2023 AAO - Essilor Award for Outstanding International Contributions to Optometry

Timothy A. Wingert, OD, FAAO has been selected to receive the AAO - Essilor Award for Outstanding International Contributions to Optometry for 2023. Beyond his contributions to optometry in the United States, Dr. Wingert has been an ambassador for the profession in other countries and has worked with multiple groups to advance optometric care and education outside of North America.

A testament to his international involvement is his four Fulbright Awards. To navigate the peer review process for this award once is something unusual but to have done it repeatedly speaks to the quality of his work. He is unique in optometry for having done this. He has also been recognized with the Witela Medal by the Poznan University of Medical Sciences for his contributions to their program. During his career he has been a visiting faculty member at multiple schools abroad and has worked with institutions in ten other countries and his own institution to create agreements with programs that would be mutually beneficial. Through his leadership, faculty from schools in South and Central America have rotated through Rosenberg School of Optometry and even more of his faculty have taught in foreign programs in the developing world.

Recognizing that his own students need to have an international awareness, he has instituted a study abroad program at his home institution that is unique in optometry. The Rosenberg School of Optometry is the only US school to offer a study abroad option to students in the Optometry professional program due to his efforts. This program last year had thirty-five percent of the class participate in it. Almost half of the two most recent graduating classes have participated in an international mission trip to gain a broader perspective on health care delivery. Some of these trips have partnered with optometry programs in other countries so that the students can work side by side and learn from each other.

Dr. Wingert has also been active in the World Council of Optometry and serves on the VOSH International Board of Directors. He served as co-chair of the Global Summit on Optometric Education established by ASCO, AAO and WCO. He has served as Chair of the ASCO International Optometric Education Committee. As chair of the Education Committee of VOSH International his counsel has been invaluable in assisting fledgling optometry training programs in the developing world. While chair of the Academy's Section on Public Health and Environmental Vision, he spearheaded the effort to recruit international candidates into the diplomate program. He is a founder member of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics and is one of only three Americans to achieve Fellow status in that organization.

He has shown dedication to helping practitioners from other countries work toward achieving the level of care enjoyed in this country. He has worked to advance optometry globally through his endeavors. The award will be given on Friday, October 13, during the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Optometry meeting in New Orleans.