“With the shortage of primary care physicians and the expanding patient population... PAs are poised to become prominent leaders.”

Kevin C. Lohenry, PhD, 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 competent 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 service to the medically underserved. The program is committed to preparing students from diverse backgrounds to practice medicine with physician supervision.

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 week with a service day 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

One year sequential coursework (equivalent to 2 semesters or 3 quarters) for biological based science majors in each of the following:

- **General Biology**
  - Applicants from an institution on the quarter system: If your institution does not offer three (3) quarters of General Biology, you may elect to take two (2) quarters of General Biology and one (1) quarter of the following: Genetics, Molecular Biology, Immunology, or Cell Biology.
  - Applicants from an institution that is on the semester system: You are required to take two (2) semesters of General Biology. No exceptions.

- **General Chemistry with lab**
  - Applicants from an institution on the quarter system: If your institution does not offer three (3) quarters of General Chemistry (Inorganic) with lab, you may elect to take two (2) quarters of General Chemistry with lab and one (1) quarter of Biochemistry with lab or one (1) quarter of Organic Chemistry with lab.
  - Applicants from an institution that is on the semester system: You are required to take two (2) semesters of General Chemistry (Inorganic) with lab. No exceptions.

- **Sciences:**
  - 3 semester units or 4 quarter units of each of the following:
    - General Microbiology with lab
    - Human Anatomy with lab*
    - Human Physiology*
    *Combined Human Anatomy and Physiology (A&P I and A&P II) will fulfill the Human Anatomy and Human Physiology with lab prerequisites.

- **Non-Sciences:**
  - 3 semester units or 4 quarter units of each of the following:
    - Statistics (preferably statistics for psychology, sociology or biology. Introduction to Statistics offered by a math department is acceptable.)
    - Introduction/General Psychology

- **International applicants must also have completed 2 semesters or 3 quarters of English Composition (AP coursework is acceptable).**

What makes a strong candidate?

- **Community Service** - Non-healthcare related volunteer experience (Interviewees average 1493 hours)
- **CASPA Cumulative GPA** - Interviewees averaged 3.43
- **Science GPA** - Interviewees averaged 3.33
- **GRE or MCAT** - Interviewees average 307 on the GRE and 20 on the old MCAT version and a 504 on the new MCAT version
- **Clinical experience** - Paid patient care experience *highly-recommended*, but not required. Interviewees average 3,788 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 Rotations; Post-Clinical Activities (return to campus for lectures & testing)

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

Year 3

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

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

*Students will have completed about 2,250 hours of clinical time before they graduate.
Our Students

“USC’s presence in my underserved community, incorporation of medical Spanish and cultural competency into the curriculum made USC my top choice.”

I have always been passionate about being part of the movement to expand quality health care, but it didn’t take me long to figure out that my interests would be best matched with the PA profession. My first year of PA school was tough, but way more rewarding than I could have imagined. Not only have I gained the medical knowledge I need to move on, but I have grown as an individual. There have been so many opportunities inside and outside of the classroom that empower me.

“USC has many opportunities waiting for you to grasp, challenge and mold into your own. The more we learn, the more we can change. The more we can change, the more we can advance. This is the FIGHT ON spirit.”

The endless possibilities that come with being a PA-C excite me! My passion for patient health education, collaborative health care, and diversity between specialties makes the profession a good fit for me. When I interviewed, I said that I enjoyed helping people, and since then USC has put this to the test by providing countless opportunities to serve. The PA program mission statement emphasizes service to the medically underserved, appreciating diversity and promoting primary health care – all of which align with my personal purpose.

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 96 percent.