Physician Assistant, M.H.S.

Degree Offered

- Master's in Health Sciences (MHS)

Nature of the Program

The Physician Assistant Studies curriculum is designed to provide a foundation in medical sciences, followed by an in-depth study of systems-based clinical medicine. The program consists of 4 semesters of didactic coursework followed by 12 months of clinical rotations. The clinical phase includes rotations in family medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine, general surgery, emergency medicine, women’s health, behavioral medicine, and rural medicine. Consistent with our mission, the program has a focus on population health, health disparity, and rural and Appalachian health issues.

ADMINISTRATION

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

- Jennifer Momen - MD, MPH, FAAP (State University of New York at Buffalo, West Virginia University)
  Assistant Professor

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

- Benjamin Silverberg - MD, MSc, FAAFP, FCUCM (University of Connecticut, Duke University)
  Associate Professor

DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL EDUCATION

- Gregory Selasky - MS, PA-C (Alderson Broaddus University)
  Assistant Professor

FACULTY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

- Benjamin Silverberg - MD, MSc, FAAFP, FCUCM (University of Connecticut, Duke University)
  Medical Director

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

- David Baldwin - MSPA, PA-C (Mountain State University/University of Charleston)
- Jennifer Momen - MD, MPH, FAAP (State University of New York at Buffalo, West Virginia University)
  Program Director
- Forrest Olgers - MPAS, MBA, PA-C (Alderson Broaddus University)
- Gregory Selasky - MS, PA-C (Alderson Broaddus University)
  Director of Clinical Education

Admissions

In order to be eligible for admission, a bachelor's degree in any discipline from an accredited U.S. institution is required. In addition, students must fulfill the following:

- Submit GRE test scores (Institution Code 4275).
- Have a minimum cumulative undergraduate and prerequisite grade point average of 3.2.
- Complete all prerequisite courses with a grade of C or higher.
- Complete 80 hours of experience in a clinical setting (paid or unpaid). Health care experience obtained to meet requirements for any course or degree program may not be counted toward the 80 hours of experience in a clinical setting. Examples of qualifying health care experience include shadowing a physician or physician assistant and working as a patient care aid, medical assistant, respiratory/occupational/physical therapist, paramedic, emergency medical technician, or scribe. Applicants logging more than the minimum of 80 hours will not receive additional preference in the admission selection process. Please note that individuals with hands-on patient care experience and those with decision-making responsibility will receive additional preference (see Selection Process section for details). All healthcare experience must have been obtained no earlier than the freshman year of college.
- Three letters of recommendation (one from a college or university professor, one from a supervisor of the clinical experience including evidence of how the student contributed to the delivery of care, and a third from either of the two preceding categories).
Prerequisite Courses

The following courses are required in order to be eligible for admission to the program:

- Biology with lab - 4 credits
- General Chemistry with lab - 8 credits
- Organic or Biochemistry with lab - 4 credits
- *Human Anatomy with lab - 4 credits
- *Human Physiology - 3 credits
- Microbiology - 3 credits
- Psychology - 3 credits
- Statistics - 3 credits
- Medical Terminology - 1 credit

Total Credits: 33

Please note the following information about prerequisite courses:

- Prerequisite courses must be completed at a regionally accredited 2- or 4-year U.S. college or university within the 10 years prior to the date of matriculation.
- A prerequisite course may be retaken, and if a higher grade is earned upon retaking a course, the second grade will be used to calculate the prerequisite GPA. However, both grades will be reflected in the cumulative GPA.
- Credit hours represent semester hours.
- Advanced placement (AP) courses will not be accepted for prerequisite requirements.
- Due to changes in course delivery method associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, online courses taken during the spring 2020 semester and beyond will be accepted to meet ALL PA program prerequisite requirements. This policy will be in place until further notice and the online courses will meet requirements for future admissions cycles provided that they meet other prerequisite requirements as specified above. Courses in the natural sciences (i.e., biology, chemistry, physiology, and microbiology) taken prior to the spring 2020 semester must have been taken in person. Online courses in anatomy taken prior to the spring 2020 semester must receive approval of the PA Admissions Committee to fulfill this requirement.
- *Combined Anatomy and Physiology courses are accepted; however, an applicant must take two semesters of Anatomy and Physiology with labs to fulfill the Anatomy and Physiology requirements; mammalian anatomy lab will be acceptable, but human anatomy lab is preferred
- An applicant may have prerequisites in progress at the time of application, however all outstanding prerequisites must be successfully completed prior to matriculation. In order to fairly evaluate each candidate, no more than two prerequisite courses may be outstanding at the time of the interview.
- There will be no waivers or exceptions to the requirements.

