

**SPRINGFIELD**

**COLLEGE**



**Pre-PHYSICIAN  
ASSISTANT PROGRAM**

**Student Handbook**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Springfield College Pre-Physician Assistant (PA) Program Student Handbook contains information on the policies, procedures, regulations, requirements, and standards required for successful completion of the Springfield College Pre-PA Program. It is a supplement to the Springfield College Student Handbook and the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs.

The Physician Assistant program reserves the right to make changes in the rules and regulations of the program, its academic calendar, admission policies, procedures and standards, degree requirements, and standards necessary for successful completion of the program at its sole discretion. Additionally, change(s) may include, but is/are not limited to, changes in course content, scheduling of courses offered, and canceling of scheduled classes and/or other program related activities.

The College reserves the right to make changes in admission requirements, fees, charges, tuition, instructors, policies, procedures or standards, regulations, and academic programs offered in its sole discretion. Additionally, the College has the right to divide, cancel, or reschedule classes or programs if enrollment or other factors require such action.

## WELCOME

Welcome to the Springfield College Pre-PA Program. This program provides a strenuous but rewarding educational experience. Faculty and staff of the program will work with you to help you attain the goal of certification to become a physician assistant.

### I. MISSION, GOALS, and OBJECTIVES

The mission of the Springfield College Pre-PA Program is to educate students in spirit, mind, and body for leadership in clinical, community, and academic service to humanity by building upon its foundations of Humanics and academic excellence.

The Springfield College Pre-PA program is designed to help students develop the following characteristics prior to beginning the professional phase of the PA program:

- A. A strong academic background with a firm foundation in the sciences (ie, high GPAs in rigorous coursework)
- B. Good reasoning ability and strong critical thinking skills
- C. Strong interpersonal skills, with the ability to connect well with individuals from various backgrounds
- D. Compassion and a commitment to service
- E. Excellent communication skills (both written and oral)
- F. Strong leadership skills and the ability to work well on a team
- G. A good base of knowledge about physician assistants and the healthcare field in general
- H. Integrity and high ethical standards
- I. A positive attitude and the ability to function well under stress

### II. GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

- A. Physician assistant students are expected to follow all rules, regulations, policies, and procedures outlined in the Springfield College Undergraduate Catalog, the Springfield College Student

### III. ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND POLICIES

The policies as laid out below apply to all Pre-PA students throughout the undergraduate phase. Each section describes the benchmarks required to maintain status in the Pre-PA program and for continuation in the limited seat portion of the Pre-PA program (Year 3 and 4). Those Pre-PA students who qualify will earn a Bachelor of Science in Health Science: Pre-PA Studies, and complete the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies in 6 years. The professional phase of the program begins in January of the senior year. The Bachelor of Science in Health Science: Pre-PA Studies is awarded in May of the fourth year. The Master of Science degree is awarded at the conclusion of the graduate PA program.

To successfully maintain status and for continuation in the Pre-PA program, each student must meet all program standards and participate in an interview. Interviews will be conducted during the spring semester of Year 2, with offers regarding conditional acceptance in the Pre-PA program made during the Fall semester of Year 3.

#### Year 1 and Year 2:

1. Students must receive a minimum grade of a B- (2.7) in all program requirements and prerequisite courses (see list below). Students who receive a grade of less than B- in a program requirement/prerequisite course, must repeat the course to improve the grade and will be put on probation. A student may repeat a specific course only once. Failure to achieve a grade of B- or better on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the program.
  - a. Program Requirements Courses
    - i. Bioscience I with Lab\*
    - ii. Bioscience II with Lab\*
    - iii. General Chemistry I with Lab\*
    - iv. General Chemistry II with Lab\*
    - v. Human Anatomy and Physiology I with Lab\*
    - vi. Human Anatomy and Physiology II with Lab\*
    - vii. Organic Chemistry I with Lab\*
    - viii. Organic Chemistry II with Lab (does not count towards 8 credit retake rule)
    - ix. PA Seminar I
2. Students must maintain a GPA of 3.5 or better, both cumulative and in the recalculated program prerequisite courses(\*). Students who do not achieve a 3.5 cumulative or recalculated prerequisite GPA, at the conclusion of a semester, will be placed on probation.
3. Repeat/Transfer credits for pre-professional program prerequisite courses are allowed with prior approval from the student's academic advisor, department chair and academic advising center.
  - a. A maximum of 8 transferred/repeated credits is allowed for substitution of program prerequisite courses\*. Transfer/repeat of more than 8 credits will not be allowed and will result in dismissal from the program.

