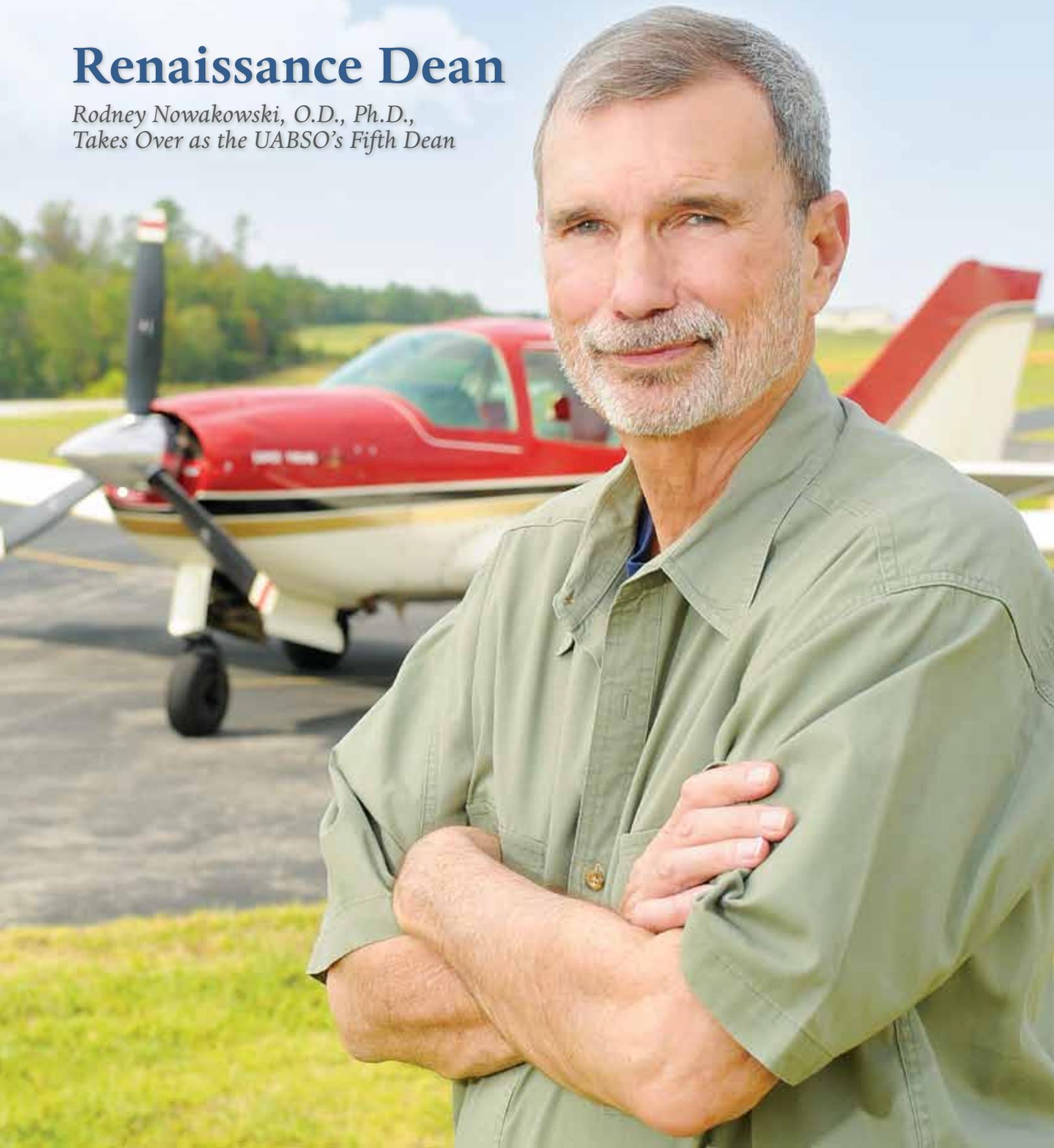


UAB OPTOMETRY

A Publication for Alumni and Friends of the School of Optometry • Summer 2012

Renaissance Dean

*Rodney Nowakowski, O.D., Ph.D.,
Takes Over as the UABSO's Fifth Dean*



From the Dean



Dear Alumni and Friends,

Many important initiatives are taking place at the UABSO. We are working on a strategic plan that will help define our direction for the next three to five years. As part of the initial process, we identified the following strategic initiatives: clinical and scholarly excellence; faculty, staff, and student success; partnerships; financial vitality; and visibility/presence. Over the next several months, working groups will develop goals and objectives in those areas, and we will launch the plan in the fall.

Speaking of visibility, another exciting initiative is a renovation of the plaza level that surrounds the school, Lister Hill Library, Volker Hall, the bridge leading across University Boulevard, and the area in front of the schools of Nursing and Health Professions. This is part of UAB's "greening" initiative, and a rendering of what our area will look like appears on page 16 in this issue. The plaza area by the School of Health Professions is nearly finished, so if you are on campus you can see what it will eventually look like on our side. We expect construction to start at the Peters Building August 1 and be finished by December 1. We desperately need to renovate the second and third floors of the Peters Building to create new, contemporary classrooms, but that will be a little further down the road. The classrooms and labs on those floors are not adequate for the teaching methods of today, and they do not meet the needs of our current students. A project manager has been assigned, and we will soon hire an architect to design several options for the layout. Similarly, we need to renovate the conference room in the Worrell Building. This would be a much smaller, but necessary, project. With increased competition from old and new schools, we have to be proactive with our facilities in order to keep our competitive edge.

On June 1, 2012, we held the convocation ceremony for 36 new O.D.s. They and the class of 2011 are featured on page 10 in this issue. We now have awarded 1,352 O.D. degrees, 62 M.S. degrees, 55 Ph.D. degrees, and 310 residency completion certificates. Our M.S. and Ph.D. graduates are honored in separate ceremonies along with graduates from other programs. We have added a new track in the Ph.D. program in sensory impairment, and it has garnered a lot of attention from prospective students.

Have you followed the SpaceX success story? Its Falcon 9 rocket launched the Dragon capsule that docked with the International Space Station in May. So? Well, the engineers in our Center for Biophysical Sciences and Engineering design and build incubators and freezers that are used on the ISS right now, and those units have been certified to fly in a Dragon capsule when replacements are delivered in space.

