

# —President's Message

I am thrilled and honored to write this message to you as the president of Optica. As you know, on 20 September 2021, our society changed its name to Optica, the society advancing optics and photonics worldwide. The new name reinforces our society's position as the leading forum for advancing light science and technology. I am delighted with the outpouring of your support for our new name and brand. Together, we are carrying forward a century-long legacy into the next 100 years as an inclusive, global society dedicated to excellence.

Our community has been gathering virtually for a year and a half. That is quite an accomplishment—and one that's been enabled by photonic technology. Yet we truly miss face-to-face interactions, as very few in-person conferences have been possible worldwide.

Personal interactions at meetings have made an enormous difference in my life and work. As a student and junior scientist, I was incredibly fortunate to find people with the same passion I had at conferences I attended. Many of them became lifelong friends. And I was lucky to meet people who selflessly mentored me. The gift they gave me inspired me to pay it forward. This is why I am so focused on helping students and early-career professionals today.

I have always encouraged my students to go to meetings and to submit papers. When you talk about your paper, you look people in the eye. They ask you questions and give you a chance to defend and improve your work. You gain friendship across countries—and you may even gain advisors and mentors. While going to conferences is still my recommendation, I am delighted to mention a great service that the Optica Foundation is piloting to provide mentor matching ([optica.org/mentormatch](https://optica.org/mentormatch)). I encourage you to look into this program and even to volunteer to be a mentor.

Optica aims to support members' desire to interact and network with our global community. The society wants to build on the fourfold increase in attendance that our virtual meetings have allowed. Although the logistical and financial challenges are substantial, we are exploring hybrid in-person and virtual meetings to best accommodate our global community. Please send your ideas to [ideas@optica.org](mailto:ideas@optica.org).

Finally, I encourage you to attend our Optica annual meeting, *Frontiers in Optics + Laser Science* ([www.frontiersinoptics.com](https://www.frontiersinoptics.com)), from 01 to 04 November 2021. Join us to learn about some great science—and also to celebrate our community and honor recipients of awards from Optica, the Optica Foundation and the APS Division of Laser Science. Yes, it is virtual—but I hope soon we will meet in person again.



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—Connie Chang-Hasnain,  
Optica President