

Enabling Excellence in Eye Care: New Foundation Initiatives

The Foundation has been hard at work developing six new programs to help fill currently unmet needs and align with the American Academy of Optometry's recent strategic plan. The Academy's strategic plan, entitled "Inspiring Excellence in Eye Care" has five pillars, each defining a priority of the Academy. These are: Education, Research, Membership, Leadership & Legacy and Strategic Partnerships. Below is a brief description of the new programs which support these pillars by "Enabling Excellence in Eye Care."



Clinical Podcast Series

Optometrists may often not have enough time or access to read all the relevant published research papers. This program will provide summaries of trending, clinically relevant research which may directly translate and impact daily patient care. We plan to present summaries from across the literature in a podcast format.



Research Funding

Two gaps were identified in funding research. First, a need to stimulate novel exploratory research in specific areas of optometric interest through pilot funding. Secondly, to form collaborations with research partners, such as those in traditional vision care as well as technology firms, to explore areas of mutual interest. Competitive proposals will be submitted and undergo a peer review process.



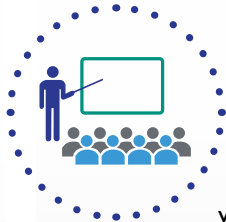
OD / PhD Scholarship Program

Additional PhD's will be required to teach the next generation of optometry students and move the profession's cutting-edge research forward. It is advantageous if these individuals also have clinical backgrounds. The Foundation will provide a training development scholarship to help incentivize optometrists/residents to pursue a PhD in a vision science or related biomedical science field.



Clinical Investigator Certification

Fellows have so much to offer to the clinical research community. Each day clinicians identify many important key insights, which could be of great value to the broader community. Many potential collaborative partners, such as academic and industry researchers, are searching for this insight. This certificate training program will provide practicing optometrists initial training to learn skills required to serve as a clinical investigator for sponsored research within their current practice setting.



Staff Training

Optometrists have voiced the need for an online staff training program that provides basic foundational education for employees who are new to the eye care profession. The training modules are aligned in a curriculum intended to be taken during the first two weeks of employment and certificates will be presented upon completion. Training modules will include topics such as basic eye anatomy, fundamentals of an eye exam, diagnostic equipment, and HIPAA and legal guidelines.



"Bright Ideas" Pitch Competition

This program will aim to stimulate new ideas and innovative thinking leading to potential treatments or devices. Top submitted ideas will be invited to a Pitch Competition at the Academy 2021 Boston meeting to present their project to a live audience and receive feedback from a panel of judges. Cash awards will be presented to winners to provide seed development funding.

Volunteer task force groups are currently working hard defining these ideas and developing details surrounding their implementation. As the programs develop with confirmed content and timelines, we will keep you updated. If you have questions or comments about these programs or the Foundation in general, please contact our Development Director, Bob Gray (BobG@aaoptom.org); or Foundation Board President, Pete Kollbaum (kollbaum@indiana.edu); or Campaign Chair, Wendy Harrison (wwharris@central.uh.edu).