General Description:
PAs are medical providers who are licensed to diagnose and treat illness and disease, and to prescribe medication for patients, working in a variety of settings. Forbes and U.S. News & World Report consistently ranks PA as one of the top health care careers, with a median annual salary of $98,000 and projected growth rate of 30% through 2024 (http://www.bls.gov/).

What are some common daily activities/experiences?
PAs are focused on patient care and may undertake educational, research, and administrative work. Studies show that in a primary care setting, PAs can provide nearly all of the clinical services a physician does, including taking medical histories, performing physical exams, ordering and interpreting laboratory tests, diagnosing and treating illnesses, counseling patients, setting fractures, and assisting in surgery.

What are 3-5 personal characteristics important for happiness and success in your profession?
- Intelligence, sound judgment, and intellectual honesty
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Respect for yourself and others
- Ability to respond to emergencies in a calm and reasoned manner
- Commitment to patient’s welfare

What are 3-5 key questions students should be asking themselves as they prepare for your profession?
- What distinguishes a PA from other health care providers, like a physician or nurse practitioner?
- How will the PA profession help me meet my career goals?
- Why do I think I will be an excellent health care provider? More specifically, an excellent physician assistant?

Preparing for Admission:
Each PA program sets its own prerequisite coursework requirements. It is best to review a program’s website for all prerequisites requirements and substitutions, including academic coursework, patient care experience, testing, and more. A more general review of information can be conducted using the PAEA program directory.

- Academic: academic prerequisites in science and non-science courses can include, but are not limited to:
  - Anatomy
  - Biology
  - Physiology
  - Chemistry
  - Organic chemistry
  - Biochemistry
  - Physics
  - Genetics
  - English, composition, technical writing
  - Psychology
  - Sociology, Humanities
  - College-level algebra or math
  - Statistics

- Standardized tests: there is no universally required standardized test for PA admissions. Some programs may require any of the GRE, MCAT, TOEFL, or other science-based testing
**Experience:** some programs may require shadowing, volunteer, paid, or any combination of direct patient care experience. Some programs will make recommendations on experience without requirements.
  - Hour requirements vary but can range from 0-4,000 hours

**Evaluations:** while most PA programs require three evaluations, others may require less or more. Some programs, but not all, require evaluations from specific types of references, which can include:
  - PAs
  - Physicians (MD or DO)
  - Nurse practitioners (NP)
  - Professors with knowledge of applicant’s academic abilities
  - Supervisors in a health area or other job setting
  - Academic advisors

**Resources for researching schools:**
- PA Focus: [http://pafocus.org/](http://pafocus.org/)

**The Admissions Cycle:**
- **CAS:** Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA): [https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login](https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login)
  - **Application opens:** April 27, 2016
  - **Application can be submitted:** from open date until March 1, 2017, close date
  - **Deadlines:** there are nine deadline options in a CASPA cycle and they include June 15, July 15, August 1, September 1, October 1, November 1, December 1, January 15, and March 1.
  - **Number of schools participating:** 197 of 210 PAEA member programs and 19 developing PA programs
  - **Fees:** $175 for first program, $50 for each additional
  - **Fee waivers:** CASPA Fee Assistance Program
  - **Evaluation letter logistics:** up to five evaluations must be submitted electronically via CASPA. Two evaluations are required for an applicant to become complete. Check PA program requirements regarding references prior to listing any references on CASPA as they cannot be removed or replaced. PA programs do not prefer committee letters.
  - **Standardized test logistics:** official GRE scores can be submitted using individual program CASPA GRE codes (if applicable). If a PA program does not have a CASPA GRE code, please follow the instructions on their website for submitting GRE scores. TOEFL scores must be submitted directly to CASPA by request to ETS. Paper score copies are not accepted by CASPA.
  - **Transcripts:** all official transcript must be sent directly by the institution(s) to CASPA at the PO Box provided in the CASPA instructions & FAQ.
  - **Background checks:** through CASPA, PAEA partners with CertifiedBackground to provide background checks to programs choosing to participate through CASPA. Programs must opt in and they order background checks on the applicants they require them from. Not all applicants through CASPA will be required to obtain a background check. In most cases, applicants will be responsible for the background check fees.

*For more information on many health professions, we recommend the NAAHP publication, *Health Professions Admission Guide: Strategies for Success*, available on the NAAHP website.*
NAAHP Fact Sheet for Health Professions Advisors
Physician Assistant

- Contact information: (617) 612-2080 - caspainfo@caspaonline.org
- CAS contact for advisors (if different): same.
- CASPA Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CASPAOnlineApp/?fref=ts

The Admissions Process:
- Advisor portal: https://uap.webadmit.org/session/new
- Approx. dates of interviews/offers: information variable by PA program.
- Total number of applicants in most recent cycle (through CAS and/or all member programs if known): 25,755 (this is total of submitted applicants through CASPA)
- Average # of applications per student: 7 designations
- Total number of first year students (through CAS and all if known): not available
- Test score and GPA averages and ranges, other data on applicants and accepted students (major, age, race/ethnicity, gender, whatever makes sense for the profession)
- Total number of students: not available

Learn More about the Profession
Training & Career Opportunities:
- Number of years: PA school averages approx. 27 months
- Degree attained: Master's degree (specific credentials vary by program)
- Total number of graduates in most recent academic year: not available but there were approx. 7,800 matriculants via CASPA in the 2015 start class.
- Data on employment of recent graduates, if available: www.aapa.org

Key Resources for Students
- PA Focus: http://pafocus.org/
- CASPA Applicant Portal: https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login

Key Resources for Advisors
- The American Academy of Physician Assistants: https://www.aapa.org/become-a-pa/
- The National Commission of Certification of Physician Assistant: http://www.nccpa.net/

Social Media
- PA Focus Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/PAFocus/?fref=ts
- PA Focus Twitter: https://twitter.com/pa_focus

For more information on many health professions, we recommend the NAAHP publication, Health Professions Admission Guide: Strategies for Success, available on the NAAHP website.
Advisory Council Professional Association Partner Information

Physician Assistant Education Association, www.paeaonline.org

- **Mission:** PAEA serves as a resource for individuals and organizations from various professional sectors interested in the educational aspects of the PA profession. The Association is the organization primarily responsible for collecting, publishing, and disseminating information on the PA programs. PAEA provides effective representation to affiliated organizations involved in health education, health care policy, and the national certification of PA graduates. PAEA works to ensure quality PA education through the development and distribution of educational services and products specifically geared toward meeting the emerging needs of PA programs, the PA profession, and the health care industry.

- **Size of organization, Number of member institutions**
  - 30 employees
  - 207 voting member programs

- **New institutional members in last two years**
  - 37 total institutional members, over 10 new in the last two years

Advisory Council Contact Information

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