



Prehealth Programs:

Optometry

CU-BOULDER ACADEMIC ADVISING CENTER, PREPROFESSIONAL OFFICE
<http://advising.colorado.edu> (click on prehealth, at left)

THE PROFESSION

Optometrists work with all aspects of eye care, including the internal and external structure of the eye. They diagnose eye diseases, vision conditions, and perform examinations to write prescriptions for eyeglasses and contact lenses. They also provide low vision aids, vision therapy and medications, as well as perform certain surgical procedures. Optometrists work in private practices and hospitals, as well as teaching and research institutions. There is a need for optometrists in all types of practice, with a particular need in pediatrics and gerontology.

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR

Optometry schools differ slightly in their prerequisites, but all recommend a strong background in the sciences, mathematics and humanities. While it is not necessary to major in a scientific discipline, many schools are recommending science classes in addition to the prerequisites.

PREREQUISITES

Optometry schools differ somewhat in their required courses for admissions, but most require AT LEAST the following courses. Be sure to research the program you are interested in for additional requirements:

Biological Sciences (lower level): EBIO 1210-1230 and 1220-1240 or MCDB 1150-1151 and MCDB 2150-2151. **(upper level):** Microbiology EBIO 3400, Human Anatomy IPHY 3410 and 3415, Human Physiology IPHY 3430 and 3435, Biochemistry CHEM 4611.

Chemistry Courses

General Chemistry CHEM 1111 and CHEM 1131 and Organic Chemistry CHEM 3311-3321 and 3331-3341. Some schools only require one semester of organic chemistry.

Physics

PHYS 2010 and 2020 or PHYS 1110, 1120 and 1140

Math

one or two semesters of calculus, based on the preference of the school and one semester of statistics

English

3-9 semester hours, depending on the school

Psychology

3 semester hours

EXTRACURRICULAR AND OPTOMETRY-RELATED EXPERIENCES

Optometry schools are looking for well rounded individuals who can be involved in a range of activities while still doing well academically. Students should choose extracurricular activities that are of interest and are a good fit for their personality. In addition to general extracurricular activities, optometry schools also want students who have a strong knowledge of optometry and interest in the field. We recommend participating in job shadowing programs for optometrists, or volunteering in an optometry office. This will enable you to learn about the field and determine your own level of interest and suitability with optometry.

OPTOMETRY ADMISSIONS TEST (OAT)

All optometry schools require that you take the Optometry Admission Test (OAT). The OAT is a standardized, multiple choice exam with four sections including natural science, physics, reading comprehension and quantitative reasoning. All sections are scored on a 200-400 scale and then all sections are averaged to produce an academic average. Scores of 320 or better are representative of successful applicants.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Throughout your undergraduate years, you should be taking the necessary prerequisites for the optometry schools where you will apply. The OAT is typically taken in the early spring or the fall of the year in which you wish to apply. Most optometry schools have rolling admissions policies, so applying early is recommended. Each school has different deadlines, but applications are generally accepted in late summer to early spring. A general timeline would be to study for the OAT in the spring and get your application material together. During the summer, finish studying and start applying. In the fall, take the OAT exam and have the score sent to the schools to which you have applied. During the late fall and early spring, you should be interviewing and/or retaking the OAT if necessary.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

All schools require letters of recommendation. Usually you arrange to have these sent with your application. We offer a Committee Letter to CU students and alumni. To be eligible, you must attend a Committee Letter workshop, establish a Preprofessional Credentials

PREHEALTH PROGRAMS:

File, and meet other requirements and deadlines (see Committee Letter Procedures for the current year on the Pre-Health Advising web site). You will need a minimum of two letters from CU Boulder faculty, one of which must be in science. The second can be science or non-science. The third is open, although many optometry schools prefer two science letters. Some optometry schools require a letter of recommendation from an optometrist, so be sure to research the schools to which you are applying. Our credential service will retain your letters, assemble them into packets, and transmit them to the optometry schools that you request. There is a website for tracking receipt and transmission of your letters. There is a fee associated with this service. See Credentials File Service on the Pre-health Advising website.

PREHEALTH STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The Student Association for Pre-health Professionals (SAPP) represents a community of students at CU-Boulder whose goal is to provide an organization in which students interested in all areas of medicine can come together and learn more about the many professions, receive academic or personal guidance, and get detailed advice on applying to health professions programs. Within SAPP there are specialized subgroups for areas such as optometry, medicine, nursing, physician assistant, etc. Membership is open to all CU students. SAPP website: www.colorado.edu/student-groups/prehealth.

Alpha Epsilon Delta (AED) is a pre-health honor society for those interested in health careers. AED website: www.colorado.edu/student-groups/aed

OPTOMETRY SCHOOLS

There are 20 accredited schools and colleges of optometry in the U.S. and Canada. They are:

- Illinois College of Optometry
- Indiana University
- Inter-American University of Puerto Rico
- Michigan College of Optometry at Ferris State University
- New England College of Optometry
- Northeastern State University
- Nova Southeastern College of Optometry
- The Ohio State University
- Pacific University
- Pennsylvania College of Optometry
- Southern California College of Optometry
- Southern College of Optometry
- State University of New York State
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of California - Berkeley
- University of Houston
- University of Missouri-St. Louis
- University of Montreal
- Waterloo University
- Western University of Health Sciences

OPTOMETRY

WEBSITES

Association of School and Colleges of Optometry- <http://www.opted.org/>

American Optometric Student Association- <http://www.theaosa.org/>

VITAL STATISTICS

2007 Class Profile for all Optometry Schools

Average GPA: 3.34

Average OAT (TS): 324

Acceptance Rate: on average 30% of applicants were accepted at each school

All information in this publication is subject to change. Please check with the prehealth advisor, or with the appropriate school for up-to-date information.

The University of Colorado at Boulder is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution.

Updated 9/08. Produced by the Academic Advising Center.

