

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Vision Care Continues Its DE&I Evolution



Image Credit: Getty Images / cienpias

BY MARGE AXELRAD / SENIOR VP, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

NEW YORK—The embrace of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) this year has continued to expand among many businesses, large and small, public and private. In healthcare, too, and vision care in particular, DE&I has continued its evolution.

As McKinsey describes it, diversity, equity and inclusion are three closely linked values held by many organizations that are working to be supportive of different groups of individuals, including people of different races, ethnicities, religions,

abilities, genders, and sexual orientations.

2023 has been a dramatic year, one of accomplishment, for DE&I awareness, widening new ways that diverse populations and people of color are represented (or introduced) to the potentials of the vision care profession as well as ways for retailers, professional offices and related product companies to address patients in new ways.

Of course, many challenges in the complex arena of DE&I persist, combined with an even more complex business environment as we end the year and look ahead at 2024.

Vision Monday reached out to just a few leaders within this space who are working across the U.S. eyecare business to tackle DE&I issues in various ways. This is by no means a comprehensive review of all the initiatives and programs that are gaining ground, but a way to put things in perspective toward an even more productive New Year for DE&I efforts in eyecare and eyewear.

VM asked these leaders to reflect on some of their “wins” in 2023, to identify some of the pain points on the DE&I journey and, finally to share a peek ahead at some of their plans for 2024. ■



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Black EyeCare Perspective Expands Partnerships and Outreach to Future Black Optometrists

With its partnerships expanding and its connections with current and future Black optometrists growing, Black EyeCare Perspective (<https://blackeyecareperspective.com/>) (BEP) is continuing its progress in “redefining the color of the eyecare industry.” The organization’s progress in 2023 was significant in several areas. The Black EyeCare Perspective Pre-Optometry Club continues to grow and now has a membership of nearly 200 students representing over 30 states and 111 undergraduate institutions with 27 of them being Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Noted Essence Johnson, OD, FAAO, BEP’s executive director, “This year’s August 13 Third Anniversary Meeting focused on learning and study strategies and members were gifted a learning and study strategies inventory assessment to help them improve upon their testing techniques. As a part of our IMPACT HBCU initiative we continue to connect virtually with IMPACT HBCU in the Fall and in person visiting campuses as a part of the HBCU Light Intelligent Tour with Transitions Optical and with the VSP Eyes of Hope Mobile Clinic.”

She added, “We visited the campuses of Xavier University of Louisiana, North Carolina Central University and engaged with over 20 more HBCUs at the 32nd Annual National Association of African American Honors Programs Conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.”

Johnson observed, “I do think that the kinds of connections and reactions we get to the work we’re doing have changed tremendously in the past three years, just a higher sense of awareness toward the issue of diversity within health care and the profession—which of course translates to the patient population as well. It may speak to everyone’s individual family or cultural perspective, but there is a multi-cultural sensibility now. There’s much work to be done to escalate education of all kinds about the importance of eyecare, how all populations can be better served and how the profession can expand.”

Black EyeCare Perspective

REDEFINING THE COLOR OF THE EYE CARE INDUSTRY 1% AT A TIME

BUY AN IMPACT HBCU SHIRT TODAY

IF YOU SEE IT, YOU CAN BE IT!

SHARE A PICTURE IN YOUR IMPACT HBCU SHIRT ON SOCIAL MEDIA WITH @BLACKEYECAREPERSPECTIVE AND @BEPPC

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN EYECARE? JOIN THE BLACK EYECARE PERSPECTIVE PRE-OPTOMETRY CLUB.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

There is a shortage of optometrists and need for more diversity in eye care. Black EyeCare Perspective believes one must be united in their efforts and intentional in their impact to educate, encourage and promote the need for more diversity in the eye care industry.

