

Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies

The Physician Assistant Studies Program is 24 months in length and begins in August. A maximum class size of 40 students will include students applying directly to our program through the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) at the graduate level as well as students progressing from the CSM PAS-Accelerated Entry Pathway (PAS- AEP).

While CSM is a women's college at the undergraduate level, men are welcome to apply for graduate program admissions.

Current College of Saint Mary PAS Accelerated Entry Pathway Students:

Current undergraduate CSM students accepted as PAS-AEP students are assigned to a specific future PAS cohort upon admission as a PAS-AEP student and will progress to their assigned PAS cohort as long as all progression requirements are met and the applicant meets the minimum technical standards for the PAS program. College of Saint Mary does not offer advanced placement for the PAS program. For Acceptance and Progression Requirements and Evaluation, go to the PAS Accelerated Entry Pathway information in the Program of Study section.

CASPA Admission Requirements

- A complete CASPA application submitted by October 1, 11:59 EST. <https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/>
- A baccalaureate degree from a United States regionally accredited college or university
 - A baccalaureate degree from outside the United States will be accepted if the student can document equivalency of a U.S. bachelor's degree through a foreign transcript evaluation service and completion of an additional 24 credit hours in biology or chemistry departments at a U.S. regionally accredited college or university prior to application. The World Education Services, Inc. is the preferred agency: <https://www.wes.org/>
- Minimum cumulative overall GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale
- Minimum cumulative PAS prerequisite GPA (Cumulative GPA of all prerequisite courses below) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale
- Minimum grade of "C" in all prerequisite courses
- 300 hours of healthcare clinical experience is required.
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test is required with scores at or above the 25th percentile on each of all three categories, verbal, quantitative, and analytical
 - May take the exam multiple times – highest scores used in each category
 - Send to Institution Code 4413 (CASPA applicants only)
- Three professional references (academic and supervisory individuals are preferred).
- CASPer, an admissions assessment of non-cognitive skills, is required. To complete CASPer, visit www.TakeAltus.com and register before November 1st. Cost is \$52.
- Must meet the minimum Technical Standards for the PAS program

- Ability to complete all MSPAS matriculation requirements within 4-6 months of entry into program. This includes requirements for immunizations as suggested by the CDC, tuberculosis screening, physical examination, criminal background check, urine drug screening, and health insurance requirements.
- Achieve all PAS program admission criteria and follow the PAS admissions process and decisions

Preferences

College of Saint Mary alumni, military, first generation, and fluency in a second language, and HRSA (Health Resources & Services Administration) Indicators will receive special consideration on the application evaluation.

Advanced Standing:

College of Saint Mary PAS program does not offer advanced placement for previous coursework or experience.

CASPA Admission Prerequisite Courses

- Human Anatomy and Physiology with lab (minimum 8 semester credits)
 - Minimum of one semester of each or two semesters of a combined course series
- Microbiology with lab
- Upper-level Biology (course with lab preferred)
- General Chemistry with lab (minimum 8 semester credits)
 - Two semesters in a course series
- Organic Chemistry with lab (minimum 4 semester credits)
 - At least one semester as required for Biochemistry (two semesters preferred)
- Biochemistry with lab
 - Acceptable course must at a minimum require Organic Chemistry 1 as a prerequisite
- Abnormal Psychology
- Developmental/Lifespan Psychology
- Statistics
- Medical Terminology (either a college/university course or certificate program will be acceptable)

Prerequisite courses must be completed with a “C” or higher grade. In progress or planned courses must be reflected on the CASPA application and must be successfully completed by July 1st of the year of entry. There is no minimum on the amount of in progress or planned courses.

Repeated Course Work

A course repeated at the same institution (other than CSM) will have the most recent grade used in the GPA calculations. If the course is repeated more than once, only one grade (the lowest received) will be replaced by the most recent grade received.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

Applicants whose native language is not English must meet one of the following requirements to be eligible for admission to the CSM PAS program. Minimum scores are based on language skills needed to successfully complete the PA curriculum, including clinical education requirements, as well as sit for the certification exam.

Paper-based TOEFL exam, minimum score of 600

Internet-based TOEFL exam, minimum score of 100, minimum of 20 in each sub test Internet-based IELTS exam, minimum of 7.5, minimum of 7.5 for each sub-test

Results should be sent directly from ETS to College of Saint Mary institutional code 6106.

****THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE TO MEET THE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS.**

MSPAS Technical Standards:

College of Saint Mary's Physician Assistant Program is dedicated to the education of students who strive to become competent and caring providers of primary health care services under the supervision of a licensed physician. All students must meet the minimum technical standards necessary to achieve the knowledge, skills, and competencies required of an entry-level physician assistant. The technical standards apply to satisfactory performance in all academic and clinical course work, as well as fulfillment of "non-academic" essential functions of the curriculum involving physical, cognitive, and behavior factors that are essential to a professional clinical practitioner. All candidates who are offered a seat in the program will be required to sign a statement attesting to their ability to meet these technical standards.

