



STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY®

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

13TH ANNUAL CAREER SYMPOSIUM

# Perspectives in Focus: Pioneering New Horizons in Optometry



**Sunday, March 23, 2025**  
**11:00am - 5:00pm**



# WELCOME



Hi Attendees,

We are thrilled to welcome you to our 13th Annual Career Symposium, "Perspectives in Focus: New Horizons in Optometry." Since October, our dedicated committee of staff and students has been working hard to bring this event to life, and we're so excited to have you join us!

Throughout the day, we hope you enjoy engaging with our panelists during the sessions and connecting with employers at the in-person job fair. Be sure to take advantage of our complimentary headshots and enter our exciting raffle for a chance to win great prizes such as an iPad or noise cancelling headphones.

Thank you for being part of this special event. We hope you have a fantastic experience!

  
Deborah Wang, O.D.  
Director of Career Development

## 13TH ANNUAL CAREER SYMPOSIUM PERSPECTIVES IN FOCUS: PIONEERING NEW HORIZONS IN OPTOMETRY

### AGENDA

Activity	Time	Room
Registration/Breakfast	10:30 AM - 11:00 AM	3rd Floor
Introduction	11:00 AM - 11:15 PM	Schwarz Theater
Concurrent Session 1	11:20 AM - 12:20 PM	Various
Break/Professional Photo	12:25 PM - 12:55 PM 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM	3rd Floor 2nd Floor for Photo
Concurrent Session 2	1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Various
Student to Doctor Session	2:05 PM - 3:05 PM	Room 101 / 103
Job and Networking Fair	3:10 PM - 5:00 PM	3rd Floor
Reception and Raffle	3:10 PM - 5:00 PM	3rd Floor

### Concurrent Sessions

Activity	Pick One	
Concurrent Session 1	Shifting Perspectives: Trail-blazing through Different Modalities	Eye on Policy: Guiding Optometry Policies!
Concurrent Session 2	The Business of Vision: Building and Growing Your Optometry Practice	Acing the Recruitment Process
Final Session	Student to Doctor Panel	



# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

## Topic 1: Shifting Perspectives: Trailblazing Through Different Modalities

**Speakers:** Dr. Elsa Sheerer, Dr. Miriam Korik, Dr. Jennifer Hue and Dr. Quy Nguyen

Join us for an inspiring session as accomplished optometrists share their extraordinary career journeys. From navigating unconventional paths to redefining success in the field, their stories will highlight the diverse opportunities optometry offers. Discover how they overcame challenges, seized unexpected opportunities, and made a lasting impact on the profession. Whether you're exploring your own path or seeking fresh inspiration, this session will open your eyes to what's possible in optometry.

## Topic 2: Eye on Policy: Guiding Optometry Policies!

**Speakers:** Dr. Marina Su, Dr. Mark Parsons and Dr. Mark Veliky

This session equips participants to learn about shaping the future of optometry in New York and the Tri-State area through organized optometry. Participants will learn to advocate for their profession through local and state organizations, better understand scope of practice laws, and explore opportunities to enhance collaborative care models.

## Topic 3: The Business of Vision: Building and Growing Your Optometry Practice

**Speakers:** Dr. David Tai, Dr. Viola Kanevsky and Dr. Michael Wallerich

This session delves into the fundamentals of managing a successful optometry practice and the entrepreneurial mindset needed to grow it. Hear from seasoned optometrists who have navigated the journey of starting and expanding their own practices. Gain valuable insights into financial planning, patient acquisition, leadership, and innovation—all key elements for building a practice that not only succeeds but thrives in today's competitive landscape.

## Topic 4: Acing the Recruitment Process

**Speakers:** Ms. Allyns Melendez (Moderator), Dr. Michael Hosford, Dr. Patrick Curran, Dr. Joshua Rogers, Ms. Holly Tate and Ms. Briana Navarro

What do employers want in future optometrists? This interactive session connects you with hiring experts to get specific advice on taking your job application to the next level. Gain insider perspective into in-demand skills and key competencies that allow you to demonstrate unique value. This will immediately be followed by a networking session with the panelists. Come away with tailored recommendations to help you stand out from other applicants and put your best foot forward in today's competitive job market.