4%	3.8%	1.4%
Black Optometry Students	Black Optometric Educators	Practicing Black Optometrists

Said Johnson, “We look forward to advancing the message of optometry and health care beyond the eyecare industry and continuing to create a pipeline for Black students even earlier in their academic journey with our 13% Promise Partners, which include Johnson and Johnson Vision, VSP, Transitions, Warby Parker, My EyeDr., National Vision, several

schools and colleges of optometry and our newest partner, the American Optometric Association. VM reported on that partnership last June. (<https://www.visionmonday.com/people/diversity-and-inclusion/article/american-optometric-association-signs-the-13-promise-to-advance-opportunities-for-today-and-tomorrows-black-optometrists/>) ■

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Latinos en Optometry Builds a Range of Resources and Events Across the ECP and Patient Community

In 2023, Latinos en Optometry (<https://www.latinosenoptometry.com/>) (LEO) launched their inauguration event at Vision Expo East in New York. “It’s been a busy year for LEO, and we are so grateful for the support from our sponsors, partners and members,” said Diana Canto-Sims, OD, co-founder and board member. She added, “As eyecare professionals, it’s important to acknowledge why diversity, equity and inclusion in vision care for the Hispanic and Latino community are crucial to ensure culturally competent vision care, address specific eyecare needs, and bridge gaps in access, ultimately promoting better eye health for everyone.”

Effective communication between an optometrist and a Spanish-speaking patient is crucial for several reasons, as Dr. Canto-Sims explains:

Accurate Assessment: Understanding a patient’s vision concerns requires clear communication. A language barrier can lead to misunderstandings about symptoms or issues, potentially affecting the accuracy of the assessment.

Correct Prescription: Precision is vital in determining the correct eyeglasses or contact lenses prescription. Miscommunication may result in an inaccurate prescription, impacting the patient’s vision.

Patient Education: Proper communication is necessary to educate the patient about their eye health, any conditions or concerns, and the importance of regular eyecare. Without clear communication, the patient might not fully grasp how to care for their eyes.

Informed Decision-Making: For procedures or treatment options, a patient needs to comprehend the benefits, risks and expected outcomes. Effective communication is vital to ensuring the patient can make informed decisions.

What we are doing about this challenge: One of our goals at LEO is to provide eyecare professionals with Spanish resources and tools for non-Latino (or non-Spanish speaking) ECPs to communicate effectively with their Spanish-speaking patients for accurate assessment, treatment, education and follow-up.



Comfort and Trust: Building a rapport with the patient is crucial for excellent eyecare. Effective communication helps establish trust and comfort, creating a positive patient-doctor relationship. Patients will share more about their medical history if they trust their doctor and feel comfortable.

Cultural sensitivity and competence: Spanish-speaking patients might have cultural differences in understanding and approaching health care. Effective communication can bridge these gaps, ensuring the optometrist understands and respects the patient’s cultural context.

Also, LEO collaborated with EssilorLuxottica’s Leonardo platform to create initiatives and courses to help address these concerns, including courses like “Recognizing & Overcoming Bias in Eyecare” with Dr. Canto-Sims, LEO co-founder; Dr. Essence Johnson, Black Eyecare Perspective (BEC) executive director; and Arlene Segovia from Transitions Optical. This course went live on October 30, 2023, and is evergreen and accessible anytime on the Leonardo platform for ECPs to learn about implicit and explicit biases in eyecare.

Effective communication is essential in providing accurate assessments, correct prescriptions, patient education, informed decision-making, building trust and ensuring cultural sensitivity. This leads to better eyecare and overall patient satisfaction. LEO is committed to creating resources to help all ECPs treat their Spanish-speaking and Latino patients proficiently.

LEO celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month at Vision Expo West in Las Vegas at its Latinos en Optometry networking event. “The outcome was phenomenal, receiving support and attendance from the industry, the show and attendees. And the LEO event was also covered live in Latin America by Creative Latin Media LLC,” Dr. Canto-Sims said.

“The Road to Opometry” Initiative (<https://www.latinosenoptometry.com/transitions-webinar-series>) sponsored by Transitions Optical is a “20/20 promise to raise the Latino optometrist percentage by 20 percent in 20 years, to better align with the growth of the Latino population.

Pew Research Center shared some key facts about Hispanics.

“The U.S. Hispanic population reached 63.6 million in 2022, up from 50.5 million in 2010. The 26 percent increase in the Hispanic population was faster than the nation’s 8 percent growth rate. In 2022, Hispanics made up nearly one in five people in the U.S. (19 percent), up from 16 percent in 2010 and just 5 percent in 1970. Hispanics have played a major role in U.S. population growth over the past decade. The U.S. population grew by 24.5 million from 2010 to 2022, and Hispanics accounted for 53 percent of this increase.”

