
New England College of Optometry Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020

Dear Faculty, Staff, Students and Members of the Board of Trustees:

The New England College of Optometry (NECO) is committed to the principles of strategic planning in the development of its organizational goals and priorities. This plan will be used to guide the activities of NECO over the next five years, enabling the College to make important financial and strategic choices in resource deployment, and in reaching tradeoff decisions among different, and often competing, alternatives.

In creating the plan, we are mindful of the influence of the College's culture on our ability to execute this strategy. Moreover, we must continue to coordinate and align all our academic, administrative, and clinical activities to maintain the institutional agility necessary to adapt to changing conditions and increased competition. We recognize that successful implementation of this plan will depend on the quality and expertise of our didactic, research, and clinical faculty as well as our administrative staff and leadership team, along with our ability to focus our attention and resources on those strategic priorities designed to positively impact the experience and success of our students, improve the health and well-being of our patients, advance our reputation, and secure our financial sustainability into the future.

The decisions in 2008 to unite the Board of Trustees' oversight of the College and New England Eye and in 2014 to merge the executive leadership and financial management of our owned-and-operated eye clinics and our community-based clinical training programs were made to promote a singular institutional mission and vision, and to ensure that clinical immersion, patient care, and service continue to be the key signatures of NECO's curriculum and student experience. These pivotal decisions have enabled us to build a long-term financial model that emphasizes revenue diversification and improved cost and risk management, while elevating our role in providing primary and specialty optometric services within a system of integrated care through our partnerships with community health centers, school-based health programs, the Veterans Administration and other medial center affiliates.

We are cognizant that all of our competitors claim to offer educational leadership, innovation, and unparalleled opportunities for patient-centered clinical experiences. We recognize that each of our students will be entering a profession that is poised for growth while simultaneously being transformed by the shifting marketplace of eye and healthcare delivery, increased emphasis on coordinated care, and disruptive changes brought on by technological advances. NECO's Strategic Planning Committee was therefore charged with addressing the following fundamental strategic questions:

- 1) How do we - as a small, private and heavily tuition dependent optometric college - thrive in the context of these changes, and what does this mean for each of our core activities of optometric education, research and patient care? (note: we will continue to explore partnerships, including potential mergers, however our intention is to do so from a position of strength and clarity about the expected benefits, both short and long term)
- 2) An optometric education is expensive and the national job market unclear. What must we do to ensure that a NECO education is a prudent investment and our College is the best place for optometric education and clinical training; what will become our "proof points", and how will we deliver on this promise to our students?
- 3) What is the optimum model for the delivery of clinical training, what should it cost and how should these costs be managed?
- 4) How do we brand our institution and elevate our presence locally and globally?

This strategic plan is united by our emphasis on stimulating teaching excellence; making connections between discovery, integration, and application to improve patient care; and accentuating early and diverse clinical experiences *designed and timed* to allow students to meld the knowledge, skills and compassion necessary for lifelong professional and personal success.

Our commitment to students

The culture of NECO is one in which students thrive in a rigorous, yet highly supportive, atmosphere. With access to more than 150 clinics and 200 schools in the greater Boston area and beyond, NECO uses the city's vast medical network to offer every student a superior clinical education experience that introduces the aspiring optometrist to a richly diverse patient base in a variety of settings, including hospitals, community health centers, private practices, and mobile eye clinics. NECO's unique clinical programs put students on the forefront of community-based, collaborative care, emphasizing the vital role an optometrist plays as a member of patient-centered health care models.

In the first year of optometry school, the clinical experience begins with **Patient Care I** (screenings and observations). Assignments commence within the first several weeks of the first semester and continue throughout the entire year. The observation program places students in different health settings to critically observe communication techniques utilized by experienced clinicians. **Patient Care II** is the primary clinical component of the second year curriculum and the first opportunity for students to apply their knowledge and skills in a clinical practice as part of an eye care team. The primary goal of the experience is to solidify the student's clinical skills while beginning the application of a rapidly evolving knowledge base. NECO utilizes its diverse and disseminated clinic for Patient Care II assignments and students may be assigned to hospitals, private practices, community health centers, and group practices. **Patient Care III** is the clinical component of the third year of optometry school and represents the first time students take responsibility for providing a complete optometric exam including testing and analysis. Similar to Patient Care II, NECO utilizes its diverse and disseminated clinic for assignments and students will typically be assigned to three different locations throughout the year. **Patient Care IV** is the clinical component of the final year and is made up of four, 3-month long, full-time external rotations. Students progress through their final year, expanding upon the technical skills and basic analytical skills of their third year and become independent, problem solving clinicians. NECO offers final year students a vast number of sites that are diverse in patient base and location. Although all students will complete part of the final year in the Boston area, opportunities for national and international travel are also offered.

Our faculty and academic programs

There are presently 49 dedicated full-time faculty members, 28 (14 tenured) with the College and 21 (1 tenured) at New England Eye, who are experienced clinicians and optometric educators. They are passionate about teaching as well as the professional and personal development of their students. The rigor and relevance of our academic and clinical programs, the personal interest taken in each student, and the sense of community created by faculty, administration, and staff distinguish NECO in the field of optometric colleges and universities.

