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National Academy of Opticianry Members Approve first steps as Part of Ongoing Merger Exploration with United Opticians Association

Lexington, KY— The National Academy of Opticianry (NAO) and the United Opticians Association (UOA) announced today that the NAO Fellow Members, and the UOA Board of Directors, each voted to authorize the beginning of the formal merger or asset-transfer process between the two organizations. These actions follow the Letter of Intent jointly approved by both Boards in April and represent a coordinated commitment to advance the next phase of due diligence and planning.

“This vote allows the process to continue responsibly and transparently,” said Gwen Cooper, Executive Director of UOA and Chair of the Joint Steering Committee. “Both organizations remain committed to a thorough review that ensures any final decision is in the best interest of the profession, the members we serve, the students of the Ophthalmic Career Progression Program (OCPP) and the long-term sustainability of opticianry education and advocacy.”

As the due diligence process continues, both NAO and UOA emphasize that all current operations, member services, and educational programs, including the Ophthalmic Career Progression Program (OCPP), will continue without interruption. Nothing in this process will disrupt ongoing work, and both organizations are committed to ensuring a seamless integration of processes, membership systems, educational offerings, and program delivery now and in the future.

During this due diligence period, the Joint Steering Committee will continue its structured evaluation of:

- Financial and legal obligations
- Programmatic integration opportunities
- Operational and staffing considerations
- Member services and educational continuity

“NAO and UOA share a long-standing commitment to strengthening the opticianry profession,” said Diane Drake, NAO’s Board President. “This process is designed to ensure that our future alignment is

thoughtful, well-planned, and grounded in the best interests of our members and the communities we serve. Our members can be confident that their programs, benefits, and educational pathways will remain strong and uninterrupted throughout this transition.”

Additional updates will be shared with members of both organizations as the process progresses.

About the United Opticians Association (UOA)

In 2024, the Opticians Association of America and the National Federation of Opticianry Schools joined forces to create the United Opticians Association. Today, the **United Opticians Association (UOA)** is the leading national advocate for the opticianry profession, dedicated to elevating the field through standardized education, certification, and coordinated advocacy. Our vision is for opticians to be nationally recognized, state-certified healthcare professionals working alongside optometrists and ophthalmologists to provide exceptional patient care. By fostering industry-wide collaboration and professional excellence, the UOA ensures that the vital role of the optician remains central to the future of eye care.

About the National Academy of Opticianry (NAO)

Founded in 1963, the **National Academy of Opticianry (NAO)** offers opticianry education and training in a variety of formats. NAO covers all aspects of education and training from career preparation (internationally known as the Ophthalmic Career Progression Program), certification and licensing exam preparation and continuing education for beginning through advanced level opticians.

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