University of Saint Francis Physician Assistant Program
Frequently Asked Questions

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

When does the program start?
The program begins in August and culminates 27 months later in December.

How long does it take to complete the program?
The USF PA program is 27-months. The first 15-months (i.e., the didactic phase) are spent in the classroom learning the foundations of medicine needed to excel in the clinical setting. The remaining 12-months (i.e., the clinical phase) are spent in the clinical realm completing rotations.

What does the learning environment look like for students?
The program's didactic curriculum is designed to promote the development of critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills in our students. Most of our classes use active learning approaches that put students at the helm of their own learning. Students routinely engage in case-based learning, team-based learning, dynamic lectures, and flipped classroom experiences. Hands-on learning is also routinely incorporated through student-led cadaveric dissections, high-fidelity simulations, physical exam labs, and procedural labs.

What does a typical week look like in the program?
During the didactic phase, our students can expect to engage in a variety of on-campus activities from 8a-5p each week. This may include classroom or laboratory instruction, small group work, team-based assignments, one-on-one meetings with program faculty, or group review with faculty. During the clinical phase, students can expect to work alongside clinical preceptors to interact with, diagnose, and treat patients.

Does your clinical phase have call-back weeks?
Yes. All students will be required to return to campus for one week at the end of each clinical rotation to engage in end of rotation activities. These may include end of rotation exams, advising appointments, simulation lab experiences, program-to-practice lectures, PANCE preparation lectures, and other activities designed to prepare our students for professional practice.

Where can I find an estimate of program costs for attending your program?
An estimate of total program cost is provided on the program's website and updated yearly.

Does the program offer financial aid?
All inquiries about financial aid should be directed to the Financial Aid Office. They can be reached at finaid@sf.edu or 260-399-8003.

Is graduate housing available on campus?
At this time, USF does not provide housing for graduate students.

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

How many applicants are accepted each year?
The USF PA program matriculates 25 students each year.

When does the cycle open and close?
Candidates are invited to submit their applications between May 1 and December 1. Preferential review will be given to all candidates who submit their completely verified application no later than 11:59p on October 1. Candidates who submit between October 2 and December 1 may not have their application reviewed.

When does the program begin reviewing applications?
Review of applications will begin immediately. All applications received between May 1 and October 1 will be reviewed prior to the dissemination of interview invitations. The program will not communicate results of the review process at this time.

When does the program send invitations to interview?
The program will extend interview invitations via email to the most competitive applicants only after all applications received between May 1 and October 1 have been reviewed.

When will interviews take place?
On-campus interviews will occur between October – January.

Does the program offer virtual interview experiences?
The USF PA program does not allow candidates to interview virtually. All interview invitations are for an on-campus interview in Fort Wayne, IN.

Does meeting the program's minimum requirements for admission guarantee an interview?
No. The high number of applications submitted to the program each year prevents the program from interviewing all candidates who meet minimum admission requirements. Only the most competitive applicants, as well as current USF students and USF alumni with CASPA application scores ≥25, will be invited to interview with the program faculty.

When are offers of acceptance sent to candidates?
The program will extend conditional acceptance offers via email to the 25 candidates with the highest collective cumulative score and impression status in January. Waitlisted candidates and candidates not granted admittance will also be notified during this time.

I submitted my application between October 2 and December 1. When will my application be reviewed?
Applications received between October 2 and December 1 may be reviewed beginning in January if a second round of the admissions process is necessary. Review of applications submitted between these dates is not guaranteed.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS
What are the minimum requirements for admission to the USF PA program?
- The possession of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution in the United States of America prior to matriculation.
- A cumulative overall total GPA and overall science GPA of 3.0/4.0 as calculated by CASPA.
- Completion of the following prerequisite courses with a grade of "C" or better. Grades of "C-" or "pass/fail" will not be accepted. Each course must have a minimum of 3 total semester credit hours and be above an introductory level (e.g., above the 100-199 or 1000-1999 level) in accordance with the host institution's specific course numbering system:
  - Human anatomy with lab
  - Human physiology with lab
  - Microbiology with lab
  - Organic chemistry with lab OR Biochemistry with or without lab
- Completion of two courses (minimum of 6 total semester credit hours) within the behavioral sciences discipline with a grade of "C" or better. Grades of "C-" or "pass/fail" grades will not be accepted. Accepted courses include those in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, social work, criminal justice, and anthropology.
- Three letters of recommendation. One recommendation must be from a clinician (i.e., MD, DO, PA, or NP) who has worked alongside the candidate in a clinical setting through observation, shadowing, or prior/current work experience. Letters of recommendation from relatives or family friends are not accepted.
- Direct patient care experience. There is no minimum hour requirement.
- Shadowing experiences, volunteer experiences, and extracurricular experiences are not required but are encouraged.

