COPE Expands On-Site Review Program

COPE is expanding its On-Site Review Program to allow all COPE Reviewers to perform On-Site Reviews of every COPE-Accredited course they attend. The goal of the On-Site Review program is to obtain objective information that can be used by the COPE Committee to determine compliance with COPE’s guidelines. This is an important element in COPE’s ongoing effort to assure optometric CE with the highest integrity that is free from commercial bias for our Member Boards.

The COPE Committee recently redesigned the On-Site Review program to make it as easy as possible. All the information for completing a review is now available on ARBO’s website. COPE Reviewers simply login and download the review forms to take with them to the CE event. Two separate assessments are completed in an On-Site Review: an evaluation of the administration of the meeting, and an evaluation of the selected course. The forms are standardized to ensure a fair and uniform evaluation by all reviewers. On-Site reviewers remain anonymous and do not share their evaluation with the CE administrator/provider or the course instructor.

All COPE Reviewers must complete two new online training modules before they are allowed to perform an On-Site Review. The new modules were developed to train reviewers on some of the recent changes in the COPE review process. One module gives information on changes that have taken place as a result of the implementation of the Standards for Commercial Support, and the second module demonstrates how to conduct an On-Site Review and report the results back to COPE.

After completing an On-Site Review, COPE Reviewers can log back in to the On-Site Review section of the website and enter the results of their review. ARBO Staff and the COPE Committee evaluate the completed On-Site Reviews on a monthly basis and the committee addresses any compliance issues with the course instructor and/or the Administrator/Provider. The COPE Committee will be compiling data from all On-Site Reviews that are performed to present as part of their annual meeting report.

When performing an On-Site Course Review, reviewers are asked whether proprietary interest (or lack thereof) is disclosed by the lecturer and if the course content is free from commercial bias. Reviewers are also asked if the outline that is handed out is relevant to the course content and if the category that was assigned to the course matches the majority of the course content. Reviewers performing an On-Site Program Administration Review are asked to evaluate documentation, facilities and compliance with COPE’s Standards for Commercial Support. Some of the specific questions on the review form include whether a certificate of attendance with all the required information was handed out, whether a representative of a commercial supporter was present during the course, and if there was any product promotion done in the classroom.

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As I write this letter, the temperatures are rising, the days are getting longer, and the trees are blooming. It can mean only one thing... the ARBO Annual Meeting is just around the corner!

ARBO is guided in actions and activities by its House of Delegates. The ARBO Board of Directors views the Annual Meeting of its Member Boards as our most important opportunity to report on our activities, engage in discussion, and receive direction from our members. In response to your requests, the meeting format has been changed to allow more time for early discussion of contemporary issues. This opportunity will be more closely integrated with the presentations to promote dialog while the topics are fresh.

Furthermore, we are increasing the time available for Member Board reports. In addition to your normal written report, we are inviting you to briefly share your Board’s position, if you have one, on some of the current regulatory issues in optometry. The topics for discussion include: board certification, continuing competence, and maintenance of licensure. Please refer to page 4 to see the specific questions you may want to address. To improve the quality of discussion we are suggesting that you be proactive and place these issues on the agenda for consideration at your next board meeting. So come prepared and join in the debate!

I am pleased to report that Lisa Fennell and the ARBO staff continue to do a great job managing the day to day activities of our office in the most efficient manner possible. In addition, the various committees within ARBO have been very busy in an effort to maintain and improve all of the programs designed to support our Member Boards. Thanks to this great group of volunteers!

COPE continues to be proactive via expansion of the On-Site Review (OSR) Program, including the credentialing of existing COPE Reviewers to perform on-site reviews. The OSR process is now much more user friendly and expeditious for the reviewer. These improvements allow us to increase the number of anonymous on-site reviews of COPE accredited courses and thereby provide assurance that COPE accredited events are meeting your standards for licensure renewal. In addition, COPE continues to grow, so we are issuing a call for more COPE Reviewers. I would invite all board members to consider becoming a credentialed COPE Reviewer and assist us with on-site reviews as well.

