



Contact: Anna Intartaglia
215-780-1487

Salus University President Receives American Optometric Association's 2023 Federal Advocacy Award

Elkins Park, Pa. – Salus University President, Michael H. Mittelman, OD '80, MPH, MBA, FAAO, FACHE, was awarded the American Optometric Association's (AOA) 2023 Federal Advocacy Award for his "exemplary dedication to optometry and the advancement of the profession." He received the award at the National Optometry Hall of Fame and AOA awards ceremony on June 23, 2023 at Optometry's Meeting in Washington, D.C.

"I think we all have a role to play in advocating for our professions," said Dr. Mittelman. "In our case, I think it is even more important given that all of our professions are statutorily regulated. We have a wonderful opportunity to educate legislators and others who can play key roles in scope of practice, additional funding and other types of support that it's my responsibility to take advantage of."

When Dr. Mittelman entered the Navy at the start of what would become a 33-year career, he became involved in the Armed Forces Optometric Association (AFOS, recently renamed to the Association of Armed Forces and Federal Optometric Services) to assist in forwarding the scope of practice and licensure by endorsement nationally. And, as the Salus president since 2013, advocating for the profession has been an important component of Dr. Mittelman's job.

When it comes to advocacy, Dr. Mittelman enjoys sharing the accomplishments of Salus students and faculty and how innovative they've been in ensuring all University students become the best healthcare professionals, educators and researchers.

"Salus is such a unique institution between our storied 104-year Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO) history, groundbreaking Audiology Bridge program and the mix of Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Physician Assistant Studies, Occupational Therapy, Speech-Language Pathology, Orthotics and Prosthetics and Biomedicine masters and PhD programs," said Dr. Mittelman.

While he calls it "very humbling" to be recognized with this award, Dr. Mittelman wants to remind everyone that there are a lot of people doing hard work to advance the profession of optometry. He cited in particular the work being done by Dr. Lindsay Wright, executive director of AFOS; and Matt Willette, chief advocacy officer for the AOA, both of whom Dr. Mittelman said work tirelessly to help optometrists who work in

the Department of Veterans Affairs practice at their highest level of training and be paid at a rate commensurate with their training.

“I was extremely surprised and honored,” said Dr. Mittelman when he received word of the award. “Frankly, the work I do for optometry, in particular, is out of my love and commitment to the profession.”

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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, Speech-Language Pathology and Orthotics and Prosthetics. Salus operates four clinical facilities in Philadelphia and Montgomery counties that provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, Speech-Language pathology and occupational therapy services. The University has over 1,200 students, and more than 14,000 alumni worldwide. For more information, please visit www.salus.edu.