4. Students are required to meet with their faculty advisor at a minimum of once per semester, during the College advising period, to review academic progress and planning. Students will not be eligible to register for classes if this requirement is not met.
5. During the spring semester of Year 2 all students will participate in an interview process with their academic advisor. This interview will assess the students' readiness for continuation in the Pre-PA program which culminates in direct entry into the graduate phase of the PA program. A maximum of 30 students will be selected for this path.
6. Evaluation Criteria:
  - a. A 3.5 cumulative GPA in program required courses at the conclusion of Spring Year 2, and a minimum grade of at least B- in each pre-professional program required courses.
    - i. Any student on probation at the time of review will be given until the end of the summer of Year 2 to resolve the probationary status.
  - b. A 3.5 cumulative GPA in all college courses to date.
  - c. The student is on track to complete all college course requirements (core curriculum coursework, themed exploration and wellness passport)
  - d. Evidence of progress towards completion of healthcare experience hours and PA shadowing hours.
  - e. Demonstrated professional behavior and attitude that is consistent with the Program Code of Conduct (Appendix B)
  - f. Demonstrates ability to meet the program's technical standards (Appendix A).
  - g. Participation in leadership and service activities will enhance the student's application for conditional acceptance into the limited seat portion of the Pre-PA program.
7. Any student who is not accepted into the limited seat portion of the Pre-PA program will work with their academic advisor to change their major within the college. The Program suggests that students who are still interested in the PA track change their major to Health Sciences or Biology. Students are further encouraged to reapply to the PA program through the traditional graduate admissions process at the next cycle.

## Year 3 and Year 4:

Students offered conditional acceptance to the graduate PA program, and continuation in the Pre-PA program will be required to meet the following standards:

1. A 3.5 cumulative GPA in program required courses, and a minimum grade of at least B- in each pre-professional program required course. Failure to achieve this requirement will result in probationary status.
  - a. Biochemistry
  - b. Medical Microbiology
  - c. Pre-Calculus or higher level math
  - d. Statistics
  - e. Upper level Science selectives

- f. EKG Interpretation
  - g. PA Seminar II
  - h. PA Seminar III
2. Any student placed on probation during Year 3 will be given until the end of summer of Year 3 to resolve the probationary status. If the probationary status is not resolved the student will not be allowed to matriculate into the graduate phase of the program and will be dismissed from the program. The student will be required to change their major. Students are encouraged to apply to the graduate phase of the program through the traditional graduate admissions process at the next cycle.
  3. Students will not be allowed to matriculate into the graduate phase of the program and will be dismissed from the program if any of the below criteria occur during the fall semester of Year 4:
    - i. Student is on probation
    - ii. Failure to achieve a 3.5 cumulative overall GPA
    - iii. Failure to achieve a 3.5 cumulative GPA in program required courses
    - iv. Failure to achieve a B- in program required courses
    - v. Has not completed all college course requirements (core curriculum, themed exploration and wellness passport)
    - vi. Has not completed healthcare experience/ PA shadowing hours as outlined below.
    - b. The student will be required to change their major. Students are encouraged to apply to the graduate phase of the program through the traditional graduate admissions process at the next cycle.
  4. The student must complete and have submitted the below, by Dec 15th of Year 4. Written documentation of a minimum of 500 hours of health care experience reviewed by the student's faculty advisor according to the following guidelines:
    - a. 470 hours of health care experience
    - b. 30 hours of observation of a clinically practicing PA
  5. Demonstrated professional behavior and attitude that is consistent with the Program Code of Conduct (Appendix B)
  6. Demonstrates ability to meet the program's technical standards (Appendix A).
  7. Immunization status, yearly physical exams, and TB status must be updated in the Health Center by Dec 15th, Year 4. A copy of the student's patient vaccination administration record with the aforementioned items from the student health center must be sent to the PA department. This request must come from the student. It is the responsibility of the student to keep up to date with the appropriate updates sent to both College and the PA program.

