MASTER OF MEDICAL SCIENCE IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

Fayetteville, N.C. | www.methodist.edu/paprogram
The Methodist University Physician Assistant (PA) program became the third established PA program in the state of North Carolina in April 1996. Methodist University (formerly Methodist College) graduated its first Physician Assistant class in May 1998. In April 2000, Methodist University voted to approve the transition of the PA Program from a bachelor’s level to a master’s level program and admitted its first master’s level class in August 2001. Since its inception, the program has prepared more than 300 graduates for clinical practice, with more than half entering into primary care medicine.

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) has granted Accreditation - Continued to the Physician Assistant Program sponsored by Methodist University. Continued Accreditation is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA Standards. Continued Accreditation remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the Standards.
“The MU PA Program has met and exceeded every expectation that I originally held of an ‘ideal PA program.’ The rigorous coursework gave way to an overall unparalleled academic experience.”

— Meagan Parsons
Class of 2013
Rockingham, North Carolina
WHAT IS A PA?

Physician Assistants (PAs) are health professionals licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision. PAs perform a comprehensive range of medical duties, from primary care to practicing in various medical and surgical subspecialties. PAs often act as first or second assistants in major surgery and provide pre- and post-operative care. Our graduates are employed in diverse specialties such as cardiology, orthopedics, pediatrics, family practice, dermatology, emergency care, and ENT.

In some rural areas where physicians are in short supply, PAs serve as the primary providers of health care, conferring with their supervising physicians and other medical professionals as needed and as required by law. PAs can be found in virtually every medical and surgical specialty.

The PAs responsibilities depend on the type of practice, his or her experience, the working relationship with physicians and other health care providers, and state laws. PAs perform medical functions that in the past have been performed by licensed physicians, including but not limited to:

- Taking medical histories
- Ordering laboratory tests
- Performing physical exams
- Treating Illnesses
- Counseling patients
- Promoting wellness
- Diagnosing illnesses
- Assisting in surgery

Physician Assistants have a long-standing tradition of serving in areas of need, providing care to those who might otherwise have little or no access to quality health care. PAs work everywhere, from removed rural settings to major urban centers, in doctors’ offices, hospitals, clinics, HMOs, the armed forces, and other federal government agencies.

Adapted from the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), www.aapa.org.
Methodist University’s Physician Assistant Program was a phenomenal education decision, and one that I did not take lightly. I moved from Michigan to attend PA school. I applied to 19 schools, interviewed at 11, and Methodist was the clear standout in all of those experiences. From the beginning of the admissions process and continuing through my career as a PA, Methodist’s PA Program has been highly professional, with excellent communication and resources in the faculty and staff, a great network of colleagues and support in the academic world, and a valuable close-knit community in all steps of the journey.

The Methodist PA Program is an excellent learning environment, with growing and advancing facilities and experiences on-site during the didactic year, highly competent and compassionate faculty who are committed clinicians in the Fayetteville area, broad opportunities for rotation experiences, and engaged MUPAP alumni throughout each step of the journey. Most will, rightly, boast of our full onsite cadaver lab, which provides an incredible knowledge base to build upon clinically. In addition, there are many clinical skills labs and sessions to learn a multitude of hands-on procedures throughout the duration of training. The philosophy of education and training is unique from other PA programs, with a focus on the team aspect of health care and the personal nature of interacting with colleagues and patients, rather than a cut-throat race or competition. The faculty is up-to-date on current medical treatments, provides relevant clinical cases and dilemmas to learn from, and constantly uses student feedback to improve the experience and process of the program. The PA program facilities are highly valuable to the learning demands of the students, and the Methodist community provides many other additional support services throughout the education and job-seeking process to provide a well-rounded graduate.

I found that the MUPAP curriculum and experiences provided exceptional competency to exceed in rotations, as well as to thrive as a new PA in the field. The program has molded an impeccable mixture of challenging students with a high-intensity didactic load, providing academic and personal support along the way, and also instilling excellent values and ethics into students throughout the journey. This was more than just a school to me; it was an educational experience that provided the best possible training for my career while also developing me as a person and a person of influence in my community. My experience has been so worth the move from Michigan that I have stayed in the area and continue to be involved in the PA program and the Fayetteville community.

The Methodist University Physician Assistant Program gets my highest recommendation for graduate medical education, and especially for individuals who are pursuing unique training that produces genuine, compassionate, invested, humble, and influential physician assistants.

Staci Pessetti, PA-C, Class of 2012
Native of Michigan, currently practicing in Fayetteville
Hope College
PA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Education
A bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university is required. No specific degree is required. An overall GPA of 3.0 or higher is recommended.

