

Welcome from the President & CEO

As we reflect on this past year, I am struck once again by the extraordinary spirit of our community. New England College of Optometry stands as one of the nation's most innovative and resilient institutions for the education of future optometrists. Our ability to thrive—through both challenges and opportunities—is made possible by the generosity and commitment of our donors, alumni, partners, and friends.

Each gift to NECO, whether large or small, has a direct impact on the lives of our students and the patients they will serve throughout their careers. Donor support strengthens our scholarship programs, expands access to advanced clinical training, fuels groundbreaking research, and enables us to invest in state-of-the-art facilities and technology.

cess ties

We are deeply proud of the work we are doing together: training compassionate, skilled clinicians; advancing the frontiers of vision science; and serving communities in Boston and beyond through clinical partnerships. These achievements are only possible because of the continued trust and investment of those who believe in our mission.

On behalf of our students, faculty, staff, I extend my deepest gratitude for your belief in NECO's mission. Together, we are ensuring that our graduates are prepared not only to meet the needs of today, but to shape the future of healthcare for generations to come.

With gratitude and optimism,

Howard Purcell, OD, FAAO, Dipl.

President & CEO



Re-Imagining Clinical Training at NECO

Cheers, applause, and the snip of a ribbon marked a new chapter for NECO on Monday, August 25, as the College officially opened its brand-new Clinical Training Center (CTC) at 424 Beacon Street.

The celebration drew nearly 100 trustees, alumni, faculty, staff, students, donors, corporate partners, and community leaders—everyone united by one goal: preparing the next generation of optometrists in a space designed to reflect the very best of modern clinical education.

The \$2.6 million project was carefully designed to replicate real-world optometry practices while giving students more opportunities to hone their skills.

For NECO, the CTC is more than a new facility—it's an investment in the future of eye care. As one of the nation's top producers of practicing optometrists, the College sees the center as essential to sustaining its leadership role and preparing graduates to deliver the highest level of patient care in communities across the country.





NECO students to pursue excellence in binocular vision and vision therapy. A proud member of the Class of 1975, Dr. Laudon joined NECO's faculty immediately after graduation and dedicated 42 years to teaching, mentoring, and advancing clinical care—retiring on his 70th birthday as a tenured Associate Professor.

A pioneer in pediatric optometry, Dr. Laudon specialized in treating children with complex needs—those facing learning differences, concussions, or developmental challenges. His work extended beyond the exam room; he developed innovative home-based therapy regimens that empowered patients to practice daily, reducing the need for frequent clinic visits. Known for his compassion, leadership, and unwavering commitment to students, he helped establish NECO's reputation for excellence in pediatric eye care. "The pediatric department at NECO would not be the same without Dr. Laudon's influence,"

care for children with specialized needs."

In March 2025, NECO honored his extraordinary legacy by creating the Dr. Richard Laudon Endowed Scholarship, a permanent fund supporting fourth-year OD students pursuing careers in binocular vision and vision therapy. For Dr. Howard Purcell, President and CEO of NECO, the scholarship is both a tribute and an investment: "Dr. Laudon's career exemplifies the best of NECO—clinical expertise, innovation, and mentorship. This scholarship ensures that his life's work will continue to change lives for years to come."

A Second Act

Although deeply proud of his career at NECO, Dr. Laudon has emphasized that his contributions did not end with his retirement. Drawing on decades of mentoring students in both clinical care and professional development, he turned his focus to a critical gap in optometric training: financial literacy. Too often, he saw graduates enter the profession unprepared to manage personal finances, invest wisely, or balance their careers with personal goals and responsibilities.

Throughout his career and especially in retirement, he began lecturing on personal and behavioral finance, developing seminars that combine practical money management with insights into human decision-making. He has also co-authored materials and educational programs with colleagues such as Dr. Pat Pirotte, equipping healthcare professionals with tools for long-term financial security. At the same time, he shares his insights more broadly through essays on Medium covering wellness, health, and financial literacy.

Beyond his writing and teaching, Dr. Laudon remains active in the community, devoting time to senior softball, where he runs the Pioneers Division (part of the EMASS Senior Softball Division), reflecting the same dedication and passion that shaped his clinical career. He also encourages fellow alumni and donors to consider a sustainable approach to philanthropy—a personal call for alumni to give as little as \$10 a month on one's credit card—a small but powerful commitment that could secure NECO's future. This challenge is grounded in his own history of giving more than \$100,000 to the College.

