WHAT IS A PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT (PA)?

A physician assistant is a graduate of an accredited PA educational program who is authorized by the state to practice medicine with the supervision of a licensed physician. PAs are invaluable members of the healthcare team and work in concert with physicians to ensure the highest quality of care for patients. The following is a brief guide to PA requirements while here at UA

PRE-REQUISITES:

NOTE: EACH PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT SCHOOL ESTABLISHES ITS OWN SET OF PREREQUISITES. CHECK THE WEBSITES OF THE SCHOOLS IN THAT YOU ARE MOST INTERESTED TO OBTAIN A CURRENT LIST OF UNDERGRADUATE REQUIREMENTS.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Biology</td>
<td>BSC 114/115 and BSC 116/117 or honors equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anatomy and Physiology</td>
<td>BSC 215 &amp; 216, or (BSC 400, 424, &amp; 425 if majoring in biology)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>BSC 242 (or BSC 310 &amp; 312 if majoring in biology)</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Chemistry</td>
<td>CH 101 and 102 or honors equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>PY 211, BSC 380, or CHS 425 recommended</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>MA 112</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>PY 101, 352, 358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Chemistry</td>
<td>CH 231 (most programs require AT LEAST one semester of O.Chem)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGHLY RECOMMENDED:</td>
<td>NHM 101 (human nutrition)</td>
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<td>HD 203 (Medical Terminology)</td>
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<td>ATR 272 (first aid and safety)</td>
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*All prerequisite courses must be completed with a grade of “C-” or higher.

EXAM AND GPA:

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is a standardized examination that consists of four multiple-choice sections that cover basic mathematics and reading comprehension skills. The GRE is designed to
measure general academic ability. It is required by most of the American PA schools. Typically, students take the GRE about one calendar year prior to their intended date of matriculation to professional school. The GRE is a nationally standardized test, similar to the ACT and SAT. A GRE score is good for three years at most schools, so taking the test in the spring of junior year does not necessarily mean that you must enter PA school right after college graduation. Average scores are:

REVISED: 150+ on Verbal and 150+ on Quantitative; 3.5 on Analytical Writing
OLD: 500 on Verbal and 500 on Quantitative (minimum 1000); 3.5 Analytical Writing

Grade Point Average (GPA): Minimum GPA requirements vary from program to program, but MOST programs have a minimum 3.0 GPA requirement. In addition, most programs require that all prerequisite courses must be passed with a “C” or better.

TIMELINE:

Freshman Year:
- Connect with the Health Professions Advising Office
- Start taking basic sciences (See chart above)
- Think about possible majors (Study what you love)
- Begin getting involved with volunteer opportunities (campus and community)
- Start medical experience (EMT, CNA, Shadowing)
- Join some student organizations (Pre-PA Society)

Sophomore Year:
- Continue with next sequence of courses
- Stay involved in extracurricular activities (Medical, volunteer, etc)
- Begin to think about becoming an officer in your organizations
- Visit Health Professions Office to begin to assess competitiveness
- BOTTOM LINE: Keep working on the things you established your first year!!

Junior Year:
- Identify PA programs you are interested in (Fall semester)
- Talk to Health Professions Advising Office about competitiveness (Fall semester)
- Register for GRE (Fall Semester)
- Study for GRE and take GRE (Spring Semester)
- Identify 3 individuals to write letters of recommendation (Spring Semester)
- Complete Application (CASPA) (Spring Semester-Summer)
- Keep working on the things you have established thus far

Senior Year:
- Submit Application (CASPA) if you haven’t already (Fall semester)
- Wait to be contacted for interview
- Finish degree requirements
- Continue with activities
- Talk with HPAO about Plan B if necessary
- Graduate

RESOURCES:

Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA): www.paeaonline.org
Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA): http://portal.caspaonline.org
GRE Information/Dates: www.ets.org
UA Health Professions Website: www.prehealth.ua.edu