Admission Information

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www.uab.edu/optometry
The UAB School of Optometry (UABSO) is part of a world-renowned academic medical campus in Birmingham, Alabama. Established in 1969, the UABSO was the first optometry program designed to be fully integrated into an academic health system. The UABSO awarded its first Doctor of Optometry degrees in 1973 and has since grown to include graduate degrees (MS, PhD) in Vision Science, and dual degrees OD/MS, OD/MPH, and a new OD/MBA. In 1978 the UABSO was the first to establish optometric residency programs within a school of optometry. Our 7 affiliated residency programs offer 12 highly competitive spots, all accredited by the ACOE.

UABSO students are taught by internationally recognized MDs, OD’s and PhDs, all of whom are experts in their particular disciplines. This affords our students an educational opportunity that is second-to-none. Our program consists of classroom instruction and clinical practice. Our small class size of 50 students or less allows us to offer a very personal educational experience. We continually recruit some of the best and brightest students from across the nation and the world. Our students demonstrate their excellence throughout their UABSO experience, translating into a board passage rate that is consistently higher than the national average.

UAB Eye Care, a 34,000 square foot state-of-the-art teaching clinic provides personalized vision care for pediatric and adult patients, treatment for ocular disease, and low-vision rehabilitation. Our students also provide numerous vision screenings and comprehensive eye exams across Alabama in community outreach programs. UABSO faculty, residents, and students see ~22,000 patients each year.

What are Optometrists?
Doctors of Optometry (O.D.) are independent primary health care providers who examine, diagnose, treat, and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures, as well as diagnose related system conditions.

What does an Optometrist do?
Optometrists perform comprehensive examinations of the internal and external structures of the eye, perform subjective and objective tests of visual function, and diagnose and treat medical and visual disorders of the eye. As health care professionals, optometrists commonly diagnose signs of systemic diseases (such as diabetes, hypertension, strokes, and brain tumors) and work with other medical specialists in caring for these patients. Optometrists prescribe glasses, contact lenses, medication, and vision therapy to treat ocular disorders. Optometrists also play a major public health role in the prevention of major causes of blindness, illness, and disability in the United States.

Is there a demand for Optometrists?
As the baby boomer population continues to age, the need for eye care increases. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the demand for Optometry will increase 24% through 2022.

What type of education is required to become an Optometrist?
O.D.’s must complete a four-year post-graduate degree program from a school of college of Optometry. Students generally complete a “Pre-Health” curriculum at an accredited institution before applying to Optometry school.
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisite Courses
Candidates must complete the following courses to be eligible for admission with a grade of C or better prior to the summer leading up to their program matriculation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology / Including Lab</td>
<td>2 semesters or 3 quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>1 semester or 1 quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>1 semester or 1 quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Chemistry / Including Lab</td>
<td>2 semesters or 3 quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Chemistry / Including Lab</td>
<td>1 semester or 1 quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics / Including Lab</td>
<td>2 semesters or 3 quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculus</td>
<td>1 semester or 1 quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>1 semester or 1 quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2 semesters or 3 quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1 semester or 1 quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>2 semesters or 2 quarters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strongly Recommended Courses**

- Anatomy & Physiology and/or Histology

Optometry Admissions Test (O.A.T.)
All applicants are required to take the Optometry Admissions Test. This exam is offered online at computer centers across the nation. You may register to take the test at [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org). It is best to complete the prerequisite courses prior to taking the OAT. We recommend that you take the test at the end of your junior year in college if possible. This enables you to retake the test before the application season ends if you are not satisfied with your scores. There is a 90-day waiting period between tests.

Letters of Recommendation
UABSO requires either a composite recommendation from the Health Professions Advisory Committee (if available) or 4 individual letters. If the composite recommendation cannot be provided, then the four letters should be from (2) faculty members who are knowledgeable about the applicant’s scholastic abilities and personal characteristics and (2) optometrists with whom the applicant has shadowed and/or worked.

Observation / Shadowing Experience
We require a minimum of 40 shadowing or observation hours. These shadowing hours indicate your interest in optometry and will provide you with invaluable insight regarding the profession of Optometry.

