

Physician Assistant Program

Admissions Guidebook

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Welcome Letter from the Program and Medical Director

From the Program Director

Dear Prospective Students,

Welcome, and thank you for your interest in the ECPI University Physician Assistant (PA) Program. We are thrilled you are considering joining our community of future healthcare providers. As the Program Director, I am proud to lead a team of dedicated faculty and staff who are committed to providing an exceptional educational experience which will prepare you to excel as a physician assistant.

Our program is designed to offer a comprehensive and innovative approach to learning. We emphasize a patient-centered curriculum interwoven with value-based care principles, clinical excellence, leadership skills, and innovation in emerging healthcare technologies. Our goal is to equip you with the knowledge and experience to thrive in a variety of healthcare settings.

We know choosing a PA program is an important decision, and we are here to support you every step of the way. I encourage you to explore our program, ask questions, and reach out to our admissions team for any guidance you may need. Together, we will build the foundation for your future in healthcare, one that is both rewarding and impactful.

Thank you again for considering us. We look forward to the possibility of welcoming you into our program.

Sincerely,

Brooke Miller, DMSc, PA-C

Program Director, ECPI University Physician Assistant Program

From the Medical Director

Dear Prospective Student,

As the Medical Director of the ECPI University Physician Assistant Program, I am excited to welcome you to explore the unique opportunities our program offers. We are committed to providing an exceptional educational experience that not only prepares you for a successful career as a physician assistant but also equips you with the skills to navigate the evolving landscape of healthcare delivery.

One of the key strengths of our program is our focus on securing outstanding clinical partners for student rotations. We understand hands-on experience is crucial to your development as a competent and compassionate healthcare provider, which is why we have dedicated significant efforts to cultivating relationships with top-tier healthcare organizations, ensuring you have access to diverse and high-quality clinical experiences. From large health systems to community health centers, our clinical partners are committed to providing you with the mentorship and guidance you need to excel.

Furthermore, our program is at the forefront of integrating value-based care principles and artificial intelligence into the curriculum. We recognize the future of healthcare lies in delivering high-quality, cost-effective care that prioritizes patient outcomes. Additionally, we leverage cutting-edge AI technologies to enhance your learning experience, providing personalized feedback and simulation-based training that will help you develop critical thinking and decision-making skills.

We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community of future healthcare leaders. Our program attracts students from a wide range of backgrounds, each bringing unique perspectives and experiences to the classroom and the bedside.

I invite you to explore our program further and discover how ECPI University can help you achieve your goals of becoming a skilled and compassionate physician assistant. We look forward to the opportunity to introduce you to our vibrant community of learners and future healthcare leaders.

Warm regards,

Sam Basta, MD, MMM, FACP, CPE

Medical Director, ECPI University Physician Assistant Program

1.2 Admissions Guidebook Disclaimer

The admissions guidebook is a living document and is updated annually at minimum. The new academic year admissions guidebook will be published every January. The guidebook is not inclusive of everything our program has to offer. For more information about being a PA student at ECPI, please view our program website.

1.3 Selection Process

1.3.1 Who We Look For

When evaluating physician assistant candidates, we seek individuals who demonstrate a blend of academic excellence, quality life and direct patient care experience, and a drive to give back to their community. Ideal candidates possess a strong foundation in the sciences, have practical and genuine understandings of patient care and can demonstrate through their application an ability to connect, communicate, and work with others in a professional environment. To assist candidates in evaluating their metrics for our program, additional points will be rewarded based on the assessment factors listed below*:

1. Academics – Competitive applicants will exceed the minimum academic standards and will be given more consideration.
    a. Prerequisite GPA
    b. Undergraduate Science GPA
    c. Undergraduate Overall GPA
    d. Post-Baccalaureate GPA (will evaluate the last thirty credits)

    Additional points are given for GPAs above 3.0 in increasing value.

2. Life Experiences –
    a. Personal Challenges

    Socioeconomic factors:
        1. Family / personal income level – as reported in CASPA
        2. First-generation status
        3. Raised in a medically underserved area as highlighted by the HRSA.