Our vision scientists are now settled into the Volker Hall research space that was renovated as a joint project between the schools of Medicine and Optometry with the generous support of the EyeSight Foundation. They are working side by side with researchers from the Department of Ophthalmology, and that is a great arrangement for collaboration that does not exist anywhere else.

Rod Nowakowski, O.D., Ph.D.
Dean, UAB School of Optometry

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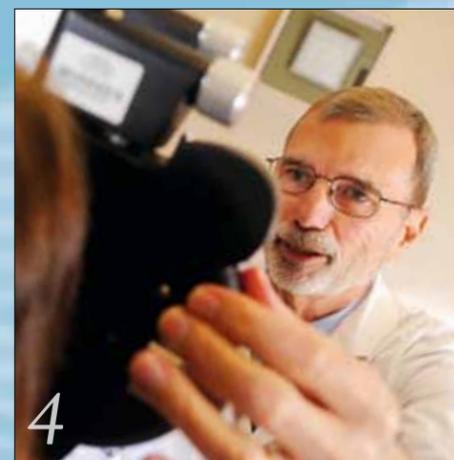
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ON THE COVER
Rodney Nowakowski, O.D., Ph.D., is pictured in front of his Viking airplane at the Shelby County Airport. In addition to his role as the school's fifth dean, Nowakowski spends time pursuing a variety of other interests, including flying and music.

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Renaissance Dean

*Rodney Nowakowski, O.D., Ph.D.,
Takes Over as UABSO's Fifth Dean*



Current and future students of the UAB School of Optometry are likely to know Rodney Nowakowski, O.D., Ph.D., as their dean, since Nowakowski was named the school's fifth dean in early 2011.

To others, Nowakowski may always be remembered as a teacher, considering his more than 35 years as a UABSO faculty member. But throughout those same years, there are also those who knew Nowakowski primarily as their optometrist, a student, a geneticist, a musician, or an airplane pilot. And when Nowakowski casually mentions his earlier stints as a lifeguard, a soldier, and an instructor of ballroom dancing, one may legitimately wonder if there ever has been a dean with a résumé quite so colorful.

"I'm the archetypical jack of all trades, master of none," Nowakowski jokes. "I just have a passion for learning new things." That passion may have been evident earlier in Nowakowski's life, but there was a brief period when he was a college dropout working as a lifeguard on South Florida beaches with precious little on his résumé that would suggest he could one day be dean of the most prestigious optometry school in the world.

Finding Focus

Nowakowski was born in Demming, New Mexico, but he grew up in Miami, Florida, after his family moved there when he was a year old. By the time he reached high school, Nowakowski had developed an interest in biology, but even then, it wasn't a singular focus. "My scientific interest was biology, but my outside interest was music," he says. "When I was in junior high school, a musician from Cuba visited the home of a friend, and he played classical pieces on the guitar. I asked if he would consider giving lessons, but he scoffed at the idea, saying he wouldn't have the patience to sit and listen to someone making the repeated mistakes that come with learning the instrument."

A short time later, however, Fidel Castro came to power, and that guitarist, Juan Mercadal, fled to Miami with a wife, two children, a guitar, and



\$23. Before long, he became a reluctant music teacher, and Nowakowski became his enthusiastic first student. "He convinced the authorities that his guitar wasn't worth much so that they would let him bring it with him," Nowakowski recalls. "It certainly wasn't priceless, but it was actually a very valuable guitar. I took lessons from him for years, and when I didn't have money to pay, I would cut his grass."

Nowakowski's beginner mistakes aside, the teacher-student relationship flourished. His teacher would encourage him to consider a career in music, but by then Nowakowski's scientific interests were becoming more prominent in his life. Nevertheless, he would serve a stint in the Army, two years at Florida State, and two years as a lifeguard before earning bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Miami. And only then did he finally discover a calling in optometry.

Birmingham Bound

"I was in graduate school studying math and biomedical engineering," Nowakowski recalls, "and the only guy teaching that was building an artificial heart that was the size of a room. I didn't feel like there was a whole lot of future in that, so I started looking at other options."

One option was revealed through a physicist friend who had signed on to teach optics at the brand new UABSO. He encouraged Nowakowski to consider optometry as a career. "I came up and met with Dr. Henry Peters, the founding dean," Nowakowski says. "We talked for quite a while about the school and about my interests, and he spoke as if I were already a student. I finally had to interrupt to ask him, 'Does this mean I have been accepted to the program?' 'Oh, yes,' he said, and then just went right on with what he had been saying."

Nowakowski enrolled at the UABSO in 1971, just two years after the founding of the school. Soon after graduating, he went to work for the school, and before long a whole new area of scientific discipline was revealed to him. "For my first job in optometry, I was director of the low

A Family of Educators

For all Nowakowski has accomplished in academia, the time he spent as a college dropout—though brief—stands out as a surprising interlude in his lifelong academic journey. Looking back, Nowakowski describes that period as little more than youthful angst, and considering the careers of his immediate family, his eventual career appears perfectly natural. "I didn't know for sure what I wanted to do with my life," Nowakowski says. "But I grew up in a family of educators, so I guess my career path shouldn't be too surprising."

Nowakowski's father, Rodney Edward Nowakowski, was the director of a Florida elementary school and later principal of that school district. His mother, Hazel Nowakowski, was the assistant director of physical education for the Dade County School System.

Like their son, the elder Nowakowskis were multifaceted people, running a school for ballroom dancing in addition to their more traditional academic duties. "They did most of the teaching, but I would assist in some ways," he says. "Often it was just lifting the needle off the record player and placing it back when they were ready."

Nowakowski's sister, Vasha, was also an educator, teaching in Florida and later in Alabama after earning her doctor of education degree from UAB.





Nowakowski married his wife, Debi, in 1980. The two met when Debi, a Prattville native, attended a lecture Nowakowski was giving on rehabilitation. She worked as an administrator at Children's Hospital for 20 years and now works as an online instructor teaching research methodology for several universities.

Into the Blue

Throughout his time at UAB, Nowakowski has never been short on administrative responsibilities. He has served as chief of the Low Vision Clinic, chief of ocular disease service, chairman of faculty affairs committee, and chief of staff, among other duties. In all that time, however, he has maintained room in his life for outside interests—most notably his hobbies of playing guitar and flying airplanes.

