Keeping Pace with the Times

Former UABSO Resident Leads the Academy
Dear Alumni and Friends,

When someone graduates from optometry school, that experience seems to be fixed in time. The graduate’s point of reference from that time forward is the way people, courses, experiences, and buildings were at the time of graduation. Of course, as we all come to realize, the only constant is change. This is one of the reasons the school endeavors to keep alumni, friends, and corporate partners informed of changes at the school through *UAB Optometry*. But I hope you will also visit the school the next time you are in the area. I believe you will be surprised.

In the past seven years, the Center for Biophysical Sciences and Engineering moved into a newly expanded and renovated building; the new Center for the Development of Functional Imaging was constructed behind the Worrell Building; the Clinical Eye Research Facility was redesigned and expanded on the fourth floor of the Henry Peters Building; the UAB Eye Care facility on the ground floor of the Peters Building was completely renovated; and the University Optometry Group was moved to a larger and more centrally located space. Several other renovation projects are in the planning stages.

As substantive as these physical changes have been, important program changes have either been made or are under way. For many years, the first professional degree program (Doctor of Optometry) utilized the summer session between the third and fourth years for patient-care purposes, but those experiences were not a formal part of the curriculum. Over the past 12 years, the O.D. program has expanded so that each summer session is utilized for either the clinical evaluation of the visual system course or patient care. As a result, this program is now officially a 15-quarter curriculum. This additional time has helped expand the clinical experience afforded students and interns.

Currently, the professional-program curriculum committee is evaluating the first three years of the curriculum in an effort to ensure appropriate course content, course sequencing, and clinical relevance. The committee has spent time with peer groups in the School of Dentistry to develop basic health-science courses that meet the unique needs of both optometry and dentistry. This aspect of the curriculum was originally coordinated with the School of Medicine, but the School of Medicine’s basic-science curriculum requirements no longer will accommodate joint presentation of these courses. This has presented an opportunity to develop basic-science courses in a manner that reinforces the clinical relevance of each subject area. In addition to the basic-science curriculum, the curriculum committee also reviewed all visual- and clinical-science courses in an effort to ensure appropriateness of content and sequence and to provide increased time for patient-care experiences. These course changes, along with the two-quarter clinical externship experiences will result in an even more efficient curriculum. A third externship experience may be offered in the future.

All of these changes would be moot if alumni and other optometrists did not continue to encourage the best and brightest students to apply for admission to the UAB School of Optometry.

John F. Amos, O.D.
Dean, UAB School of Optometry
4 Keeping Pace with the Times
Former UABSO resident Richard E. Weisbarth, O.D., steps into the national spotlight in his role as president of the American Academy of Optometry.

6 In Memoriam: Eydie Jones
Longtime employee and friend of the school Eydie Jones died earlier this year, but her legacy of love and concern for students will be forever remembered by those who came through the school.

7 Student Spotlight
Jody Simmons has remained active in many leadership organizations throughout her time as a student at the UABSO.

8 Mastering the Craft
Accurate diagnoses are only part of the job. Communicating effectively with patients can be the most vital aspect of keeping patients satisfied and seeing clearly.

10 The Clinical Eye
For the past 25 years, the Community Eye Care program has taken screenings and examinations to communities in Birmingham and surrounding areas.

12 About the School
Sightings of faculty, students, and friends of the school—from social gatherings to scholastic milestones.

15 Faculty Focus
Timothy Gawne, Ph.D., is a neuroscientist in the Vision Science Research Center who started his career as an electrical engineer.

16 From the President
News of note from Alumni Association president Melissa Hoercher, O.D.

16 Alumni Board Profiles
Meet the members of the board of the UABSO Alumni Association. This issue features Julie Blake, O.D., and Joel Jenkins, O.D.

17 Alumni Profile
David Duval, O.D., has been in private practice in his hometown of Mobile for more than 31 years.

18 Development
A list of paid dues for 2007
Richard E. Weisbarth, O.D., wasted no time in establishing what his priority would be during his two years leading the American Academy of Optometry. Upon being named president in December 2006, Weisbarth penned an address to the organization titled, “The Academy and Future Change.”

“The Academy is all about change, and that’s really what I am trying to concentrate on during my term as president,” Weisbarth says. “My goal is to look at what we need to adjust as we move into the future. We may make a decision today that we can’t implement until tomorrow. So I always try to look ahead and plan for the future.”

Weisbarth’s primary task in 2007 was to help direct the Academy through one of the biggest changes in the organization’s 85-year history. Since its founding in 1922, the American Academy of Optometry has always held its annual national meeting sometime in December. But in 2007, after more than a decade of planning, the meeting date was changed to late October.

Such a shift does not happen easily, or quietly. And as Academy president, Weisbarth was the point man who had to deal with the numerous suggestions and even a few complaints about the change from members. “It is a major chore to move a meeting after that many years,” Weisbarth says. “We’re breaking tradition, and we’re trying to change people’s mindset. That has been the biggest challenge. But it was something that we as an organization decided needed to be done.

“When our forefathers got the organization started, December was a really slow month. It was not difficult to close one’s practice, leave the schools, and go to a meeting. But now, December is actually one of the busiest months in our profession: Practices are busier than ever because you have college students coming home, flexible spending accounts mean some people have to use their allocated funds by the end of the year or lose them, and we have national board exams for the students that now take place in December. Over time, it has just become a very inconvenient month, so we had to move the meeting to a different time of year for the organization to continue to thrive.”

