the Class of 2013’s Angel Husher and Amber Mayberry for their comedy skit which also included song and dance. Third place went to accomplished ballroom dancer, Suzy Lakamp and her partner Spiro for an excellent rendition of the Samba. However, all seven acts were potentially award-winning. Jake Hayward and Brigitte Colley (Class of 2013) demonstrated outstanding vocal talents in performing the Josh Groban song “Thankful” with a slide show of their respective Volunteers of Optometric Service to Humanity mission trips in the background. Pauline Gassman (Class of 2015) provided a violin concert to the composition by Antonio Vivaldi. Finally, the Christian rock band “Power Cross” was well represented with Aaron Peterson and Daniel Ethakoti’s performance of the Switchfoot song “Gone” and Daniel’s solo of the White Cross song “Simple Man”.

The Master and Mistress of Ceremony, Chris Wooldridge and Amanda Nicklas (Class of 2013) had the unenviable task of following Eric Jerde (Class of 2012) who served as Master of Ceremony for the first two events. However, they performed their responsibilities very well, combining comedy, interactive games with the audience and integrating performances from NOSA President Vanessa Braimah (a beautiful dance solo) and a vocal rendition of a Paul Simon song retitled “50 Ways to Leave Optometry” from the Student Services team of Drs. Brown, Bennett, and Simmons. A very special thank you should be given to the judges who included College Student Services Administrative Assistant Linda Stein, and faculty representatives Drs. Julie Dekinder, Keshia Elder, Aaron Franzel, and Linda Marks. In addition, the contribution of the event sponsors, CooperVision and HOYA, is greatly appreciated.

Continued, page 3
We are proud of the fact that the UMSL chapter of the National Optometric Student Association may, in fact, be the most active chapter in the United States, hosting vision screenings, minority student optometry workshops, and numerous other community service activities. For 2011-12, the President is Vanessa Braimah, and the other officers are: Vice-President, Wynter Rice; Treasurer, My Dinh; Secretary, Trista Papisz, Representative ('14), Ashley Gezella; Representative ('15), Devin Sasser, and Faculty Advisor, Dr. Alex Harris.

First place award was awarded to the Class of 2015 comedy team of Jerika Kirwan and Kate Gettinger.

Master and Mistress of Ceremony, Chris Wooldridge and Amanda Nicklas (Class of 2013)

Third place went to accomplished ballroom dancer, Suzanne Lakamp ('12) and her partner Spiro.

Second place went to the (Class of 2013's) Angel Husher and Amber Mayberry.
UMSL Intramural Teams Recognition for Excellence in Campus Competitions

One of the best stress-relieving outlets for optometry students is participating in campus intramural sports. Every class has an intramural Chair or committee and a high percentage of the student body participates in events such as flag football, basketball, soccer, volleyball, and floor hockey. Although the purpose is simply to have an enjoyable break from a rigorous study schedule, our high achieving students have enjoyed a remarkable amount of success against very skilled undergraduate teams. Recently our combined Class of 2013 and 2014 men’s flag football won the campus championship. This team consisted of Steve Branstetter (‘13), Jeremey Dohogne (‘14), Brad Englebarts (‘14), Jon Olson (‘13), Dan Puls (‘14), Brandon Ridder (‘13), Dean Schultz (‘14), Mason Seelinger (‘13), Mike Waclawski (‘14), and Will Waldie (‘13). In addition, the men’s floor hockey was runner-up in the campus competition. This team consisted of Seth Bachelier (‘13), Rob Ensley (‘13), Ryan Hazlehurst (‘15), Mason Seelinger (‘13), Will Waldie (‘13), Arthur Wang (‘12), Alan Wegener (‘12), and Dustin Wiles (‘12). It is notable to mention that Arthur, Alan, and Dustin performed in this game immediately after taking Part Two of the NBEO examinations.

Flag Football Champions:
Front Row: Brandon Ridder, Brad Englebarts, Dan Puls, and Mason Seelinger. Back Row: Steve Branstetter, Dean Schultz, Mike Waclawski, Will Waldie, and Jon Olson.

