

# GUEST EDITORIAL

## INDIANA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY

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**B**y most accounts the idea for an optometry school at Indiana University (IU) was informally first discussed by two Indiana optometrists, John P. Davey and Noah Bixler, in the late 1930s. Those discussions became more earnest when Irvin M. Borish left the faculty of the Northern Illinois College of Optometry to set up practice in Kokomo, Indiana, in 1944. The School Committee of the Indiana Association of Optometrists was formally organized in 1945, with John Davey serving as Chairman. A sustained effort by Indiana optometrists culminated in a bill passed in 1951 by the Indiana legislature establishing the School of Optometry at IU.<sup>1</sup>

Pre-optometry courses began at IU in 1951, and in 1952, Henry Hofstetter was hired to design a curriculum, start ordering equipment and hire a faculty. The first professional courses in optometry started in the fall of 1953 with eighteen students. Sixteen of those students formed the first graduating class in 1956. To date, there have been more than three thousand graduates of the optometry program at IU.<sup>1</sup> Graduates have practiced throughout the United States and have served in leadership roles with numerous professional organizations, academic institutions and corporations.

The program in optometry operated initially as a division of the university, with its degrees granted by the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School. In 1975 it became a degree-granting School of the University. The first optometry graduates received Master of Optometry degrees. The professional curriculum was expanded to four years in 1965, and the first O.D. degrees were awarded in 1968.

Recognizing the importance of vision research and the development of faculty for optometry schools; an early priority was the establishment of a graduate program awarding M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in physiological optics (now known as vision science). The first M.S. degrees were awarded in 1956 to William R. Baldwin, Lester Ray Loper, and Paul W. Lappin. The first Ph.D. degrees were presented in 1962 to Robert Mandell and John H. Carter. Today more than 90 have earned M.S. degrees and 70 have achieved Ph.D. degrees.

Like many optometry schools early in their development, the school at IU was housed in many different buildings. The building currently occupied by the School of Optometry and the Program in Vision Science, completed in 1967, was first used for classes and clinics in January, 1968. This five-story, limestone-faced building is located on East Atwater Avenue. It provides space for classrooms, a library, laboratories, offices, as well as supporting research and development activities.

The School operates a number of clinical facilities serving different communities and offering students a wide variety of clinical experiences. Atwater Eye Care Center, a two story clinic built in 2008, is one block from the School's academic building. The street address is 744 East Third Street. That address was the same as the address for Foley House, the location of the School's clinic from 1959 to 1967.

The School also operates the Community Eye Care Center on the west side of Bloomington. The Community Eye Care Center was first opened in 1972 and has expanded to occupy a two story building at 803 N. Monroe Street in

Bloomington. In 1992, the School of Optometry opened the Indianapolis Eye Care Center in a newly constructed building at 501 Indiana Avenue in Indianapolis. Offering an expanded scope of patient care services, the Indianapolis Clinic is located near the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. In February 2000, the school opened another clinic in Guanajuato, Mexico. Fourth-year students also gain additional clinical experience through external rotations in a variety of clinical centers. Over 40 external rotation sites offer students excellent educational opportunities in referral centers, VA centers, private practices and other clinical centers.<sup>2</sup>

In 1995, a portion of the clinic in the Optometry Building was dedicated as the Borish Center for Ophthalmic Research. The center serves to facilitate investigations in vision disorders and diseases that affect the eye and its adnexa. The Borish Center provides an arena for the development of clinical researchers in vision and for the training of graduate students, residents and fellows.

Recently the Indiana University School of Optometry (IUSO) and the Indiana University School of Medicine Department of Ophthalmology have cooperated on two ventures. First, they held the Glick Research Symposium in Indianapolis. Second, they joined forces to offer eye and vision care for Marion County Medicare patients at the Indianapolis Eye Care Center.

As the profession of optometry has expanded its scope, so the School's curriculum and clinical training experiences kept pace. A new didactic curriculum was started in 2007. The goal was to focus

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on primary care optometry, encourage active life-long learning skills, and reducing the dependency on rote memorization. To this end, courses were streamlined to provide links between basic and clinical sciences. A new course series, "Integrated Optometry," was instituted for the first three semesters. Integrated Optometry follows a Problem Based Learning format. The goal of the courses is to learn basic science facts and concepts by studying clinical cases. Coincidentally, these changes fit very nicely with the recently revamped NBEO Part 1 exam. In 2009 (latest scores available) 95.2% of IU students passed compared with 91.9% nationally.

Over the decades, the School has contributed to the advancement of optometry in many ways. First and foremost, each graduate is fully prepared to practice entry-level optometry and have the life-long learning skills to readily use the new scientific and technical advances that await them. Second, the vision science research program of the School's faculty has significantly accelerated the pace of new discoveries that will be incorporated in optometry practices of the future. Lastly, the School continues to educate the future leaders, educators, and vision researchers that will help drive the profession of optometry forward.

### **References**

1. Goss DA. History of the Indiana University Division of Optometry. *Indiana J Optom* 2003;6:28-74.
2. Hitzeman SA, Goss DA. A history of the IU School of Optometry's clinics, external ro-