

# FOCAL POINTS

MICHIGAN COLLEGE OF  
OPTOMETRY'S NEWSMAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER 2018/2019

## FACULTY AND STAFF FOCUS

Dr. Paula McDowell and  
Connie Brady

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## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Courtney McNulty and  
Jonathan Kendall

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## GOOD NEWS

The Who, What and Where  
of MCO

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## ALUMNI FEATURE

Dr. Nicholas Belill

# THOUGHTS FROM THE DEAN



MCO Dean, Dr. David Damari

Optometric education is in the midst of a period of review. The Accreditation Council on Optometric Education has released updated standards<sup>[1]</sup> for existing programs and for proposed new programs. The Association for Schools and Colleges of Optometry is hosting a wide-ranging discussion among optometric educators in March to discuss several aspects of the profession that impact our future, including the number of applicants, the impact of student debt, the role for automation and other technologies in eye and vision care, and the current and future scope of optometry. The hope is that this discussion will be the first among many that will help all organized optometry prepare for and assure our profession's place in the future of healthcare. Finally, the American Academy of Optometry and ASCO are working together to formulate a credentialed path to specialty practice, since specialties have existed de facto in our profession since the onset of residency education in the 1970s but have never been formally recognized. Of these considerations of our future, the most important in our immediate future, and the one that will affect you, our alumni, most tangibly over the next two years, is the new standards for accreditation.

[1] <https://www.aoa.org/Documents/ACOE/OD%20Manual%2001%202019%20PDF.pdf>

Since the early 2000s, the Department of Education has been leading a push for higher education to better document how well post-secondary institutions deliver on their promise of improved employment and quality of life for their graduates. The new ACOE standards are an attempt to better measure outcomes from the schools and colleges of optometry and to better assure that students who enter those programs can expect that these programs are given appropriate resources to assure every student admitted has access to the learning and experience necessary for “independently practicing contemporary optometry.”

The revised standards for proposed programs attempt to address widely held, arguably valid concerns that many of these were attempts by some universities to create prestige and profit for themselves by starting doctoral-level healthcare programs with minimal resources. The revised standards for newly proposed programs were finalized this past autumn and published in January. These are especially important because there are several colleges and universities in the process of or considering beginning new programs, as I outlined in the last newsletter.

The new standards for applying to create a program accredited under the ACOE include a feasibility study that includes enrollment projection, resources that will be made available, career opportunities, and public need. The host institution must also have regional accreditation that recognizes the institution’s ability to deliver doctoral-level healthcare education, and must have a CEO and chief academic officer in place at least six months in advance of the submission of a self-study.

Standards for all programs have also become more rigorous. The most important of these, as far as you are concerned, are the standards on program outcomes. MCO will now have to demonstrate that “within six years of matriculation, at least 80% of entering students must be (1) licensed to practice optometry, or (2) pass all three parts of the NBEO, or (3) pass the equivalent Canadian registration examination. The ACOE also strongly recommends that we provide career placement rates and success in placements into residencies as measures of our outcomes.

Why does this affect you? We have no question that MCO graduates are among the most successful in optometry. However, we can no longer just assert that is true. We will now have to provide actual numbers to back up our contention, and this is where you come in. We will have to survey all of you, and you will all have to respond, in order for us to truly demonstrate the success of our program and its graduates. I know that you are surveyed to death these days. Every retailer, hotel, airline, and restaurant now surveys you on your “satisfaction.” The survey we will be sending you in a year or so will be different. Our accreditation will depend on the number of responses we get. So when you receive a survey or two from MCO in the next 12-18 months, please don’t assume it is just another Ferris junk mail. Our future as a college of optometry will actually depend on you!

As always, if you have any questions about the current state of your alma mater, or any suggestions for us, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am here to serve our alumni and our students.

Be well and do well,  
David

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

## DR. PAULA MCDOWELL

Dr. Paula McDowell knew since eighth grade that she wanted to become an optometrist, and with this goal in mind, she set out to attend Ferris State University for her undergraduate degree. She then completed the optometric doctorate program at MCO in 2009, staying on afterwards as MCO's first Pediatric and Binocular Vision Resident. After working in Grand Rapids and teaching at the Illinois College of Optometry, she came back to MCO as faculty in 2012. Currently she is an Associate Professor, teaching multiple courses, supervising students in clinic, and handling all affairs as the Chief of Pediatric and Binocular Vision Services and Residency Supervisor.