Reasonable accommodation is defined as any change in the environment or in the way things are usually done that enables an individual with a disability to participate as fully as possible in the academic program. If an accommodation is requested, the program may require additional documentation and information and will follow up with the student to discuss the specifics of the request and the appropriate plan of action. The College of Saint Mary shall provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities otherwise qualified to complete the essential functions of the curriculum. However, such essential functions must be completed by the student in a reasonably independent fashion. Students must not pose a threat to the safety or wellbeing of patients, other students, staff, or themselves. Each student is expected to perform the following, with or without reasonable accommodation.

A student in the Physician Assistant Studies program must have adequate abilities and skills in the following five areas: 1) Observation; 2) Communication; 3) Sensory and Motor Coordination and Function; 4) Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Ability; and, 5) Behavioral and Social Attributes.

Observation:

The student must be able to observe demonstrations and conduct experiments in the basic sciences, including but not limited to, chemical, biological, anatomic and physiologic sciences, microbiologic cultures, and microscopic studies of microorganisms. A student must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand. Observation necessitates the functional use of the sense of vision, hearing, and other sensory modalities. A student must be able to integrate all information visually and through the other senses.

Communication:

A student must be able to communicate effectively, sensitively, and rapidly in English with patients and members of the health care team. A student must be able to elicit information from patients, perceive nonverbal communications, speak intelligibly, hear sufficiently, and describe changes in mood, activity and posture. Communication includes not only speech, but writing, reading, interpreting tables, figures, graphs and computer literacy. Students must have the ability to interact with patients, the health care team, and the general public in a manner which is professionally

appropriate for the environment and situation. Students must be able to recognize environments in which professional behavior is expected and must be able to discriminate between professional environments with differing behavioral expectations (i.e. seeing a patient vs. assisting a preceptor in surgery).

Sensory and Motor Coordination and Function:

The student must have sufficient sensory and motor coordination and function to elicit information from patients by inspection, palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers. The student will be required to coordinate both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of hearing, touch and vision.

More specifically, the student must be able to exercise such fine motor skills as to adequately perform laboratory tests, including but not limited to, wet mount, urinalysis and gram stain. The student must exercise such level of dexterity, sensation and visual acuity as to accurately complete such processes as administering intravenous medication, making fine measurements of angles and size, measuring blood pressure, respiration and pulse, performing physical examinations, and performing therapeutic procedures such as suturing and casting.

The student must be able to hear sufficiently to accurately differentiate percussive notes and auditory findings, including but not limited to, heart, lung, and abdominal sounds, as well as discern normal and abnormal findings using instruments such as tuning forks, stethoscopes, sphygmomanometers, and Doppler devices.

A student must be able to react and perform in a prompt manner when a timely response is required for both general and emergency care situations. Moving patients and engaging in some procedures such as CPR will require a necessary level of strength.

Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities:

A student must have the intellect necessary to quickly analyze and resolve problems. These intellectual abilities include numerical recognition, measurement, calculations, reasoning, analysis, judgment and synthesis. The student must be able to identify significant findings from the patient's history, the physical examination and laboratory data, provide a reasoned explanation for likely diagnoses, and choose appropriate medications and therapy. The ability to incorporate new information from many sources in formulating diagnoses and plans is essential. Good judgment in patient assessment, diagnostic and therapeutic planning is primary. When appropriate, students must be able to identify and communicate the limits of their knowledge to others. Students must be able to recall and retain information in an efficient and timely manner.

Behavioral and Social Attributes:

A student must possess the emotional health required for full use of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment and the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients. The development of mature, sensitive, effective, and professional relationships with patients and members of the health care team is essential. Students must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Students must be able to use supervision appropriately and act independently, when indicated. Compassion, integrity, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are all personal qualities that are desired in a health professional and assessed during the admissions and education processes.

Eligibility to enter or continue in the PA program will be based on academic progress as well as physical and emotional capacities to perform the essential functions necessary to meet the requirements of the program's curriculum and become an effective practitioner.

All candidates who are offered a seat in the program will be required to sign a statement attesting to their ability to meet these technical standards.

PAS Admissions Process and Decisions:

Admission to the PAS graduate program is competitive with a limited number of seats in each cohort. Meeting the minimum admission requirements above does not ensure acceptance into the PAS program. Admission decisions are made by the PAS Admissions Committee and will be made based on the following:

- Past academic performance (GPA and completed courses, particularly science and math courses)
- Documented academic aptitude (collegiate GPA)
- Extra- and co-curricular activities
- Medical and/or clinical experiences (shadowing, volunteering, etc.)
- Recommendations from qualified individuals with knowledge of the applicant's character and performance
- Communication, professionalism, and interpersonal skills via essay, interview, review of letters of reference.