The traditional four-year Doctor of Optometry (**OD**) degree is the largest program at NECO with a total student count of just under 490. Smaller programs include the Accelerated Optometric Degree Program (**AODP** with 11 students), designed for medical doctors and/or PhD scientists who wish to become doctors of optometry; the Advanced Standing International Program (**ASIP** with 14 students), which admits graduates of foreign optometry programs with a minimum of two years of experience to the Doctor of Optometry degree program; and the PhD/OD China Program (**OD-China** with 2 students) with our international affiliate, Wenzhou Medical University. NECO also offers an **MS in Vision Science** Program for candidates who wish to earn a MS degree without enrolling in the College's OD degree program; a **dual MS/OD** degree program for enrolled optometry students who wish to also earn a MS degree; and a **dual OD/PhD** degree for enrolled optometry students who wish to also earn a PhD degree through the Boston University School of Medicine, division of Graduate Medical Sciences.

Last updated September 21, 2015

Our foundations

Throughout its 120-year history, the College has continued to be a highly respected post-graduate school that is committed to excellence in optometric education, innovation, and patient care. Educating tomorrow's optometrists requires that our faculty be outstanding teachers, scholars, and clinicians; that our administrative staff and leadership team be exceptionally talented and collaborative; and that we continually improve the physical, technological, and human environment within which learning takes place. In realizing our strategic aspirations, we commit to preserving our community-oriented environment while encouraging philanthropic and volunteer support among our board, alumni, faculty, staff, friends, students, and corporate sponsors. We will also build a distinctive brand in the marketplace to increase awareness, enhance perception, intensify consideration by highly qualified students, faculty recruits and partners, and to shape, protect and optimize how others perceive the value of the programs and services we provide.

Our framework for teaching and learning, research, and patient care and clinical education – established by the Strategic Planning Committee and defined more fully on the following pages – will shape our goals for 2015 through 2020. Targeted investments in these areas will ensure that we remain the most well-regarded optometric college in the world, recognized for preparing optometrists to serve their patients with exceptional proficiency, integrity and professionalism; for producing highly respected research that advances the frontiers of optometric knowledge while achieving external support and recognition; for our ability to respond to the rapidly evolving world of professional education and healthcare; and for providing excellent patient care while serving the needs of the public.

On the pages that follow, you will read about our Mission, Vision, and Values that guide our work and investments, and the framework, goals, and proof points of success for our core activities of Teaching and Learning, Research, and Patient Care and Clinical Education.

Thank you for learning more about NECO's Strategic Plan 2015-2020. We are excited about our future yet mindful our work begins anew with the Board's endorsement of this plan, and the task force teams' shift to implementation. It is my hope this plan will inspire you to join NECO as we set a new course for our future.

Sincerely,

President Clifford Scott, OD, MPH

Mission and Vision

Our Mission

Changing the way people see the world through optometric education, discovery and service.

We do so by:

- *integrating innovative education with early and diverse clinical experiences to prepare students to become outstanding Doctors of Optometry*
- *advancing the frontiers of optometric knowledge through research, and translating that knowledge to improve patients' lives worldwide*
- *cultivating compassionate care of the highest level of proficiency, integrity, and professionalism; influencing public policy; expanding access to comprehensive and specialty optometric services; and instilling sensitivity to the health and social welfare of diverse communities*

Our Vision

NECO will continue to be a leading college of optometry in the rapidly evolving world of professional education and healthcare.

Our Values

The following shared beliefs guide our actions, decisions, planning, and interactions with students, patients, faculty, staff, and the community.

- **Relationships: We believe that all relationships matter.**
Our identity is rooted in our highly personal, community-oriented ethos. We believe that our relationships with students, patients, clinical affiliates, and each other matter. Each relationship we develop and nurture makes us stronger.
- **Collaboration: We believe people working together towards a common purpose can accomplish far more than adding the contributions of individual efforts.**
We strive to develop relationships that reflect this belief and pursue meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships.
- **Professionalism: We value a culture of integrity, accountability, proficiency, transparency, and mutual respect in how we work and communicate with one another.**
We emphasize the importance of experience, competence, resourcefulness, knowledge, and inquiry as we work through a shared vision for the common good.
- **Excellence: We strive to achieve the highest quality standards in patient care and satisfaction, education, and research through continued reflection, assessment, and improvement.**
We foster an environment where individuals are encouraged to explore their interests, take risks, develop their intellectual and human potential, and continue to question and make discoveries as lifelong learners.
- **Diversity & Inclusion: We value and respect the diversity of our students, staff, and patients.**
We help each other develop a greater awareness towards the complexity of individuals, human life, and health and well-being. We seek to learn from one another through our diverse experiences and perspectives and foster an atmosphere of compassion, courtesy, and mutual respect.
- **Social Responsibility: We value our tradition of serving the community and bringing vision care to underserved populations.**
We integrate knowledge with social responsibility at a local, national, and international level. We encourage engagement and purpose through our commitment to community service. Our work promotes vision health and eye care, education, and advocacy, as we works towards sustainable models of health care delivery.
- **Legacy and Innovation: We honor our legacy while we commit to our future.**
We recognize that our College has a rich history and honor the best parts of our past. We also realize we are continuously changing and evolving and have an obligation to the future of the institution and our students by being forward-looking in our approach to education, research, patient care, and financial and operational sustainability.

Establishing the Foundations: Creating a Roadmap for the Development of our Strategic Goals

Teaching and Learning

We prepare our students to become outstanding Doctors of Optometry who exemplify professionalism and compassion in the communities they serve. The curriculum optimizes the synergistic relationship between the didactic and clinical experience. We deliver the didactic and clinical curriculum by utilizing both traditional and innovative pedagogical practices to ensure a learning experience that is student-centered and engaging. NECO fosters an ethos that celebrates inquiry, collaboration, and life-long learning, all of which serve to attract and retain high quality faculty, students, and staff.

Research

We advance the frontiers of optometric knowledge and translate that knowledge to improve patients' lives worldwide, by reducing vision loss and disability, and by transforming eye care delivery. Our goal is to promote fundamental and innovative discoveries, and their application, to improve vision health by facilitating creative research engagement by faculty and students.