## Topic 5: Student to Doctor

**Speakers:** Dr. Travis Pfeifer, Dr. Rebecca Aquije and Dr. Julie Song

Join us for an insightful discussion on navigating the transition from student to practicing optometrist. This event will cover key aspects of early career development, including the shift from working in the UEC to various practice modalities such as hospitals and private practice. Participants will also gain valuable insights into the job search process, the power of networking, and strategies for balancing career growth with financial planning. Additionally, we'll explore the meaningful community outreach initiatives fellow ODs engage in and how you can get involved. Don't miss this opportunity to gain practical advice and connect with emerging ODs in the field!



# SPEAKERS



**Dr. Rebecca Aquije** received her doctorate from the SUNY College of Optometry in 2020 and was the recipient for the Dr. Max Cohen Memorial Award for Commitment to Community Service. She then completed the Irwin B. Suchoff Residency Program in Vision Therapy and Rehabilitation at SUNY College of Optometry. During her residency, she was the recipient of the Dr. Martin H. Birnbaum Memorial Award for Outstanding Knowledge and Skill in Behavioral Optometry.

When Dr. Aquije was a student, she worked at the New York Hall of Science which kindled her interest in biology. In addition, her personal experience with significant near-sightedness motivated her to pursue a career in optometry. Throughout her academic journey, Dr. Aquije developed a passion for vision therapy and rehabilitation, recognizing its transformative potential in enhancing lives. Aside from its impact, she enjoys the meaningful connections she is able to make with her patients. Her experience with her own vision resulted in a profound empathy for patients facing similar visual challenges.



**Dr. Saysha Blazier** received her bachelor of science in cell and molecular biology from Bradley University and her doctor of Optometry in 2011 from Southern California College of Optometry. In 2011 she moved to NYC, where she completed a residency in Low vision and Ocular Disease with the SUNY College of Optometry in partnership with Lighthouse International. Dr. Blazier served as Director of Low Vision Services and clinical instructor at University Hospital associated with Rutgers University Medical School and has published posters and papers for research in vision & ophthalmology. Dr. Blazier has been in private practice settings first in Jersey City, NJ and now Staten Island, NY since 2014. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and has served on both the NJSOP & NYSOA Board of Trustees, where she now serves as president elect for the NYSOA.

Dr. Blazier has always been very involved in volunteer leadership, serving as the president of the AOSA as a student, chaired the NYSOA clinical education and meetings committee and currently serves on the AOA Leadership Development Committee. She was honored as young optometrist of the year in 2015, Presidential Special Recognition award in 2018, and distinguished service award in 2019 for the New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians. She also received young optometrist of the year for the New York State Optometric Association in 2021 and was awarded the Young Optometrist of the Year for

the American Optometric Association in 2022. She currently serves as regional leader for PECAA + HEA in the NYC area and is passionate about helping develop future leaders of and for the profession.

Dr. Blazier resides on Staten Island and in her free time loves spending time with her family and dog and enjoying the outdoors as much as possible.



**Dr. Patrick Curran** is a partner optometrist in Johnson Curran Optometry in Roanoke, Virginia. Johnson Curran Optometry is a 6 office private practice that specializes in high volume primary care optometry. He graduated from the Indiana University School of Optometry in 2008 after serving externships in Pensacola, FL, Chicago, IL, and Louisville, KY. He received his biology degree from Augusta State University (GA) in 2004.

Dr. Curran practices general optometry, emphasizing disease diagnosis and treatment, contact lenses, dry eye disease, routine vision care services, and glasses. Dr. Curran also oversees Low Vision & Myopia Management Clinics. Dr. Curran is a member of the Board of Trustees within the Virginia Optometric Association as well as a member of the American Optometric Association.