Also, according to Pew, “The Latino population, already the nation’s largest minority group, will triple in size and will account for most of the nation’s population growth from 2005 through 2050.

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New England College of Optometry Deepens Its DE&I Commitments, Partnerships and Sponsored Pathways

According to New England College of Optometry (NECO) president Howard Purcell, OD, FFAO, “We continue our focus on impacting the feeling of belonging in our community. We want everyone to feel welcome at NECO. Without that component, you are wasting your time on other diversity efforts.” He added, “We respond to internal and societal concerns as they impact our community. This has been a key issue in assisting our students in their journey through what today is a very rigorous curriculum.

“Current issues have challenged all of us and reminded us that we all have our own views and perspectives, yet when we speak on behalf of the college it requires sensitivity and a desire to listen and learn. Open dialogue, mutual compassion and understanding has been at our core.”

Dr. Purcell pointed out, “We have a strong ABIDE (Association for Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity) Council that works on our DE&I goals and initiatives across the school (faculty and staff representation from across our college, health centers and clinics). We continually increase the level of DEI topics and education in our curriculum and keep that focus with our Culturally Relevant Curriculum Committee.”

He also noted that NECO has continued with its school screening program. “Early identification combined with follow-up and education have made a difference in our community. This allows our first-year students an experience in patient care while serving those children most in need in our community.”

In addition, NECO has begun pathways partnership with a local charter school and will continue to build and expand that program to increase awareness of the field of optometry and of the school’s program for young students in an area with large Black and Latinx representation.

NECO has integrated “land acknowledgements” as part of the introduction to major college functions including its White Coat Ceremony and Com-



Howard Purcell, OD, FFAO

mencement. In addition, NECO has worked toward standardizing its hiring and recruitment practices to ensure continued equitable access and diversification, Dr. Purcell noted.

“We provide ongoing DE&I-focused trainings and discussion opportunities for our community at the student, faculty/staff and leadership levels. We have provided and continue to plan a DE&I focused COPE-accredited CE series and we host regular opportunities to gather as a community in learning, discussion and celebration of various cultural and heritage related events.”

NECO’s DE&I director engages regularly with chief diversity officers at other optometric institutions through working groups. This has helped to sustain the college’s momentum and assures accountability. At NECO, the director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging reports directly to the president.

Dr. Purcell acknowledges some of the pain points in the DE&I journey of 2023. “The recent Supreme Court decision on Race in Admissions has resulted in many questions and challenges for those institutions who are committed to provide doctors that are representative of the communities they serve. There are many opportunities to continue the work we have been doing.

“It does require that we pivot and adapt to the current laws. Discussions are ongoing as to how we



DE&I is a multi-pronged effort at New England College of Optometry.

plan to ensure we continue to work toward our diversification/DE&I goals while we follow the court’s ruling. Those diversification efforts exist at the faculty level, students, staff and board of trustees.” He also added, “We are proud to have joined the Black EyeCare Perspective’s 13% efforts.”

Even as other partnership efforts expand, Purcell noted, “These efforts will take time. Creating an environment where all feel welcome and that they belong is a process. One must start with the foundational elements and work from there. The great news is that our students are leading the charge.”

Looking ahead, Dr. Purcell said NECO plans to continue and expand its Sponsored Pathways Program. “This is one of many programs intended to address the issue of student debt. This program helps employers address geographical demand by agreeing to cover part of the student’s tuition in exchange for an agreement to employment for a specified time frame.

“NECO intends to launch a Hybrid OD program (the time frame is dependent on accreditation) that will enable those who live in the 30 states without an optometry school to have the option to remain home for most of their education. The hope is that this will result in graduates remaining in their home towns in order to serve those communities,” Dr. Purcell said. ■

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SUNY College of Optometry Expands Its DE&I Initiatives Within the Profession and Student Community

SUNY College of Optometry has been expanding its commitment to DE&I efforts for several years. The college's Office of Continuing Professional Education (<https://www.sunyopt.edu/academics/programs/continuing-education-ce/>) held the Annual Race in Optometry webinar last summer. Titled "Race in Optometry: Headwinds - Exploring Emerging Barriers to Success," the virtual session was held June 28, 2023. The wide-ranging discussion is now available to view live, along with prior panels in the signature series. The "Headwinds" discussion was held just prior to the June 29 U.S. Supreme Court decision about affirmative action in college and university admissions processes, which drew concern and renewed commitment to diversity initiatives among optometry groups.