Floor Hockey

Class of 2015 Members Make Music and Rock!

As evidenced at the NOSA talent show and, most recently at a recent UMSL chapter meeting of Fellowship of Christian Optometrists (FCO), the recently formed Class of 2015 Christian rock band; “Power Cross,” is both talented and creative. This band is composed of four members of the Class of 2015 including Greg Steimel, Aaron Peterson, Dan Ethakoti and Dustin Hetke. How did this band originate?

According to Aaron Peterson: “We started going to FCO and realized that we wanted to sing a few songs and worship God with our talents so we started doing worship songs every Friday morning. Initially we didn’t have any names in our mind until we learned from Dr. Bassi’s class about the optical/power cross. We thought it made sense to name our band Power Cross because we are optometrists and our goal is, not only to correct refractive errors using lenses, but also help broken people, lost souls to come to know the power of the cross of Christ which can fix all the problems we face in this world. Our plans are to continue to lead worship at FCO every Friday and encourage our colleagues, and also we hope to do a concert soon to raise some funds for FCO. We want to be a band (optometrists) who would not only give physical but also spiritual vision and hope to those who need it.” It is evident that the members of Power Cross feel strongly about the benefits of FCO and intend to play an important role in this organization for years to come, serving as a talented and welcome diversion from the stresses of a rigorous curriculum. Who knows; perhaps we’ll see “Power Cross” at future church events as well as other venues, spreading the gospel in a very entertaining manner while also bringing positive recognition to the optometric profession and the UMSL College of Optometry.
Dr. Carl Bassi Provides 10th Annual Fechner Day Presentation

As he individual responsible for establishing this fine tradition of bringing in renown speakers in the spirit of the famous 19th century German experimental psychologist Gustav Fechner, it was only appropriate that Dr. Carl Bassi, Associate Professor and Director of Research and Graduate Studies was the speaker at UMSL’S 10th Annual Fechner Day, held October 21st at the Student Millennium Center. Gustav Fechner was an early pioneer in experimental psychology and was credited as the founder of psychophysics while inspiring many 20th century scientists and philosophers. Dr. Bassi's talk, entitled “Fechner Day the 151st and 10th Anniversaries” provided an informative and entertaining overview of Gustav Fechner's life with applications to Optometry, Psychology, Physics, Chemistry, Philosophy (and, yes, even to Justin Bieber!). As is traditional with the event, German chocolate cake was served immediately after the presentation.

Early Exploration of Career Opportunities in Optometry

Recognizing that early preparation is a critical ingredient for academic success in college and beyond, a number of area school districts provide on-site opportunities for students to gain exposure to a variety of career opportunities. A group of eighth graders from Ladue Middle School recently visited our College of Optometry in order to learn about careers in optometry.

The student group first received an introductory overview of our profession from Dr. Barbara Brown ’88, Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions. What is optometry? What do optometrists do? Why is optometry important? The students clearly came away impressed. What about the high tech part? The visiting eighth graders particularly wanted to know about the application of technology to the field of optometry.

Dr. Vinita Henry (‘85), Director of Clinical Operations, brought the group into a clinical setting where students were eager to learn more and get to see for themselves the critical role that technology serves as we diagnose and manage eye and vision problems.

“I really enjoyed the optometry center, and enjoyed the ‘hands on’ experience by looking at the back of the eye.” -Natasha

Dr. Carl Bassi provides 10th Annual Fechner Day Presentation

Middle School recently visited our College of Optometry in order to learn about careers in optometry.

According to Hannah, “Optometry is a really cool way to see how your eyes are and see what they do. It is important to see if your eyes are healthy and don't have diseases in them.”

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“I really enjoyed the optometry center, and enjoyed the ‘hands on’ experience by looking at the back of the eye.” -Natasha

Ladue Middle Schoolers who may join our College community in the future to be the ones talking about high tech instrumentation and life as a new optometry student.
Dr. Robert A. Koetting: The College of Optometry loses a friend; the profession of optometry loses a visionary.