3. Non-Traditional Student. Non-traditional students to us are:
        1. Military/veteran
        2. Graduate of a master's program

        Hampton Roads local preference (counties in VA and NC within a 75-mile radius of our campus.)
4. Direct patient care experience – Our minimum criteria is 500 hours of direct care experience, but competitive applicants will have over 1200 hours of direct patient care experience.
    1. Clinical and healthcare licensures – additional points will be given to those with clinical healthcare licensure.

2. Additional points will be given to those with over 500 hours of direct patient care experience and even more points will be given to those with over 1200 hours of direct patient care.

* In-person interviews are required – see section 4.0 for details.

1.4 Program Mission and Goals

Mission Statement

The Physician Assistant Program will provide a challenging and innovative academic setting for students from diverse backgrounds to become physician assistants. Graduates will provide exceptional healthcare, promote health equity, commit to personal and professional growth, and lead in the communities they serve.

Goals

1. Provide a challenging and innovative learning environment where students gain the knowledge and skills necessary for entry-level PA practice.
2. Prepare graduates to practice in various settings and with various healthcare professionals to reflect the versatility and team-based nature of the PA profession.
3. Attract a cohort of students who will promote diversity in the PA profession.
4. Prepare students who are committed to personal and professional growth.

1.5 Technical Standards

Observation and Sensory Abilities

Applicants and students must possess sufficient sensory capabilities to observe and assess patients accurately. This includes the ability to:

- Observe demonstrations, experiments, and waveform readings.
- Use vision, hearing, and somatic senses to assess patients at both close range and distance.
- Distinguish tissue texture, and symmetry/asymmetry.
- Integrate sensory information to make appropriate clinical decisions.

Communication Skills

Effective communication is essential for accurate data collection, patient care, and collaboration with the healthcare team. Students must:

- Communicate clearly and effectively in spoken, written, and electronic formats.
- Elicit and convey patient histories, document data, and interpret findings accurately.
- Perceive and respond to nonverbal communication cues from patients and colleagues.
- Engage in empathetic, culturally sensitive communication to establish rapport.

Motor and Tactile Skills

Students must possess adequate motor and tactile abilities to perform essential diagnostic and clinical tasks, including but not limited to:

- Performing physical examinations, including palpation, auscultation, and percussion.
- Conducting procedures such as suturing, lumbar punctures, and assisting in surgery.
- Providing emergency interventions like cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Maintaining stamina to handle physically demanding workloads in classroom and clinical settings.

Cognitive and Intellectual Abilities

The program requires students to demonstrate cognitive abilities that ensure effective clinical reasoning and decision-making. Students must:

- Assimilate and integrate complex medical information from lectures, readings, and clinical experiences.
- Retain, analyze, and synthesize information to form diagnostic and therapeutic plans.
- Exhibit critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to make sound judgments under pressure.

Behavioral and Professional Attributes

Emotional stability, resilience, and professionalism are critical for effective practice as a PA. Students must:

- Demonstrate integrity, empathy, and compassion in interactions with patients and the healthcare team.
- Maintain composure and professionalism in high-stress or rapidly changing situations.
- Exhibit self-awareness, seek feedback, and engage in continuous self-improvement.
- Adhere to ethical standards and respect diverse cultural and social perspectives.

The PA Program complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals. Students are encouraged to contact the Campus President to discuss their needs and initiate the accommodations process. The program is committed to supporting all students while maintaining the integrity of its technical standards. Please visit the link below for procedures for requesting accommodation: Link to Students with Disabilities Policy and Procedures, ECPI University Catalog

2.0 General Information

2.1 Program Quick Facts

Quick Facts for ECPI University Physician Assistant Program

1. Master of Science in Physician Assistant degree (MPA)
2. 24-month program
    a. First year “Didactic Phase, is 12 months long with in-person instruction on campus.

