

COLLEGE of SAINT MARY

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Is 5 years long enough to become a PA?

- The actual PA courses do not begin until level 4 (Year 4), and the PA classes last the traditional length of 24 months. The first 3 years of study consist of an accelerated undergraduate Human Biology program where students will be classified as PrePA and complete coursework towards a Bachelor of Science in Human Biology, which will be completed during the 4th year. The accelerated undergraduate Human Biology program will complete all requirements of the traditional Human Biology program by taking the maximum course load every semester. Some PA courses will contribute to the completion of the bachelor's degree.

2. Are there other PA programs in the country similar to CSM's program?

- Yes. There are over 30 programs in the country with similar combined B.S./M.S. PA programs that produce successful and competent PA's as evidenced by their licensure pass rates and their ongoing accreditation by the ARC-PA, the PA accrediting body.

3. Who teaches the PA courses?

- The undergraduate Human Biology portion of the curriculum (Years 1-3) is taught by doctoral level professors in Biology, Chemistry, Math, Psychology, Arts and Sciences and other support disciplines. The PA program courses (Years 4-5)-will be taught by PA's, physicians, and other medical providers. CSM will have 4-5 full-time PA and physician faculty and will utilize several medical providers from the community for guest lectures and clinical clerkships.

4. Is my daughter ready as a freshman?

- If accepted into the PA program, CSM will provide your daughter the opportunities and resources needed for academic excellence, compassionate service, and leadership. Small class size will provide significant individualized attention. Community service and patient-care opportunities will be an important aspect of the program. CSM will help your daughter develop into a competent, caring medical professional.

5. Will my daughter be learning using cadavers?

- CSM is one of a very small number of non-medical schools in the region to have an operating cadaver lab. The lab is used for anatomic demonstration in Anatomy and Physiology classes, and an upper-level undergraduate Gross Anatomy course is offered every Fall to students wishing to pursue an in-depth exploration of human anatomy prior to beginning the PA courses in Year 4. Beginning in Year 4, students will complete additional upper-level anatomy courses utilizing both dissection and prosection.

6. Is the board exam transferable to other states?

- The national PA board certification examination (PANCE) given by the NCCPA will allow students to apply for a license in any state.

7. What is the accreditation process?

- PA education is accredited through the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). CSM has been granted developmental status by the ARC-PA with a provisional accreditation decision in March 2016. Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status granted to new programs. The status indicates that the plans and resource allocation for the program appear to demonstrate the program's ability to meet the ARC-PA *Standards*, if fully implemented as planned. CSM may officially start the PA portion of the curriculum once provisionally accredited. Accreditation-Provisional does not ensure any subsequent accreditation status, but any student beginning in a provisionally accredited program qualifies to take the national board certification examination following graduation.

8. How is it possible to accept students if the PA program is not accredited?

- CSM has applied for provisional accreditation from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). The CSM Physician Assistant Program anticipates matriculating its first class in Fall 2016 pending provisional accreditation. Provisional accreditation is an accreditation status for a new PA program that has not yet enrolled students in PA courses, but at the time of its comprehensive accreditation review, has demonstrated its Spring 2016 preparedness to initiate a program in accordance with the accreditation *Standards*. Students are currently being enrolled in the accelerated Bachelor of Science Human Biology program. If students meet the progression criteria to level 4, and CSM is awarded provisional accreditation in the Spring of 2016, PrePA students will advance to the accredited level of the program beginning in Fall 2016.

9. What if the PA program does not receive accreditation in Spring 2016?

- CSM will continue to seek accreditation as soon as possible. In the meantime, students would be eligible to apply to other PA programs around the country.

10. What other programs are accredited at CSM?

- The University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The CSM Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Business, Paralegal and Education programs are accredited through their own respective accrediting agencies. Each of these programs went through a similar application process and received accreditation in their first application.

11. What is the admissions process?

- Admissions to the program will occur on a rolling admissions process. If minimum requirements are met, an Admissions and Progression Committee will review applications and decide who will be invited for an interview. Due to the competitive nature of the PA program, meeting minimum requirements does not ensure an invitation for an interview. Following the interview, the Admissions and Progression Committee will decide who will be admitted into the program. Applicants will be notified of the Committee's decision via letter.

12. What will happen to completed applications once 30 students are accepted at any level?

- CSM will not accept more than 30 students at each level. Students may enroll as a Human Biology major and be assigned to a waiting list for PA slots that may become available in subsequent years.

13. Who will decide about admission to (and progression in) the PA program?

- An Admissions and Progression Committee will review applications to the PA program and make final decisions about admissions, progression and dismissals.

14. Does CSM accept men into the PA program?

- CSM is a women's college at the undergraduate level, so only women are eligible for the accelerated undergraduate Human Biology/PrePA track. The PA program has an admissions preference for current CSM PrePA students. However, if all 30 seats are not filled at the beginning of the PA program (Level 4/Year 4), the seats will be filled with non-CSM-PrePA applicants. In that situation, men are eligible to apply to begin the graduate PA program.

15. Will I have enough money available to complete the program?

- College of Saint Mary is committed to affordability. We will work with you throughout your time at the University to ensure that finances do not prohibit you from reaching your academic goals. The first step is for you to apply to the University and submit your FAFSA. Once we receive your FAFSA information, and you are accepted to the University, you will receive a financial aid award letter. This letter will include information about scholarships and grants the College of Saint Mary is offering you, as well as your individual federal and state grant and loan eligibility. Once you receive your award letter, we would encourage you to meet with a member of our financial aid staff to answer any questions you may have.

16. Are there special scholarships and loan repayment options available to Physician Assistant students?

- Yes. There are a variety of scholarships and loan repayment programs available to both undergraduate and graduate students that qualify. These scholarships and loan repayment programs may have additional requirements that must be met after graduation. For more information, please visit the American Academy of Physician Assistants webpage regarding financial aid: http://www.aapa.org/your_pa_career/pa_students/resources/item.aspx?id=913