Dr. Robert A. Koetting, a contact lens pioneer, inventor, and visionary passed away at the age of 85 on August 7th. His many notable accomplishments included establishing the first optometric practice limited to contact lenses, and being among the first practitioners in the country to embrace, promote, and write about the benefits of contact lenses for the presbyopic population. His optometric practice in Clayton has been well acknowledged as one of the most prominent practices in the United States.

His father, Dr. Felix Koetting, was an optometrist and his son joined him in the 1940s before opening his own practice in 1962. His honors and awards are numerous. He was named “Contact Lens Person of the Year by the American Optometric Association (AOA) as well as receiving the AOA’s highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award. He also received the Eminent Service Award from the American Academy of Optometry (AAO) and has served as Chair of both the Contact Lens Section of the AOA and the Cornea and Contact Lens Section of the AAO.

He was also a long-time supporter of the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) and, in particular, the College of Optometry. For many years he was Co-Chair of the Shadow Ball, a fundraising social event for such causes as eyecare for the indigent and scholarship funding. For 20 years he lectured on the topic of contact lens practice management to the third year students as part of the advanced contact lens course curriculum. For all of his efforts on behalf of UMSL, he received the Chancellor's Medallion in 1995.

Today the practice he established, and which still bears his name (Koetting and Associates), is still thriving under the ownership of Dr. Carmen Castellano who is celebrating his 30th year of association with this practice. The College's Cornea and Contact Lens Resident as well as fourth year optometry students continue to benefit from having the opportunity to see contact lens patients at Koetting and Associates. Two UMSL graduates are also associated with this practice, Dr. Craig Sorce (‘92) and Joe Castellano (‘11). Dr. Koetting’s contributions can be best summarized by Dr. Carmen Castellano, his long-time friend and successor: "Bob Koetting was one of optometry’s true icons and he was very generous about sharing his knowledge with others in his field. He was very proud of optometry and his accomplishments elevated all of us in the St. Louis community and throughout our profession. Bob also recognized the importance of the UMSL College of Optometry to our region and worked hard on the school’s behalf. Our profession will miss him but we are forever grateful for his contributions."

Dr. James A. DeClue, Sr. Long-time clinical faculty member and leader in the community

Dr. James A. “Jim” DeClue, Sr. passed away November 16th at the age of 87. Dr. DeClue was a long-time practitioner who for almost 30 years owned an optometric practice (Eye & Vision Care Ltd) within a few blocks of the College of Optometry.

He was very supportive of the establishment of the College and, beginning with the first year the Center for Eye Care opened in the Fall of 1982, he served for many years as an adjunct clinical faculty member supervising optometry students. For many years he was an active participant in workshops held at the College for minority students considering a career in optometry and his ability as an orator likely exhibited a very positive influence with these participants.

Dr. DeClue was also a community leader and civil rights activist. Not only was he one of the first black optometrists in Missouri but he ultimately served as the president of the St. Louis chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He was a pioneer in the civil rights movement in the St. Louis area and in 1994, “Dr. James A. DeClue Day” was proclaimed by United States Representative William Clay of St. Louis in recognition of Dr. DeClue’s “noteworthy contribution and generous public service.”
Students Promote Health, Bullying Awareness and Optometry Through Pageantry

The interview process for acceptance to the College of Optometry is an important factor when making decisions as to whether each applicant will engage within their class and will have the maturity, professionalism, and interpersonal skills to succeed in a profession for which effective dyadic communication is a requirement for success. For two students, Claire Klinsky ('12) and Jenna Osseck ('15), these expectations represented no obstacles at all, as they had each distinguished themselves via a long history of competition and successes in pageants that include grueling requirements demanding poise, professionalism, and excellence in communication.

Through their participation in pageantry, each of these individuals has brought positive attention to the profession of optometry, as well as to each of their respective platform emphases: the importance of exercise and diet for health (Claire), and the timely topic of bullying awareness (Jenna).

Claire Klinsky's experiences include achieving finalist status for Miss Illinois and first runner-up for Miss Missouri. What motivated her to pursue this journey? “Honestly, the scholarship money that is involved in pageants was a motivating factor when I first began pageants, but it became much more than that!... [When] I started competing in pageants involved with the Miss America Organization [as] a freshman in college, it was an activity that I thought would give me more self-confidence and help me to create a healthier lifestyle. My personal platform involved teaching young people the importance of eating a healthy diet and making exercise a part of every day. As I continued through pageants, my motivation definitely shifted from scholarship money to educating as many people as I could about the importance being healthy!”