Important Dates

Please refer to the Physician Assistant Studies program website (http://medicine.wvu.edu/physician-assistant-studies/admission/application-process/) for more information on important dates and the application timeline.

Selection Process

INTERVIEWS

Interviews will be conducted during the summer and, at the discretion of the department, may be conducted virtually or in person. Please refer to the Physician Assistant Studies program website (http://medicine.wvu.edu/physician-assistant-studies/admission/application-process/) for more information.

FINAL SELECTION PROCESS

A total of 25 students will be admitted to each class.

Points will be awarded on the Admission Selection Rubric and candidates will be selected based upon the following criteria:

- Cumulative Undergraduate, Prerequisite, and Science GPA
- GRE scores (Verbal, Quantitative, and Analytical Writing)
- West Virginia residency status
- Interview score (average score of two interviewers)
- Strength of letters of recommendation (average score of three letters)
• Strength of CASPA statement and responses to two WVU-specific questions
• Quality and relevance of health care experience (see detail below)

Preference will be given to individuals based on previous health care experience as follows, and in order of increasing preference:

• No hands-on patient care (shadowing a physician or physician assistant)
• Involvement in patient care team as a scribe
• Hands-on patient care with limited need for professional judgment (patient care aid, medical assistant, physical therapy assistant)
• Patient care involving assessment and requiring some professional judgement (emergency medical technician (EMT), respiratory therapist, dietician)
• Patient care with independent decision-making and/or requiring significant professional judgement (paramedic, registered nurse)

In the event of a tie in the Admission Selection Rubric score, the following criteria will be applied in the order below until there is no longer a tie at the 25th position:

1. West Virginia residency status
2. Score on WVU mission question
3. Prerequisite GPA

Final decisions regarding admission will be made by the Admissions Committee.

Please note that applicants who are offered admission will often have academic records which exceed the published minimum standards. Data regarding the characteristics of successful applicants for the class entering in January 2023 will be provided when available.

OFFERS OF ADMISSION

Applicants accepted to the program will receive an offer of admission through their preferred email (as identified in CASPA) with a link to the online Declaration of Acceptance form. Those wishing to accept a seat in the class will have one week to complete the online Declaration of Acceptance form. Applicants accepting the offer of admission will be sent an invoice from the WVU Graduate Admissions Office for a non-refundable deposit of $1,000, which will be due within two weeks of receipt of the invoice. The deposit will be applied towards the first semester tuition. Failure to pay the deposit within the required time period will result in forfeiture of the seat.

An offer of admission may be revoked if an applicant’s application materials are found to be falsified. An enrolled student may be dismissed from the program if the student’s application materials are found to be falsified, consistent with applicable policies or procedures as contained in the WVU Graduate/Professional Catalog section on Academic and Professional Standards.

POST-ACCEPTANCE REQUIREMENTS

The physician assistant studies program at West Virginia University begins in the spring term (January). Students accepting a seat in the program must submit proof of compliance with all post-acceptance requirements to the appropriate office (as instructed in the acceptance letter) by no later than the first day of orientation (January 5, 2023). Students failing to meet these requirements may not be permitted to matriculate into the program.