CASPA Application Process

1. Submit the CASPA application by October 1st, 11:59 EST
2. Send official transcripts from all college credit institutions to CASPA
3. Send Non-U.S. transcripts evaluated through the World Education Services, Inc. (preferred agency) to CASPA
4. Request 3 letters of recommendation (evaluations) through CASPA – if more than 3 are submitted, we will ask you to identify 3 for our review (no family or friends)
5. Send Official GRE General Test scores to Institution Code 4413
6. References, transcripts and GRE scores submitted by November 1st
7. Complete CASPer (www.TakeAltus.com) before November 1st
8. Review of application by the PAS Admissions Committee
9. If selected, participate in an on-campus interview with the PAS Admissions Committee. The PAS program Technical Standards Attestation form must be signed during the interview stating the ability to meet all required technical standards.
10. Admission decision by the PAS Admissions Committee following a complete application and interview

Once a student is admitted to the PAS Program, she/he must complete requirements designated by the program within 4-6 months of entry:

Criminal Background Check

Students are required to complete a background check prior to matriculating into the PAS program. Students are responsible for the associated costs. Additional background checks may be required during the PAS program depending on clinical site requirements. If criminal or illegal behaviors are discovered that were not previously disclosed, the student may be subject to dismissal from the program. If a student cannot complete clinical rotations due to negative items contained in the background check, the student will not be able to graduate from the program.

If a student with a misdemeanor or a felony is permitted to continue, this does not guarantee that the student will be eligible for licensure after graduation. The state licensing boards make independent decisions on eligibility requirements as stated in the law. Nor should the decision be construed as a guarantee the student will be allowed by NCCPA to take the PANCE exam. The NCCPA will make the determination with regard to the student's ability to sit for the national board exam.

It is the student's responsibility to inform the PA program director of any change to the background if information was added after the date of the initial background submission.

Immunization Requirements

Physician Assistants are at risk for exposure to and transmission of vaccine-preventable diseases due to their contact with patients or infective material from patients. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) strongly recommends that all health care workers (including students in medical disciplines) be vaccinated against (or have documented

immunity to) COVID-19, hepatitis B, seasonal influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis, and varicella. Additionally, the CDC recommends that health care workers receive Tdap/Td, consider the meningococcal vaccine, and undergo annual tuberculosis screening. More information can be found on the CDC website (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/hcw.html#recs>).

Upon admission to the PAS program, the student must provide documented evidence as defined below that he/she is compliant with the immunization requirements of the CSM PAS program. The student is responsible for the associated costs. The student must also sign a record release form so that immunization and screening records may be forwarded to clinical sites for supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPE's). Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the student's admission status in the PAS program being revoked. The inability to comply may be appealed to the PAS program director to determine the course of action.

Some clinical sites may require that a student receive additional vaccinations and/or have antibody titers assessed for specific conditions to meet variable state and/or institutional regulations. Moreover, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices may revise their guidelines without prior notice. In these instances, the student will be expected to become compliant with these new guidelines and be responsible for the cost. The student immunization and screening record is not considered part of the health record and may be viewed by appropriate program faculty and staff when necessary.

Hepatitis B

- Documented 2-dose or 3-dose series with dates and positive hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs).
- If negative anti-HBs, the student must repeat the 2-dose or 3-dose series and get anti- HBs serologic tested 1–2 months after completion of the series.

Measles, Mumps, and Rubella

- Documented measles, mumps, and rubella 2-dose vaccination series with dates or documented serologic evidence of immunity (titers) to measles, mumps, and rubella.
- Documented serologic evidence of immunity (titers) to measles, mumps, and rubella is highly recommended even if the student had prior vaccination series.
- If serologic immunity is not adequate, students must follow the CDC guidelines to become compliant.

Varicella (Chickenpox)

- Documented varicella 2-dose vaccination series with dates or documented serologic evidence of immunity (titers) to varicella.
- Documented serologic evidence of immunity (titers) to varicella is highly recommended even if prior vaccination series.
- If serologic immunity is not adequate, students must follow the CDC guidelines to become compliant.

Diphtheria/Tetanus/Pertussis

- Documented 3-dose primary vaccination series with dates
- Students must have a one-time dose of Tdap as soon as possible if they have not received Tdap previously (regardless of when previous dose of Td was received).
- Td boosters are required every 10 years thereafter.

COVID-19 Vaccine

- Documented receipt of COVID-19 vaccine with date(s).

Meningococcal Vaccine

- Students must sign that they have received information related to meningococcal vaccination and have decided to decline at this time or receive a single dose of the meningococcal vaccine.