Dr. McDowell chose to return to MCO for a myriad of reasons. She certainly likes the small class sizes and enjoys working at a school that encompasses a unique learning environment, where she is able to familiarize herself with the names and faces of all of her students. Additionally, being in a small school provided her with the opportunity to get involved as faculty in lectures and labs a bit earlier than she anticipated. Not to mention, her husband Dr. Brian McDowell, also received a job offer from MCO at the same time, which was a nice bonus that aided in her decision. Dr. McDowell's favorite aspects of teaching include getting to know her students and seeing them as future colleagues. She gets excited when her students have that "AHA" moment while downstairs in the University Eye Center- specifically when they start to piece together their clinical and educational background, being able to appreciate the connection between lab and classroom concepts coming together in clinic. She also enjoys seeing her students get excited when they have a challenging patient case that goes really well.



***Congratulations to Dr. Paula McDowell for being named the recipient of the 2018 MOA Young Optometrist of the Year Award!***

Dr. McDowell is heavily involved in the optometric community. She believes that it's important to be engaged in the profession, to stay updated on what's going on and to serve as a role model for her students. She is a member of the MOA Children's Vision Committee where they work to promote the AOA InfantSEE program. Furthermore, they aim to increase awareness of the importance of having regular and thorough vision exams, beyond having 20/20 vision or passing vision screeners at school. She is the AAO Faculty Liason, there to answer any questions about the Academy or it's fellowship process. She's a member of the AOA, MOA, and a Fellow of the AAO.



**Hunter McDowell "examines" his dad while Dr. Paula McDowell holds him up to the slit lamp**



**Drs. Paula and Brian McDowell, with their sons, Dexter and Hunter**

Currently Dr. McDowell completed her third year as the Chair of the ASCO Ethics Educators Special Interest Group. From the research side, she's involved as a Principal Investigator in PEDIG (the Pediatric Eye Disease Investigator Group), a network that brings together optometrists, ophthalmologists, and other professionals who work with the pediatric population. They conduct randomized controlled trials and scientifically based studies through the NIH, aspiring to promote better vision care in the pediatric patient population. Dr. McDowell's academic interests include looking at better treatments for amblyopia and strabismus, analyzing the effects of digital devices on vision and learning, and examining the potential of new technology in vision therapy programs. She also enjoys working with the special needs populations and has a strong interest in ethics in the field of optometry.

Outside of her career, Dr. McD enjoys spending time with her family, Dr. Brian McDowell, also a MCO alumnus and faculty member, and their two wonderful little boys, Dexter and Hunter. She also loves painting with water colors and oils, and being involved in all sorts of different craft projects. If there was one thing she could say to MCO students, her advice would be to stay excited about the profession and keep in mind why you started. She knows it could be very easy to get bogged down over tests and proficiencies, as well as the long hours and stress, but focusing on the end goal and working hard will help students become successful in the future. In terms of her thoughts for alumni, she would encourage our alumni to come back, visit often, and keep in touch with their former faculty. She hopes our alumni look back at MCO with fond memories and mentioned that she always enjoys hearing from them.



**Dr. McDowell with her son, Hunter, in front of her paintings**

**Dr. McDowell tells us a little bit more about MCO's Pediatrics and Binocular Vision Residency Program:**



**Drs. Paula and Brian McDowell, with their sons, Dexter and Hunter**

"We have a fantastic Pediatric and Binocular Vision Residency Program. Our residents that come through the program get great exposure to all facets of pediatric optometry. They are involved in direct patient care throughout the week, they help with overseeing the students, they participate in some of our different labs or research projects, and there are opportunities to present lectures. We also send our residents to the Cherry Street Health Services in Grand Rapids, which is a federally qualified community based health center, to give them exposure to a little bit of a different pediatric population in a practice setting outside of academia. Our residents do periodic observations throughout the year at other pediatric neuro-psych, ophthalmology, or vision therapy practices. One nice thing about this program is that it's very flexible, allowing our residents to have the opportunity to explore different areas of learning depending on their personal interests in pediatric optometry".