The World Via UAB

Making dramatic changes is nothing new to Weisbarth. One of the biggest occurred when he decided to leave his native Ohio after graduating from The Ohio State University College of Optometry in 1980 and enroll in a newly formed
cornea and contact lens residency program at UAB. At the time, Weisbarth had no intention of moving from Ohio; the first plane trip he ever took was the one to Birmingham for the residency interview. He had never been in the Deep South and admitted he “went through some culture shock.” But Weisbarth says the move to UAB turned out to be one of the best changes of his life, both professionally and personally. “It was without a doubt a fantastic year in my education,” Weisbarth says. “I learned so much and I grew so much professionally. I also developed a tremendous friendship with the other residents in my class, and we still stay in contact. And I also met my wife, Pam, there. She is an optometric technician by training and was teaching in one of the clinics. I met her in the fall at a back-to-school party, and we got married a year later. So I have very, very fond memories of UAB.”

Shortly after completing the residency program, Weisbarth accepted a job as a clinical research optometrist with CIBA Vision, a contact-lens company based in Atlanta. He remains with the company today and currently holds the position of vice president, global head of professional development and partnerships—a position that keeps him on the move around the world.

“I am totally convinced that I ended up working for a contact-lens company solely as a result of having that residency program at UAB on my résumé,” Weisbarth says. “I believe very strongly in residency programs, primarily because I wouldn’t have had the opportunities that I have been afforded, even in terms of getting involved in the Academy, had it not been for the residency program. I have sent many students to UAB simply by speaking so highly of residency programs and what they can do to your education and to enhance your career.”

While he was at UAB, Weisbarth attended the Academy’s annual meeting for the first time. He quickly became heavily involved in the organization and by the mid-1990s was a member of the Academy’s board of directors.

Lois Schoenbrun, the executive director of the American Academy of Optometry, says Weisbarth’s dedication to the organization is more obvious than ever now that he is president. “Dr. Weisbarth is delightful to work with. He seeks constant improvement in everything we do,” Schoenbrun says. “When he became president, right off the bat he said, ‘Let’s review the strategic plan and set new goals, so we have some direction for the future.’ He is very much focused on where we are going. He’s already moved the organization forward in some specific ways: We’ve conducted a review of our strategic plan and set new goals, we are improving our communications within the organization and within the optometric profession, and we’re taking a look at how we evaluate our education so we can continue to provide the best possible eye- and vision-care education. He is an amazingly hard worker and a wonderful multitasker. And he keeps it organized. He just accomplishes so much.”

Increasing Awareness

One of Weisbarth’s primary goals for 2008 is to expand membership in the Academy. He says that while the American Academy of Optometry is primarily an education and research organization, most of the members are optometrists in private practice. “A lot of people don’t know that. There is a perception that the Academy is all about research,” Weisbarth says. “What we’re trying to do is really change that perception. So growing the membership by building awareness is one of the priorities. I want to grow our membership by building practitioner, student, and educator awareness of the Academy.”

Of course, while attempting to achieve all these goals, Weisbarth also has a full-time job with CIBA Vision that requires him to travel to many of the company’s offices, which are located in 40 countries.

“I’ve discovered that sleep is very overrated,” Weisbarth says with a laugh. “I’m very fortunate in that I work with a fantastic group of people who are very supportive. They will allow me to wear my Academy hat, and they pick up the slack for me wearing my full-time-job hat. It wouldn’t be possible without my colleagues at CIBA Vision. They’ve been a tremendous support network. It’s just a matter of me being very organized and delegating and asking others for help. There are a lot of long hours, but it’s worth it.”
Dear Alumni and Friends,

It is with great sadness that I write this message. The School of Optometry lost one of its most loyal and dedicated employees earlier this year. Eydie Jones passed away on January 9, 2008. Although Eydie had been challenged by illness for more than a decade, she showed remarkable courage and always had a smile on her face and a positive attitude. As prolonged as her illness was, it never was what defined her.

From 1971 until her retirement in September 2001, Eydie was involved in the Office of Student Affairs and in the lives of the optometry students. She, perhaps more than any other, is the person many alumni remember and ask about. Almost every student who attended the UABSO during those years has a story or special memory of Eydie and some kindness she extended or deed she performed. In her own unique way, Eydie Jones influenced eye care in the state of Alabama and the entire Southeast. The success of former UABSO students was of great satisfaction to Eydie, and she took immense pride in each of their accomplishments.

Beyond her life at the school, Eydie was for many years a single mother raising two sons. She took great delight in sharing “Henry and Michael” stories and was very proud of their achievements. She later married Dr. John Jones, UAB’s first vice president for student affairs. In addition to her work and life as a mother and wife, she managed to earn a degree in business from UAB. She was also active in various student-affairs organizations at the state, regional, and national levels. She served on and chaired the student-recruitment committee for the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry. During this service she developed and produced a student-recruitment video that was utilized widely within the profession.

Eydie served the school as administrative assistant for student affairs, director of marketing and alumni affairs and later as director of student and alumni affairs. There is certainly no question she had a profound effect on the life of the school, the students, alumni, and ultimately eye care.

At her retirement, the UABSO Alumni Association named a student room in the new UAB Eye Care in her honor. Eydie’s husband John and sons Henry and Michael established the Eydie C. Jones Endowed Scholarship in 2006 to assist deserving students. I can think of no greater honor to Eydie’s memory than contributing to the scholarship that bears her name. To make a donation to the scholarship, contact Peggy Striplin at (205) 934-9838 or striplin@uab.edu.

Eydie Jones attended the 2004 UABSO graduation ceremony with her husband, John.

Eydie is pictured with UABSO dean John F. Amos outside the room named in her honor at the 2004 dedication of the renovated Henry Peters Building.
In Memoriam

A Message from Eydie Jones’s Family

Many of you reading this know the simple “CV-story” about our mom and the UAB School of Optometry, including her 30 years of service to UAB and to the school. However, the UABSO and its students, faculty, and staff meant so much more to her than just a rewarding career.

Mom began something at the school that she had never had before—a professional life. She started on this journey as a single mother raising two very young and rambunctious boys (a whopping understatement, as many of you know firsthand from her stories). Her entire family lived far away, in her rural Pennsylvania hometown, so Mom, the school, and her boys grew together over the next 30 years.

