



*Pennsylvania College of Optometry
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Salus University Partners With Qassim University of Saudi Arabia

Elkins Park PA, (July 30, 2013) – Salus University has entered into an agreement with Qassim University of Buraydah, Saudi Arabia to provide strategic collaboration designed to advance their optometric educational program. The three-year agreement includes a targeted faculty development program in which faculty from the Salus University Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO) will visit Qassim University annually to provide advanced education to both faculty and students. In addition, PCO will provide optometric rotations at its Elkins Park, PA campus for seventh-year students enrolled in the Qassim University optometry program. This joint initiative also involves the Public Health department at Salus, which will conduct a feasibility study to benchmark the Qassim optometry program internationally.

According to Dr. Abraham Gonen, associate professor and director of global development at Salus University, the agreement between the two institutions is a first for Salus. “For many years now, we have offered a degree program for international licensed practitioners of optometry,” he said. “Students attend lectures in their home countries and complete two separate clinical rotations in Elkins Park. Upon successful completion of the program, Salus University awards them a Master of Science degree in Clinical Optometry. In contrast, the students who complete their rotations here in Elkins Park under this new agreement with Qassim University will earn their optometric degrees from Qassim.” Dr. Gonen further explained, “Salus will provide consulting services to Qassim University by helping the institution explore international accreditation and international recognition.”

The mission of Qassim University is to provide “high-quality, accredited education producing competent graduates who meet the needs of the labor market, conduct applied research and offer quality community services to develop the Qassim region.” Its new optometry program is dedicated to providing high-quality graduates to advance optometric care

throughout the Kingdom. Both universities are committed to fostering international partnerships and Qassim's goals complement Salus University's mission "to protect and enhance health and well-being through education, research, patient care and community services worldwide."

"Qassim University is known within Saudi Arabia for its medical and healthcare programs," noted Dr. Anthony F. Di Stefano, Salus vice president of academic affairs, who signed the agreement with Professor Sulaiman A. Al-Yahya, vice president for planning, development and quality at Qassim. "Our experiences at Salus University lend themselves to a successful collaboration as Qassim University prepares to bring change to the healthcare infrastructure within its country and move forward on the international stage as a progressive university for optometry in Saudi Arabia." Under the terms of the agreement, Salus University will send faculty to Qassim University to participate in the optometry lecture plan and train Qassim faculty in optometric subspecialties.

In addition to Professor Al-Yahya, five members of Qassim University's administration and faculty visited Salus University's campus to witness the signing: Professor Abdulrahman AbaAlkhail, international cooperation advisor; Professor Saleh Aldamegh, dean, College of Medicine; Dr. Yousef Aldebasi, dean, College of Applied Medical Sciences; Dr. Mohammed Almohalmeed, dean, College of Dentistry, and Dr. Brahim Aldughairi, president's advisor. The delegation from Qassim University was accompanied by Dr. Abdulaziz Aleisa, advisor, Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the U.S., Ministry of Education.

A Salus University faculty member or dean from each College attended the signing of the agreement and made a brief presentation on their respective degree programs. In thanking the delegation, Dr. Di Stefano noted, "This is an historical moment in the development of both universities. Our shared vision will serve as a strategic foundation for building global alliances and advancing public health optometry worldwide."

Salus University was established by the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO) in July 2008. Now the University's founding college, PCO was founded in Philadelphia, PA in 1919 and has long been recognized as a leader in the education of health care professionals. Salus University has three additional colleges: the George S. Osborne College of Audiology, the College of Education and Rehabilitation, and the College of Health Sciences. For information on the accredited professional and graduate degree programs offered by Salus University, please go to: www.salus.edu