# ALUMNI FEATURE

**What year did you graduate MCO?**

I graduated as co-valedictorian from MCO in 2004.

**Where are you originally from and where do you currently practice?**

Clio, MI

**Tell us about your path into your current mode of practice?**

Upon graduation from MCO in 2004, I took a position with Pearle Vision in Flint. Within nine months, Pearle Vision was purchased by Luxottica and the location I was working at was going to close down. I then decided to open a practice cold in 2006, since I preferred to have more control over my professional future compared to the uncertainty of being employed by a corporation. The location that I chose was my hometown of Clio, since there was a brand new retail space in a high traffic area and a lack of private practice optometry in the near vicinity. The business has been very successful with positive growth ever since. In fact, we plan to hire an associate doctor in 2019.

***Dr. Nicholas Belill***



**Dr. Belill and his staff!**

**What is the most rewarding part of your career?**

I enjoy teaching patients and my staff about the visual system in a way that they can best understand it. This includes many analogies that have been developed over the years. Some people will tell me that they finally understand a condition that they have suffered from for many years, and are very grateful that I took the time to explain it. It is also very rewarding to assist patients who are having urgent causes of visual loss or eye pain.

**Where do you see the future of optometry heading?**

Advancing technologies will continue to change and improve how patient care is delivered. Specialties such as scleral lenses, myopia control and orthokeratology will become more popular. With the aging population, early detection and treatment of eye diseases such as macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma will become more important than ever.

**What are your hobbies and interests outside of optometry?**

I enjoy spending time with my beautiful wife and four amazing children. I am a fan of local sports teams, plus also like to read presidential biographies and other historical nonfiction. I also like to plan and take family vacations.

**What are some fond memories you have of MCO?**

My fondest memories of MCO were spending time with my three roommates: Kevin, Kyle, and Michael. We had a lot of laughs and helped each other out whenever needed. Our entire class was full of nice, talented people. The clinical instructors were all dedicated to preparing us to succeed, and some are still a professional resource that I continue to use years later.



**If there is one thing you can say to MCO students, what would it be?**

It is not only important to learn as much as you can while at MCO, but to also develop lifelong learning skills. Trying to master the art of optometry will be an evolving process that will last for the rest of your career. This is part of what makes being a Doctor of Optometry both challenging and rewarding.

**If there is one thing you can say to our alumni, what would it be?**

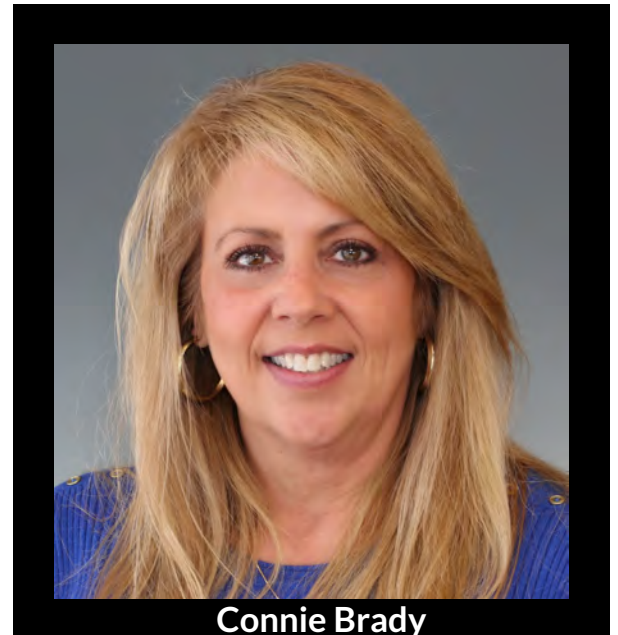
There are many ways that alumni of MCO can continue to support their alma mater. Whether it be through financial means, or taking the time to mentor current students, giving back can be both a gratifying experience and also one that helps our profession continue to thrive for many years to come.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