ARBO’s OE TRACKER program also continues to grow. Utilization of OE TRACKER is increasing among our Member Boards to efficiently audit compliance with CE requirements for license renewal. There has also been an increase in the use of OE TRACKER by CE providers and optometrists who realize the value and time savings that the program offers. CE data is being submitted to the office in record numbers and 94% of all optometrists now have data in OE TRACKER!

I was pleased to participate with the National Board Exam Review Committee (NBERC) when they met in Charlotte at the NBEO Council Meetings in December. Traditionally the committee reviews exam content and processes for the next year’s administration. This year, the committee took special interest in the NBEO’s reaction to exam piracy and took note of the substantial changes that are being made to the clinical skill exam (CSE). The implementation of a one-site CSE has not been without controversy. Nevertheless, I was impressed with NBEO’s due diligence and evidence based approach to improving the validity of this critical section of the exam. I believe you will be too. The committee will give a complete report at our Annual Meeting in June.

In conclusion, I hope that you are planning to attend this year’s “Exploring the Future of Health Care Regulation” Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah. Issues surrounding board certification, continuing competence, maintenance of licensure, single-site CSE, and new proposed optometry schools should create quite the buzz with regard to public protection.

Thank you for all of your support. If you have any questions or concerns about any of ARBO’s programs, please feel free to email me at president@arbo.org, or contact the ARBO office at arbo@arbo.org. I look forward to seeing many of you in Salt Lake City.

Sincerely,

Jerry A. Richt
ARBO President
A Note from our Managing Director

Spring is beginning here in North Carolina and it can’t come soon enough for me. I hope the temperature is starting to warm up where you are too. I know a lot of you had really tough winters and are tired of shoveling snow.

The warmer days remind me that the Annual Meeting will be here soon. Hopefully, you’ve already started making your plans to attend the meeting in June. The Planning Committee has made some changes to the program and I think you’ll find it to be a very productive and informative meeting. Registration for the meeting is open now and the preliminary agenda and hotel information are posted on our website. We have arranged for a very competitive rate at the Sheraton Hotel and the venue is only a few blocks from the AOA meeting location if you are planning to stay the week. You can find more information on the 92nd Annual Meeting on pages 4 and 5.

Our hardworking staff has been really busy keeping up with all the CE activities going on around the country. COPE is now in the compliance period of the Standards for Commercial Support and the On-Site Review Program is being expanded to help increase oversight of COPE accredited CE. More attendance data than ever before is being sent to OE TRACKER and we are continuing to spread the word to every licensing board of the importance of auditing 100% of your licensees.

We’re also developing a new and improved website that will be available later this year. The new website will have increased functionality and be more user-friendly than our current site. This will be another way for us to enhance communication between all our member boards. We’ll tell you more about the features of our new website when we see you in June.

I’m looking forward to seeing you all in Salt Lake City. If you have any questions or suggestions, please let me know. As always, thank you to all our volunteers for all that you do to help us continue to achieve our mission of protecting the public.

COPE Committee Meets

The COPE Committee met January 8-9, 2011 in Charlotte, NC. During the meeting the Committee reviewed the COPE course and event statistics, discussed the expansion of the On-Site Review Program and made plans for their quarterly audit of COPE courses. The Committee also assessed changes made in 2010 during the implementation of the Standards for Commercial Support and evaluated COPE approved administrators and COPE qualified courses for compliance with the SCS.

COPE Committee Members: Jill Martinson-Redekopp, O.D., North Dakota, Chair; Douglas Ayre, O.D., Kansas; Larry Barger, O.D., Ohio; Bruce Rakusin, O.D., Massachusetts; Robert Smalling, O.D., Arkansas; Jack Zarybnisky, O.D., Idaho; Jerry Richt, O.D., Ex-Officio, Tennessee.

