Application Action Plan
Optometry School

Pre-Professional Advising (PPA) can help with your professional school application! Schedule an appointment through BoilerConnect (purdue.campus.eab.com and look for CCO/Pre-Professional) or send questions to preprofessional@purdue.edu.

As you begin to think about applying, you will find advance preparation will make the process much less stressful. This to-do list will help you prepare for your application.

Applying

- **Explore**—Visit the online common application (application service) you will be using and read over the website, FAQ, and instructions. This will educate you on what information you will need for your application.
  - OptomCAS is the application most applicants will use. https://www.optomcas.org/
  - The application instructions for OptomCAS is called the Applicant Help Center https://help.liaisonedu.com/OptomCAS_Applicant_Help_Center
  - Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) https://optometriceducation.org/
  - Optometry Program Admissions Directory https://myasco.opted.org/searchEngines/admissions_advanced_search_form.aspx
- **Get Advice**—Make an appointment through BoilerConnect with Pre-Professional Advising to discuss your application. https://www.purdue.edu/boilerconnect/
- **Letters**—Research your schools early on and make sure you are obtaining appropriate letters for the schools at which you are applying.
- **Brainstorm**—Start thinking about your application essay and your activities section. Gather some thoughts to help you write your personal statement.
- **Writing the Personal Statement—**This essay is an important element of your application and needs to be taken seriously. It expresses why you want to enter the field and allows schools to get to know you better. Some schools may ask for additional essays as part of their secondary application.
  - Pay close attention to any required prompt
  - Focus on 2-3 main points
  - Write clearly and concisely
  - Be descriptive and provide concrete examples
  - Think about your reader
- **Review your Personal Statement**
  - Have trusted friends, faculty, and advisors provide comments on your personal statement. You want a range of people reading and commenting on it as different people will react differently to it.
  - Discuss any writing difficulties with The Writing Lab.
  - If you want the Pre-Professional Advisors to read your draft and provide comments, please email as a Word attachment to preprofessional@purdue.edu
- **Research Schools**—Research the schools to which you will apply.
  - First, your state residency makes a difference in terms of acceptance. Your state school is the most likely to accept you. Even if you hope to leave your state, you must apply at your own state school.
  - Second, think about what you value in a program. Location (area of country, urban/college town/rural setting, relatively close to family, far from family, etc); curriculum structure; school's mission; etc.
  - Be aware of that school's admission credentials and in-state admissions (for state schools). This process is expensive. Don't throw away money making poor decisions about where to apply.
    - If they require research to graduate and you have no interest in research, don't apply there.
    - Applying as an out-of-state applicant to a school that typically interviews 1 out of state student a year? What's up with that?
  - Make a chart with items such as contact information, any additional requirements you need, extra application requirements, and the types letters of recommendation they prefer.
- **Organize**—You will need to list your activities, awards, research, and shadowing/observation experiences. Start gathering all this information early. Better yet, as an undergrad, keep a log as you go.

- **Clean House**—Be sure all of your social media is professional and your email address and phone messages are appropriate for communication with professional programs.
  - Please note, some schools do look for and check your social media to see if it is appropriate. Make sure you lock down your privacy settings as much as possible.
  - Make sure your phone mailbox is open and available in case they need to reach you.
  - Check your email regularly during the application process—this is the most common method of communication for schools.
  - Be sure to check your junk mail/spam as well in case a school's messages somehow get caught there.

Additional Preparation

- **Interview Preparation**—Watch for news in your professional area and start preparing for interviews.
  - Pay attention to current events and health news. These often come up in interviews.
  - Research how your schools does interviews.
  - Look at the PPA website for information on using Big Interview, an online tool to practice interviewing.
  - PPA can also provide lists of questions to help you practice.
- **Parallel Planning**—Develop your back-up plan during your application year and fill any gaps in your application in case you need to apply again.
  - Think carefully about where any gaps are in your application as you fill it out.
  - During your application year, work on filling those gaps so that if you need to apply again, you will be in a better place.
  - In interviews, schools often ask about what you will do if you don't get in. You need to be able to answer this. So work on your back-up plan if for no other reason than to have a great answer to this question.
- **Financial Planning**—If you qualify for U.S. Federal Loans, file your FAFSA even if you have not yet been admitted.

Early Application Helps Your Application!

- One of the easiest things you can do to help your application is to apply early.
- Try to submit your application within 1-1.5 months of the application service opening
- Since the application opens the end of June, this means submitting in July or early August.

Preparing for your Giant Leap
purdue.edu/preprofessional