Looking ahead, Dr. Laudon continues to expand his influence. He will be featured in the upcoming Natural Health 365 iHealth Docuseries, presenting on vision therapy, and he continues to explore ways to use his written work and expertise to reach broader audiences.

A Legacy that Bridges Two Worlds

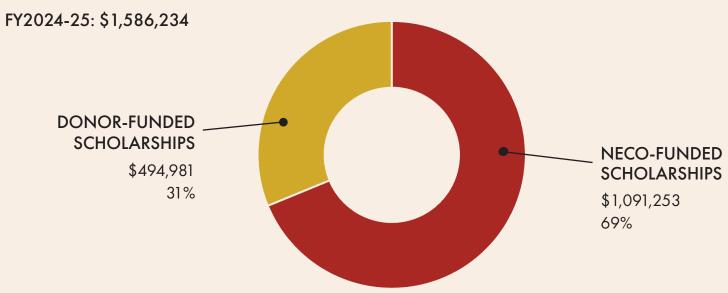
Dr. Laudon's life work—whether in the exam room, the classroom, or in his writing—remains rooted in empowerment. His goal has always been to equip others with the tools they need to thrive, whether that means helping a child with their visual and learning challenges, guiding a graduate toward financial independence, or inspiring alumni to give back.

Today, his legacy is carried forward by students like Toby Wercberger, OD '25, the inaugural Dr. Richard Laudon Scholarship recipient, who embodies the compassion, skill, and vision that defined Dr. Laudon's career.



As Dr. Laudon reflects, "Hopefully, in our passing, our life will be celebrated, in a similar manner as it was at the moment of our birth." His legacy is already being celebrated—by patients, students, alumni, and the generations of optometrists and professionals who continue to be inspired by his example.

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT



Strengthening Alumni Engagement & Community Connection in 2024-25

NECO advanced its mission to educate compassionate, skilled optometrists this past academic year by deepening alumni ties, fostering student-alumni connections, and expanding community initiatives. Through a combination of signature events, virtual programming, targeted outreach, and innovative collaborations, NECO made meaningful strides in creating a vibrant, engaged community of graduates, students, faculty, and partners.

Signature Alumni Events and Milestone Celebrations

The 2024-25 academic year saw the return and expansion of NECO's hallmark events. Highlights included:

- 50th Reunion Celebration Class of 1975 (May)
 A weekend of social gatherings, tours, and reflections on NECO's legacy
- Clinical Training Center (CTC) Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony (August)
 Showcasing NECO's newly-created state-of-the-art training space
- Southern Florida Dinner & Reception (April)
 Strengthening connections with alumni in the region
- AOA Alumni Reception Minneapolis (June)
 Bringing together graduates attending the national conference
- Graduate Strong (March)
 Supporting graduating students as they transition into practice

NECO is now preparing for Reunion Weekend 2025 (October 10–11), which will be its largest alumni gathering of the year. In conjunction with the American Academy of Optometry Annual Meeting, this two-day celebration will feature a general alumni reception, class reunions, faculty meet-and-greets, and tours of the Beacon Street campus featuring its new Clinical Training Center.

Virtual Engagement: The Fireside Chat Series

Recognizing the importance of accessible programming, NECO launched the Fireside Chat Series to feature alumni and faculty thought leaders. The inaugural event featured Dr. Howard Purcell, and upcoming sessions include a discussion with Dr. Amy Moy and Dr. Tim Bossie on clinical education and innovation.

Personalized Alumni Outreach and Storytelling

The Office of Development and Alumni Relations conducted more than 50 one-on-one alumni meetings, generating valuable insights for enhancing giving, mentoring, and volunteer opportunities. The office also debuted a monthly alumni e-newsletter and alumni website (necoalumni.org), delivering information on events, strategic priorities, clinical operations, and academics at NECO.

Student-Alumni Connections and Philanthropy

Alumni continued to play a vital role in student success. In FY25, 163 students received more than \$1.5 million in scholarships, supported in part by alumni giving. Additional engagement came through scholarship celebrations, career panels, and class agent outreach.

