



Updated June 4, 2026

Q: If the NAO opted not to combine with the merger of OAA and NFOS for good reason two years ago, why is this being done now?

A: The short answer is that the NAO board was just not ready to make the change several years ago; the board was split on the final decision. The majority of the board wanted more time to research possibilities. Once the merger was completed, the NAO board elected to take a wait and see approach before revisiting any future possibilities.

Q: What has changed?

A: Several things have changed:

1. The UOA has proven to be a positive force for our profession, working hard on unification and advocacy.
2. We all feel that the values of the UOA match the NAO with the current leadership. During the last year, we've worked hard on building trust and feel now is the right time to move forward.
3. New UOA leadership, board members from both organizations and the Steering Committee bring a wealth of experience in managing nonprofits, healthcare, legislation and advocacy.

Q: Is this merger due to NAO long term financial viability?

A: There are no financial concerns today. NAO is a financially healthy organization. However, financially, it is a good move for a number of reasons.

The two organizations that created UOA as well as NAO are 501c6 nonprofits and each had (and have) limited revenue streams. NAO has a revenue stream from the sale of books, CECs, the OCPP, and membership. UOA receives substantial grant funding, industry support and a small membership revenue stream. UOA has the ability to market to a larger audience and with a streamlined message and a strategic plan that will benefit the profession as a whole.

Together, we present a unified profession which increases the ability for this one national voice to engage a wider audience, reaping the benefit of increased industry financial support from a variety of resources, including for-profit corporations, private equity, and other investment sources.

Q: What happens to the current money that the NAO has in the bank?

A: In accordance with NAO Bylaws, any money remaining in the NAO bank account following the merger will be distributed for the benefit of COA Accredited Opticianry Programs.

Q: What is the due diligence process? After this process is complete, will the membership be able to review the conditions or is the final decision left only to the Board?

A: The Steering Committee has created a guiding document to review all aspects of operational, financial and programmatic considerations. Compliance oversight will be conducted by a third party to ensure the merger is completed according to state and federal laws as well as nonprofit best practices. Because the vote to merge was favorable by both organizations, the work is now in the hands of the Steering Committee with regular updates provided to both boards. Both organizations are committed to transparency and will provide status updates as they are available. We anticipate that the merger process will move along without incident with an implementation timeline announced by mid Fall 2026.

Q: If NAO is being dissolved, what role will the new exec board members have?

A: The merger process will take some time and is expected to be complete by December 2026. Until the merger is complete, it is business as usual for both organizations. The new NAO executive board members will have oversight of the process and remain active in their positions through the end of 2026.

Q: How will this impact individual membership, three-year memberships and lifetime memberships? And will there be two memberships or will NAO and UOA be merged into one membership?

A: All membership tiers and membership length will be honored. The steering committee is discussing how to integrate NAO members with UOA members. The UOA membership committee will meet to discuss all options, membership benefits and additional membership opportunities. NAO members will remain NAO members until at least December 31 2026. We anticipate announcing a new membership structure that will take effect July 2027.

Q: What happens to the students in the OCPP Program?

A: The Steering Committee has been discussing the OCPP student and corporate contracts and we are all in agreement that all students will stay in the OCPP seamlessly, and contracts will be honored. Our collective goal is to grow the OCPP program and both organizations have similar ideas to create a comprehensive growth plan for the NAO-OCPP program.

Q: Will the NAO name be used in conjunction with the OCPP in licensing states statutes and/or rules.

A: The steering committee is charged with exploring the ownership and naming convention in each of the states and will make decisions regarding the use of NAO and OCPP names as they receive more information regarding regulatory requirements.

Q: If we are members of UOA, NAO and our state society, those membership fees can accumulate. Will all membership be combined?

A: By July 1, 2027 we will have one membership structure. See above for a more detailed answer.

Q: What about OptiCon and SECO? Doesn't UOA own OptiCon and NAO own SECO?

A: UOA does own OptiCon and it will continue as the exclusive optician education program at Vision Expo. NAO doesn't own SECO, NAO provides the optician education for SECO. The SECO relationship and contract will continue uninterrupted and we are already working on the program for the March '27 SECO Conference.

Q: What will happen to the NAO Name?

A: This is currently being discussed by the steering committee and we hope to be able to address this more fully very soon.

Q: Does this merger affect any existing credentials or future credentialing of professionals?

A: This is an excellent question. The steering committee will discuss options for those who hold the FNAO distinction.

Q: What's the overall goal of this merger?

A: To unite our profession. With the addition of NAO, UOA becomes a truly united organization consisting of key focus areas to support all aspects of the Opticianry profession. We invite you to listen to the recent UOA State of the UOA webinar. During the webinar UOA announced their strategic plan with a clear focus on advocacy legislation, formal education, apprenticeship training, continuing education, state association and individual member support.

It's a great time to be an optician and we are confident this merger will help us all achieve the shared vision:

Opticians are nationally recognized and respected healthcare professionals, certified in every state. Opticians work alongside optometrists and ophthalmologists to elevate eye care, delivering exceptional expertise and service to patients who rely on spectacles and contact lenses.