Preparation for a Physician Assistant graduate program involves curricular and extracurricular experiences which demonstrate communication, leadership, community service, research, and familiarity with the medical profession. Any major is appropriate. Study something you love!

**EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

### Physician Assistant Program

#### Shadowing Physician Assistants

This should be one of your first experiences as a prePA student. Observing Physician Assistants working in different environments in action will help you understand the profession. Shadowing also help you get to know PAs, as many PA programs require at least one recommendation letter from a PA. UPAP does not require but highly recommend students shadow Physician Assistants. Many students find shadow opportunities through volunteer experiences at medical facilities.

#### Patient Care Experience

Interacting well with sick people is one of the key indicators of a successful healthcare provider. Your experience can take a variety of forms: as an MA, CNA, EMT, or in another role which provides direct “hands-on” care to a patient. Most students obtain a job at a hospital, in nursing homes and in hospice care after volunteering several months at these facilities. The U of U PA School requires minimum of 2000 hrs of “direct” patient care experience.

### Extracurricular Activities

As a physician assistant, you need to demonstrate various attributes and competencies, such as compassion, commitment to service, strong leadership and communication skills. The following activities will enhance your application for many PA programs.

- **Community Service**
  Having interaction with people coming from different backgrounds than your own will strengthen your interpersonal skills and communication skills. Find various opportunities at the Bennion Community Service Center (http://bennioncenter.org).

- **Leadership Experiences**
  Examples includes offices held in organizations, committee work; leadership in church activities; coordinating a project; managing, training, supervising at work or in other activities; teaching experience of any kind; peer counseling or mentoring, etc.

### Things to Remember

- Make sure you have contact information for supervisors and health professionals you shadow or work with, in case you need to have them write recommendation letters. Even if you discontinue an activity, try to keep an open relationship with them.
- Keep a record of all hours of service and experiences. Writing your reflections in a journal will be helpful when you write a personal statement.
- You can download the PreHealth Planner Spread Sheet from our website; you will find it under Available Downloads.
USEFUL WEBSITES
- Physician Assistant Education Association (http://www.paeaonline.org)
- Resources for PrePA and PA students: PA Focus (http://pafocus.org/)
- The University of Utah Physician Assistant Program (UPAP) (http://medicine.utah.edu/upap)
- Pre-Physician Assistant Student Organization (PrePASO) (http://prepaso.weebly.com/) E-mail: prepaso@gmail.com
- Tutoring Center (http://tutoringcenter.utah.edu/) --328 SSB, 581-5153

APPLICATION PROCESS
Your application process begins in spring or summer at the end of your junior year, if you have completed the necessary requirements. PA programs admit students once a year, for summer matriculation. You’ll take the GRE (Graduate Record Exam) and submit an application 12 months in advance of the year for which you are applying.

GRE
Some PA programs require the GRE. The GRE is administered throughout the year. The exam may be repeated, but the best strategy is to prepare thoroughly and take the GRE once. Taking the exam by spring will enable you to apply earlier.
- August is the last GRE accepted by most schools for the following fall’s entering class.
- The GRE is divided into three multiple choice sections which are scored on a scale of 130-170: Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Analytical Writing.

| GRE | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | July | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| GRE | Register & Study | Take exam |
| Recom. Letters | Request letters & get contact info. from letter writers |
| Application Prep | - Write draft of Personal Statement - Research Schools | CASPA Available Online in mid April till early March. However, program deadlines range from August – March. UPAP’s deadline is on August 1. |
| | | Secondary Applications UPAP’s deadline is on Sept.3 |
| | | Interviews |
| | | Acceptance Notifications |

Financial Aid | Priority filing for federal financial aid

CASPA (Central Application Service for Physician Assistants)
Most US PA programs are part of CASPA, which is available at https://caspa.liaisoncas.com. (Texas has a separate online system, TMDSAS.) For additional resources, visit PA Focus (http://pafocus.org/)
- Application requirements include transcripts, personal background information, extracurricular experiences, personal statement, and fees.
- Because many schools use a “rolling” admission process (they begin reviewing applications and admitting before deadlines), it will enhance your chances if you submit your application early regardless of when you take the GRE.
- Completing the application will take at least 1 week; most students take several weeks. Make sure you will have plenty of time to fill out the application, and to have somebody review your entire application before you submit.

To help us advise other students, we would appreciate it if you would release your information to the Health Professions Advisor. This information will always be kept confidential.
Letters of Recommendation

Once a PA program receives your initial application, they will usually request supplementary material, including Letters of Recommendation. To facilitate this, most students should use the free CASPA Letter Service.