Community Highlights

NECO advanced community-building and inclusion with a slate of programming:









CommUnity
Cultural Connection

- Latinx/Hispanic Heritage Month Fireside Chat (October) with LaVista (LEO)
- Student and Faculty/Staff Open DEI.alogue Series Facilitating open conversations on equity
- CommUnity Cultural Connection (CCC) (January)
 Potluck-style meal with participation from nine community clinics
- Lunar New Year Celebration (January)
 In partnership with the Asian Student Association and sponsored by Alco
- Ramadan & Eid Celebration (April)
 Highlighting cultural traditions
- Boston Pride Parade (June)
 NECO students, faculty, and staff marched together with PRISM
- Canadian Thanksgiving Dinner
 Fostering belonging for over 100 Canadian students
- Immigration Policy Q&A and Canadian Consulate Visit Offering direct support for international students

Academic and Industry Collaborations

The College continued to lead conversations on the future of optometry through the 2024 NECO Industry Collaborative, tackling challenges such as equity, workforce supply and demand, and scope modernization. The fifth annual Industry Collaborative, set for November 3-4, 2025, will focus on Optometry Reimagined: Equipping Graduates for a New Era of Care.

NECO also launched an on-demand continuing education library, enabling optometrists to access CE anytime, anywhere.

Looking Ahead

As NECO moves toward its upcoming capital campaign, alumni will play a pivotal role in shaping the College's future. With more opportunities for involvement on the horizon—mentorship, regional events, and industry partnerships—FY26 promises to build on a year defined by connection, collaboration, and community.

For more information or to get involved, visit necoalumni.org, or contact the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at alumni@neco.edu.







MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY

In the lives of our students • In our academic, clinical & research programs • In the future of optometry



Make a one-time or recurring gift at neco.edu/giving



Call the NECO Development Office at (617) 587-5612



NECO Development Office 424 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02115

How the Laudon Scholarship is Making an Impact

Toby Wercberger, OD '25, focuses on the future with scholarship support

When **Toby Wercberger**, **OD** '25 began her optometry journey, she knew she wanted a career in healthcare—but not in a traditional way.

"I always loved the sciences and knew I wanted to work in healthcare," she shared. "When I discovered optometry, I thought, 'Why did I never think of this before?' It blends science, patient care, and work-life balance, and allows you to build lasting relationships with patients."

Growing up in Toronto, Toby began shadowing optometrists in high school and college, learning about the medical side of the profession. "The more I learned, the more I fell in love with it," she recalled. "I was lucky to meet amazing doctors who opened their clinics to me and showed me what optometry could be."

When it came time to choose a school, NECO stood out immediately. "I got such a welcoming, homey feel from NECO from the start," she said. "The staff were responsive and helpful during the application process, and the opportunity to work in the community—like doing vision screenings at local elementary schools—even in our first year really sealed the deal."

That early patient interaction had a lasting impact. "I remember walking into the lunchroom at an elementary school just a month or two into the program, thinking, 'we're on the provider side now.' Even though our preceptors double-checked everything, it reassured me that I was in the right place, doing the right thing."

The Dr. Richard Laudon Scholarship: A Timely Gift

This year, Toby began a residency in vision therapy in New York City—a move that brought both professional opportunity and financial challenge. "I knew I wanted to do a residency no matter what, to gain that additional training so I could best provide for my patients," she explained. "But after four years of optometry school, taking a pay cut and moving to an expensive city like New York is a huge financial burden. Receiving the Dr. Richard Laudon (NECO Class of 1975) Scholarship was such a relief—it





allowed me to focus on why I'm here and what I'm learning, rather than the financial stress."

Toby expressed gratitude for Dr. Laudon's generosity: "I'm honored to have been selected. This scholarship is helping me pursue my specialty and bring that knowledge back to my community."

After completing her residency, Toby plans to return to Toronto to join a private practice with a focus on pediatric patients and vision therapy. She hopes to build strong networks with occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists, teachers, and pediatricians to ensure comprehensive care.

"With vision therapy, there's so much co-management," she said. "I want to create a better network so patients receive well-rounded healthcare—not just eye care in isolation."

Reflecting on her time at NECO, Toby describes her experience as transformative. "NECO gave me a great education and a great community. Yes, there were challenges, but overall, I'm so grateful—for my training, for the opportunities, and for the scholarship that is allowing me to take this next step. It's an honor to be supported in pursuing my passion and to be able to give that back to my patients."

Your gift can change lives. Support from donors like Dr. Richard Laudon make it possible for students like Toby to follow their passions, pursue specialized training, and bring exceptional care to their patients in communities across the country.



For Dr. Clifford "Scotty" Scott and Dr. Mary Scott, New England College of Optometry has always been more than a place of study—it's been home. The couple first met as classmates at NECO, launching both a lifelong partnership and distinguished careers in optometry.