Although Nowakowski didn't follow his teacher's advice and pursue guitar as a career, he never gave it up either. After arriving at UAB, a fellow faculty member discovered that Nowakowski was a musician, and the two began playing together. "At that point, I had only played classical, but we got together with some students who were musicians, and they taught me a lot about other types of music and how to improvise," Nowakowski says. "We eventually began to play at parties (including the annual UABSO student party called the Eye Ball), and we called ourselves Rod and the Cones. I certainly didn't deserve top billing, but for a band of optometrists, the name was just too good to pass up."

Aside from music, Nowakowski says one of his favorite places to unwind is high above the ground in his Viking airplane. "I started flying in 1977," he says. "I had a friend in optometry school who talked me into learning how and going in with him to buy a plane. We bought a 1946 Aeronca Champ and paid about \$2,500 for it."

When both young men fell in love with the skies, they found there wasn't enough air time for both of them, so they bought a second plane. "This one was a 1946 Aeronca Chief for about the same price," Nowakowski says. "So we each owned half of two planes, one of which didn't always run as well as the other, so we would flip a coin to see who got stuck flying that one."

Eventually, Nowakowski would graduate to owning his own plane. To date, he has owned five planes, even owning two at the same time for a brief period.

vision clinics, and we had a clinic at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind in Talladega," he says. "I kept seeing children who were affected by hereditary eye disease, and I wanted to learn more about it."

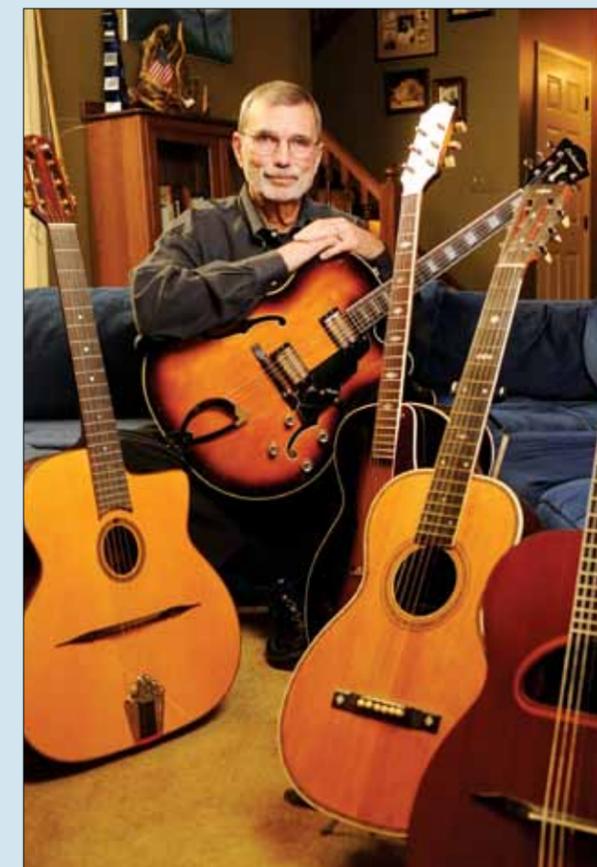
To satisfy that curiosity, Nowakowski began studying genetics at UAB. Soon after, he added a Ph.D. in genetics to his O.D. "That has impacted my career more than I could have realized," he says. "There has been so much change in the treatment of eye disease. One of the most fascinating developments of my career has been seeing how our understanding of certain diseases has changed. Diseases that once caused irreversible blindness now actually have a chance of being cured."

In recent years, Nowakowski's expertise in genetics has led to him being named a board member of eyeGENE—a nationwide effort to develop a repository of DNA from people with hereditary eye disease. "Today, we have a repository with more than 2,000 samples," he says.

Hard Hat Area

Prior to his being named dean, Nowakowski held several other administrative positions, including chief of staff of the UABSO clinics. That position put him in the unique position of overseeing a multimillion-dollar renovation of the ground floor of the Henry Peters Building. "We spent years just planning the project and trying to find out what people's needs would be," he says. "We actually built a mock examination room so that people could picture what it would be like and could point out specific needs or areas of concern."

Once the planning was done, construction began, and while Nowakowski was monitoring the progress of the renovations, there were still patients to see. With the ground floor clinics completely gutted, temporary clinics opened on an upper floor, while pediatrics and primary clinics moved down the street. Eighteen months later, an official ribbon-cutting ceremony unveiled state-of-the-art clinics, an optical shop, and an entire new entrance and façade for the building facing University Boulevard, UAB's main thoroughfare.



A New Era

With more than 35 years on the UABSO faculty and a wide variety of professional and personal interests to occupy his time, one might ask why Nowakowski would choose to tackle the job of dean. But for an alumnus with a lifetime of devotion to his school, a more natural question might be, "Why not?"

"I guess I felt I had accomplished everything else within this setting that I wanted to accomplish," Nowakowski says. "As an alumnus, it was interesting to be the first graduate to serve as dean. And having done administrative work through the years, I knew I could gain some satisfaction from this type of work."

In order to find such satisfaction in the short term, Nowakowski has had to steer the school through the toughest economic environment it has faced through his long career, in a climate that has seen the financial strain on optometry students reach an all-time high. "I definitely felt that the school needed a dean who could get the school through the economic downturn," he says. "It's difficult and disappointing to not have the resources that we have had in the past, but we need to find a way to weather this stretch while figuring out a strategy that will take advantage of this situation by setting the school up to fare better in the longterm."

A Few Good Mentors

New Program Seeks to Pair Students with Alumni

While there are valuable lessons to be learned in the books and classrooms of the UAB School of Optometry, Martin Habel, O.D. ('78), says students also can benefit from an experienced guide to help usher them into the real world. A mentor, if you will, to bridge the gap between studying pathology and helping patients.

"If students had somebody on the outside to give them a perspective on the practice world—the type of perspective they're probably not getting in the student world—it could make a difference in their career and their life," says Habel. "We need to get people oriented to what the world of optometry is like after school."

With that goal in mind, Habel is spearheading a campaign to start just such a mentoring program in the UABSO. He said he already has received "a great response" from practicing optometrists interested in acting as mentors, and he hopes to receive similar positive feedback from students when he discusses the potential program with them this fall.

"I'm approaching this with the thought of helping people by being sort of a father figure," says Habel, who runs a pri-

ivate practice in Rainsville. "Many of these students know little about the outside world. They're so involved with learning the language of optometry and the pathology that they lose a little perspective on what it takes overall to care for people.

"No matter what type of practice you go into, what you're doing is taking care of people. As practicing optometrists, we have a lot of information we can pass on to help them do that better and quicker."