OE TRACKER Committee Meets

The OE TRACKER Committee met February 26-27, 2011 in Charlotte, NC. During the meeting the Committee reviewed current OE TRACKER statistics and methods for uploading attendance into the database. The Committee also reviewed feedback from states that used OE TRACKER to audit their licensees and agreed to stress the importance of 100% audit to the Member Boards at the 2011 Annual Meeting. Additionally, Committee members made plans for phase II of the new CE Analysis Feature (see page 5 for more information), and other program enhancements.

OE TRACKER Committee Members: Richard Orgain, O.D., Tennessee, Chair; Dale Dergousoff, O.D., British Columbia; Howard Flippin, O.D., Arkansas; Jeffrey Kraskin, O.D., District of Columbia; Michael O’Hara, J.D., Ph.D, Nebraska; Joseph Sullivan, O.D., Kansas; Marcie Welsh, O.D., New York; Ernest Schlabach, Board Liaison, Virginia; Jerry Richt, O.D., Ex-Officio, Tennessee.
The theme of this year’s meeting is “Exploring the Future of Health Care Regulation.” The planning committee is working hard to develop a very full and informative meeting agenda. You definitely will not want to miss it.

Each of ARBO’s Member Boards have been asked to submit a written report on their activities over the past year. In addition to the information that is usually reported, this year ARBO is asking each Board to answer three questions on some important, current issues in optometry:

1. Has your Board taken a position on Board Certification? Please describe your position.
2. Does your Board think that continued competence of optometrists is part of your mission? What does your Board think is the best way to accomplish this?
3. Does your board think that the current system for maintenance of licensure (CE) is adequate in reassuring the public that an OD is maintaining competence? What additional requirements would your Board recommend?

These questions are designed to spark a lively and informative discussion during the contemporary issues session on Monday afternoon. We ask that you send your responses to the questions even if you are unable to attend the meeting.

Registration for the meeting is now open on our website. Rooms at the Sheraton can also be reserved online through a link on our website. A block of rooms has been reserved at a reduced rate of $139 (+ tax). You must make your hotel reservation by May 10, 2011 to ensure you get the reduced rate. To register for the meeting or to make a hotel reservation, go to http://www.arbo.org/annual_meet.php.

In these times of economic challenges, we recognize that funding is limited. ARBO and the NBEO are offering two financial support programs for Boards with restricted travel allowances:

- **$500 Travel Stipend.** Jointly funded by ARBO and NBEO, this stipend will be available to one person from each jurisdiction who attends both the NBEO Workshop and the ARBO Annual Meeting. To apply, or for more information, please contact Andrea Moss of the NBEO at 704.332.9565 or moss@optometry.org.

- **$250 and $500 Scholarships.** Also jointly funded by ARBO and NBEO, travel scholarships are available again this year. A limited number of scholarships are available and they will be rewarded on a first come first served basis. To apply, please send a request to Lisa Fennell, ARBO Managing Director, on your Board letterhead by May 2, 2011.

For more information on the 2011 Annual Meeting, go to www.arbo.org and click on ARBO 2011 Meetings.
New OE TRACKER Feature

OE TRACKER has recently added a new feature which allows ODs to see the CE requirements and the renewal dates for each jurisdiction they are licensed in as well as the number of days left in the renewal period. Optometrists can also see a listing of the number of CE hours they have accumulated in OE TRACKER during the current renewal period. This new CE Analysis and License Renewal Reminder feature is available to all ODs who have paid the $20 OE TRACKER annual fee.

The OE TRACKER Committee developed this feature to provide Optometrists with their CE requirements and license renewal dates in one centralized place regardless of how many different jurisdictions they are licensed in. This feature is useful for all ODs, but the committee expects it to be especially helpful for those who are licensed in more than one jurisdiction. As an added benefit, optometrists can have OE TRACKER send them a text or an email to let them know 90 days in advance of their license expiring with a reminder to check their CE hours in OE TRACKER.

The committee asked a number of ODs to evaluate this feature and the response has been very positive. Feedback from the doctors that tried the new feature has included: “It’s great to have this service”; “The summary available on your website is of great value to me”; “Reminders by text are a great idea”; “This is a great new feature”; “This is excellent; it saves me a lot of time.”

