

# FOCAL POINTS

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

MICHIGAN COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY'S NEWSMAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER  
2020/2021

## FEATURE

Keeping optometric  
education strong  
during COVID 19

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## FACULTY FOCUS

Dr. Chad Rosen

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## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Alina Usataia  
Toqua Saflo

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## ALUMNI FEATURE

The Peters Family  
Dr. William Denton

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## STAFF FOCUS

Amy Parks  
Andrea Johnson

# THOUGHTS FROM THE DEAN



MCO Dean, Dr. David Damari

*Greetings from Michigan College of Optometry. I am writing this during a Thanksgiving week when our second- and first-year students have already left campus to spend the holiday with their families, and will remain there through the entire rest of the calendar year. Our third-year students are wrapping up the final two days of patient encounters in the University Eye Center before they leave to join their families for Thanksgiving, but they will be back on Monday to see more patients. These are just some of the ways in which the MCO experience is a bit different this year as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in an effort to keep everyone here safe and do our part to assure that the hospital systems in Michigan and everywhere our students and their families live are not overwhelmed with patients suffering from that disease. Our lectures are now all remote for all of our students. We have done this to minimize the amount of time they spend in one room together during the pandemic. Everything we know about SARS-CoV-2 indicates that cumulative exposure time is highly correlated with likelihood of infection and severity of disease, so to have students sit together in those rooms for four hours at a time when viable, albeit not exactly equivalent alternatives are available, would be irresponsible.*

**We are minimizing exposure in the classroom so that we can continue to offer rich face-to-face laboratory and clinical experiences. We have changed the scheduling so that each lab section in the third floor Dow Laboratory can use the entire lab, not just half of it, in order to facilitate social distancing of student pairs and faculty. There has been no reduction in clinical laboratory experience. We did lose some time at the end of the spring semester, as the response to the pandemic began, but our students and faculty returned from the summer a week early, added hours in the first week of the fall semester, and have made up every single missed lab hour.**

**MCO alumni can be very proud of how the entire MCO community has responded to this pandemic and worked hard to keep the program on track while keeping everyone safe. Finally, there were some clinical encounters lost during the spring and summer semesters as everyone determined how to best see patients while keeping them and our students, staff, and faculty safe, as well as their families. It would be impossible to make up all those hours, but we did offer alternative case study discussions and other experiences that the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education had acknowledged as acceptable during that limited time.**

**Now we are back at full force. Our third- and fourth-year students are seeing just as many patients as before the pandemic. To accomplish this, our staff have had to do an extraordinary amount of work to educate our patients on new protocols, do advanced COVID-19 screening procedures, and make many more appointments for optical services and other things that for our patients used to be simply walk-in services, all with less staff than before as the University continues to have budget and personnel cuts in the wake of the enrollment declines we have been seeing at the University for the last few years. Finally, in all these measures, we have been doing the same best practices as almost every other college of optometry in the US. In fact, our faculty and administration were remarkably creative in determining how to make up for the lost time from spring, and some things we have done have served as a model for other schools and colleges.**

**You should also know that the Governor's Executive Order has specifically exempted healthcare programs from the prohibition of face-to-face instruction. She understands how important experiential learning is to healthcare training, thanks in part to the strong advocacy of the MOA and MCO. In short, you can continue to be proud of the level of education at MCO. The students, staff, faculty, and administration here will always advocate for a program at Ferris that provides the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to create leaders for the future of our profession. Continued engagement from alumni and alumnae like you help us stay on that course, and you are welcome to call or write me anytime you have questions or concerns.**

Clinical Education During COVID-19

# EDUCATING STUDENTS AND SERVING PATIENTS

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UPDATE FROM DAVID DURKEE, OD, FAAO  
ASSISTANT DEAN FOR CLINICAL AFFAIRS  
AND DIRECTOR OF EXTERNSHIPS

Conducting an educational clinical learning experience, by itself, is already a large task. With as many as 74 clinical students, 22 faculty, and 6,000 patients a year, the University Eye Center at the Michigan College of Optometry has many moving parts. The balance to achieve exemplary patient care while still educating optometry's future requires a careful coordination of resources. It's a delicate balance. Producing qualified graduates that can deliver high quality optometric care, pass board exams, meet accreditation standards, and satisfy patients' needs while on a budget is the definition of living almost on the edge.

That careful balance was challenged mightily with the pandemic. How can we deliver patient care and educate students when everything is shut down? In the early days of the pandemic, the transmission and morbidity of the contagion were unknown. In March of 2020, all clinic operations were halted while examination and planning could occur. Meanwhile the clock was ticking on patient care and student education. We immediately started examining our patient files for those that needed urgent care, and created a schedule for emergency visits. All, of course, after developing our infection control protocols. One early decision we had to make was how safe were our protocols to be constructed. We decided that erring on the side of a conservative approach to infection control was the best policy. My overall premise was "assume everyone is already infected", and we'll still see patients while protecting ourselves.

