UNIVERSITY OF
SAINT FRANCIS
INDIANA

Physician Assistant Studies 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.

Does the program utilize a traditional curricular model or a modular approach?
The program launched a new didactic phase curriculum in Fall 2024 that divides the 4 didactic semesters into modules. Each system-based module covers the pertinent foundational sciences, pharmaceutical therapeutics, clinical medicine, history and physical exam, diagnostics, labs, imaging modalities, and procedures, etc. related to a particular organ system. For example, in the Pulmonary Essentials module, students discover the anatomy and physiology of the respiratory system; explore the conditions and disease states related to the respiratory system; practice performing history and physical exam related to the respiratory system; learn the various pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical therapeutic options available for these conditions; practice reading images and labs related to this system (e.g., chest x-ray, pulmonary function tests, ABGs, etc.); and review the technical skills related to pulmonary conditions.

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. Many of our courses integrate faculty-provided lectures and active learning approaches. Students routinely engage in case-based learning, team-based learning, dynamic lectures, and flipped classroom experiences to deepen their understanding of course content. Hands-on learning is also routinely incorporated through student-led cadaveric dissections, high-fidelity simulations, physical exam labs, procedural labs, and encounters with standardized patients.

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, with occasional night and weekend requirements. 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.

What types of service projects / volunteer opportunities exist for students?
Opportunities to engage in volunteer opportunities and service projects are shared with students throughout the year. Some are medical based, such as volunteering at a free clinic or providing blood pressure screenings to the elderly, while others are general opportunities to give back to the community (e.g., picking-up trash along assigned roads or park trails). Students are also welcome to engage in service opportunities that are of interest to them and were not initiated by program faculty.

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 or rotation pre-briefing appointments, simulation lab experiences, program-to-practice lectures, PANCE preparation activities, ultrasound training, guideline reviews, OSCEs, and other activities designed to prepare our students for professional practice.

What rotations will I do during the clinical phase?
All students will complete four-week core rotations in family medicine, emergency medicine, internal medicine, and surgery; and two-week core rotations in pediatrics, women's health, and behavioral health. Students also complete three, four-week elective rotations.

Do I have to find my own rotations during the clinical phase?
No. The SF PA Program is responsible for obtaining, assigning, and monitoring clinical rotations. Preceptors and clinical rotation sites are chosen and assigned by the PA Program, not the students. Students are <u>not required</u> to provide or solicit clinical sites or preceptors. Any student who wishes to work with the clinical team to procure specific rotations <u>must</u> consult with the clinical team prior to contacting any prospective clinical sites and/or preceptors.

Can I request specific rotations, preceptors, or clinical sites?
Yes. Students will be given the opportunity to request rotation sites. Students may propose new sites by completing the Request for Student-Initiated Rotation Site Form which <u>must</u> be submitted at least three months prior to the start of the intended rotation period as it is likely to take at least this long for the clinical site to be formally established. This information will be considered in the scheduling of rotations; however, <u>no request is guaranteed</u>. Students will not be assigned to clinical rotations where there might be a violation of educational integrity, such as when a supervising preceptor would be a first- or second-degree family member. Exceptions to this policy may be made at the discretion of the Assistant Dean of Sciences and Medical Studies.

Where are most rotation sites located relative to Fort Wayne?
Most clinical rotations assigned to students will be <u>within a 2-hour (one-way) commute of the Fort Wayne campus</u>. However, <u>each</u> student will be assigned to <u>one or more sites that exceed a 2-hour (one-way) commute</u>. Students are given the opportunity to communicate with the clinical team any distant sites where they have housing during the clinical phase. If alterations to previously provided housing options arise during the clinical phase, students are required to notify the clinical team and the program's administrative assistant <u>at least 3 months prior to the start of the rotation</u>.

If a student is assigned to a site for a <u>core</u> rotation located more than 120 miles (one-way) from either the Fort Wayne campus, the student's previously disclosed permanent address, or address on file with the program's administrative assistant (<u>whichever is closest to the site</u>), the program will arrange housing for the student or provide a housing stipend <u>up to</u> $1,600 to assist with lodging costs. The amount and method of housing support offered will be determined by the clinical team based on availability, location, and program budget. More details related to this policy are publicly available in the program's *PA Student Handbook.*

Does the program have a housing policy?
Yes. Students are <u>required</u> to procure and maintain their own housing throughout the duration of the PA Program. All transportation and living expenses are to be <u>covered by the student while enrolled</u>. All students (didactic and clinical) are **required** to maintain housing within a 1-hour commute of the Fort Wayne area throughout the entirety of the PA Program.

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

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.

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 are <u>not</u> guaranteed to have their application reviewed. Candidates are encouraged to submit their application by 11:59p EST on October 1st to be <u>guaranteed</u> review.

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 <u>prior</u> to the dissemination of interview invitations. The program will not communicate results of the review process during this time.

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

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

Does the program offer virtual interview experiences?
The SF 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 volume 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 SF students and SF alumni with CASPA application scores ≥25 on the program's CASPA Application Scoring Rubric, 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 late December or 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 <u>may</u> be reviewed beginning in January <u>if</u> a second round of the admissions process is necessary. Review of applications submitted between these dates is <u>not</u> guaranteed. Candidates are encouraged to submit their application by 11:59p EST on October 1st to be guaranteed review.

How can I tell if I am a competitive applicant for the program?
Review the program's CASPA Application Scoring Rubric to determine how many points your application is likely to receive. Though interviews invitations are offered to the candidates with the most competitive (i.e., highest) scores, invitations have been extended to those who scored between 26-31 points in the previous two admission cycles. This point range does <u>not</u> guarantee an interview invitation for the 2026-2027 cycle, though, as applicant scores vary each year.

