



EDITORIAL/ÉDITORIAL

University of Waterloo Honours Pre-Waterloo Graduates

In this year of special recognition by the University of Waterloo to Optometry for its two decades of involvement with the University, the Board of Governors have voted to extend a significant honour to the optometrists who graduated from the Ontario College of Optometry before it made the move to Waterloo in 1967.

A University of Waterloo O.D. degree is being awarded "ad eundem gradum" (literally, "to this level") to those pre-Waterloo OCO graduates who accept the specially extended invitation. The degrees are being presented in conjunction with the 1987 convocation ceremonies which will also see the Waterloo School's first Director, Dr. E.J. Fisher, presented with a singular honour — the designation of Professor Emeritus (as was reported in the CJO • RCO Autumn, 1986 issue).

Marking this unique event in the University's history, Dr. Douglas Wright, President of the University of Waterloo, recently penned a letter to CAO Dr. Scott Brisbin with a personal observation on the granting of the special degrees.

Following is the text of that letter:

I am very pleased to have been asked to make a comment on the University's agreement to grant the honorary degree of *ad eundem gradum* to optometrists. This is the first time that the University of Waterloo has undertaken such a step, but Waterloo has a marvelous record of doing things first and best.

Were it not for the co-operative programs that this University undertook in its first step to provide a different and challenging innovation in post-secondary education, the pathway to exciting and new actions would not be so clear.

And were it not for an event of 20 years ago, this University would not have the School of Optometry as one of its major academic thrusts. I believe it was for that reason, and for others which have to do with our spirit of adventure and innovation, that persuaded the Senate of the University of Waterloo to agree that the honorary degree of *ad eundem gradum* should be made available to those whose educational achievements took place at another time and at another venue.

I am sure that the School and all optometrists and the University will benefit greatly from the continuing association that has been in place now for two decades. The degree *ad eundem gradum* is simply the forerunner of our future.

Douglas Wright
President
University of Waterloo

Twenty Memorable Years

On July 1, 1967, Canada celebrated its centennial birthday party. It was a great nation-wide party with marching bands, parading soldiers, floats, speeches by political leaders, fireworks and celebrations everywhere. Thousands assembled on the lawn of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa as well as in countless cities, towns and hamlets from coast to coast. Ambitious centennial projects in scores of places were either opened officially or inaugurated. Many parks, sports arenas, library buildings, and community halls were designated as Centennial projects. The great "Expo '67" was in full swing in Montreal. Yes, it was a grand celebration of our country's 100th birthday.

But on that same day, Canadian optometrists were also celebrating at the biennial Congress of the Canadian Association of Optometrists in Montreal. For it had just been announced

that, on that day, the former College of Optometry had ceased operation and had become the School of Optometry in the Faculty of Science at the University of Waterloo. After several months of research and negotiation, an agreement had been reached between the Department of University Affairs of the Ontario government, the University of Waterloo, and the College of Optometrists of the province of Ontario. The announcement at the Congress was eagerly received. And so a new era had begun for Optometrical education in Canada.

The months of July and August in 1967 were busy months for the four teaching staff, one secretary and one technician who were charged with the task of moving the College and establishing the new facility. Each person was assigned one area as his responsibility. Students in the course had to be notified to

report to Waterloo in September. Useable equipment, library books, files and records all had to be prepared for moving. Furniture and supplies deemed to be unsuitable had to be put up for sale.

If you have ever moved your home, you will have some idea of the decisions which needed to be made, and the work which had to be done just to vacate the premises at 138 and 140 St. George Street. In Waterloo, space had to be found for clinic, offices and laboratories on a campus already stretched by burgeoning expansion. New equipment and furniture had to be ordered and arrangements made that all would arrive as alterations were completed. Apart from these considerations, faculty members and staff needed to make personal arrangements for moving.

It was a hectic time which will long be remembered by those who were involved. But it was accomplished, and the School was ready to open in early September. (Well, not quite, since there were still construction people in the clinic, and office space was limited, and labs were crowded, but the staff managed.)