OptomCAS Application — [www.optomcas.org](http://www.optomcas.org)
UABSO utilizes OptomCAS, the Optometry Centralized Application Service. Through this service, applicants may submit an application and have it sent to multiple optometry schools of their choice. OptomCAS serves as your primary application. You will upload your college transcripts, OAT scores, and input your shadowing hours. Additionally, you will direct those writing recommendation letters for you to OptomCAS.

UAB Supplemental Application
In addition to the OptomCAS application, there is a supplemental application that has additional questions that are not covered on OptomCAS. This application can be accessed through the OptomCAS website.

**Instructions:**
- From your OptomCAS application, select the Program Materials box. This tab will allow you to select UABSO from the list of schools.
- Once you are on the school’s page, click the “Supplemental Application” link.
Requirements for Admission
- Candidates for admission to the first professional degree program (O.D.) of the School of Optometry must meet all of the requirements for admissions to the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the School of Optometry.
- Applicants must have completed a minimum of 90 semester hours or 135 quarter hours, the equivalent of three years of college education, prior to matriculation. However, preference is given to applicants who have received their 4-year degree or will receive their degree prior to matriculation.
- All courses must be taken at a fully accredited institution and must be acceptable to the institution for degree credit and major requirements.
- No more than 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours earned at a 2-year institution may be applied to the credit hour requirement.

Helpful Hints
- Apply early!!! UABSO is on a rolling admissions system.
- Although a science degree is not required, it is helpful. If you plan to obtain a degree in a major other than a science-based major, you need to excel in the required science prerequisite courses.
- Continue to shadow optometrists after you reach the 40-hour minimum. Something can be learned from every experience.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Once the school has received both your Supplemental and OptomCAS applications, the Admission Committee will review your application and assess whether or not to extend an invitation to interview at that time. Not all applicants will receive an interview invitation after the first review however; there are multiple reviews of each application.

Interview days take about half-a-day depending on your interview date and time. The interview is designed to give us a chance to learn things about you that your application cannot convey. The committee is interested in the depth of your intellectual curiosity about the field of Optometry.

Each interview day consists of the following activities:
- Meet the Dean
- Financial Aid Presentation
- School & Clinic Tour
- Lunch with Current Students
- Open File Interview
- Closed File Interview

The Selection Process—Frequently Asked Questions

When can I expect to hear whether I’ve been accepted or not?
It depends on the applicant pool the year that you apply. We use rolling admissions system.

What factors are considered when making admissions decisions?
OAT scores, transcripts, interview scores, optometric experience, extracurricular activities, leadership positions, and recommendation letters are all considered when making admission decisions.

If I interview and I don’t get a contract seat, although I am a legal resident of a contract state, will I still be considered for a position in the class?
Yes, you will be considered for a non-resident seat in the class.

How will I be notified if I am accepted?
If you are selected for the class, you will receive a phone call from the Office of Student Affairs. The call will be followed up with an official letter of offer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions¹</th>
<th>Alabama Resident</th>
<th>SREB Contract States²</th>
<th>Non-Residential/Non Contract</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculated</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17³</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| OAT Average/Total Science | 324/317 | 320/314 | 329/324 | 324/318 |

1. The number of available positions from each contract state is subject to change per the state’s legislative decisions
2. Contract States: Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina
3. Non-resident students include students from SREB contract states that did not receive one of the twelve contract seats.

**Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Information**

The Regional Contract Program is a tuition-savings program for college students in the SREB member states who want to pursue degrees that are not offered by their in-state institutions. Students can enroll in out-of-state institutions that offer their degree program and pay only the in-state tuition rates. These state governments have a contract with UABSO to provide this benefit for legal residents of their state. Each state enrolled in the program offers a limited number of contract seats. UABSO has agreements with the following states: **Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina** for a total of 12 positions. The number of available contract seats per state is subject to change based on your state’s ability to fund this program.

**Certification Procedures:**

Certification is the procedure by which state officers verify and certify the legal residency of applicants. States may certify students before admission, during the admission process or after a student is formally admitted. State residency requirements for participation are determined by each state. State certification officers screen applicants for residency requirements and certify students who are eligible for participation in the SREB program based upon their state requirements.