**Dr. Michael Hosford** is a Senior Manager with EssilorLuxottica Licensed Recruiting and Professional Services. In this role, Dr. Hosford's team is responsible for the recruiting of Optometrists for nearly 500 practice locations in the Northeast region of the US. Dr. Hosford attended Michigan State University for his undergraduate work before earning his BS and Doctorate from the Michigan College of Optometry at Ferris State University.

Dr. Hosford started his career with EssilorLuxottica as a practicing Associate Optometrist. During his time with EssilorLuxottica, Dr. Hosford has expanded his career development and training as a practicing Optometrist to include roles in Market and Regional Operations Management, co-chair of the Optometric Advisory Council and as a Doctor Recruitment Specialist with the EyeCare team.

Dr. Hosford has a great passion for networking and most enjoys helping new and experienced Optometrists in their search for the right practice. His work also includes partnering with the EssilorLuxottica brand leaders and field teams to ensure the success and access of care to patient focused doctors who deliver personalized, quality care to their patients across many EssilorLuxottica practice locations.





**Dr. Jennifer Hue** is a graduate of SUNY College of Optometry. Dr. Hue earned her Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree, a Master of Vision Science (M.S.), and completed a Primary Eye Care residency. She is an Associate Clinical Professor at SUNY College of Optometry, where she supervises interns in primary care and specialty contact lens clinics. Dr. Hue also serves as the instructor of record for the Public Health course, International Programs Coordinator & Advanced Standing Director. Dr. Hue has demonstrated a deep commitment to international collaboration, successfully expanding SUNY's global partnerships to include institutions in China, France, South Africa, Australia, Nigeria, Spain, among other countries. Dr. Hue is driven by a vision of equitable access to eye care and education worldwide, which she continues to promote within her academic and professional roles.



**Dr. Viola Kanevsky** is a pediatric optometrist specializing in custom contact lenses, who has practiced on the Upper West Side for over 30 years. An émigré from the former Soviet Union, Dr. Kanevsky lived in Netanya, Brussels, and Miami, until her family settled in New York City in 1979. Many years later, having earned a BS from Pace University, a Doctorate from SUNY State College of Optometry, and raised a son and a daughter on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, she works and lives with her husband, foster refugee teenager, and Kerry Blue Terrier, in the neighborhood that she loves best.

She owes much to the community that fostered her personal happiness and professional success and tries to give back to it whenever she can. She is the immediate past President of the New York State Optometric Association and has served on its board in various capacities for several years; she has served as director of the Optometric Society of the City of New York; president of her residential coop board; vice president of the board of the Interscholar Orchestras of New York, an organization dedicated to providing musical education to children regardless of ability to pay; and trustee on the board of the Ilya and Emilia Kabakov Foundation and as such, produces benefit concerts for the Ship of Tolerance, an international art project whose goal is to promote tolerance amongst children of differing cultures.

Dr. Kanevsky supports the New York Youth Symphony and Concerts in Motion, an organization that brings music to homebound individuals. She is the president of the NY chapter of Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (VOSH) and has joined VOSH on medical missions to orphanages in Mexico,

Peru and Guatemala. An avid writer, Dr. Kanevsky enjoys lecturing, writing humorous articles about optometry, and has served as editor-in-chief of Insights, the monthly newsletter of OSCONY, and on the editorial boards of Women in Optometry and of ODsOnFB. In 2023, Dr. Kanevsky ranked #1 on Newsweek's list of America's Best Eye Doctors, was honored as Optometrist of the Year by the New York State Optometric Association, was chosen to be Alumna of the Year by SUNY College of Optometry, and received the Media Advocacy Award from the American Optometric Association.