Patient Care and Clinical Education

We provide exceptional care for the diagnosis and treatment of eye and vision disorders. We engage students in diverse clinical experiences that challenge them to apply their skills, knowledge and compassion to improve the vision, eye health, and quality of life for every patient. We strive to expand access to comprehensive and specialty optometric services through advocacy and development of public health initiatives, and through community-centered programs that embrace our philosophy of integrated care.

Teaching and Learning: Goals, Resources, and Assessment

We prepare our students to become outstanding Doctors of Optometry who exemplify professionalism and compassion in the communities they serve. The curriculum optimizes the synergistic relationship between the didactic and clinical experience. We deliver the didactic and clinical curriculum by utilizing both traditional and innovative pedagogical practices to ensure a learning experience that is student-centered and engaging. NECO fosters an ethos that celebrates inquiry, collaboration, and life-long learning, all of which serve to attract and retain high quality faculty, students, and staff.

Goal 1: Define an enrollment strategy that meets enrollment and student quality targets within a student market that is increasingly competitive, diverse, and global.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Determining optimal mix of enrollment within our programs: four-year OD, AODP, ASIP, MS, PhD/OD China, OD/MS and OD/PhD programs. We will need to identify the characteristics that we feel are important for NECO students and target our outreach to these groups.
- B. Right-sizing our commitment to and widening our interests in our international affiliations and international student programs. In doing so, we will ensure integration of international students with the traditional four year students and ensure the curriculum meets their needs, including developing sites that are well equipped to support international students with different needs.
- C. Expanding our pool of students by identifying and supporting cohorts of prospective four-year OD students whose backgrounds and experiences are different than our current four year OD population, including currently underrepresented student populations. We must develop programs that will prepare these students for success at NECO and beyond.
- D. Ensuring our admissions program is adequately resourced to compete within the current environment while developing and expanding these alternative recruitment pipelines; making certain that all these processes are well-defined and well-integrated into the Admissions Office.

» **What resources are needed:**

1. Funds to conduct a market analysis of the national and international pool of students to ensure these markets are viable and sustainable. The market analysis should also include the option of reinstating our three-year OD program for students with MS degrees in life sciences.
2. Additional Student Services support will be needed, which will likely change and/or expand if our current model changes. Changing the cohorts will likely require additional specialized programs for these groups and NECO must ensure there is adequate staffing for this change. Resources dedicated to supporting visa issues, acclimation issues, and cross-cultural support must be allocated.
3. Additional financial support (grants/sources of aid) will need to be identified by the Financial Aid Office to help attract underrepresented student groups; the College should also evaluate other means of financial aid for merit.
4. Resources will be needed for curriculum evaluation to ensure that those not in the four-year program (AODP/ASIP, MS/OD) are prepared for clinic and have appropriate academic and clinical support.
5. Dedicated time from Academic Affairs and the Budget Office to conduct a cost analysis of all programs to inform appropriate cost effectiveness of changing our current enrollment strategy.
6. Institutional research staff to track survey data.

» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

1. Evaluate graduation and retention rates.
2. Evaluate Board pass rates and the distribution of pass rates
3. Assess results from student satisfaction surveys. Survey post-graduation at marked intervals to assess how well our students achieve in line with our strategic goals.
4. Assess impact on the NECO student culture if the cohorts change significantly. Use data to develop profiles of successful, satisfied students and use that as the target for outreach.
5. Successfully meet enrollment targets.
6. Assess profiles/attributes of students to understand who does well and who is successful at NECO.

Goal 2: Foster an Environment of Teaching Excellence.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Creating a “Center of Optometric Teaching Excellence,” sponsored by faculty working closely with instructional design and the library. The Center will aim to arm faculty with the tools needed to keep students engaged in the learning process and to retain and apply what they have learned. This may lead to a differentiating factor that students may consider when selecting schools.
- B. Mentoring junior and other faculty through workshops and symposia to enhance teaching effectiveness.
- C. Defining publication goals for articles on excellence in optometric teaching in the ASCO monthly newsletter as well as other optometric publications. Develop goals for speaking at conferences and symposia. Identify and obtain grants (i.e. AOF Innovation in Education grant) to support this effort.
- D. Investing in faculty development, including identifying several faculty to obtain graduate education in the field of education, leading to NECO offering a fellowship in optometric education. Graduates of the NECO fellowship will then become part of the Center of Optometric Teaching Excellence or become faculty members at NECO or at other optometric colleges.

» **What resources are needed?**

1. Faculty and staff time to research and design a teaching and learning center and to develop a model for implementation.
2. A budget to support the creation of the center, stipends for center leaders, conference fees, and faculty development.
3. Assistance from the branding team to promote our activities in this area to our stakeholders.

» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

1. Assess course evaluations for engagement.
2. Assess whether publication and presentation goals have been met by faculty.
3. Evaluate the number of non-NECO faculty participating in faculty development through our Center of Optometric Excellence.
4. Implement an electronic badge system to encourage all faculty members to attend training.
5. Evaluate Admissions surveys to see if potential students identify strong teaching/faculty as a reason to consider NECO.
6. Assess critical thinking skills of students upon admission (during orientation) and upon the end of the four-year program to see if our program met the goal.