Dr. Mary Scott, valedictorian of the Class of 1968, built a career that spanned academics, clinical practice, and institutional leadership. She served as a Trustee for more than a decade, helping guide NECO through critical advancements, and today continues to mentor students in the clinical skills lab. Her legacy reflects pioneering leadership, dedication to patient care, and devotion to education.

Scotty has been equally central to NECO's story, serving as professor, department chair, dean of Academic Affairs, and president from 2009–2018. Now president emeritus, he continues to contribute as an institutional historian and trusted advisor.

Together, the Scotts embody NECO's enduring spirit of service, scholarship, and community—leaving an indelible mark on the College and the profession of optometry. Today, their connection to NECO remains strong.

A Community That Lasts a Lifetime

Reflecting on their student years, the Scotts describe NECO as a family. "This is evidenced by strong alumni attendance at class reunions and at our receptions at national meetings," Scotty shares. The mentors and role models who shaped their student experiences decades ago continue to inspire, and the Scotts take pride in watching that same legacy of connection extend across generations of alumni.

Philanthropy, to the Scotts, is rooted in community. "It's just a formal way of saying: we are all on this planet together and should be there to help each other." They view their support as both a responsibility and a privilege—an opportunity to honor the profession they love, while helping to reduce the financial burden on today's students. "When I was a student," Scotty said, "I had a scholarship that allowed me to attend college and graduate school. I feel the responsibility to offer the same chance to other generations."

While easing the cost of education is critical, the Scotts believe the impact of their giving reaches far beyond dollars. "We've established personal connections with many of our graduates who have gone on to be role models in their own right," Mary notes. They take joy in celebrating alumni successes, seeing in each one a reflection of NECO's enduring legacy.

The Scotts encourage colleagues and fellow alumni to join them in supporting NECO. "I think many of our colleagues feel the same way and are on the cusp of becoming donors. We encourage them to do so. It's gratifying on many levels."

A Living Legacy

When asked about legacy, the Scotts are quick to point out that it's less about recognition and more about sharing. "Legacy is what others think you've done. To me it's a reflection of how well you've shared your knowledge, wealth, and friendship."

Through their philanthropy, mentorship, and ongoing involvement, the Scotts continue to embody NECO's spirit of community, generosity, and leadership—ensuring the College they call home thrives for generations to come.

The Scott Scholarship: Lessening the Burden

Brynn's Story

For third-year NECO student Brynn Johnson, OD '27, choosing a path in optometry meant stepping far outside her comfort zone—geographically, academically, and financially. Growing up in Buffalo, New York, Brynn cast a wide net for graduate schools, looking within a six-hour radius of home. The moment she visited NECO, she knew she had found her place.

"I felt comfortable here from the start," Brynn recalls. "Even though I didn't know a single person in Massachusetts, I could tell NECO would be a community that supported me every step of the way."

Her instincts proved right. From working alongside beloved faculty members like Dr. Maureen Hanley and Dr. Bina Patel, to representing NECO at national events such as Vision Expo, Brynn immersed herself fully in campus life. "NECO has become a big piece of my heart," she says.

But the journey to becoming a doctor of optometry isn't just academically rigorous—it's financially demanding. In her third year, the cost of national board exams loomed large. "Each exam is close to \$1,500, and you take three of them," Brynn said. "For me, that's more than a month's rent. When you're budgeting for tuition, housing, and daily living expenses, it's a huge stressor."

That's where the Drs. Clifford and Mary Scott Scholarship Fund made all the difference. "Receiving this scholarship felt like a huge weight lifted," she says. "It allowed me to focus on preparing for boards without worrying about how I'd pay for them. The Scotts are truly investing in the future of our profession by helping us cross these final hurdles."

Brynn's vision for her own future is clear: a residency in pediatrics,

followed by work in underserved areas, possibly back near her hometown. She hopes to specialize in care for children with autism, Down syndrome, and complex medical needs, and to establish optometric services in hospitals that currently lack them. "I've met families who have to travel eight or nine hours for specialized care," she says. "I want to be the person who brings that care closer to home."

In classrooms, clinics, and communities, Brynn is already carrying NECO's mission forward. And thanks to the generosity of donors like Drs. Clifford and Mary Scott, she, and others like her, are empowered to make an even greater impact.