**Dr. Miriam Korik** graduated from Salus University in 2020. She currently practices in NYC, at Park Slope Eye Optical Boutique and NYC Pupil. She is currently the Vice President of the Optometric Society City of New York. She hosts a podcast with Optometry Times called The You and Eye Podcast and holds a position on their editorial board. In her free time, she enjoys running and travel. Her focus is pediatrics and high end

optical.



**Ms. Allyns Melendez** Allyns brings over 25 years of expertise in human resources and business management. She holds a Master's in Business Administration from Temple University Fox School of Business and a Bachelor's Degree in Business & HR Management from Kaplan University. Additionally, Allyns is a certified analyst for two workplace behavior platforms, holds certifications in Human Resources Studies from Cornell's ILR School, and is a certified leadership and flow coach. She has completed courses in Leadership Strategies from Harvard Business School and Neuroscience for Business at MIT.

Driven by a passion for human capital and business strategy, Allyns assists businesses in understanding essential tactics for the development, training, education, and motivation of their employees. Currently serving as the CEO at HR Transformed and the COO at a national public relations firm, she also holds the position of a Professor of Continuing Education at Temple University. Allyns is fluent in English and Spanish, with conversational proficiency in Polish. She resides in Hudson Valley, New York, with her husband and three children. In her leisure time, she indulges in activities such as cycling, pilates, dance, cooking, and rock climbing with her children.





**Ms. Briana Navarro** is a Senior Manager of Talent Acquisition for Optometry at Warby Parker, where she has played a key role in supporting the growth of Optometrists in retail locations since 2018. Having started with the company in 2014, Briana's expertise and passion for talent acquisition have contributed to Warby Parker's success in building a dedicated and skilled team of Optometrists. Residing in Chicago, Briana balances her professional life with personal time spent gardening, reading, and enjoying quality moments with her children at the park.



**Dr. Quy Nguyen** is a dedicated professional with a proven track record in patient-centric care, fostering diversity in the field, and empowering future eye doctors.

Dr. Nguyen started his career as an eye care physician in hospital and ophthalmology private practice settings, caring for patients. Then as Executive Director of Career Development and Planning at SUNY College of Optometry, he managed a myriad of career development programs to support students, residents, and young alumni. In addition, he was also the Director of the CSTEP program and wrote and secured a grant (almost doubled from the previous grant) from the New York State Education Department to expand pipeline programs that increases the diversity of health care professionals.

Now in industry, his focus is on making a national impact by developing and scaling initiatives that support and elevate students and ODs. At VSP, he manages a team that provides support for all the colleges and schools of optometry. In addition, he is working to increase support for doctors in the profession, including managing a loan repayment program, expanding career support services, and launching for the first time, the VSP Future Leaders Academy, to help nurture and empower early-career optometrists into leadership.



**Dr. Mark Parsons** is a native of Syracuse, NY, is the lead optometrist at Rochester Regional Health's (RRH) Department of Ophthalmology. He brings extensive expertise, having completed his optometry training at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus University and an ocular disease residency at the Wilmington VAMC. Dr. Parsons' leadership extends to his role as founder and coordinator of RRH's ocular

disease residency and he currently serves as the President of the NYSOA. Recognized as both NYSOA Young Optometrist and Optometric Educator of the Year, he also demonstrates a commitment to global health through medical missions in Nicaragua and the development of eye care services with InterVol in Belize.



**Dr. Travis Pfeifer** is a clinical instructor at the SUNY College of Optometry in the contact lens, myopia management, and primary care clinics. After graduating from SUNY, Travis completed a cornea and contact lens residency also at SUNY. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and a frequent contributor to Review of Cornea and Contact Lens and EyeWitness.



**Dr. Joshua Rogers** is the Campus Relations Lead for National Vision. He graduated from The Illinois College of Optometry in 2016 and started his career with National Vision in Cleveland, OH before transferring to Buffalo, NY. Dr. Rogers joined as the Regional Recruiting Director for the Northeast for two years before taking on the role of Campus Relations. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and serves on the Membership Development Committee for American Optometric Association.