**State Certification Officers:**

**Georgia:**
Deborah Sullivan  
Board of Regents of the University System Georgia  
270 Washington Street  
Atlanta, GA 30334  
Phone: 404-962-3079  
Email: deborah.sullivan@usg.edu

**Louisiana:**
Kathy Hoyt  
Louisiana Board of Regents  
1201 N. Third Street, Suite 6-200  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
Phone: 225-342-4253  
Email: kathy.hoyt@regents.la.gov

**Mississippi:**
Renotta Jones  
Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning  
3825 Ridgewood Road  
Jackson, MS 39211  
Phone: 601-432-6791  
Email: rjones@ Mississippi.edu

**South Carolina:**
Tanya Rogers  
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education  
1122 Lady Street, Suite 300  
Columbia, SC 29201  
Phone: 803-737-2224  
Email: trogers@che.sc.gov
INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE

Financing a professional education can initially appear to be overwhelming. Fortunately for an optometrist, your income will be sufficient to satisfy your student debt in a timely manner. Consider the following:

- The earning potential of an optometrist (initially and career-long).
- Excellent prospects for job growth for the foreseeable future.
- A high level of professional satisfaction (CNN Money Oct 29, 2012).
- Flexibility with regard to how, when and where you practice.
- Relatively low stress.
- Few events in life provide the level of satisfaction and immediate gratification that come from restoring sight to patients.

While an investment always involves some amount of risk, the risk of assuming debt to finance your optometric education is more than offset by the benefits listed above.

**Annual Tuition & Fees 2016-17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Resident Tuition</th>
<th>Fees*</th>
<th>Non Resident with Merit Scholarship**</th>
<th>Non Resident without Merit Scholarship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>$26,115</td>
<td>$1172</td>
<td>$38,012</td>
<td>$54,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>$26,115</td>
<td>$1372</td>
<td>$38,012</td>
<td>$54,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>$26,115</td>
<td>$1372</td>
<td>$38,012</td>
<td>$54,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Year</td>
<td>$17,410</td>
<td>$1247</td>
<td>$25,341</td>
<td>$36,008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Notes about Tuition & Fees

*Fees do not include books, equipment, health/dental insurance, or living expenses

** Merit scholarships are available for highly qualified non-contract, non-resident students. The criteria for a Merit Scholarship are based on academic achievement and financial need. Beginning Fall 2015, the Merit Scholarship amount will be $16,000 per year for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Year and $10,667 for the 4th year. The Merit Scholarship is renewable yearly, based on continued academic excellence and the availability of funding for the program. Once an applicant has been admitted, the Merit Scholarship application will be made available based on academic qualifications. Merit Scholarships are reserved for highly qualified, non-contract, non-resident students. If the admitted applicant is given an application for the Merit Scholarship, it would be advised to submit that application prior to accepting his/her seat.

The Merit Scholarship amount for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year is $16,000 per year, the 4th year amount is $10,667. The Merit Scholarship is renewed annually, based on continued academic excellence and the availability of funding for the program.

Additional Scholarship Information

The University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry offers a number of awards, scholarships, plaques, equipment, and travel awards that are provided by vendors, alumni, national optometric organizations, regional organizations, state organizations, local organizations and the school. The School of Optometry currently has 49 endowed scholarships. Scholarship funding is an extremely important funding priority for the School.

In addition, some branches of the military, offer one, two, and three year scholarships on a competitive basis. Scholarship benefits will vary with each branch, and may offer tuition, book, and equipment reimbursement along with a stipend for living expenses while you are in school. Students who apply and are chosen to receive a military scholarship will be required to meet specific contractual obligations after graduation, and will be classified as an Officer in the military.
The national board exams for optometry are administered by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO). The NBEO is an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to protect the public by assessing the competence of practicing optometrists. NBEO examinations are widely accepted for optometric licensure in the United States.

The performance of UABSO students on all parts of this examination, with very rare exceptions, has been highly successful compared to the national average dating back more than twenty years. UABSO students are required to pass both the basic science (Part I) and the clinical science (Part II) sections of this examination to graduate from the program.
**American Optometric Student Association**  Each student actively enrolled in the UAB School of Optometry is a member of the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA). The UAB Chapter is closely affiliated with the national association and serves as the student government for the School. Students, therefore, are subject to the rules and are eligible for the benefits of both the local and national associations.