So for several months the clinic operated with volunteer faculty covering urgent care issues. The 3rd year students continued clinic sessions by participating in "virtual" clinics mostly over ZOOM video meetings. This was deemed adequate to send these students to off campus externships in June as newly minted 4th year students. But our rising 2nd year class lost some of their spring clinics, and we deemed it too risky to have all 36 students in their new 3rd year Summer clinic. This Class of 2022 would then be without real clinical experiences for nearly 4 months. Meanwhile, the campus clinic did operate in the Summer with our normal four 4th year students, plus 1 more 4th year displaced from a closed externship location. Routine and specialty care then continued at a lower volume, as we learned how to manage the resources in the clinic to control the infection. Largely, it worked!

This Fall, the lingering problem were those 3rd year students that needed to catch up on clinical experiences missed over the summer. We worked on creating extra "make-up" clinics for 10 weeks to account for the hours lost. This was possible with our existing resources as we paired all the students in primary care and make-up clinics, where normally the students would be working alone. With additional time slots made available by coordinating class/lab schedules, there was room in the clinic operations to accommodate all the moving parts. Although the system worked, and performed in a safe manner, just imagine the fall schedule of the typical 3rd year student. Half the class had 5 clinic sessions per week, plus the challenge of remote classes and normal labs. But I could not think of many groups more prepared than this Class of 2022. They were dedicated, intelligent, cooperative, and driven to excel. They have handled the enormous extra Fall workload with aplomb.

As we near the end of fall term, MCO's clinic operations are about back on track, and although our volumes are still slightly reduced, the students are seeing a sufficient number and variety of patients to meet the program's goals. Many thanks go to the students, faculty, staff, and administration at MCO for meeting the challenge head on with exemplary work and cooperation. It will be a time we will never forget.

# BRINGING THE FIRST YEAR CLASS "HOME"

## EDUCATING STUDENTS DURING COVID-19

*A faculty perspective*  
**Amy Dinardo, OD, MBA, FAAO**



Faculty and students alike at the Michigan College of Optometry were not immune to the challenges that undoubtedly presented as a result of worldwide events in the 2020 academic year. As the summer began and the pandemic continued, Dr. Rosen and I started talking about the unique challenges that come with indoctrinating the first year class- particularly with our class Ocular Anatomy and Physiology. Like others at MCO, we knew we wanted to provide first year students with a top-notch education and a solid foundation for the remainder of their careers. With so much conflict and uncertainty going on in society, we wanted to ensure a sense of stability and community

at MCO. We knew the first year students needed to feel connected with each other as well as the rest of the MCO family. But how could we do that in one semester with one class?

Instead of seeing this as a disaster, Dr. Rosen and I decided to take this on as an opportunity to rethink our course design. Redesigning a course is not easy. Dr. Rosen and I invested hours upon hours of researching best practices for hyflex courses, recording and editing new content, and planning new ways to keep our students engaged and supported. As a way to get to know each other, Dr. Rosen and I started off the semester with an interactive game called "two truths and a lie". The students were asked to post two truths about themselves and one lie. Then we would all guess which of the three was the lie. This was a fun way of us to get to know each other's talents and interests in a way that we might not have been able to otherwise.

The remainder of the semester was filled with a combination of self-paced and live activities. Content was posted with enough time to allow students to go at their own pace. Research has shown that students retain material best when it is presented in short bursts. With that in mind, Dr. Rosen and I designed multiple short lectures that lasted no longer than 35 minutes. To increase the students' interaction with the content and with each other, we used music and animated graphics, as well as problem-focused study guides and collaborative group activities. Live courses were interactive with no stakes quiz-type polls that allowed students gain an idea on the level of their own understanding.



**Dr. Dinardo's COVID-19 themed cookie creations**

One of the unique challenges with online education is ensuring that the students are organized. Dr. Rosen and I also knew that students need to get timely feedback and answers to their questions. We combated that by posting “to do” lists with objectives and estimated time lengths for each chapter. We even estimated the amount of extra study time students would need outside of class activities in order to be successful. Additionally, any prerecorded content was posted using a platform that allows students to ask questions of us in real time. Whenever a student posted a question about a lecture, Dr. Rosen and I immediately got an electronic notification that is time-stamped at the point in the lecture that the student had the question. Other students could see the question and read our responses. To wrap-up the course and review before finals week, Dr. Rosen and I conducted our fifth annual “Jeopardy” tournament using a remote quiz show program called Kahoot. Students logged in on Zoom and competed for

points by answering questions related to course material. Some questions included optometry-related questions that were actually asked on Jeopardy. Like past years when this event was conducted in person, it provided much needed light-hearted fun and friendly competition amongst students. It was a great way to get to know students and to motivate them at the end of the semester.

In the end, although the first semester was a little different from what we all imagined, Dr. Rosen and I feel that we accomplished our goals of educating our new young O.D.'s in a welcome and supportive environment- even if that environment was sometimes online. In the words of first year Leah Thompson, “Drs. Dinardo and Rosen approached Ocular A&P this semester with the students' academic and mental well-being in mind”. Ashely Peters adds, “Dr. Dinardo and Dr. Rosen provided some much needed structure to my academic schedule during this period of virtual learning!” Brittany Wendt says, “Dr. Dinardo's and Dr. Rosen's passion and empathy towards my class and the field of optometry was very evident. They went above and beyond to ensure we received the same quality instruction as any other class, and I deeply appreciate it.” Nicholas Keinath says, “ Dr. Dinardo and Dr. Rosen adapted to this semester's unique circumstances exceptionally well. They were eager to hear our concerns, and always responded promptly with understanding and flexibility.”

