"[The Academy] is more than a CE meeting. It is the meeting of colleagues dedicated to clinical excellence. The meetings can be the genesis of some important changes for the profession."

1) Why did you attend the Academy this year?

**JCC:** “I get the bulk of my continuing education there, and the quality is generally very high. The meeting is a great place to meet with others in the contact lens field—fellow educators from other institutions, industry representatives, and researchers from around the world.”

**RBD:** “[The Academy] is more than a CE meeting. It is the meeting of colleagues dedicated to clinical excellence. All other trappings are put aside for this one central goal. Besides, it's the meeting where I can see my colleagues from around the country and the world.”

**Students:** Location was the most common response. Other reasons included: the number of classmates attending, opportunities to learn about the latest optometric research, access to new equipment, inexpensive registration as a student, excellent lecturers/topics, and positive feedback from O.D.s who have previously attended the academy meeting.

2) What was your most enjoyable experience at the Academy?

**JCC:** “I really enjoy seeing so many Berkeley graduates (and current students) at the meeting. It’s good to see familiar faces, and to know that they’re happy with their chosen profession and are actively keeping up with the latest developments.”

**RBD:** “A few of the meetings I attended within the context of the Academy are my high points. The meetings are facilitated by the gathering of colleagues. It can be the genesis of some important changes for the profession.”

**Students:** For some, it was attending seminars and lectures presented by Berkeley faculty. These students had the opportunity to learn more about topics they were curious about, but had not yet been taught in much detail. For others, it was the social and professional networking and chance to catch up with Berkeley Optometry alumni.

3) How did you decide which of the many lectures to attend?

**JCC:** “That’s tough. There are so many interesting topics, and often they’re presented at the same time. I try to strike a balance between contact lens talks and those that help to satisfy my continuing education.”
education requirements. Sometimes I’ll attend lectures in areas I don’t know much about, often to be pleasantly surprised and informed.”

RBD: “A number of the lectures were on topics of interest for me professionally. While obtaining CE is important to me, it’s not my primary goal. I attend the Optometric Glaucoma Society meeting the day prior to the start of the AAO. “

Students: The decisions were primarily based on personal interest and relevance of the material to the curriculum. Another approach was to ask for advice from optometrists (some recent graduates and faculty at UCBSO).

4) Which was your favorite(s)?
JCC: “My favorite this year was a lecture on common contact lens misconceptions. One of the speakers discussed a phenomenon regarding spherical lenses for low astigmats that I had observed personally, but never heard described elsewhere.”
RBD: “I really like Dr. Gerry Selvin’s grand round series. Milton and Thomas are always entertaining.”
QT: “Optic Nerve Jeopardy, Case Management of Refractive Errors in Preschool Children, Glaucomatous VF Loss not caused by Glaucoma, and Contemporary Uses of Bandage Contact Lenses.” (There were a lot of good lectures!)

5) How was the exhibit hall?
Second year students feel replenished after posing with Alcon’s Opti-Free mascot. Lily Huynh, Cheyenne Huber, Linh Le, Claudia Ruegg, and Marianna Mkrtchyan (left to right).

The exhibit hall was popular! Reasons to go included:
• Hearing about the latest and greatest advancing technology from the helpful and friendly exhibitors
• Good representation of the majority of ophthalmic companies
• Fun and informative
• Focal point to interact with colleagues. It is an opportunity to see and encourage recent grads and students who are making an investment in their careers.
• Tons and tons of free stuff!!
• Great complementary dinners

6) Did you attend any of the poster sessions?
Third year students take a minute to pose for the camera before heading in for seminars. Tiffany Chan, Binh Nguyen, and Helen Zhou (left to right).
One of the attendees reported that it was “good to see colleagues presenting posters and being proactive in learning.” Another attendee felt that “there should be a school (UCBSO) wide effort to encourage students and faculty to collaborate on posters.”

7) As an optometry student, how relevant and useful was the information for you?
The information helps me most with deciding on the field of optometry I want to focus on in the future. I think that this experience helped me fine-tune topics that interested me most, as well as gave me a head start on preparing for that.”

1st year: “The information I found very helpful.”
2nd year: “Some information presented to me was slightly beyond my current knowledge as a 2nd year student. However, the information that I have already learned in class was reinforced by the presentations and that I found much.”
3rd year: “The information presented at the Academy was very useful!”
4th year: “The lectures were very relevant for 4th year student, especially with controversial topics that require good amount of clinical/patient experiences.”