And what has happened in the 20 years since that time? From the physical viewpoint, Optometry has a splendid building which is recognized as one of the finest on the campus and, indeed, among North American Optometry buildings. It is furnished with excellent equipment which has been replaced, expanded and updated on a regular basis over the years. The School has developed many new specific areas in patient care: an electro-diagnostic clinic, low vision clinic, binocular vision clinic, pediatric clinic, geriatric clinic, aniseikonia clinic and contact lens clinic, in addition to a high quality primary care clinic. The clinic has a patient record of more than 26,000 visits each year.

An outreach clinic has also been operated, including service to senior citizen's homes and child care facilities in the immediate area. Clinical service has been provided to outlying areas of Canada, involving native Canadians, school and geriatric populations, not only in Ontario, but also in other provinces. Clinical teams have been sent several times to under-developed countries in the Caribbean and in Central America. The University of Benin in Nigeria has received considerable help in establishing the first Optometry program in black Africa, and indeed the only one outside South Africa.

A rapidly growing research program has been developed in basic science research as well as clinical and epidemiological areas. Grants have been received from many private sources and governmental agencies. It would be difficult to name all of the areas involved, but some samples are electrophysiology, sensory perception, colour vision, aniseikonia, border enhancement, geometrical optics, pharmacology, ultra violet radiation, contact lenses, and low vision. Research grants received last year totalled more than \$850,000.00. Several hundred papers have been produced at the current rate of 60 per year reporting the results of research. These have been printed in many different refereed journals. This is truly an excellent record among Optometry Schools and Colleges.

The reading room facilities have been expanded with the addition of thousands of new books and a large journal collection. Computers have been installed for student use, as well as a slide viewer, photocopier, and other aids. The reading room study carrels are fully occupied by students literally from dawn to dark. Overflow study tables have been provided in the corridors. A highly efficient library staff is on duty 12 hours a day, with some time on Saturdays and Sundays.

And what of the faculty? There were only 4 full-time teaching faculty in Toronto. Today there are 18, and 8 full time clinical

faculty. There are 8 adjunct part-time teaching faculty and 37 part-time clinical faculty members. Through the years, a number of changes have been made in all categories. A few have retired. Some have moved to other institutions — a normal event in Universities today. The support staff numbers some 36 people.

This is a considerable change over the 20 years, and represents a major task just to keep track of the details. Several prominent optometrists, optometrical educators and visual scientists have spent a few terms as visiting professors, while others have visited for a few hours or days.

There have been four directors of the School since it came to Waterloo and each has made a difference but distinct contribution to its growth. At present, the director is also known as the Associate Dean of Science for Optometry. Continued growth is evident in the fact that space is at a premium and several changes have been made from the original plan of the building to accommodate office and research laboratory space.

Finally, the curriculum in Optometry has been under constant study with frequent revisions. It represents all that is best in modern optometrical education. Since coming to Waterloo well over 1000 optometrists have walked across the platform at convocation to receive their "Doctor of Optometry" degrees from the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor. The majority of these are now serving the Canadian people with superior vision care. They represent more than half of the optometrists in Canada today.

In terms of graduate education, two avenues have been adopted. One involved the establishment of a graduate program in Physiological Optics, leading to the M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees. This required more than simply drawing up a curriculum and declaring the program ready to accept graduate students. It was first necessary to obtain academic approval within the University of Waterloo itself and, after this, to have the program approved by the Ontario Council on University Affairs. The process was completed in two stages and each involved more than two years of work and negotiation. The second method of providing graduate education was to establish advanced clinical training for those who wished to become clinical teachers, or who wished to acquire special skills in some particular area of Optometry. This was done by establishing clinical residencies. Approximately a dozen graduate degrees have been awarded, and more than twenty graduates have completed the residency program.

With a worthy heritage, an excellent faculty and a fine, but crowded, facility, the future of Optometrical education at the University of Waterloo is very promising indeed. The profession can well be proud of the present and past faculty and staff of the School who have served and are still serving as a team dedicated to developing the program.

Edward J. Fisher, M.A., D.Sc., F.A.A.O.