Students completing a Bachelor’s degree or prerequisite course requirements in the fall semester preceding matriculation will be required to submit an unofficial transcript documenting degree conferral or prerequisite course completion by no later than the first day of orientation (January 5, 2023). The official transcript documenting degree and/or course completion is still required and must be received no later than the last day of class for the spring semester. Failure to complete this requirement will result in dismissal from the program.

In the event that a student is offered admission to the program after December 1st, the deadlines for submission of post-acceptance requirements will be stated in the acceptance letter and will supersede the deadlines provided above.

Post-acceptance requirements include:

• Official transcript verifying bachelor’s degree from an accredited U.S. institution with cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.2 or higher
• Official transcript verifying completion of all prerequisite courses within the 10 years prior to matriculation at a regionally accredited U.S. 2- or 4-year college or university with a grade of ‘C’ or higher and prerequisite GPA of 3.2 or higher
• Health screening form
• Proof of health insurance
• Proof of immunizations and titers
• Background check and drug screening
• Technical standards attestation

Health Sciences & Technology Academy (HSTA) Scholars
One HSTA tuition waiver will be offered by the physician assistant studies program if a HSTA scholar is selected for admission to the program through the published admission selection process. In the event that more than one HSTA scholar is accepted for admission, the applicant with the strongest academic credentials (average of cumulative undergraduate GPA and prerequisite GPA) will be awarded the tuition waiver.

**Admission Requirements 2023-2024**

The Admission Requirements above will be the same for the 2023-2024 Academic Year.

Major Code: 8373

**Degree Requirements**

A minimum grade of "C-" is required in EACH didactic course; however, an overall GPA of 3.0 will be required to progress in the program. There will be a Committee on Academic and Professional Standards that will assign remediation plans and penalties associated with failure to meet these standards.

**A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 is required.**

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Total Hours 114
## Suggested Plan of Study

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Major Learning Outcomes

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Graduates of the physician assistant studies program will demonstrate competencies in each of six domains as noted below.

MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE

- Recognizes the underlying pathophysiologic processes of commonly encountered medical and surgical conditions
- Recognizes signs and symptoms of disease and abnormal findings on diagnostic studies
- Recognizes risk factors for acute and chronic medical conditions including mental health conditions
- Understands the effect of the patient’s environment and stress on health outcomes and quality of life
- Understands the importance of using evidence-based interventions for disease prevention and health maintenance

INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Communicates with patients and other members of the healthcare team in a professional and respectful manner
- Recognizes the unique contributions of other health care providers to patient care
- Demonstrates rapport with patients while obtaining and providing information
- Partners with patients in formulating a treatment plan
- Collaborates effectively with all members of the health care team
- Identifies relevant information from the medical record and accurately documents patient encounters and procedures

CLINICAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Obtains a thorough and accurate medical history
- Performs a thorough and accurate physical examination for patients of all ages
- Performs commonly utilized medical and surgical procedures with proper technique and attention to patient safety
- Effectively counsels patients and provides education using a method tailored to the patient

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS

- Understands the legal requirements for practice as a physician assistant
- Demonstrates respect, compassion, and sensitivity in patient interactions
- Applies ethical principles to the care of patients
- Maintains patient confidentiality in all venues
- Respects the doctrines of informed consent and shared decision-making
- Seeks opportunities for professional development and scholarship
- Demonstrates willingness to teach and learn from fellow health professionals

PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

- Identifies and uses evidence-based resources to answer clinical questions
- Recognizes and addresses personal deficits in knowledge and clinical skills
• Recognizes and addresses personal biases which may affect patient care
• Advocates effectively for patients as they navigate the health care system
• Recognizes and addresses the challenges facing patients in rural and/or underserved areas
• Takes into account costs to the patient and the health care system when ordering medication, diagnostic studies, or therapeutic interventions

CLINICAL REASONING AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS
• Selects diagnostic studies most likely to be useful in evaluation of patients with acute and chronic disease
• Formulates a patient-specific differential diagnosis using patient data including history, physical examination, and diagnostic studies
• Suggests appropriate treatment modalities for emergent, acute and chronic medical and surgical conditions, including pharmacologic treatment and behavioral modifications
• Identifies the appropriate site of care based on clinical presentation and patient demographics
• Reflects on the possible causes of a patient’s failure to respond to treatment

Accreditation
The ARC-PA has granted Accreditation-Provisional status to the West Virginia University Physician Assistant Program sponsored by West Virginia University.

Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status granted when the plans and resource allocation, if fully implemented as planned, of a proposed program that has not yet enrolled students appear to demonstrate the program’s ability to meet the ARC-PA Standards or when a program holding Accreditation-Provisional status appears to demonstrate continued progress in complying with the Standards as it prepares for the graduation of the first class (cohort) of students.

Accreditation-Provisional does not ensure any subsequent accreditation status. It is limited to no more than five years from matriculation of the first class.

Additional details on the West Virginia University Physician Assistant Program and data disclosures as required by ARC-PA are available on the program website (http://medicine.wvu.edu/physician-assistant-studies/accreditation/).

COURSES
PA 507. Human Anatomy 1. 3 Hours.
Lecture and lab based human anatomy course covering back, upper limb, thorax, abdomen, and pelvis.

PA 510. Physician Assistant Practice 1. 2 Hours.
Introduction to the physician assistant profession, including history, scope of practice, and physician collaboration. Units of content include ethics and risk/risk management.

PA 511. Evidence Based PA Practice 1. 1 Hour.
Introduction to evidence based medicine, including how to access scientific evidence and how to evaluate scientific merit of sources.

PA 512. Physical Diagnosis. 3 Hours.
Medical background and associated skills practice in history taking and medical examination. Includes preparation for clinical practice with HIPPA, OSHA, and BLS requirements. Principles and practice of medical documentation.

PA 515. Pathophysiology 1. 2 Hours.
Embryology, histology, immunology overview, principles of inflammation and healing; pathophysiology of cancer and introduction to infectious disease.

PA 517. Genomic Medicine. 1 Hour.
Review of genetics and cell biology. Introduction to genomic applications in medicine. With other concurrent courses, illustrates genetic basis of diseases such as cancer.

PA 518. Health and Disease Across the Lifespan. 3 Hours.
Study of life-span human development across cognitive, psychosocial and neuromotor domains with particular emphasis on applications to physician assistant practice in health, disease and disability.

PA 522. Clinical Procedures 1. 3 Hours.
Introduction to specific skills necessary in clinical practice settings primarily through experiential learning. Includes Orthopedics, Surgery and Emergency Medicine, and ACLS. Documentation practice and simulation experiences will be used.
PA 523. Clinical Medicine & Pharmacotherapeutics 1. 3 Hours.
First in a series of courses designed to prepare the physician assistant for the assessment and clinical management, including pharmacologic, of various diseases and conditions. Emphasis is on disorders of the musculoskeletal and dermatologic systems.

PA 524. Diagnostic Medicine 1. 2 Hours.
Principles of imaging and specific applications to body organs and systems for the purpose of clinical diagnosis.

PA 527. Human Anatomy 2. 3 Hours.
PR: Successful completion of PA 507 and good standing in the physician assistant program and pathologists' assistant program. Lecture and lab based anatomy course covering head, neck, and lower limb.

PA 528. Principles of Behavioral Health for PA. 1 Hour.
Application of biopsychosocial model of health to human health. Principles of behavior and behavior change are introduced. Includes overview of techniques, including counseling, motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy.

PA 530. . 1 Hour.
Introduction to members of the health care team, including mandatory inter-professional education experience. Experiential practice in clinical setting.

PA 531. Evidence Based PA Practice 2. 2 Hours.
Principles of epidemiology and research. Includes research ethics, IRB and design applications to quality improvement and evidence based practice. Overview of clinical trial terminology and implementation.

