

Carver College of Medicine – Physician Assistant Program

Curriculum for the Masters of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) Degree

OVERVIEW

The Carver College of Medicine's MPAS degree curriculum underwent an exciting and significant renewal process and implemented in the Fall of 2014. The goals of this renewal effort were to develop an innovative curriculum that improved the integration of basic sciences with clinical application, exposing students to earlier clinical activities and preparing them for team based practice. Given the phenomenal pace of change in technologic innovation and the explosion in scientific discovery of new knowledge, tomorrow's PA must now be educated in ways that will allow them to continuously adapt to the complex and continuously evolving environment of health care delivery. The goal of the new curriculum is to help our PA students develop the enduring knowledge, skills and attitudes that will provide focus and direction for tomorrow's PAs in a future healthcare environment that cannot be easily predicted.

THE MPAS CURRICULUM

- **Innovation** – Scientific content is taught in the context of the 6 fundamental mechanisms of health and disease with new teaching methodologies used in the curriculum.
- **Integration** – Science courses each taught by co-directors including a basic scientist and a clinician in a strand that extends across the curriculum.
- **Team Based Practice** – Course work completed alongside medical students with an interprofessional education focus.

The exciting new curriculum consists of a **'triple helix model'** with three strands that extend throughout the MPAS curriculum. The three strands are:

- **Mechanisms of Health and Disease (MOHD)**
- **Medicine and Society (MAS)**
- **Clinical and Professional Skills (CAPS)**

Other new features include longitudinal mentored clinical experiences starting in the first week of PA school. Opportunities to experience a primary care clinical experience during the first summer as a preparation for transitioning into a full time clinical rotation experience. The focus on interprofessional education will also begin early in the first semester of the curriculum and extend throughout the curriculum to prepare students to be highly effective leaders and participants in the healthcare team. Finally, additional focus is being given to wellness in the context of the provider, the patient and populations.

The design format for the medical science curriculum is based upon the mechanisms of health and disease. When a person becomes ill, there is a complex and dynamic interaction happening between the basic internal mechanisms that maintain health and those that produce disease. The 6 basic mechanisms include genetics, the immune system, metabolism, oxygenation, structure/locomotion (skin and musculoskeletal) and neuropsychiatry. At the same time, there is an interaction between the person and their environment, as well as with their health care provider. The triple helix model of our curriculum reflects these core interactions and their interrelatedness. They are intertwined and interrelated in the same manner as they are in real life. The ultimate goal for our graduates is to achieve a complete and comprehensive understanding of each of the three strands as well as their intimate interconnections in order to provide holistic health care for patients and populations.

Completion of the MPAS curriculum will occur over approximately 28 months and will culminate in the Masters of Physician Assistant Studies degree and the Certification of Completion. Graduates will be eligible to sit for the national certification examination and licensure as a physician assistant.