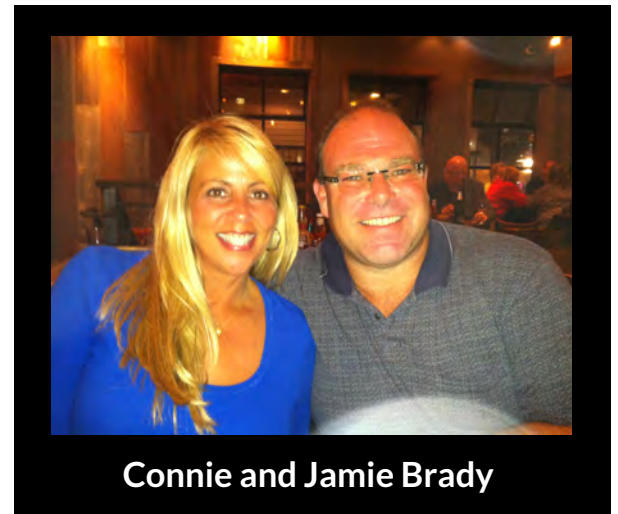
## Connie Brady

Connie grew up in Armada, a small town in eastern Michigan. She came to MCO with over 20 years of management experience working in other medical offices. She joined MCO's University Eye Center in July 2010, and is currently employed in the business office as the Insurance Billing Specialist of vision and medical claims. Some of her responsibilities include posting insurance payments, electronically submitting claims, maintaining patient ledgers for accuracy, in addition to assisting the dispensary with patient insurance verification, eligibility, and prior authorizations. When needed, she is also able to help the front desk with check-ins, check-outs and general patient assistance. She really enjoys working at UEC, mentioning that her fellow employees have become her second family. Furthermore, she genuinely enjoys spending time with the students, specifically when they come into her office with insurance questions, allowing her to take the time to teach and explain how particular insurances work.

Connie loves spending time with her family, especially her little two year old grandson, Owen! Outside of her career, Connie enjoys boating and working in her flower and vegetable garden. She also likes tapping maple trees and making maple syrup with her husband, Jamie, who is an optician here at the UEC and faculty member. Together they have four wonderful grown children!



Connie Brady



Connie and Jamie Brady



Connie and her family!



Connie's message to MCO students: "Take a moment to breathe and to recognize what you have accomplished. Then move forward with courage towards the future you choose. Always remember to honor each accomplishment before you move on to the next task. That way you build a strong foundation, acknowledging where you've been and what you've learned to take with you moving forward".

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

**Where are you originally from?**

Harrison Township, MI all the way on the Eastside on Lake St. Clair in the Metro Detroit area.

**What is your educational background?**

I graduated from Wayne State University in Detroit with a Bachelor's in Biology. While I initially started out pre-pharmacy, I changed my path to pre-optometry after I started working at a LensCrafters. I loved talking to my doctor about what she was doing and what all the numbers I was collecting represented. I was fascinated by it all. I knew quickly I had found my niche. I applied to MCO and the rest is history.

**Why did you choose MCO?**

MCO allowed me to stay close to home and my family, while also putting myself in a learning environment where I knew I would thrive. It was the best of both worlds as far as I could tell. Why I chose MCO also happens to be what I enjoy most about it. The small town feel, the small class size and as promised, I could not love my classmates any more than I do. They have become like another family and the best support system I could ever ask for.

**What type of practice do you envision yourself in?**

I see myself starting out in a retail setting just to get my feet wet as a new grad. I'm also familiar with it through previous work experience. However, I eventually see myself in a private practice. Whether that ends up being only ODs or an OD/MD clinic remains to be seen, as I think I would enjoy either. We'll have to wait and see what opportunities arise down the road.

## COURTNEY MCNULTY

Third Year Student



**What activities do you enjoy outside of school?**

I love to read, go boating, and spend time with my family and friends. I have played the flute for 15 years and taught private lessons locally for 6 years until I moved to Big Rapids for school. I'm looking forward to possibly getting back into teaching when I move back home.

**Do you have a message for our alumni?**

We appreciate all of your support and enjoy when we get to meet you to talk and ask questions about life on the other side of school. Your wisdom is always welcome. I'm excited to finally join the ranks and help students find their way as well.

