



EMERGENCE OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS AWARDING A PRE-PA DEGREE



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PURPOSE

With the increased national recognition of the PA profession, undergraduate advisors are seeing an influx of students interested in undergraduate experiences to prepare them for the rigor of graduate PA programs. While each graduate PA program sets their own specific admission criteria, the AAPA lists Chemistry, Biology, Anatomy, Microbiology, and Physiology as common undergraduate prerequisites. There is a recent emergence of undergraduate programs that award a Bachelor's degree in Pre-PA coursework. In an effort to describe this novel degree, this study examines the curricular requirements of these degree programs in comparison with AAPA listed PA admissions criteria, and also compares the types of Pre-PA degrees conferred by these institutions.

METHODS

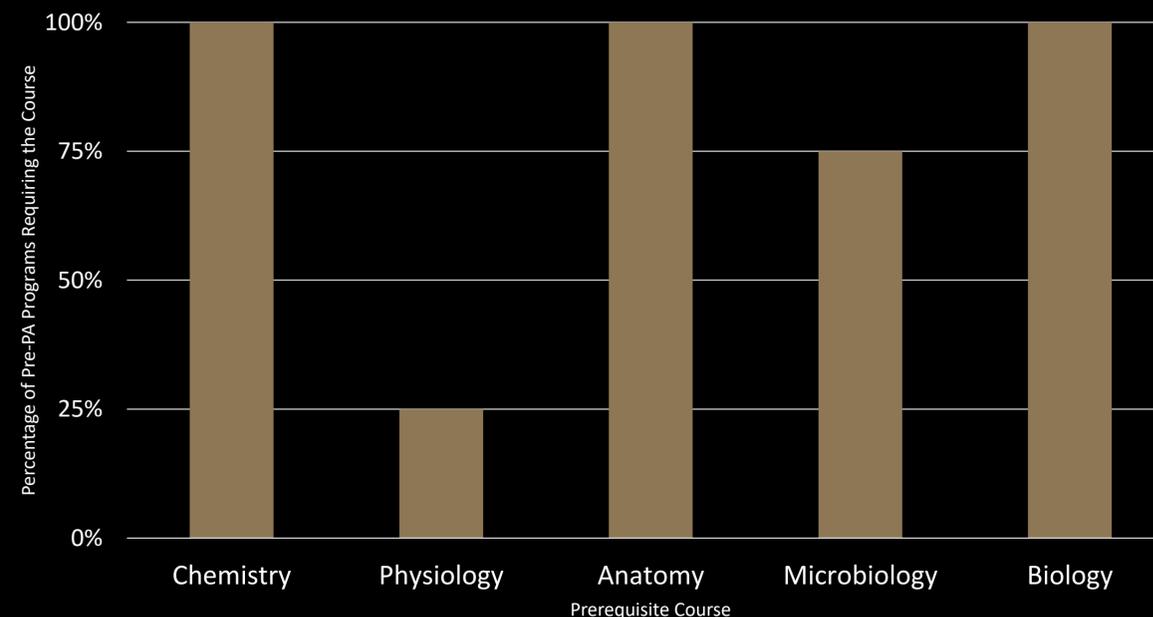
A national search of accredited universities in the United States with programs that award an undergraduate degree or subset specialization in Pre-Physician Assistant coursework was conducted. Four unique programs were identified that confer a certificate or degree in Pre-PA coursework. Dual degree BS/MS PA programs were not included in this study, as there was not a clear distinction between undergraduate and graduate. Descriptive statistics were performed utilizing SPSS v.26 for all four programs, as well as just the three that confer a degree as opposed to a certificate. Existing programs, along with AAPA published requirements for prerequisites were utilized to model an innovative Pre-PA degree program.

OBJECTIVES

- Compare Pre-PA program requirements with AAPA recognized prerequisites for PA graduate programs.
- Describe an educational innovation that combines the natural and psychosocial sciences to prepare students for the rigor of graduate PA education.
- Prepare students for entry into graduate PA programs by introducing them to PA trends and culture prior to matriculation.

RESULTS

Comparison of Current Pre-PA Program Requirements Compared to AAPA Listed Prerequisites



DISCUSSION

While the current Pre-PA degree programs offer many science-based courses that may be required by programs, there is a need for supplementation in these programs with the additional attributes required of PA candidates. A Pre-PA curriculum that confers a bachelor's degree was designed that includes both the natural and psychosocial sciences as well as annual seminar courses that address history and trends in the PA profession, entry level placement for healthcare experience, community service, commitment to professional organizations, reflection on academic and professional development, and student mental health.

CURRICULAR INNOVATION:

PRE-PA SEMINARS

Pre-Physician Assistant Foundations

- Introduction to the (PA) profession
- Overview of the history of the PA profession, core PA competencies, accreditation, and career pathways

Practical Applications for the Pre-Physician Assistant

- Explores the application of didactic learning to clinical practice of medicine
- Prepares students to explore entry-level medical positions through nationally recognized certifications in healthcare

The Pre-Physician Assistant Professional

- Focuses on graduate preparation for PA programs
- Reflect on their pre-PA coursework and activities to prepare to apply for a PA graduate program

Pre-Physician Assistant Professionalism Seminar

- Focuses on student success in graduate professional programs
- Topics include interviewing strategies, professionalism in graduate school, and strategies for success in graduate programs

REFERENCES

Become a PA. AAPA. (2021, November 9). Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.aapa.org/career-central/become-a-pa/>.

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