More to the point, the school not only allowed Mom to grow, but encouraged and fostered her growth as she worked more than 10 years toward earning a bachelor’s degree in business from UAB, one class at a time, nearly every quarter. This wonderful support continued as the school—and Mom—evolved and blossomed together.

After she was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in November 1995, the school stood by her as she successfully faced this challenge—through three stem-cell transplants and multiple trips over the years to her transplant center at the Myeloma Institute for Research and Therapy in Little Rock, Arkansas. This simply would not have been possible without the support and sacrifice of her colleagues at the school and at UAB.

We have been fortunate to discover that Mom was a prolific journal writer, which helped me write this. I have learned that the school was, in a deep way, a formative part of her life and meant more to her than these words can convey.

Thank you.

Henry and Michael Cornelius

Jody Simmons
Preparing for a Career In a Demanding Profession

It’s not uncommon for friends of Jody Simmons to experience double vision. “I have an identical twin sister who is currently a student at the Indiana University School of Optometry,” explains Simmons. “I enjoy being able to call her and get a different perspective of how her optometry program works. We often bounce ideas off each other in regards to our future practice goals.”

Simmons, who will graduate from the UABSO in May, always planned on a career in health care. But after seeing the lifestyles of female physicians she had followed, she decided medical school was not her dream. “During my freshman year at Samford, I shadowed an optometry student who was from my hometown of Evansville, Indiana,” says Simmons. “I fell in love with optometry and knew it was the profession I wanted to pursue.”

Since arriving at the UABSO, Simmons says she has benefited from interacting with students from other disciplines. “The most rewarding part of studying at UAB is knowing I will have an education from one of the best optometry schools in the nation,” she says. “The newly renovated clinic has allowed me to work with the most state-of-the-art equipment available today. It’s great to be able to practice and learn in a facility where we know we are giving patients the very finest eye care available.”

In her first three years at the school, Simmons held many leadership positions, including president of her class, vice president of the American Optometric Student Association, and co-founder of the Gold Key Honor Society. “Time management has been critical, but all of those activities have been important parts of my overall experience here,” she says.

Simmons says one of the biggest challenges facing optometrists today is the rapidly changing technological landscape. “Electronic medical records have been a significant change over the past decade,” she says. “Also, the OCT, GDx, and HRT that we use on a daily basis at the UABSO are becoming more common in private practices throughout America.”

In her spare time, Simmons enjoys running, cycling, golfing, and reading. Her future goals include “becoming an associate for a successful doctor and building a solid patient base,” she says.
An elderly woman who had worn glasses for much of her life found herself looking forward to a change. Her current frames had grown uncomfortable, they were out of style, and she was sure her vision had worsened in recent months, so she went into her annual eye exam anticipating a much-needed change—only to leave disappointed.

The reason? She thought the doctor told her not to change her glasses. Trouble is, the doctor told her no such thing. “In my early years of practicing optometry, I would examine older patients, and if there wasn’t much change in their vision that would significantly increase their prescription, I would tell them that they didn’t need new glasses,” says Dewey Handy, O.D., a 1979 graduate of the UAB School of Optometry who now practices in Jackson, Mississippi. “A year later they would come back, and I would find out that they hated their glasses, but they thought I had told them they couldn’t change. Of course, I never told them that, but they misinterpreted ‘they didn’t have to change’ as ‘they couldn’t change.’ I think as patients get older, they rely more and more heavily on what their doctors tell them, so I have had to learn to be very literal in my explanations.”

That example shows just one of many subtle lessons optometrists and other physicians must pick up in order to build successful doctor-patient relationships—relationships which, in turn, can determine the success of a practice.

People Versus Pocketbooks

“After 32 years of practice, I have noticed that the optometrists (and ophthalmologists) who have the most successful practices are not necessarily the most skilled—but patients they say, but, as in the case with Handy’s patients, how their comments might be perceived. To develop a sense of how a patient might interpret comments, a doctor has to be sensitive to a number of factors. Is the patient older or younger? Are patients primarily from an urban or rural environment? Educated or uneducated? Without some sensitivity to a patient’s background, an optometrist may have trouble “speaking the patient’s language.”

“Some communication techniques are learned, but most are natural,” says Paula Newsome, O.D. (’81). “From day one, I have prided myself on taking complex topics and making them easy to understand. I practice in a downtown market in Charlotte, North Carolina, however, so many of our patients are from an urban setting. I’m sure it would be different if we were in another environment. The examples I would use to explain things would be different, because the patient needs to relate easily to what you’re saying.”

Communication also comes naturally to Carter—partly because he practices near his hometown, in the same county where his parents were raised. “I’m in a small town in a rural area near to where I graduated high school,” says Carter, who practices in Hamilton, Alabama. “So, in many ways, the people here are my people. However, people everywhere have a higher level of sophistication now than in years past, so I believe communication with them about optometry would be the same regardless of setting. The big difference between my patients and urban patients is in the small talk, the chitchat. I can talk with them about topics that might not translate well in an urban setting, and I think the small details that come out in those conversations help shape a patient’s view of their
doctor—how comfortable they are, how much trust they give, and how much they feel the doctor cares for them as a person versus a pocketbook.”

**Failure to Communicate**

Connecting with patients on a personal level may be vitally important to a doctor’s image and to a practice’s patient retention, but that personal relationship means little if the patient doesn’t understand the message the doctor is trying to send.

“While still in optometry school, I was approached at my sister’s wedding by a woman in tears,” Carter says. “She had taken her daughter to an optometrist for examination and had been told the young girl had ‘astigmatism.’ The doctor had not explained the term, and the mother was distraught, because she had no idea what that term meant—she thought her daughter was going blind. I explained that astigmatism was simply an error in focusing and not a disease. But I learned a lesson—that the language I spoke as an optometrist was foreign to lay people and that I had a duty to make sure my patients understood the results of their exam.”