Distinguished Alumni

Each year NECO proudly awards the Distinguished Alumni title to deserving graduates who have exemplified excellence, embraced their role as compassionate caregivers, exhibited an unwavering dedication to the field of optometry, and made a profound impact on their communities. These are the Distinguished Alumni that we celebrated in 2024-25:



Karen Carrasquillo, OD '05, PhD

Dr. Carrasquillo patented the SCLERAL FitKit and established the FitAcademy to train clinicians worldwide in ocular surface disease management. Additionally, Dr. Carrasquillo is considered the key international opinion leader on scleral lenses.



Charles F. Mullen, OD '69

Dr. Mullen is known for expanding educational and clinical practice through national policy change and strengthening vision care. He established the current community health center and VA Hospital networks, and his work continues to instill confidence in students, residents, faculty, and patients across the country.



Eli Peli, OD '83, MSc

Dr. Peli is a leading expert in vision rehabilitation research. He was the first to propose and test the use of computerized image enhancement as a visual aid. Dr. Peli has developed numerous optical visual aids that are used around the world.

From the Chair of the Board of Trustees

It is my privilege to share this message on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the New England College of Optometry. Each year, I am inspired by the dedication of our students, the passion of our faculty, and the commitment of our alumni and partners who work tirelessly to advance the field of optometry. Together, we form a community devoted to ensuring that patients everywhere have access to exceptional vision care.

The role of philanthropy in sustaining and advancing NECO's mission cannot be overstated. Financial support from donors—whether through scholarships, endowed funds, or gifts to critical initiatives—directly strengthens our ability to educate future leaders, support groundbreaking research, and expand patient care. Your generosity ensures that our students are trained in state-of-the-art facilities, guided by distinguished faculty, and equipped to provide compassionate, innovative care to diverse populations.

As stewards of this institution, the Board of Trustees is deeply aware of the responsibility we share in shaping NECO's future. In today's rapidly changing healthcare landscape, it is essential that we continue to invest in education, research, and clinical care.

On behalf of the entire Board, I extend my sincere gratitude for your commitment to NECO. Your belief in our mission fuels the progress we celebrate today and lays the foundation for tomorrow's achievements. Together, we are securing a future where education, discovery, and patient care in optometry continue to flourish.

With appreciation,

Richard Heller, Esq. Chair, NECO Board of Trustees

Philanthropist's Society

Members of the Philanthropist's Society are recognized for their cumulative giving to the New England College of Optometry and NECO Center for Eye Care. This distinguished group has demonstrated their exceptional commitment to optometric education by making lifetime gifts of \$50,000 or more and we are pleased to express our gratitude for their philanthropic leadership.

\$1,000,000+

Estate of Joseph Feldberg, OD '52 * Lester Marcus, OD '54 *

\$500,000-\$999,999

Alcon

Bausch + Lomb EssilorLuxottica

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\$250,000-\$499,999

Stella Beider *

Boston Center for Blind Children

CIBA Vision

CooperVision

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\$100,000-\$249,999

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Genentech

Estate of Edith Heymans *

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Johnson & Johnson Vision

Donald Korb, OD '57 & Joan Exford, OD

Mark Lank

Richard Laudon, OD, '75

Carol Maloney, OD '81

Steven Manfredi

Massachusetts Society of Optomtery

Polymer Technologies

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State Street Foundation

Topcon Healthcare

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\$50,000-\$99,000

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Howard B. Purcell, OD, FAAO '84

Melvin Stack, OD '53

William Tolford, OD '55 *

vviiliaili lollola, OD

Topcon Healthcare

VisionWorks

Zenni Optical

* Deceased

Foster Namias Legacy Society

The Foster Namias Legacy society is named for 1932 graduate, longtime faculty member and Trustee of the College in recognition of his lasting legacy. The Foster Namias Legacy Society honors individuals who included the New England College of Optometry in their estate plans. We recognize this esteemed group of individuals with deep gratitude for their commitment to the future success of the College.

Arthur W. Baker, OD '67 *
Stella Beider *
Larry R. Clausen, OD
Paul A. DeCesare, OD '69
Carl E. Doughty, OD '69
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Edith Heymans *
Dorothy L. Hitchmoth, OD '96

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* Deceased

Alan Lewis, OD '65

Fiscal Year 2024-25 Donors

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of our many supporters. The following list reflects gifts received between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025. We apologize for any inadvertent errors or omissions.

THE PRESIDENTS CIRCLE

The President's Circle recognizes alumni and friends whose gifts in Fiscal Year 2025 totaled \$1,000 or more. Members of this group are among the College's most loyal supporters and are recognized at the following giving levels.