8) Question for the faculty: Do you have any advice for students who may be interested in becoming a Fellow?
JCC: “Attend an Academy meeting, I think that will give you a good sense of what the Academy’s about and potentially inspire you to pursue fellowship. As for succeeding in the process, I don’t think our graduates have much trouble.”
RBD: “Do it now! It will be a high-yield experience for your career.”
In Perspective

In Perspective Editorial Board
Helen Zhou | Editor-In-Chief / Reporter
Andy Mu | Publication Editor
Charlie Ngo | Photographer

SAAO Board
Jane Lo | Student Liaison
Cheyenne Huber | Treasurer
Claudia Ruegg | Membership
Linh Vu | Educational Co-Director
Shradha Sanghvi | Educational Co-Director
Amiee Ho | Fundraising
Jessie Lee & Andy Mu | 1st Year Rep.
Linh Le | 2nd Year Rep.
Wes Haynes | 3rd Year Rep.
Helen Cheng | 4th Year Rep.
Robert Dister, O.D. | Faculty Liaison

vision therapy to treat people with amblyopia (“lazy eye”). Amblyopia is a developmental abnormality resulting from physiological alterations in the visual cortex that impairs form vision, which affects about 1-3% of the population. By convention, it is often treated by covering the sound (normal) eye in infants and young children, but was believed to be untreatable in adults. However, recent studies have shown that perceptual learning treatment have improved the performance in the amblyopic eye in children and adults. Thus, it is our task to find out how perceptual learning improves the visual performance of people with amblyopia and how we can improve existing forms of treatments.

I thought that it was a tremendous opportunity this year to present a poster for the first time while also attending my first AAO Conference. I presented our study on how learning positional discrimination generalizes across different noise levels and features orientations and retunes the template of the perceptive field. I have to say it was very exciting and fun at the AAO conference. Additionally, I had the chance to explore around the conference with my fellow classmates and was able to see our professors outside of an academic setting. We attended lectures workshops during the day and saw the highlights of Anaheim at night. From a student perspective, it is definitely something we should take the opportunity to attend as it provides more depth in the field that we are currently learning and what will be our future profession.

By Charlie Ngo (I)

I have been working as a research assistant for the past three years with Dr. Dennis Levi, OD, MS, PhD, FAAO and Dr. Roger Li, BSc (Optometry), PhD. I first began as a Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program (URAP) participant in my third year at Cal and continued to be involved until now. It was through working in the Levi Lab that has first led me to pursue a career in optometry and a graduate degree in vision science. I love how I could integrate the clinical and research aspect as an optometry student and research assistant. Thus, I hope to continue researching in the Levi Lab for as long as I can.

I am particularly involved with studying the mechanisms behind perceptual learning and how perceptual learning could be used as a more effective method of
Robert Greer, O.D. shares about his involvement with the American Academy of Optometry (AAO) and explains what it means to be a Fellow and Diplomate.

1) To start off, what is a Fellow and a Diplomate?
Generically, a Fellow is a member of any of certain learned societies. In this case, the society would be the American Academy of Optometry (AAO).

A Diplomate is one who has been certified as a specialist by a board of examiners. Within the AAO, there are sections that have committees that administer exams which allow a doctor to become a diplomate in an area of specialty. Those areas include binocular vision/pediatrics, cornea/contact lens, low vision, disease, primary care, public health and vision science.

2) Where can we find information on the requirements to become a Fellow and Diplomate?
The information for becoming a Fellow is all contained on the AAO website: www.aaopt.org. For Fellow information click on the link "Membership" and for Diplomate information go to the link "Sections" where the information for "Becoming a Diplomate" within each section is listed.

3) What are the benefits of being a Fellow? Why did you decide to become a Fellow and then a Diplomate?
The biggest benefit, in my mind, of becoming a Fellow is that you must prove your worth. "The letters FAAO (Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry) after an optometrist's, scientist's or other qualified person's name signify to colleagues and patients that rigorous qualifications for fellowship have been met." It means you've pushed yourself a bit harder, worked a bit more intensely, cared a bit more deeply about your profession, your patients and yourself. You're a cut above the rest.

In addition, there is the camaraderie of being a Fellow. The annual meeting is charged with energy and as a Fellow you're bound to come away from each meeting ready to face your patients and the world with a new found sense of purpose and desire. It's wonderful!

Also very worthwhile is the subscription to "Optometry and Vision Science" the journal of the AAO. It contains cutting edge research and up-to-date information for all areas of eye care.

And lastly, you can attend the annual meeting for a reduced rate. Since the education at the Academy annual meeting is usually the best of the year, this can be a significant savings.