If you know a first year student, please reach out to them and welcome them to the MCO family. Maybe give them a word or two of praise and encouragement for a job well done this semester!

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT- DR. CHAD ROSEN

## WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND?

I attended the University of North Dakota for my undergraduate degree in Entrepreneurship. During that time I completed all of my optometry degree prerequisites. I knew I wanted to do optometry all along, but I wasn't interested in studying biology and I found business to be more interesting. Considering that optometry careers are business heavy, I knew that a background in business would be helpful. Later, I attended Pacific College of Optometry and completed a residency after in Cornea and Contact Lens.



## WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE MCO?

MCO provided me with a great opportunity! The Vision Research Institute was starting up and, since I had already interviewed at MCO for my residency, I knew some people, and had already visited the school and it felt like home. When the opportunity presented itself, it was a no-brainer for me! MCO allowed me to expand my skills and put myself into a position that was a little uncomfortable hoping I could grow as a professional.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ASPECT OF TEACHING?

Working with the students! I take a great joy in watching students grow over the years. Seeing students come in from different undergraduate schools and watching them grow as a person and as a professional. Seeing them come in with this timid, scared look on their faces, worried about whether they will be able to make it through the 4 years, take care of patients and take charge, to seeing them in clinic in their third year about to go on their rotations, seeing how much they've grown and seeing how much it all starts to click and having them make clinical decisions. To me, that's really fun and awesome to see just how far they expand their skills and their confidence throughout that time!



Dr. Rosen with his wife,  
alumna Dr. Samantha Rosen

## **WHAT KIND OF INVOLVEMENT DO YOU HAVE WITHIN THE OPTOMETRIC COMMUNITY?**

Over the years, I've been involved in quite a few groups and organizations. At one point I was on a Sports Vision Section Committee of the AOA and I did that for a few years. I was on a contact lens organization group. I am currently the editor-in-chief of a peer reviewed contact lens journal (the Journal of Contact Lens Research and Science), a fellow of the Academy, and a fellow of the Scleral Lens Education Society. I've written articles for the National Keratoconus Foundation, and am a reviewer for the Optometry and Vision Science journal, as well as a reviewer for Contact Lens and Anterior Eye journal.

## **IF THERE IS ONE THING YOU COULD SAY TO MCO STUDENTS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

All of us as faculty, we realize how much work the students put into school and I know sometimes there may be a disconnect between the faculty and students. I know it doesn't always seem like we sympathize with you guys, but we do. We truly appreciate the effort you put in, you work incredibly hard and it will absolutely pay off. Keep working hard and don't let it stop once you graduate. Once you get out on your own and have that license in your hand, you finally realize "boy I might not actually know as much as I really want to know." You might have some nervousness seeing patients right off the bat, but that's where that continued learning will only benefit you throughout the rest of your career. So, congratulations and keep up the hard work.

## **IF THERE IS ONE THING YOU COULD SAY TO MCO ALUMNI, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

Especially not being an alumnus myself, it's really easy to see how awesome MCO is as a community. It's not only the reason why I wanted to stay here to teach, but also the reason why I want to continue staying here and teaching! The tight knit group that we have is really special and it allowed us to teach the students to be at the top of their game like they truly are. Our students are truly exceptional, and we constantly get comments from other doctors that work with them about how great they are, so I will say MCO students will be a huge asset to any practice that they end up working for. And we couldn't teach to that level without the support of the alumni. The assistance that the alumni give us is tremendously appreciated and we need it moving into the future as well.

## **WHAT MAKES THE CONTACT LENS DEPARTMENT AT MCO SPECIAL?**

I love that the MCO contact lens department functions as a team, a pretty tight-knit group, bouncing ideas off of each other. It is really nice to have that collegiality, and I think that benefits the students when we're teaching too, because we can each add about our own experiences. That was one of the biggest draws for me. We have people that are extremely qualified, but we also have people with different interests too, in their areas of specialties and expertise. It's really nice to have a cohesive unit.

## **WHAT DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO ACCOMPLISHING DURING THE REST OF YOUR CAREER?**

I still consider myself early in my career. I'm sure it will change significantly as time goes by. Right now, I definitely want to keep growing clinical research applications and providing opportunities for students to get involved, because it's only through involvement that students realize if it's something they enjoy or not. Also, I want to keep getting better as an educator. None of us are trained teachers so to speak, our primary role is as optometrists. It can be difficult sometimes to find a way to get concepts across to the students, even though the optometrist knows exactly what they are doing. I want to make sure the information I provide students with is not only accurate but also comes across in a manner that they understand.

## **WHERE DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF OPTOMETRY HEADING?**

Things have changed significantly since I graduated in 2008. Technology has been driving a lot of things and I think we have a lot of disruptive technologies that have come into the marketplace. They are not always well-received, but I think we can't shun them completely. We need to find a way to either utilize them in our practices, or see how they can be used in combination with our current practice methods to either become more efficient or provide better care to our patients. I think a lot of the technologies are really going to be driving what goes on in our profession moving forward. While we have a profession where we can spend a lot of time really building relationships with our patients, we are going to be seeing more patients because communities are in need of more optometrists, so I think we have to find a way to not lose that personal touch, but also become more efficient. I think some of these technologies may work in our favor if we can find appropriate ways to utilize them.