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of helping patients understand, Carter adds, is making sure they are actually listening. After all, he says, the clearest explanation in the world is useless if it falls on deaf ears. “I don’t believe I have ever lost a patient because of miscommunication, but I have retained patients after a misunderstanding by simply apologizing for not making myself clear. Technically, many of those cases were situations where I tried to get through and the patient simply did not pay attention, but even in those cases, I feel responsible when a patient doesn’t understand. Because of that, I definitely write down instructions more than I used to.”

“I am really shocked at how little most patients know about their eyes—even people who have had regular examinations,” agrees Karen Vanoy, O.D. (’97), who now practices in Gadsden, Alabama. “I realize that some patients don’t listen to a lot of what we say, but I also feel that many doctors are not taking the time to explain things properly. I have so many patients say ‘Well, no other doctor has ever explained that to me before,’ whether they are talking about eye disease or astigmatism. I am finding that patient education is a huge reason for patient retention in my practice. It may take a few extra minutes to explain things to them but they are grateful, and they tell other people about their experience.”

In most modern optometry practices, Vanoy explains, doctors must be able to handle large patient loads, a requirement that can create a frenetic, fast-paced environment—one where doctors will often depend on technicians and support staff to take care of many details. “In that environment, it’s sad when the patients end up being the ones who suffer,” she says. “Many doctors just don’t have the time to talk to their patients. Technicians can be great at patient education, but sometimes there is just no substitute for a patient hearing something out of the doctor’s mouth.”

**Patient Communication: A Student’s Perspective**

Wayne Stevens, a fourth-year optometry student from Ocala, Florida, recently discussed his perspective on patient-communication issues.

**UAB Optometry:** Considering how much time is devoted to learning the science behind optometry, the procedures you have to perform, and the diagnoses you have to make, have you given thought yet to how you communicate with patients?

**Wayne Stevens:** It didn’t take long to realize that I was not going to become an all-knowing, masterful clinician overnight. I did, however, realize that my patients did not have to know that. None of my patients will know if I performed gonioscopy perfectly; nor will they fully appreciate the decision-making process that may be involved in treating their glaucoma. They will know, though, if they were treated right, and that’s what will bring them back next year with their family and friends.

**UAB Optometry:** What are some of the more difficult challenges you’ve faced in clinic in terms of communication with patients?

**WS:** Silent diseases such as glaucoma do not automatically spur the patient into a diligent care routine, due to the lack of concrete symptoms experienced by the patient. It is up to the clinician to really stress how important it is to be diligent with the prescribed treatment to control the disease process, and I have often found it difficult to really impress this upon the patient to improve compliance.

**UAB Optometry:** What impressed you about optometrists you have seen as a patient?

**WS:** The optometrist who inspired me to become an optometrist always made my eye exams a wonderful experience. She took the time to do some friendly chatting and always seemed to have an uncanny memory about my family and things we had talked about in the past (no doubt aided by a few notes in my chart). She also took the time to make some simple explanations of the procedures she performed and of the data she collected. As a teenager, I could have told you what my IOP was, and I thought that was pretty cool!
Over the years, UAB School of Optometry students have examined thousands of patients—many of whom never have set foot on campus.

While it is true that UAB students treat thousands of patients every year in the school’s state-of-the-art clinics at UAB Eye Care, thousands more are treated in locations throughout Birmingham and the surrounding metropolitan area. Whether through screenings at schools or community events or by appointments at local county health centers, the school has long demonstrated a commitment to making quality eye care accessible.

“Years ago, we started doing pediatric screenings at day cares and schools, but over the past decade, we have seen that evolve into a situation where we are now able to deliver comprehensive eye care,” says Felton Perry, O.D. (’74), director of the UABSO’s Community Eye Care program. “It’s important for people to know that we are in their communities and that we can offer them first-time examinations and follow-up examinations.”

A Long History

The UABSO’s Community Eye Care program started in 1973, with faculty and interns providing screenings in conjunction with the Jefferson County Head Start Program. As it grew, that program began to get requests from nutrition centers and senior-citizen centers, and an adult-screening program was added to the services that the school offered. Through these screenings, the program began to see patients throughout the Birmingham area and in surrounding counties. “We responded to health-fair and career-day requests, but
we also got many requests from physicians who wanted us to do eye exams for their patients with diabetes and hypertension," says Perry. "It quickly became clear that there were large numbers of patients who were being referred to optometrists but either would not or could not go, because there was no eye care offered in their community."

A prime example, Perry says, was north Birmingham. "That really was an isolated community in terms of eye care until about seven years ago, when the health department asked us to come in," he says. "We set up an exam room in the old X-ray room at the Northern Health Clinic, so we now are able to do complete exams there. If we find anything that needs additional treatment, we may have to send them somewhere else, but at least we can provide a full examination to identify or rule out those more serious problems."

From that beginning, the school was able to reach other parts of the community, establishing similar sites at the Jefferson County health clinics in Ensley and Bessemer. Soon after, the program responded to an invitation from the United Cerebral Palsy Center and began offering services at its facility, first at its downtown location and then at its new LINCPoint location off Lakeshore Drive in Homewood.

**Lasting Benefit**

One of the program’s most recent endeavors involves sending optometry interns into the Black Belt counties as part of the school’s Rural Alabama Diabetes and Glaucoma Initiative (RADGI). The initiative is conducting research into diabetes and glaucoma in rural areas while bringing much-needed eye care to those underserved parts of the state. "That gets a little further out than the places we normally go, but we are making an effort to free up interns for one- or two-day trips," says Perry. "There is a mutual benefit to all these community projects. Our students are getting valuable experience treating diverse patient groups, and they’re delivering care to places that are underserved, if not totally unserved."

