Becoming a Competitive Applicant to Optometry Programs
Applicants to optometry school must complete a minimum of 90 credit hours (3 years) of college coursework, along with the pre-optometry prerequisites. Most pre-optometry students complete a Bachelor’s degree prior to entering optometry school. Competitive applicants for admission to optometry school have a solid academic record, a well-rounded profile of co-curricular experiences, strong scores on the Optometry Admission Test (OAT), supportive letters of recommendation, and can clearly articulate their reasons for choosing Optometry.

SELECTING A MAJOR
Applicants with a well-rounded education, a variety of interests and personal experiences are ideal candidates. Students are encouraged to choose a major where they can demonstrate strong overall academic performance while also focusing on developing a solid foundation in the sciences. Optometry programs look for students who demonstrate the academic ability to handle a rigorous course load.

GPA
GPAs calculated on optometry school applications normally include coursework done at all colleges attended. If a course is repeated, both grades will be included in the GPAs calculated by the optometry schools. Aim for GPAs of 3.3 or higher.

GRADES
C is an honorable grade, though most, if not all, grades should be higher! Multiple grades below B, especially within the two academic years leading up to optometry school application, could interfere with competitive admission to optometry schools. Faced with a likely grade below C, some students should withdraw (W) and later try for a higher grade; consult with your advisors as you decide. More than two W’s, however, could indicate a lack of judgment or an inability to handle challenges later in optometry school.

PRE-REQUISITE AND RECOMMENDED COURSES
There is variability among prerequisite courses required by optometry schools; students are strongly encouraged to research potential schools carefully to be aware of all prerequisite course and other admissions policies. Pre-Optometry students who complete the following courses should be well-prepared to apply to a large percentage of optometry programs. Students should consult with advisors for timeline planning.

PRE-REQUISITES MOST OFTEN REQUIRED BY OPTOMETRY PROGRAMS
• Two semesters of General Biology with lab – BIO 201/205; BIO 202/206
• Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab – CHM 203/204; CHM 205/206; CHM 285/286 also meets this requirement
• Two semesters of Organic Chemistry with lab – CHM 321/322; CHM 323/324
• One semester of Biochemistry – CHM 371 or CHM 381
• Two semesters of General Physics with lab – PHY 201/205; PHY 202/206
• One semester of Microbiology – BIO 350 or BIO 451
• One semester of Human Anatomy with lab
• One semester of Human Physiology with lab
• One semester of Psychology – PSY 201
• Two semesters of English
• One semester of Statistics
• One semester of Calculus – MTH 231 or MTH 245

While many optometry programs may accept AP/CLEP/IB, dual-credit college courses, or community college courses to meet prerequisites, applicants should research individual schools to be certain of their admissions policies.
Course Scheduling Considerations:
Freshmen and sophomores usually take only two natural science or math subjects each semester.

Chemistry: General Chemistry I (CHM 203/204) and General Chemistry II (CHM 205/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring. Students must have a sufficient chemistry background (completion of high school chemistry) and sufficient math background (an ACT math score of at least 24 or an SAT math score of at least 580) to be eligible to take General Chemistry in the freshman year. Students may instead take additional math and/or CHM 105 Introductory Chemistry in freshman year to be better prepared for General Chemistry.

Biology: General Biology I (BIO 201/205) and General Biology II (BIO 202/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring, respectively. Completion of either General Chemistry I (CHM 203) or Introductory Chemistry (CHM 105) is required to take General Biology II.

Math: Pre-Optometry students are required to complete a calculus course. MTH 231 or MTH 245 will fulfill this requirement. Math, physics, and chemistry majors will need more than one semester of calculus and usually should not take MTH 231.

Summer: Science courses may be taken in the summer by pre-optometry students, but only when there are good reasons for doing so (not just a vague desire to “catch up”) and, in many cases, not at community colleges. Speak with a pre-health advisor before taking summer science courses.

Sample First Semester Schedule: Course sequencing may vary depending upon a student’s readiness.
• General Biology I with lab (4 sem. hours)
• General Chemistry I with lab (4 sem. Hours) or Introductory Chemistry (3 semester hours)
• Magis Core Class (3 or 4 sem. hours) – ENG or Critical Issues + COM
• Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PHL or THL
• Maybe another Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PSY or SOC, foreign language
• RSP Class (.5 semester hours each freshman semester)

OPTOMETRY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS:

NATIONAL ADMISSION TESTS: Optometry programs require the Optometry Admission Test (OAT) in order to apply. Students typically take the OAT approximately 12-15 months before starting an optometry program, if accepted. To do well on the OAT, it is necessary to first complete appropriate pre-optometry courses and complete intensive study for the test.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION: Students must submit at least two and up to four letters of recommendation with their OptomCAS application. Optometry programs have different requirements for letters. It is recommended to obtain at least one letter from a professor who taught the student in a science course. In some cases, a letter from an optometrist might be required or recommended.

INTERVIEWS: Many optometry programs will interview promising applicants. The EDGE Career Center offers interview preparation assistance, including mock interviews.

VOLUNTEER AND SERVICE
Students should seek out service experiences in both healthcare and non-healthcare settings, and it is beneficial to show sustained commitment over time. Check out the Schlegel Center for Service and Justice for opportunities - http://blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj/.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
Optometrists are called on to connect with and help people different from themselves, and make their patients feel comfortable during treatment. Seek out experiences that help you build interpersonal relationships and interact with people from many walks of life.

LEADERSHIP
Leadership comes in many forms. Creighton has a number of resources to help you gain leadership experience through various organizations and student programming. Showing some leadership skills now demonstrates you can be a leader in your community later.

RESEARCH
Research experience is not a requirement for admission to optometry programs, but may add an extra layer to your application if you are particularly interested in research. See the Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship for opportunities at http://www.creighton.edu/curas/.

CO-CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

Strong academics alone are not enough to be competitive for a optometry program. It is also important that you are a well-rounded applicant that participates in meaningful activities on your college campus and your community. Optometry programs value community service, leadership, research and other co-curricular involvement.

HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE
Students should seek opportunities for hands-on, direct patient care experience, whether volunteer, paid, or both.

www.creighton.edu/edge  402-280-5566, edge@creighton.edu