The SUNY Optometry series launched in 2020 to stimulate a national, ongoing conversation on race and equity within the profession of optometry.

Moderated by Dr. Joy Harewood, chief diversity officer and associate clinical professor at SUNY College of Optometry, the discussion included 10 panelists. This year's lecture offered a variety of perspectives ranging from legal considerations, barriers to success, and increased efforts to maintain and continue to grow diversity.

"SUNY College of Optometry is a leader in looking at ways to improve diversity across the field of optometry including leading conversations such as the Race in Optometry series," observed SUNY Optometry president Dr. David A. Heath. "The College

remains committed to DEIB and will work within the new guidelines to continue to advance the principles of diversity, belonging and inclusion across the optometric workforce. The impact of this critical work extends beyond the walls of our campus and impacts the population health of the diverse patient community we serve," Dr. Heath said.

The most recent panel discussion, titled "Race in Optometry: Headwinds - Exploring Emerging Barriers to Success," can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32zwCMYImGA>.

For those who missed previous Race in Optometry sessions, they are available at these links:

Part 1 - Race in Optometry: An Honest Conversation
www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kgeZpelsfo

Part 2 - Race in Optometry: Seeking Solutions
www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVqAzgYrwoc

Part 3 - Race in Optometry: Diversity and Leadership in the Optometric Industry and the Profession
www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VQfItl9Gro

Part 4 - Race in Optometry - Accountability - One Year Later
www.youtube.com/watch?v=dU_AEmCNEJM

Part 5 - Race in Optometry: Where Are We Now Two Years Later?
www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFlnFclNV5E

Another highlight for SUNY Optometry this year was that its Collegiate Science & Technology Entry Program (STEP) received the 2023 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine, the largest and oldest diversity and inclusion publication in higher education. The Inspiring Programs in STEM Award honors colleges and universities that encourage and assist students from under-represented groups to enter the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). SUNY Optometry was featured, along with 79 other recipients, in the September 2023



issue of *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine.

"I'm very proud of the significant impact we've made in the last seven years," noted Quy

H. Nguyen, OD, director of Minority Enrichment (CSTEP). "When I began my role, we had 3 CSTEP students matriculating at SUNY, to this past 21-22 cycle it had increased to 19 enrolled CSTEP students—that is a 533 percent increase. I am proud of the work of my office and all of our staff and administrators who have supported us and our wonderful students along the way.

"It is indeed inspiring to see increasing diversity at the College, the wonderful community that we've built, and most importantly, graduating more and more culturally-competent doctors that play a pivotal role in health disparities."

As its primary objective, the CSTEP program at SUNY College of Optometry exists to increase the number of historically under-represented minority students in STEM targeted professions, most particularly in the growing and dynamic profession of optometry. The program is open to all New York State residents who are economically disadvantaged and a member of an underrepresented community.

SUNY Chancellor John B. King, Jr. said, "Only 2 percent of all optometrists in America identify as Black, and the majority of medical students overall, about 75 percent, come from households with income levels in the top 40 percent. Programs like CSTEP at SUNY College of Optometry are actively working to change these statistics by increasing the representation of professionals of color and students from low income households in this field."

Throughout the past decade, over 420 participants have benefited from SUNY Optometry's CSTEP program as they explore STEM and health care related fields. Uniquely, the CSTEP students who enroll in SUNY Optometry become part of the SUNY Optometry Irises cohort which provides academic and mentoring support throughout their time at the college. ■

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Transitions Diversity Advisory Board Widens Its Initiatives

The Transitions Diversity Advisory Board was originally formed in 2010 to help guide the company's multicultural initiatives and further strengthen its ability to help eyecare professionals provide culturally and linguistically appropriate vision care to a diverse patient base.

Cultural and language barriers can make it hard to communicate with patients—and can stand in the way of the patient receiving the best possible vision care. Even patients who speak fluent English may feel more comfortable communicating in another language.