Where can I find a copy of the program's CASPA Application Scoring Rubric?
Right here, as well as in the *Physician Assistant Student Handbook*, which is also available on the program's public facing website. More details about the rubric, including a more thorough description of preference points, can also be found in section 4.2.4 of the *handbook*.

Degree

Item	In Progress	Completed
Bachelor's Degree	0.5 points	1 point

GPA

Item	0.5 points each	1 point each	3 points each	5 points each (preference)
Overall total GPA	3.00 – 3.20	3.21-3.39	3.40 – 3.59	≥ 3.60
Overall science total GPA	3.00 – 3.20	3.21-3.29	3.30 – 3.44	≥ 3.45

Coursework (must all be completed with grade of "C" or higher; grades of "pass/fail" and advanced placement credit are not accepted).

Item	Uninitiated	In Progress^	Completed
Human anatomy <u>with</u> lab*	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
Human physiology <u>with</u> lab*	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
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 <u>not</u> considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy or human physiology. Mammalian anatomy, gross anatomy, and vertebrate anatomy are considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy.			
Microbiology <u>with</u> lab*	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
Organic chemistry <u>with</u> lab* OR Biochemistry <u>with or without</u> lab*	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
6 credits of behavioral science coursework#	0 points	0.5 points	1 point
Medical terminology$	0 points	0.5 points (preference)	1 point (preference)
Pathophysiology$	0 points	0.5 points (preference)	1 point (preference)

*Must have a minimum of 3 total semester credit hours. See the clarifying notes for more information.

^In progress courses are courses that are listed on the CASPA application as ongoing or planned <u>and</u> have not been awarded a verified grade.

#Accepted courses include those in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, social work, criminal justice, and anthropology.

$There are no semester credit hour minimums for medical terminology or pathophysiology courses.

Recency of Coursework [not required]

Item	0 points	2 points (preference)
Amount of time that has passed since the <u>science prerequisite courses</u> (i.e., anatomy, physiology, microbiology, organic chemistry / biochemistry) and labs, if applicable, were successfully completed with a grade of "C" or better.	< 3 of 4 completed within the last 5 years*.	≥ 3 of 4 completed within the last 5 years*.

*Dating occurs in relation to (and is inclusive of) the application year. Within five years of the application year includes 2022-2026.

Letters of Recommendation

Item	0.5 points each	1 point each	2 points each (preference)
Letter from a clinician (i.e., MD, DO, PA, or NP)	≥ 7 ratings on individual reference are "Average," "Below Average," or "Poor"	≥ 7 ratings on individual reference are "Good"	≥ 7 ratings on individual reference are "Excellent"
2nd Letter (Applicant's choice)			
3rd Letter (Applicant's choice)			

Letters from relatives or family friends are <u>not</u> accepted.

Direct Patient Care Experience

Item	0.5 points	1 point	2 points (preference)
Hours of Direct Patient Care Experience	1-499 hours	500-999 hours	≥ 1000 hours

See the clarifying notes for a list of positions that do and do not meet the requirements of Direct Patient Care.

Volunteer Service/ Community Enrichment Experience [not required]

Item	0 points	1 point (preference)
Hours of Volunteer Experience	< 200 hours	≥ 200 hours

Shadowing Experience [not required]

Item	0 points	1 point (preference)
Hours of Shadowing Experience	< 50 hours	≥ 50 hours

Extracurricular Activities [not required]

Item	0 points	1 point (preference)
Hours of Extracurricular Activities	< 1000 hours	≥ 1000 hours

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 <u>and</u> 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-," "pass/fail," or advanced placement credit will <u>not</u> be accepted. Each course must have a minimum of 3 total semester credit hours:
    - 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-," "pass/fail," or advanced placement credit will <u>not</u> be accepted. Accepted courses include those in the disciplines of <u>psychology</u>, <u>sociology</u>, <u>social work</u>, <u>criminal justice</u>, and <u>anthropology</u>.
- Three letters of recommendation. One recommendation <u>must</u> 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. The other two letters are at the candidates' discretion, though letters of recommendation from relatives or family friends are <u>not</u> 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 <u>no more than 2 outstanding prerequisite courses</u> (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 <u>and</u> have not been awarded a verified grade. All prerequisite courses must be completed <u>no later than three months prior to matriculation</u> 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 <u>not</u> considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy or human physiology. Mammalian anatomy, gross anatomy, and vertebrate anatomy <u>are</u> considered acceptable substitutions for human anatomy.

Does the program accept advanced placement credit or Pass/Fail grades for any of the prerequisite courses?
No. The program <u>does not</u> accept advanced placement credit or Pass/Fail grades for any prerequisite courses. Candidates must obtain a <u>letter grade</u> 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 <u>semester</u> 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 <u>paid</u> clinical position. Though volunteer experience is encouraged, volunteer experiences <u>cannot</u> be used to satisfy the requirement for direct patient care experience.

What are accepted forms of direct patient care experience?
Positions that <u>qualify</u> 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 or personal 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 <u>do not qualify</u> 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 Tracey Boothman or Madison Wharton in the Admissions Office. Their contact information is on the following page.

Can I submit more than three letters of recommendation?
You can, but the SF PA program will only review the <u>first three letters in your application</u>.

Does the program accept updates from candidates after their CASPA application has been submitted?
No. The program does <u>not</u> accept updates from candidates after their application has been submitted.

Does the program accept international students?
At this time, the SF 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.

Who do I contact with questions?
- Tracey Boothman, Director of Adult and Distance Admissions. TBoothman@sf.edu, 260-399-7700 ext. 6332
- Madison Wharton, Graduate and Transfer Coordinator. MWharton@sf.edu, 260-399-7700 ext. 6341