

Community Programs • Community Facilities Loan

## Optometry School Provides Opportunities and Eye Care

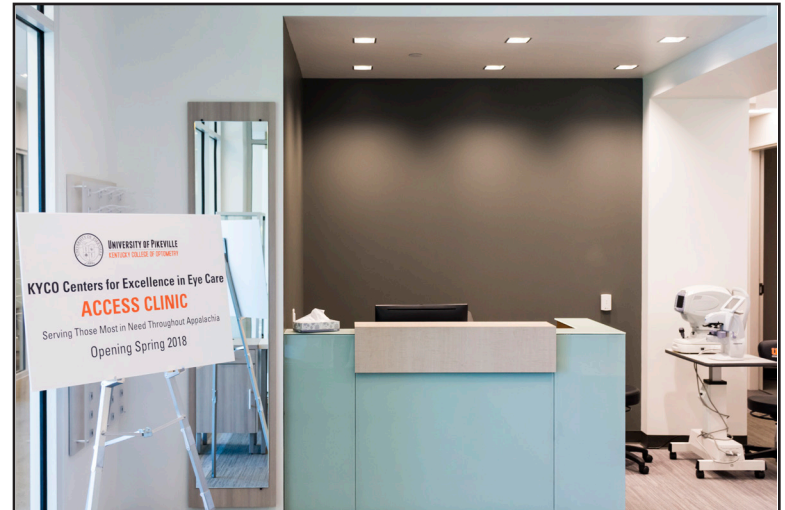
Carved into the side of a mountain deep in Appalachia, the University of Pikeville College of Optometry recently opened one of the most advanced optometry schools in the country.

With only one ophthalmologist and eight optometrists providing eye care between Pikeville and the two-and-a-half-hour drive to Lexington, the need for advanced health care in the region was evident. Many critics thought it would be impossible to build a school of such magnitude and prestige in Pikeville, but local leaders and school officials persevered in planning the construction.

The modern, state-of-the-art building was financed through a Community Facilities loan, ensuring this rural university prospers and provides quality education to the students. With hundreds of applications received from across the country, it is evident prospective and current students recognize the significant advantages of a healthcare education in Appalachia. Rural prosperity in the region has increased since the construction of the school through many different avenues, with job creation and education through advanced technology as primary drivers.

Service to the community is one of the primary goals of the College of Optometry; the school requires students and faculty to serve the local population in need of critical eye care. Inside the building, a clinic will be available to serve those needing eye care. To assist community members in the region who cannot travel to Pikeville, the school will send doctors and students throughout Appalachia. Already, hundreds of people who have never received eye exams have been seen by members of the school.

As the university celebrates the dedication of the new building, Rural Development takes great pride in our partnership, knowing generations will continue to receive the high-quality level of education the school was founded upon.



*Inside the new building, the eye care clinic will open soon, and is a welcoming place for the community to receive critical healthcare*

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**Obligation Amount:** \$50,000,000 loan

**Date of Obligation:** September 12, 2014

**Congressional District:** Representative Rogers, (KY-05); Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul

**Partners:** Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Agency, Private Donations

**Demographics:** Pikeville is located in Pike County in eastern Kentucky. This once thriving region suffered a major economic decline recently due to the lack of production of coal.

**Impact:** New infrastructure devoted to educating students on techniques of advanced healthcare brings a significant economic boost to the region. Also, people living in this region of Appalachia now have access to quality eye care, which was previously extremely difficult to find.

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