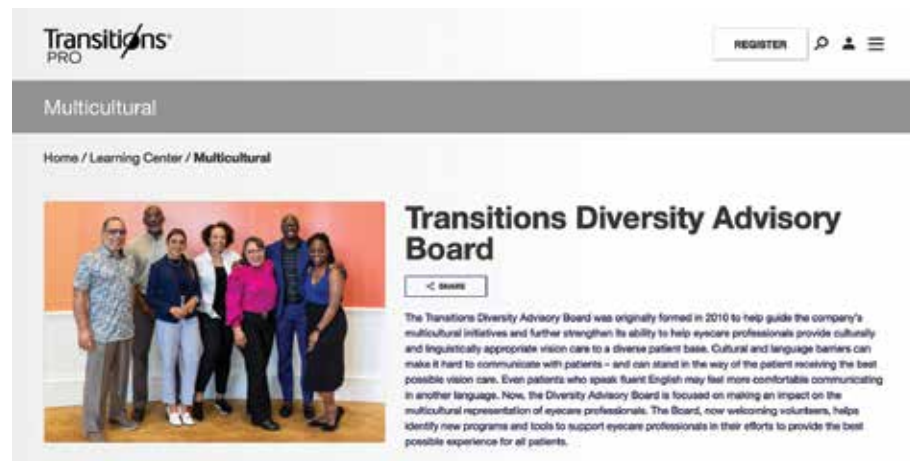
Now, the Diversity Advisory Board is focused on making an impact on the multicultural representation of eyecare professionals. The Board, now welcoming volunteers, helps identify new programs and tools to support eyecare professionals in their efforts to provide the best possible experience for all patients.

In 2023, The Transitions Diversity Advisory Board (DAB) has conducted year-round multicultural initiatives that are in alignment with EssilorLuxottica's sustainability efforts and designed to empower eyecare professionals and the industry to provide culturally appropriate vision care to a diverse patient base.

This year's initiatives included DE&I education (available online <https://www.revieweducation-group.com/ce/ce-video-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-eye-care>) and resource development for eyecare professionals, community and patient outreach as well as optical industry recruitment efforts.

The Transitions DAB developed and presented both in-person and virtual COPE- and ABO-approved workshops as well as Leonardo courses on how to recognize and overcome bias to better serve diverse patients and meet their unique health needs. Digital resources that underscore the need for vision care were also created for eyecare professionals to share with their diverse patients.

Collaborations with nonprofits including Latinos en Optometry (LEO) as well as the continued Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Light Intelligent Tour in partnership with Black EyeCare



Perspective (BCEP) focused on introducing the world of eyecare to help increase diversity among the next generation of optometrists, ophthalmologists and opticians.

Also, at this year's Transitions Academy, the DAB participated in the company's annual mobile vision clinic event with the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation in Orlando, Florida. Over 80-plus unhoused patients were seen who may have otherwise lacked access to eye exams and glasses.

The HBCU Light Intelligent Tour, which was conceived and launched in 2022 by the Transitions DAB and executed in partnership with BCEP, continued to create awareness of optical careers among diverse populations by connecting with 350 students from 12 schools through school visits and student activation at NAAHP (National Association of African American Honors Programs).

Latinos en Optometry successfully launched a virtual Road to Optometry webinar series and visited two schools with high Hispanic student attendance connecting with 150 Hispanic students.

In addition to student outreach, Transitions is creating lasting partnerships with university presidents, faculty and pre-health advisors to provide HBCUs with continued support to recruit students into the optometric profession. Students reached at tour stops also receive ongoing communications like the Future Optometrist e-newsletter designed to share industry updates and trends as well as in-

formation regarding the Optometry Admission Test.

Demonstrating the impact of Transitions and BCEP's efforts, the tour was recognized as a finalist in the category of Education/Scholarship Program in Ragan Communications and PR Daily's 2023 CSR & Diversity Awards.

A spokesperson for Transitions DAB told *VM*, "While the Transitions DAB has continued to make great strides in developing resources, participation in community events and encouraging diverse students to join the optical industry, continued efforts to increase DE&I in eyecare are still needed. Multicultural representation among Black and Hispanic communities continues to be disproportionate in comparison to their counterparts." (Sources: US Census Bureau and Zippia)

As such, the Transitions DAB plans to continue its mission to impact diversity fundamentally by continuing to recruit additional DAB members as well as volunteers who have a passion for DE&I and innovative ideas for programs and tools to help guide the company's multicultural initiatives. Additionally, Transitions recognizes the need for continued educational and community outreach to help patients feel trust and comfort that their eyecare professional understands their health needs, that they receive equal access to care and understand that vision problems can have long-term impact on their overall health and well-being.

