African Optometric Education Initiative Launched to Strengthen Eye Care Professional Skills and Patient Access

Collaborative Effort from CooperVision, National Vision, and Advancing Eyecare Supports Optometry Schools Across Africa with Training, Equipment, and Capacity Building

ROCHESTER, N.Y., November 16, 2026—CooperVision, National Vision, and Advancing Eyecare today announced the African Optometric Education Initiative (AOEI), a collaborative effort to strengthen optometric education across Africa and help develop the next generation of eye care professionals needed to expand access to vision care. The partnership aligns with the companies' shared support for the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB)'s goal of eliminating avoidable sight loss by 2030 and ensuring everyone, everywhere, has access to quality eye care.

Millions of people across Africa lack access to basic vision care, which can result in reduced educational achievement, lost productivity, and lower quality of life.[1] AOEI aims to address this inequity by providing targeted resources to the institutions that educate and train future optometrists, subsequently expanding access to quality eye care.

The initiative will provide select optometry schools with diagnostic equipment, faculty support, curriculum development, and other offerings designed to create sustainable clinical learning environments. The approach goes beyond financial contributions to include instruction, technical support, maintenance, governance, and research for long-term capacity building.

"CooperVision has a long history of investing in optometric education and professional development around the world. Participating in AOEI is a natural extension of our commitment," said Karen Walsh, MCOptom, PGDip, FAAO, FIACLE, FBCLA, Senior Director, Global Professional Affairs, CooperVision. "Strong eye care systems begin with high-quality educational institutions, and by investing in the people and programs that prepare future practitioners, we can help build a skilled eye care workforce and expand access to care across Africa."



Left to Right: Karen Walsh (CooperVision), Reade Fahs (National Vision), and Jim McGrann (Advancing Eyecare)

“Expanding access to vision care requires a strong, well-prepared eye care workforce,” said Reade Fahs, Executive Chairman, National Vision. “Through our charitable foundation 20/20 Quest, we’re helping bring together organizations with complementary expertise to strengthen the institutions, educators, and students who will shape the future of eye care across Africa.”

“Students need opportunities to develop clinical skills using the equipment and technology they’ll encounter in practice,” said Jim McGrann, CEO, Advancing Eyecare. “We’re contributing our expertise in equipment selection, technical planning, and installation to help AOEI institutions create modern, sustainable learning environments that prepare graduates to deliver quality care.”

The initiative is designed to establish a sustainable model that can grow over time. The first year will focus on validating the model with a modest number of schools, with future efforts expected to include additional educational institutions, clinical equipment installations, faculty training, and other capacity-building activities.

References:

1. World Health Organization, Regional Office for Africa, Eye health, 2026.

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About CooperVision

CooperVision, a division of CooperCompanies (Nasdaq: COO), is a global leader in contact lens innovation, dedicated to advancing vision at every stage of life. The company offers one of the industry’s most comprehensive portfolios of soft and specialty contact lenses—including daily disposable, two-week and monthly options—with high-performance materials and optics across spherical, toric, and multifocal designs. With a strong heritage of addressing complex vision

challenges such as childhood myopia, astigmatism, presbyopia, and irregular corneas, CooperVision combines purposeful research and development, state-of-the-art manufacturing, and deep practitioner partnerships to deliver clinically advanced solutions. Decades of experience and insight continue to shape the eye care profession and create meaningful advantages for both practitioners and wearers. For more information, visit www.coopervision.com.

About CooperCompanies

CooperCompanies (Nasdaq: COO) is a leading global medical device company focused on helping people experience life's beautiful moments through its two business units, CooperVision and CooperSurgical. CooperVision is a trusted leader in the contact lens industry, helping to improve the way people see each day. CooperSurgical is a leading fertility and women's healthcare company dedicated to putting time on the side of women, babies, and families at the healthcare moments that matter most. Headquartered in San Ramon, Calif., CooperCompanies has a workforce of more than 15,000, sells products in over 130 countries, and positively impacts over fifty million lives each year. For more information, please visit www.coopercos.com.

About National Vision

National Vision Holdings, Inc. (NASDAQ: EYE) is one of the largest optical retail companies in the United States with over 1,200 stores in 40 states and Puerto Rico. With a mission of helping people by making quality eyecare and eyewear more affordable and accessible, the company operates four retail brands: America's Best, Eyeglass World, and Vista Optical inside select Fred Meyer stores and on select military bases, and an e-commerce website DiscountContacts.com, offering a variety of products and services for customers' eye care needs. For more information, please visit www.nationalvision.com.

About Advancing [LD1] Eyecare

Advancing Eyecare is the leading provider in the eyecare instrumentation marketplace established to offer the best products and service solutions in the ophthalmic equipment industry. Currently comprised of Marco Lombart, INNOVA Medical, S4Optik, Santinelli International, Birmingham Optical Group, and other leading brands, the combined scope of the organization has the broadest product portfolio, the most knowledgeable people, and the most reliable service in the industry. For more information, visit www.advancingeyecare.com.

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