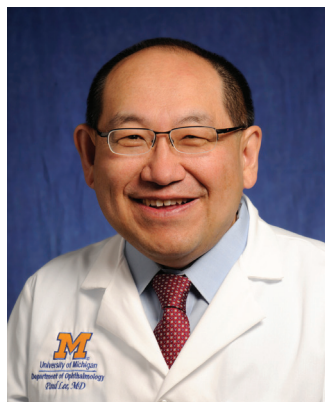


PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Gearing Up for 2021's Challenges



The Boards hope that you are staying well and continuing to adjust the best you can to the constant change driven by the ongoing challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. In this Report, we highlight activities that serve to remind us of our ability to overcome challenges by working together and of the resiliency and determination of our vision research community.

Since the last edition of the Report, the Alliances have continued to be active in service to our vision research community, both in terms of NAEVR advocacy and

AEVR education. The Alliances have also continued opportunities to broaden input through the establishment of the new Member Councils in each of three membership sectors—Industry, Professional Societies, and Foundations/Patient Service/Research Organizations. The Councils held their first calls in late October, and the Boards are looking forward to a productive exchange that will enhance support for our vision research community.

to research in limiting new programs or initiatives, delaying grant awards, and potentially requiring investigators to seek private “bridge” funding. They also urged research relief funding to support both established investigators and NIH-funded trainees and early-stage investigators, including the training and employment of graduate students whose career was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In making their case, the EVSs provided links to their personal research videos for their Congressional delegation representatives in which they described their breakthrough research and the promise it holds for patients. To highlight the effect of the COVID-19 clinical and laboratory shutdowns, they encouraged staff to view AEVR's 30-minute EVS discussion entitled *Impact of COVID-19 Lab Closures on the Next Generation of Vision Scientists*. If you have not yet watched this one-of-a-kind video, the Boards urge you to do so, as it is a compelling discussion of such topics as patient engagement, animal colonies and cell cultures, collaborations, training, and career pathway. Although many of the EVSs recognized a significant delay in their ability to submit a first research grant for federal or private funding, they generally expressed hope, noting how these challenges have made them stronger and even more creative.

“Stronger and even more creative” describes the Alliances’ charge subsequent to the upcoming elections. No matter the result, NAEVR will be advocating with and AEVR will be educating new Members

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NAEVR has continued to advocate for science agency research relief due to laboratory closures, especially for National Institutes of Health (NIH) grantees—either in a fifth supplemental package or as emergency funding in final Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 appropriations. Unfortunately, Congress has not acted to finalize either relief option, having passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund government programs when the new fiscal year began on October 1. The CR, which runs through December 11, funds agencies at their FY2020 level.

On September 23-24 and just before final action on the CR, AEVR held its *Sixth Annual Emerging Vision Scientists (EVS) Day on Capitol Hill*, which is funded each year by a grant from Research to Prevent Blindness. This year, AEVR engaged 22 EVSs nominated by their Departments of Ophthalmology and Schools/Colleges of Optometry from across the nation and reflecting the breadth of vision research. Executive Director James Jorkasky created a team in conjunction with ARVO to virtually replicate most of the components of this annual event through videos posted on the Alliances’ and ARVO Web sites, as well as hold an Advocacy Day that engaged the early-stage investigators in calls with their Congressional delegations. In their advocacy calls, the EVSs urged Congress to finalize FY2021 appropriations, noting that delayed appropriations are detrimental

of Congress, as well as new appropriations leaders and their staffs. NAEVR will continue to work with its research advocacy colleagues to urge final FY2021 NIH appropriations so that the National Eye Institute (NEI) has funding to support approved grants and begin new programs.

To make this happen, the Alliances will need your support in 2021—financially, and through the voices of each member organization. We are working with our members and the new Councils to create synergies to enhance vision research. The importance of NAEVR/AEVR has never been greater. Let's work together to ensure the Alliances’ ability to grow vision research in 2021. While the year 2020 has turned out to be different than what we could have ever imagined in December 2019, we can create a brighter future starting in 2021.

Paul Lee, MD, JD
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AEVR Recognizes Thyroid Eye Disease Awareness Week

AEVR will follow up on its first-ever November 2019 Thyroid Eye Disease (TED) Congressional Briefing with a virtual 2020 event held during the first annual *TED Awareness Week* (November 16-20, 2020). The November 19 global Briefing, held from 12 Noon - 1:15 pm Eastern, features speakers Gary Lelli, MD (Weill Cornell Medicine) and Christine G. (TED Patient Advocate). Visit the Web site at www.eyeresearch.org for full details and to register.