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The Vision Council Expands Its Scholarship Program and Will Address DE&I Issues at Its Summit

The Vision Council is committed to supporting a more diverse, equitable and inclusive industry. Opening Your Eyes: The Vision Council Scholarship Fund (<https://thevisioncouncilfoundation.org/opening-your-eyes/>) supports a pathway into the optical industry for students from under-represented communities. Covering tuition, certification and exam fees, the Fund's scholarships support students pursuing an associate degree in ophthalmic dispensing at participating schools within the National Federation of Optician-Schools (NFOS.)

Since its launch in 2021, The Vision Council has provided more than 25 students with scholarships covering the entire cost of their optician program.

Participating schools include:

- Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology (Mass.)
- Broward College (Fla.)
- Camden County College (N.J.)
- Cuyahoga Community College (Ohio)
- Daytona State College (Fla.)

- Durham Technical Community College (N.C.)
- Erie Community College (N.Y.)
- Essex County College (N.J.)
- Georgia Piedmont Community College (Georgia)
- Hillsborough Community College (Fla.)
- Miami Dade College (Fla.)
- Middlesex Community College (Conn.)
- New York City College of Technology (N.Y.)
- Raritan Valley Community College (N.J.)
- Reynolds Community College (Va.)
- Wiregrass Georgia Technical College (Georgia)
- Ogeechee Technical College (Georgia)
- Southwestern Community College (N.C.)

Upon each student's graduation, The Vision Council provides additional support to scholarship recipients getting their start in the industry and provides free registration and discounted continuing education at both Vision Expo East and West and complimentary National Academy of Opticianry (NAO) and Opticians Association of America (OAA) membership for the first year following graduation.

In January 2023, TVC hosted a DE&I-focused



breakout session at the 2023 Executive Summit in Austin with Marie Deveaux, "Creating Belonging." A PDF of those points is available at <https://thevisioncouncil.org/sites/default/files/assets/media/Marie%20Deveaux%20-%20Belonging%20Leave%20Behind%20-%20TVC%20Executive%20Summit%202023.pdf>.

Coming up in January at The Vision Council 2024 Executive Summit there will be a special DE&I panel discussion as well; participants are still being finalized. ■

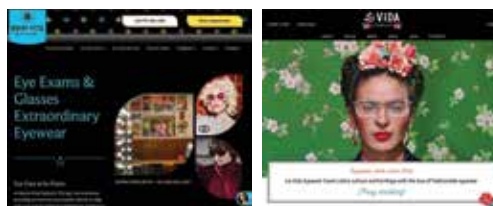
Latinos en Optometry Builds a Range of Resources and Events Across the ECP and Patient Community

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Hispanics will make up 29 percent of the U.S. population in 2050, compared with 14 percent in 2005.

"Our goal at Latinos en Optometry is to catch up with the population growth of Latinos and increase the number of Latinos graduating and practicing optometry. We are also committed to creating helpful resources for non-Latino optometrists to better serve the fast-growing Latino population."

Coming up in January is an exclusive 8-part live webinar series for undergraduates and current optometry students. Details are posted at www.latinosenoptometry.com/transitions-webinar-series. The next webinar will be on Jan. 10, 2024, with CEO board member Dr. Hector Santiago, professor at the Inter Optometry school in Puerto Rico, the president



Dr. Canto-Sim's Buena Vista Optical is in Chicago and the La Vida collections address special flair and fit.

of VOSH, and optometry student Liliana Gonzalez.

These webinars are interviews/chats of LEO's eight board members (on different days) who all practice different modalities in optometry. The LEO Student Ambassadors conduct the interviews. The webinars will share a range of modalities of practice, from traditional private practice to academia

and hybrid modes like corporate optometry mixed with specialties like myopia management. The first two webinars were recorded and are posted on the LEO website now.

The LEO now also has established its first club at Nova Southeastern College of Optometry in Florida and has plans to develop similar student clubs at all the colleges of optometry.