Habel envisions the program as being informal, without any set parameters for what is required of the student or the mentor. The program simply would link each student with an optometrist who is practicing in that student's area of interest, and both would decide how best to proceed.

"It could be the student talking about themselves or asking about optometry, or the mentor having the student into their practice to let them observe real-world optometry—whatever it takes," Habel says. "If I were a senior, I would love to have somebody tell me how to find a place to practice, what I am looking for, what I should be doing. That information is very valuable."

In addition to helping students, Habel says a mentor program also would benefit the profession as a whole. By learning all aspects of the profession, and not merely the technical knowledge, early in their careers, Habel says graduates will be more willing to take a proactive approach to optometry that will extend beyond their individual practice.



In conjunction with the UABSO Reunion/CE weekend, some optometry students were encouraged to join the Friday evening reception at UAB Eye Care. Opportunities to network with alumni were facilitated by UABSO Alumni Board members. The UABSO Alumni Association and its board members encourage our students to attend alumni functions and become acquainted with their future colleagues in the profession.

"It's a shame when practices that have been around 30 years begin to close.

If this mentor program leads to another program that helps create associates or partnerships, that's just icing on the cake."

—MARTY HABEL, O.D.

"In order to advance our profession, we always have to be working to change laws and improve our technology and techniques," Habel said. "We need people to be involved in all parts of this profession rather than just being passive. One way to do that is to give the students perspective on how we got where we are and what it takes to do what we're doing.

"If we can educate students from the beginning, maybe we'll get them to play a greater role in the profession. We have an obligation to see that our profession continues and advances the way it has in the last 30 years. And I think the best way to do that is to nurture and mentor a student."

If the mentor program is successful, Habel says it could lead to an additional matchmaking program in which students are introduced to potential associates or partners who could help graduates actually enter into existing practices.

"I believe that will be a spin-off of this," Habel says. "We need to find a way to make that happen. Because it's a shame when practices that have been around 30 years begin to close. It's so hard to develop a practice, and to see one close without somebody picking it up is tough. If this mentor program leads to another program that helps create associates or partnerships, then that's just icing on the cake."



Elizabeth Peters



Elizabeth Peters has worked in the School of Optometry for 21 years, but her ties to the school are arguably stronger than the longest-tenured faculty, and her memories of the school almost certainly go back further.

"I was just a baby when my dad moved here to become dean of the school," says

Peters, an office services specialist for UAB Eye Care and daughter of Henry Peters, O.D., the UABSO's founding dean. "I remember coming here when I was off from school, so I knew all the faculty, and the students were used to seeing me running around. Of course, most of the staff is gone from when I was that age."

While those original faculty members may be gone, there are successive generations of students and faculty—not to mention patients—who have come to know Peters as an integral part of the school's staff. After graduating with an undergraduate degree from St. Andrews Presbyterian College in North Carolina, Peters came to work at the UABSO as a part-timer while she earned a second degree from the UAB School of Education.

"A lot of things have changed over the years that I've been here in terms of technology and appearance, but it's still the same school my father started in terms of being oriented toward the patients and the students," she says. "I have always appreciated the way the faculty, staff, and students care for their patients. Even though I don't work up front anymore, there are patients who have been coming here for years I still see from time to time."

When she isn't working, Peters performs with Colla Voce, a vocal ensemble that performs classical works, including "everything from medieval times to the Romantic period to modern composers." Peters says she was invited to join the group by UABSO graduate Jim Fisk, O.D., who is also a member.

In addition to her musical interests, Peters is the current vice president of a local fan group for *Doctor Who*, the long-running British science fiction television series. "I've always been a fan of science fiction and fantasy, but particularly of *Doctor Who*," Peters says. "I have a unique sense of humor, so the offbeat British science fiction and comedy have always appealed to me."

UAB School of Optometry Class of 2011



Front row: Oanh Huynh Lu, Lori Alyse Jasper, Erin Michelle Fontaine, April Michelle Lopez, Bhavika Mahesh Patidar, Laura F. Rayne, Yen Do McIndoe, Niyati Patel, Kimberly Watkins Stroup, Aimee Lam, Sara Lynn McGowan

Row 2: Carrienne Grubb Starnes, Ayesha C. Kidd, Jennifer Virag Seibert, Sheila Marie Karst Morris, Ashley Lauren Cowart, Natasha Nicole Gay, Lauren N. Stirling, Ashley Brett Fox, Johnna Leigh Headley

Row 3: Alan Michael Cantrell, Karen Romero Reeves, Amber Christie Zaunbrecher, Jeremy Hollis Gaffney, Benjamin Edward Pendergrass, Stacy LeeAnn Burden, Kaley Hardesty Chatham, Lauren Amber Cook, Katie Elizabeth Creech, Brandi Hicks Casey, Calah Odom Ray

Row 4: Stephanie LeAnn Baker, Punit Shashikant Bhakta, Matthew Charles Bohrman, Merin A. Graves, Matthew Barnes Bellipanni, Lawson Spruiell, Tyler Neal Mayes, Jonathan Patrick Cobb, Amanda Janette Cobb, Nicki Hill

Not pictured: Heidi M. Gonzalez, Justin Donald Smith



Timothy C. Nichols, O.D. ('81), presented the convocation address for the the 43 members of the 37th graduating class of the UAB School of Optometry in April 2011.

At left, dean Rodney Nowakowski presents the Dean's Award for Excellence to Laura Frances Rayne.

AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

**Beta Sigma Kappa International
Optometric Honor Society**

Silver Medal

Sheila Marie Karst Morris

**Alabama Optometric
Association Leadership Award**

Calah Odom Ray

**Southern Council of Optometrists
Clinical Excellence Award**

Stacy LeeAnn Burden

**Jess Boyd Eskridge Clinical
Excellence Award**

Lauren N. Stirling

Dean's Award of Excellence

Laura F. Rayne

ANNUAL AWARDS

**ABBA Optical Excellence Award for
Fitting of GP Contact Lenses**

Karen Romero Reeves

**ABBA Optical Excellence Award for
Prescription of GP Contact Lenses**

Amber Christie Zaunbrecher

**Alcon 4th Year Optometry Student
Scholarship Award**

Punit Shashikant Bhakta

**COVD Award for Excellence
in Vision Therapy**

Amber Christie Zaunbrecher

Crizal DCRP Award Program

Ashley Brett Fox

**Designs for Vision Incorporated/
William Feinbloom Low**

Vision Award

Laura F. Rayne

**GPLI Contact Lens Clinical
Excellence Award**

Laura F. Rayne

**Marchon Practice
Management Award**

Erin Michelle Fontaine

**The National Alumni
Association Scholarship**

Sheila Marie Karst Morris

Varilux Student Grant Award

Merin A. Graves

**VisionAmerica Co-Management
Award**

Punit Shashikant Bhakta

**Vision Service Plan/
Dr. Henry B. Peters Award**

Sara Lynn McGowan

**Vision Service Plan Excellence in
Primary Care Scholarship Award**

Benjamin Edward Pendergrass

**Vistakon Excellence in
Contact Lens Award**

Sheila Marie Karst Morris

**Winchester Optical/
David J. Kerko Low Vision Award**

Alan Michael Cantrell

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

**Beta Sigma Kappa International
Optometric Honor Society**

Punit Shashikant Bhakta

Stacy LeeAnn Burden

Brandi Hicks Casey

Kaley Hardesty Chatham

Jonathan Patrick Cobb

Lauren Amber Cook

Ashley Lauren Cowart

Erin Michelle Fontaine

Ashley Brett Fox

Jeremy Hollis Gaffney

Merin A. Graves

Nicki Hill

Oanh Huynh Lu

Sara Lynn McGowan

Sheila Marie Karst Morris

Bhavika Mahesh Patidar

Benjamin Edward Pendergrass

Calah Odom Ray

Laura F. Rayne

Jennifer Virag Seibert

Carrienne Grubb Starnes

Lauren N. Stirling

Kimberly Watkins Stroup

Amber Christie Zaunbrecher

**Gold Key International
Optometric Honor Society**

Stephanie LeAnn Baker

Lauren Amber Cook

Oanh Huynh Lu

Sara Lynn McGowan

Bhavika Mahesh Patidar

Benjamin Edward Pendergrass

Calah Odom Ray

Laura F. Rayne

UAB School of Optometry Class of 2012



Front row: Amber Nicole Hurley, Sheena Clarissa Harper, Erin Beebe Hardie, Sally Salamata Hamissou, Hilary Susan Melby, Melanie Katherine Peeler, Divya Jayprakash Patel, Brittany Magnus Mitchell, Sunita Jagani, Ashley Hooks Ware

2nd row: Megan Chamlee-Mills, Brooke Schaeffer Kaplan, Danielle Gonzalez Ledet, Karah Hill Roberts, Meagan Elizabeth Jarrell, Cara Anne Gilliland, Amy Elizabeth Nowell, Tracy Mulvehill Doss

3rd row: Blakeley Kyle Jones, Deanna Danielle Apple, Natalya Stanislavovna Frolova, Ashley McKain Ott, Stephanie Guinn Ommen, Paula Lynn Johns, Aimée Sylvester McBride, Patricia Marie Fulmer, Kendra Shanae Mills

4th row: Jesse Carl Williams, James Isaac Williams, Matthew Bryan Greene, Thomas A. Pinkston, Evan Joel Stout, Jeremy Daniel Edgerly, James Dylan Vaught, Andrew Ryan Treece, Lakesha T. Story



William H. Sullins, O.D. ('76), presented the convocation address for the the 36 members of the 38th graduating class of the UAB School of Optometry in April 2012.

At left, Amber Nicole Hurley, of Lebanon, Virginia, receives the Dean's Award of Excellence, the highest honor presented to a graduating student.

AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

- Beta Sigma Kappa International Optometric Honor Society Silver Medal**
Aimée Sylvester McBride
- Alabama Optometric Association Leadership Award**
Patricia Marie Fulmer
- Southern Council of Optometrists Clinical Excellence Award**
Erin Beebe Hardie
- Jess Boyd Eskridge Clinical Excellence Award**
Andrew Ryan Treece
- Dean's Award of Excellence**
Amber Nicole Hurley

ANNUAL AWARDS

- ABBA/Essilor Outstanding GP Practice Achievement Award**
Paula Lynn Johns
- ABBA/Essilor Practice Achievement Award**
Sheena Clarissa Harper
Meagan Elizabeth Jarrell
Evan Joel Stout
Ashley Hooks Ware
- Alcon 4th Year Optometry Student Scholarship Award**
Aimée Sylvester McBride
- COVD Award for Excellence in Vision Therapy**
Ashley McKain Ott

- Crizal DCRP Award Program**
Stephanie Guinn Ommen

- Designs for Vision Incorporated/ William Feinbloom Low Vision Award**
Sheena Clarissa Harper

- GPLI Contact Lens Clinical Excellence Award**
Erin Beebe Hardie

- Marchon Practice Management Award**
Aimée Sylvester McBride

- The National Alumni Association/ Dean's Scholarship**
Aimée Sylvester McBride
Andrew Ryan Treece

- One Sight Research Foundation Scholarship**
Sunita Jagani

- Professional Eye Care Associates of America Scholarship**
Sunita Jagani
Meagan Elizabeth Jarrell

- Optelec U.S. Incorporated Low Vision Award**
Megan Chamlee-Mills

- VisionAmerica Co-Management Award**
Paula Lynn Johns

- Vision Service Plan Excellence in Primary Care Scholarship Award**
Andrew Ryan Treece

- Vistakon Excellence in Contact Lens Award**
Patricia Marie Fulmer

- VSP Service Plan/ Dr. Henry B. Peters Award**
Erin Beebe Hardie

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- Beta Sigma Kappa International Optometric Honor Society**
Deanna Danielle Apple
Patricia Marie Fulmer
Erin Beebe Hardie
Sheena Clarissa Harper
Amber Nicole Hurley
Sunita Jagani
Meagan Elizabeth Jarrell
Blakely Kyle Jones
Brooke Schaeffer Kaplan
Aimée Sylvester McBride
Hilary Susan Melby
Amy Elizabeth Nowell
Stephanie Guinn Ommen
Ashley McKain Ott
Divya Jayprakash Patel
Melanie Katherine Peeler
Evan Joel Stout
Andrew Ryan Treece
James Isaac Williams

Gold Key International Optometric Honor Society

- Patricia Marie Fulmer
Sally Salamata Hamissou
Erin Beebe Hardie
Amber Nicole Hurley
Meagan Elizabeth Jarrell
Paula Lynn Johns
Melanie Katherine Peeler

About the School

News from In, Around, and Beyond UAB



SECO representatives Suzanne Simms ('99), left, and Doug Clark ('82), right, present a check to UABSO senior director of development Peggy Striplin.