## Pre-professional Phase Coursework

Refer to the curriculum outline online, the degree audit, or the course catalog.

## **IV. ACADEMIC HONESTY**

- A. Any instance of cheating as defined by an instructor will be investigated and will follow the Springfield College Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy in the Student Handbook (<https://springfield.edu/studenthandbook>).

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# APPENDIX A: Technical Standards

## MINIMUM TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION, CONTINUATION, AND GRADUATION

The Springfield College Physician Assistant Program seeks to educate students in spirit, mind, and body for leadership in clinical, community, and academic service to humanity by building upon its foundations of Humanics and academic excellence. To achieve this goal, the following principles and technical standards will be applied to candidates for admission and continuing students.

### Principles:

1. Technical Standards are the Program expectations for certain knowledge, skills, abilities, professional attitudes, and behaviors.
2. These standards are prerequisites for entrance, continuation, and graduation from the Springfield College Physician Assistant Program. Students must verify they meet the Technical Standards before matriculation and maintain them throughout their PA education. Students are obligated to alert the Program immediately of any change to their status.
3. Students are expected to develop a robust medical knowledge base and the requisite clinical skills to apply their knowledge and skills appropriately, effectively interpret information, and contribute to patient-centered decisions across a broad spectrum of medical situations and settings.
4. Students, with or without disabilities, applying to and continuing in the program are expected to meet the same requirements.
5. Matriculation and continuation in the program assume a certain level of cognitive, motor, and technical skills. Students with disabilities will be held to the same standards as their non-disabled peers. Although not all students should be expected to gain the same level of proficiency with all technical skills, some skills are essential, and mastery must be achieved with the assistance of reasonable accommodations where necessary.
6. Reasonable accommodations will be provided to assist in learning, performing, and satisfying the technical standards. Every reasonable attempt will be made to facilitate students' progress where it does not compromise collegiate standards or interfere with the rights of other students and patients.

Students must possess aptitude, ability, and skills in five areas:

- Observation
- Communication
- Sensory and motor coordination and function
- Conceptualization, integration, and quantitation
- Behavioral and social attributes

The functions described below are critically important to the student and must be autonomously performed by the student. Technological compensation can be made for some disabilities in certain areas. Still, a candidate must meet the essential technical standards in such a way that they can perform them in a reasonably independent manner. It should be understood that these are standards for minimum competence in the program.

### **Observation**

Students must have sufficient sensory capacity, with or without reasonable accommodation, to observe information presented through demonstration in a lecture hall, the laboratory, and in various patient settings. In addition, students must evaluate patients accurately and assess their relevant health, behavioral and medical information promptly. Students must obtain and interpret information through a comprehensive assessment of patients, correctly interpret diagnostic representations of patients'

physiologic data and accurately evaluate patients' conditions and responses. Students must competently use diagnostic instruments such as otoscopes, ophthalmoscopes, and stethoscopes.

### **Communication**

Communication includes not only speech but reading and writing. Physician assistant education presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of required reading to master the subject area and to impart information to others. Students must exhibit interpersonal skills to enable effective caregiving of patients, including communicating effectively with all members of a multidisciplinary healthcare team, patients, and those supporting patients, in person and writing. Students must clearly and accurately record information and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication. Students must read and efficiently, accurately, and legibly record observations and plans in legal documents such as the patient record. Students must prepare and communicate concise but complete summaries of individual encounters and complex, prolonged encounters, including hospitalizations. Students must complete forms according to directions in a complete and timely fashion in various formats, including electronic platforms.

### **Sensory and Motor Coordination or Function**

Students must possess sufficient sensory and motor function to perform physical examinations using palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers, with or without reasonable accommodation.

Students must be able to execute motor movements to provide or direct general care and emergency treatments to patients promptly. The student, therefore, must be able to respond promptly to urgencies within the hospital or practice setting and must not hinder the ability of their co-workers to provide prompt care. Examples of emergency treatment reasonably required of a physician assistant include arriving quickly when called and assisting in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), administering intravenous medications, applying pressure to arrest bleeding, maintaining an airway, suturing uncomplicated wounds, and assisting with obstetrical maneuvers.