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## JONATHAN KENDALL

First Year Student

Jonathan is originally from Hastings, Michigan, but currently lives in Cadillac with his wife, Erin, and his daughters Mackenzie (4) and Evie (2). After high school he attended Michigan State University and received a degree in teaching, majoring in biology and integrated science. He then spent ten years instructing grades six through twelve, initially in Fife Lake and later in Caledonia. In that time he taught almost every science class imaginable, from botany all the way up to AP physics. Eventually he made the decision to leave the classroom and pursue optometry.

He chose MCO because of its proximity to home. He mentions that changing careers with two young children is disruptive enough without moving them halfway across the country, and he feels that he's made the right choice by staying close. Being a nontraditional student, he really enjoys the close-knit feel in MCO. He noted that a few of the faculty have children about the same age as his and are very understanding of what it takes to make this shift in his career. Furthermore, as a former science educator he has a unique appreciation for the quality of the classrooms and laboratory equipment here at MCO. Jonathan is still deciding what mode of practice he'd like to pursue in the future, but notes that eventually he'd highly consider returning to teaching in an optometric capacity. Outside of the classroom, his children keep him very busy. They are both active girls and enjoy being outside no matter the weather or season.



**Jonathan with his wife, Erin**

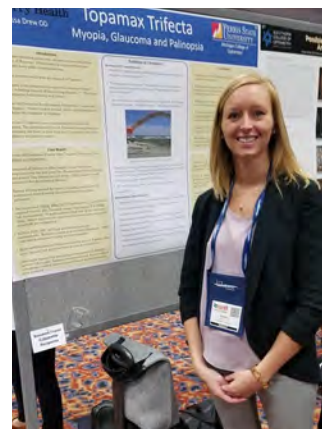
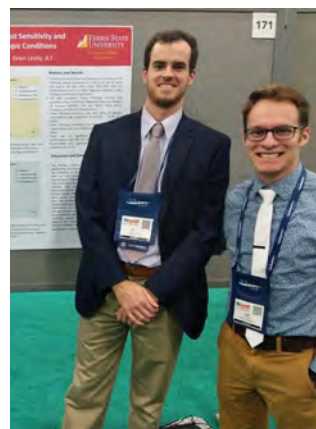
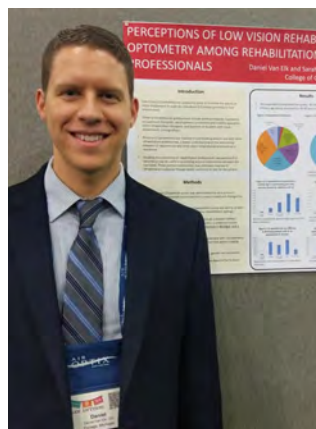
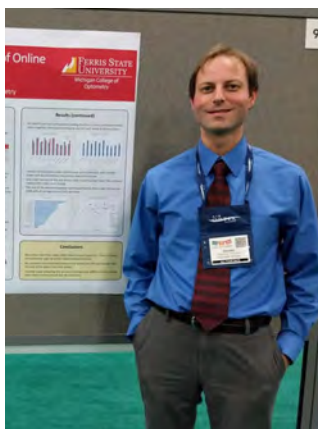


**The Kendall Family**

**Jonathan's message to our alumni is this:**

"Thank You. Every day I walk past the placards that indicate which class is responsible for the donation of which equipment and I am very thankful for all of it. I was an excellent teacher, but I will be a better optometrist because of your generosity."

# MCO AT THE AAO

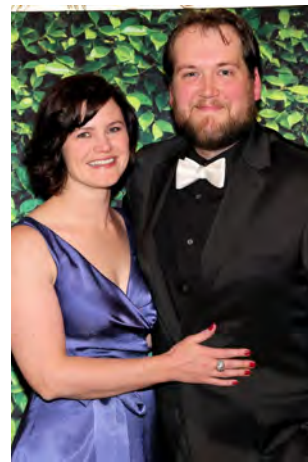


Congratulations to our alumni who became Fellows of the Academy this past year in San Antonio!