Goal 3: Provide unique educational experiences to widen our appeal to students.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Developing clinical sites that can accommodate specialties such as pediatrics, low vision, etc. and then offering specialized concentrations.
- B. Developing custom pathways for students. For example, we may create a program that has students immersed in the clinical environment in the first semester or year, and then start classroom after the immersion.
- C. Exploring additional combination of dual degrees programs (ex: OD/MPH degree). Ex. online MPH program allowing ODs to pursue an MPH degree.
- D. Creating a service-oriented experience (similar to VOSH) ideally for every student, but realistically starting with interested students and then scaling the model to all students. This experience does not need to be international but can be focused on underserved national and local populations.

»» **What resources are needed?**

1. Faculty expertise and time to devote to special tracks and administrative time to develop more clinical relationships that can accommodate specialty tracks.
2. Evaluation of the curriculum to find time to implement specialty tracks and the VOSH-like experiences for students.

»» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

1. Track the number of students enrolling in these experiences.
2. Create pre and post-graduation surveys to identify if these programs have become a differentiator.

Goal 4: Incorporate an IPE experience for every student.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Identifying a faculty administrator to run the program
- B. Identifying 2-3 faculty facilitators who will work with other faculty members to become program facilitators.
- C. Leveraging our relationships with our multi-discipline training sites such as Community Health Centers, outreach sites, and the VA to provide all students the opportunity to gain this experience in a clinical environment. Identify and establish new sites such as the Hass Center to become a model for IPE involvement.
- D. Develop implementation plan that leads to all students gaining the experience.

»» **What resources are needed?**

1. Budget to accommodate .5 FTE faculty lead, training for facilitators and conference funds, meeting and travel expenses, 1.0 faculty FTE to train the educators, .5 administrative support.
2. Review of curriculum to incorporate IPE related materials.

»» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

1. Assess against ASCO guidelines and accreditation requirements.
2. Evaluate student survey responses.

Research: Goals, Resources, and Assessment

We advance the frontiers of optometric knowledge and translate that knowledge to improve patients' lives worldwide, by reducing vision loss and disability, and by transforming eye care delivery. Our goal is to promote fundamental and innovative discoveries, and their application, to improve vision health by facilitating creative research engagement by faculty and students.

Goal 1: Create a Center for Vision Enhancement in areas such as:

- *Aberrations of the eye, including analyzing patients before and after surgery*
- *Dry Eye*
- *Alzheimer's diagnosis from retina and lens*
- *Visual impact of brain injury/damage and disease*
- *Refractive errors, including myopia, hyperopia, and presbyopia*
- *Low vision, sports vision*
- *Vision development (including amblyopia)*
- *Identifying the vision needs of populations and assessing impact of treatments*

The center will focus on biomedical and translational research and prevention and treatment strategies for individualized eye care using evidence-based research. Locations may include NECO, NEE, VA hospitals, and collaborations with external researchers.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Expanding areas of expertise through which the College is recognized as a world leader for its contributions to knowledge in selected areas in vision science and health care.
- B. Fostering collaborative research projects and initiatives with other leading institutions locally, nationally and internationally to develop new research directions.
- C. Encouraging synergy between clinical and research faculty.
- D. Disseminating findings through publications and presentations.

» **What resources are needed?**

1. Equipment, technology, and furniture to support research efforts
2. Staff to support the center and to conduct the research
3. Dedicated space to house researchers and labs for their research
4. Scheduled time for new hires and current faculty for research and grant-writing
5. Patients for clinical research (including a database for patients interested in being contacted about research)
6. Internal administrative infrastructure and technical support for projects: grants management and oversight, statistical support, business management, IT, library
7. Funding such as internal funds for space and equipment, preliminary research and grants for research projects

» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

1. Secure external funding for research projects
2. Publish findings in high-impact peer-reviewed scientific journals
3. Deliver presentations at scientific meetings and invited presentations
4. Develop new clinical treatments
5. Produce other measurable outcomes (patents, changes in health policies)

Goal 2: Recruit and retain outstanding faculty to provide excellent teaching and research.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Recruiting and retaining faculty who have demonstrated scholarly excellence in current and new research areas and provide them with time and resources to advance to the top of their fields.
- B. Providing encouragement, support and professional development opportunities for emerging research leaders.
- C. Encouraging synergy between clinical and research faculty.
- D. Balancing teaching and research responsibilities for research faculty.
- E. Setting clear criteria for internal funds for faculty.

» **What resources are needed?**

- 1. Rigorous standards for securing and maintaining funding, publish in high-impact peer-review journals
- 2. Internal administrative infrastructure and technical support for projects: grants management and oversight, statistical support, business management, IT, library
- 3. Space such as offices and research labs for new faculty
- 4. Funding such as internal funding for start-up funds, pilot projects, bridge funding, support staff
- 5. Adequate scheduled time

» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

- 1. Secure external funding for research projects
- 2. Publish findings in high-impact peer-reviewed scientific journals
- 3. Deliver presentations at scientific meetings and invited presentations
- 4. Introduce new clinical treatments
- 5. Receive external recognition

Goal 3: Provide opportunities and encourage students to participate in research.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Continuing to refine and promote research degree programs at the Masters and PhD levels that will further the College's research efforts and prepare graduates of these programs for careers in academia and research.
- B. Providing a sufficient number of research mentors for graduate programs.
- C. Offering opportunities for students to participate in significant research projects and share their research with others at the College and at conferences.

» **Resources Needed:**

- 1. Scheduled time assigned to faculty to mentor students
- 2. Project funding for equipment, supplies, and travel
- 3. Qualified mentors to support student researchers

» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

- 1. Detail the number of graduate degrees awarded
- 2. Note publications to which students have contributed and are named authors
- 3. Track what students have done after graduation in relation to research

Patient Care and Clinical Education: Goals, Resources, and Assessment

We provide exceptional care for the diagnosis and treatment of eye and vision disorders. We engage students in diverse clinical experiences that challenge them to apply their skills, knowledge and compassion to improve the vision, eye health, and quality of life for every patient. We strive to expand access to comprehensive and specialty optometric services through advocacy and development of public health initiatives, and through community-centered programs that embrace our philosophy of integrated care.

Goal 1: Ensure every graduating student receives a diverse and “appropriately timed” (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th year) set of clinical education experiences and patient encounters.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Recruiting, developing and retaining highly qualified clinical faculty.
- B. Expanding and diversifying optometric screening opportunities of children and adults.
- C. Aligning student clinical experiences with degree of knowledge and competency. Continue to assess and ensure clinical skills are at the appropriate level for patient encounters at different stages of education.
- D. Creating and properly supporting opportunities for every student to have early exposure to optometric specialties.
- E. Improving optical dispensing skills by creating opportunities to train under the guidance of licensed opticians or other allied health professionals.
- F. Enhancing the student’s understanding of the requisite business and operations functions (ex. exposure to billing, coding and the use of electronic health records) that ensures successful delivery of eye care in diverse health care environments.
- G. Determining the optimal mix of students from all levels of clinical training to improve productivity and clinical education at each clinical site.
- H. Continuing to develop more clinical sites and affiliations to enable the appropriate mix of patient encounters for all students.
- I. Developing sites amenable to changing student demographics.

» **What resources are needed**

1. Increased funding to recruit faculty nationally and internationally
2. Increased funding and time for mentorship and development of faculty members
3. Optimized student-to-faculty ratio at each clinical site to support clinical teaching

» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

1. Assess student satisfaction
2. Examine number of students participating in residencies
3. Examine Board pass rates
4. Determine if there is increased faculty satisfaction and retention
5. Evaluate student patient encounter logs
6. Measure the student clinical training by types and levels of patient care experiences
7. Solicit feedback from clinical educators

Goal 2: Support and externally promote our unique position as a leading provider of Optometric Specialties and develop New England Eye as a Center for Vision Enhancement.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Establishing New England Eye Commonwealth as a referral center for providing specialty optometric services to the New England Eye network, affiliates, and beyond.
- B. Improving referrals and awareness of NEE specialty services by:
 - Identifying which specialty services should be provided (supported by market research)
 - Hosting conferences for specialty care and services to NEE affiliate and external providers.

- Establishing a metric to determine outcomes and referral patterns.
 - Increasing brand awareness through innovative marketing initiatives.
 - Creating a streamlined referral process
- C. Developing new partnerships to foster inter-professional education (IPE).

»» **What resources are needed?**

1. Significant funding to develop and support infrastructure including IT
2. Significant funding to achieve a robust marketing, branding, and website initiative
3. Fundraising initiatives to complement and support clinical programs
4. Adequate facilities to support specialty services
5. Strategic faculty hires to provide specialty care

»» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

1. Examine number of patient encounters
2. Determine changes in revenue
3. Examine referral rates and patterns
4. Note patient retention and satisfaction
5. Increase social media presence
6. Increase institutional affiliations
7. Assess conference participation
8. Determine number of IPE shared patients

Goal 3: Execute business models for patient care and clinical training that promote efficiency and growth opportunities throughout the clinical system.

We will accomplish this by:

- A. Supporting our programs through strategic assignment of faculty resources.
- B. Providing enrichment and development of all affiliated clinical faculty.
- C. Developing strategies to strengthen clinical operations and identify “best practices” that can be shared with our clinical site partners.
- D. Developing metrics to determine the true cost of clinical education by site (ex. owned, CHCs, etc).
- E. Enhancing, strengthening, and leveraging our relationship with clinical partners by:
 - Branding the college name with clinical partners to ensure increased recognition.
 - Providing consultative services to optimize business and financial operations.
 - Negotiating contracts with ophthalmic vendors for preferred pricing.
 - Collaborating with partners on issues of common interest to improve the delivery of health care.
- F. Develop strategies for identifying the optimum portfolio of clinical sites by:
 - Continually analyzing the impact of existing sites on the quality and cost of clinical training.
 - Researching new sites and creating partnerships that ensure quality training for all students.

»» **What resources are needed?**

1. Significant funding to develop and support infrastructure, including IT
2. Significant funding to achieve a robust marketing, branding, and web site initiative
3. Fundraising initiatives to complement and support our clinical programs
4. Funding and resources to expand and establish owned and operated clinics
5. Funding and resources to sustain and grow current clinical affiliations and to secure new affiliations

»» **How will we assess the outcomes?**

1. Assess student satisfaction
2. Examine number of quality clinical placements
3. Increase fiscal responsibility to ensure financial sustainability of clinical sites
4. Increase overall clinical program patient census

NECO Strategic Planning: Overview of Goals by Task Force Team

Teaching and Learning	Research	Patient Care/Clinical Education
<p>Goal 1: Define an Enrollment Strategy that meets enrollment and student quality targets within a student market that is increasingly competitive, diverse, and global.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining optimal mix of enrollments: four-year OD, AODP, ASIP, MS, and PhD/OD China, OD/MS and OD/PhD programs. Right-sizing our commitment to and widening our interests in our international affiliations and international student programs. Expanding our pool of students by identifying cohorts of prospective 4-year OD students with different backgrounds and experiences. Ensuring admissions program is adequately resourced/expand alternative recruitment pipelines. <p>Goal 2: Foster an Environment of Teaching Excellence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a “Center of Optometric Teaching Excellence” Mentoring faculty through workshops and symposia to enhance teaching effectiveness. Defining publication and speaking goals for articles/symposia on excellence in optometric education and identify and obtain grants to support this effort. Investing in faculty development <p>Goal 3: Provide unique educational experiences to widen our appeal to students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing clinical sites that can accommodate specialties (ex. pediatrics, low vision) Developing custom pathways for students; Exploring additional combination of dual degrees programs (ex: OD/MPH degree); Creating a service-oriented experience (similar to VOSH) ideally for every student <p>Goal 4: Incorporate an IPE experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying faculty administrator to run program. Identify Faculty Leadership for IPE Programs Leveraging our relationships with affiliated sites. Develop implementation plan. 	<p>Goal 1: Create a Center for Vision Enhancement in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Aberrations of the eye, including analyzing patients before and after surgery</i> <i>Dry Eye</i> <i>Alzheimer’s diagnosis from retina and lens</i> <i>Visual impact of brain injury/damage and disease</i> <i>Refractive errors, including myopia, hyperopia, and presbyopia</i> <i>Low vision, sports vision</i> <i>Vision development (including amblyopia)</i> <i>Identifying the vision needs of populations and assessing impact of treatments</i> <p><i>The center will focus on biomedical and translational research and prevention and treatment strategies for individualized eye care using evidence-based research. Locations may include NECO, NEE, VA hospitals, and collaborations with external researchers.</i></p> <p>Goal 2: Recruit and retain outstanding faculty to provide excellent teaching and research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recruiting and retaining faculty who have demonstrated scholarly excellence in current and new research areas and provide them with time and resources to advance to the top of their fields.</i> <i>Providing encouragement, support and professional development opportunities for emerging research leaders.</i> <i>Encouraging synergy between clinical & research faculty.</i> <i>Balancing teaching and research responsibilities for research faculty.</i> <i>Setting clear criteria for internal funds for faculty.</i> <p>Goal 3: Provide opportunities and encourage students to participate in research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Continuing to refine and promote research degree programs at the Masters and PhD levels that will further the College’s research efforts and prepare graduates of these programs for careers in academia and research.</i> <i>Providing a sufficient number of research mentors for graduate programs.</i> <i>Offering opportunities for students to participate in significant research projects and share their research with others at the College and at conferences.</i> 	<p>Goal 1: Ensure every graduating student receives a diverse and “appropriately timed” set of clinical education experiences and patient encounters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recruiting/developing/retaining highly qualified clinical faculty.</i> <i>Expanding and diversifying optometric screening opportunities of children and adults.</i> <i>Better aligning student clinical experiences with degree of knowledge and competency at different stages.</i> <i>Creating and properly supporting opportunities for every student to have early exposure to optometric specialties.</i> <i>Improving optical dispensing skills by creating opportunities to train under the guidance of licensed opticians or other allied health professionals.</i> <i>Enhancing the student’s understanding of the requisite business and operations functions (ex. exposure to billing, coding and the use of electronic health records) that ensures successful delivery of eye care in diverse health care environments.</i> <i>Determining the optimal mix of students from all levels of clinical training to improve productivity and clinical education at each clinical site.</i> <p>Goal 2: Support and externally promote our unique position as a leading provider of Optometric Specialties and develop NEE Commonwealth as a Center for Vision Enhancement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Establishing New England Eye Commonwealth as a referral center for providing specialty optometric services to the New England Eye network, affiliates, and beyond.</i> <i>Improving referrals and awareness of NEE specialty services (hosting conferences, analyzing referral patterns, brand awareness).</i> <i>Developing new partnerships and sites to foster IPE.</i> <p>Goal 3: Execute business models for patient care and clinical training that promote efficiency and growth opportunities throughout the clinical system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Supporting our programs through strategic assignment of faculty resources.</i> <i>Providing enrichment and development opportunities to affiliated clinical faculty.</i> <i>Developing strategies to strengthen clinical operations and identify “best practices” that can be shared with our clinical site partners.</i> <i>Developing metrics to measure cost of clinical education.</i> <i>Enhancing, strengthening, leveraging our relationships with clinical partners. Identifying new sites.</i>

NECO Strategic Planning: Areas of Overlap and Integration

AREAS OF OVERLAP	Teaching and Learning	Research	Patient Care/Clinical Education
SPECIALTY SERVICES “CENTER FOR VISION ENHANCEMENT”	<p>Goal: Provide unique educational experiences to widen our appeal to students.</p> <p>Develop clinical sites that can accommodate specialties such as pediatrics, low vision, etc. and custom pathways for students to connect clinical and classroom experiences.</p>	<p>Goal: Create a Center for Vision Enhancement to conduct patient-centered research.</p> <p>The center will focus on biomedical and translational research, and prevention and treatment strategies for individualized eye care using evidence-based research. Locations may include NECO, NEE, VA hospitals, and collaborations with external researchers.</p>	<p>Goal: Support and externally promote our unique position as a leading provider of Optometric Specialties and develop New England Eye as a Center for Vision Enhancement.</p> <p>Establish New England Eye Commonwealth as a referral center for providing specialty optometric services to the New England Eye network, affiliates, and beyond.</p>
FACULTY	<p>Goal: Foster an Environment of Teaching Excellence</p> <p>Create a “Center of Optometric Teaching Excellence”;</p> <p>Mentor faculty - workshops, symposia;</p> <p>Define publication and speaking goals for articles/symposia on excellence in optometric education and identify and obtain grants to support this effort;</p> <p>Invest in faculty development</p>	<p>Goal: Recruit and retain outstanding faculty to provide excellent teaching and research.</p> <p>Recruit and retain faculty who have demonstrated scholarly excellence in current/new research areas;</p> <p>Provide encouragement, support, professional development opportunities for emerging research leaders;</p> <p>Encourage synergy between clinical and research faculty;</p> <p>Balance teaching and research responsibilities for research faculty;</p> <p>Set clear criteria for internal funds for faculty</p>	<p>Goal: Recruit and retain highly qualified clinical faculty (ODs and Clinical Directors).</p> <p>Develop a clear position description and set of responsibilities for the Clinical Director role at each site;</p> <p>Support our programs through strategic assignment of faculty resources;</p> <p>Provide enrichment and development of all affiliated clinical faculty.</p>
STUDENT EXPERIENCE	<p>Goal: Provide unique educational experiences to widen our appeal to students.</p> <p>Develop clinical sites that can accommodate specialties;</p> <p>Develop custom pathways for students;</p> <p>Explore additional combination of dual degrees programs (ex: OD/MPH degree);</p> <p>Create a service-oriented experience (similar to VOSH) for every student</p> <p>Goal: Incorporate an IPE experience for every student</p> <p>Leverage our relationships with our multi-discipline training sites such as Community Health Centers, outreach sites and the VA to provide all students the opportunity to gain this experience in a clinical environment. Identify and establish new sites such as the Hass Center to become a model for IPE involvement.</p>	<p>Goal: Provide opportunities for students to participate in research</p> <p>Continue to refine and promote research degree programs at the Masters and PhD levels that will further the College’s research efforts and prepare graduates of these programs for careers in academia and research;</p> <p>Provide a sufficient number of research mentors for graduate programs;</p> <p>Offer opportunities for students to participate in significant research projects and share their research with others at the College and at conferences.</p>	<p>Goal: Ensure every graduating student will have a diverse and appropriately timed set of clinical education experiences and patient encounters.</p> <p>Expand and diversify optometric screening opportunities of children and adults;</p> <p>Better align student clinical experiences with degree of knowledge and competency;</p> <p>Create and properly support opportunities for every student to have early exposure to optometric specialties;</p> <p>Improve optical dispensing skills by creating opportunities to train under the guidance of licensed opticians or other allied health professionals;</p> <p>Determine the optimal mix of students from all levels of clinical training to improve productivity and clinical education at each clinical site;</p>

NECO Strategic Planning Subgroup Goals: Areas of Overlap (continued)

FACILITIES & INFRA-STRUCTURE	TEACHING AND LEARNING Beacon Street	RESEARCH Beacon Street-Commonwealth-Other?	PATIENT CARE/CLINICAL ED Commonwealth
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Investigate optimal strategies for transport services between Beacon St. and Commonwealth Ave. b) Create a “hub of student intellectual and social engagement” on the 1st floor, combining IT Lab, E-Classroom, Library and Café. c) Seek approval from BRA to build over the 424 parking lot, and/or outdoor area next to Library. d) Survey classroom configurations and other spaces to improve interactive learning, virtual meetings and study space. Measure usage. e) Enhance the Pre-Clinic Experience. f) Introduce self-service applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Explore whether wet lab and animal research should be conducted at Beacon or alternative locations. b) Determine what type of space is necessary and how it will be funded to move forward with the creation of the Center for Vision Enhancement to focus on biomedical and translational research, and prevention and treatment strategies for individualized eye care using evidence-based research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Relocate retail clinic to 1st floor street level of Commonwealth; expand specialty services. b) Investigate options for expanding/improving leased space at Commonwealth when 2nd floor lease expires in December 2016. c) Explore whether we should develop the concept of a Clinical Campus at Commonwealth (determine what components would be included and risks/benefits of this configuration) d) Create a portfolio of clinical partnerships that will deliver effective, efficient, and compassionate vision care while educating our students.
FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY	<p>Define an Enrollment Strategy that meets both enrollment and student quality targets within a student market that is increasingly competitive, diverse, and global. Annually survey the optometric employment market.</p> <p>Explore options for reducing the optometry curriculum and pre-optometry preparation.</p> <p>Limit tuition increases, and reduce tuition dependency by increasing revenue from patient care, fundraising, external support for research.</p> <p>Control debt by inclusion in Federal scholarship and loan reduction programs.</p>	<p>Develop funding strategies to maintain and grow the research program (both federally and industry funded).</p> <p>Develop metrics to measure the net direct and indirect cost of NECO’s research program.</p> <p>Establish rigorous standards for securing and maintaining funding and publishing in high impact peer review journals.</p>	<p>Patient Care Revenue Growth –increase net patient revenue by focusing on productivity, billing and coding, optical and specialty services.</p> <p>Develop strategies to strengthen clinical operations and identify “best practices” that can be shared with our clinical site partners.</p> <p>Enhance, strengthen, and leverage our relationship with clinical partners.</p> <p>Develop metrics to measure cost of clinical education by site and by year (of student).</p>
MARKETING & BRANDING	<p>Engage with a professional marketing/branding firm to: Clarify our value proposition and identity in the field of optometric colleges and universities, and as a provider of optometric services to the public; create a strong brand identity that distinguishes NECO from its competitors and helps attract prospective students, patients, and funding sources (i.e. philanthropic support, research grants, ophthalmic industry), reinforces our reputation within academia, and promotes a strong and lasting connection with our alumni community; develop messaging to communicate NECO’s distinctive place in the primary markets of optometric education and optometric-care services (i.e. primary eye care, specialty eye care, community service, public health and research); and integrate the identity of NECO and NEE in our communications. The work will involve market research (including an analysis of the demand for specialty optometric services), brand messaging, and strategic marketing to create a comprehensive positioning statement to communicate our mission, vision, values, strengths, and unique and distinguishing features.</p>		

NECO BRAND PILLARS

OVERALL MESSAGE: GREAT EXPERIENCES FORGE GREAT DOCTORS

BRAND PILLARS	CLINICAL EXPERIENCE	LOCATION & COMMUNITY	IMPACT & SERVICE	INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP	STUDENT-TO-PROFESSIONAL TRANSITION
CORE MESSAGE	Early and Diverse Clinical Experiences	Rich History of Higher Education & Healthcare Excellence	Serving Patients and Impacting Communities	Charting the Future of Optometry	Ensuring Lifelong Success in an Evolving Profession
KEY SUPPORT POINTS	<p>COMPREHENSIVE CLINICAL TRAINING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical experience begins immediately and continues throughout your education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ First Year: Learn vision screening and observation techniques ✓ Second Year: Participate in eye exams ✓ Third Year: Lead complete eye exam ✓ Final Year: External rotations; leveraging vast technical skills to become problem-solving clinicians <p>A DIVERSE CLINICAL NETWORK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose-built network of clinics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hospitals ✓ Schools ✓ VA medical centers ✓ Health centers ✓ Elder care sites ✓ Private practices ✓ NECO's mobile clinic Creates the optimum environment for developing students' technical and analytical skills Exposes students to a richly diverse patient base Brings to light the vital role an optometrist plays as a member of patient-centered healthcare teams 	<p>BOSTON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation and excellence in higher education and healthcare happen here Our location distinctively enhances opportunities to integrate the curriculum into the hub of Boston's medical community <p>NECO CAMPUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NECO unites Boston's historic Back Bay location with a newly designed clinical campus on Commonwealth Avenue <p>NECO COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community is at our core <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students thrive in a rigorous yet highly supportive atmosphere ✓ Create lifelong relationships with fellow students, faculty, alumni, and our institution 	<p>IMPACTING PATIENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our students impact hundreds of patients' lives while at NECO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Providing vision care to children, adults, and senior citizens ✓ Cultivating compassionate care at the highest levels of proficiency, integrity, and professionalism for every patient <p>IMPACTING COMMUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving access to eye and vision care serving diverse communities is the cornerstone of our clinical programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Utilizing the resources of our mobile clinic and working throughout our purpose-built clinical network, students provide care to the Greater Boston community Promoting sensitivity to the health and social welfare of diverse communities across cultural environments and healthcare settings is paramount to our mission <p>IMPACTING GLOBAL HEALTHCARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to care goes beyond our Greater Boston clinical practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students are encouraged to participate in affiliated programs bringing vision services to overseas populations who would otherwise not receive eye care ✓ VOSH 	<p>LEADERS EDUCATING FUTURE LEADERS: A RICH HISTORY OF INNOVATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NECO is for the future leaders in optometry Our faculty and administration continue a distinguished legacy of leadership within optometry NECO has always been at the forefront of innovative programming and clinical experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Establishing optometry at community health centers and VA hospitals ✓ Bringing care to the homeless and intellectually challenged NECO continues to push the standards of care, disrupting traditional models <p>PATIENT-CENTERED, TEAM-BASED HEALTHCARE MODELS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NECO model embraces a patient-centered model staffed by high-functioning teams of doctors, optometry students, and other medical professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Approach promotes patient-driven, proactive, personalized, team-based care ✓ Focus on wellness and disease prevention, resulting in improvements in patient satisfaction, healthcare outcomes, and costs 	<p>DISCOVER YOUR PASSION IN THE FIELD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our professional program has the flexibility for students to tailor their experience, exploring the specialties within optometry and pursuing concentrations, advanced degrees, participation in research, and studies with industry leaders Our emphasis on the relationship between the physical, technological, and human environments, and the contributions we make to society, enhance the learning and development of our students, while preparing them to become outstanding ODs <p>BE PREPARED FOR THE EVER-CHANGING FIELD OF HEALTHCARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared throughout your career to adapt to the rapidly changing technology in eye care NECO provides lifelong learning opportunities through our continuing education programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows alumni and other providers to further their optometric knowledge and skills in generalized and specialized areas

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BRAND PILLARS	CLINICAL EXPERIENCE	LOCATION & COMMUNITY	IMPACT & SERVICE	INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP	STUDENT-TO-PROFESSIONAL TRANSITION
CORE MESSAGE	Early and Diverse Clinical Experiences	Rich History of Higher Education & Healthcare Excellence	Serving Patients and Impacting Communities	Charting the Future of Optometry	Ensuring Lifelong Success in an Evolving Profession
			<p>INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY & PUBLIC HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For over a decade, NECO leadership has advocated for improvements in healthcare legislation at the state level, as well as maintaining close advocacy relationships with the Massachusetts congressional delegation and federal health policy administrators All NECO students are required to engage in two public health projects 	<p>RESEARCH FOCUSED ON IMPROVING PATIENTS' LIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The research we conduct has a direct impact on patient outcomes, changing the way clinicians examine their patients and the recommended treatment options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers opportunities to learn and experience evidence-based concepts, best practices, emerging trends in care Ability to be part of NECO's commitment to expanding horizons and reinforcing knowledge foundations through state-of-the-art ongoing education <p>FIND SUCCESSFUL CAREER PLACEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our graduates enjoy a strong career trajectory. They continue to secure career opportunities in every facet of optometric practice <p>NECO'S ALUMNI NETWORK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NECO's Alumni Association exists to promote the best interests of the College and to establish mutually beneficial relations between esteemed alumni and the institution Our alumni help identify and recruit prospective students, support College events, actively support current students by participating in a variety of student-directed clubs and programs, and champion students in their efforts for job placement post-graduation