



For Immediate Release  
Feb. 19, 2021

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### Donor Support Offers More Doors of Opportunity in Optometry at Salus



*A \$7,500 donation from Keplr Vision will help offset optometry school application fees for undergraduate students who completed an early exposure program called the Optometry Learning Experience (OLE) hosted virtually this year by the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO) at Salus University.*

**Elkins Park, Pa.** — Salus University was the recent recipient of a \$7,500 donation from Keplr Vision, an optometric group headquartered in Illinois. The partnership will give students more opportunities to pursue an optometric education through early exposure.

The grant – part of an effort to expose the optometry profession to more undergraduate students pursuing a health sciences degree – will be used to help offset application and testing costs for students who want to apply to optometry school. Eligible students receive

the financial support by completing the University's Optometry Learning Experience (OLE) program established 40 years ago by the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO) at Salus.

Due to the pandemic, OLE took on a virtual format this year, attracting nearly 60 students from across the U.S. and Canada. Dr. Jeffrey Lewis, director of school engagement at Keplr Vision and a practicing optometrist, participated as a panelist during the three-day event. During his live presentation, Dr. Lewis covered topics and statistics surrounding the growing need and high demand for optometrists, optometry specializations and shifting priorities of the profession.

"I think that students deserve the opportunity to at least hear about practicing optometry," Dr. Lewis said. "They need the opportunity for exposure. I believe that and Keplr Vision believes that, too. So, we love increasing public awareness about the profession of optometry, because many of us, now that we're in it, think it's phenomenal."

The OLE program gives students an in-depth look at receiving a Doctor of Optometry degree at PCO/Salus. **Melissa Cinciruk, MA**, associate director of Admissions, spearheads the organization of the program and as a result has witnessed the impact of the experience among visiting students.

"By meeting real members of the Salus community and speaking with current students, the whole process seems less intimidating," Cinciruk said. "OLE participants can see that there are people like them who have gone on to succeed."

Cinciruk also pointed out that the pandemic and social distancing guidelines have made it challenging for students to job shadow.

"At a time when finding shadowing opportunities can be particularly difficult, access to optometrists is invaluable," she said. "Given their exposure to multiple optometrists during OLE, there is a greater chance that students will have found an optometrist with whom they can relate."

Keplr Vision's donation, which is called the Keplr Vision Application Grant, will be offered to students who participated in this year's OLE on a first-come, first-served basis. **Chad Killen, OD '19, Resident '20**, PCO/Salus instructor and clinical instructor at The Eye Institute (TEI), first came to PCO/Salus as a junior in the OLE program pursuing his bachelor's degree. According to him, the program also serves a more practical purpose.

"I remember my pre-health professions club in undergrad. Optometry wasn't a career that was talked about as much," Dr. Killen said. "Until I had the opportunity to do OLE, I didn't know as much about it and I'm sure some of my classmates had no experience with it at all. So, I think more opportunities to expose the profession to undergrads, or even younger, will help students make sure that they're on the right path."

### **About Salus University**

Salus University, founded as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1919, today is a diversified, globally recognized professional academic center of learning that offers a wide range of degree programs in the professions of Optometry, Audiology, Physician Assistant, Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Biomedicine, Occupational Therapy and Speech-

Language Pathology. Salus operates four clinical facilities in Philadelphia and Montgomery counties that provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, and speech-language pathology services. The University has more than 1,200 students, and more than 14,000 alumni worldwide. For more information, please visit [www.salus.edu](http://www.salus.edu).