- Dr. Morgan Baker, MI
- Dr. Nina Collins Glauch, MI
- Dr. Adrian N Hulbert, CA
- Dr. Austin Schipper, WI
- Dr. Andrea Shank, MI
- Dr. Matthew Tholl, AE
- Dr. Amanda J Umlandt, VA

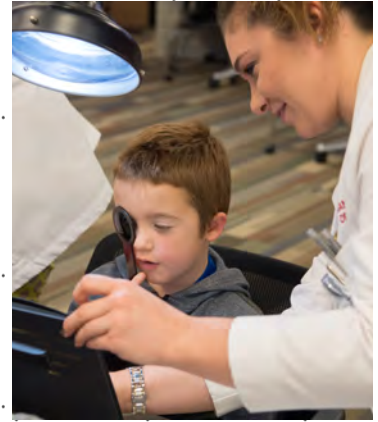
# EYEBALL 2018

We raised our glasses to the Catalina Wine Mixer theme!



# SINE PROGRAM

The MCO Students in Need of Eyecare program (SINE) examined children lacking access to eye care and provided glasses to those who needed them at no cost through Frey Foundation and Lions Club grants.



# INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AT MCO

The second year students participated in an interprofessional workshop with students from pharmacy, nursing and social work, to better understand the roles of each profession in patient care.



## POVERTY SIMULATION

MCO first year students participated in a poverty simulation to build clinical empathy with students from nursing, pharmacy and social work. The simulation was funded through a Ferris Foundation Exceptional Merit Grant.



# MCO & THE MOA

## 2018 MOA STUDENT NIGHT AT THE HOLIDAY INN



## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FOURTH YEAR STUDENT, OUR ALUMNUS, AND THREE OF OUR FACULTY FOR BEING RECIPIENTS OF THE 2018 MICHIGAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION AWARDS!



**Optometrist of the Year**  
Lillian Kalaczinski, OD



**Educator of the Year**  
Emily Aslakson, OD, FAAO



**Young Optometrist of the Year**  
Paula McDowell, OD, FAAO



**Student of the Year**  
Luke Lirones



**Keyperson**  
Doug Totten, OD

# MCO EVENTS!

## AOSA WELCOME BACK PICNIC



## CLASS OF 2022 ORIENTATION



## VISION REHABILITATION CLUB OLYMPICS



# MORE MCO EVENTS

## MCO AND CLUB SPORTS/BROOMBALL



## STRESS RELIEF NIGHT



## MISCELLANEOUS!





WE ARE PROUD TO BRING YOU

# The MCO Summer CE Program!

We hope that you will join us for this excellent program. Register now by clicking [here](#) or visiting our web page.