Dr. Rosen with his wife and alumna, Dr. Samantha Rosen, Hailey Ullrey and alumnus, Dr. Justin Ullrey

## WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU ENJOY OUTSIDE OF YOUR CAREER?

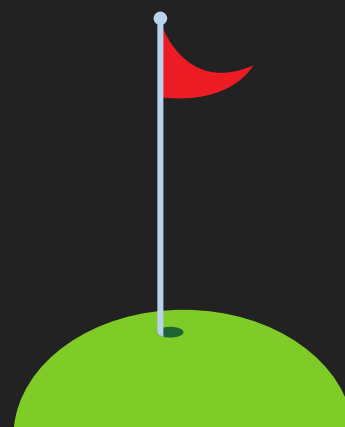
I like to do a lot of stuff outdoors. I used to snowboard a lot, but we don't have a lot of mountains around here, so it's not quite the same. I like bike riding in the summertime with my wife, spending our time going on the different trails throughout Michigan. It's so beautiful, especially Western Michigan. I got my wife into golfing, so we actually really enjoy golfing together. Sometimes I go golfing with Dr. Lotoczky or other faculty members at MCO and show them how much I don't know how to golf. Being able to spend time with friends and family is important.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CLASS TO TEACH?

That's a tough one. I love Ocular Anatomy and Physiology, but I thoroughly enjoy clinical problem-solving courses and the hands-on stuff where I get to give real-world examples and talk about my experiences. So, I would probably say clinical problem solving class!



From left to right: MCO faculty members, Dr. Joe Pole, Dr. Rosen, Dr. Joshua Lotoczky and Art Optical's Erik Anderson during MCO's Optic Cup golf tournament



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Where are you originally from?

I was born in a little Eastern European country called Moldova, but I grew up in Toronto, Canada.

## What is your educational and work background?

I attended the University of Toronto for my undergraduate studies, completing a double major in Cell and Molecular Biology, Health and Disease, and a minor in Physiology. Throughout undergrad, I worked as a Research Assistant in a myriad of settings, including the Hospital for Sick Children, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, as well as the Donnelly Centre for Cellular and Biomolecular Research where I wrote my undergraduate thesis. In my last few years at U of T, I became employed part time at a local optometry practice as a Diagnostic Imaging Technician and was subsequently hired for full time work as a Patient Care Coordinator, a position I held for two years straight out of university prior to attending MCO. Working at the clinic and seeing my mentors improve the quality of life of their patients on a daily basis inspired me to pursue a career in optometry.

## Why did you choose MCO? What do you enjoy most?

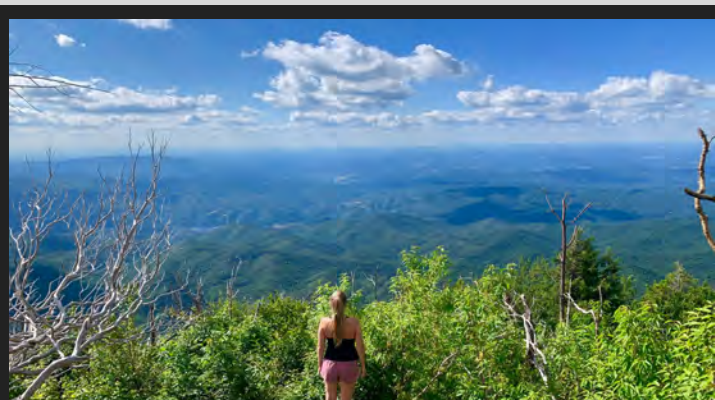
While attending U of T in the core of downtown Toronto, I was surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the city, and I vividly remember sitting in my first year biology class among 1,000 students in one single lecture hall! Although I loved my undergraduate experience, it was imperative for me to attend a graduate school with a small class size to have a greater chance of interaction, engagement, and opportunity to ask questions. Right after interview day, I was immediately sold on MCO, as I felt it was exactly the kind of learning atmosphere I was looking for. Everyone on the admissions committee were incredibly welcoming, the facility and equipment were outstanding, and ultimately it just “felt right”. I trusted my gut and I am incredibly glad I did! What I’ve enjoyed most throughout this journey are the friendships I’ve built with my classmates and the personal growth I’ve endured as a clinician over these last few years.

## ALINA USATAIA

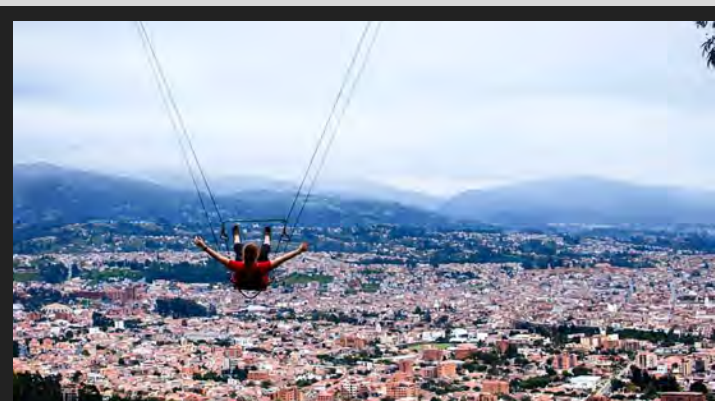
### Fourth Year Student

### Focal Points Student Assistant





Hiking the Great Smoky Mountains in TN



Mission Trip to Ecuador

### What activities do you enjoy outside of MCO?

I love being involved in volunteering initiatives, service to the community is of utmost importance to me. I love moments of self-reflection while hiking, camping, or simply spending time in nature. I am an avid traveler, over the last decade I've visited Thailand, Japan, Philippines, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Colombia, and many beautiful places across the US!



