



# Accelerated Dual Degree (BS/MHS) Program in Physician Assistant Studies

The Physician Assistant field has grown in numbers and prestige during the last 40 years. Today, Physician Assistants (PAs) are found in all areas of medicine. Under the supervision of a licensed physician, PAs diagnose, treat, and monitor a variety of commonly encountered illnesses and injuries. They take medical histories, order tests, prescribe medication, and provide patient education and preventive intervention. In surgical specialties, PAs perform “first assist” on many surgical procedures, including such tasks as harvesting leg veins for coronary bypass surgery.

In a cooperative effort, the Pathway to Health Professions (Health Sciences) Program and the Hahnemann Physician Assistant Program of the College of Nursing and Health Professions have created an accelerated dual degree program which offers its students valuable early advising and mentoring from PA faculty to help them plan their studies and meet their goals while they are still undergraduate students. Drexel’s highly regarded Hahnemann Physician Assistant Program, which was founded at the former Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital, is the oldest Physician Assistant Program in Pennsylvania and one of the largest PA programs in the country. The Hahnemann PA Program is known for attracting a diverse student body, with more than a quarter of the trainees coming from minority backgrounds and from the medically-underserved areas in which PAs are critically important.

## Coursework

Dual degree students spend their first three years in the Pathway to Health Professions Program, while completing the prerequisite courses for the Physician Assistant Program. Electives may be taken in natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, mathematics (including statistics), and computer sciences. Strongly recommended electives include courses in health sciences, nutrition, foreign languages, pharmacology, sociology, and philosophy. During their junior year, students apply to the Physician Assistant Program. A Bachelor of Science degree is awarded after the successful completion of the first year of PA graduate curriculum.

Once accepted into the PA Program, graduate training begins with four quarters of classroom work that integrates patient interaction in several courses. The final five quarters comprise the clinical phase of the Physician Assistant curriculum, which begins with six five-week rotations in medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, emergency medicine, and

psychiatry. The clinical phase ends with two ten-week preceptorships and with the completion of a graduate project.

The PA Program presents intense intellectual and physical challenges, requiring stamina as well as personal and financial sacrifice. The program demands a high degree of integrity, self-sufficiency, motivation, self-discipline, and well-developed study skills. To be considered for admission into the Hahnemann Physician Assistant Program, candidates must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation, the following technical standards for a Physician Assistant in training. Candidates must be able to:

- Elicit information from patients by inspection, palpation, percussion, and auscultation, and conduct other diagnostic procedures necessary to provide care to patients (these essential functions require a sufficient level of motor and sensory abilities).
- Use standard medical instruments and provide general care and emergency treatment to patients (these functions require a sufficient level of postural control, neuromuscular control, and eye-to-hand coordination).
- Assimilate and learn large volumes of complex, technically-detailed information in order to perform clinical problem solving (students must be able to apply concepts and information from different disciplines to formulate diagnostic impressions and therapeutic interventions).
- Maintain composure and emotional stability during periods of high stress.
- Exercise sound judgment and professional interpersonal skills.
- Demonstrate an attitude of respect and concern for others.

Further information about the technical standards is available at [http://www.drexel.edu/cnhp/physician\\_assistant/masters\\_technical\\_standards.asp](http://www.drexel.edu/cnhp/physician_assistant/masters_technical_standards.asp).

## Drexel Co-op

Drexel University has long been known for its co-operative education programs, through which students mix periods of full-time, career-related employment with their studies. Co-op employment is a part of the Pathway to Health Professions curriculum. The co-operative experiences of the Pathway to Health Professions curriculum are directed toward activities that will expose students to the work environments of various health professionals. These work settings will provide students with the opportunity to observe health professionals at work and to

assess their own potentials for undertaking such patient-focused careers.

## Career Opportunities

Specialties in family medicine and geriatrics will offer some of the best employment opportunities for PAs in the coming years, with growth expected in emergency medicine, surgery, and hospital-based internal medicine as well. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects the number of physician assistant jobs to grow by more than 27% by the end of 2016. The Physician Assistant profession was rated as the fourth fastest growing profession in 2007 by CNN and Forbes.

Nearly half of all PAs work in private offices for either single- or multi-specialty group practices or solo practitioners; one-third work in hospitals; and 11 percent staff federally qualified health centers and other community health facilities.

Though salaries vary by location, specialty, and work setting, graduating students can expect to earn on average about \$76,000 in their first year in the field. According to the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the current median annual income for all PAs in full-time practice is about \$88,000.

## In a Class of Their Own

In Drexel's Hahnemann Physician Assistant Program, students with high potential become high achievers. Of the 75-member class that graduated in the spring of 2008:

- Sixteen students (maximum number possible) were inducted into Alpha Eta, the Health Professions National Honor Society
- Seven students were selected for inclusion in *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges*.
- Twelve students were inducted into Pi Alpha, the National Honor Society for Physician Assistants.

## Admission Requirements

Dual degree applicants should have completed a mathematics progression including algebra, geometry, and trigonometry in high school. Applicants should also have completed a full year each of at least two of the following laboratory sciences: biology, chemistry, or physics. To be considered, applicants must have a cumulative GPA of 3.5 and a combined SAT score of 1200 (Critical Reading and Mathematics sections).

Admittance to the Physician Assistant program is not automatic for dual degree students. During their junior year, students must apply to the Hahnemann Physician Assistant program and meet the following admission requirements:

- Maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 and minimum cumulative GPAs of 3.00 in science courses and non-science courses during the three years of undergraduate study in the Pathway to Health Professions Program.
- Complete the prerequisite courses and other requirements of the Physician Assistant Program, with no grade less than a C for a prerequisite course and without repeating any prerequisite course.
- Obtain a written recommendation from the Academic Advisor of the Pathway to Health Professions Program.
- Complete a minimum of 500 documented hours of patient contact and obtain a letter from the work supervisor documenting the completed hours.
- Complete an application through CASPA ([www.caspaonline.org](http://www.caspaonline.org)) by October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Complete a successful interview with the Physician Assistant Program.
- Demonstrate the personal qualities necessary to fulfill the role of a future Physician Assistant.
- Matriculate into the Physician Assistant Program in the year stipulated.
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are not required of applicants to the PA Program.

In addition to a thorough review of all supporting documents, candidates are evaluated for their ability to handle the high demands of training, commitment to people-oriented service, and familiarity with the physician assistant's role.

## For More Information

To learn more about the Accelerated Dual Degree Physician Assistant Program, please contact:

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To apply to the dual degree program, contact:

Office of Enrollment Management  
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To apply online, go to <http://www.drexel.edu/apply>.

Complete both the Undergraduate Application and the Supplemental Application for Undergraduate Accelerated Degree Programs.