RADGI is led by Mary Jean Sanspree, Ph.D., a research professor in the UAB Vision Science Research Center. But while the project’s primary focus is research into diabetes and glaucoma, Perry says the UABSO and the Community Eye Care program are especially sensitive to providing a lasting benefit to the communities where people are participating in the study. "Groups have gone into a lot of communities over the years to do research, and when they have found what they were looking for, they leave," says Perry. "We want to be in these communities for as long as there is a need for our services."

Optometry students Micahel Dasinger and Carrie Bonds (top right) and Elizabeth Page (bottom) gain experience with diverse groups of patients by working with the Community Eye Care program.
About the School
News from In, Around, and Beyond UAB

Alumni of the Year Danny Hartzog ('76) accepted his honor in the presence of his wife Emily and daughter Holle. Son Shea was unable to attend.

Steven Bowser, center, was awarded the Coshatt Scholarship, which was funded by UABSO alumni. Congratulating Steven are incoming alumni president Melissa Hoercher ('95), and outgoing president Hamp Moore ('86).

Norman Johnson ('80) visits with speaker Dudley Reynolds. They were colleagues in Leadership Alabama in 2001.

The new alumni board includes Marty Habel ('78), Melissa Hoercher ('95), Hamp Moore ('86), and Jill Helton ('98).

Alumni Breakfast
The annual meeting of the UABSO Alumni Association was held last November in conjunction with the Alabama Optometric Association conference in Birmingham. Dudley Reynolds, president and chief operating officer of Alabama Gas Corporation, spoke to the group about the influence of optometry and optometrists in his life and how those experiences led him to a position on the Dean’s Community Advisory Committee and to facilitate the endowment of a scholarship to the school by Energen/Alagasco.

At the convention, the school also honored Danny Hartzog, O.D. ('76), with the Alumnus of the Year Award and announced second-year student Steven Bowser as the winner of the Dr. Elbert A. “Bert” Coshatt Alumni Scholarship.

Other business included electing a new slate of officers for the coming year. The new officers for 2008 are president Melissa Hoercher ('95), president-elect Jill Helton ('98), secretary/treasurer Greg Jackson ('88), past-president Hamp Moore ('86), and members-at-large Marty Habel ('78), Joel Jenkins ('83), Tim Nichols ('81), Kim Dunagan ('96), Julie Blake ('05), Ernie Bowling ('90), JoAnn King ('83), and Mike Hooks ('83). As always, it was a morning of sleepy yet convivial fellowship among the alumni of the UAB School of Optometry.

Joe Fleming ('91) holds the attention of fellow faculty members Tim Kraft and Mike Loop during breakfast.

New faculty member Lei Liu chats with Marty Habel ('78) after the breakfast meeting.
Charles Kinney named President of NCOS

Charles H. Kinney, O.D. ('81), of Eden, North Carolina, was recently named president of the North Carolina Optometric Society. Upon graduation from the UABSO, Kinney entered private practice while simultaneously serving a three-year tour as the reserve liaison officer at Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina. Prior to optometry school, he flew out of Cherry Point as a marine aviator for a number of years.

At the end of his tour of duty in 1985, he moved his practice to Eden, North Carolina, and in 1986 joined a group of clinicians forming Doctors Vision Center. Kinney has been a member of the North Carolina State Optometric Society for 25 years and has served as trustee for three years and as vice president of the society. He also sits on numerous other boards.

Kinney is a father of nine, and his son Micah is following in his footsteps as a second-year student at the UABSO. Kinney enjoys practicing optometry and the challenges it presents. “It may not be as exhilarating as a night carrier landing, but the rewards are just as great. I try as hard as I can to promote and protect what we have accomplished over the last 25 years. Keep up the good work at the UABSO, producing outstanding practitioners and great citizens representing a superb institution.”

Clark Amos Award

The Clark F. Amos Endowed Presidential Scholarship is awarded annually to a student or students planning a career in optometric education. The 2007 scholarship was given to Keri Bounous, a fourth-year student from Derby, Kansas; Pamela Shepard, a fourth-year student from Collinsville, Alabama; and Abigail Jackson, a fourth-year student from Omaha, Nebraska.

Vendor Reception

The end of the year is a great time to show appreciation to those who support the work and projects of the UAB School of Optometry. The annual Vendor Appreciation Meeting is one way we acknowledge these vendors and donors.
About the School
News from In, Around, and Beyond UAB

NAS Dean’s Scholarship Winners
The NAS Dean’s Scholarship, a new scholarship funded by the UAB National Alumni Society, provides $2,000 each year to each school/discipline on campus, to be awarded at the discretion of the dean. Steven Bowser and Will McGriff, both second-year students, were this year’s recipients for the School of Optometry. A luncheon was held to honor the recipients. Congratulations to these fine future optometrists.

Washington Dinner
The UAB National Alumni Society hosted an alumni dinner in Washington, D.C., recently. Each school on campus was encouraged to invite alumni to the dinner for an enjoyable evening. Tuan Quang Duong (’92), of Falls Church, Virginia, joined Peggy Striplin for an evening at the Washington Press Club.

CIBA/Caplan Scholarship
The Dr. Lester Caplan/CIBAVision Endowed Scholarship was awarded this year to five deserving students. Every year this award acknowledges excellence in contact lens education. This year’s winners are Caleb Gardner, a fourth-year student from Greenville, Alabama; Pamela Shepard, a fourth-year student from Collinsville, Alabama; Ryan Wally, a fourth-year student from McComb, Mississippi; Brian Mahalak, a fourth-year student from Roscommon, Michigan; and Matt Harper (not shown), a fourth-year student from Valdosta, Georgia.