Claire's determination is evident as she relates her persistence in navigating the world of pageantry, persevering in ten competitions prior to earning her first local title and progressing on to the Miss Illinois pageant. She was also recognized as the Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals "Miracle Maker" for fundraising, and as both a State Academic Award winner and Preliminary Interview Award Winner. As recently as 2011-2012, Claire placed in the top 15 at Miss Missouri USA 2011 and was 1st Runner-Up to Miss Missouri USA 2012.

Jenna Osseck's decision to compete in pageants “was also influenced by the academic scholarships awarded by the Miss America & Miss Missouri organizations... Knowing I would be pursuing Optometry, I knew the scholarship assistance would be wisely used.” And —like Claire— she was successful due to her persistence. In 2008 at her first competition, Jenna won the Miss Kirksville title and went on to compete at Miss Missouri at the age of 18. “I did not compete again until January, 2011 when I was crowned Miss Northeast Counties and qualified to compete for Miss Missouri this past June. I ... collectively received over $2,500 in scholarships [for multiple pageant competitions].”

For the past several years, Jenna has regularly spoken at elementary, middle, and high schools across the state promoting her personal platform of Bullying Awareness & Prevention. “I’ve also had the privilege of participating in radio interviews as well as televised bullying prevention public service announcements for northeast Missouri, and raising funds year-round for Children’s Miracle Network.”

Interestingly enough Claire and Jenna both have a sister who has participated in the Miss America pageant. Claire relates: “My sister Whitney was Miss Illinois 2010 and competed for the title of Miss America 2011. It was exciting to see my sister succeed and follow her throughout her year as Miss Illinois. I like to think that watching me compete in the Miss Illinois pageant helped Whitney learn what to do (and what not to do) which made her successful very quickly in the pageant!” For Jenna she has an older sister who achieved prominence and served as a good role model. “My sister, Tara Osseck, was Miss Missouri 2009, and competed in the 2010 Miss America Pageant at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas. Tara has constantly been engaged in community service and won a 2010 Quality of Life Finalist Award for excellence in community service at the Miss America Pageant. Impacting me from childhood, Tara has continually been my role model and one of my main support systems. No matter what goal I have set out to achieve, she is there every step of the way cheering me on and helping me to excel in any way possible.”

The qualities that have made both Claire and Jenna successful in pageants —and the benefits derived from the preparation and performance—will assuredly help them later in the optometric profession. “More than anything, pageants have taught me how to communicate with just about anyone from any type of background,” observes Claire. “Making your patients feel comfortable is crucial to their treatment in the world of optometry so communication skills are key.” Jenna adds that her pageantry experiences specifically enhance her ability help educate...
Two UMSL Students Honored
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[future patients] “of varying backgrounds and educational levels.” For Claire, “pageants taught me how to manage my time effectively and be very organized.” Jenna agrees, adding that the process of honing interview skills required competitors to be “extremely knowledgeable about local, state, national, and global issues...”, which optimizes effectiveness and credibility in all types of interactions.

The impact of participation in pageants is perhaps best summarized by Dr. Carrie Hruza (Mrs. Missouri America 2010 and Mrs. Missouri United States 2011) who works with well respected glaucoma specialist and adjunct professor of the College of Optometry, John Galanis, M.D: “As a competitor or a titleholder, pageants increase one's public speaking skills, quick thinking, multi-tasking, interviewing, and confidence.” And Dr. Hruza is very aware of the successes of Claire and Jenna. “I just love that optometry is represented in pageantry here in Missouri! Or, that pageantry is represented in optometry!” For Claire Klinsky and Jenna Osseck, it has given them the determination, the discipline, and the interpersonal communication skills to succeed in a rigorous curriculum. Those same attributes will drive them to be leaders and role models for the profession and bring further positive recognition to the UMSL College of Optometry.