Keck School of Medicine of USC
The Primary Care Physician Assistant Program

Diversity. Leadership. Service. Quality Education
With the shortage of primary care physicians and the expanding patient population...

...PAs are poised to become prominent leaders.”

Kevin C. Lohenry, Ph.D., PA-C
Program Director

The Master of Physician Assistant Practice (MPAP), offered by the Primary Care Physician Assistant Program at Keck School of Medicine USC, trains students in a range of medical, social and behavioral sciences required for clinical practice.

The 33-month graduate curriculum includes integrated course work in the basic sciences, medicine, clinical skills, public health and epidemiology, health care administration and psychosocial and behavioral sciences. Our unique location within the Keck School of Medicine of USC provides students with a vast array of educational and clinical resources that contribute to excellence in training.

The Primary Care Physician Assistant (PA) Program is dedicated to the advancement of physician assistant education and emphasizes care for the medically underserved. The program is committed to preparing students from a wide variety of backgrounds to practice medicine with the supervision of a physician.

The program places great importance on collaboration. By creating an innovative learning environment, we are giving PA students all the tools they need to be leaders in the field of health care and to advocate on behalf of their patients and profession.
Why be a Trojan PA?

With a diverse makeup of students and faculty, the Primary Care PA Program is a unique experience that you won’t find anywhere else.

• We offer students **Medical Spanish** courses to help them enhance their ability to practice medicine in Spanish-speaking neighborhoods. It is vital that health care providers be able to build relationships with their patients and speaking the language is key. Our graduates report a doubling in their language confidence at the completion of the course.

• Students engage in a great deal of **volunteer work** and **service to the community**. New students begin orientation with a day at the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank and current students are active in the Student-Run Clinic, where they volunteer their time to offer medical services to the greater community.

• Our students are **leaders**. Every spring, students are invited to **advocate** in Washington D.C., where they meet with congressional representatives and advocacy groups to speak on behalf of their patients and profession. Students also are involved in many on campus groups, where they lead projects alongside medical, pharmacy and students from other disciplines. As part of our program, we also promote membership to the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) and the California Academy of Physician Assistants (CAPA) to help our students learn about advocating for the profession and their future patients.

• The program offers **one-of-a-kind innovation** with our emphasis on whole-brain learning and a one-to-one iPad classroom. Our lecture halls include top of the line technology and our faculty are trained to promote learning that focuses on collaboration and building a critical thinking skill set, so that when students graduate they are better prepared to meet the challenges they face in practice.
Admission Requirements

Sciences:
One-year sequential coursework for science majors in:
• General Biology with lab (usually 1 semester each of cellular biology and organismal biology or 3 quarters of cellular, organismal, and evolutionary biology)
• General Chemistry with lab (2 semesters or 3 quarters of inorganic chemistry with quantitative analysis)
3 semester units or 4 quarter units of each of the following:
• Human Anatomy with lab
• Human Physiology with lab
• General Microbiology with lab

Non-Sciences:
3 semester units or 4 quarter units of each of the following:
• Statistics, preferably statistics for psychology, sociology or biology.
• Introduction to Psychology
2 semesters or 3 quarters of Beginning Spanish Language

International applicants must have also completed 2 semester units or 3 quarters of English Composition.

What makes a strong candidate?

• **Community Service** - Non-healthcare related volunteer experience (Interviewees average 1180 hours)
• **Cumulative GPA** - Interviewees averaged 3.44
• **Science GPA** - Interviewees averaged 3.35
• **GRE or MCAT** - Interviewees average 306 on the GRE and 27 on the MCAT
• **Clinical experience** - Paid patient care experience *highly-recommended*, but not required. Interviewees average 3,648 from both paid and volunteer experience.
• **PA shadowing experience** - 20 hours of PA shadowing is recommended
• **Research experience**
• **Laboratory experience**
• **Healthcare volunteer experience**
• **Interview** (selected applicants only) - Knowledge of PA profession, leadership potential, communication/interpersonal skills, professionalism, personal attributes and program fit.
Program Curriculum

The program is a full-time educational and professional training program. Students have the opportunity to learn from instructors, including, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, doctors, occupational therapists, social workers and pharmacists. Based on the unique curriculum offered at the Primary Care PA Program at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, our students enter the workforce having spent more time in each rotation.

Year 1

Fall: Basic Medical Sciences; Behavioral Sciences I; Clinical Skills I and Topics in Medicine I.

Spring: Behavioral Sciences II; Clinical Skills II; Topics in Medicine II.

Year 2

Fall: Behavioral Sciences III; Clinical Skills III; Topics in Medicine III

Spring: 18 weeks of Clinical Clerkships; Post-Clinical Activities (return to campus for lectures & testing)

Summer: 12 weeks of Clinical Clerkships; Post-Clinical Activities (return to campus for lectures & testing)*

Year 3

Fall: 18 weeks of Clinical Clerkships; Post-Clinical Activities (return to campus for lectures & testing)

Spring: Advanced Clinical Skills IV; Advanced Education; Advanced Research; Medical Care Organizations; Senior Clinical Clerkships (~250 hours).

*Students will have completed about 2,000 hours of clinical time before they graduate.
Student Perspective

“I chose USC because it was the one school, where I felt like I could get a world-class education and also a hands on experience in a diverse community.”

- Judith Onyepunuka, Class of 2018

“Working with people of all walks of life has always been important to me and I really felt that USC encompassed that in their mission statement. I am from an underserved community, so it has always been important to me that I give back to communities similar to where I came from.

When I interviewed here, I felt like this was my dream school. The faculty made me feel comfortable and I couldn’t imagine myself anywhere else. Now that I am a student, I know that Dr. Lohenry and the entire faculty here are invested in me. Even when I don’t believe in myself they have more confidence in me than I do.

This first year has been a roller coaster. Being in a class of 59 has been amazing because there is always someone who understands what you are going through and there is always someone that can help you out. It has really been great to gain new brothers and sisters.

USC really advocates for a work-life balance and they encourage that you maintain the other aspects in life that make you who you are.”

Graduate Performance on Certification Exam

Since the Primary Care PA Program’s inception in 1972, our graduates have been well-prepared to take the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE). Currently, the five year first time test taker average pass rate for the program is 97 percent.
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To find out more about our program visit:
www.usc.edu/pa

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