The new CE Analysis and License Renewal Reminder feature will be implemented in two phases. The first phase, which is available now, provides information for jurisdictions with a renewal period that is the same for all doctors (e.g., April 1, 2009 – March 31, 2011). During the second phase, expected to be available later this year, optometrists from jurisdictions with renewal periods that are not the same for everyone (such as birth date or initial license date) will be able to enter the dates of their renewal period and OE TRACKER will do the analysis.

We encourage you to login to your OE TRACKER account and try this new feature. The OE TRACKER Committee welcomes your feedback and any other suggestions you have for improvements or enhancements to the OE TRACKER program.
Many factors contributed to the thoughtful analysis that ultimately led the NBEO to conclude that development of a single-site CSE was not only justified, but rather, was essential. Stark realities were gleaned from numerous dialogues over many months during which the strengths and weaknesses of the existing Part III examination were compared to those of the planned National Center of Clinical Training in Optometry (NCCTO). A thorough understanding of the comparative differences between the multi-site and one-site CSE formats confirmed the necessity of the transition. After many years of constant, intensive analysis and innumerable corrective adjustments to the multi-site exam, the justification to centralize the clinical skills assessment is obvious to everyone closely associated with the exam.

As more and more optometry schools have opened, requiring more and more testing individuals to process and evaluate more and more candidates, it has become clear that the current method at multiple sites has, less and less, “worked quite well.” The National Board recognized that this recent addition of three new optometry schools or colleges, with the possibility of inclusion of several others, was only going to increase the existing challenges. Though multiple-site CSE testing afforded the optometric profession and state boards with the best process available for many years, it is time that a superior and more valid method is developed. The changes that are occurring in relation to a stable, impartial, reliable administration of CSE are, indeed, necessary to host a reliable, vastly improved, more meaningful clinical skills evaluation that remains abreast of the expansion in the scope and complexity of optometric practice. This exam update is crucial as the CSE has become increasingly central and significant to the NBEO’s mission to protect the public.

This new assessment design permits a far more consistently administered, uniformly scored, stable exam that produces a superior evaluation of true candidate skills achievements since all candidates’ performance will be videotaped and verifiable by multiple examiners at each station. The NBEO will have clear, reliable primary-source information as to whether the exams taken by its candidates meet the well-defined, criterion-referenced goals. Candidates who wish to appeal their scores will know that their future is not in the hands of a single examiner who is asked to think back 6-8 weeks and recall a specific exam performance. Rather, candidates will know that their recorded performance will be reviewed and reassessed by a panel of examiners, as many times as is required to render an appropriate scoring decision. Candidates may take comfort in the realization that testing will be administered in the fairest, most impartial and substantive manner possible.

The NCCTO will be located in Charlotte, North Carolina. A frequent comment concerns the distance between Charlotte and the west-coast schools. The NBEO recognizes that westernmost candidates possibly face slightly higher travel expenses as they head to Charlotte, and will endure somewhat longer travel times than candidates closest to Charlotte. However, “super-saver” flights clear across the country often cost less than those that only cross 1 or 2 states. A longer flight distance does not automatically translate into higher costs. Airfare fees are often based more on booking efficiency than mileage; procrastinators generally pay more than other travelers, regardless of flight distance. If a student schedules a morning exam, the CSE trip will require only 2 days, with only 1 night in a hotel. The flight to Charlotte would be the day prior to the exam, testing would be complete by noon, followed by an afternoon/early evening flight back home. Travelers lose time as they fly east, but then gain it back on the westward leg of the trip. The expenditure of several hundred extra dollars and several additional hours of travel time for a one-time board exam must be kept in perspective in the overall total of time and money spent to acquire an optometry education.

Another common question that has arisen is the possibility that the NBEO could open a second testing facility closer to the west coast. This endeavor would more or less double the NBEO’s cost of doing business, which would necessitate a proportionate hike in exam fees. Similarly, NBEO headquarters could have been moved to a more central site and contained the more “fairly” located NCCTO. This, again, would be a very expensive undertaking which, again, would result in markedly increased exam fees. Both options were considered by a Board of Directors that has been focused on maintaining stable NBEO fees, as this board exam factor is always uppermost in all candidates’ minds.

