Physician Assistant

Career Facts:
- PA’s are health care professionals licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision.
- They conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and can write prescriptions in most states, including Illinois (AAPA).
- PA’s work in at least 60 different specialty areas, including Family/General medicine (34.5%), General Surgery and Surgical subspecialties (21%), and Emergency Medicine (10%).
- The average starting salary for PA’s was $69,517 in 2006 and the average salary for all PA’s was $80,356.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the number of PA jobs will increase by 27% by 2016, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Application Timeline:
- Freshman – Junior Years: Gain patient-contact experience, research PA programs and admission criteria, take prerequisite courses, develop communication and leadership skills through campus/community involvement, visit target schools, identify individuals who will write letters of evaluation.
- Spring of Junior Year: Take GRE if applicable, begin working on the CASPA application (see information on the Central Application Services for Physician Assistants below), collect applications for non-CASPA schools, give recommendation forms to evaluators with stamped, addressed envelopes.
- Summer prior to Senior Year: Order and send transcripts, complete and submit CASPA application and any additional applications for non-CASPA schools, possibly take/retake GRE, complete and return secondary applications, if applicable. On all applications, take time to read and follow the directions, proofread, have others read the application, etc. Make a good first impression!
- Senior Year: Finish any remaining applications, take/retake GRE if necessary, interview at selected schools, decide which program to attend, send final transcripts to school of choice.

Note: This timeline can be flexible. However, most program deadlines are between October and December of the year prior to admission. CASPA highly recommends completing the application as early as possible. Some schools operate on a rolling admission basis so it’s extremely important for students to apply well before the deadline.

Central Application Service
- Approximately 130 schools participate in CASPA, the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants. Students who are applying to at least one participating school must fill out a CASPA application. This application can be sent to multiple participating schools. The fee starts at $130, and increases with each additional school.
- CASPA collects one set of materials from each applicant including an online (or paper) application, transcripts, letters of evaluation (Do not use LEO, use CASPA forms), and any
applicable standardized test scores (except GRE scores which should be sent directly to the schools).
- The CASPA website provides clear, detailed directions for completing and submitting applications.
- Students wishing to apply to non-CASPA schools should visit the schools’ websites for application instructions.
- The CASPA website is www.caspaonline.org. Applications are available in April of the year prior to admission.

Admissions Criteria

- **Admissions Test:** GRE for graduate level programs.
- **Prerequisite Coursework:** See Below. Grades of C or better are required in all prerequisites.
- **Clinical Experience:** Many programs suggest students have up to 2000 hours of patient-related medical experience and/or volunteer experience. One to four years of experience is typical.
- **GPA:** Minimum GPA of 2.75-3.0 for most programs. Average GPA’s are as high as 3.5 and up.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** Prefer one academic performance letter (from and instructor) and one letter from a health professional. Use CASPA forms (downloaded from CASPA website) or individual school forms (for non-CASPA schools). Do not use LEO for PA Programs.
- **Interviews:** Many programs will invite qualified applicants for on-campus interviews.
- **Refer to the PA Programs Directory at the Physician Assistant Education Association (www.paeaonline.org) website.**

Prerequisite Coursework

*Note: Students should contact individual schools for prerequisite information. This list is a guideline only.*

- Biology with lab (2 courses min.)
- Anatomy (1 course)
- 1 year Chemistry with lab
- Physiology (1 courses)
- Organic Chemistry with lab (1 course)
- Microbiology (1 course w/ lab preferred)
- 1 year English
- Biochemistry (1 course)
- Statistics (1 course)
- Psychology and/or Sociology (2 courses)