Seasonal influenza

- Students must receive 1 dose of influenza vaccine annually and submit evidence of vaccination before December 1st each year in the program (as long as there is an adequate supply of the vaccine in the community). If the clinical rotation site requires the influenza vaccine earlier than December 1st, the student will be required to comply with the site deadline.
- Many clinical sites require influenza vaccination; therefore, students may not waive influenza vaccination without a documented circumstance approved by the PAS program director.
- Failure to comply will prevent students from beginning the next semester, instant removal from a supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPE's), and will affect their progression and graduation.

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening

- An intradermal skin test for tuberculosis (PPD) or TB Gold is required prior to matriculation and annually thereafter, except in cases of a documented positive reading. Additional screening may be required based on clinical site policies.
- If a student has a history of a positive PPD reading, the student must submit the PAS program's TB screening form signed by a listed provider, which requires a chest radiograph report within the past 12 months negative for active TB and documentation of completed therapy recommended by the CDC for a positive PPD screening. Students who are PPD positive will need an annual chest x-ray and evaluation by a health care provider that they are free of tuberculosis.
- Failure to comply with this requirement will prevent students from beginning the next semester, be removed instantly from a supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPE's), and may affect progression and graduation.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

All students must successfully pass a 10-panel urine drug screen on an annual basis through a clinic designated by the PA program. Additional drug testing may be required dependent upon individual clinical placement and 'for cause' testing during the 24-month course of study. Students are responsible for the associated costs.

There is a zero tolerance policy for drug or alcohol use anytime the student is actively engaged in activities related to didactic or clinical rotations while in the CSM PA program. A violation of the Drug and Alcohol Policy results in dismissal from the program.

Any student with a substance abuse problem who voluntarily reports the condition to the faculty, will be assisted in finding proper treatment in a confidential manner.

Health Insurance Requirements

Health insurance is mandatory for all students during the entire length of the program. If any changes to the student's health insurance coverage are made while enrolled in the PA Program, it is the student's responsibility to notify the program staff immediately. Students are responsible to find new coverage as soon as possible. Should a student lose coverage, participation in the program will be suspended until such time that insurance coverage is confirmed.

Expenses incurred by the student for any illness or injury (including those that may occur while on rotations) are the student's responsibility. CSM does not assume responsibility for healthcare related costs arising from the illness or injury of a student.

History and Physical Examination Requirements

Students must provide documentation of a physical exam within 6 months before matriculating into the program as defined below.

- Matriculated PAS students must have a history and physical examination completed by a licensed physician (M.D. or D.O.), PA-C, or NP, 4-6 months of prior to matriculating into the PAS program. This document must state there are no restrictions of the student participating in supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPE's).
- The student must sign a record release form, so that the final page stating no restrictions may be forwarded to the PAS program and future clinical sites for supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPE's).

Restrictions by the medical provider may result in the student's admission status in the PAS program being revoked. The student will have the option to set up a meeting with the PAS program to discuss the restrictions and potential consequences related to completion of program requirements. The PAS program will decide the admission status of the student.

No PA faculty member, including the program director or medical director, are permitted to participate as healthcare providers for PA students. This includes giving medical advice, as well as physically providing healthcare unless there is an emergent situation. Program faculty are able to help refer students for healthcare, including mental healthcare, upon request.

Student Work and Participation Policy

The program strongly discourages any type of outside work during the first 12 months of study in the program. Students are prohibited from working during clinical rotations. Program responsibilities are not negotiable, and will not be altered due to student work obligations. The following apply to all students for the duration of the PA program:

- Students may not be hired as employees for any private or public practice, clinic, or other institution to perform any medical services during any time they are part of the Physician Assistant Program. College of Saint Mary holds no liability for services provided by the student in such capacity.
- Students may not be given any payments, stipends, or other remuneration for medical services performed as part of the physician assistant educational program.
- Students may not work or volunteer in any capacity that allows access to student files.
- Students may volunteer their medical services to charitable, humanitarian, or community service organizations only when such services are assigned or approved within the PA program. All volunteer requests must be cleared by the PA program director before the student can partake in the volunteer activity.
- Students may not substitute for regular clinical or administrative staff during the clinical phase.
- Students may not act as instructional faculty for any component of the PAS curriculum.

Students are not allowed to participate in CSM athletic teams or take additional courses outside of the PA curriculum while enrolled in the PA program unless approved by the PA program director.

Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SCPE) Solicitation Policy

Currently enrolled, as well as prospective students, are not allowed to arrange their own clinical experiences nor solicit clinical sites or preceptors. Reasonable effort will be made to accommodate student preference requests, but in ALL cases, the final determination for rotation times, sites, and activities will be at the discretion of the Clinical Coordinator.

Accreditation

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA) has granted **Accreditation-Continued** status to the **College of St. Mary - NE Physician Assistant Program** sponsored by **College of St. Mary - NE**. 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 **March 2031**. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation *Standards* and ARC-PA policy.

The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website at <http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation-history-college-of-st-mary/>.