- The number and types of letters varies, depending on each PA program; but generally, you will need one letter from each of the following people:
  1. Patient Experience Supervisor
  2. Professor (usually Science)
  3. Physician Assistant you shadowed
- CASPA limits applicants to 3 letters:
- UPAP requires 3 letters, preferably from clinicians who have supervised you in clinical settings.

Pre-PA CURRICULUM

Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLEP Credit &amp; Correspondence Study</th>
<th>May not be acceptable as part of the prerequisite courses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP Credits</td>
<td>Depends on program. Check each school’s requirements section online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Courses</td>
<td>Accepted by most schools as long as they are not independent study courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeats</td>
<td>On your PA school application, all repeated courses will be counted in your GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawals</td>
<td>W’s should be used only for non-academic emergencies, though W’s will not affect GPA.</td>
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GPA

Most PA programs minimum overall GPA requirements that range between 2.5 - 3.0. However competitive applicants who have been admitted to PA programs will more usually have an overall average cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher. Some schools may also look at separately at prerequisite GPA and overall GPA.

UPAP’s minimum GPA is 3.0 with emphasis on science GPA, and all grades included repeated courses will be calculated towards GPA. Application with less than 2.7 GPA (based on CASPA) will not be reviewed. The average GPA among accepted students for UPAP is 3.47.

Bachelor’s Degree

Most PA programs require a bachelor’s degree before students matriculate to a PA school. There is no specific major you need to pursue in order to increase your chances of admission to a PA school. Find a major you are passionate about!
### Prerequisite Course Guide

Shading indicates most commonly required by most schools  
* = can be taken @ SLCC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BIOLOGY</strong></th>
<th><strong>CHEMISTRY</strong></th>
<th><strong>MATH</strong></th>
<th><strong>Non-Science</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 semesters of General Chemistry &amp; 1 semester of Organic Chemistry</td>
<td>*1050 (4) College Algebra (Prereq: Math 1010)</td>
<td>*WRTG 2010 Intermediate Writing (Prereq: WRTG 1010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>1210 (4) Principles of Biology</em>&lt;br&gt;Prereq for most bio classes.&lt;br&gt;Biol 1610 @ SLCC</td>
<td>*1210 (4) Gen Chem 1 (Prereq: Math 1050)</td>
<td>Any Upper Division Writing (CW)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2325 (4) Human Anatomy&lt;br&gt;(Prereq: Biol 1210)&lt;br&gt;Required by UPAP</td>
<td>*1215 (1) Gen Chem 1 Lab</td>
<td>Any Psychology course</td>
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<tr>
<td>2420 (4) Human Physiology&lt;br&gt;(Prereq: Biol &amp; Chem 1210)&lt;br&gt;Required by UPAP</td>
<td>1220 (4) Gen Chem 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3210 (3) Microbiology&lt;br&gt;Microbiology Lab&lt;br&gt;(Prereq: Biol 1210, 2020, &amp; Chem 1210)</td>
<td>PATH 3100 (3) Medical Microbiology</td>
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<tr>
<td>^3205 (1) Microbiology Lab</td>
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^One of these courses is recommended by UPAP & many PA programs, but lab may not be required.

- **Science**: Genetics, Bio Chemistry or Physics may be required or recommended by some PA programs.
- **Non-Science**: A semester of Sociology or Anthropology course may be required or recommended by some PA programs. A semester of Diversity course is also recommended by UPAP.

#### Notes

1) This guide is designed for students preparing to apply to a range of PA programs. Some courses may not be required by all schools; some schools may require additional courses not on this list. See a PPA advisor for specifics.

2) In order to take the proper math class, you must have ACT, SAT or math placement test scores, or successfully pass a prerequisite math course.

- Optional preparatory courses are available for Math and Chemistry:
  - **MATH 10 Math Boot Camp for Intermediate Algebra** (1 week workshop offered the week before fall and spring semesters begin.)
  - **MATH 15 Math Boot Camp for Precalculus** (1 week review workshop offered the week before fall and spring semesters begin.)
  - **CHEM 10 Chemistry Boot Camp for General Chemistry** (1.5 hrs/day x 5 days x 2 weeks)
  - **CHEM 1200 (3) Prep for College Chemistry** (Usually offered online. Check class schedule for more information.)
  - **CHEM 1208 (1) Intro to Periodic Table** (Offered online between semesters for 2 weeks.)
  - **CHEM 2308 (1) Intro to O Chem** (Offered online between semesters for 2 weeks.)