

COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND NATURAL SCIENCE

Master of Physician Assistant Studies (M.P.A.S.)

Director/Associate Professor: Kristi Collins

Director of Didactic Education: Betsy Piburn

Medical Director: Patrick Francis

Assistant Professors: Jeffrey Waldron, Joshua Fiore

Physician Assistants (P.A.s) are nationally certified and licensed healthcare professionals who practice medicine with a physician's collaboration and/or supervision working as a team. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, P.A.s conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive healthcare, assist in surgery, and write prescriptions.

Within the P.A.-physician relationship, physician assistants exercise autonomy in medical decision making and provide a broad range of diagnostic and therapeutic services. A P.A.'s practice may also include education, research, and managerial/administrative services.

Physician Assistants, while trained in general medicine, often specialize in emergency medicine, surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics, pediatrics and other specialties. Students in the Franklin Pierce University M.P.A.S. program attend classes in West Lebanon, New Hampshire. Our facility includes classrooms, a computer lab and a clinical lab where students learn hands-on practical skills. Clinical experience is a vital part of the program and is conducted at sites throughout the country, with a focus on rural and underserved regions of New Hampshire and Vermont.

This full-time day program is designed to be completed in 27 calendar months. Graduates of the M.P.A.S. program will be skilled and compassionate clinicians who promote health and wellness, diagnose and treat acute illnesses and manage chronic disease.

Mission

The mission of the M.P.A.S. Program is to prepare P.A.s who demonstrate clinical excellence; embrace diversity, equity and inclusion; advocate for their patients; lead and advance the profession; and serve their communities.

Program Goals:

- Prepare students to function as competent healthcare providers in primary care settings.
- Nurture student progress to optimize professional growth and retention.
- Recruit students from rural and underserved communities, particularly those from New Hampshire and Vermont.
- Train students in rural and medically underserved communities with a focus on New Hampshire and Vermont.
- Graduate students who practice in rural and medically underserved communities with emphasis on New Hampshire and Vermont

Program-level Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate core medical knowledge regarding established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care. (Medical Knowledge)
- Employ interpersonal and communication skills (including oral and written) to enable effective information exchange with patients, their families, and members of the healthcare team. (Interpersonal & Communication Skills)
- Provide safe, entry-level patient care to include effective information gathering, appropriate diagnostic evaluation and implementation of therapeutic management plans. (Patient Care)
- Exhibit professionalism as demonstrated by assuming responsibility for actions, recognizing personal limitations, expressing sensitivity to diversity, and respecting colleagues, faculty/staff, preceptors, and patients. (Professionalism)
- Demonstrate ability to self-analyze current knowledge and clinical skills and enhance capabilities through reflection and critical appraisal of the medical literature. (Practice-based Learning & Improvement)
- Demonstrate awareness of the larger system of health services including access to healthcare, continuity of care, and community support services. (System-based Practice)

Accreditation

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA) has granted Accreditation-Continued status to the Franklin Pierce University Physician Assistant Program sponsored by Franklin Pierce University. Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA Standards.

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 approximate date for the next validation review of the program by the ARC-PA will be September 2027. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ARC-PA policy.

Technical Standards

The following technical standards establish the essential qualities necessary for students enrolling in the M.P.A.S. program. Students must possess these qualities in order to achieve the required level of competency stipulated for program advancement and graduation, must demonstrate the standards upon admission to the program and continue to demonstrate these standards throughout their matriculation in the M.P.A.S. program. Failure to do so will be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

All applicants who were born outside of the United States and who did not graduate from a United States high school will be required to submit internet-based TOEFL (iBT) scores with their application. A minimum total score of 100 (with at least 25 in each section) is required. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) code for submitting your score to CASPA is 3709.

Application Process

Students must apply through the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) online at CASPA.org. The CASPA application cycle opens each spring for the following academic year.

The deadline for submission of applications is November 1. After verifying the minimum requirements for admission are met, the program will evaluate each candidate's academic achievements, personal attributes and experiences. Factors given specific consideration are:

- Overall GPA or Science GPA of 3.5 and above
- Research, publications or presentations
- Significant personal experiences, such as work experience and overcoming significant life adversities and struggles
- Franklin Pierce University student or alumni
- Resident of Vermont or New Hampshire
- From an underserved or rural area or extensive experience with populations from underserved/rural areas

Please note that none of these factors, alone or in combination, guarantees admission. However, all else being equal, candidates who demonstrate a greater number of these factors will generally be in a better position for an interview and for admission. The admissions committee will consider these factors, along with the quality of the interview, to make recommendations for admission. Interviews are a requirement for admission to the program.

