

LEADING THE WAY

ASOA LEAD CERTIFICATE PROGRAM GRADUATES MAKE THEIR MARK

Jennifer Gallihugh

Since its inception, the ASOA LEAD Certificate Program (Learn, Engage, Advance, Develop) has been a launchpad for ophthalmic administrators and practice leaders looking to grow their leadership skills

and expand their influence in the field. Designed to equip rising leaders with practical tools, faculty insight, and peer networking opportunities, the program has quickly become a cornerstone of ASOA's professional development offerings. Now, several years

since its launch, the real measure of LEAD's impact can be seen in the accomplishments of its graduates—professionals who are shaping the future of ophthalmic practice management.



SAM WINNEGRAD: FROM LEAD GRADUATE TO ASOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

"The LEAD program didn't just teach leadership theory. It provided the tools and real-world experience to apply those principles in practice—while connecting me with a community dedicated to advancing excellence in ophthalmic administration."

—Sam Winnegrad, Director of Operations, University Eye Specialists, Knoxville, TN

A member of the inaugural LEAD class, Sam Winnegrad, Director of Operations at University Eye Specialists in Knoxville, TN, exemplifies how the program fosters long-term leadership within the ASOA community. As one of the first participants, Sam brought both enthusiasm and vision to the table—qualities that have since guided his continued

involvement with ASOA. His LEAD experience sharpened his ability to tackle strategic challenges and improved his confidence in navigating the complex landscape of ophthalmic administration.

Today, Sam serves on the ASOA Board of Directors, bringing the same forward-thinking approach that distinguished him as a LEAD

participant. He credits the program with providing a foundational network of peers and mentors, as well as a clearer understanding of how to leverage his strengths for greater organizational impact.

"The LEAD program didn't just teach leadership theory," says Winnegrad. "It provided the tools and real-world experience to apply those principles in

practice—while connecting me with a community dedicated to advancing excellence in ophthalmic administration.”

Sam’s journey from program participant to board member is a testament to how LEAD cultivates leaders who are

not only prepared for career advancement but also inspired to give back to the ASOA community.



BRANDON MEACHAM: SPOTLIGHT ON A RISING STAR

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—Brandon Meacham, Practice Administrator, Georgia Vision Institute

Brandon Meacham, Practice Administrator at Georgia Vision Institute, is a graduate of the most recent LEAD class and another standout example of the program’s effectiveness in identifying and empowering emerging leaders. At the 2025 ASOA Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, Brandon was honored with the prestigious ABC Rising Star Award—a recognition reserved for individuals who demonstrate exceptional promise and dedication to advancing ophthalmic practice management.

Brandon’s engagement with ASOA goes far beyond receiving accolades. He currently serves on both the ASOA Annual Meeting Program Committee and the ASOA Education Committee, roles that allow him to directly shape the learning experiences of fellow members. His participation in LEAD was a

catalyst for deeper involvement, connecting him with mentors and decision-makers who saw his potential and encouraged his continued growth.

“The LEAD program was transformative,” Meacham says. “It gave me the skills and confidence to take on leadership roles, and it opened doors to committees where I can help shape the future of our profession. Not only does LEAD give you the information needed to succeed in this career, but connects you with wonderful resources, mentors, and colleagues. All the knowledge and experience from the people you get connected with is invaluable.”

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

As LEAD continues to evolve, stories like Sam’s and Brandon’s remind us of the lasting value of investing in leadership

development. Graduates of the program are not only achieving personal success but actively shaping the trajectory of ASOA and the broader ophthalmic community.

LEAD alumni are proving that leadership isn’t just about where you start—it’s about how far you’re willing to go, and who you bring with you along the way. *AE*

To learn more about the LEAD Certificate Program and how you can be part of this dynamic community, visit www.asoa.org/career-and-advancement/lead.



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