   b. Second year in "Clinical Phase" (full-time hands-on experiential learning)
      i. Typically, 1:1 with physicians or PAs at the clinical sites
      ii. Settings for clinical rotations:
         1. Surgery
         2. Family Medicine
         3. Internal Medicine
         4. Adult Specialty Medicine
         5. Emergency Department
         6. Pediatrics
         7. OB/GYN
         8. Behavioral Health
         9. Elective
         10. Preceptorship
      iii. The PA program is partnered with the following sites for clinical rotations:
         1. Sentara Medical System (Virginia Beach, VA)
         2. Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters (Norfolk, VA)
         3. Orlando Health (Orlando, FL)
         4. Hampton Roads Community Health Center (Portsmouth, VA)
3. Credit hours:
   a. Didactic year – 70
   b. Clinical year – 51
   c. Total program - 121 credit hours
4. Applications will be received nationwide through the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA). Requires a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university
   a. Required GPA of 3.0 or higher.
   b. Pre-requisites (see Admissions Guidebook Section 3.4 "Prerequisites")
   c. Minimum of 500 direct patient care experience hours required.
5. Students will often re-locate to the area during the program.
6. Employment during enrollment in the program is highly discouraged.
7. Cohort size of up to 50 students
   a. The program does not have an option for deceleration or pauses.

2.2 Estimate of All Costs Related to the Program

Complete information on the total cost of the PA Program, to include associated fees, can be found on our program website.

2.3 ECPI University Facilities and Student Services

During the didactic year students will practice clinical skills in classrooms located at the Virginia Beach campus. Students will have access to Anatomage tables for virtual dissections, dedicated clinical skills laboratory, an interprofessional simulation space including an intensive care unit (ICU)/trauma bay, and history and physical examination labs.

Students will also have access to our newly renovated on-site library, and virtual library services.

Students who need mental health resources, counseling, or accommodation can access these resources through the University wellness partner, WellConnect.

2.4 Advanced Standing and Transfer Credits

The PA program does not accept previous medical training or experience for advanced placement. All PA matriculants are required to complete the full curriculum.

2.5 Citizenship, International Students, English as a Second Language

We currently invite all international students who meet the established admissions standards to apply. * However, international students, citizens, and U.S. students with an international degree must complete the following three additional requirements:

1. All academic transcripts from institutions outside the U.S. must be evaluated by a recognized credential evaluation service such as World Education Services (WES).

2. Those with English as a second language are required to submit TOEFL scores and meet the minimum requirement with ECPI's TOEFL Standards and Requirements.

3. International students must also complete the additional steps outlined on the ECPI International Student Admissions page and send all documents to isa@ecpi.edu.

*Foreign MD graduates must have a minimum medical school GPA of 3.0.

2.6 Background Checks and Drug Screening

As a condition of enrollment and continued participation in the Physician Assistant (PA) Program, all students are required to undergo a criminal background check and urine drug screening prior to matriculating into the program. Students are responsible for all costs associated with meeting these requirements. Non-compliance with drug screening requirements, or a positive result without medical justification, may result in an offer of acceptance being rescinded.

3.0 General Admissions Requirements

3.1 Application Timeline, Review Process, and Notifications

April 30th, 2026, CASPA opens for 2027 Cohort
April 1st 2027 CASPA Application Closes
August 30th , 2027, Matriculated Class Enters
August 2029 Class Graduates

Applications will be reviewed by the admissions committee based on academic performance, life experience, and healthcare experience. Selected candidates will be invited for an interview. These topics are graded via an internal rubric based on Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 above.

We will contact all candidates via email with the following status/updates:

1. Notification of non-acceptance (application will not proceed forward)
2. Notification of interview invite
3. Notification of waitlist placement
4. Notification of conditional offer to matriculate

3.2 Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA)

3.2.1 Transcripts

All transcripts must be uploaded into CASPA and submitted as part of the final application. If you have prerequisite courses or your degree is in progress, please upload them to CASPA as soon as they are completed and applied to your transcript. Interview invites and conditional acceptances will still be granted with courses in progress but will be rescinded if the prerequisite grade does not meet requirements or if a bachelor's degree is not conferred by the start of the program. To assist candidates in evaluating their metrics for our program once final grades are posted to ensure timely verification of prerequisite coursework.

3.2.2 Experiences

Detail your experiences in the CASPA application. We do not accept updates to experiences after application submission unless there is a significant update to your experience that would enhance your chances of admission. Examples meeting minimum direct patient care hours after application submission, etc. These updates should be tied to the criteria listed in "1.3.1 Who We Look For."