**Dr. Julie Song**, a native of Tempe, Arizona, earned her Doctor of Optometry degree from the SUNY College of Optometry, where she served as class president for four years and was a member of Beta Sigma Kappa. She remained at SUNY to complete a residency in Cornea and Contact Lenses and became a fellow in both the American Academy of Optometry and the Scleral Lens Education Society. Dr. Song was also the inaugural recipient of the Visionary in Eye Care Resident Recognition Award in the "Best in Optometry" category, sponsored by Optometry Times. Currently, Dr. Song serves on the GP Lens Institute Rising Stars Committee and is collaborating with contact lens industry. She has delivered COPE-approved lectures, presented at academic conferences, and published articles on cornea and specialty contact lenses in professional journals. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, working toward her reading goals on Goodreads, playing board games and puzzles, and spending time with friends.





**Dr. Elsa Sheerer** earned her Doctor of Optometry degree from SUNY College of Optometry in 2015. Prior to coming to SUNY, she graduated from The Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities. She started her optometric career as a SUNY Resident, completing the Pediatric and Infant Vision residency in 2016. Since then, Dr. Sheerer has worked in a variety of settings in New York City including private practice, luxury optical, OD/MD, and hospital practice. She currently practices at Acuity NYC, a private practice on the Upper West Side, and at Woodhull Medical Center, where she maintains a faculty position training students and residents. Dr. Sheerer continues to take a special interest in pediatrics in her practice. She also enjoys fitting specialty contact lenses, myopia management and orthokeratology, InfantSEE, and primary eye care for all ages.

Dr. Sheerer is involved with local and state optometric associations. In fact, she was honored to receive an award from the New York Optometric State Association for Excellent Communication in September 2021. She is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry. Outside of the exam lane, Dr. Sheerer enjoys cheering on the 2025 Football National Champion Buckeyes, weekend getaways, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and museum-going in New York City.



**Dr. Marina Su**, Dr. Marina Su is the Chief Operating Officer, Director of Optometry, Ocular Disease Residency Supervisor at Fromer Eye Centers. She is also an Adjunct Assistant Clinical Professor of SUNY College of Optometry.

Dr. Su earned her Doctor of Optometry degree from the Southern California College of Optometry. She completed her training at the Minnesota Eye Consultants in Minnesota, Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton in California, Whiteriver Hospital on the Apache Reservation in Arizona and the Vision Therapy, Pediatrics, Contact Lenses and Low Vision Clinics at the Eye Care Center in California. She then completed her residency in Ocular Disease with emphasis in co-managing anterior and posterior segment pathology, glaucoma, oculoplastics, strabismus, pediatrics, low vision and specialty contact lens fittings at Fromer Eye Centers in NY.

She provides comprehensive, co-management and medical eye care for all ages, including InfantSEE® exams, pediatrics, low vision, and specialty contact lenses fittings for ocular surface disease, keratoconus, irregular corneas and aphakia. She also fits custom-tinted/prosthetic contact lenses for patients with

ocular injuries or other ocular disorders.

Dr. Su is currently serving as Immediate Past President of the New York State Optometric Association (NYSOA), on the AOA's Leadership Development Committee and a consultant for the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE). She helped develop the NYSOA Young Advocate program and the NYSOA DEI task force in collaboration with SUNY College of Optometry, and served as NYSOA's first person of color as President. She was awarded NYSOA's Young Optometrist of the Year in 2017 and ranked on Newsweek's 50 Best Optometrists List for 3 years. She has also gone on multiple humanitarian trips including those in the United States, Mexico and Haiti.

She remains passionate about advocacy and actively advances health equity at all levels, while enjoying her time raising her three children with her husband in New York.



**Ms. Holly Tate**, With eight years of experience in optometrist recruitment, Holly Tate has successfully guided hundreds of optometry students into their first post-graduate roles. Passionate about educating future ODs on the job market and the career paths available to them, she takes pride in ensuring they make informed decisions about their futures.