Optometry School Friends

### What type of practice do you envision yourself joining in the future? What are your career goals?

I am fortunate enough to be at a stage where I am open to any opportunity, the world is my oyster! With that being said, recently going through rotations has made me reflect and realize how excited I get regarding the medical aspect of our profession. My ideal opportunity post-graduation would allow me to cultivate strong rapport and relationships with my patients, having the ability to offer a variety of services and providing high quality care, all while practicing medical-based optometry. Ultimately, my long term goals include being employed in a hospital setting or having the autonomy of owning my own practice. I can envision myself enjoying either modality. Although life is serendipitous, so we shall see!



MCO Eyeball- Alina (center) with her classmates Bryn, Erica, Amanda and Leah

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

Just an extension of gratitude. Please know that we very much appreciate your support to the school and your continued mentorship towards us students. It all makes a difference, thank you kindly!

\*Dr. Hinkley extends her sincere gratitude to Alina for her years of hard work in the creation of this emagazine!

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## TOQUA SAFLO

First Year Student and Focal Points Student Assistant

### Where are you originally from?

I am Syrian- Canadian. I was raised in Toronto, Canada and have been living in Windsor, Ontario, Canada for the past several years.

### What is your educational and work background?

I attended the University of Windsor and graduated in 2020 with a major in biology and a minor in biochemistry. While completing my undergraduate degree, I was privileged to work in multiple retail settings including Home Outfitters, LensCrafters and The Body Shop. My time there provided me with the realization of how deeply I enjoy assisting people and providing them with positive interactions. I also got to experience the academic aspect of teaching when I served as a TA for Molecular Biology class. This position gave me a lot of communication skills, further expanded my knowledge and drastically improved my time management skills.

I was also privileged to volunteer at Hôtel-Dieu Grace healthcare hospital for two years, an opportunity that gave me direct exposure to the real impact that health professionals have on their patient's lives, not only medically, but also emotionally. I shadowed my optometrist for two years and it became apparent to me how passionate I am about interacting with patients and removed any doubt in my mind about whether optometry was the field I was interested in joining!



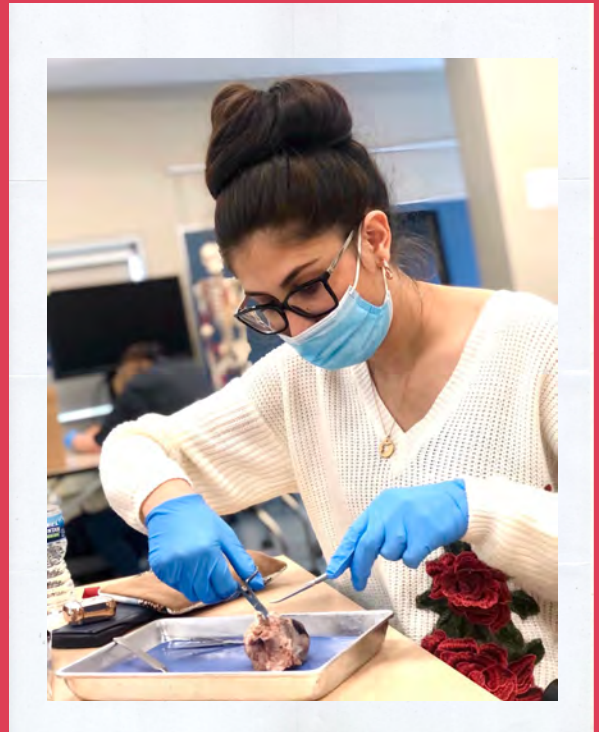
### Why did you choose MCO as your optometry school?

I chose MCO because, after interviewing at 3 different optometry schools, I was particularly impressed with the experience I had visiting the MCO's campus. I was excited at the prospect of being part of such a small class, and to have the opportunity to develop closer relationships with my instructors and classmates than I would be able to at other schools. Another practical factor was affordability, as MCO offers the same tuition rate for students from Canada as they do for domestic students. Moreover, MCO was closer to home for me than any of the other schools, which allows me the convenience of being able to drive home on a regular basis: a luxury I would not have if I had chosen a different school.

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## What activities do you enjoy outside MCO?

One of my favorite activities outside MCO is to relax with a cup of coffee and a nice book, preferably non-fiction. I also enjoy watching documentaries in my free time, as I love learning more about different aspects of the world that I would not get to learn about in school. I have also recently developed a passion for cooking: learning new recipes and getting the opportunity to create unique dishes for my family and friends (this new skill also came in handy this year when I moved away from home for the first time)! Finally, I greatly enjoy traveling and all the new experiences and adventures it can offer. I look forward to being able to travel again and scratch more destinations off of my bucket list when COVID-19 is no longer a threat.



