

## **Gerald E. Lowther**

*Professor of Optometry*

Gerald E. Lowther came to Indiana University in 1994 as professor of optometry. He was born and raised in Lancaster, Ohio, and went to The Ohio State University (OSU) where he earned his B.Sc. in Optometry, Doctor of Optometry, M.Sc. in Physiology Optics, and Ph.D. in Physiology Optics. When he got his O.D. degree, he entered the private practice of optometry for a couple of years before returning for his graduate degrees. After receiving his Ph.D., he was on the faculty of the OSU College of Optometry as an assistant and then an associate professor. During this time he taught courses in contact lenses, public health, and practice management, cared for patients in the contact lens clinic, and served as director of the contact lens program. While at OSU, he carried out research in the areas of contact lenses and corneal physiology.

In 1977 Dr. Lowther left OSU to become professor of optometry at the new College of Optometry at Ferris State University in Michigan. Here he continued to teach in the contact lens program, was director of the contact lens clinic, and carried out research in several areas related to contact lenses. In 1989 he took the position of professor of optometry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he continued his work in the contact lens field. While there, he was also appointed associate dean.

After coming to IU in 1994, he was involved in the development of the Borish Center for Ophthalmic Research and became its co-director. In 1998 he was appointed dean of the school and held the position until the summer of 2008.

During his career he has been very involved with numerous organizations. He has been a member of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's ophthalmic drug and device panels, as well as a member of a task force of the Council of the National Eye Institute. He was chairman of the Association of Contact Lens Educators (1976–1978), chairman of the Council on Academic Affairs of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (1979–1980), a member of the American Optometric Association's (AOA) Commission on Ophthalmic Standards (1982–1988), and a member of the AOA Research Council (1989–1995). He has been a council member of the International Society for Contact Lens Research since 1979, and was president of the organization in 1993–1995. He was on the board of the American Academy of Optometry from 1986 to 2000 and its president in 1997 and 1998. He was on the National Board of Examiners in Optometry from 2000 to 2008 and president of the board in 2003–2004.

Dr. Lowther has been very active internationally, having lectured and presented papers in over 20 countries. He did a sabbatical in Sydney, Australia, at the University of New South Wales in the laboratory of Dr. Brien Holden in 1986. He has been involved in helping to start the first optometry programs in Poland at the Karol Marcinkowski University of Medical Science and in Thailand at Ramkhamhaeng University. He goes to Thailand at least annually to help develop the Thai program as well as to teach in the program. He was the department advisor to the School of Optometry at the Hong Kong

Polytechnic University from 2001 to 2006. He was on two advisory committees to the Minister of Public Health in China on the development of the profession of optometry in China.

Over the years Dr. Lowther has received numerous awards, including the Distinguished Faculty Award from the Michigan Association of Governing Boards, the John Neill Memorial Lecture Award from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry, the University of Houston Award for Distinguished Research on the Cornea and Contact Lenses, and the Max Shapero Memorial Lecture Award from the American Academy of Optometry. He was elected as a Distinguished Scholar of the National Academies of Practice, and given the Distinguished Service Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Indiana Optometric Association. In 2006 he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Human Resource Development from Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok.

Over the course of his career Dr. Lowther has had a research program funded by numerous contact lens, ophthalmic lens, and pharmaceutical companies. He has more than 100 research publications and three books, along with chapters in numerous other texts. He has consulted for and served on numerous industry advisory committees. He has taught many graduate students and been on the graduate committees of students at foreign institutions.

As dean of the IU School of Optometry, Dr. Lowther increased the international involvement of the school. IU faculty are involved in the Thailand program, and students from Thailand, the Netherlands, and Australia have spent time in IU clinics. IU students have done rotations in Hong Kong and China. A clinic was established in Guanajuato, Mexico, in 2001, as a rotation site for selected optometry students, with a full-time IU faculty member as director of the clinic. It has developed into an outstanding facility and service. The Mexican government has built a \$1.4 million clinical facility in Guanajuato, including a surgical suite where Mexican and American ophthalmologists are able to provide surgical services in addition to all the optometric services. This facility gives the optometry students both clinical and cultural experiences while at the same time providing vision and health care to thousands of indigent patients who otherwise would not receive care.

He has overseen many accomplishments during his tenure as dean. There have been facility improvements, including remodeling the campus clinic, putting on an addition to the Community Eye Care Center, remodeling the main school classroom, establishing a joint clinic with the IU Department of Ophthalmology, and the recent building of a new campus eye care center. Moreover, numerous outstanding faculty have been added, the amount of research funding has increased almost tenfold, and there has been a major increase in outreach, providing vision and health care to thousands of underserved persons.