Students must be able, with or without reasonable accommodation, to negotiate patient care environments and must be able to move between settings, such as clinics, classroom buildings, and hospitals. Students must meet applicable safety standards for the environment and follow universal precaution procedures. Physical stamina sufficient to complete the rigorous course of the didactic and clinical study is required. Long periods of sitting, standing, or moving are required in classrooms, laboratories, and clinical experiences.

Students must also use computers and other electronic devices as most medical documentation uses electronic platforms and the national certifying examination and classroom examinations are computer-based tests.

### **Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities**

Problem-solving, a critical skill demanded of physician assistants, requires intellectual abilities which must be performed quickly, especially in emergencies. These intellectual abilities include, but are not limited to, the ability to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures, numerical recognition, measurement, calculations, reasoning, analysis, judgment, and synthesis. Students must effectively participate in individual, small-group, lecture, and other learning modalities in the classroom, clinical, and community settings. Students must learn, participate, collaborate, and contribute as part of a team.

Students must identify significant findings from the patient's history, physical examination, and laboratory data, make causal connections, and make facts-based conclusions based on the available data and information. Students must formulate a hypothesis and investigate potential answers and outcomes and

reach appropriate and accurate conclusions. When appropriate, students must be able to identify and communicate the limits of their knowledge to others.

### **Behavioral and Social Attributes**

Students must possess the emotional health required for the full use of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities associated with the diagnosis and care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients. Empathy, integrity, honesty, concern for others, good interpersonal skills, interest in people, and motivation are personal qualities that are required. Students must be able to monitor and react appropriately to one's own emotional needs and responses. For example, students must maintain an emotional demeanor and organization in the face of long hours, fatigued colleagues, and dissatisfied patients.

Students are expected to exhibit professionalism, personal accountability, compassion, integrity, concern for others, and interpersonal skills, including the ability to accept and apply feedback and to respect boundaries and care for all individuals respectfully and effectively regardless of gender identity, age, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or any other protected status. Students should understand and function within the legal and ethical aspects of the practice of medicine and maintain and display ethical and moral behaviors commensurate within the role of a PA in all interactions with patients, faculty, staff, students, and the public.

Students must possess the endurance to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. All students are at times required to work for extended periods of time, occasionally with rotating schedules. Students must adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the practice of medicine. Students are expected to accept suggestions and criticisms and, if necessary, to respond by modifying their behavior.

### **Disability Statement**

The Physician Assistant Program is committed to creating a respectful, accessible, and inclusive learning environment. It recognizes that students with varied types of disabilities can become successful medical professionals. Students with a disability who need accommodations should initiate discussions with Disability & Accessibility Services (DAS) as soon as the offer of admission is received and accepted. It is the responsibility of the student to provide DAS (413-748-3389 or email [ascdas@springfield.edu](mailto:ascdas@springfield.edu)) with adequate information documenting the general nature and extent of the disability as well as the functional limitation in need of accommodation. Evaluation and implementation of an accommodation request is a collaborative effort between the student, the DAS, and the Physician Assistant Program.

Should a student have or develop a condition that might place patients, the student, or others at risk or affect their need for accommodation, an evaluation with the DAS may be necessary. Accommodation is not reasonable if providing the accommodation:

- poses a direct threat to the health or safety of the student and/or others,
- if providing the accommodation requires a substantial modification of an essential element of the curriculum as determined by the Physician Assistant Program,
- if providing the accommodation lowers academic standards, or
- if providing the accommodation poses an undue financial burden on the College

# APPENDIX B: Code of Conduct

## SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE PA PROGRAM CODE OF CONDUCT

The PA program adheres first and foremost to the Springfield College Student Handbook in regards to the code of conduct and subsequent disciplinary actions. Please refer to the current year handbook for more information. This can be found on any course Brightspace homepage, under student resources click *college policies* then *student handbook*.

In addition, the Springfield College PA Program attempts to ensure that PA students are upholding appropriate standards of professionalism and ethics. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner in the classroom, on campus, and in clinical settings. Unprofessional behaviors will be reported to the Program Director for disciplinary review.

The Springfield College PA Program Code of Conduct outlines the principles that all PA students are expected to uphold. Breaches of these principles may result in disciplinary review. Disciplinary action taken at the end of the review may include a verbal warning, written warning, probation or dismissal from the program. Disciplinary action may be reported to any state licensing authority, government agency, the graduate PA's employer or potential employer.

