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NSUOCO participating in World Sight Day

Students, faculty and staff of Northeastern State University's Oklahoma College of Optometry will wear red T-shirts and put information online to bring awareness to Oct. 14 as World Sight Day.

NSUOCO student Neal Whittle created a short video describing the prevalence of blindness around the world and placing focus on the statistic that 80 percent of global blindness is preventable. It was produced at the request of Jennifer O'Neil, American Optometric Student Association philanthropy chairperson. The video can be seen at <http://optometry.nsuok.edu/NewsEvents/Vision2020Video.aspx>.

Dr. Doug Penisten, dean of NSUOCO, said student support of WSD is a local demonstration of commitment to addressing the world's needs for optometric care.

"The shirts they sell will allow them to make a contribution to Vision 2020," he said. "Our students are devoted to patients and their vision and want to help people improve their quality of life by preserving or restoring sight."

Penisten said students of the College of Optometry have a long-standing history of service to those in need.

"This is an aspect of outreach in line with the free clinics we offer on our missions to other countries," he said. "I'm very proud of our students and what they bring to the community, the college and the university."

WSD is an international day of awareness, held annually on the second Thursday of October to bring attention to the issue of avoidable blindness and impairment. The day's goal is to provide a platform for organizations worldwide to encourage governments, corporations, institutions and individuals to actively support blindness prevention efforts.

"WSD is observed around the world by all partners involved in preventing visual impairment or restoring sight," said O'Neil. "It is also the focal advocacy event for the prevention of blindness and for Vision 2020: The Right to Sight, a global effort to prevent blindness."

Vision 2020 was created by the World Health Organization and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness. Ocular afflictions of the greatest concern to Vision 2020 are cataracts, refractive errors, trachoma, childhood blindness, low vision, river blindness, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration.

"Most blindness worldwide is avoidable, readily treatable or preventable," said O'Neil. "Without effective intervention, the number of blind people worldwide has been projected to increase by 76 million by 2020."

For more information on Vision 2020 or WSD visit www.vision2020.org or www.givingsight.org. For more about NSUOCO visit <http://optometry.nsuok.edu>.

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