Sensation

Students must possess sufficient visual, auditory and tactile sensation to receive appropriate information in the classroom, laboratory and other education settings. Sensation must be sufficient to receive verbal and non-verbal information while interviewing patients and to perform inspection, auscultation and palpation techniques during physical examination of patients.

Communication

Students must be able to communicate effectively with patients, family members and other clinicians. This includes expressive and receptive modes of verbal, non-verbal and written communication.

Further it includes the ability to accurately assess receptive communication in order to make appropriate and timely responses. Finally, it includes the ability to communicate with attention, empathy and sensitivity.

Motor Function

Students must have sufficient strength and coordination to perform the activities required of a P.A. These include performing a physical examination involving techniques in palpation and percussion and utilizing diagnostic instruments.

Students must have sufficient stamina to sit, stand and move within the classroom, laboratory, examination rooms, treatment rooms and operating rooms for extended periods of time. They must have sufficient coordination to move about patient care environments and sufficient dexterity to use common medical instruments. All students must arrange their own transportation between educational and clinical settings.

Intellectual Capability

Clinical problem solving, a critical ability for P.A.s, encompasses abilities to accurately measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate, learn and retain information and make decisions in a timely manner. Students must be able to:

- Independently access and interpret medical data
- Identify significant findings from history, physical examination and laboratory data

- Perform a reasoned explanation for likely diagnoses and recommend treatment regimens
- Recall and retain information in an efficient and timely manner

Behavioral/Social Proficiency

Students must possess the ability to establish and maintain appropriate professional relationships. Factors included in this requirement are the abilities to prioritize competing demands, to function in stressful circumstances, to exercise good clinical judgment, to behave ethically, to be compassionate, empathetic, responsible and tolerant toward patients and other healthcare professionals.

Advanced Placement

The M.P.A.S. program is a full-time day program and does not offer advanced placement for students.

Work Policy

In order to enhance student learning and assure student success in the M.P.A.S. program, it is recommended that students not work while enrolled in the program. If a student chooses to work while enrolled in the program, work schedules cannot interfere with class attendance, academic performance, or clinical rotation schedules. Students are never required to work for the program in any capacity.

Physician Assistant Program Academic Policies

The policies below are in addition to the standards noted above as set by the College of Health and Natural Sciences.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

M.P.A.S. students are held to same graduate academic standards as other programs at Franklin Pierce University, which states that all graduate students must achieve a term grade point average (TGPA) and cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.0 (B) or higher to remain in good academic standing. A passing grade for courses within the program is a C (73%) or better. Graduate students may have no more than two grades lower than a B- on the academic record at the time of graduation.

Any student not meeting this minimum will be required to meet with their academic advisor to establish and sign a Learning Contract to address academic deficiencies. A student will be considered to have attained satisfactory academic progress when the student receives consistent course grades of B- or better and maintains a cumulative and TGPA of 3.0.

Students with a history of academic probation or deferred suspension will be referred for academic dismissal from the program if they fail to maintain the academic standards of the University. The Student Progress Committee meets throughout the term to review and discuss each individual student's progress. Concerns regarding student academic performance will be documented and referred to the students' academic advisor and/or the M.P.A.S. Student Affairs Committee for follow up.

At the close of each term, academic records will be reviewed by the Program Director in conjunction with the Dean if necessary. Appropriate sanctions will be applied. Students on Academic Probation at the end of the didactic year cannot progress to the clinical year. In addition to academic expectations regarding Academic Standing, recipients of all forms of financial assistance are expected to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress.

M.P.A.S. Promotion Policy

In addition to the University's Graduate Academic Standing Policy, as listed in the FPU Academic Catalog, the M.P.A.S. program implements the following Promotion Policy that is more stringent.

Good Academic Standing

The course sequence in the curriculum is designed to provide incremental knowledge and skills necessary for PA practice. The M.P.A.S. program has determined that the sequence must be followed to achieve this goal. A student in good academic standing will progress through the curriculum as designed. Since courses are arranged in a specific sequence, repeating a course will result in delay of the student's progress through the curriculum, and require a longer period of time to successfully complete the entire curriculum. Good academic standing is obtained by achieving a term grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 or greater, maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or greater, passing all Pass/Fail courses/assignments and maintaining appropriate technical and professional standards.

Disciplinary Sanctions

Academic Probation

- Any student whose term GPA is below 3.00 for a single term, or
- Any student whose cumulative GPA is below 3.00, or
- Any student who receives a final course grade of C or C+ in any course regardless of GPA.

Academic Suspension with Deceleration

- Any student who has a final course grade of C or C+ in any two courses, or
- Any student who has been on academic probation without demonstrating satisfactory academic progress. Satisfactory academic progress means maintaining a term GPA greater than 3.00.