GOA Gift to UABSO
The Georgia Optometric Association (GOA) presented UABSO dean John F. Amos with a gift to the school for assistance given the association as it worked to get better therapeutic drug laws passed by the Georgia Legislature. Shown presenting a commemorative plaque to Amos are Georgianne Bearden, executive vice president and director of the GOA, and John B. Whitlow (’91), president of the GOA.

UABSO Dispensary Named Crizal Eyecare Practice of the Year
The UAB School of Optometry is the proud recipient of the Crizal Eyecare Practice of the Year Award for 2007. This award was given to UAB Eyecare by Optical Prescription Laboratory for having the highest percentage of anti-reflective sales among all of their customers. This increase in sales has been a direct result of UABSO’s outstanding students, opticians, and staff. Congratulations, UABSO! Fourth-year students Kennedy Walker of Selma, Alabama and Carrie Haare of Louisville, Kentucky, and Dispensary Supervisor Michele Self proudly display the Crizal award.
Faculty Focus

Fourth-year students Jody Simmons and Heather White visit with Dr. Irving Borish at the UABSO Alumni Reception held during the American Academy of Optometry meeting.

New fellows Keshia Elder ('98) and Kate Osborn ('06) celebrate their achievements together at the alumni reception.

Kate Lanier ('07), Michelle Anderson ('06 Resident), and Matt Motteler ('06) enjoy the relaxed mood of the reception.

Nancy Wiggins ('91) and Gene Harrison ('91) shared old stories and new information.

Timothy Gawne, Ph.D.
Cracking the Neural Code

Timothy Gawne, Ph.D., spends his days searching for answers. A neuroscientist with the UABSO Department of Vision Sciences and the Vision Science Research Center, he says he finds his career fulfilling and challenging. “Right now I’m studying how the different parts of the visual system work together, especially the visual cortex. I’m particularly interested in figuring out the neural code—in other words, how we should interpret the signals that neurons send to each other. For all we know about the brain, we still don’t know what the code is. Neurons send signals to each other via brief pulses called ‘action potentials,’ but we haven’t determined what these pulses really mean. It’s a bit like recognizing that a language uses the letters A through Z, but not knowing any vocabulary or grammar. Cracking the neural code would be an achievement on a par with discovering the genetic code. It would tell us in detail what the basis of the mind is.”

Gawne, who received a B.S. degree in electrical engineering from MIT, was employed briefly as a software engineer before pursuing his graduate degrees. “I worked at the now-defunct Digital Equipment Corporation in Marlboro, Massachusetts,” he explains. “It was a lot of fun, and I liked the people there, but working as a professional engineer means staying focused on a narrow task. I was going to be assigned a job writing diagnostic software routines for a specific model of magnetic tape drive, and I didn’t want to spend a year doing that. So I got a Ph.D. in physiology from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and started my research career.”

“This is a great job,” Gawne adds. “It can be frustrating at times, because if a project doesn’t pan out, nobody cares how hard you worked on it. Nevertheless, there really aren’t many jobs where you can follow your own ideas.”

Even though he has chosen a very specialized path, Gawne says he has found his niche with the Department of Vision Sciences. “There is an excellent group of vision researchers and neuroscientists here. We have a first-ranked optometry school that not only prepares students for clinical work, but also gives them a basic science background so they can teach and do research.”

As for what lies ahead, “I plan to continue working on a National Science Foundation-funded project involving mechanisms of stimulus selection in the visual cortex and revamp my optometry course for the revised curriculum.”

When he’s not conducting research, Gawne enjoys carpentry, walking, and keeping in touch with his two children. His son, Andy, 21, is working on a mechanical engineering degree, while his daughter, Elizabeth, 18, plans a career in anthropology. But work is never far from his thoughts. “Being able to follow your own interests is a precious thing to have,” he says. “It’s a privilege to be paid to do this.”
Recently I attended funeral services for a young woman named Cynthia who had been an optician at Baldwin Eye Clinic. Cynthia’s passing saddened me beyond the loss of a co-worker, in that I had been abruptly made to realize how, on a daily basis, I had failed to know this person. The truth is, I had missed her more during her living than I will in her passing.

Who among your staff have you “missed?” As optometrists, we rely on the daily contributions of people without whom we could not realize success. Cynthia was always productive, in place and on time, diligent and reliable. Her illness was never a factor in her work until she could no longer work. I don’t think any of us expected that cancer was defeating this quiet contributor. Did I express to her my appreciation for jobs well done?

I’ve made efforts to thank the people in my life who have believed in me, the many role models who’ve impressed me and encouraged my growth. Have I similarly acknowledged the people that I may influence?

In his book *You Don’t Need a Title to Be a Leader*, Mark Sanborn encourages readers to give thought to their legacies. He warns not to confuse “resume skills” with “leadership skills.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Résumé</th>
<th>Legacy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What you’ve accomplished</td>
<td>What you’ve contributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The money you’ve made</td>
<td>The difference you’ve made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impression you leave</td>
<td>The impact you have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your career</td>
<td>Your organization, family, community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-improvement</td>
<td>Helping others improve</td>
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We each impact our contemporaries. We have the capacity to influence and encourage others. There are endless opportunities to contribute our talents and our money to our profession. Why not think about our contributions in terms of their lasting effects?

Relationships bless us. Becoming part of an organization and participating in a collective good enriches us. Start today to build your legacy by making a difference in the lives of those around you.

Don’t just walk through life—leave footprints.

_Melissa Hoercher, O.D._
President, UABSO Alumni Association

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**Alumni Board Profiles**

**Julia M. Blake, O.D.**

After finishing her undergraduate work at Auburn and then getting her veterinary technician license, Julie M. Blake, O.D. (’05), began working in the Animal Resources Program at UAB, where she met Tim Gawne, Ph.D., of the Vision Science Research Center. Knowing Blake eventually wanted to get out of the laboratory setting, Gawne encouraged her to apply to the UABSO. “I couldn’t believe I was working only a couple of blocks away from the number one optometry school in the nation. Once I began coursework it was obvious I had finally found my true passion,” Blake says.