Holly is especially excited to connect with SUNY College of Optometry students, sharing how MyEyeDr.'s full-scope practices, unmatched support, and exceptional compensation packages make it a premier choice for launching a rewarding career in optometry.



**Dr. Mark Veliky** has lectured extensively in the NY Metropolitan area and has previously played an integral role in Omni Eye Services' internship and residency programs. He was named New Jersey Society of Optometric Physician's "Young Optometrist of the Year" and selected as the New Jersey Society of Optometric Physician' Optometrist of the Year and presented with the society's Special Purpose Award for his work on the Legislative Committee.

Dr. Veliky graduated from Manhattan College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and completed his Optometry degree at The New England College of Optometry. After completing his residency at Omni Eye Services, he joined Omni as Center Director of the Rochelle Park office.



Dr. Veliky is a past President of the New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians, and has served as the Chair of the Legislative Committee for the past ten years. He serves as adjunct faculty at the New England College of Optometry, SUNY College of Optometry, Pennsylvania College of Optometry, University of Houston College of Optometry, Inter-American University of Puerto Rico School of Optometry, and UC Berkeley College of Optometry.

Dr. Veliky is a member of the American Optometric Association and President of the Bergen- Passaic Society of Optometric Physicians.



**Dr. Michael Wallerich** started his eyecare career in 2005 as an apprentice optician in his local eye clinic. He attended the University of Minnesota to earn his Bachelor of Biology and minored in Spanish. He graduated from SUNY-Optometry and Empire State College in 2017 with his Doctor of Optometry and Master of Business Administration degrees.

He pursued a Brain Injury Vision Rehabilitation residency at UC Berkeley-School of Optometry at the VA Palo Alto Healthcare System. Today, Dr. Wallerich owns/operates two corporate Target Optical locations, opened a cold start private practice, Swoop Eye Care, in his local community in 2023, owns a billing company called Visionary Billing Consultants, provides expert witness & medical-legal support for patients, provides consulting services for several ophthalmic industry companies, professional speaker for neuro-optometry topics, and continues to take on new entrepreneurial projects within the eyecare industry.



**Dr. Deborah Wang** grew up in the suburbs of Portland, Oregon and she eventually attended the University of Oregon. There, she majored in Human Physiology at the Robert D. Clark Honors College. Afterwards, she moved to New York City to complete her graduate studies at the SUNY College of Optometry. Upon graduating, she began working at an ophthalmology practice in Brooklyn, NY, where she played a pivotal role as the first hired doctor, contributing significantly to the establishment and growth of the practice. In 2024, she transitioned from clinical care to the role of Director of Career Development at SUNY College of Optometry.

Dr. Wang believes in the importance of being involved with her professional network, holding the position of immediate president of OSCONY (Optometric

Society of the City of New York). Additionally, she has served as the co-chair of the NYSOA (New York State Optometric Association) Young Advocates Committee in the NYC/LI region, chair of the Continuing Education Sub-Committee and is a member of the Brand, Communications and Outreach Committee, as well as the Annual Innovation Vision Conference. Outside of work, Dr. Wang enjoys reading and exploring the bountiful NYC food scene, writing reviews as Yelp Elite for the past 8 years.



# THANK YOU

To the Career Symposium Planning Committee: Dr. Deborah Wang, Dr. Gui Albieri, Daria Harrison, Rashel Paula, John Varamo, Michael Arias, Bridget McAllister, Dr. Richard Soden, Morgan Casetta, Fawaz Khan, Rachel Patel, Sophia Khan, Lydia Jogijose, Millan Khadka, Samia Ahmed, and Tahmina Keya



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Also, a special thanks to our College Community who contributed to the success of our event – Louie Bacosa, Jan Gonzalez, Sarah Didier, Faiz Khan, Adam Shiri and our internal departments: Facilities, OCN, Institutional Advancement, Student Affairs, IT and UPD.



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