\$50,000+

Edith Hochstadt ^{*}

CooperVision Lorraine Fedyna, OD, '84 Kristen Griebel, OD, '97 Drs. G. Burtt, OD '52 & Ruth W. Holmes J Vernon Muir Trust Richard Laudon, OD, '75

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\$10,000-\$24,999

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\$5,000-\$9,999

AbbVie Inc.
FYidoctors
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MyEyeDr.
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Valarie Ricciardi, OD '88 and
Brian Thamel, OD, '88
Christopher Taylor, PhD
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\$2,500-\$4,999

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* Deceased

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The following group of donors recognizes alumni and friends whose gifts in Fiscal Year 2025 were up to \$999. They are recognized at the following giving levels:

\$500-\$999

American Academy of Optometry (AAO)
Phyllis Andrejko, OD '97
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Maureen Cavanagh
Jason Chin, OD '04
Laura Dake Roche, OD '85
Shivang Dave, PhD
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Agawam Eye Associates Inc Jackie Garlich, OD '10 William Gleason, OD '74

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Michele Ann Lagana, OD '92 & Ian G. Cox, OD, PhD

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Milly Mui, OD '09

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In Memory of Carl F. Gruning, OD '66*

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Edmund Hackman, OD '76 Steven Hammer, OD '75 Maureen Hanley, OD '81* Katherine Harkins, OD '14

Beth Harper

David Helfman, OD, FAAO '69

Carl Hirsch, OD '76

Ryan Hogan

Jeanne Hopkins, OD '91 Emil Horowitz, OD '77 Arthur V. Horvitz, OD '68

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William Kirn, OD '98 Shaughn Korpalski Rachel Krug

Cheryl Landry, OD '85 Allen Lee, OD '12 Laurie Lesser Li Li, OD '15

Cynthia Macdonald Carla Mack Peter Maddocks

Marciano Family Optometric Michael S. McAvoy, OD '84 Glen McCormack, OD John McIntyre, OD '84 Michelle Melnyk Barbara Meltzer Ashley Mills

John C. Minardi, OD '85 and

Sally R. Minardi John Nguyen

Long Nguyen, OD '14 Kay Nottingham Chaplin, EdD Gege Odion, OD '92

OXY USA WTP LP Eliezer Peli, OD '83 Maria Pham, OD '11 Kathleen Prucnal, OD Nicole Quinn, OD '01 Galina Rabkin, OD '03 Harvey D Rappoport, OD '75

Charles Reagan Camille Ruan

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Gayathri Srinivasan, OD '11

John Stefanini JD

Norma Swenson, OD '88

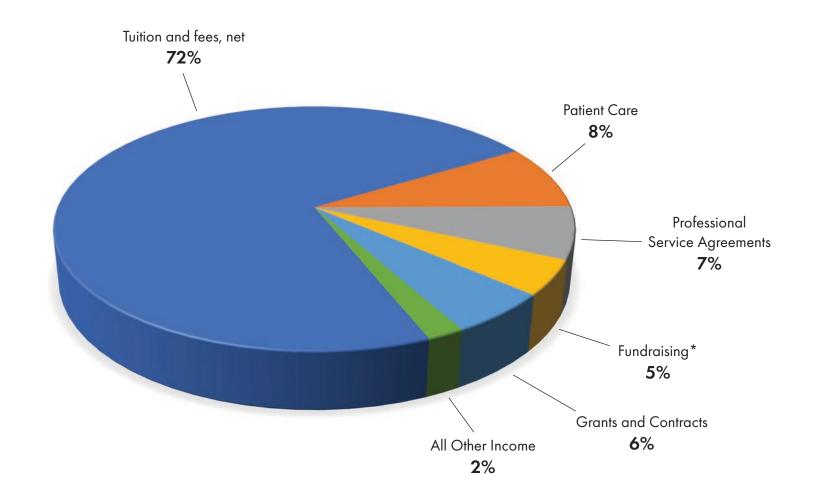
Noelle Tchang Patricia Thomas

Denise Thomas-Wilcox, OD '85

James Toop, OD '84 Cheryl Vescio Louise Winkler Frank Winski, OD '89 Erin Wooldridge, OD '15 Yueran Yan, OD '19 Winston W. Yao, OD '99 Florencia Yeh, OD '13 Yuhui Zhu, OD '12 Joseph Zolner, EdD

^{*} Deceased

Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Revenue





Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Expenses