Becoming a member of the Alumni Association and then serving on the board allows Blake an opportunity to give back to the school. “It offers me a way to see that the UABSO remains at the top.”

Blake still practices in Birmingham, where she also enjoys spending time with her husband, Michael, and three-year-old son, Ethan.

**Joel Jenkins, O.D.**

Currently the board’s only member practicing outside Alabama, Joel Jenkins, O.D. (’83), works in Athens, Georgia, where he started Jenkins Vision Care 20 years ago. Jenkins earned a bachelor’s degree in physiological optics in 1981 and earned his optometry degree two years later.

Throughout his career, Jenkins has remained heavily involved in charitable vision care. Since 1996, he has participated in a dozen international eye-care mission trips.

In addition to the board of the UABSO Alumni Association, Jenkins is also a member of the Oxford College of Emory University’s alumni board. He is married to Ingrid Jenkins. They have two daughters, Clio, 17, and Katarina, 14.

“I chose to attend UAB primarily because of its proximity to my home state of Georgia,” Jenkins says. “Only later did I realize that I had graduated from the best optometry school in the country. UAB needs the support of all its alumni to help maintain its outstanding position and to remain affordable for the high-quality students the school attracts.”
During his senior year at the University of Alabama, David Duval, O.D., received a letter that changed his life. “It was from Dr. Henry Peters, who was recruiting for the second class at the UAB School of Optometry,” says Duval. “He asked if I would like to come for an interview.”

Duval took out a Tuscaloosa phone book and called William Lary, O.D., to ask about optometry as a profession and got a glowing recommendation. “Having worn glasses since age 15,” Duval says, “I had some experience with optometrists and thought it sounded like an interesting career, so I met with Dr. Peters and was accepted into the next class. Maybe it was an omen—I had done my final science project in high school on the eye.”

Duval, who majored in pre-med with hopes of becoming a pediatrician, soon knew he’d made the right choice. “I found optometry and the medical center to be both interesting and challenging. We were extremely well prepared when we graduated in 1974, and I have always been proud of the administration, faculty, students, and facilities. I also look forward each year to the UAB alumni reception at SECO, the summer meeting at Sandestin, and our annual fall gathering in Birmingham,” says Duval, who worked briefly in Foley, Alabama, before opening a clinic in his hometown of Mobile in 1976.

“I’ve now been in private practice in Mobile for more than 31 years, and I became a partner in EyeCare Associates Inc. about 10 years ago,” says Duval, who also provides optometry services one day a week at the U.S. Coast Guard Medical Clinic. “I have a staff of three, and we provide vision care for all ages, including contact-lens care, pre- and postoperative care, refractive surgery co-management, diabetic eye care, treatment of medical eye conditions, sports vision, and low-vision consultations.

“Our patients are our friends, we treat them as family, and it’s gratifying to serve them both visually and medically in ways that affect their everyday lives,” adds Duval. “We try to exceed their expectations as to what eye care should be. This is the way I was taught at UABSO, and with the administration and faculty there now, I know today’s young optometrists are definitely well prepared in eye and patient care.”

Duval says things have changed dramatically since starting his practice more than three decades ago. “In the beginning, we could not see Medicare patients, we used a Mackay-Marg tonometer because we couldn’t put an anesthetic drop in a patient’s eye, we couldn’t treat conjunctivitis or remove foreign bodies from the cornea, and all patients paid in cash, because there was no vision or medical eye insurance.”

Duval, the state representative to the National Professional Committee of Vision Service Plan for 12 years, has also served as a keyperson to the American Optometric Association National Congressional Conference held annually in Washington, D.C. In his spare time, he and his wife, Bonnie, enjoy exercising, traveling, and attending baseball and basketball games at the University of South Alabama. The Duvals recently celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary, as well as becoming the proud grandparents of Jackson Scott McCoy of Atlanta.
### 2007 Paid Alumni Dues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Names</th>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Ronald E. Dachelet, Michael E. Raim, Bernard Scott</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>James W. Andrews, David N. Bazemore, Charles J. Brazeal, Jeanine Cariri, Michel J. Gambino, G. Rudy Golson, James W. Marbourg, Barry J. McNamara, Joseph Segree, Daniel I. Strait</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Freddie M. Mayes, William G. McMinnish, Bruce A. Perry, Terry G. Reynolds, Gary E. Roquemore</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>Kelly A. Blount, Michael B. Bradford, Mark S. Dickinson, Steven R. Fields, Frederick J. Jackson, Gregory S. Leet, Richard M. Murphy, Jeanne M. Perrine, Allan Rhodes, Alice Sterling, John Walters</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Ernest Lee Bowling, Christopher R. Deibert, Mashefiril F. Koonce, David Phillip LeRoux, Robin Lively Marbourg, Kimberly K. Reed, Derrell Ray Spurlock II, Chris D. Teichmiller, Russell L. Whately, Maurice E. Zadeh</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Gregory Chad Green, C. Wade Hyatt III, Michele P. Keel</td>
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</tbody>
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1993
Violeta Bancha Caceres
R. Wayne Cobb Jr.
Jimmie Jean Corley
John A. Essinger II
Michael Alvin Griffin
Parag Kanitkar
Thomas Floyd MacMillan
Susan Seay Richardson

1994
Lisa Land Schifanella
Michelle Reeves
Tammy H. Love
Susan Stowers Lee
Anna Lee Harned
Thomas Keith Boan
Wanda Cook Batson