## What type of practice do you envision yourself in the future? What are your career goals?

Although I'm still in my first year, and a lot can change from now until graduation, as of right now, I am really interested in completing a residency in Pediatric Optometry and Binocular Vision, so that I can fulfill my post-graduation goal of working at a children's hospital. My long term goal is to eventually open up my own practice, so I can enjoy the freedom and autonomy that comes with running my own practice.

## Do you have a message for our alumni?

I would mainly like to express my sincere gratitude to our alumni for all the support they have given to MCO. I would also like to offer my best wishes to all of them and their families in this troubling time.

# ALUMNI FEATURE

## *The Peters Family*

Ferris State University and MCO are in the blood of the Peters family. Attending MCO became a legacy when Dr. Edward Peters and then his sons Dr. Eddie and Dr. Zach Peters all became alumni. The Peters Family continues to support MCO through their generosity and time.

Dr. Edward Peters received his Doctorate of Optometry in 1986 from Michigan College of Optometry at Ferris State University. MCO was a perfect fit for him because of state funding at the time and the small class size, allowing him to foster lifelong friendships. Dr. Peters is originally from Mason, MI, but he currently resides and practices in St. Johns, MI with his son Eddie. After graduating, Dr. Peters worked in a corporate setting for 3 years and, in 1988, he bought his own practice, Avery Eye Care Center. The practice has grown since then and added three other optometrists. In addition, Dr. Peters also owned and operated Professional Eye Care Center of East Lansing with another MCO graduate between 1991-2000. When asked about his favorite part of being an optometrist, Dr. Peters said, "helping patients every day and running the business end of my practice. I believe in America and there



Dr. Edward Peters in his graduation and current clinical photos

THEN  
and  
NOW



is no better career than to be your own boss". Dr. Peters is a member of a Vision Source Leadership group that meets 2 times a year in Houston. Outside of his practice, Dr. Peters enjoys spending time with family, golfing and traveling. He looks forward to a smooth transition and practice growth with the addition of his sons Eddie and Zach. Dr. Peters believes that despite the increase of internet sales of glasses and contact lenses, it cannot replace the personal relationship that optometrists build with their patients. Dr. Peters advice to MCO students is to, "Enjoy your time, ask more business questions, and invest in retirement ASAP. Be proud to be a part of MCO and don't forget where you came from."



Drs. Eddie and Edward Peters in their practice, Avery Eye Care Center

Dr. Eddie Peters is a graduate of the Michigan College of Optometry, Class of 2018. Growing up around optometry, Dr. Peters realized quickly that he enjoys the freedom and diversity that private practice has to offer. This being said, he has experienced other modes of practice during his rotations at Grand Rapids VA, private practice in Saginaw, and Cherry Street Health Services in Grand Rapids, a federal public health center. He further explained that walking into private practice, you never quite know what will walk in the door each day which requires him to stay informed and educated on all aspects of optometry, and makes his day go by quickly. To Dr. Eddie Peters, the most rewarding part of a career in Optometry is helping people in a situation where they can't help themselves and have nowhere else to go. Dr. Peters' advice to MCO students is, "Don't be a hero when it comes to refraction. If the patient has no visual



Dr. Eddie Peters in his graduation photo, wearing his dad's plaid blazer and clinical practice photo



complaints and is seeing 20/20 or better, don't go more than 0.25 either way on sphere or cylinder." Dr. Eddie Peters enjoys golfing, fishing, and watching any sporting event involving our Detroit teams. He enjoys talking optometry with his father and brother and has been a wealth of growing knowledge over the past 12 years while working at Avery Eye Care Center.



Zachary Peters in his upcoming graduation photo wearing his dad's plaid blazer

Zachary Peters earned his bachelors in 2017 from Ferris State University, and he is looking forward to graduating as a Doctor of Optometry in May 2021. While currently on his fourth year externships, he is planning on practicing in St. Johns with his father and brother upon graduation. Zach looks forward to expanding the already successful practice that his father has built over the past 30 years. Becoming a respected and trusted doctor for those in his hometown is one of his long term goals.

Zach's answer to his favorite part of being an optometrist is, "I enjoy talking with and answering various questions patients have. When patients say, 'This is the clearest I've seen in years!' it is always a rewarding feeling and makes me feel awesome about my profession and work."



Above: Dr. Edward Peters with his sons Zachary and Dr. Eddie Peters at Zach's White Coat Ceremony

His advice to current MCO students is this: "Have fun! Don't forget to spend time outside of school to relax and unwind. There is more to life than a perfect grade on that exam!"

In a word to MCO alumni, Zach said: "Stay involved in MCO and give advice any chance you get! Students love hearing advice and experiences from young and old alumni alike."

Zach's hobbies include playing sports with friends and family outside of optometry. One of his favorites is golf. He, his dad, and brother have some great matches and memories on the golf course.

Zach received the Ferris State Alumni Legacy award during his time at FSU/MCO. He was the president of the Student Alumni Gold Club, and he is a member of the AOA and MOA. Some fond memories of MCO are seeing his first patient in the clinic, and playing intramural sports with his classmates.