Coursework
Microbiology with lab 4 semester hours
Anatomy and Physiology with lab 4 semester hours
2 additional human/animal biology courses* 8 semester hours
General Chemistry I and II with labs 8 semester hours
Organic Chemistry I and II with labs 8 semester hours
Biochemistry** 3 semester hours
Statistics 3 semester hours
2 psychology courses 6 semester hours
Medical Terminology 1 semester

* No ecology, nutrition or physical education courses. Examples of acceptable courses may include: Principles/Foundations of Biology, A&P II, Cell Physiology, Genetics, etc.
** Biochemistry and Organic Chemistry may not be combined into one course

Notes about coursework
◆ A prerequisite GPA of 3.2 or higher is recommended.
◆ All coursework must be completed with a letter grade of C or better. However, if accepted, any outstanding coursework must be completed with a letter grade of B- or higher.
◆ All coursework must be completed in the United States and through a regionally accredited institution.
◆ There are no time restrictions on the prerequisite coursework, but if courses were taken more than 5 years ago, applicants should consider retaking some course(s) as a refresher.
◆ Applicants may apply to the program if there is outstanding coursework, but must be in-progress or have a plan in place to complete the outstanding coursework by the program’s start date.
◆ No substitutions or exceptions will be granted for coursework.
◆ It is recommended that all coursework be completed at the university level.

INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
An applicant is not eligible to apply if he/she has:
◆ A history of drug abuse or conviction of a felony, or
◆ Dismissal from a PA or another medical program (e.g. medical, nursing, physical therapy program, etc.)

The program does not allow auditing of any course, transfer credits, or advanced placement (exemption) from any course based on previous education or experience.

INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS
In addition to the other prerequisite requirements, applicants who have completed their degree outside of the United States must:
◆ Submit foreign transcripts for evaluation of degree equivalency to the World Education Services (WES). If the evaluation determines the foreign degree to be equivalent to a bachelor’s degree or higher in the United States, the applicant has completed the bachelor’s degree requirement.
◆ Complete all prerequisite coursework in the United States regardless if the applicant has already completed the same courses in a foreign country. There are no exceptions to this policy.
◆ Submit Test of English as a Second Language (TOEFL) scores. TOEFL scores of 570 (PBT), 230 (CBT), 100 (IBT) are required.
CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

A minimum of 500 hours of clinical experience is required prior to matriculation. The purpose of clinical experience is to allow for exposure to how the healthcare system works and to gain an understanding of the PA profession. Having direct patient contact is valuable to helping applicants establish a comfort level when working with patients and other members of the medical team.

THE PROGRAM CONSIDERS HOURS IN TWO TIERS:

◆ “Tier one” hours are defined as positions that have direct patient contact and are normally paid positions.
◆ “Tier two” hours are defined as hours that have limited or no patient contact, but are somewhat relevant to an applicant’s preparation for PA school and the PA profession. Only 250 hours of “tier two” hours will be counted towards the 500 hour requirement.

Applicants are encouraged to have at least completed or exceeded 500 hours at the time of application to be deemed competitive. The program is not responsible for assisting applicants with finding places of employment, shadowing opportunities, certifications, etc. It is the responsibility of the applicant to arrange their own clinical experience. All hours must be completed by July 15 of the year planning to enter.

ACCEPTABLE CLINICAL WORK*:

Tier One Hours
◆ Emergency medical technician (EMT)
◆ Athletic trainer
◆ Paramedic
◆ Emergency Room technician
◆ Certified nursing assistant (CNA)
◆ Patient care tech
◆ Military medic
◆ Surgical technician
◆ Respiratory technician
◆ Nurse
◆ Scribe
◆ Phlebotomy

Tier Two Hours
◆ Certified laboratory technician
◆ Shadowing (PA, NP, MD/DO)
◆ Pharmacy technician

* The program reserves the right to designate hours into tier one or two as it deems appropriate.

GRADUATE RECORD EXAM (GRE)

The GRE General Test measures verbal, quantitative, and analytical skills that have been acquired over a long period of time and that are not related to any specific field. The MUPAP requires only the GRE for admission and scores must be within 5 years of application to the program. No applicant is exempt from submitting GRE scores regardless of previous education or experience. GRE scores must be sent directly to CASPA via code 0399. The MUPAP recommends a combined verbal and quantitative score of 297 or higher. Applicants may visit gre.org for assistance obtaining tutorials or workbooks.
APPLICATION PROCESS

All applicants to the Methodist University PA Program must apply through the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA). The CASPA cycle opens in April of each year, 16 months in advance of our start date. Visit our website for specific opening dates/deadlines.