I decided to become a Fellow for all of the above reasons. However, becoming a diplomate in low vision was more of a personal thing. Being a diplomate doesn't give you more initials after your name, it doesn't provide you with higher pay or increased respect from your patients. For me it was all about proving that I was one of the best in the world at what I do, namely low vision. There are less than 50 of us in the world and I wanted to prove to myself that I belonged to that select group. It didn't hurt having Ian Bailey push me along but in the end I chose to do it to show my peers, and myself, that I was to be counted amongst them. Having gone through the process I can also state unequivocally that it was an amazing learning experience.

4) After you obtain the title, do you need to do anything to maintain the title?
At this time, there is nothing to be done to maintain your FAAO other than paying annual dues. However, as a Diplomate I have to ensure I'm staying up on the latest doings in low vision by being active in seeing patient, teaching, lecturing, research, attending continuing education and any of a host of activities that show my commitment to maintaining my knowledge and skills.

A special thanks to our sponsors for their generous donations to SAAO.
May I present to you, Dr. Robert Dister (BD), SAAO’s current faculty liaison... Most of you are probably familiar with the pretzel-eating Dr. Dister from pre-clinic, the 200 series, BV lab, clinic downstairs, or maybe giving a lecture about “How NOT to be Sued for Malpractice” at the Academy meeting. But have you ever wondered how he ended up in all those places?

HZ: Let’s start off with your background – where you were born and where you grew up.
BD: I was born in Cleveland, Ohio and when I was 18, I went off to college at University of Michigan. I left to go to Yale for grad school in geology. Then I came out to Berkeley for law school at Boalt and I’ve been out here [in California] ever since!

HZ: Why did you decide to come out to California?
BD: I came out here for law school. I applied to several law schools and got into Stanford, Berkeley, and Michigan. I didn’t want to go back to Michigan because all my friends would have been gone, and I wanted to keep all the good memories of my undergrad. Berkeley was a lot cheaper than Stanford. And Berkeley is a lot more fun than Palo Alto. (Spoken like a true Bear!)

HZ: What were you originally planning to do with your geology masters?
BD: I went straight from grad school to Boalt. The original plan was to get a PhD, but then I found that I didn’t really like doing research enough to make a career out of it. I enjoyed teaching – I got to be a TA while I was a grad student.

HZ: Did you do any research in optometry?
BD: I’ve done some, but it’s been 8-9 years since I’ve done scientific research. I worked on some small projects with Ian Bailey in low vision.

HZ: Do you plan to do any more research in the future?
BD: No. The only research I’ve done recently is legal research, like for the Academy this year, but not scientific.

HZ: What did you do after graduating from law school? Why did you decide to study optometry?
BD: After two years of being an attorney, I realized that there wasn’t much about the job that I liked. I worked for a big firm that dealt with maritime rates and regulations pertaining to the Japanese shipping firms. It was incredibly boring and awful. Anyway, what they say about law school is your 1st year of law school, you hate it because they scare you to death, the 2nd year they work you to death, and the 3rd year they bore you to death. So after the first 2 years, I was pretty bored of it and I thought it would be better once I started working at a firm. But it wasn’t.

HZ: Do you still keep in touch with your law school classmates?
BD: Oh yeah, a few – probably about 5 or 6 of them.

HZ: Are most of them still in law?
BD: Well, one of them after becoming an attorney, drove a cab for a long time then worked at Circuit City and is now back to working as an attorney. Some of them became authors. One became a rhetoric teacher. I’d say maybe about half of them are doing something else.

HZ: What about your optometry school classmates?
BD: I keep in touch with a lot of them and almost all of them I think are still in optometry.

HZ: Are any of them also teaching at UCBSO?
BD: Ron Janda used to teach optics lab up until recently. Karen Chester was a classmate. Susan Hewlett, who works with Dr. Portnoy, was also a classmate of mine.

HZ: When you were a kid, what did you think you wanted to do when you grew up?
BD: You mean, was it my childhood dream to study geology, become a lawyer, and then an optometrist? (haha) Well, as a kid I was interested in rocks. It was a hobby. My grandfather was an optometrist, so that planted the optometry seed in my head. That and I was a high myope at a pretty early age.

HZ: When was the last time you were refracted?
BD: Well, I refracted myself last time, but I never felt that my left eye could get...
refracted as well as the right. Maybe I have some higher order aberrations in that left eye. But as for the full exam, I can’t actually remember the last time. I get a dilated fundus exam on one eye and then tonometry here and there. I usually always let the students do things on my left eye because I figured if I’m going to have one eye messed up, it might as well be the less dominant eye. Or maybe after all these years, it actually has messed up my left eye!

HZ: I was just looking around your office. What are all these different degrees on your wall?