1995
Jill S. Anderson
Karen P. Anderson
Joanne Lynn Bachman
Cliff M. Caudill
Robert Duvall
Sarah Freeman
Tamara Hester
Robert D. Hitt
Melissa Waldon Hoercher
Kenneth Andrew Lameier
Tracy F. Poling
Bethany Baker Lyn
John Mark Turner
Steve L. Sullins

1996
M. Sean Alexander
Melissa Ball
Steve C. Beaty
Paige T. Chambers
Carolyn Martin Chang
Kimberly Dunagan
Leslie Graham-Dooley
Nancy Ellen Herlevich
Christopher Howard
Norah L. Krol
Perry Kent Lee
Anita Lowe
Keith Lowe
Denise Mills
Jeffery Morrow
Lawrence N. Nicastro Jr.
Raphael Dixon Weeks

1997
Ian Benjamin Gaddie
Shaye Simpson Hurd
Timothy J. Leach
Marie C. Letson
Kye Lever Mansfield
Jana L. Morgan
Aubrey Alan Odom
Linda Slade
Amanda Ham Sie
Joseph Irwan Sie
Karen Smith Vanoy
Laura Arthur White

1998
Jennifer L. Alverson
Jill E. Barksdale
Paul D. Batson
Layle D. Boatwright
Keshia Sims Elder
Jeffery B. Ford
Mollie Butler Glenn
A. Jill Helton
Jimmy R. Hollis
Andrea Beavers Hudson
Michael M. Kwarcinski
Steven R. Landreth
Lisa M. Meadows
Jon G. Milano
Malory Sanderfur Roberts
W. Derrick Thornton
Kimberly D. Walters
William C. Womble

1999
G. Michael Hanners
Brandy E. Hicks
Lance Long
Jennifer Fishel McMure
Timothy Matthew Meadows
Suzanne Slaughter Simms
Stephanie L. Tompkins

2000
Dana R. Agnes
Riley Austin
Kenny Blackston
Shinil Channappa
Anita Cranford
Vivianie Freeman
Helen Chandler Fure
Smitesh Patel
Daren Patrick
Adam Shaikh
Matthew Sullivan
Eric Tidmore

2001
George Eischens
Karen E. Fisk
Clare Leonard
Loan Nguyen
David Parker
Michelle C. Parker
Susan Persall
Renae R. Weinick

2002
Philip Dunne Flynn
Jason Lee
Sally Wong Moore
Thomas Lyle Simmons
Geno Sissors
Angela Eileman Tennant
Ashley Rhyme Williams
Kenneth Reid Winton

2003
Chad Michael Belanger
Ryan James Brown
Lori Walker Couch
Bradley Steven Drake
Rachel Lewis Harvey
Bradley Neal Hines
Joyce Anderson McDonald
Brian R. Pettie
Dustin L. Reece
Elizabeth A. Steele
Zachary B. Steele* 
Sean M. Stevens
Dawn Dachelet Wilczek
Susan Yee

2004
Brigette Bailey
Ashley Holloway Bowers
Jeremy Campbell
Parisa Dudley
Shea Eagerton
Kristen Heck
Jennifer Gail Martin
Katie McCreary
Rich McCurdy
Lan Quang O'Donnell
Adria Porter
Hayden Powell
Amy Richardson Riggs
Abnous Abbey Sarfod
Paul Vandiver
Dan Wilder
Danielle Winzeler Williams
Audrey Brazeal Wood

2005
Sharon Shih Adhami
Julie M. Blake
Joni L. Gantt
Kimberly Barnes Lewis
Katie Bond McCurdy
Lori Akridge McStoots
Kreslyn B. Odum
Jessica A. Palmer
Amanda P. Paul
Kelly Armstrong Smith
Tom Streeter
Alexia Vaughn
Megan Boyle Walker
Rick Williams
Lauri Frazier Wyatt
Yu Zhao

2006
Brian Atkinson
Alexandria A. Bahl
Jason D. Blankenship
Brandy M. Carroll
Shelly B. Chumbler

Ahn Q. Chung
Jackie Collins
Inder Dhallwal
Tara L. Foltz
Neil W. Hutto
Jacob A. Ivey
Amanda Howard Jacobs
Stephanie N. Johnson
J. Michael Johnson
Ben Kachelman
Leah Patterson Kirkemier
Justin D. Lane
Karen R. Larson
Allison Lord
Shannon Potts Mattson
Angela MacDonald
Zach McCarry
Matt Motteler
Kim Ocampo
Kate Osborn
Anjali Patel
Keith A. Pawlish
Sara Dennis Pehlps
Alan R. Pradillo
Kristen F. Pumphrey
Zachary T. Pumphrey
Justin R. Sasser
Anita Saxena
Thomas J. Schell
Sharon M. Streeter
Blane L. Tarr
Kimberly N. Thomas
Loan T. Vo
Jessica B. Walk
Chandra M. Williams
M. Seth Williams

Residents
Kimberly Benigno
Angela N. Berghoff
Christopher J. Colburn
Michael Conklin
Jon L. Forchê
Patti W. Fuhr
Clarissa Dawn Glover-Danque
L. Shepard Harrick
Caroline Beesley Pate
Marias Rossini
John R. Scibal
Leonard M. Thorschwill
Richard E. Wesibarth
Katherine Niemann Weise

Graduate Students
John M. Laurent
Steven H. Schwartz
Michael Wesson

Friends
John F. Amos
Lester Caplan
Nadine Forchê
Sidney I. Greenberg
Karen Kanitkar
Wilburn Lord Jr.
Charles Nelson
Richard W. Phillips
Peggy Striplin

*Lifetime Member
Vision Matters

“I love working with color and texture. To create art, I have to be able to work with colors that are very close in value, and few things are as satisfying as being able to look at and appreciate a finished product.”

—Debbie Scott
Felter and juried member
of the Alabama Design and Craftsmen Guild

Patient of Lynn Hammonds, O.D. (’91), for XX years