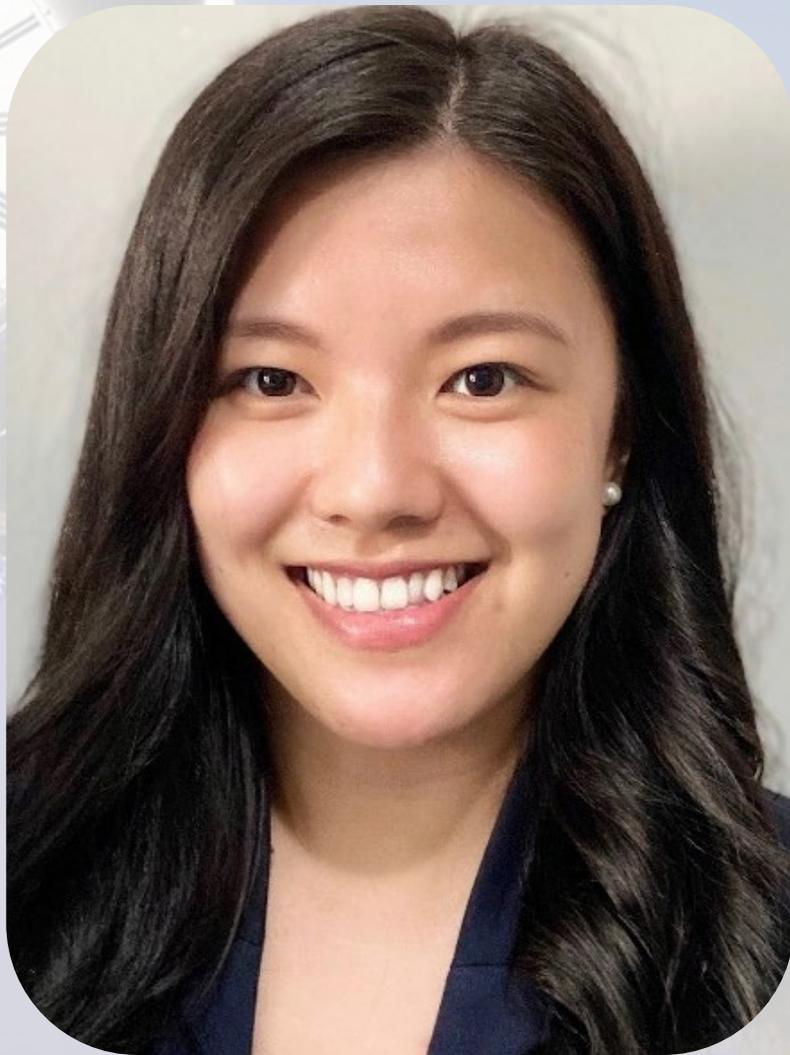


WesternU

College of Optometry



Meet Tenzin

2022 Recipient of the
WesternU Board of Trustees Scholarship



Dear WesternU Board of Trustees,

I want to thank you for your generous donation. This scholarship is truly a life-changing scholarship for me. As a first-generation low-income student, I have relied heavily on loans to fund my undergraduate, graduate, and now doctorate degrees. Thus, this scholarship alleviates a lot of the financial stress that I have carried over the past couple of years. I genuinely feel so grateful to be a recipient of this prestigious scholarship.

I was born in a refugee camp in Dharamshala, India where my parents did not have the opportunity to complete high school or attend college. They then immigrated to Minneapolis, Minnesota where I grew up in a poorly-funded public school district that did not prepare me well for my undergraduate courses. However, financial and academic support programs such as Admission Possible, TRIO, and Page Education Foundation helped alleviate the isolating nature of my undergraduate years by offering study workshops and one-to-one academic advising. This support also spurred me to give back to these programs by tutoring and mentoring underrepresented college-bound students. As a board member of Lamton, I organized inaugural out-of-state visits to colleges by fundraising travel costs, creating itineraries, arranging meetings with admissions departments, and coordinating question and answer sessions with local students. These experiences showed me the impact of accessibility to mentorship. It also motivated me to further my education by completing a Masters of Science degree in Medical Physiology. My graduate education bolstered my foundational science knowledge and refined my study practices, thereby preparing me for the optometry school curriculum.

I choose WesternU's College of Optometry program because it offers a diverse patient population that represents the population I hope to serve. I believe my extracurricular experiences and my upbringing have expanded my cultural skillset to better connect and bond with the people I want to serve. I am also excited about the opportunity to participate in vision screenings at local school districts. Vision problems act as a barrier to learning, therefore, to play a role in improving children's quality of life and academic performance is truly rewarding and something I hope to continue as a pediatric optometrist. WesternU's commitment to supporting its students through LEAD academic support is also significant. As a first-generation student, I believe having an environment that fosters a welcoming atmosphere dedicated to supporting the well-being of its students will allow me to contribute significantly back to my peers, mentors, and community.

Thus, the WesternU Board of Trustees Scholarship is life-changing. This scholarship lessens my financial burdens and allows me to work fewer hours to instead focus on my studies and additional educational opportunities. As a recipient of this scholarship, I will uphold the values, expectations, and honor that this role brings. I also commit to continuing to provide mentorship, tutoring, and promoting higher education. I commit to practicing and improving the well-being of communities like my own.

Thank you so much for your generosity. I am deeply appreciative of your support.

Tenzin Choedon, M.S.
OD Class of 2026

Learn More About
Tenzin Choedon, OD 2026
Trustee Scholarship Recipient



Hometown:	Blaine, MN
Undergrad:	St. Olaf College
Degrees:	BA Biology, MS, Medical Physiology (Case Western Reserve)
Hobbies/Interests:	hiking, photography, beach, weight lifting, painting
Previous Career/Job:	Research Coordinator at Bioscreen

What is your proudest accomplishment? My proudest accomplishment has been my ability to adapt when pursuing a graduate degree in Cleveland, Ohio. I arrived in Cleveland alone with two large suitcases and no connections, no motor vehicle, and no prior visits. However, I built strong connections with my peers, professors, and doctors. I attended various volunteering opportunities and improved my foundational science knowledge and study practices.

What inspired you to pursue your health sciences career path? I was inspired to pursue a career in health sciences due to the lack of health professionals in my community. I wanted a career where I could serve to advocate and educate low-income communities regarding their health. Through experiences of my own, I have witnessed first-hand the significant impact a doctor can make in a community.

Why did you choose to attend WesternU? As the health care system changes with an evolving population, I believe it is essential for students in optometry to collaborate with other professionals in order to enhance patient care which is why WesternU's interprofessional collaboration is very appealing to me. WesternU's dedication to community involvement is another aspect.

What are your future career plans/goals? As an optometrist, I plan to practice in a community where I can provide resources and bridge health disparities to improve the quality of care, especially for children. Through personal experience, I understand the importance of vision screenings and its impact on improving children's quality of life and academic performance. I hope to still be an active alumna and provide mentorship and scholarships to low-income WesternU students.

How will the Trustee Scholarship impact you? This scholarship alleviates much of the financial stress that I have carried over the past couple of years. As a first-generation low-income student, I have relied heavily on loans to fund my undergraduate, graduate, and now doctorate degrees. This scholarship allows me to freely focus on my education instead of worrying about working full-time while in my program.

What impact are you hoping to make on the community you serve? I intend to create education-oriented resources and events that will help first-generation students navigate applications, interviews, and other hurdles with guidance that I often did not have. As an optometrist, I hope to participate in community events to compile a list of resources for patients beyond just eyecare.