Southern Council of Optometry Invests in UABSO Students

Visiting UABSO to encourage student attendance at SECO, Doug Clark, O.D. ('82), took the occasion to represent the Southern Council of Optometry by donating a check for student scholarships to the school.



With Jimmy Bartlett, left, pulling out the winning name, UABSO alumni director Peggy Striplin, right, awards the door prize of \$100 to Rick Weisbarth (resident, '81). Weisbarth, in turn, donated the \$100 cash back to the school. Thank you, Dr. Weisbarth!

Bartlett Honored

Recently retired professor Jimmy Bartlett, O.D., was honored at the UABSO Alumni Reception at SECO this year. His many years of service to the school and to optometry were celebrated with his family and with alumni and friends from across the country.

Alcon Student Case Report Award

Aimée McBride is the UABSO winner of the Alcon Partner in Education Award for 2012. Her case report is titled "Recurrent Branch Retinal Vein Occlusion in Primary Care Optometry" and was co-authored by Stephen Byrnes, O.D., of New Hampshire. McBride, a fourth-year student from Alabama, was awarded \$1,000, and her report will now be considered for the national award along with submissions from other optometry schools. The national winner will receive an additional \$5,000 prize.



Aimée McBride

Carl Zeiss Vision Fellowship

The 2011-2012 AOF-Carl Zeiss Vision Fellow from UABSO is Patricia M. Fulmer. Fulmer was awarded \$5,000 and two travel fellowships to attend Academy 2011 in Boston and Academy 2012 in Phoenix. A Gadsden, Alabama, native, Patricia will be entering a residency in primary eye care at the Amarillo Veterans Affairs Medical Center after graduation in June.



Patricia M. Fulmer

Steele Honored with UAB Teaching Award



Elizabeth Steele, O.D. ('03)

Elizabeth Steele, O.D. ('03), assistant professor of optometry, was selected by students and colleagues to receive the UAB President's Award for Excellence in Teaching for the School of Optometry. Students show appreciation for her positive attitude

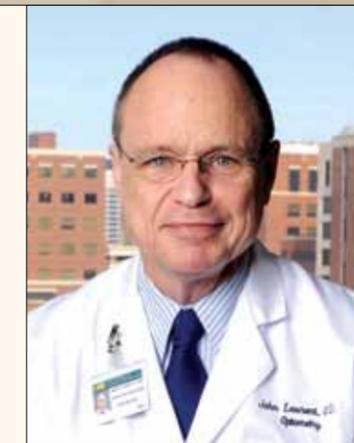
and her willingness to devote extra time to guidance, encouragement, and mentoring. "One of Dr. Steele's strengths is her ability to communicate with students in a positive, constructive manner at a time when they are highly anxious about an upcoming exam," one colleague says.

Other faculty say they appreciate her passion and dedication as course master of CEVS (Clinical Evaluation of the Visual System), one of the school's most challenging sequences. "She is always encouraging, energetic, and willing to provide a helping hand whenever she is needed," says another colleague. "Being able to work with Beth always makes my job more enjoyable."

Caplan Inducted into National Optometry Hall of Fame

Les Caplan, UABSO professor emeritus, was inducted into the National Optometry Hall of Fame at the 2011 AOA meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, in June. Caplan's life has been devoted to ensuring the public receives the best care possible—be it eye care or the more encompassing health care. This is a well-deserved honor. Caplan has touched many lives throughout his long and continuing career in optometry.

John Laurent, O.D., Ph.D.



From riding elephants in Thailand and diving in the East China Sea to conducting vision research in Florida and California, a career in optometry has given John Laurent, O.D., Ph.D., opportunities beyond what he ever could have imagined. But when asked to pick a favorite among his many optometric posts, he doesn't hesitate. "I can honestly say that my current position on faculty is the best job I've ever had," says

Laurent, now in his third year on faculty at the UABSO. "I have been very lucky to have had a number of jobs I truly loved."

That's quite a statement from a man who confesses that his early impressions of academia—and optometry practice—left something to be desired. "I hated high school," Laurent says. "I took a year off before enrolling in the University of Wisconsin, only to find that my feelings about school hadn't changed." Despite that rocky start, Laurent got a reprieve from his academic woes when he was drafted into the Army and sent to Germany to work as a clerk. Little did he know that experience would lead him to the two professions—optometry and military service—that would define his career.

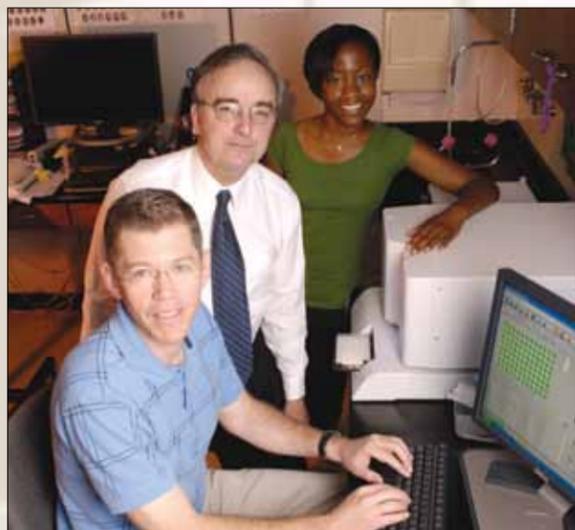
While in Germany, a fellow GI encouraged Laurent to consider optometry. Laurent would later return to college, but this time around, he discovered that his perspective had changed. "After the Army, the world looked so much different," he says. He went on to earn a B.S. from Wisconsin and an M.S. and O.D. from Ohio State University's School of Optometry. Soon after graduating, however, he says he felt constrained by the permanence of a small-town practice. He opted instead to return to the military, embarking on a naval career that would span the next 26 years. During that stretch, he served in such places as Germany, Hawaii, and Okinawa. He also made an important stop in Birmingham, where he earned a Ph.D. from the UABSO Department of Vision Sciences. It was during that stop that Laurent also met his wife, Becky, a Birmingham attorney.

After retiring from the Navy, Laurent returned to the UABSO for a residency—an experience he now recommends to other military personnel nearing retirement. "I didn't expect to learn much, but I did," he says. "It's a refreshing experience—like being a fifth-year optometry student, except I was 30 years out of school."

