



# PAEA

# 10,000+

PA STUDENTS GRADUATED IN 2021  
FROM PAEA MEMBER PROGRAMS

# 300+

ACCREDITED PA PROGRAMS  
IN THE UNITED STATES

# 100%

ACCREDITED PA PROGRAMS  
THAT ARE MEMBERS OF PAEA

## **PAEA Overview**

Founded in 1972, the PA Education Association (PAEA) is the only national organization representing PA educational programs in the United States. PAEA provides services for faculty at its member programs, as well as to applicants, students, and other stakeholders.

## **PA Education at a Glance**

- **Degree Awarded:** Master's Degree
- **Program Length:** 27 months on average
- **Curriculum:** Includes both classroom-based learning and at least 2,000 hours of structured clinical education across multiple specialties which reinforces clinical reasoning, hands-on skills, and patient-centered care
- **Accreditation:** All PA programs, as well as the graduates of those programs, are held to rigorous national standards, as dictated by both the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant and the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants

## **PA Education & Application Trends**

- Applicant numbers for PA programs continue to rise, increasing from 30,353 in the 2020–2021 cycle to 34,625 in the 2024–2025 cycle. This steady growth underscores the ongoing demand for the PA profession.
- The 2024–2025 application cycle saw the highest number of military-affiliated applicants since 2020–2021.
- From 2020 to the most recent cycle, the number of underrepresented in medicine (URiM) applicants increased by approximately 35%, and the proportion of URiM applicants relative to the overall applicant pool rose by 4% (from 21.4%–25.5%).
- In terms of academic background, degrees in Biology, Health Science, and Psychology continue to dominate. These three majors have held the top spots since 2019–2020 and now represent nearly half of the entire applicant pool.

## **Featured Facts: PA Education & PA Profession**

- PAs are licensed professionals who practice medicine across a wide variety of settings. Since its creation in the mid-1960s, the PA profession has consistently served as an effective solution to health care provider shortages.
- PA programs are graduate-level programs, conferring a master's degree, and require a completed bachelor's degree plus extensive prerequisite coursework for admission.
- Graduation is followed by passage of the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) and state licensure.
- To maintain national certification, PAs need to complete 100 hours of continuing medical education (CME) credits every 2 years and undergo recertification every 10 years.

## **Why it Matters?**

PA Programs prepare graduates for broad, flexible practice that enables them to practice in specialties and settings that communities need the most. The rigorous education makes sure that graduates are:

- Ready to enter clinical practice immediately upon graduation and licensure
- Prepared to meet growing healthcare access needs across the United States
- Equipped to adapt to evolving healthcare environments
- Collaborative members of interprofessional teams

## **For more information, please contact:**

Tyler Smith, MPH  
Chief Policy Officer  
PA Education Association  
703-667-4356 | [tsmith@PAEAonline.org](mailto:tsmith@PAEAonline.org)