PRE-OPTOMETRY
Pathway Information

GSW GEORGIA SOUTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

There is no "best" major for pre-optometry students. Biology is the most common major, as it provides a strong foundation and more of the required course work applies toward the major. However, other majors can be acceptable. Pursue a major that helps you excel.

Consult a pre-health advisor about your individual plan, and to check with your optometry school for their requirements. While at GSW, be sure to build credentials in scholarship, leadership, community service, and clinical experience, as well as shadowing in the various settings of the profession.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED COURSES

Pre-Optometry Requirements:

- Principles of Biology I & II
  BIOL 2107K & 2108K (8 hrs)
- Principles of Chemistry I & II
  CHEM 1211/L & 1212/L (8 hrs)
- Organic Chemistry I & II
  CHEM 3301/L & 3302/L (8 hrs)
- Intro to Physics I & II
  PHYS 1111/L & 1112/L (8 hrs)
- Composition I & II
  ENGL 1101 & 1102 (6 hrs)
- Biochemistry
  CHEM 4410 (3 hrs)
- Elementary Statistics
  MATH 1401 (3 hrs)
- Microbiology
  BIOL 2260K (4 hrs)
- Human Anatomy and Physiology I & II
  BIOL 2251K/2252K (8 hrs)
- Intro to Psychology
  PSYC 1101 (3 hrs)
- Calculus I
  MATH 1120 (4 hrs)

Note: All lab courses should be taken face-to-face.

Recommended Pre-Optometry Courses:

- Animal Physiology
  BIOL 4400 (4 hrs)
- Genetics
  BIOL 4200 (3 hrs)

ADVISOR INFORMATION

Primary Advisor:
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TIMELINE

Many of the required courses are sequence courses that have prerequisites and are not offered every semester. For example, you cannot take Organic Chemistry without successfully completing both Principles of Chemistry courses and their associated labs. You can't take Principles of Chemistry I without the pre-requisite/co-requisite Mathematics course. Organic Chemistry I is only offered in Fall and the Organic Chemistry II only in Spring.

OPTOMETRY ADMISSION TEST (OAT) AND GPA EXPECTATIONS

The Optometry Admission Test (OAT) is required for admission into optometry school and is offered multiple times per year at a cost of $450. Before you can register for the OAT you must secure an OATPIN. You can register for a PIN at ADA.org/OAT. You must register for the test at least 60-90 days in advance. The test is computer based and 5 hours in length. You should plan on taking the exam only once. Retakes are allowed but they are limited and should be considered very carefully.

You should plan to take at least 5-6 full length practice exams since this is the best way to prepare and to gauge your progress. The ideal OAT score for most optometry schools is 340/340.

The ideal optometry school applicant will have a 3.5 cumulative GPA or higher and a science GPA or 3.6 of higher. Optometry programs via the OPTOMCAS application use the BCP GPA which takes into account biology, chemistry, physics courses. All attempts at a course will be included in the GPA calculation.

Grade trends are as critical as your raw GPA. Admissions committees look for trends on your transcript—so all is not lost if you stumble your first semester or two, but then show substantial improvement each subsequent year. They will also look for negative trends such as consistently withdrawing from or performing poorly in hard sciences or completing them away from your home institution. While an instance or two is not a deal-breaker, a pattern of behavior will be. You must demonstrate the ability to handle difficult scientific content.

LETTERS OF EVALUATION

The OptomCAS application allows students to upload four (4) letters of recommendation. Check the website for each school you plan to apply as the requirement for the letter may vary between schools. Ideally, you should try to get two letters from hard science faculty, one from an optometrist and one professional letter. Profession letters may come from a supervisory person that will write a competing letter for you (research mentor, volunteer coordinator or other faculty).

At GSW, it is easy to build a close relationship with faculty due to the small class sizes. You have the opportunity to work one-on-one with faculty both inside and outside of the classroom. A letter of recommendation has a greater value if it is from faculty that can address more than your grades in a course. You must be mindful of this and do your best to foster a strong relationship with faculty.

For additional letters, ask someone who will write the most compelling letter (volunteer coordinator, faculty, employer, etc.).