

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Physician assistants (PAs) are health care professionals licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and in most states can write prescriptions.

The scope of the PA's practice corresponds to the supervising physician's practice and varies with training, experience, and state law. In general, a PA will see many of the same types of patients as the physician. The cases handled by physicians are generally the more complicated medical cases or those cases which require care that is not a routine part of the PA's scope of work. PAs are taught to "know their limits" and refer to physicians appropriately. For more information on the PA profession, contact the American Academy of Physician Assistants at www.aapa.org.

DEGREES OFFERED

The Master of Medical Science (MMS) degree is awarded to those who successfully complete the curriculum. Program graduates are eligible to sit for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE).

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that the number of PA jobs will increase by nearly 50% between 2004 and 2014 while the total number of jobs in the country will grow by only 13% over this same period of time.

About 38% of physician assistants are employed in primary care (family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics and women's health). The rest are employed in specialties such as surgery, emergency medicine, internal medicine, orthopedics, etc. About 36% of PAs work in hospital settings while 64% work in outpatient settings. PAs work in private and public facilities, and in rural, urban and suburban areas.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Admission to the 27-month Masters program is via a competitive selection process through the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA).

Thirty four (34) students are selected to begin the Program in August of each year. CASPA applicants must fulfill certain criteria to be considered for a class position:

- Baccalaureate degree by the time of matriculation.
- Cumulative GPA of 3.0 (GPA of 3.0 from last 60 hours or GPA of 3.0 from a completed graduate degree is acceptable).
- Science GPA of 3.0.
- Health care experience involving direct patient contact.

- Successful completion of selected prerequisite courses:
Chemistry I & II, Organic Chemistry I & II
Microbiology, Anatomy, Physiology
Molecular Biology OR Genetics
Statistics and Medical Terminology

Note: Prerequisite course work must be completed within 7 years of application.

WHY CHOOSE SLU

- Selecting a PA school from more than 130 accredited programs is a big decision. Here are some good reasons to put SLU at the top of your list:
- A great place to learn. SLU is recognized as a "character building school" and is ranked among the "best universities" and "best educational values" in the country.
- A mission in keeping with our Jesuit identity. Students are encouraged to develop as critically reflective and socially responsible persons capable of exercising leadership in advancing the cause of human good in the world.
- A tradition of excellence in PA education. The Saint Louis University PA Program is one of the first 12 PA programs established in the country and the first to be established in the Midwest.
- A pass rate on the PANCE exam above the national average. In nearly 35 years of existence, the Program has maintained an overall pass rate of 97% for its graduates. The first-time pass rate for new graduates is 98% in the last 10 years.
- An exceptional learning environment. The Allied Health building houses classrooms, a clinical laboratory, a computer laboratory, a 300-seat auditorium, and 8 simulated medical offices. The simulated medical offices are equipped with videotaping capabilities, enabling faculty to critique students taking a medical history or performing a physical examination.
- Small class size. Class size is limited to 34 students, affording an optimum student/faculty ratio and individual attention to student development and progress throughout the Program.
- Optional Post-Graduate Mini Residency. Unique to SLU, this clinical concentration provides a method for students to increase their expertise in a specific medical or surgical discipline.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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<http://www.slu.edu/x2348.xml>