The Peters Family at Dr. Eddie Peters's graduation. From left to right: Zachary Peters, Mrs. Peters, Dr. Eddie Peters and Dr. Edward Peters

# ALUMNI FEATURE

## Dr. William Denton

*Dr. Denton is an MCO alumnus, Class of 2000. Originally from Sault Ste. Marie, MI. He's currently settled in Charleston, South Carolina, working at the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC, which also happens to be a 4th year MCO externship rotation site. He continues to impact MCO with his externship instruction and mentorship.*



*What is your educational background? When did you graduate MCO?*

I received a Chemistry degree from Evangel University (Springfield, MO) in 1996. I graduated from MCO in 2000 in the bottom 5 of my class of 27. Yes, I had over a 3.0, and yes, I learned a habit of only studying for a test until I knew I would get a "B" on it. I can't say I've had any regrets.

*Why did you choose to attend MCO?*

In-state tuition was the deciding factor. It was also less than four hours from my childhood home, Sault Ste. Marie.

*What are some fond memories you have of optometry school?*

Nothing is better than receiving the news that you passed NBEO Parts I, II, and III and graduation is eminent. The hooding ceremony was very memorable. I also enjoyed most of the social events.

*Tell us a little bit about your path into your current position and mode of practice.*

After graduation in 2000, I chose to complete a Primary Care Residency at the WJB Dorn VAMC in Columbia, SC. During my residency, I did a ton of moonlighting in corporate practices. I also met my wife, Annette, and we were married a week after my residency was completed.

I continued doing multiple, part-time jobs for 6 months while searching for my ideal position. September 11, 2001 was a turning point in my life, as all my opportunities suddenly became limited. Within a few long weeks I received a call from the VA. In December 2001, I started back at the WJB Dorn VAMC as a contract optometrist. After doing that for almost two years, they asked me to join full-time. I truly enjoyed building up the clinic, as most of the doctors were about the same age and experience as me. I was a student externship and residency director, and Chief of the Low Vision Clinic during this time. In 2014 I transferred to the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC in Charleston, SC to try to build up another clinic from almost scratch. Charleston - we used to vacation there, and now we live there.

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

When I reached my maximum salary level at the VA, I was able to finally concentrate on what I really wanted to do. My goal was, and still is, to be the mentor I believe every optometry student should have. The recent shutdown due to COVID-19 has proven again what I enjoy, examining patients, and mentoring students! Many decisions in my work life now line up with the goal of mentoring students.

Being a jack of all trades in optometry also is a favorite of mine. Having a week that allows me to treat difficult disease, assist low vision patients to maximize their vision, fit disease-compromised corneas with scleral lenses, and evaluate a TBI patient and prescribe yoked prism, is just where I want to be. I love “nerding up” with PubMed in the evening after experiencing a specific head-scratcher patient. It is such a real puzzle that I love to solve.

***What kind of involvement do you have within the optometric community?***

Optometry is a great profession! I’ve been fortunate enough to be in membership committees for the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), the Optometric Retina Society (ORS) and the Scleral Lens Education Society (SLS). I’ve also spent about five years on the NBEO PAM Council, where we fine-tune the Part II exam for the following year. After having my fill of political leadership involvement in optometry school, I’ve mainly concentrated on building up the next generation through these committees as well as mentoring around 15 student externs each year.



Exploring Zion National Park

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

My main hobbies were born in 2005 and 2008. Their names are Faith and Sarah. I’ve poured into my daughters every minute possible, including teaching them math as they are homeschooled. I also am a diehard Detroit Pistons fan. I do like other Michigan sports; however, basketball is my passion. Another hobby I enjoy is becoming knowledgeable about stocks. If everyone gives to their retirement, it is a person who has the knowledge and the confidence with the stock market who will maximize the retirement amount.

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

So many!!! All of our classmates were so great, and we have so many memories from beach events to tubing the river in town. We loved the smaller class size which allowed us to become friends with all of our classmates and our professors!

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

Always treat the patient the way you would treat a family member, and advocate for your future profession to keep the care in the doctors' hands and not a third party insurance. Take control of your future, don't let what other doctors think, say or do dictate what you do with your career. Determine what you want and set a plan for how to achieve it. Don't ever settle.

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

As a group of professionals, optometrists, in general, sometimes settle for the status quo. We hope that we will personally continue to create our own destiny and we hope that the rest of our profession can find the motivation, and determination to do the same.



The Denton Family



Dr. Denton with his daughters

# STAFF FOCUS

## AMY PARKS

Amy grew up in the Edmore area, about 40 miles southeast of Big Rapids. She has been married to her high school sweetheart for 30 years and has 2 children, Justin and Megan! Amy enjoys spending time with her family and her huskies. She also enjoys scrapbooking, shopping with her daughter, going on motorcycle rides with her husband and traveling. Her favorite trips were to Hawaii and Alaska.

Amy started her career at Ferris in 2011 and joined the Dean's Office at MCO in 2015. She came to MCO with over 20 years' of experience working in education in a central office environment where, although her responsibilities were slightly different, the interactions were similar. At MCO, Amy's main responsibility is making arrangements for admissions, including scheduling and meeting with the prospective students, along with our student ambassadors. She enjoys hearing the stories the applicants share about their journey towards optometry, and she hopes this initial connection helps put them at ease if future assistance is needed as they make this transition.