Yet an additional recurring question involves the timing of the one-site CSE. This exam, like all other

Continued on page 7
NBEO exams, is criterion-referenced, which means that the pass-fail cutoff is based on specific standards rather than comparative performance among candidates. Part III CSE assesses entry-level competence required both to qualify for an optometry license and to protect the public. Some optometric educators have argued that CSE is administered too late in a candidate’s education because CSE is a highly structured, procedural assessment. As students accumulate patient-care experience during their clinical rotations, they develop and finesse their own clinical ‘style.’ This can be a significant disadvantage in a procedural exam that requires candidates to perform skills in a precise, prescriptive, step-by-step manner. In the one-site CSE model, candidates may select a CSE test date that is comfortable and convenient for them. A candidate who prefers to wait until April to gain additional clinical experience will have that option. A major advantage to testing earlier in the 4th year is the ability to schedule a retest prior to graduation, if necessary. Under the current format, candidates who do not pass CSE in April must wait until August’s end to retest.

It is hoped that all optometry stakeholders can understand that the single CSE trip, when considered within the context of the overall time and money expenditures for an optometric education, is wholly acceptable within the “big picture” as the NBEO rises to the challenge of creating an excellent, contemporary, clinical skills examination that extends a level, unbiased, fully documented test experience to all candidates.

For more information on the NBEO or the National Center of Clinical Training in Optometry, please visit www.optometry.org.

FARB Forum

FARB, the Federation of Associations of Regulatory Boards, is an organization that represents Associations such as ARBO that are made up of regulatory boards for a given profession. ARBO is a founding member of FARB, and has a representative (currently Dr. Christina Sorenson) on their Board of Directors. They hold two meetings of interest to regulatory board members and staff each year; the attorney certification seminar (for attorneys that represent regulatory boards), and the FARF Forum.

This year the FARB Forum was held January 28-30 in New Orleans, LA. ARBO Managing Director Lisa Fennell was in attendance, as were Dr. Robert Smaling, former ARBO President and a Member of the Arkansas Board of Optometry; and Laurie Mickelson, Executive Director of the Minnesota Board of Optometry. Laurie is also a non-voting representative to the ARBO Board of Directors and Chair of the Executive Directors/Administrators and CELMO Committees.

The Forum opened with a keynote address by Megan Twohey, a reporter from the Chicago Tribune. Ms. Twohey gave a presentation on her recent series on Illinois’ failure to stop predatory doctors which has prompted calls for reform of the Illinois regulatory system. There was discussion on society’s views of regulatory boards and what we can learn from the public reaction to the minimal disciplinary actions taken against the doctors.

The Forum continued with presentations and panels that covered topics of interest to regulatory board members, staff, and attorneys. There were discussions on understanding the role of education; examination development, scoring and maintenance; Board and Association perspectives on new initiatives and technology; and practical and legal issues involving administrative actions. One of the speakers was Joe Baker, Jr., former Executive Director of the Florida Board of Optometry. Joe is currently Executive Director of the Florida Nursing Board.

Recent regulatory cases were also presented by Dale Atkinson, FARB Executive Director, and Amy Richardson, an associate attorney from Atkinson & Atkinson, gave a presentation on legislation of interest. It was clear from the discussions during the meeting that all regulatory boards share similar interests and challenges regardless of the profession involved. The information presented would be of interest to any board member, whether they represent the profession or the public, and to all board staff.