The group also has developed "The Roadmap to Optometry," a PDF that explains the steps needed to qualify to apply to optometry school for undergraduates interested in optometry. There is a college tour with a mobile clinic for undergrads to experience an eye exam during the college tour mobile clinic offered by LEO board member, Dr. Linda Arrango. ■

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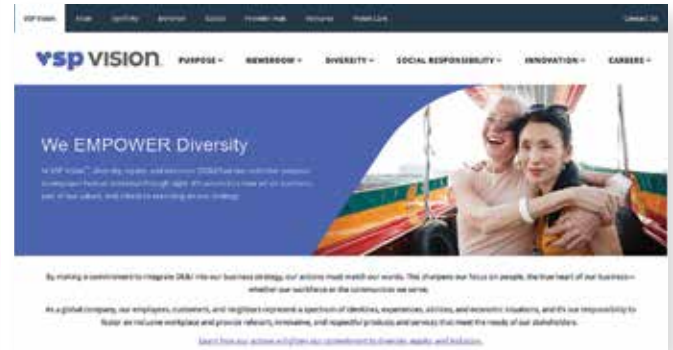
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VSP Vision Expands Awareness of DEI Issues Inside and Outside Its Organization

VSP Vision (<https://vspvision.com/>) continues to work toward enhancing its DE&I initiatives with business partners and the many communities it services, such as diverse contributions in philanthropic giving and adherence to its Supplier Diversity Program.



Most recently, for second-consecutive year, VSP Vision has been included on Seramount's annual Inclusion Index (<https://seramount.com/best-companies/2023-inclusion-index-organizations/>) which recognizes companies that are leading the way in fostering diverse and inclusive work environments.

"The Inclusion Index is another great barometer that not only underscores VSP Vision's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, but also helps guide our continued journey to a more inclusive workplace," said VSP Vision chief diversity officer Marvin Davenport. "We are proud that our collective commitment to DE&I elevated VSP Vision to a short list of companies that achieved a score of 70 percent or higher."

With a goal of helping organizations throughout the U.S. recognize their DE&I successes and areas of opportunity, Seramount ranked applicants

in three areas, including best practices in recruitment, retention and advancement of people from under-represented groups; creating an inclusive culture; and improvement in demographic diversity for women and racial/ethnic minorities.

VSP boasts a robust Business Resource Group (BRG's) program that offers professional development curriculums to BRG leaders. Similarly, leadership development and mentorship programs are available to all employees seeking to enhance their distinct skills and capabilities.

In addition to developing the DE&I space internally, VSP continues to work toward enhancing DE&I initiatives with business partners and the many communities it serves, such as diverse contributions in philanthropic giving and adherence to its Supplier Diversity Program.

This is the latest recognition from Seramount this year as VSP earned accolades as a Top Company for

Executive Women and a Top Company for Multicultural Women in September and June, respectively. VSP has been the recipient of additional honors recognizing the company's DE&I initiatives in 2023, including being recognized by the National Organization on Disability (NOD) for its commitment to employing and advancing professional opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

VSP also earned the "Vets Indexes 4 Star Employer" designation, recognizing VSP's ongoing efforts to recruit, hire, retain and develop veterans and the military-connected community.

And Davenport, VSP's first diversity officer, was honored by Diversity FIRST (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/diversityfirst/>) as a Top 100 Diversity Officer in March. Davenport was the only honoree selected from the eyecare industry.

More about VSP Vision's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, are posted at vspvision.com/diversity. ■

Transitions Diversity Advisory Board Widens Its Initiatives

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In 2024, the Transitions DAB aspires to continue to create new programs and initiatives to support eyecare professionals in their efforts to provide the best possible experience for all patients as well as making an impact on the multicultural representation of eyecare professionals and providing equitable access to eyecare.

The Transitions Diversity Advisory Board and OneSight are partnering for the third year in a row,

days before Transitions Academy in February 2024, to create a community event where the companies will provide free eye exams, lenses and frames to multicultural and low-income individuals in Orlando, Florida.

Transitions plans to continue the outreach to students through the HBCU Light Intelligent Tour and expand outreach to Hispanic students with a Latinos en Optometry Road to Optometry Tour. A digital and printed roadmap will give guidance from

undergrads to the Optometry Admission Test and beyond for students who are interested in optical careers but are unsure where to start their journey.

For interested ECPs, more details on the DAB and a large suite of multicultural resources and learning essentials are posted at https://trade.transitions.com/learningcenter/multicultural?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=PRO2013%2BMC%2BToolkit%2BRemarketng on the Transitions Pro site. ■

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