



ONE TO WATCH

JESSICA STEEN, OD, FAAO, DIPL ABO

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Please share with us your background.

I grew up in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. One of my favorite places was our local science center. I was drawn in by the live demonstrations and real-time connections to science and technology.

I studied biology and computer science at the University of Regina and studied optometry at the University of Waterloo School of Optometry and Vision Science. I completed a residency in primary care with an emphasis in ocular disease at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Describe your current position.

I'm a full-time faculty member of NSU's College of Optometry and serve as an attending optometrist. I work with optometry interns and residents at NSU's Eye Care Institute, where I am also Director of the Glaucoma Service. I teach courses in glaucoma and ocular pharmacology, teach in our clinical methods laboratory, and perform clinical research. I also mentor NSU undergraduate students interested in optometry, medical students and residents, and physician assistant students.

Who are your mentors?

Joseph Sowka, OD, FAAO, Diplomate, has been central to my continued professional development and was responsible, along with Lori Vollmer, OD, MS, FAAO, for my move

to NSU. Dr. Sowka and I collaborate often and continue to share patients.

Jeffrey Judelson, MD, FCS, FRCS Edinburgh, FRCSC, welcomed me into the medical eye care community in Regina as a student. Dr. Judelson is an exceptional example of surgical skill and the continued pursuit of excellence, whether in patient care or in the development of the perfect limoncello.

What has been the most memorable experience of your career thus far?

Speaking to students and future colleagues at the ceremonies marking major professional milestones at NSU. It is truly a privilege to congratulate and welcome students to the profession at their white coat and graduation ceremonies.

What are new technological advances that you find particularly exciting?

The breakthroughs in cell-protein synthesis and its evolving role in bioengineering could completely change the game in nearly every industry, including the development and widespread production of pharmaceutical products.

Also, the sheer number of therapeutic candidates under investigation within the geographic atrophy and dry age-related macular degeneration space reflects the excitement and potential for a first-in-class treatment.

Describe a typical day in your life.

In an ordinary week, my responsibilities are shared within clinical

care, teaching in a classroom setting, spending time with our ocular disease residents, and carving out time for College and University-wide committees. After hours is when I engage in optometry professional association activities and focus on local community involvement. I've embraced all things South Florida and enjoy scuba diving, fishing, and rooting for the Florida Panthers.

What advice can you offer to individuals who are just now choosing their career paths after finishing optometry school or a residency?

Explore as much as possible and be all-in to take the time to understand what your passion is. Knowledge outside of the practice of optometry is invaluable. Being well-rounded within the realm of business and finance, arts, culture, or wherever your interests are, will open doors within the profession and allow for connections with people in unique and rewarding ways. ■

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