



Commission on Opticianry Accreditation

Semi-Annual Meeting, October 7, 2025, 5:30 pm
Via Zoom

Summary of Major Actions and Discussion

(These are not the official minutes of the COA Semi-Annual Meeting)

Attendees

Aceto, Kelly
Bourque, Lisa
Buckner, Ledonna
DeLoach, Deborah
Ferguson, Roy
Gibson, Hali
Goh, Bryan, presiding
Hicks, Thomas
Himes, Jerry
Lew, Judy
Tolar, Russ

Non-voting:

Weinberger, Jayne, Director of Accreditation
Norris, Ellen, Assistant Director

Goh called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm, indicating that a quorum is present.

I. **Call to Order**

Goh welcomed the Commissioners, and introduced the new appointees Hali Gibson, Jerry Himes, and Kelly Aceto, each of whom gave a brief introduction to herself. The agenda was accepted as written.

II. **Conflict of Interest and Agreement of Confidentiality**

All attendees signed both agreements and emailed them to Norris prior to the meeting start.

III. **Total Quality Leadership (TQL)**

Goh read the meeting ground rules. Lew volunteered to be timekeeper.

IV. **Approvals via email since February 19, 2025 meeting**

The following actions were taken via email after the February 19 2025 meeting:

- A. February 19, 2025 minutes were approved.
- B. Annual Fees
A motion was made, seconded, and passed to increase the annual program fee 5% a year for 5 years, starting with the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
Notification of the \$1,707 fee due November 1 2025 was sent to the Program Directors via email.
- C. Bylaws:
A motion was made, seconded, and passed to add the following paragraph to ARTICLE III Section 2 Appointment of Commissioners.

If circumstances make an appointment detailed here not viable, the appointment for a first term and reappointment for a second term shall be made by majority vote of the remaining Commissioners at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose.
- D. Kelly Aceto was elected Public Member.
- E. The budget for FY 2025-2026 was accepted.
- F. Lisa Bourque was elected to her second term.
- G. Hali Gibson was elected to her first term.

V. Chairperson's Report

Goh indicated that the items in his update on activities report will be considered as they come up in the meeting.

VI. Director of Accreditation's Report

- A. Program visits coming up
 1. Roane State Community College in TN has been scheduled for spring 2026.
 2. Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in NM on-site is due fall 2026.
 3. Miami-Dade College in FL on-site is due fall 2026 .
- B. Weinberger and Norris have been working on the 2025 Interim report for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Goh requested that Norris give a brief explanation of what CHEA is and our relationship with it.

Essentially, CHEA does for COA what COA does for the programs we accredit. CHEA requires all of the standards that the US Department of Education requires of accrediting agencies. The difference is that US Department of Education recognition is only for accrediting agencies that schools or programs use to apply for federal funding for students or facilities. COA does not qualify because our programs are required to be sponsored by accredited institutions, so we are not cited in our program's funding requests. CHEA does not have that eligibility test. Most accrediting agencies are listed by both if they qualify for both.

The programs that we accredit are given a maximum of 6-year terms, with annual reports. CHEA gives a maximum of 8-year terms, with one mid-term report. The interim report due is the equivalent of the annual report that we require.

CHEA only requires a fee after the full self-study and in-person visit have occurred.

VII. Treasurer's Report

The YTD financial report was reviewed. We will revisit the budget for payroll later in the meeting. Eight of the 17.5 programs have paid their dues that are due November 1. We have 3 CDs laddered to mature 3 months apart, so that COA is never more than 3 months from being able to access invested funds if needed. There is no indication that we will need to do this in the near future.

VIII. Reaffirmation of Accreditation

No reaffirmation activity for this meeting.

IX. Progress Reports

1. Essex College

No one present is connected with the program.

The outstanding issue has been resolved.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the progress report and extend the term of accreditation to the full six years, to February 2, 2030.

2. College of Southern Nevada

No one present is connected with the program.

The outstanding issue has been resolved.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the progress report.

3. SUNY Erie

No one present is connected with the program.

The outstanding issue has been resolved.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the progress report.

X. Annual Reports

1. Connecticut State Community College – Middlesex, Middletown, CT

Goh left the room.

There was an issue about the documentation in the Advisory Committee meeting minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the annual report with a reminder about AC meeting documentation.

Goh returned.

2. Durham Technical Community College, Durham, NC

Tolar and Norris left the room.

After discussion of the report, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the annual report.