More information on FARB can be found on their website, www.farb.org. The FARF Forum is usually held in late January and the 2012 Forum will potentially be held in Miami, FL. The 2011 Attorney Certification Seminar will be held September 30-October 2, 2011 in Park City, UT. Please go to the FARF website for more information and registration.
The Citizen Advocacy Center (CAC) held their 23rd Annual Meeting November 11-12, 2010. The theme of the meeting was “Scope of Practice, Continuing Competence, and Health Care Reform”. The first day of the meeting was devoted to sessions addressing scope of practice issues and the second day was spent discussing current trends in assuring the public that their health care professionals are currently competent. CAC has been in the forefront of efforts to move beyond mandatory continuing education to a system of lifelong learning, beginning with an assessment of a healthcare professional’s learning needs, followed by implementation of a plan to shore up areas needing improvement, and concluding with periodic demonstrations of current competence.

Two ARBO Directors gave presentations at the CAC Annual Meeting. Gregory Moore, O.D., as a member of the West Virginia Board of Optometry, participated in a session entitled, “The Case for Changes in Scope of Practice in Five Health Professions.” Other professions represented in this session were dental hygiene, pharmacy, physical therapy and psychology.

ARBO Immediate Past President William Rafferty, O.D., along with Martin Crane, M.D., the Immediate Past President of the Federation of State Medical Boards, participated in a session entitled, “Continuing Competence Initiatives by Licensing Board Associations. Both speakers supported the CAC efforts of lifelong learning to demonstrate competency for healthcare professionals.

Dr. Lucinda Maine from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy also gave a presentation entitled, “Redesigning Continuing Education in the Health Professions.” Which discussed the impact of the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) recently released report on regulatory boards. In their report, the IOM recommends that a national interprofessional CE institute be created as a way to foster improvements in CE for health professionals to improve quality of care and patient safety. They also concluded that a system of continuing professional development would be more effective than the current system of CE because it allows health professionals to tailor the learning process, setting, and curriculum to their own needs.

Other sessions at the CAC Annual Meeting discussed patient-centered approaches to scope of practice and a new scope of practice initiative by the CAC aimed at involving consumers and consumer organizations in scope of practice legislation and rule making. PowerPoint presentations from the CAC Annual Meeting are available on the CAC website.

The CAC serves the public interest by enhancing the effectiveness and accountability of health professional oversight bodies. They offer training, research and networking opportunities for public members and for the health care regulatory, credentialing, and governing boards on which they serve. For more information on the CAC, visit their website at www.cacenter.org.

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Dr. Jill Martinson-Redekopp Elected to NBEO Board

Jill Martinson-Redekopp, O.D. was elected to the National Board of Optometry (NBEO) Board of Directors in December 2010. Dr. Martinson-Redekopp has served 18 years on the North Dakota State Board of Optometry. She served as President of the North Dakota Board for 7 years. She currently chairs ARBO’s COPE Committee and has served on the Bylaws and Optometric Competency Committees. She practices full scope optometry at Trinity Regional Eyecare in Minot, North Dakota with an emphasis on management of ocular disease. Congratulations to Dr. Martinson-Redekopp!
2011 Annual Meeting Call for Nominations

In accordance with ARTICLE VI, Section 2.C of the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO) Bylaws, I hereby announce that the Nominating Committee consists of the following individuals:

- Dr. Joseph B. Sullivan, Kansas
- Dr. Howard Flippin, Arkansas
- Dr. Beth DeSpiegelaere, Minnesota
- Dr. Larry J. Barger, Ohio, Chair
- Dr. Jeffrey Kraskin, DC
- Dr. Michael Ohlson, Iowa
- Dr. Steven Eyler, Consultant

I also announce that two members of the ARBO Board of Directors will be elected for terms as follows:

Two Full 4-Year Terms:
- One 4-year term – Dr. William Rafferty -- eligible for re-election
- One 4-year term – Dr. Susy Yu -- eligible for re-election

Individuals wishing to be considered by the Nominating Committee for service on the ARBO Board of Directors shall send a statement to that effect, along with a current CV, to Ms. Lisa Fennell, Managing Director, at the ARBO office by June 1, 2011. The candidate should be available at the ARBO Annual Meeting for an interview by the Nominating Committee.

For more information, see ARTICLE V, Section 1 of the Bylaws, on the ARBO Website at www.arbo.org.

W. Ernest Schlabach
ARBO Secretary-Treasurer