

Excerpts Concerning Optometric Education from Recent Progress  
Reports to the Commission on Planning Studies Underway:

1. December 4, 1975

"In response to documented manpower needs for optometrists in the Southeast," the Assistant Director for Health Affairs and two members of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (Dr. Draffin and Mr. Walsh) have met with counterparts from Georgia and North Carolina, under sponsorship of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), to develop a plan for a regional school of optometry to serve the three adjacent states. Each state recognizes the need for expansion of optometric education, but no single state is prepared to provide the total resources required to establish a quality school on its own. Consequently, the possibility of shared capital funding and operating expenses is being explored; possible assistance from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in the procurement of matching funds for construction as well as start-up support for a new program is also being explored. The proposed regional school would reflect the characteristics prescribed as requisite for new optometric facilities by the Liaison Committee for Optometry of the Association for Academic Health Centers as recommended by the consultants' report to SREB. Consequently, it is expected that the host state, when designated, would locate the new school in a major academic health center, as was done in Alabama where the new School of Optometry has been located at the Medical Center of the University of Alabama in Birmingham. Optometry would be assured, by this means, of participation in the training programs and research opportunities that prevail for the full complement of health professions found within an academic health center.

Within South Carolina, the quantitative need for practicing optometrists is under analysis by the Health Manpower Division of the Governor's Office. The data from this study will be available to a Task Force on Optometric Education established by the Health Education Authority to engage in planning, to relate to the SREB-sponsored development of a regional model, and to provide advice to the Commission."

2. June 2, 1976

"At the invitation of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), representatives of the Commission have participated with their counterparts in Georgia and North Carolina in the development of a tri-state regional plan for optometric education through the establishment of a school of optometry in an academic health center in one of these three states, with sharing of capital and operational expenses. This regional planning effort has produced a model for the proposed school and recommendations for implementation, which have been endorsed by the Southern Regional Education Board and forwarded to the higher education agencies of the three states with the request that answers to these questions be provided:

- (1) Does your state wish to participate in this proposed regional plan for optometric education?
- (2) Would your state like to be considered as the host state for the proposed regional school?

The Health Education Authority, with assistance from its Task Force on Optometric Education, will advise the Commission on this matter."