Since joining the faculty, Laurent says he is surprised daily by the pleasures of academic life. "Teaching in contact lens labs, teaching a business course, and conducting two research projects keeps me very busy," he says. "It's fascinating to see the transformation from a student to a professional optometrist."



UAB is "greening" the campus. As part of that project, the plaza around the school will be transformed. The surface of the plaza will become more attractive, with new benches as well as planters with trees and flowers. This will give students, staff, and faculty an opportunity to be outside, in addition to making a more attractive environment for prospective students. The work is scheduled to begin in early August. A similar renovation is already taking place in the plaza surrounding the School of Nursing, just across University Boulevard, and the areas around Volker Hall and Lister Hill Library also are slated to be included in the project.



Roderick J. Fullard, center, was awarded the 2011 mentoring award by the Graduate Program for his role mentoring both students and young faculty.

From the President



"A house divided against itself cannot stand". These famous words said more than 150 years ago are still true today.

As a member of the Class of 1978, I have had the privilege to watch this school and our profession grow and mature over the last 30-plus years. A handful of men who had a great vision planted a seed. With a few legislative connections, they gave birth to the UAB School of Optometry in the midst of the UAB medical center. Nationally, this was the first of its kind. A stalwart faculty developed curriculum and wrote textbooks that educated our alumni to not only be the top in our field, but to push our profession to develop into primary health-care providers. Laws were fought for, passed, and expanded to allow us to use the education we had obtained. Our school, state, and national associations led the way in grassroots politics to make change and excel. We did all this by bonding together, using each other's strengths to form one body stronger than its individual parts.

It saddens me to observe the current division in our ranks over plans and policies. A fight over board certification has led to the spawn of a new group, the American Optometric Society, which has sued the American Optometric Association. Opinions rendered in court now even question whether we are to be counted as physicians. Economic stresses have splintered us into commercial and private practice factions. Even our school has been strained by adaptation to major state budget cuts and a change in personnel fueled by retirement.

A house divided against itself cannot stand. A few men had great vision. We should not and cannot let that vision die or ever falter. Each one of us must stand together again. We must put aside our differences and utilize our individual strengths to form one body of uniform purpose to strive to do everything we can to provide the best care possible for those we have pledged to serve—our patients.

There are generations yet unborn whose very lives will be shaped by the moves we make and the actions we take. Each of you has been created in order that you might make a difference. You have within you the power to enact change. Your actions have value far greater than silver or gold. Your life—and what you do with it today—matters forever.

Marty Habel, O.D.
President, UABSO Alumni Association

Sam Pierce, O.D. Answering the Call in Private Practice and Professional Leadership

Becoming involved in regional and national optometry organizations seemed like natural choices for UABSO alumnus Sam Pierce, O.D., who has been fascinated with vision for as long as he can remember. "I was always interested in how the eyes worked, or more important, why they often didn't work and needed help by way of glasses, contact lenses, or surgery," explains Pierce, who earned a doctor of optometry degree from the UABSO in 1988. "I loved the idea of being in a health-care profession that often yielded almost instantaneous results."

A past president of the Alabama Optometric Association (ALOA), Pierce first became active in the organization 18 years ago by serving on the ALOA Elections Committee. This required being actively involved in the Alabama governor's race by serving in a candidate's election campaign organization. "Not long after that, I served as president of the Birmingham Area Optometric Society and then was elected to the ALOA Board of Directors," he says. "While serving on the ALOA board, I served on the board of directors for the UABSO Alumni Association and eventually became president."

Pierce also has served as a trustee of the Southern Council of Optometry (SECO), a regional organization with a membership of optometrists from 11 Southern states. He is currently a member of the board of trustees for the American Optometric Association (AOA), having been reelected to a three-year term at the group's national meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2011. In the next three or four years, he plans to run for secretary-treasurer of the AOA and hopes to ultimately become AOA president. "Each office is held for one year. To serve as president of the AOA would be an extreme honor, and I would be only the second optometrist from the state of Alabama, as well as the second graduate from the UABSO, to serve in that position."

For Pierce, being involved in professional organizations is an obligation, to a certain extent. "Optometry is a legislated profession; therefore, it is just the stroke of a governor's pen away from not existing," he says. "For that reason, every member of the profession, regardless of his or her mode of practice, should be an active member of a state association and national association."

After his term on the ALOA board, Pierce was appointed to serve for three years as a SECO trustee representing Alabama. Following his service to SECO, he ran for the AOA Board of Trustees in 2009 and was elected to a two-year term, filling a vacated spot, after having served on various AOA committees for the past decade.

In addition to being active in professional organizations, Pierce believes that lending a helping hand during times of tragedy and hardship is a role he must assume. "Optometrists are health-care specialists, and serve in more than 3,500 communities throughout the country. When our area is affected by natural disasters, it is our responsibility to rise to the occasion and do our part to assist those in need."



In addition to serving in multiple leadership roles in professional organizations, Sam Pierce has treated patients at his Trussville practice since 1989.

Over the years Pierce has worked with the Lions Club and Special Olympics, and he most recently volunteered in Moulton, Alabama, performing free eye exams as part of a mobile eye clinic for tornado victims, using the VSP mobile eye clinic. He also established an optometry clinic at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center in the days following Hurricane Katrina—an experience he'll never forget. "I grabbed some supplies and instruments and set up a table and immediately had a deluge of people with eye-related problems," he says. "Some had lost glaucoma medication; some had diabetes and needed their eyes checked. But about 90 percent of them were people who had lost their glasses or contact lenses and couldn't see. I realized there was a need to get their eyes checked and get them back in glasses."

Pierce worked with other UABSO alumni to assist victims. He was later asked to chair a task force of the ALOA to determine how to better serve those in need when future disasters hit. "These people had been at the Civic Center for days before I wandered in with a bag of toys for the children," he says. "My hope is the next time something like this happens, we will be there from day one."

Originally from Opp, Alabama, the 49-year-old Pierce attended Birmingham-Southern College for three years before transferring to the UABSO, where he earned a bachelor of science in physiological optics in 1986. Pierce and his wife, Kim, are the parents of two teenage daughters and three dogs. He has treated patients at his Trussville practice since 1989.

"My work is very rewarding," he says. "When someone comes in with a piece of metal imbedded in their cornea, within minutes they can be pain free and headed back to work. Or I can take a kid that can't see what's on the board at school, put a pair of glasses on him, and he's counting the leaves on the trees on the way home."