Tolar and Norris returned.

3. Essex County College, Newark, NJ
No one present is connected with the program.
After discussion of the report, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the annual report, with a request that the statistics on the website be updated.
4. Miami Dade College, Miami, FL
No one present is connected with the program.
After discussion of the report, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the annual report, with a request that the statistics on the website be updated.
5. Reynolds Community College, Richmond, VA
No one present is connected with the program.
After discussion of the report, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the annual report.
6. Roane State Community College, Harriman, TN
Ferguson and Gibson left the room.
After discussion of the report, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the annual report.

Ferguson and Gibson returned to the room.
7. Southwestern Community College, Sylva, NC
No one present is connected with the program
After discussion of the report, motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the annual report.
8. Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (degree), Albuquerque, NM
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (lab), Albuquerque, NM
No one present is connected with the program
Long-time Program Director Sam Henderson retired, and the new program director is Eric Garcia. Because of this change the Advisory Committee meeting that was scheduled did not occur. After discussion of the report, motion was made, seconded, and passed to request a progress report at the spring meeting to include Advisory Committee meeting minutes.

9. Tri-Service Optician School (TOPS), Yorktown, VA
No one present is connected with the program
After discussion of the report, motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the annual report.

XI. Old Business

A. Committee Reports

a. Bylaws

The formation of the UOA from combining OAA and NFOS requires that the COA reconsider the membership model that has been in place for 50 years.

There was extensive discussion of (1) the need for more representation on the COA for contact lens content experts; (2) the need for appointing agencies to be able and willing to pay their appointees expenses to COA meetings; (3) that since ABO and NCLE write, administer, and grade the exams that are two of our five measurements of outcomes for the programs that COA accredits, asking them to appoint commissioners could be problematic.

CLSA (for contact lens content experts) and Vision Council (for laboratory/manufacturing content experts) will be contacted about potentially appointing commissioners. One of these appointees would fill the 12th position that used to be a public member, and the other would take the place of one UOA appointee. Goh will also let UOA know that there will be 5 instead of 6 appointees and will explain the reasoning.

The bylaws committee will make a recommendation at least 30 days before the spring COA meeting so that the bylaws can be updated before the normal July 1 rotation.

b. *Essentials* Review

A sample of a redesigned on-site review checklist was presented and received enthusiastic approval. The following issues require consideration and/or rewriting: (1) non-college-employee distance learning preceptor's credentials; (2) the Evaluator's Checklist; (3) the surveys that are used during onsite visits for students, faculty, advisory committee members. Goh will poll the commissioners for volunteers for a committee to deal with updating the on-site documents and surveys.

c. Strategic Planning

The COA needs an updated strategic plan. Goh will poll the commissioners for volunteers for a Strategic Planning committee.

d. Policies & Procedures

There was discussion about the makeup and scheduling of on-site evaluator teams. Goh will poll the commissioners for volunteers for a Policies & Procedures committee.

XII. New Business

A. Other New Business

none

B. Update on staffing for COA

Weinberger is retiring as Director of Accreditation as of November 1, 2025. Norris is retiring as Assistant Director as of December 1, 2025.

Over the summer we conducted a job search including industry online job boards and emails to our accredited schools. After interviewing several candidates, the committee's unanimous first choice for Director of Accreditation was Kristina Green, who is well known to nearly all of us. Green accepted the position. She will review the resumes and interviews of the search committee's top choices for Assistant Director, and in the next week an offer will be made to the top candidate for that position.

Norris referred the commissioners back to the financial report. Because of the timing of the staff changes, the payroll will probably be more than budgeted. A motion was made, seconded, discussed and passed to move money from the accountant line item, which will not be used this year and will be reinstated in the next fiscal year budget, to payroll.

C. Date/Location of Next Meeting

The spring meeting will be in person (but hybrid for those who want to join by zoom) at Vision Expo East. It will be held on Wednesday March 11 if the education schedule does not create a conflict for any of the Commissioners. Possible locations (at convention center or a local hotel) will be considered based on access to WiFi for zoom attendees and cost.

D. Election of Officers

Current officers are Goh, Chair; Lew, Vice-Chair; Bourque Treasurer. Lew goes off the commission in July 2026, but could remain as Vice-Chair until the summer. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the current slate of officers.

XIII. Goh adjourned the meeting at 8:30 and thanked the Commissioners for their time and service to the COA. He also thanked Weinberger and Norris for their service over the last 30 +/- years.