Because the program operates on rolling admissions, it is possible that our class can be filled prior to the deadline. Once your application has been submitted, it can take up to four weeks from that date for it to be verified. Applicants who wait to apply later in the cycle may miss their chance of being considered.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

All applicants must have three letters of professional recommendation submitted with their CASPA application. Letters should be submitted from:
- A professor or advisor within the science department.
- A medical supervisor or coworker. If shadowing a PA, they should write the letter on behalf of the applicant.
- Another supervisor or medical coworker.
INTERVIEW PROCESS

To be accepted into the Methodist University PA Program, selected applicants must participate in a successful on-campus interview with the Admissions Selection Committee. Interviews begin a year in advance of the start date and continue on a monthly basis until the class is filled. Through a series of program interactions and individual interviews, applicants will be assessed on non-cognitive factors such as, but not limited to: understanding of the role of the PA, compatibility with the program and profession, professionalism, communication, ethical decision making, problem solving, teachability and critical thinking skills.

“Our goal is to educate the PA to put the patient and family at the center of all they do. We strive to build a foundation of evidence-based medical knowledge to be applied with compassion and respect for all.”

– Dr. Christopher Aul
Medical Director
CURRICULUM

The PA program has one start date a year in August. The program is 27 months (7 semesters) in length and consists of two phases: Didactic and Clinical. Course/Rotation scheduling and names listed below are examples and are subject to additions/changes/deletions at any time based on curriculum evaluation. For specific course listings please visit our website under “Curriculum.”

DIDACTIC PHASE-3.5 SEMESTERS

The didactic year is the first 3.5 semesters of classroom instruction and is held on the campus of Methodist University. The following semester breakdown is an example of the didactic phase.

**Fall Semester I**
- Emergency Medicine I
- Health Promotion/Disease Prevention
- History and Physical Exam I
- Anatomy I (Cadaver dissection)
- Medical Ethics
- PA Orientation I
- Pharmacology I
- Physiology
- Urology/Nephrology

**Summer Semester**
- Clinical Skills I
- Dermatology
- Geriatrics
- Hematology
- Lab Medicine II
- Neurology
- OB/GYN
- Oncology
- Pharmacotherapy
- Pulmonology
- Surgery

**Spring Semester**
- Anatomy II (Cadaver dissection)
- Behavioral Medicine
- Cardiology
- Emergency Medicine II
- Endocrinology
- Gastroenterology
- History and Physical Exam II
- Infectious Disease
- Lab Medicine I
- Pediatrics
- Pharmacology II

**Fall Semester II**
- Clinical Skills II
- Critical Thinking
- ENT
- History & Physical Exam III
- Ophthalmology
- Orthopedics
- Research Methods*

* The capstone project is completed within the Research Methods course.

CLINICAL YEAR-3.5 SEMESTERS

The clinical year is the final 3.5 semesters and consists of off-campus clinical instruction. Clinical rotations are arranged within Cumberland County and surrounding counties (local radius is considered 75 miles from campus) at local medical centers and private practices. Decisions regarding requested rotations outside of the local radius from campus are at the discretion of the clinical coordinator. Clinical rotations required by the program are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rotation</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency Medicine</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Medicine I</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Medicine II</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Medicine I</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Medicine II</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB/GYN</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orthopedics/</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral Medicine</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pediatrics</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
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CADAVER LABORATORY

The human anatomy laboratory at Methodist is a critical component of the first and second semesters’ Physician Assistant curriculum. The Gross Anatomy course is designed to provide a working knowledge of human anatomy, an understanding of physiology, disease processes, diagnostic radiology, surgical and traumatic conditions, and interventional therapy. PA students have described the course as an “invaluable” and “irreplaceable” experience, and PA faculty members believe this anatomy laboratory builds a strong foundation for the MU Physician Assistant Program and its outstanding success.

PANCE PASS RATE

The MU Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) pass rates for first-time takers compare favorably with the national rates. MU’s PANCE scores for the previous five years may be viewed on our website under “PANCE Pass Rates.”
WHY METHODIST UNIVERSITY?

- Strong support from local medical community.
- Employment of physician assistants is expected to increase 30 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average for other occupations.
- Cadaver Lab: Cadaver dissection is a critical and unique component of our PA program.
- A small class size allows faculty to build a close, personal relationship with each student.
- Performance on the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) compares favorably with national rates.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS
- American Academy of Physician Assistants
  www.aapa.org
- Physician Assistant Education Association
  www.paeaonline.org
- National Commission on Certification of PAs
  www.nccpa.net
- Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA)
  www.arc-pa.org
- North Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants
  www.ncapa.org