Does the program have a preference for course delivery method or institution type for the required prerequisites?
No. Prerequisite courses may be completed at any traditional institution (e.g., regionally accredited college or university, four-year institution, community college, or two-year institution). Online or hybrid courses (including labs) are accepted.

Do all prerequisite courses need to be completed before I submit my application?
No. Candidates may have no more than 2 outstanding prerequisite courses (6 semester credit hours) remaining at the time of submission. This includes "in progress" courses that are listed on the CASPA application as ongoing or planned and have not been awarded a verified grade. All prerequisite courses must be completed no later than three months prior to matriculation with final transcripts sent to the Office of Admissions.

I've completed all the prerequisite courses required for admission, but my courses have names that don't readily reflect their content. What should I do?
Upload your course syllabi into the 'Documents' section of CASPA. Our admissions and recruitment team will review your documents for compatibility with our prerequisites.

Does the program allow substitutions for the human anatomy and human physiology prerequisites?
Two courses of combined human anatomy and physiology with labs (minimum total of 6 semester credit hours) may be used to satisfy the individual human anatomy and physiology requirements. Comparative anatomy and/or physiology courses are not considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy or human physiology. Mammalian anatomy, gross anatomy, and vertebrate anatomy are considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy.

Does the program accept advanced placement credit or Pass/Fail grades for any of the prerequisite courses?
No. Candidates must obtain a letter grade for each of the 6 required courses.

My institution uses a quarter credit system. How do my credits relate to semester credit hours?
The credit hour minimums listed for prerequisite courses refer specifically to semester credit hours. Applicants who have completed coursework using a quarter credit system may calculate their semester credit hour equivalence by dividing the quarter hour credits by 1.5. For example, a course worth 4 quarter credits is equivalent to a course worth 2.67 semester credit hours (as 4/1.5 = 2.67).

How does the program define "direct patient care experience"?
Direct patient care experience is defined as hands-on experience with patients in an approved paid clinical position. Though volunteer experience is encouraged, volunteer experiences cannot be used to satisfy the requirement for direct patient care experience.

What are accepted forms of direct patient care experience?
Positions that qualify for direct patient care experience include medical assistant; patient care technician; surgical technician or technologist; first assistant; scribe; certified nursing assistant or student nursing assistant; occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant/tech/aide; physical therapist or physical therapy assistant/tech/aide; certified athletic trainer; phlebotomist; respiratory therapist; emergency room technician; lab technician (if phlebotomy and/or direct patient care is the majority of the job description); pharmacist; certified pharmacy technician with hands-on patient care; dietician; emergency medical technician; paramedic; registered nurse or nursing assistant/aide; radiologic technician or technologist; ultrasound technician or technologist; EKG/ECG/EEG technician; chiropractor or chiropractor assistant; dental hygienist; military medic or corpsman; ophthalmic or optometric assistant; rehabilitation technician; or social worker (with a clinical focus).

What are examples of patient care experience that do not qualify for direct patient care experience?
Positions that do not qualify for direct patient care experience include personal care assistant; clerical pharmacy technician; unit clerk; patient transporter; lifeguard; camp counselor; counselor; front office staff or clerical administrator; drug and/or equipment sales representative; or medical researcher.

My patient care job is not included in either list. Who can I contact to determine if my job qualifies for the program's definition of direct patient care experience?
You may contact Dr. Courtney Lloyd, the program's Assistant Program Director and lead of the Admissions and Recruitment Team. Her email address is clloyd@sf.edu.

Can I submit more than three letters of recommendation?
The USF PA program will only review the first three letters in your application.

Does the program accept updates from candidates after their application has been submitted?
No. The program does not accept updates from candidates after their application has been submitted.

Does the program accept international students?
At this time, the USF PA program is not accepting applications from international students.

Does the program accept foreign medical graduates?
All candidates must possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution in the United States of America prior to matriculation. Foreign medical graduates are welcome to apply after meeting this requirement.