

Physician Assistant

Health Professions Advising Office (HPAO), Student Access to Science Center, FO5-109

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Nature of the Work, Earnings and Occupational Outlook

Physician assistants (PAs) provide a wide range of health care services under the supervision of physicians. They should not be confused with medical assistants, who perform routine clinical and clerical tasks. Many PAs work in primary care areas such as general internal medicine, pediatrics, and family medicine. Others work in specialty areas, such as general and thoracic surgery, emergency medicine, orthopedics, and geriatrics. Physician assistants take medical histories, perform physical exams, order and interpret laboratory tests, diagnose and treat illnesses, counsel patients, assist in surgery, and set fractures. The responsibilities of a physician assistant depend on the practice setting, education, and experience of the PA, and on the state laws and regulations. Physician assistants are required to have leadership skills, self-confidence, and emotional stability. They must be willing to continue studying throughout their career to keep up with medical advances.

According to the American Academy of Physician Assistants, there were about 66,000 certified PA's in clinical practice in 2006 (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-2009). State laws regulating physician assistants have expanded access to physician services provided by PAs, including the authority to prescribe medications in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and Guam. The development of HMOs and other prepaid plans and the growing acceptance of PAs by other health care professionals have combined to strengthen the job market for PAs. Employment of PA's is expected to grow much faster than average for all occupations through 2016 (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-2009). According to the American Academy of Physician Assistants, median income for physician assistants in full-time clinical practice in 2006 was about \$74,980; median income for first-year graduates was about \$69,517. Income varies by specialty, practice setting, geographical location, and years of experience (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-2009).

Physician Assistant Education

There are many entry pathways into the physician assistant profession. **Options include certificate of completion, as well as associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree.** There are 140 accredited physician assistant programs in the United States, and they are located at medical schools, medical centers, hospitals, two- and four-year colleges and universities, and in the uniformed forces (Association of Physician Assistant Programs). More than 90 PA programs offered the Master's degree option and most applicants to PA programs already possess a bachelor's degree at the time of entry.

Physician assistants are educated as generalists in medicine; all programs emphasize primary care. PA programs require students to complete 9 to 12 months of classroom studies and then 9 to 15 months of supervised clinical rotations (Association of Physician Assistant Programs). PA education includes classroom instruction in biochemistry, nutrition, human anatomy, physiology, microbiology, clinical pharmacology, clinical medicine, geriatric and home health care, disease prevention, and medical ethics. Students obtain supervised clinical training in several areas, including primary care medicine, inpatient medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, geriatrics, emergency medicine, psychiatry, and pediatrics.

Pre-Physician Assistant Preparation

In 2006-2007 a total of 9,031 applicants applied PA programs via the Central Application for Physician Assistants (CASPA) and 3,715 applicants were offered admissions. The mean age was 27.6 with a mean GPA: **Science GPA: 3.08, Cumulative GPA: 3.23.** CASPA is a centralized Web-based application service provided by the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA). CASPA allows you to apply to any number of participating schools by completing a single application. CA schools not participating in CASPA include Drew University, San Joaquin Valley College, Stanford University, Riverside Community College and UC Davis. For more information regarding CASPA refer to their website: <http://www.caspaonline.org> or contact CASPA by phone at (240) 497-1895.

Any major is appropriate for PA preparation. Students are advised to select a major they find interesting and to work at developing a broad-based, interdisciplinary foundation of knowledge and skills from which they can build upon. Most PA programs require that applicants have a minimum of two years of college credits and some health care experience prior to admission. Analysis of student enrollment data shows that more than half of those who apply to physician assistant programs already have a college degree (PAEA).

Prerequisite Requirements:

Prerequisite admission requirements vary from school to school. Selection criteria may also vary according to the individual institution's philosophy, thus refer to the individual program website for detailed information. For a list of programs accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) visit the PAEA website www.paeaonline.org, and click on the Member Programs tab.

Below is a list of requirements for the 10 PA schools in California. Students maintain responsibility for verifying course selection with individual PA programs.

