

## AOA News Extra

### ABO Formation Moves Forward – Board Members Selected

**St. Louis, Mo., Sept. 2, 2009** – The American Optometric Association (AOA) is pleased to announce a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been entered into by the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA), the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) and the AOA regarding the formation and organization of the American Board of Optometry (ABO).

On June 26, 2009, at the annual meeting of the AOA, members of the AOA House of Delegates voted in favor of establishing the ABO as the entity to develop and implement the framework for optometric board certification and maintenance of certification for optometry. To this end, the AOA and other organizations in the optometric field have studied and worked on the creation of the ABO, which will establish and implement a process for board certification of optometrists.

Special counsel engaged to form the ABO recommended the use of a MOU as the first step toward formation of the entity and to establish the basic organizational and governance elements for the ABO.

"I'm pleased with the progress we continue to make with other optometric organizations and look forward to the continued development and implementation of the American Board of Optometry," said Randy Brooks, O.D., president of the AOA.

The AOA has made two appointments for the ABO board of directors: David Cockrell, O.D., from Stillwater, Okla., and Paul Ajamian, O.D., from Atlanta, Ga.

"These two well-respected optometrists see patients on a daily basis," said Dr. Brooks. "Their clinical expertise as well as their ability to relate to practicing ODs will be critical to their role representing the profession on the ABO."

As part of the MOU, the other organizations have also announced their appointed representatives.

"The Board of Directors of the Academy has watched the issue of board certification develop," said Mark Eger, O.D., FAAO, president of the AAO. "Now that it has been adopted by the profession, we are committed to join the other stakeholder organizations to assure its implementation. The Board of Directors of the Academy has appointed Past President Dr. Tom Lewis as the Academy's representative, who will work with the representatives of the other stakeholder organizations to make sure the final product is credible and defensible to both the profession and the health care community."

"ASCO is pleased to partner with other organizations to ensure the delivery of high-quality patient care services by optometrists," said Mel Shipp, O.D., ASCO president. "As a member of ABO, ASCO will be better able to ensure that the optometric education provided by its member institutions is consistent with this objective."

Dr. Shipp appointed David A. Heath O.D., president, State University of New York State College of Optometry, as ASCO's representative to the ABO.

"Dr. Heath brings broad experience as a dean and president of two optometric institutions as well as extensive ASCO and other not-for-profit leadership experience," said Dr. Shipp. "In addition to his academic administration experience, Dr. Heath's analytical ability, keen intellect and extensive operational and governance experience will be invaluable to the ABO."

"With an AOSA member on the JBCPT, optometry students have watched with great interest the development of the board certification process," said Tyson Allard, AOSA president. "Students by their very position must look to the future of optometry. The AOSA Executive Council has appointed Dr. Mary Phillips as the student association's representative on the ABO board, who will work with the other committed organizations toward a product that increases their credibility in the health care community and the profession they are working to enter."

The MOU also establishes a timetable for circulation of organizational documents, creation and qualification of the ABO as a tax-exempt entity and implementation of the certification process.

"The AOA is pleased that the formation of the American Board of Optometry is proceeding on schedule and is appreciative of everyone who participated in developing the model for optometric board certification over the last two years. The AOA continues to support a voluntary process, independent of licensure, as the most appropriate and accepted mechanism for board certification in optometry. It is my hope that, as future standard bearer for national certification, the American Board of Optometry will continue drawing upon the collective expertise of our profession's most respected organizations as well as practicing optometrists throughout the country," said Dr. Brooks