



American Optometric Student Association

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July 20, 2009

Topic: Board Certification

Dear AOSA Members, Residents, and Allied Organizations:

This past June was an historic month for optometry and the AOSA. First and foremost over 950 students attended this year's Optometry's Meeting® in Washington DC, comprising 26% of the total conference attendance. These students enjoyed a week of great educational courses, entertainment, and networking opportunities with students and doctors from around the world. Likewise, earlier in the week a record number of students attended the Congressional Advocacy Conference and visited Capitol Hill to meet with their representatives in the United States Congress and Senate to educate them on issues important to Optometry. Included was vital legislation aimed to end the exclusion of Optometrists in the National Health Service Corps loan repayment program, thus expanding eye and vision care to underserved areas while helping address issues of student debt.

Optometry's Meeting® was also witness to another giant step in the growth and evolution of our profession. The AOA House of Delegates, comprised of representatives from 53 affiliated organizations including the AOSA, voted in favor of the formation of the American Board of Optometry (ABO). The ABO will establish the proposed model Board Certification and Maintenance of Competence which has been developed over the past two years by the Joint Board Certification Project Team (JBCPT). This historic milestone will shape the future of our profession and strengthen optometry's voice in the national health care reform debate.

Over the past two years the AOSA has played an instrumental role in the development, discussion, and initiation of this model. This began with the extraordinary commitment and tireless efforts of our JBCPT representatives, Dr. Mary Phillips (MCO'08) and Dr. Chris Wolfe (NSUCO'08). In addition the AOSA Board of Trustees, consisting of one voting representative from each school, worked closely with their student delegate counterparts to shape the discussion and debate within the House of Delegates and to cast AOSA's votes in favor of the proposed Board Certification model.

It should be with a great sense of pride and responsibility that we understand our student leaders performed with great professionalism and the student voice they represent continues to be highly regarded amongst the optometric community. With our nation confronting a rapidly changing health care system, now is even a more crucial time for students and new graduates to support the efforts of our professional organizations. It must be our responsibility, now and throughout our professional careers, to ensure that the public has access to eye and vision care which optometrists provide.

Sincerely,

Tyson Allard

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