KECK SCHOOL OF MEDICINE (Masters)

www.usc.edu/schools/medicine

Science Courses

1yr. General Chemistry Chem 111A, 111B
 1 yr. General Biology Biol 111 w/L, 212 w/L
 Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 Microbiology Micr. 200 or 211

Non-Science Courses

Statistics Math 108 OR Bio 260 OR HDev 250
 Psychology Psych 100
 Spanish Language Span 101A & 101B
 English Composition Engl 100 & 1 Additional

LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY (Masters)

www.llu.edu

Science Courses

Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 Microbiology Micr. 200 or 211
 1yr. General Chemistry Chem 111A, 111B

Non-Science Courses

Psychology Psych 100
 Sociology OR Cultural Anth. Soc 100 OR Anth 120
 1 yr. of English Engl 100 & 1 Additional
 *Recommended Courses Statistics, Medical Terminology, Computer Literacy

SAMUEL MERRITT (Masters)

www.samuelmerritt.edu

Science Courses

Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 Microbiology Micr. 200 or 211
 1yr. General Chemistry Chem 111A, 111B
 General Biology Bio 111 w/L
 Organic Chemistry Chem 322A w/ 323A

Non-Science Courses

Statistics Math 108 OR Bio 260 OR HDev 250

*It is preferred that students only have one prerequisite course in progress in Spring.

*Most competitive applicants will have a minimum of 1000 hours of related direct patient contact.

TOURO UNIVERSITY (Joint Masters)

www.tu.edu

Science Courses

1 yr. General Chemistry Chem 111A, 111B
 1 yr. General Biology Biol 111 w/L, 212 w/L, 213 w/L
 Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 Microbiology Micr. 200 or 211

Non-Science Courses

1 Behavioral Science course Psych 100, Soc 100, Anth 120

*Recommended Courses 1 Calculus

*Demonstrated commitment or interest in serving in and working for medically and economically underserved areas is desirable.

WESTERN UNIVERSITY (Masters)

www.westernu.edu

Science Courses

1 yr. General Chemistry Chem 111A, 111B
 1 yr. General Biology Biol 111 w/L, 212 w/L
 Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 Microbiology Micr. 200 or 211
 Genetics Bio 370

Non-Science Courses

Statistics Math 108 OR Bio 260 OR Psych 110
 College Algebra Math 109 or higher
 Psychology Psych 100
 Sociology Soc 100
 English Composition Engl 100 & 1 Additional
 3 Humanities courses e.g. art, music, ethics, philosophy, etc.

CHARLES DREW UNIVERSITY (Certificate)

www.cdrewu.edu

Science Courses

Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 General Biology Biol 111 w/L, 212 w/L
 Microbiology Micr 200 or 211
 1 yr. General Chemistry Chem 111A, 111B
 1 yr. Organic Chemistry Chem 320A & B or 322A w/323A & 322B w/323B
 College Algebra or Higher Math 109 or higher

Non-Science Courses

English Composition Engl 100
 Speech or Pub. Speaking Comm 130
 Critical Thinking (Phil. Only) Phil 170
 Anth/Psych/ Soc (all 3) Anth 120, Psych 100, Soc 100
 Spanish Span 101A
 U.S. History Hist 172 or 173 or 300
 American Government Posc 100
 Any 3 humanities/liberal arts courses (min. 3 units ea.) not meet other req.'s

RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (Certificate)

www.rcc.edu

Science Courses

Chemistry Chem 111A
 Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 Microbiology Micr. 200 or 211
 Physics Phys 100A or 151
 *Priority give to RCC students>Riverside County Residents>CA Residents

Non-Science Courses

College Algebra Math 109 or higher
 Psychology Psych 100
 Sociology Soc 100
 Anthropology Anth 120
 English Composition Engl 100
 *2,000 hours of paid direct "hands-on" patient-care experience

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY COLLEGE (Certificate)

www.sjvc.edu

Science Courses

Chemistry Chem 111A
 Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 Microbiology Micr. 200 or 211
 *2,000 hours of direct patient care experience (both paid or volunteer acceptable)

Non-Science Courses

College Algebra Math 109 or higher
 Psychology Psych 100
 Sociology OR Anthropology Soc 100 OR Anth 120
 Speech Comm 130
 English Composition Engl 100

STANFORD UNIVERSITY (Certificate)

www.pcap.stanford.edu

Science Courses

Chemistry Chem 111A
 Human Anatomy Biol 208
 Human Physiology Biol 207 or 342/L
 Microbiology Micr. 200 or 211
 *3,000 hours of direct patient care experience by application deadline

Non-Science Courses

College Algebra Math 109 or higher
 Psychology Psych 100
 Sociology OR Anthropology Soc 100 OR Anth 120
 Speech Comm 130
 English Composition Engl 100