PA 533. Clinical Medicine & Pharmacotherapeutics 2. 4 Hours.
Second in a series of courses designed to prepare the physician assistant for the clinical management, including pharmacologic, of various conditions. Includes infectious disease and disorders of the cardiovascular, hematologic, pulmonary and GI systems.

PA 534. Diagnostic Medicine 2. 3 Hours.
Principles and applications of medical tests which guide clinical interventions. Includes laboratory medicine and physiologic tests. Exposure to normal and abnormal laboratory findings as well as reading and interpretation of EKG.

PA 535. Pathophysiology 2. 3 Hours.
Concurrent with study of human physiology, pathophysiology of various body systems.

PA 540. PA Practice in the US Health System. 2 Hours.
Description of the US Health system, including billing, coding and reimbursement. Medicare and Medicaid are covered. Regulations regarding PA scope of practice are included.

PA 541. Evidence Based PA Practice 3. 1 Hour.
Students design and propose a research or quality improvement project, including literature review.

PA 542. Clinical Procedures 2. 2 Hours.
Introduction to specific skills and procedures necessary in clinical practice settings primarily through experiential learning. Includes Obstetrics and Gynecology, ENT and Neurology. Involves case based and simulated practice.

PA 543. Clinical Medicine & Pharmacotherapeutics 3. 4 Hours.
Third in a series of courses designed to prepare the physician assistant for the assessment and clinical management, including pharmacologic, of various diseases and conditions. Emphasis is on ENT, urogenital, and neurologic disorders.

PA 547. Neurobiology. 4 Hours.
Lecture and laboratory based course provides fundamentals of neuroanatomy and mechanisms of Central Nervous System function.

PA 549. Prevention and Community Health for PA. 3 Hours.
PA role in the prevention of disease and maintenance of community health. Survey of cultural impact and health disparity. Includes inter-professional experience in community based health programs.

PA 553. PA Practice in Pediatrics & Geriatrics. 2 Hours.
PA practice in pediatric and geriatric populations, with emphasis on clinical conditions that uniquely affect children and older adults.

PA 610. Family Medicine PA Practice. 6 Hours.
Clinical practice experience in primary care/family medicine. Under supervision, students perform clinical assessments, procedures and clinical decision making involved in patient care.

PA 620. Internal Medicine PA Practice. 8 Hours.
Clinical practice experience in internal medicine. Under supervision, students perform clinical assessments, procedures and clinical decision making involved in patient care.

PA 630. Pediatric PA Practice. 6 Hours.
Clinical practice experience in primary care/pediatrics. Under supervision, students perform clinical assessments, procedures and clinical decision making involved in patient care.

PA 640. Women’s Health PA Practice. 5 Hours.
Clinical practice experience in obstetrics and gynecology. Under supervision, students perform clinical assessments, procedures and clinical decision making involved in patient care.
PA 650. Surgery PA Practice. 6 Hours.
Clinical practice experience in general surgery. Under supervision, students perform clinical assessments, procedures and clinical decision making involved in patient care.

PA 660. Behavioral Medicine PA Practice. 4 Hours.
Clinical practice experience in behavioral medicine and psychiatry. Under supervision, students perform clinical assessments, procedures and clinical decision making involved in patient care.

PA 670. Emergency Medicine PA Practice. 4 Hours.
Clinical practice experience in emergency medicine. Under supervision, students perform clinical assessments, procedures and clinical decision making involved in patient care.

PA 680. Elective PA Practice. 4 Hours.
Elective experience in a clinical practice setting selected by the physician assistant student. The experience may be an extension of one of the core required rotations OR may reflect a special interest of the student within the practice of medicine.

PA 685. Rural PA Practice. 4 Hours.
Mandatory clinical practice experience in a setting designated as rural. The experience may be in either family medicine, internal medicine or pediatrics.

PA 686. PA Summative Evaluation. 1 Hour.
Summative evaluation and preparation for the national certification (PANCE) exam.

PA 797. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Research activities leading to thesis, problem report, research paper or equivalent scholarly project, or a dissertation. (Grading may be S/U.).