3.2.3 Courses/Degrees in Progress

We allow up to three prerequisites to be in progress during submission, but all prerequisites must be completed by Spring semester prior to matriculation.

3.2.4 Withdrawing an Application

Applications may be withdrawn at any point by contacting ECPI University PA admissions at PAAdmissions@ecpi.edu

3.3 Bachelor's Degree

All applicants are required to hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited U.S. Higher Education Institution. International students and students with a degree from a foreign institution should refer to Section 2.6 in this manual for further guidance.

3.4 Prerequisites

3.4.1 Minimum and Competitive Standards, Required Prerequisites, Recommended Courses

Minimum standards are listed below. If you meet but do not exceed the "Minimum Required Standards" we still encourage you to apply as we review each applicant holistically based off the criteria in Section 1.3.2 "Who We Look For."

Minimum Required Standards
Overall GPA
3.0
Science GPA
3.0
Prerequisite GPA
3.0
Hands-On Direct patient care experience Hours
500

Competitive applicants will exceed the minimum required standards listed above.

Required Prerequisites

The table below outlines our program's specific prerequisite requirements.

*A&P I and A&P II combined or Anatomy (4 semester hours) and Physiology (4 semester hours) are acceptable.

**Medical Terminology does not need to be completed from an institution of higher learning and can be taken online through Coursera or MedCerts. A certificate of completion must be submitted on your CASPA application or must be in progress at the time of your application submission.

***Both lab AND lecture must *individually* meet the minimum grade requirement.

Required Course Name	Required Semester Hours	Lab Required
General Biology I (for science majors)	4	Yes
General Chemistry I (for science majors)	4	Yes
Microbiology	4	Yes
Statistics or Biostatistics (200 level or above)	3	
*Human Anatomy and Physiology	8	Yes
Psychology (200 level or above)	3	
Organic Chemistry I	3	
Organic Chemistry II or Biochemistry	3	
** Medical Terminology	Completion	

All GPAs will be reported by CASPA in accordance with the CASPA value charts.

3.4.2 Online Courses

We currently accept online courses from regionally accredited colleges and universities for core and prerequisite curriculum.

3.4.3 Pass/Fail, AP/IB, and CLEP

We currently accept P/F courses for core content classes only. All prerequisite courses must be passed with a letter grade of “C” or higher.

3.4.4 Grade Substitutions

Grade substitutions will be accepted for the highest grade completed for the course.

3.4.5 Prerequisite Time Window

All prerequisite coursework requirements must be taken within 10 years of enrolling in the program. For the 2026/2027 admissions cycle, the oldest prerequisite we will accept will be from the Fall 2016/Spring 2017 academic year.

3.5 Additional Testing

At this time, **we do not require** any additional testing except the TOEFL if applicable to you as outlined in Section 2.5. This means **we do not require** the following:

1. GRE
2. MCAT
3. CASPer
4. PA-CAT
5. Kira

If test scores are submitted, they will not be factored into our decision.

3.6 Patient Care Experience

A minimum of 500 hours of direct hands-on direct patient care experience is required, but competitive candidates will have over 1200 hours. Applicants may have these hours in progress at the time of application.

2. Additional points will be given to those with over 500 hours of direct patient care experience.

Examples of acceptable direct patient care experiences. This list is not exhaustive, so if you have questions, please contact the admissions office:

Defined by CASPA as "experiences in which you are directly responsible for a patient's care."

- Athletic Trainer (ATC)
- Clinical/Medical Assistant
- Clinical Psychologist
- Clinical Research Assistant (with patient interaction)
- Certified Nursing Assistant (with clinical duties)
- Registered Dietician
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
- Paramedic
- Patient Care Technician
    - Examples: cardiac, endoscopy, ophthalmic, OR/surgical, procurement, radiology, rehab, etc.
- Mental Health Aide
- Military Corpsman/Medic

- Nurse
- Nurse Aide
- Occupational Therapist
- Optometrist assistant
- Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA)
- Phlebotomist
- Physical Therapist
- Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA)
- Respiratory Therapist
- Surgical Technologist/Assistant
- In-person Medical Scribe