This Code of Conduct represents some, but not all, of the behaviors that may trigger review under the Springfield College PA Program's Promotions Committee.

### Principles of Conduct:

Springfield College PA students shall comply with all applicable PA program, Springfield College, and clinical site policies as well as laws, regulations, and standards related to their professional role. Each student is responsible for their conduct from the time of admission to the professional phase of the PA program through the actual awarding of a degree, including periods immediately before classes begin or immediately after classes end, during the didactic phase as well as during the clinical phase and during periods between semesters.

### Springfield College PA Students:

- Shall not engage in cheating or other dishonest behavior that violates the security of any form of student assessment before, during, or after an examination. This includes unauthorized reproduction, distribution, displaying, discussing, sharing or otherwise misusing any form of assessment, including but not limited to exam/quiz questions.
- Shall always do their own work, and may never plagiarize or cheat on examinations, papers, or any other forms of assessment. Students shall not solicit, obtain, possess, or provide to another person an examination or portions of an exam, prior or subsequent to the administration of the examination. A student may not obtain or provide test questions to or from other students in any form-oral, written, or electronic. A student shall not obtain test questions in any form from previous students or graduates of the program.
- Shall promptly inform PA Program faculty when possessing knowledge or evidence that raises substantial question of student(s) cheating on or misusing questions from an PA program examination or any other form of student assessment.
- Shall demonstrate and uphold the highest standards of integrity and ethics with patient care, medical documentation, and scholarly work and in professional relationships with faculty and preceptors.
- Shall behave in a manner consistent with the accepted standards of professional practice.

- Shall not employ deceptive means, including submitting to the PA Program any document or evaluation regarding student performance that contains a misstatement of facts or omits any facts.
- Shall not falsely represent themselves in any way to be a certified PA or a physician.
- Shall demonstrate personal and professional responsibility and accountability at all times. This includes but is not limited to accountability to patients, the profession, preceptors, faculty, and staff. Avoidance behavior is not acceptable.
- Shall treat others with courtesy and respect.
- Shall not discriminate against others on the basis of gender, disability, socioeconomic status, religion, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.
- Shall treat patients and their families with respect and dignity in their presence and in discussion with other medical team members regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status. Such respect and dignity will be displayed in both interactions with the patient/family or in discussions with other medical team members.
- Shall respect appropriate professional boundaries in their interactions with patients, patient’s families, and others.
- Shall demonstrate and respect professional relationship boundaries with faculty, staff, preceptors, and other members of the healthcare team. Jocular and overfamiliarity is inappropriate.
- Shall avoid behavior that would pose a threat or potential threat to the health, well-being, or safety of others apart from reasonable risks taken in a patient's interest during the delivery of health care.
- Shall demonstrate respect for the right of the patient and their family to be informed and to share in decision-making.
- Shall respect the rights of patient confidentiality and privacy at all times. Students shall not inappropriately disclose any confidential patient information, publicly or privately, that was observed or learned as part of the PA student’s educational experience/rotation, nor shall PA students disparage any patient in a public setting (including through social media) based on information observed or learned as a part of the PA student’s didactic or clinical educational experience.
- Shall demonstrate good judgment and insight to one’s own abilities, professional and personal limitations, and know when to ask for help.
- Shall only wear their “white coat” when participating in the care of patients in an official capacity or at a time specifically designated by the PA Program and/or preceptor. PA students may not wear their ‘white coat” to gain access to medical facilities or to a patient’s medical records when they are not participating in an officially sanctioned PA Program educational experience.
- Shall participate in orientation, the classroom, experiential learning, clinical rotations, professional meetings, events, and/or any other setting where judgment is required or patient care might be compromised without impairment from alcohol and/or drugs. Shall practice without impairment from cognitive deficiency or mental illness that, even with appropriate reasonable accommodation, adversely affects their practice of medicine.
- Shall demonstrate the professional behavior expected of a SC PA student including:
  - Excellence
  - Altruism
  - Accountability
  - Honor and Integrity
  - Duty
  - Respect for others
  - Intellectual curiosity
  - Teamwork and Collaboration
  - Advocacy and Equity

\*Adapted from the National Commission for Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA)