



Via Email  
shara.murphy@dca.ca.gov

April 19, 2021

Shara Murphy  
Executive Officer  
California State Board of Optometry  
2450 Del Paso Road  
#105  
Sacramento, California 95834

Dear Shara Murphy,

The Association of Schools and Colleges is the national the academic leadership organization committed to advancing optometric education and research to enhance the health and well-being of the public. Since 1941, ASCO has pursued this mission by representing the interests of institutions of optometric education and by enhancing the efforts of these institutions as they prepare highly qualified graduates for entrance into the profession of optometry in order to best serve the public's eye and vision needs. ASCO proudly represents all accredited schools and colleges of optometry in the United States.

Like most organizations looking to find new ways to address our nation's call for the removal of racial disparities in all parts of society, ASCO has been very engaged the last few months in developing educational programs to build awareness of the important of cultural competency and racial bias within our organization and member institutions. We are dedicated to developing an applicant pool, student community, faculty body, and profession that reflects the diversity of the U.S. population, while preparing future optometric clinicians for practicing in a multicultural and global society.

One of the important initiatives ASCO is working to achieve is requiring Cultural Competence Continuing Education training for all practicing optometrists. According to the Department of Health & Human Services, several [states](#) (i.e. California, Washington, Indiana, New Jersey) requires mandatory cultural competency training for some health professions and several other states have proposals for such mandates. Unfortunately, most states that have a cultural competency training mandate do not require this of the optometric profession. Currently, [Oregon](#) serves as a great model for such an initiative. The Oregon Board of Optometry, as mandated by the Oregon Health Authority, requires 1 hour of culturally competency education each year for license renewal.

We are reaching out to you today, at the request of ASCO's Diversity and Cultural Competency Committee (DCCC) and with the full support of the ASCO Board of Directors, to request that the California State Board of Optometry do what it can to help alleviate the burden of racial inequities in the practice of optometry by requiring diversity training be a component of required continuing education needed for licensure/re-licensure in your state.

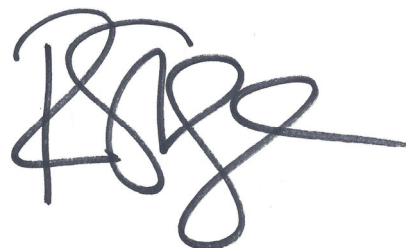
We realize that proposing mandatory cultural competency training for the optometric profession is a huge undertaking, but it is not impossible. Many other health professions (medicine, nursing, and dentistry) are fully aware that cultural competence only enhances the patient care experience and improves health outcomes, and are moving to put these mandates in place. We all must play a part in reducing health care disparities. We need to excel as technically, cognitively, and culturally competent and sensitive clinicians.

We hope that you will join us in making this important initiative a reality for our profession.

Respectfully,



John Flanagan, PhD, DSc(hon), FCOptom, FAAO, FARVO  
ASCO President  
*and*  
Dean  
University of California at Berkeley School of Optometry  
University



Ruth Shoge, OD, MPH  
Chair, ASCO Diversity & Cultural Competency  
Committee (DCCC)  
Assistant Professor  
Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus



Dawn Mancuso, MAM, CAE, FASAE  
Executive Vice President and CEO  
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry