A close-up photograph of a person's eye, looking slightly to the right. The eye is brown and has long, dark eyelashes. Overlaid on the image are several concentric circles in shades of blue and white, creating a ripple effect around the eye. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

STRATEGIC PLAN
2020–2025

**PREPARING
TODAY'S
OPTOMETRISTS
FOR
TOMORROW'S
OPTOMETRY**



New England
College of Optometry

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the New England College of Optometry is to **change the way people see the world.**

We do so by:

- Integrating innovative education with early and diverse clinical experiences to prepare today's optometrists for tomorrow's optometry.
- Advancing the frontiers of optometric knowledge through evidence-based 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.

VISION STATEMENT

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

OUR VALUES

Purpose & Impact: We commit to high quality and compassionate patient care, access and advocacy for underserved populations, and impact that improves lives.

Excellence & Discovery: We encourage curiosity, explore innovation, embrace and adapt to change, and dedicate ourselves to advancing eye care in the midst of evolving healthcare delivery systems and patient expectations.

Leadership & Inspiration: We inspire each other to think differently, we hold ourselves accountable for our actions, words and results, and we communicate clearly and respectfully.

Collegiality & Collaboration: We approach our work and our relationships with a spirit of teamwork, helpfulness, honesty and civility.

Diversity & Inclusion: We celebrate the diverse community that different individuals cultivate – at NECO, throughout our clinical network, and at home. As an equal opportunity employer, we ensure that NECO is a place where all people feel welcome and appreciated.

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT HOWARD PURCELL

Dear Students, Alumni, Trustees, Faculty and Staff

Welcome to NECO's Strategic Plan 2020 through 2025. I believe the recurring themes found throughout this plan — *Tomorrow's Optometry, Innovation, Inclusion, and Collaboration* — will guide our institutional priorities and set the stage for who we are and what we stand for over the next five years.

Today we live in a world of vast similarities in goods and services, including optometric education. All of us believe in excellence, from academics to research to patient care and clinical training. At NECO, we choose to differentiate ourselves by the questions we ask about the students and patients we serve: **What do they believe about optometry? What do they believe about themselves? What do they believe about themselves and optometry?**

Over the next five years, we intend to explore these questions by examining the relationship between students and optometric education; patients and comprehensive eye care; innovation and technological adaptation; and human behavior and choice. It is through this exploration that we will be inspired to think differently, learn from each other, evolve, and ultimately change the way people see the world.

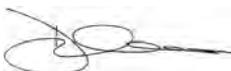
We believe optometric education and the professional industry must collaborate to explore, innovate, and navigate the future of optometry together. The expanded use of technology will alter the traditional role of optometrists, yet our dedication to quality care, early diagnosis and intervention, and the importance of comprehensive eye care cannot be diminished in the pursuit of convenience and lower costs. Some of the dynamics on our collective radar include: healthcare policy and declining reimbursement rates, shifts in patients' perceptions of the value of comprehensive eye care, the rise of easy-to-use exam automation devices, telehealth, expanding choice including online and retail, private equity and commercialization, and the move towards medical optometry and specialty care. Our highest priority is student success, and educating today's optometrists for tomorrow's optometry must be about proficiency and compassionate care in the context of these related developments.

NECO has always multiplied our impact by working with partners and colleagues in our community. Our reputation was built on the quality of our academic, research, and clinical training programs; our commitment to community health centers; and the remarkable careers and contributions of our Alumni community.

As we move into 2020 and beyond, we are committed to providing a world-class education for tomorrow's optometrists. We will create a place where innovation and discovery, exceptional care, and change and adaptation all flourish and advance our profession.

NECO will lead the way into the future of eye care and optometry. We hope you join us on this journey.

Sincerely,



Howard Purcell, OD, FAAO
President and CEO

INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

2020 – 2025

Goals:

- 1: Deliver a world class educational experience** that engages and inspires students to learn, seek, and solve problems through evidence-based analysis, critical thinking, and compassionate patient care while preparing them to practice in today's and tomorrow's optometry.
- 2: Leverage NECO's expansive clinical network** to integrate didactic, clinical, and patient care experiences to best prepare our students as critical thinkers, collaborators, and flexible clinicians, able to adapt to the evolving world of optometric care.
- 3: Develop an enrollment management and student success strategy** that attracts, retains, and prepares a student body that will succeed academically and professionally.
- 4: Grow NECO's research and graduate programs** by building on our international reputation in clinically relevant areas including myopia, low vision rehabilitation, and pediatrics.
- 5: Develop the financial, human, and physical resources** necessary to achieve NECO's goals, while stimulating a more balanced mix of revenue and funding sources to enable continued financial sustainability in an environment of increasing competition for eye care, mounting student debt, and shifting demographics.
- 6: Promote a culture of responsibility, sensitivity, and civility** towards all communities, and support an organization that embraces and values different backgrounds, experiences, opinions, and beliefs.
- 7: Collaborate with partners, including industry and alumni**, to engage in innovations, share perspective, and strengthen NECO's position as an influencer in optometry locally, nationally, and globally.



GOAL

1

Deliver a world class educational experience that engages and inspires students to learn, seek, and solve problems through evidence-based analysis, critical thinking, and compassionate patient care while preparing them to practice in today's and tomorrow's optometry.

Objectives:

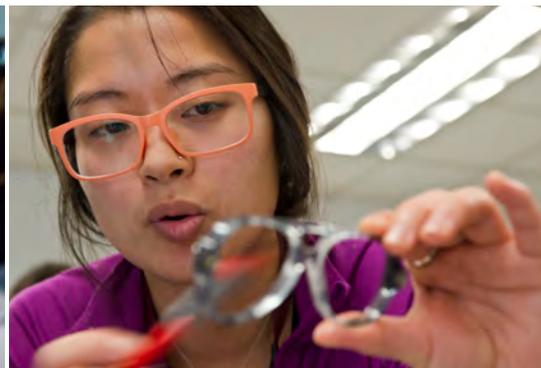
1. Define and develop a robust system for reviewing and evaluating the curriculum, assessing teaching and learning effectiveness within and across the curriculum, and introducing timely and relevant adjustments to the curriculum.
2. Cultivate an instructional environment to support student engagement and effective teaching and use of instructional technology, facilitated by the Educational Effectiveness Center.
3. Expand opportunities for (optional) customized learning, mentoring and clinical experiences to further develop students' skills and knowledge in specialty areas such as pediatrics, low vision, contact lens, practice management and business, public health and optometric academic careers.
4. Reimagine the practice management curriculum and create a professional development track for students focusing on healthcare environments, evolving modes of practice, changes in patient expectations, evidence-based care, innovation and adaptation, and leadership.
5. Introduce an accelerated 3-year OD program for exceptional students.

GOAL**2**

Leverage NECO's expansive clinical network to integrate didactic, clinical, and patient care experiences to best prepare our students as critical thinkers, collaborators, and flexible clinicians, able to adapt to the evolving world of optometric care.

Objectives:

1. Ensure every graduating student receives a diverse and appropriately timed set of clinical education experiences and patient care encounters that reflect contemporary optometric practice, engage them in specialties, expose them to current and emerging trends in optometry, and prepare them to collaborate, communicate, and practice as evidence-based clinicians.
2. Increase awareness and access to eye care in our owned and operated clinics. Expand specialty care services — where appropriate and financially profitable — through the exploration of patient demand, educational requirements, expanding scope of practice, and the cost/benefit analysis of new sites and technology.
3. Develop a sustainable long-term clinical training model for NECO, one that appropriately addresses the risks and timeframes associated with NECO's leased sites at Commonwealth (current lease ends December 2026) and Roslindale (lease ends March 2028), gentrification of community health centers, the consolidation of private practices, and changes in veterans' healthcare.



GOAL**3**

Develop an enrollment management and student success strategy that attracts, retains, and prepares a student body that will succeed academically and professionally.

Objectives:

1. Develop and implement an effective enrollment management strategy that reflects and maintains an aggregate student enrollment of 525 to 530 students across all programs (OD and Accelerated).
2. Create a holistic student support system that allows NECO students to succeed academically and professionally, increases 1st and 2nd year retention rates, and improves board pass rates.
3. Foster meaningful connections between students and alumni that support student recruitment, career placement, professional development, and lifelong learning and engagement with NECO.

GOAL**4**

Grow NECO's research and graduate programs by building on our international reputation in clinically relevant areas including myopia, low vision rehabilitation, and pediatrics.

Objectives:

1. Create a collaborative center for research.
2. Continue to recruit and retain outstanding faculty to provide excellent teaching and research, and to mentor students interested in research.
3. Promote student participation in research.