Amy is also responsible for numerous tasks pertaining to student activities, course scheduling, and assisting the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. Amy thoroughly enjoys interacting with the students in every aspect of their time at MCO and attempts to contribute to each student's experience positively.

Amy witnesses first-hand the impact alumni can have on current MCO students, whether it be job shadowing, alumni presentations, or the desperately needed long-term scholarship support. Amy states that it is only by supporting students and future colleagues can the optometry profession continue to grow and thrive.



### Where are you originally from?

I grew up in Big Rapids and graduated from Big Rapids High school in 2008.

### How long have you worked at MCO?

I've worked at MCO for just under 10 years. I started working for MCO as a student employee in the Fall of 2010 after I transferred to Ferris from Michigan Tech. After graduating from Ferris in 2013, I accepted a staff position and have held several roles before getting to where I am now.

### What is your role at MCO?

It's hard to really define, but title-wise I am the HIPAA Privacy Officer and Satellite Clinic Coordinator. As HIPAA Privacy Officer I am responsible for ensuring that faculty, staff, and students are trained in proper HIPAA practices, making sure that MCO's technology meets HIPAA requirements for data security, and serving on the University's HIPAA Compliance Committee. As Satellite Clinic Coordinator, I travel, with students and doctors, to the Baldwin Clinic two times a week. In addition to those two main responsibilities, I am an ABO-certified optician, I assist with checking in and checking out patients, scheduling appointments, verifying insurance coverage, and answering phone calls.

### What do you enjoy most about your job?

I really enjoy working with the students. They have a passion for what they're doing that makes it easy for me to be excited to help. It's awesome to see them evolve from timid second year students performing their first exams to proficient graduates ready to enter the workforce.



### What are your hobbies/interests outside of work?

Most of my free time is spent at home with my husband, young son and two dogs. Outside of that, I enjoy outdoor activities and traveling (in and out of Michigan).

### Do you have a message to our students?

Take advantage of your time here. Ask questions, do the extra-curricular activities, get to know your faculty and peers. Four years goes by so fast but the things you learn here and the connections you make will last much longer.

# SINE PROGRAM

The MCO Students in Need of Eyecare (SINE) program examined children from Fremont and Hesperia schools lacking access to eye care, again in 2019, and provided glasses to those who needed them at no cost through a grant from the Fremont Area Community Foundation. Third and fourth year students took part and faculty members volunteered their time to supervise the examinations.



# SECOND YEAR WHITE COAT CEREMONY 2020

In February, our second year students were welcomed as clinicians who would begin examining patients at the University Eye Center! These now third years are actively involved in patient care.

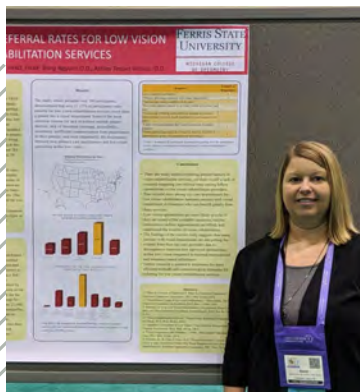


# EYEBALL 2019



# ACADEMY 2019

MCO faculty, administration, residents and students were a large and active part of the American Academy of Optometry meeting in Orlando, Florida, as well as the virtual 2020 meeting



# MCO Awards

MCO congratulates the following faculty, alumnus and student who received awards from the Michigan Optometric Association in 2019:

**Optometrist of the Year:** Dr. Elizabeth Becker (MCO alumnus)

**Educator of the Year:** Dr. Jennifer Schad (MCO faculty and alumnus)

**Young Optometrist of the Year:** Dr. Anthony Sesto (MCO alumnus)

**Student of the Year:** Dr. Bret Williams (MCO alumnus)

**Roger R. Seeyle Distinguished Service Award:** Dr. Lori Smolinski (MCO alumnus)



# MCO Alumnus of the Year

## 2020 MCO ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

MICHIGAN COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

### CONGRATULATIONS

The MCO Alumni Association is pleased to honor Robert Buckingham, O.D., Ph.D (O'81) as the recipient of the 2020 Alumnus of the Year award. Dr. Buckingham has admirably served his country and patients in the U.S. Air Force. He serves F.S.U. and M.C.O. as a tireless advocate for our university, programs, students and alumni.

Ferris State University is an equal opportunity institution. For information on the University's Policy on Non-Discrimination, visit [ferris.edu/non-discrimination](http://ferris.edu/non-discrimination).

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# 2019-2020 MCO EVENTS

## MICHIGAN OPOTMETRIC STUDENT PRIVATE PRACTICE ASSOCIATION FIELD TRIP



## TIE BLANKET EVENT IN SUPPORT OF ANGELS OF ACTION COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION



# 2019-2020 MCO EVENTS

## MCO INTRAMURAL SPORTS & ACTIVITIES



## HALLOWEEN



## AOSA INFO NIGHT



# 2019-2020 MCO EVENTS IN PHOTOS



# 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

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MICHIGAN COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

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