**Beta Sigma Kappa**  Beta Sigma Kappa is the International Optometric Honor Society. It was founded in 1925 and serves over 1,800 active members plus 950 honor student members. A student must attain a GPA of 3.5 in their first professional year, a cumulative GPA of 3.4 for the first two years, a 3.3 cumulative GPA for the first three years, and a 3.2 cumulative GPA for all four professional years.

**Fellowship of Christian Optometrists**  This national organization seeks to provide fellowship for Christian optometrists and optometry students. The organization’s activities include monthly luncheon seminars with featured speakers, Bible studies, and a yearly mission trip for humanitarian purposes.

**Gold Key Optometric Society**  The purpose of Gold Key is to recognize upper-class students who have demonstrated outstanding professional and ethical attitudes through leadership in their class, college and profession. All third year students are potential candidates for membership. However, no more than 10% from each class may hold membership.

**National Optometric Student Association**  The goals of the National Optometric Student Association (NOSA) are to increase minority representation in optometry and to serve as the focal point for the enrichment, counseling, and support of minority students.

**Private Practice Club**  The Club of Private Practice Management exists to provide students with information and opportunities regarding private practice optometry and to aid in the transition from student to doctor. The club aims to explore the rewards, challenges, and opportunities of private practice through guest speakers, events, and workshops.

**Student Volunteer Optometric Service to Humanity**  Student Volunteer Optometric Service to Humanity (SVOSH) is a charitable organization dedicated to providing vision care to people in the United States and abroad who would not otherwise receive care. Activities include collecting used eyeglasses and participating in vision screenings in underdeveloped countries.

**Community Connections**  UABSO students have many opportunities to serve others by participating in community outreach programs. The Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, the United Cerebral Palsy Center of Greater Birmingham, and various local elementary schools are just a few examples of places UABSO students provide vision screenings. The school recently began a new outreach activity called The Gift of Sight, where needy families from the Birmingham area are invited to the teaching clinic for free eye exams during the holidays.

**Outside the Classroom**  Birmingham is home to the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, the Birmingham Museum of Art, The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the historic Alabama and Lyric Theaters, the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center, a large number of community theaters and the McWane Science Center. There are several live music venues, world-class restaurants, and outdoor recreational opportunities all within close proximity to the UABSO. According to the National Geographic Traveler article titled “Steel Magnolia” from the August/September 2014 issue: “I’ve found a modern city that has retained its pace and charm, one with many of the accoutrements and attitudes of the New South but without the shiny facelessness common to too many cities around the region. You can do a billion-dollar banking deal in Birmingham. But you can also still eat at Niki’s, a popular meat & three in West Birmingham”.

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**THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**
The UABSO Admission office is frequently asked about coming to visit the area and tour the school. The school offers individual visits during which you have the option of meeting with an admissions advisor and taking a tour of our clinic. **If you are interested in an individual visit, please contact the Office of Student Affairs at 205-975-0739 and speak with Mr. Reginald Kinsey.** If you would like some suggestions on where to stay in Birmingham during your visit and/or places to see, we would be happy to provide you with a list of things to do. Below are just a few options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotels Nearby</th>
<th>Recommended Food</th>
<th>Must-See Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence Inn Downtown</td>
<td>Jim &amp; Nick’s BBQ $$</td>
<td>Vulcan Park &amp; Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205-731-9595</td>
<td>Five Points South</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springhill Suites at UAB</td>
<td>Steel City Pops (dessert)$</td>
<td>Railroad Park &amp; Regions Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205-322-8600</td>
<td>Homewood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubletree Hotel</td>
<td>Surin of Thailand $$</td>
<td>Civil Rights Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205-933-9000</td>
<td>Five Points South</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a metropolitan population of ~1 million, Birmingham has all of the amenities of big city while possessing the warmth and hospitality of a Southern town. The UAB School of Optometry is located in the heart of the UAB campus on the Southside of Birmingham.

Birmingham is in the midst of a downtown renaissance with the additions of the Regions Park Baseball Stadium, Railroad Park, several local breweries, loft apartments, and nationally renowned restaurants. Forbes magazine named Birmingham as America’s Most Affordable City (March 2015), Move To named Birmingham as America’s Best City in 2014, Birmingham is #1 on Zagat’s list of America’s Next Hot Food Cities 2015, 2016 Lonely Planet Top 10 “Best of the U.S.” and 2016 Only U.S. city on Travel Channel’s “Next Great Destinations”.

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**VISITING UABSO**