

## Contact Info:

*Ian McLaughlin*

*Pre-Optometry Advisor*

*(414) 229-4654*

*mclaughl@uwm.edu*

*<http://uwm.edu/letters-science/programs>*



## Explore Pre-Optometry at UWM

Undergraduate preparation for the study of optometry requires a strong foundation in science and mathematics and a background in the humanities and social sciences. UWM offers all of the prerequisites needed to apply to one of the 19 accredited optometry programs in the U.S. There are no optometry programs in Wisconsin; the closest one is in Chicago. Although it is possible to enter an optometry program after completing the necessary science and math courses but before earning the bachelor's degree, it is a highly rare situation. The majority of students accepted into optometry programs have completed their bachelor's degree.

## Majors for Pre-Optometry Students

It is important to note that "pre-optometry" is not a major. While many pre-optometry students choose a natural science major such as chemistry or biology, some do not, and this does not adversely impact their application to optometry programs. Optometry colleges are interested in well-rounded students who have the necessary scientific preparation plus demonstrated excellence in deductive reasoning, interpersonal communication, and empathy. These attributes can be developed through many different majors, including those in the humanities and social sciences. Pre-optometry students are encouraged to select any major that is of interest that will provide challenging material. Regardless of the major, students will be counseled on the required science courses needed for application to optometry school, and those courses will be integrated into the student's schedule.

## UWM Advantages

UWM students are encouraged to enhance their preparation for optometry school outside of the classroom:

- » **Unite For Sight's Global Impact Corps:** Student volunteers spend a week or more abroad, generally in less-developed areas of the world, working with medical professionals and social entrepreneurs.
- » **Prevent Blindness Wisconsin (PBW) Vision Screening Program:** PBW is a statewide not-for-profit organization dedicated to preventing blindness through the identification of early signs of eye disorders. UWM students may become certified vision screeners and volunteer to work with children, adults, and the elderly.
- » **Vive Peru:** This summer medical mission partners students with medical professionals to bring healthcare to Peru.
- » **Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR):** OUR provides access to research experiences for undergraduates. Students work directly with faculty members and graduate students in their chosen field of study.

## Advising

Students who identify themselves as pre-optometry will be assigned to a dedicated advisor who works with students interested in post-baccalaureate study in the healthcare field. Our pre-optometry advisor understands the long-term planning required to successfully complete the bachelor's program and the application process for optometry programs.

Because many science courses have prerequisites and follow a very structured order, it is important that students plan their course schedule very carefully in consultation with their advisor. Getting off track as early as freshman year can delay graduation.

**Quick Facts:**

- » In 2012, 24/7 Wall Street named optometry as one of the top ten best paying jobs of the future.
- » In 2012, CNN named optometry the #12 in the Best Jobs in America list.
- » CareerCast places optometry at #27 in their list of best jobs.
- » Doctors of optometry practice in more than 7,000 communities in the U.S. In more than 4,300 communities, optometrists are the only primary eye care providers.
- » Optometrists provide 70 percent of primary eye and vision care services in this country and far outnumber any other eye care practitioners.

**Admissions Test**

Students applying to optometry programs must take the Optometry Admission Test (OAT). This is a standardized test designed to measure general academic ability and comprehension of scientific information. All accredited optometry schools in the United States and Canada require the OAT.

**After Undergraduate Studies**

After completing undergraduate studies, students wishing to become an optometrist must complete a four-year program leading to a Doctor of Optometry (DO) degree. To obtain a state licence to practice optometry, students must pass written and clinical exams. Continuing education credits are necessary to renew the license every few years.

**Career Outlook**

Optometrists perform examinations of both the internal and external structures of the eye, conduct vision tests, analyze findings, and diagnose and treat eye-related ailments, including glaucoma, nearsightedness, and eye injury. Many diseases manifest themselves first in the eye, and optometrists may play a role in diagnosing diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Optometrists may provide pre- and post-surgical care for cataracts and laser surgery. They can prescribe drugs and contact lenses.

Employment of optometrists is expected to grow by 27 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations. More optometrists will be needed because the population is aging, and the number of individuals with chronic diseases is increasing. However, because it is a small occupation, the fast growth will still result in only about 11,300 new jobs.

A survey conducted by the journal, *Review of Optometry*, found that the median optometrist's salary was \$148,220 in 2013. However, there was a significant salary difference between those who are in sole practice and own their own business, who average \$179,438, and those who are employed by others, who only average \$116,932.

**Suggested Pre-Optometry Courses**

One year of general Biology with lab (Bio Sci 150, 152)
Anatomy and Physiology (Bio Sci 202, 203)
Microbiology (Bio Sci 383)
Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab (Chem 102, 104)
One year of Organic Chemistry with lab (Chem 343, 344 & 345)
Biochemistry (Chem 501)
One year of Physics with lab (Physics 120/121 & 122/123)
6 credits of English, including composition
Calculus (Math 211 or 231)
One semester of statistics
Introduction to Psychology (Psych 101)

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