UAB School of Optometry Endowed Scholarships

2011-2012

Abel Family Endowed Optometry Scholarship (for outstanding student in CEVS) given by Drs. Stuart and Wanda Able
Matthew James Davis

Clark F. Amos Endowed Optometry Presidential Scholarship (for students who wish to pursue a residency) given by many friends and alumni in memory of Clark Amos
Sheena Harper
Amber Hurley

Drs. John and Catherine Amos Endowed Optometry Scholarship (preference given to any student from a Southeastern state) given by Drs. John and Catherine Amos
William Lee Thibodeaux

Dr. Arol Augsburg/DCAC Endowed Optometry Scholarship (for all students) given by the Dean's Community Advisory Committee (DCAC) in honor of the school's third dean
Matthew James Davis
Lindsay Johnson

Azman Endowed Optometry Scholarship (for third-year contact lens students who submit a paper) donated by Dr. Tom Azman and Dr. Irwin Azman in memory of their father, Mr. Abraham Azman
To be awarded in the summer

Richard B. Booth Endowed Optometry Scholarship (preference given to students from Tennessee) given by Mr. Richard B. Booth, former chair of the DCAC
Trenton Stuart Cleghern

The Helen and David Bunkin Endowed Optometry Scholarship (for all students) given by Mrs. Helen Bunkin
Jesse Williams

Dr. Lester Caplan/CIBAVision Endowed Optometry Scholarship

(given to one or more in the top 20 percent of the contact lens section) given in honor of Dr. Caplan by CIBA Vision
Patricia Fulmer
Erin Hardie
Evan Stout

Douglas & Connie Clark Endowed Optometry Leadership Scholarship (given to students who have demonstrated leadership within the school and on a regional or national level) given by

Dr. and Mrs. Douglas Clark
To be awarded in a year

Dr. Elbert A. "Bert" Coshatt/UABSO Alumni Endowed Optometry Scholarship (for outstanding students with financial need) given by the UABSO Alumni Association and many alumni
Vinh Thanh Duong

Bob & Hulene Crosby Endowed Optometry Scholarship (given at the discretion of the dean) given by Dr. and Mrs. Bob Crosby
Barrett Martin

Dr. Ernest DeBakey Endowed Optometry Scholarship (preference given to students from south Alabama) given in memory of Dr. DeBakey by friends and family
Sierra Bennett Riley

Lee Dickerson Endowed Optometry Scholarship (demonstrated proficiency in RGP lenses) given by Mr. and Mrs. Lee Dickerson
Andrew Treece

Energen/Alagasco Endowed Optometry Scholarship (preference given to an outstanding student from a minority population) given by Energen/Alagasco
Priya Joshi

Dr. Jess Boyd Eskridge/UABSO Alumni Endowed Optometry Scholarship (all students) given by

the UABSO Alumni Association and many alumni
My-Tho "Karin" Tran

The Faculty of Optometry and Vision Science Endowed Student Scholarship (open to all students and graduate students) given by the faculty of the UAB School of Optometry in both departments
Nicole Guyette
Jason Kyle Varnadoe

The Martin D. & Rita Gaffney Endowed Optometry Scholarship (preference given to students from a military family or residents of Florida with financial need)
Daniel G. Gaffney

The Sara Fran Hanan Endowed Low Vision Award (given to students who excel in low-vision education) given by Mrs. Sara Fran Hanan
To be awarded in a year

Eydie C. Jones Endowed Optometry Scholarship (to an outstanding first-year student with financial need) given by the UABSO Alumni Association and her family
Whitney Luster

New Orleans Contact Lens Society Endowed Optometry Scholarship (preference given to students from Louisiana) given by members of the N.O. Contact Lens Society
Francis Davis
Ha My Huynh

Drs. Debi and Rod Nowakowski Endowed Optometry Scholarship (students who display consistent leadership qualities) given by Drs. Debi and Rod Nowakowski
Erin Hardie

Dr. E.C. Overton/UABSO Alumni Association Endowed Optometry Scholarship (all students) given by the UABSO Alumni Association and many alumni
Frank Francisco

Dr. Henry B. Peters/DCAC Endowed Optometry Scholarship (all students) given by the Dean's Community Advisory Committee (DCAC)
Andrew Treece

Frederic & Marion Rosemore Family Foundation Endowed Optometry Scholarship (outstanding third- or fourth-year student in primary care) given by Dr. and Mrs. Fred Rosemore
Matthew James Davis

Southern Council of Optometrists Endowed Optometry Scholarship (preference given to outstanding students from Southeastern states)
Jennifer Craig

Dr. Edgar M. Warr/UABSO Alumni Endowed Optometry Scholarship (all students) given by the UABSO Alumni Association and many alumni
Amie Marsh

Dr. Bradford W. Wild/DCAC Endowed Optometry Scholarship (all students) given by the Dean's Community Advisory Committee in honor of Dr. Wild, the school's second dean
David Zimmerman

John A. Williamson Endowed Optometry Scholarship (given to first-year students in good standing with financial need) given by Mr. John A. Williamson in his estate
William Lee Thibodeaux

Dr. Paul S. Worrell Endowed Optometry Scholarship (all students) given by the estate of Dr. Paul S. Worrell
David Patrick Beatty
Daniel Plesha

Mrs. Sylvia D. Worrell Endowed Vision Science Scholarship (vision science graduate students) given by Mrs. Sylvia D. Worrell in her estate.
Li He
Ye Long
David Walsh

Estate Planning 101

Done.

You've created a will or a trust, and you are finished with estate planning. Actually, estate planning is a continuous process. To ensure that your plans fulfill your goals, you must periodically review those plans and make adjustments if necessary. Consider the following circumstances that may call for an update of your will or any other estate-planning documents:

- Significant increases or decreases in the value of your assets
- Death of a spouse or existing beneficiary
- Relocation to a different state
- Birth or adoption of a child or grandchild
- Change in your executor, trustee, or guardian
- A desire to include the UAB School of Optometry in your will or estate plan
- Change in the estate tax laws

A review of your estate plans should be conducted every five years to make sure that your plans are still in line with your goals. Consider the beneficiary designations for your retirement and investment accounts as well as your insurance policies to determine whether the beneficiary designations should be altered.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, call Peggy Striplin (205) 934-9838 or e-mail striplin@uab.edu

SINGLE-LIFE GIFT ANNUITY RATES

AGE	RATE
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65	4.7%
70	5.1%
75	5.8%
80	6.8%
85	7.8%
90	9.0%

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