## Summer CE 2019

12 Hours of Pharmaceutical COPE approved CE



Wednesday, June 5, 2019 and Thursday, June 6, 2019

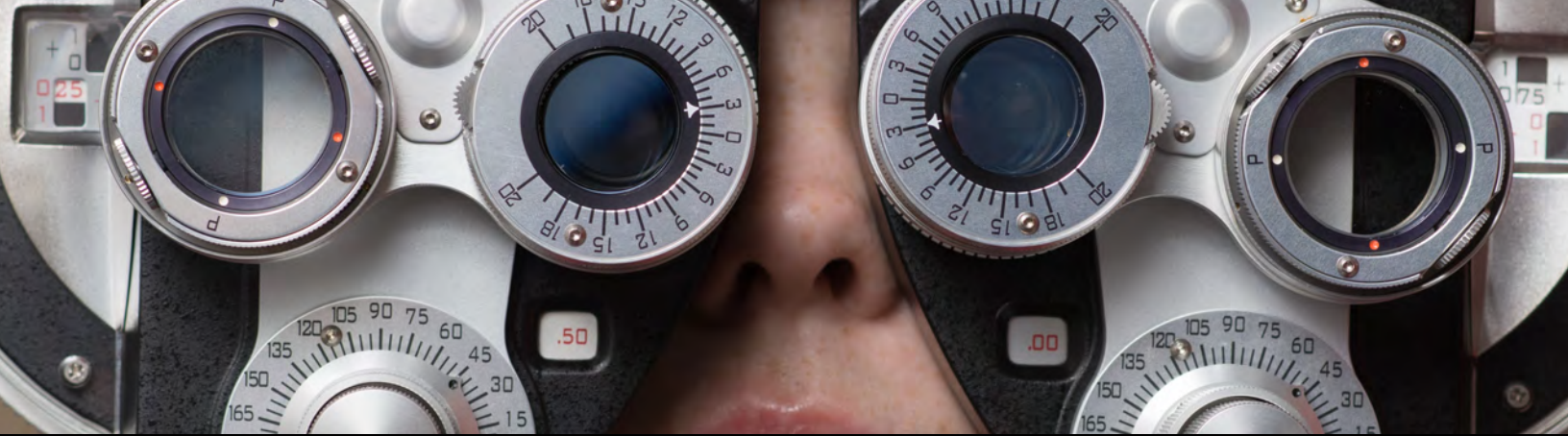


## SAVE THE DATE

Registration will open March 11, 2019

For more information, go to [www.ferris.edu/mco/ce](http://www.ferris.edu/mco/ce)





# Good News!

- Congratulations to **Dr. Daniel Taylor** for receiving his Diplomate in Optometric Education at the AAO!
- **Dr. Madeleine Hacker** has been named the top GPA earner from the Michigan College of Optometry, as published by *Women in Optometry* reporting on the top GPA earners from each school. She has started an anterior segment disease and contact lenses residency program at Davis Duehr Dean in Madison, Wisconsin.
- **Dr. Vandana Rajaram** received the MOSA First Year Class Student Choice Award for Outstanding Professor for the academic year of 2017-2018.
- MCO alumni **Dr. Jason Fliegel**, **Dr. Traci Seng**, **Dr. Sara Weidmayer**, and **Dr. Kathy Lewis**, wrote "The ABC's of Radiologic Testing" in the October publication of the Review of Optometry.
- Our third year student, **Mary Stoll**, is the 2018 J. Pat Cummings Scholarship recipient from the American Academy of Optometry Foundation.
- The 2018 Vincent Salierno Scholarship recipient is fourth year student **Brendon Manns**. This scholarship is from the American Academy of Optometry Foundation.
- **Dr. Sara Bush** published an article in the journal Vision Development and Rehabilitation titled, "Screen Time in the Pediatric Population: A Review of its Effects on Refractive Error, Attention and Learning, and Ocular Health".
- **Dr. Jenerou**, **Dr. Raghunandan**, and **Dr. Sara Bush** published an article in the journal Vision Development and Rehabilitation titled "Divided Visual Attention Performance of Ice Hockey Players with History of Concussion."
- **Dr. Avesh Raghunandan** and **Tabatha Boyak** presented their paper at the AAO titled "Sub Threshold Binocular Contrast Summation Scales with Interocular Phase Disparity".
- **Dr. Andrea Shank** and **Dr. Paula McDowell** presented their paper at the AAO titled "Reading Eye Movement Abilities: A Comparison of Digital and Print Presentations".
- **Dr. Paula McDowell** and **Dr. Brianne Hobbs** presented their poster at the AAO titled "Faculty Awareness of Industry Relationships Within Colleges of Optometry".
- **Dr. Vandana Rajaram** and students **Luke Lirones** and **Kevin Leahy** presented their poster at the AAO titled "The Effect of Automobile Window Tints on Contrast Sensitivity and Color Discrimination under Photopic and Mesopic Lighting Conditions".
- **Dr. Dan VanElk** and **Dr. Sarah Hinkley** presented their poster at the AAO titled "Comparative Analysis of the Perceptions of Low Vision Rehabilitation Optometry Among Rehabilitation Professionals".
- **Dr. Joe Pole** presented a poster titled, "Comparative Analysis of the Performance of Online Spectacle Retailers" at the AAO Annual Meeting.
- **Dr. Sarah Hinkley** presented two lectures at the AAO titled "Functional Implications of ARMD and Their Treatment" and "Driving and Vision Assessment, Education and Action in the Exam Room".

# CONTACT US

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU ABOUT  
SPECIAL NEWS, POSITION CHANGES OR  
ANYTHING FUN OR EXCITING!

EMAIL NEWS TO [SARAHHINKLEY@FERRIS.EDU](mailto:SARAHHINKLEY@FERRIS.EDU)

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## FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Michigan College  
of Optometry

1124 S. State St.  
Big Rapids, MI 49307  
[www.ferris.edu/mco](http://www.ferris.edu/mco)

Written and Edited by:  
Dr. Sarah Hinkley and Alina Usataia