BD: Well, I got my Michigan diploma, which is the one I’m most proud of. It was the first one. The one in Latin is the Masters I got at Yale. When I was an optometry student, you automatically got a Bachelors of Science degree after your second year. My law degree and optometry diploma. There’s my FAAO certificate, my residency certificate, and my license.

HZ: How long have you been a Fellow of the Academy?

BD: Since 1996. I think Dr. Fleiszig got hers around the same time as mine. I remember walking out thinking, “I’m not so sure I passed” and I ran into Dr. Fleiszig who remarked, “Bob! That was just awful!” But it was fine and I think everyone that comes out of that feels nervous. It was in Orlando, at one of the Disneyworld hotels.

HZ: And did you go to Disneyworld? (Note: Dr. Dister was also at Disneyland after the recent Anaheim Academy meeting).

BD: Sure did.

HZ: Favorite theme park ride?

BD: The California Adventures ride called Soaring over California.

HZ: What are your responsibilities as SAAO Faculty Liaison?

BD: Well, there’s the Student/ Faculty Liaison meeting the morning of the first day at the Academy. At UCBSO I act as an advisor to the SAAO Board, and I relay information from the AAO to our SAAO chapter. Dr. Whiteside was the one who really made this organization what it is now. I feel like my job is to not mess up what she started. Our school is known for having one of the most active chapters. Some schools pay for all the students memberships, so they have a much higher participation rate (100%), but they are not always active.

HZ: How did you become the Faculty Liaison?

BD: I think Dr. Whiteside had asked me because she knew I was interested in becoming more active with the academy and also I was teaching preclinical, so a lot of the students knew me. I’m also the Vice Chair of the Admittance Committee for special categories. This is for people who are non-practicing optometrists or non-optometrists such as librarians or public health officials who are interested in applying for the FAAO. The requirements are a little different.

HZ: Did you ever work in private practice?

BD: I used to work in a practice in Alameda. I graduated in 1987 and started working for the school full time in 1996. I did mostly contact lens and primary care optometry, and also did vision screenings at different schools through the Alameda-Contra Costa Optometric Society’s MCT (Modified Clinical Technique) program. You get really good at retinoscopy that way.

HZ: Did you do a residency?

BD: In contact lenses at UCBSO. There was a time when I was teaching the Binocular Vision clinic, Contact Lens clinic, and the Low Vision clinic all at the same time. That was just nutty. You had to shift your gears really fast.

HZ: How did you get involved with teaching BV?

BD: At the time of my residency, I had a half day off and they needed someone to teach the lab section of what is now the Optometry 240 course. Later, around 1996, the clinic needed a BV instructor. This was before Dr. Hoenig became the chief of the BV clinic. For some reason, UCBSO didn’t turn out many graduates who were interested in doing BV in those days, and it was hard to find BV instructors. Most of my clinical teaching was in low vision. Now I’m involved with the 200 series, the 1st year PBL class, BV lab, and clinic during the summer.

HZ: It’s almost time to wrap up, but there’s one last thing I wanted to ask you. I heard you make a pretty tasty gumbo. Would you be willing to share this recipe with the school?

BD: Yeah of course! The only problem with the recipe is that it’s designed for a huge group of people. It also can get a little expensive, but you get what you put into it. I like to splurge and put in a few pounds of crab and shrimp.
This year, the Basic Science (Part I) of Boards has been renamed to “Applied” Basic Science (ABS). The new version will consist of a blend of current Basic Science and Clinical Science test items. Most of these test items should the new requirement of referencing a clinical condition, either explicitly or implicitly. Previously, the questions were formatted in a way to explicitly, or straight-forwardly, elicit an answer. NBEO has been working hard to shift this mindset to a new implicit format in which test items integrate clinical aspects into basic science. For example, instead of just asking about eye anatomy, the new questions will ask about eye anatomy in reference to a clinical condition, disease or pharmacology. In addition, clinical aspects from Part II are shifting into the new ABS Part I. These items shifting to ABS are related to epidemiology (skill 1), history, symptoms and clinical testing (skill 2). Items testing diagnosis and treatment (skill 3) will remain within Part II.

Moreover, the 2009 Part I Boards is planned to be longer. It will be lengthened to 4 sessions (instead of 3) with each session lasting 3.5 hours. Each session will contain 125 questions for a total of 500 questions (instead of 435). Test topics will be spread throughout the sessions so that each subject is equally represented. For example, there will be the same amount of optics questions in each of the 4 sessions.

At UCBSO, we’ve been working hard to update our “Berkeley Study Guide” to match the NEW Part 1 Boards. Through an enormous collaborative effort, we are proud to have started sales on our newly updated guidebook this past fall! The guide features updated information and integrated questions and answers. We hope you find our study guide helpful in your preparation for Boards.