

Guest Editorial ▶ The Past, Present, and Future of Optometric Residency Programs from the Perspective of a Director

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I have had the privilege of serving as the Residency Director for Southern College of Optometry since 2009. Since that time, I have witnessed considerable growth in the number and types of residency programs offered across the nation. When I graduated from the IU School of Optometry in 1995, I had roughly two routes to pursue for residency training: a Veterans Affairs Medical Center or a position within an optometric institution. Today's resident can pursue residency education in the areas of Family Practice Optometry, Primary Care Optometry, Cornea and Contact Lens, Geriatric Optometry, Pediatric Optometry, Vision Therapy and Rehabilitation, Low Vision Rehabilitation, Ocular Disease, Refractive and Ocular Surgery, Community Health Optometry, and Brain Injury Vision Rehabilitation, and often times a program will offer a combination of these disciplines. In addition, residency programs continue to be offered at VAMCs and optometric institutions; however, the fastest growing residency site type is private practice. Graduates are recognizing the potential learning and career opportunities afforded in the area of patient care while gaining valuable insights into practice management in these unique settings.

The possibilities continue to grow along with the career trajectories of residency trained ODs. According to data supplied by ORMatch, 244 programs offering 443 residency positions were offered for 2017. Yet, this continues to be an insufficient number for the ever-increasing demand for residency education. This year, 544 applicants registered 2396 applications through ORMatch (Optometry Residency Matching Service). This number has increased every year since

2014. Data shows that the average applicant applied to 4.6 residency programs for the 2017-18 residency year.

In the area of Private Practice Pediatric/Vision Therapy Optometry Residency Programs affiliated with SCO, we had as many as 10 applicants for a single program position this year. SCO has embraced this residency model and is proud to offer the largest number of this type of residency amongst all Schools and Colleges of Optometry. We recognize that quantity is far less admirable than quality, and for this reason, you will find our Program Supervisors to be established, well-renowned clinicians in their communities and advocates for the profession at large. SCO is pleased to offer 31 residency programs, 11 of which emphasize pediatrics and/or vision rehabilitation. Three positions are offered in The Eye Center at Southern College of Optometry, with a fourth low vision/vision therapy, and rehabilitation position. Private Practice pediatric, vision therapy, and rehabilitation residencies are located throughout the country and are described in detail in this issue of OVP. We also offer a hospital-based pediatrics program in Aurora, Colorado. We have the pleasure of being an integral part of creating career success post-residency. Many of our former residents hold faculty positions at academic institutions, join private practices with existing vision therapy, or bring vision therapy to an underserved population. While career paths vary amongst SCO residents, what remains uniform is the professional growth of each and every one of them from the start to the conclusion of their programs. They are the future of optometry, and that future is limitless per the observation of this Residency Director.

