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Introduction

OptomCAS is the centralized application service for the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) and is administered by Liaison International Inc., an education information technology company located in Watertown, MA. OptomCAS allows optometry applicants to use a single web-based application and one set of materials to apply to multiple schools and colleges of optometry. Applicants who apply through OptomCAS submit a completed web-based application comprised of biographical data, colleges and universities attended, academic course history, letters of recommendation, work experience, extracurricular activities, honors and a personal essay. It is the applicant's responsibility to read and follow specific instructions for OptomCAS and the schools and colleges of optometry.

OptomCAS began its first year on July 15, 2009 for Admissions Cycle 2009-2010. Since its implementation, all eligible schools and colleges of optometry have participated in the centralized application service. OptomCAS provides validated numbers for the optometry application process.

This report will focus on Admissions Cycle 2017-2018. This cycle opened on June 28, 2017 and closed on June 2, 2018. The application fee was $170 for one institution and $70 for each additional institution.

Participating Institutions for 2017-2018

As noted in Table 1, twenty-three schools and colleges of optometry participated in OptomCAS in Admissions Cycle 2017-2018.

Table 1.

| Chicago College of Optometry, Midwestern University | Salus University Pennsylvania College of Optometry |
| Illinois College of Optometry | Southern California College of Optometry at Marshall B. Ketchum University |
| Indiana University School of Optometry | Southern College of Optometry |
| Inter American University of Puerto Rico School of Optometry | State University of New York State College of Optometry |
| MCPHS University School of Optometry | University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry |
| Michigan College of Optometry at Ferris State University | University of California, Berkeley School of Optometry |
| Midwestern University Arizona College of Optometry | University of Houston College of Optometry |
| New England College of Optometry | University of the Incarnate Word Rosenberg |
Applicants and Applications

The number of OptomCAS individual verified applicants to the twenty-three schools and colleges of optometry for 2017-2018 was 2,527. These applicants submitted a total of 12,293 applications for an average of 4.86 applications per applicant. See Table 2 below for a comparison to previous cycles.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verified Applications</td>
<td>2,639</td>
<td>2,604</td>
<td>2,732</td>
<td>2,812</td>
<td>2,687</td>
<td>2,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Verified Applications per Applicant</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a 6% decrease in the number of applicants compared to the previous cycle. The total verified applications decreased by 8%.

Designations

The top three designations for applicants to the Doctor of Optometry program were: Salus University Pennsylvania College of Optometry, Illinois College of Optometry, and Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry (reference Table 3). Please note these are OptomCAS applicant numbers and some institutions have a supplemental application that must be completed before an applicant will be considered for their program.

Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Applicants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Chicago College of Optometry, Midwestern University</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Illinois College of Optometry</td>
<td>976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Indiana University School of Optometry</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Inter American University of Puerto Rico School of Optometry</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographic Information on the Doctor of Optometry Applicant

OptomCAS demographic data are captured on the OptomCAS application. This information cannot be verified by Liaison staff.

Gender

Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, females comprised 70% of the OptomCAS applicant pool with males at 29%. Less than 1% of the applicant pool’s gender was unknown. There was an increase in female applicants and a decrease in male applicants compared to the previous OptomCAS admission cycle.
Age

Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that the majority of applicants were in the 20-25 age range. The average age for all applicants was 23.7 with a median age of 22. The youngest applicant was 18 and the oldest was 57. There was a very slight change from the previous OptomCAS admissions cycle regarding the average and median age.

Race/Ethnicity

Figure 3.

As shown in Figure 3, the majority of applicants were White (47%) with the other applicants reporting Asian (30%); Hispanic/Latino (9%); Black/African-American (4%); Two or More Races (3%); American Indian/Alaska Native (less than 1%); and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (less than 1%). Six-percent of applicants did not report a race.
As shown in Figure 4, there were minor shifts in the race/ethnicity categories for this admissions cycle from last cycle.

**Citizenship**

As shown in Figure 5, the majority of applicants in 2017-2018 were US citizens at 88%; 5% were non-residents; 4% did not report; 2% were permanent US residents; and less than 1% were temporary US residents.
State of Residence

The top five states where OptomCAS applicants claimed their state of residence in 2017-2018 were: California, Texas, New York, Florida and Illinois. There were 205 applicants from Canada. In the 2016-2017 Admissions Cycle, the top five states were the same with 200 applicants from Canada.

First Generation College Student

In 2017-2018, 64% of OptomCAS applicants had a parent who attended/graduated from college, while 30% of applicants are first generation college students. Six percent declined to answer the question. This was similar to last year.

Military Experience

Less than 1% of OptomCAS applicants had previous military experience, which was the same as the last admissions cycle.

Influences

The top five influences on why an applicant chose to apply to a Doctor of Optometry program were: non-relative optometrist, a parent who is a non-optometrist, relative optometrist, other health professional and friend. These influences were the same as last admissions cycle.

Academic Information on the Doctor of Optometry Applicant

Major

The most selected major on the OptomCAS application was Biology. Biology was also the top major last year.

Institution

The California higher education system claimed three of the top five spots for feeder institutions for OptomCAS applicants. These institutions were: University of Houston; University of California, San Diego; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Texas; and University of California, Irvine. In 2016-2017, the top five feeder schools were: University of California, Irvine; University of Houston; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, San Diego and University of California, Berkeley.
GPA

OptomCAS calculates a standardized GPA to aid the schools and colleges of optometry in evaluating applicants using uniform and consistent criteria. The overall cumulative GPA for all applicants was 3.34 – for males it was 3.31 and 3.35 for females. The GPAs were similar in the last admissions cycle – 3.30 for males and 3.35 for females.

Accepted Profile of the Doctor of Optometry Applicant

Gender

For Admissions Cycle 2017-2018, 69% of accepted applicants were female and 31% were male. In 2016-2017, 65% were female and 35% were male.

Age

The median age for accepted applicants was 22 years old. It was the same last cycle.

Race/Ethnicity

As shown in Figure 7 below, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander had the highest rate of acceptance at 100%, followed by White and American Indian/Alaska Native at 80%; Two or More Races at 77%; Asian at 74%; No Race Identified at 74%; Hispanic/Latino at 59%; and Black/African-American at 55.
All races/ethnicities except Hispanic/Latino increased the rate of acceptance from 2016-2017.

**Citizenship**

Eighty-eight percent of applicants accepted were US citizens; 5% were non-residents; 4% did not report; 2% were US permanent residents; and less than 1% were temporary US residents.

**GPA**

For 2017-2018, the average overall GPA for accepted applicants at the twenty-three schools and colleges was 3.42.

**More Information**

Please submit any questions or comments you have on the OptomCAS Applicant Data Report – A National Snapshot to:

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