- Any student on academic probation at the end of term 4 of the M.P.A.S. program (as those students are not eligible to progress to the clinical year).

Program Dismissal

- Any student who receives a failing final course grade in any course, or
 - Any student who receives three final course grades of C or C+, or
 - Any students whose term GPA is below 3.00 for three terms (need not be consecutive terms), or
 - Any student whose cumulative GPA is below 3.00 for two terms and who has not shown satisfactory academic progress. Satisfactory academic progress means maintaining a term GPA greater than 3.00.
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- Any student who fails to earn a Pass (for a Pass/Fail course) or a final course grade of B+ or better in any repeated graded course, or
 - Any student who fails to adhere to the technical and/or professional standards of the program, as documented on the M.P.A.S. program's Technical Standards & Professionalism Assessment Tool, or
 - Students who re-matriculate for academic reasons and fail to maintain a term GPA greater than 3.0.

Notice of a Disciplinary Sanction shall be delivered in writing (electronic or paper format) to the student within five (5) days of the start of the next term and shall take effect immediately upon delivery.

Appeal of the decision may be made to the Dean of CHNS in writing within seventy-two hours of delivery of the decision to the student. Students on Probation at the end of the didactic year will not progress to the clinical year and will be referred to the M.P.A.S. Student Affairs Committee.

Part-time Enrollment and Deceleration

The design of the curriculum within the M.P.A.S. program does not allow for students to attend part-time. Students who cannot continue on a full time basis or who are on Academic Probation at the end of the didactic year may be decelerated or considered for readmission on a case-by-case basis. Deceleration is defined as movement from the student's entering cohort to a subsequent cohort. Students may be required to repeat some or all of the coursework completed at the time of withdrawal or probation.

Summative Evaluation

Students must demonstrate satisfactory performance in the summative evaluation. The summative evaluations are administered during Term 9 prior to graduation. Students may remediate up to two components that do not meet expectations. Each remediation can be performed only once. Successful remediation will result in the original score being raised to a passing score (typically, 83%).

Course Sequence

Didactic Phase

PA Program Term 1 November – February 17 credits

ME500 Introduction to Clinical Reasoning 1 credit
ME504 Pharmacology I 2 credits
ME508 Patient Care I 2 credits
ME510 Behavioral Medicine 2 credits
ME512 Clinical Application of Basic Sciences I 6 credits
ME516 Clinical Medicine I 4 credits

PA Program Term 2 March – May 17 credits

ME506 Pharmacology II 2 credits
ME520 Professional Seminar I 1 credit
ME524 Clinical Reasoning I 1 credit
ME528 Patient Communication and Education 2 credits
ME536 Patient Care II 2 credits
ME540 Clinical Application of Basic Sciences II 4 credits
ME544 Clinical Medicine II 5 credits

PA Program Term 3 June – August 15 credits

ME509 Pharmacology III 2 credits
ME532 Introduction to Epidemiology and Public Health 2 credits
ME548 Clinical Reasoning II 1 credit
ME552 Professional Seminar II 1 credit
ME564 Clinical Application of Basic Sciences III 4 credits
ME568 Clinical Medicine III 5 credits

PA Program Term September – November 17 credits

ME556 Understanding and Accessing the Medical Literature 1 credit
ME560 Advanced Clinical Skills 3 credits
ME582 Healthcare for the Rural and Medically Underserved 2 credits
ME580 Clinical Reasoning III 2 credits
ME584 Evidence-based Medicine in Clinical Practice 1 credit
ME588 Clinical Pharmacology 2 credits
ME592 Clinical Medicine IV 5 credits

Clinical Phase**PA Program Term 5 December – February 11 credits**

ME576 Preparation for Clinical Education 1 credit
ME631 Clinical Rotation 1 5 credits
ME632 Clinical Rotation 2 5 credits

PA Program Term 6 March – May 12 credits

ME633 Clinical Rotation 3 5 credits
ME634 Clinical Rotation 4 5 credits
ME645 Seminar I 2 credits

PA Program Term 7 June – August 12 credits

ME635 Clinical Rotation 5 5 credits
ME636 Clinical Rotation 6 5 credits
ME646 Seminar II 2 credits

PA Program Term 8 September – November 12 credits

ME637 Clinical Rotation 7 5 credits
ME638 Clinical Rotation 8 5 credits
ME647 Seminar III 2 credits

Professional Phase**PA Program Term 9 December – February 14 credits**

ME619 Elective Clinical Experience 4 credits
ME648 Seminar IV 2 credits
ME690 Senior Seminar 6 credits
ME692 Preparation for Clinical Practice 2 credits
Total Credits over 9 Terms = 126 credit hours earned