Physician Assistant Programs in CA

PA Program	Keck/ USC School of Medicine	Loma Linda University	Samuel Merritt College	Touro University CA Program	Western University
Website	www.usc.edu/schools/medicine	www.llu.edu	www.samuelmerritt.edu	www.tu.edu	www.westernu.edu
Length of Program	33 Months	24 Months	28 Months	32 Months,	24 Months
Degree Offered	Masters	Masters	Masters	Masters- joint MPA/ MPH	Masters
Class Size	40-45	26	36	40	98
Minimum GPA	2.7 minimum;	3.0 science, 3.0 cum.	3.0 science, 3.0 cum.	2.9 science, 2.9 cum.	2.7 Overall, Science and Pre-req.
Direct Patient Care Experience	No minimum; Strongly Recommended, community service req.	Req.1 year or 2000 hrs. documented experience	Recommended:1000 hours is competitive	Recommended: Experience or cummunity service	No minimum; emphasize community service
Selection factors	GRE or MCAT scores	Seventh Day Adventist/ Christian Perspective		Underserved populations	
Letters of Recommendation	3 required	3 required- 1 practicing PA or Physician	3 required- 1 health professional	2 required- 1 clinician	Consult Admissions Office
Pre- Requisite Courses- A & P	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology
Chemistry	2 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab	2 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab	2 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab	2 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab	2 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab
Microbiology	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab
Biology	2 sem. Bio. w/ lab		1 sem. Bio. w/ lab	2 sem. Bio. w/ lab	1 sem. Genetics
Math	1 sem. Statistics	1 sem. Algebra	1 sem. Statistics	Calculus recommended	1 sem. Algebra
Psychology	1 sem. Psychology	1 sem. Psychology		1 sem. Psychology	1 sem. Psychology
Sociology/ Anthro.		1 Sociology or Anthro.		1 Sociology or Anthro.	1 sem. Sociology
Add'l req./ GE	1 year English	1 year English	1 sem.Organic Chem		2 sem. English
	1 year Spanish Lang.				1 sem. Statistics
		Recommend: Med. Term., Stats, Computer Literacy			3 sem. Humanities

Physician Assistant Programs in CA

PA Program	Charles Drew Univ.	Riverside Community College	San Joaquin Valley College	Stanford University	UC Davis
Website	www.cdrewu.edu	www.rcc.edu/academicPrograms/pa	www.sjvc.edu/programs/pa2.php	http://pcap.stanford.edu	www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/fnppa
Length of Program	24 months	24 Months	24 Months	16 Months	24 Months
Degree Offered	Certificate	Certificate	Certificate	Certificate	Certificate
Class Size	50	28	20	50	60
Minimum GPA	2.5 cum.	2.7 in Science, 2.5 overall	2.5 minimum	C or better in Pre-reqs.	no minimum- 2.7 or higher recommended
Direct Patient Care Experience	Req. 100 min. hours in medical health care setting	2000 hours documented experience	Required: 2000 hours required (paid or volunteer)	Required: by application deadline 3,000 direct patient care experience	Highly Recommended: 2 years documented experience
Selection factors	Underserved populatons	RCC students, RC Res., CA Res.	Underserved Populations	Underserved Populations	Underserved populations
Letters of Recommendation	Consult Admissions Office	Consult Admissions Office	2 required	Consult Admissions Office	Consult Admissions Office
Pre- Requisite Courses- A & P	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology	1 semester w/ lab of: Human Anatomy Human Physiology
Chemistry	2 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab	1 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab	1 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab	1 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab (or 1 yr. HS)	1 sem. Gen. Chem. w/ lab (or HS Chem)
Microbiology	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab	1 sem. Microbiology w/ lab
Biology	1 sem. Bio. w/ lab				
Math	1 sem. Alg. Or Calc.	1 sem. Algebra	1 sem. Algebra	1 sem. Algebra	1 sem Algebra
Psychology	1 sem. Psychology	1 sem. Psychology	1 sem. Psychology	1 sem. Psychology	1 sem. Psychology
Sociology/ Anthro.	1 Sociology and Anthro.	1 Sociology or Anthro.	1 Sociology or Anthro.	1 sem. Sociology or Anthro.	1 Sociology or Anthro.
Add'l req./ GE	1 semester each of: Spanish, Speech	1 sem. English 1 sem. Physics w/ lab	1 sem. English 1 sem. Speech	1 sem. of English	1 sem. English
	English, Crit. Think (Phil dept. only)				