GOAL

5

Develop the financial, human, and physical resources

necessary to achieve NECO's goals, while stimulating a more balanced mix of revenue and funding sources to enable continued financial sustainability in an environment of increasing competition for eye care, mounting student debt, and shifting demographics.

Objectives:

1. Develop a sustainable financial model that supports our Strategic Plan through enhanced revenues and managed expenses and risks.
2. Stimulate philanthropic support among our community of alumni, employees, board members, and corporate partners.
3. Continue to actively explore potential merger, acquisition, and/or consortium agreements between NECO and other academic institutions.





GOAL

6

Promote a culture of responsibility, sensitivity, and civility towards all communities, and support an organization that embraces and values different backgrounds, experiences, opinions, and beliefs.

Objectives:

1. Position NECO as a diversity, equity and inclusion leader within optometry, and as an academic institution more broadly, and increase the representation of “underrepresented minorities” in the student body, faculty and staff.
2. Integrate ethics, social responsibility, and cultural sensitivity into student educational and co-curricular programs, and clinical experiences.
3. Create a more unified faculty at NECO, one that recognizes the differences between the expectations, priorities, schedules, and career paths of faculty on different profiles (didactic, research, and clinical), while at the same time encouraging continued engagement and collaboration between all faculty and between faculty and administration.
4. Cultivate a culture of institutional pride where all NECO faculty and staff envision themselves as ambassadors for NECO, helping us to build strategic partnerships, recruit and retain top talent, encourage philanthropic support, and reinforce the key elements of NECO’s brand.

GOAL**7**

Collaborate with partners, including industry and alumni, to engage in innovations, share perspectives, and strengthen NECO's position as an influencer in optometry locally, nationally, and globally.

Objectives:

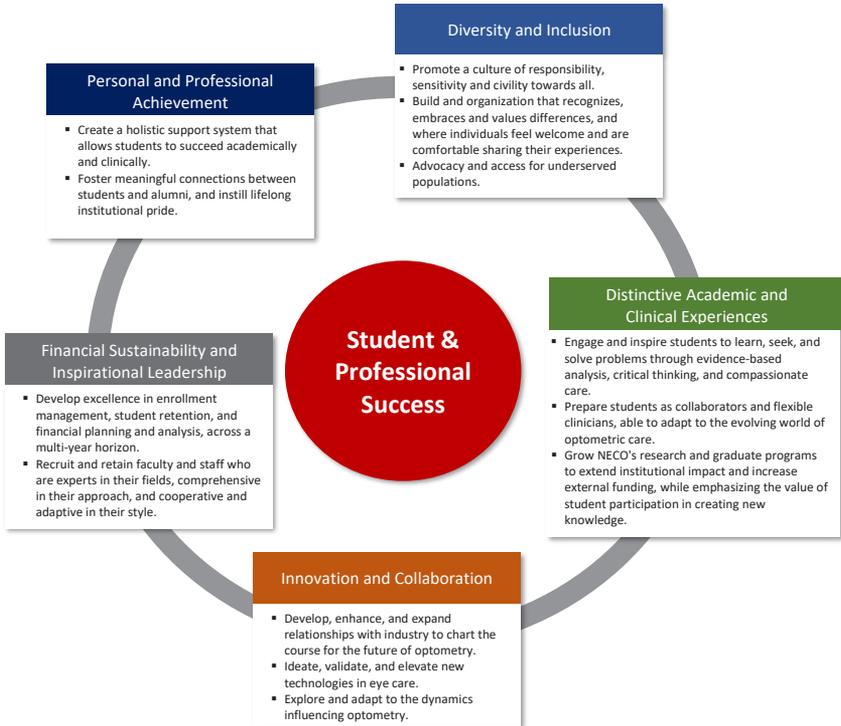
1. Develop Industry Collaborative to enhance and expand relationships with industry, employers, media, and professional association partners to drive thought leadership about the future of optometry and optometric education.
2. Establish an Innovation Center to attract start-ups and established companies to ideate, validate, and elevate new technologies.
3. Expand and reinforce partnerships with typical and atypical partners in the Greater Boston area and beyond to build a Boston brand.
4. Develop unique Continuing Education programs that promote critical thinking, hands-on learning, and online platforms.
5. Solidify NECO's reputation as the influencer of international optometric education.



STUDENT SUCCESS

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT TODAY AND TOMORROW

NECO's Strategic Plan supports student success in many of its goals. This quick view highlights the themes in the action plan most closely related to student success.





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