

REPORT ON BLAST FROM THE PAST STUDENT CHALLENGE, 2025

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Each year, one of my favorite projects as a member of the Optometric Historical Society is coordinating the annual Blast from the Past Student Challenge. This event solicits entries about a wide variety of topics in optometric history from current optometry students. I love to see the creativity and diverse interests represented by our future colleagues. I also enjoy learning more about lesser-known aspects of optometric history.

This year, we had a record 17 submissions. We have seen submissions in the form of hand-drawn comics, research papers, video presentations, infographics and more. Optometric Historical Society members read and score every submission. They are always hard-pressed to decide on finalists for the Challenge, who this year presented virtually in late April to over 50 fellow students and optometrists.

We had three finalists this year. Third place was awarded to Cinthia Qiu Cheung for her research on Dr. Patricia Bath, a groundbreaking Black female ophthalmologist specializing in community ophthalmology and public health who also invented the laserphaco probe used in today's cataract surgeries.

Second place was Jared Denton for a fascinating and thorough history of optical coherence tomography (OCT). Although OCT is a relatively newer technology in eye care, Jared did a commendable job explaining the science behind the technology and how it evolved.

This year's first-place winner was Monica Do for her heartfelt biography of Dr. Ian Bailey, a true pioneer in low vision. Monica expertly outlined Dr. Bailey's numerous accomplishments, and her presentation included testimonials from other optometrists who have been directly and positively impacted by Dr. Bailey.

Each year I look forward to learning more about subjects and people who were influential in the history of our profession. We thank each student for their time and talents. I can only hope that more students will continue to submit to the Challenge in 2026!