Experience Hours that are Not Accepted:

- Administrative/Clerical Roles: Medical receptionist, ward clerk, medical secretary, or office assistant
- Non-Direct Care Positions: Virtual medical scribe, patient navigator, and pharmacy technician/clerk (if only cashing out or filling prescriptions)
- Support/Transport Roles: Hospital transport, housekeeping, or delivering patient food
- Observational Roles: Physician or PA shadowing
- Chiropractic assistant
- Acupuncture assistant
- Specific Training/Volunteering: Hours accrued as required in a licensure/training program (e.g., EMT trainee) or purely observational volunteering
- Fitness/Wellness: Personal trainer, aerobics instructor, lifeguard, or CPR/ACLS instructor

3.7 Licenses and Certifications

All licensing and certifications may be uploaded into CASPA.

3.8 Personal Statement/Essay

The personal statement is uploaded to CASPA and must outline the applicant's motivation for becoming a Physician Assistant, relevant experiences, and career aspirations. We do not require an additional essay outside of the mandatory CASPA essays. However, we may include a short writing prompt on interview day for applicants who are invited to interview.

4.0 Interviews

4.1 Interview Invite

Interview invites will be sent to an applicant using the email provided on their CASPA application. Please add PAAdmissions@ecpi.edu to your contacts so that the invite is not filtered to your spam/junk folder.

4.2 Interview Day

The interview day will consist of a brief presentation of the program, an introduction to key staff and faculty, a facility tour, and interviews.

4.3 Candidate Status after Interview

The admissions committee will notify candidates through their CASPA email address with one of the following:

1. Notification of non-acceptance (application will not proceed forward)
2. Notification of waitlist placement
3. Notification of conditional offer

5.0 Interview Results

5.1 Accepted Student Health Requirements

Students are required to meet the health screening requirements to both matriculate and complete clinical rotations. Students must:

1. Have a physical examination by a licensed healthcare provider within six months prior to the start of the program
2. Have complete immunizations and boosters
    a. *COVID-19:* Vaccination is not required by ECPI University for matriculation. Due to the evolving nature of these recommendations, the PA program encourages students to refer to the most recent CDC recommendations last updated October 31, 2024 for guidance. Note: Clinical year supervised clinical practice experience (SCPE) sites may have specific requirements for COVID-19 vaccination.
3. An annual TB screening
4. Provide proof of health insurance
5. Drug screening

5.2 Accepted Student Orientation

New students will attend a mandatory orientation in August 2027, to receive welcome information, complete required paperwork, and meet staff, faculty, and other cohort members. This is mandatory for all matriculating students.

5.3 Deferment Policy

Deferments will be granted on a case-by-case basis and will be granted for only one calendar year if approved. Please contact PA Admissions with your request and it will be sent to the program director for a final decision.

5.4 Deposit Policy

Students who accept a conditional offer of admission are required to submit a nonrefundable $1,000.00 deposit.

Please note this does not include fees paid by applicants to the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA).

6.0 Accreditation

The ARC-PA has granted Accreditation-Provisional status to the ECPI University Physician Assistant Program sponsored by ECPI University.

Accreditation-Provisional is an accreditation status granted when the plans and resource allocation, if fully implemented as planned, of a proposed program that has not yet enrolled students appear to demonstrate the program's ability to meet the ARC-PA Standards or when a program holding Accreditation-Provisional status appears to demonstrate continued progress in complying with the Standards as it prepares for the graduation of the first class (cohort) of students.

Accreditation-Provisional does not ensure any subsequent accreditation status. It is limited to no more than five years from matriculation of the first class. The program's accreditation history can be viewed on the ARC-PA website at https://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation-history-ecpi-university/

7.0 Program Policies

Program policies and procedures will be provided to applicants upon enrollment into the PA Program. If you would like a copy of our Student Handbook, then please request the Student Handbook through PAAdmissions@ecpi.edu.

8.0 Contact Information

Any questions, comments, or concerns regarding admissions can be directed to our admissions department at PAAdmissions@ecpi.edu.

Any questions, comments, or concerns regarding disability compliance can be directed to our Director of Student Support Services at Scampise@ecpi.edu.